



2019

Three Poems: The Dog at the Hospital; Bracken Ferns; Branta Canadensis

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Recommended Citation

Moua, Pos L. (2019) "Three Poems: The Dog at the Hospital; Bracken Ferns; Branta Canadensis," *Journal of Southeast Asian American Education and Advancement*. Vol. 14 : Iss. 1, Article 12.

DOI: 10.7771/2153-8999.1194

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Cover Page Footnote

Special acknowledgments go to the following persons for making these poems come alive: Mao Lee, Se Lee, Tong Ying Vang, Xee Ha, Bliia Yee Lee, and Se Lor. Their love of exploration and adventure around the national forests paved the foundation for these poems.



Creative and Literary Works

Three Poems

Pos L. Moua
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The Dog at the Hospital

I read that a very loyal, unnamed dog would lay
Down on a raggedy but beloved towel outside

The hospital in Brazil to wait five months long
For its owner to return as he had often done.

As it lay waiting at the hospital door, people
Would come and go, as they enter the door,

The dog, in its drooping, mellow somberness,
Would stare at them and graciously moved out

Of the way so they could enter the hospital.
It would leave that place by the entrance

Of that house of someone's hope only to find
Food and again return to the same spot to wait.

Once, the dog kennel took it two miles away
And imprisoned it for its daily obstruction,

But it eventually escaped and returned to wait,
Day after day, for time is neither cruel nor kind

To it, whose heart must linger like an old man



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Journal of Southeast Asian American Education & Advancement, Vol. 14, Iss. 1. (2019) ISSN: 2153-8999

Trying to warm himself by a slow quivering flame.

Does it wait to enter the door of nirvana-heaven
The way its owner and truthful friend who had

Been stabbed to death, or does it wait for love?
I do not think it's waiting for its owner to return:

It is waiting to follow its owner: for what else is
Purpose when love isn't daily engendered

Through the usual voice, the usual path to
The market or to the lone, usual dumpster and

For what else must one live when life is fleeting
Like a long stumbling flow of the river towards

That evening horizon, and the familiarity of love
Isn't scented in the air like the scent you daily

Carry to me by the couch and along the hallway,
All the way to and from San Francisco Bay, my love.

Bracken Ferns

“Nip the tips of these with your fingernails,
only these young fiddleheads,”
such agile demonstration, how
your fingers smile and fiddle through
the patch of ferns like a hungry doe.

As I follow you up the slope, I practice
collecting those eagle's clenched talons —
those elegant fronds unfurling the way you
curl cozily like a spiraling
snail-shell, translucent on the bed I made.

Each clasp of the fern head,
at each horseshoe bend, almost closing,
is a babe's clenched fist I yearn
to kiss and let cuddle over my cheeks,
and in the sunlight by the shades

of the oaks, the odiferous pines incant

spirits of the Sierra and suns closer
to your tender, leavened voice—
your nape and cheeks brighten
and I look uphill at you and the sky blues.

Branta Canadensis

“It was a little after the evening
and the dark was just about to set,
the horizon hazed in gold;
I said to myself, ‘I’ll wait in these
trees to see if any of them fly low.’”

A little later the hunter knocked on
my door; cheerfulness in his greeting,
he asked for a bag and told of his last-minute
hunting excitement, as if he were
forgoing safety, desire, and freedom.

That night my wife and I gutted a
magnificent mother whose wingspan
outstretched mine over the green lawn—
such angelic feathers from Alaska,
from cold Canada, through the freezing.

With it fell another white goose along
with two buffleheads and two fist-size teals,
their green wings iridescent and downy;
even lifeless, they’re reminiscent of life
like the surface of a pond swaying to breezes.

We tried to pluck the long feathers
and their soft simple downs, almost
like cushioning clouds of wintry sky,
pillows for the souls to rest, attachments
to earth and its diffusive spectrum.

In my heart, I imagine the fall,
the shots, and the last cry, farewell to
its love, whose wings flapped along
side hers just before the burst of pellets
exploding from within the hidden bushes,

pellets scattering like stringing

strings of arrows, death, and
dreadful shrieks against life and long
travel—an ending to when there was
a beginning since its fledgling days.

I imagine my love walking beside me
shot and fell beside me, blood spewing,
oh, heaven, all beauty, memories,
yearnings, faded, sank into the abyss of
silence over wind-swept tules and mud:

My mind flashed back to the night
when machine gun let bullets flared,
streaking lines of sorrow like blood
pens drawn across the pitch of night
and those screams haunt me long after.

As we peeled off skin along with fat
and its elegant plumage from its long
neck, now stiff to the bones, bruised
and blood-clogged on the side to its
thigh, a deep gushing wound.

I snipped the legs and wings, uttered
a silent prayer and heard its spirit whispered,
“Oh love, was this a journey to slough pastures
of San Luis and then to the equatorial
warmth of Mexico and the dancing sea?”

About the Author



Pos L. Moua, lives in Merced, California, with his wife and five children. He is a language arts teacher who has taught Hmong and English at Merced High School and Merced College for over 20 years. He is a member of Hmong American Writers’ Circle (HAWC). His first chapbook, *Where The Torches are Burning* (Swan Scythe Press, 2001) gives “an account of love and family and identity in the poet’s new land.” His poems have appeared in the anthologies *Tilting the Continent: Southeast Asian American Writing* (New Rivers Press, 2000) and *How Do I Begin?: A Hmong American Literary Anthology* (Heyday Books, 2011). His latest collection of poems, *Karst Mountains Will Bloom* (Blue Oak Press, 2019) is praised as “a landmark achievement: ascendant, transcendent, visionary.”



Journal of Southeast Asian American Education and Advancement

Vol.14 Iss.1 (2019)

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