2012

Selected Poems

Jim Vongsouvanh
cabaretinlove@yahoo.com

Follow this and additional works at: <https://docs.lib.purdue.edu/jsaaea>

Recommended Citation

Vongsouvanh, Jim (2012) "Selected Poems," *Journal of Southeast Asian American Education and Advancement*. Vol. 7 : Iss. 1, Article 12.

DOI: 10.7771/2153-8999.1054

Available at: <https://docs.lib.purdue.edu/jsaaea/vol7/iss1/12>

This document has been made available through Purdue e-Pubs, a service of the Purdue University Libraries.
Please contact epubs@purdue.edu for additional information.

This is an Open Access journal. This means that it uses a funding model that does not charge readers or their institutions for access. Readers may freely read, download, copy, distribute, print, search, or link to the full texts of articles. This journal is covered under the [CC BY-NC-ND license](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/).

Selected Poems

by
Jim Vongsouvanh

2087 (after Ginsberg's Howl)

(Dedicated to my mother)

I've seen the best minds of the last generation
lost within an existential cyberspace-
the mind's own mechanical memory.

Oh, you'd be ashamed mother,
of all that's been abandoned.
of holy books burnt,
and ancient recipes deleted.

All to create this replicant floating city;
this broken apocalyptic paradise.

My childhood seems so vintage now
and I'm beyond due for an upgrade.

The Angkor temple is crowded of cyber genetic ghosts:
all tired, naked, and illuminating nothing but a sigh.

The Mekong river hovers above empty bridges
and skyscrapers playing a smooth, harmonic, jazz
like the sounds from a deserted train
off in the distance departing into midnight.

The streetlamps flicker like fireflies trying to sleep.
A garden full of smoking monks hold up crystallized candles in awe,
all wired to the electric sky of neon clouds.

SOME RIGHTS RESERVED Readers are free to copy, display, and distribute this article, as long as the work is attributed to the author(s) and the **Journal of Southeast Asian American Education & Advancement**, it is distributed for non-commercial purposes only, and no alteration or transformation is made in the work. More details of this Creative Commons license are available at <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/3.0/>. All other uses must be approved by the author(s) or JSAAEA.

Your holographic coffin is being transferred
to the backup cemetery geobyte storage,
where techno monks will regenerate your soul
through a ferris wheel, and power giant singing statues
of gods we used to bow down to.

This supernatural presence keeps
my pulse from skipping a beat.
I refuse to become fully technolyzed,
and give the rest of my blood
merely for a bigger hard drive.

This unnatural city carries around false deities
on their synthetic flash drives.

I long for your comfort and your warmth
the atmospheric fog is dead to me now
And its techno lullabies no longer make me feel safe
in this city that never breathes.

The eerie static that has been programmed
into the small drums of my ear
have finally breached my encrypted transmission.
I cannot survive only on microscopic rice grains,
so I have hacked my data chip to self destruct,
please acknowledge my farewell:
Phohp gan mai

American Asian
(Dedicated to myself)

I have never been to Champasak
to witness the wonders of Wat Phu.
Nor have I laid eyes on the sight
of the bold and beautiful Buddha park.
I've yet to see the full length of the Mekong
like a child first stretching it's arms out for a hug.

For I was born near skyscrapers and museums
where larger cities surrounded me.
I've seen the illumination
of the glowing orange golden gate bridge.
And I've walked along the beach of the Pacific
which stretches as if even beyond infinity.

I've never bought pho'
on a boat from a widow of seven.
But I've sat next to James Dean in a booth
at two in the morning
and had eggs benedict.

I've never tasted freshly baked barbeque buns
on the street from a boy
who is just starting school.
But I've walked down the street
to catch coffee with a friend
before we departed to our morning routines.

I've tasted Chicago hot dogs, New York slices,
Portland beer, and Coney island cotton candy,
but never catfish roasted over a fire with sticky rice.

I've never heard the Nam Song breathing
or the unified hums of monks chanting
that could lull me into a peaceful sleep.
But I've heard The Smiths come on the radio
after a 14 hour shift.

I've survived the bitter and bipolar
Minnesota winters.
But I've never felt rain
inside my own home
during the seasons of monsoons.

I can pass by the bakery in the morning
And smell the muffins out of the oven,
Or pass the café' with newly roasted coffee beans.
But I'll never smell the nature of the sun
Rising over the horizon
with incense from Ban Nakhangxang
and that nothingness from a bamboo.

I can read, and I can write.
I can sing, and laugh, and recite Shakespeare,
And I can solve encrypted ancient mysteries,
But as I sit and stare out of my apartment,
There is nothing I long more for
Than to go home.

