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A Chinaman's Chance
New and Selected Poems 1960-2010
Alex Kuo
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Review by *irene koronas*

*"It was another Asian body
Its brains blown out by necessity
Splattered on TV's evening news
Almost twenty years ago*

*We wondered then if color returned
To his face under the moon
And if his firebombed village*

Had a prayer to move next to

*Never again such nights
We said that night*

*We were determined
To make the line shorter
But colonel after colonel
Thirteen knots around our neck
Reach out to Central America now*

*Again brown bodies tagged and tallied by history
While we think "Never again!"
In the neighboring sunlight startled..."*

A Chinaman's chance, is a timely look back and forward at human nature and the nature of mass fear, fear as applied to 'others.' Kuo shows the greed that hides in men's heads, somewhere it grasps and causes expected destructions, again. Sherman Alexie says, "His (Kuo) vision is sure and uncompromising." This collection starts with a poem named, "gathering children" and the book ends with "in the vicinity of spring" and all the actions taken or not taken, are in the verse:

*"It begins
with parchment of aspen
and it is grief
drifting in early arrival.*

*It is more than think:
a deer skull a rabbit's
winter coat the thicket
of spruce cones a boar's
tooth the lynx's skulking*

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*and the suffering quail
the sun's escarpment
and the mind's winter coping
the summer tick.*

*Do not believe it is Less
than late.*

*And it ends
with the idea of pain
slicing up the deep cold
without eyes.*

*Look at it
look at it falling
from the alphabet."*

Alex Kuo has given us, the reader, a book we can be with for many years, and that is the kind of book that feeds my mind and touches my spiritual life. this book deserves a Pulitzer Prize:

*"I do not remember its name
But when I think of what little
It takes to remember that old lie*

*Because of the way it bent
Its shadows deeper over dust
The perpetual scaffolding of wishes..."*