

*This Town*—Kyle Laws & Jared Smith  
Review by April Pameticky



The 2016 collaboration between Jared Smith and Kyle Laws is both a journey and a delight. Out now from [Liquid Light Press](#), *This Town* feels familiar, a place visited or lived in before. The two Colorado poets corresponded back and forth for months, writing one poem in response to the next. While they didn't intend a collection at the outset, Laws calling the culmination and publication a "happy accident," the result has a wonderful cohesion. And since we at *River City Poetry* thrill to see solid collaboration, it seemed like the perfect time to review it.

These lines, whether from Smith or Laws, show recognizable places peopled with kin we know. From traveling dancing girls to Great Clips, these sweep an expanse of Americana rich in detail.

Smith opens the collections with "How do you look at this space?"

I open fewer visions into the meanings than I  
used to when sitting in bar rooms with high strung girls  
because no seduction is needed, no love will save me  
except any part of my soul that will escape the flesh,  
and I have little hope of that since science is science.

There's an acknowledgment here, that wisdom has come with age a little, and that "science" will prevail over soul. In the same poem, he writes:

so you put the key into its lock and there are  
books on shelves that lead back into the room  
and maybe there are words on the pages you  
haven't read yet or perhaps you have forgotten  
and it might be this is the foyer of your frame house  
and it might be that this is more of a used book shop  
located between a diner at the corner of Main  
and a Great Clips barber shop, a hardware store  
on the other side

All the places and spaces are metaphors for the nooks and crannies of our own memories and experiences. There is a melancholy strain over the sights, a hesitancy that these once-familiar places might not be what we had originally thought.

Kyle Laws responds in the poem “This Town:”

This town lives in a snapshot from a box camera.  
It is not my town.  
It may not be yours.  
It exists at the back of your mind.  
A town you travel through on a cross country trip.  
Someplace you stop for coffee in the middle of the night.

These are places with names on the tip of my tongue. And Laws and Smith both show dexterous control over the imagery. From Smith’s “The Night Marchers”—

There are certain streets you don’t walk down,  
streets where half the lights are blown out and  
shadows warm their hands around old oil cans...

Stylistically, these poems complement each other. Laws later answers:

From “Dancing in Atlantic City”

I only stay when the show runs late, too tired to drive home,  
always get a room to myself, more cash than the rest  
because I am almost a local, scorned by the dancers.

Like most chapbooks, this one is short at 33 pages. But it's richness and complexity make for an appetizing interlude. To purchase *This Town*, visit Liquid Light Press:  
[http://liquidlightpress.com/KyleL\\_JaredS.htm](http://liquidlightpress.com/KyleL_JaredS.htm)

Both Kyle Laws and Jared Smith are prolific, with a number of collections running the gamut. For more information, visit their respective sites:

Jared Smith: <http://www.jaredsmith.info/books.htm>

Kyle Laws: [www.kylelaws.com](http://www.kylelaws.com)



*April Pameticky received her MFA from WSU in 2006 and became swirled up in the Wichita vortex. Along with Chandra E. A. Dickson, she will host the 2017 Poetry Rendezvous October 27-29. For more information, visit [here](#).*