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## Three Poems: The Room; Man Lost in Long Beach; Oversea Patriots

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## Creative and Literary Works

### Three Poems

**Bunkong Tuon**  
*Union College*

#### The Room

The house is perfect.  
A three-story colonial.  
Four bedrooms, two baths,  
kitchen and living room,  
sunroom that overlooks  
half an acre of yard.  
I could see children  
running in that green.  
The neighborhood is quiet.  
School within walking distance  
and in an excellent district.  
The fire and police stations  
are a few blocks away.  
My wife and I look at each other.  
Our realtor disappears.  
“This is the one,” I say.  
She says, “The dining  
room is too small.”

Driving back I think about  
my first home in America.  
A red building complex  
where the bricks crumbled,  
fell on unsuspected passersby.  
Fifteen of us crammed in



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a two-bedroom apartment.  
We were happy to have  
non-dirt floor to sleep on,  
roof over our heads,  
running water to drink,  
and blue flame rising  
with the turn of a knob.  
At night we huddled  
to keep our bodies warm.  
I cocooned in Grandma's arms  
on the torn yellow couch  
that became a bed at night.  
Unmarried aunts wrapped in  
gray blankets on the floor.  
One uncle who survived  
a Khmer Rouge prison  
slept in the dining room.  
At night he moved the chairs,  
swept the floor, pushed  
the dining table into the hallway,  
made a bed of two blankets,  
his arms behind his head,  
and slept like never before.

### **Man Lost in Long Beach**

When the demons return  
his wife's eyes turn eggshell white.  
The man with ashen hair  
and tired eyes throws  
a bottle, shatters it  
against the white cupboard.  
He walks out onto Anaheim,  
takes a right on Walnut  
towards the Pacific Ocean  
he once flew over some  
twenty five years ago.

He survived  
the killing fields  
by pretending to be  
a farmer, while others  
were taken,  
plastic bags muffled

their screams.

Hiding his name  
in a paper boat,  
he watched childhood  
float away.  
His parents shot  
point blank.  
His mother's eyes  
bulging white  
and open forever.

### **Oversea Patriots**

My friend asked,  
“Why waste time translating?”

I was a doctoral student  
in Comparative Literature.

He persisted, “Who reads  
Khmer poetry anyway?”

We were having lunch  
in the university courtyard.

“When I graduate, I'm going  
back to Kampuchea

and build me a business  
in making computers.

You'll see how I rebuild  
our Angkor Empire.”

## About the Author



# Journal of Southeast Asian American Education and Advancement



**Bunkong Tuon** is a Cambodian-American writer and critic. He is the author of *Gruel*, *And So I Was Blessed* (both published by NYQ Books), *The Doctor Will Fix It* (Shabda Press), and *Dead Tongue* (a chapbook with Joanna C. Valente, Yes Poetry). He teaches at Union College, in Schenectady, NY.



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