Departure, and Other Poem Series

A graduate project submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
For the degree of Master of Arts in English

By

Khiem Nguyen

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California State University, Northridge
Dedication

To my mother and father, who believed in me, allowing me to pursue my passion, and to my brother, whose footsteps I follow. Your love and support means everything.

I would also like to thank my mentors, Dorothy Barresi and Leilani Hall, whom I have learned a great deal from, and who have been there for me every step of this journey.
# Table of Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Signature Page</td>
<td>ii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dedication</td>
<td>iii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abstract</td>
<td>vii</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Abstract

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For a long time, I’ve been obsessed with television. I like how each series is structured, broken down into seasons, and again into episodes. If you think about it, life is like a series of seasons—not the summer and winter kind, but the television kind—one series of events after another, each with its own story arc that adds on to a comprehensive whole. Here, you will find seven series of poems, in a way corresponding to the seven years I have been at California State University, Northridge, both as an undergraduate and a graduate student. These series all have their own structures and themes—some tell stories both real and imagined, while others explore a particular issue—but what they have in common is that they are all concerned with some of the following topics: racial/ethnic culture, family, tradition, fantasy, and of course, pop culture. Identity is a very complicated thing, and it is my hope that this project will portray its multiplicity.

The pieces in this project are out of order, series clashing into each other. However, everything is where it needs to be. Even though we may experience time in a linear fashion, and even though episodes are aired in a particular order, our recollection of memories, our viewing of the episodes, is not always in the correct order. Within the series in this project, and sometimes within the poems themselves, things are not always going to be in a straight line going forward. What fun would there be if they did?