About the Author

Jim Vongsouvanh is a second generation Laotian American who was born in San Jose, California in 1989. He is a graduate of the AFA in Creative Writing program at Normandale Community College. His poetry has appeared in *The Paper Lantern*. When he is not reading or writing, you can catch him geeking out in the record shop, comic store, or local bookstore. He has not returned to his native country of Laos yet, but plans to one day. He currently resides in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

Volume 7 (2012)

Journal of Southeast Asian American Education & Advancement

www.JSAAEA.org

A peer-reviewed
scholarly journal
published by the
National Association
for the Education &
Advancement of
Cambodian, Laotian,
and Vietnamese
Americans (NAFEA)

Editor

Dr. Wayne E. Wright

University of Texas, San Antonio

Associate Editors

Dr. Chhany Sak-Humphry

University of Hawaii at Manoa

Dr. Phitsamay Sychitkokhong Uy

University of Massachusetts, Lowell

Book Review Editor

Dr. Vichet Chhuon

University of Minnesota

Creative Works Editor

Bryan Thao Worra

Lao Assistance Center

Special Advisor

Gregory Green

Curator, Echols Collection on Southeast Asia, Cornell University Library

Journal Manager

Sovicheth Boun

University of Texas, San Antonio

Comments and questions for the editorial staff may be directed to jsaaea@lists.sis.utsa.edu

Editorial Review Board

Dr. Steve Arounsack

California State University, Stanislaus

Dr. Phala Chea

Lowell Public Schools

Dr. Loan Dao

Cancer Prevention Institute of California

Dr. Changming Duan

University of Missouri, Kansas City

Dr. Jeremy Hein

University of Wisconsin – Eau Claire

Dr. Samlong Inthaly

Minneapolis Public Schools

Dr. Kevin K. Kumashiro

University of Illinois, Chicago

Dr. Carl L. Bankston III

Tulane University

Dr. George Chigas

University of Massachusetts, Lowell

Dr. Hien Duc Do

San Jose State University

Dr. Sophal Ear

U.S. Naval Postgraduate School

Dr. Nancy H. Hornberger

University of Pennsylvania

Dr. Peter Nien-Chu Kiang

University of Massachusetts, Boston

Dr. Ha Lam

Arizona State University

Dr. Jonathan H. X. Lee
San Francisco State University

Dr. Sue Needham
California State University, Dominguez Hills

Dr. Bic Ngo
University of Minnesota

Dr. Leakhena Nou
California State University, Long Beach

Dr. Isabelle Thuy Pelaud
San Francisco State University

Dr. Giang Pham
University of Minnesota

Dr. Bounlieng Phommasouvanh
Minnesota Department of Education

Dr. Kalyani Rai
University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee

Dr. Soveacha Ros
Royal University of Phnom Penh

Dr. Nancy J. Smith-Hefner
Boston University

Dr. Christine Su
Ohio University

Dr. Loan Tran
University of California, Riverside

Dr. Tinou Tran
Alief Independent School District

Dr. Linda Trinh Vo
University of California, Irvine

Dr. Zha Blong Xiong
University of Minnesota

Dr. Stacey Lee
University of Wisconsin, Madison

KimOanh Nguyen-Lam
U.S. Department of Education

Dr. Max Niedzwiecki
Daylight Consulting Group

Dr. Clara Park
California State University, Northridge

Dr. Mark Pfeifer
SUNY Institute of Technology

Dr. Loan T. Phan
University of New Hampshire

Dr. Karen Quintiliani
California State University, Long Beach

Dr. Angela Reyes
Hunter College, The City University of New York

Dr. Fay Shin
California State University, Long Beach

Dr. Cathy J. Schlund-Vials
University of Connecticut, Storrs

Dr. Yer J. Thao
Portland State University

Dr. Myluong Tran
San Diego State University

Dr. Khatharya Um
University of California, Berkeley

Dr. Terrence G. Wiley
Center for Applied Linguistics

Dr. Kou Yang
California State University, Stanislaus

Doctoral Student Editorial Review Board

Keo Chea-Young
University of Pennsylvania

Ketmani Kouanchao
California State University, Fullerton

Ravy Lao
University of California, Santa Barbara

Thien-Huong Ninh
University of Southern California

Vanna Som
Harvard University

Krissyvan Truong
Claremont Graduate University

Yang Sao Xiong
University of California, Los Angeles

Annie BichLoan Duong
San Joaquin County Office of Education

Peter Tan Keo
Columbia University

Monirith Ly
Texas State University-San Marcos

Malaphone Phommassa
University of California, Santa Barbara

Alisia Tran
University of Minnesota

Silvy Un
University of Minnesota

Yeng Yang
University of Texas, San Antonio