

A Million Shadows at Noon by Lenard D. Moore (Cuttlefish Books, Lakewood, OH: 2023). 68 pages. 4" x 6". Perfect softbound. ISBN: 978-1-7350257-6-6. \$14 from <https://cuttlefishbooks.wixsite.com/home/poetry-series>

Lenard D. Moore's latest collection *A Million Shadows at Noon* carries the torch and continues worthy missions of Richard Wright and beat counterculture, harnessing the brevity and ability to evoke strong feelings, shift paradigms, and move hearts and minds that *haikai* is especially suited for:

two-lane street— / one by one the men keep coming / into fall light

The impressive physic for treating society's ills could not find more capable hands at realizing its ameliorative potential than this former HSA president. Through a sleek arrangement of around fifty poems in the handsome classical three-line short/long/short format (forming a treatise of sorts), the poet sets his sights on examining (with dexterous range and incredible clarity) the 1995 Million Man March. We encounter charged intersections of caste and country that this author previously investigated thought-provokingly in his book focused on the events of *Desert Storm*. Correlated concerns and subtexts explored here also inform and reveal the complexities embedded across life, motivating each individual actor and spicing these precise vignettes' symbolic language when tableaus are thoughtfully unpacked:

slow sunrise— / where the fallen leaves end / the man's wheelchair gleams

The elegantly encoded cover design is reminiscent of screen printed t-shirts or high contrast protest posters, but also harkens very interestingly to the traditional minimalist ink paintings, which often accompanied classical Japanese poetry. Notions of positive and negative, and black and white space in a *sumi-e* composition across rice paper makes for captivating parallels, stimulating much food for contemplation in regard to marginalization and the outliers: opposite dots in each yin-yang teardrop. Moore envisions the cumulative picture which comes together from this

monumental mosaic – and the source material from which it derives – to “*resonate like a blues song heard for the first time.*” He hopes, as Issa did, that the results will serve as a meaningful, didactic illumination for readers. The preface and afterword included are highly enlightening and useful for understanding and contextualizing the content and value of this volume. As a wonderful introduction to Moore’s work and depth, these insights will be equally treasured by new readers and longtime fans. The *haijin*’s mobilizing of many eclectic narrators, perspectives, and peculiar viewpoints to confront a similar subject through specific, richly varying lenses also brings to mind the oeuvre and techniques of Akiko Yosano. As a retrospective, alongside the documented setting’s stirring mood of optimism in the immediate chronological window depicted, there is often a conflicting sense of uneasiness and ambiguity apparent, insinuating loose ends, lack of closure, and the incomplete...

darkening sky / a row of folding chairs / left in the plaza

Recent domestic protest suggests these feelings are anything but confined to the past and remain of the most imperative urgency. Polling indicates that by 2020, as many as 26 million Americans had actively participated in demonstrations associated with the burgeoning contemporary initiatives promoting social justice and civil rights, which have been described as the biggest, most pivotal continuing movement in American history. These fundamental ambitions for equity, inclusivity, and restitution are by no means matters settled; they still loom ever vital in our national discourse weighing heavily on the collective conscience, galvanizing dreams and spurring the noblest actions of our and each succeeding generation:

sun plaza: / one million shadows darken / foot by foot

May activists and conscientious humanitarians of the future discover this significant opus, learn from its contents, and apply Moore’s commendable strategies toward their own righteous literary and altruistic pursuits! □■