



2007

Four Poems: Snakehead Fish; Departures; Capitol; and Preparations for Southeast Asia

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Recommended Citation

Worra, Bryan Thao (2007) "Four Poems: Snakehead Fish; Departures; Capitol; and Preparations for Southeast Asia," *Journal of Southeast Asian American Education and Advancement*: Vol. 2 : Iss. 1 , Article 8.

DOI: 10.7771/2153-8999.1090

Available at: <https://docs.lib.purdue.edu/jsaaea/vol2/iss1/8>



Volume 2

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)

Four Poems: *Snakehead Fish; Departures; Capitol; and Preparations for Southeast Asian*

by

Bryan Thao-Worra

Snakehead Fish

When the water's wrong
You just pick up your things,
Suck in a last breath for the old times
And walk all the way to a new pond
So clean you can smell it.

When everything is all right:
You gobble your neighbors up
One at a time like a thresher in frenzy
With a gorged wide-mouth grin,
Blimping up till you're long
As a line of five dollar bills.

When we get around to it,
Your passports will be revoked:
Pisces non grata a la America.

We'll have to go back to Asia
To eat you.

On the news they say you're
A tasty reincarnated sinner
And I wonder how karma works out
Like that, making a funny fish face
For my visiting niece
over a bowl of sour soup.



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Departures

The monks gave us a bag of Thai oranges
Before we left for the States.

Next time we come, we'll have learned more Lao,
We promise.
They promise there will be more to show us the next time.

Sitting outside the Khop Jai Deu
Waiting for our bus to come

Elvis is crooning "Return to Sender"
Because there's no such number,
And no such home.

I took a photo of the fountain
Next to the Scandinavian Bakery,
Tuk-tuk drivers loitering nearby.

Handing them some fruit,
They ask, "How long are you staying in Laos?"

And I reply,
"This is our last day."

The sun looks like it could be peeled wide open
While I take a bite of a giant orange,

Trying to wring out a last memory from this light,
Wondering when the King's song is ever going to end

The scent of citrus on my hand
Sinks deeply past my bones,
Trying to harden into an anchor

The shape of a kind heart.

Capitol

Vientiane is a memory.
I want to use the word buried,
locked inside my mind
so tight I barely get
any visitation hours.

But Vientiane is
more than a memory.

She's alive
and so am I.

She's just going on with her life,
shaking her head at
my foolish Romanticism-

a stale baguette
trying to paint her
when she was a waif.

While she sends me
a hundred worn photographs
of her golden spires and muddy feet,
I admit, I've barely written back,

left to wonder who she's really become
and would have been,

had I been there the way
I always think I wanted to.

As if this would make any difference
worth mentioning in the mornings

of the children born with no memories of me.

Preparations For Southeast Asia

There were children whose curt sense of geography
Calculated our destination just south of Pluto.

Enough turmoil from enigmas. Time for answers.
Queries to dispel our conjurations of rumor and smoke.

At least we could say “we went,” “we returned,”
“We did not stay forever.”

Our hummock of a travel agent
On a corner of University Avenue
Smiled like a hunter’s moon:

“You don’t need lots of money where you’re going.
Just a little, and you’ll be living like kings.”

I wanted to utter some vaporous remark
About the life expectancy of Asian royalty,
But simply took my passport and tickets

Marveling at our modern keys of paper and numeral,
Opening doors that might not have been locked as tightly
As we once believed,

Packing to send our peripatetic hearts hurtling through the atmosphere
Some 600 miles per hour, bent on finding a home

Our parents alone would recognize.

About the Author



Bryan Thao Worra is the Laotian American author of *On The Other Side Of The Eye*, *Touching Detonations*, and *The Tuk-Tuk Diaries: My Dinner With Cluster Bombs*. He also volunteers as the literary editor for Tripmastermonkey.com, [Bakka Magazine](http://BakkaMagazine.com) and AsianAmericanPoetry.Com. You can learn more about his work by visiting www.myspace.com/thaoworra or writing him at thaoworra@aol.com



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