

## The Ugly American

In China, near the ousted sanctuaries  
of black Beijing, streets too slippery  
to safely streetwalk on, my French stepsister  
sleeps with a rich Chinaman. She's not sixteen.  
He drunkenly whispers to me, as if I  
were a priest, everywhere he goes  
his penis follows, like an angry sailor.  
She needs to be told  
how much all of this is worth.  
Mao's war isn't over. We émigres eat rice,  
wary of servants putting in pellets of poison.  
For this I sleep all day, my mosquito net  
and lethargy muting the smells of charcoal  
and fried dog. At night I feel better:  
I go out for American beer and heroin  
from Thailand. Neither really helps, or hurts.  
My father, the fat, bogus diplomat,  
never comes near here anymore, busy,  
we are told by the papers, bribing  
the locals for peace concessions.

The Yongding River is dirty and bloated,  
overcrowded with taxis ferrying hybrid races  
across and back, looking for work or selling

Cont.

("The Ugly American," cont., no break)

war trinkets. Last night my brother, confused  
about transitory symbols of loyalty, and fueled  
by homemade vodka and gravesites  
of bombed victims, blew tiny holes  
into the Chinaman's head with a shotgun.  
Today, as with all other days, we wear black,  
fearful of the dwindling list of mealtickets,  
arrogantly blind to boys in Oregon  
murdering boys from Ohio with lucky punches  
after discovering infidelity. These killings  
lead to makeshift suicides, bedsheets  
amateurishly ripped from the jail's cots,  
as if the raised dust from the rafters  
did not really look like halos  
pouring from their suffocating heads.

Someday soon I will steal money from my mother  
and cover myself with jade, rubies,  
Spanish prostitutes, because I'm bored  
with the Twentieth Century. It can't,  
or won't, end soon enough. I wanted it to say  
to me once, I love you, I mean it,  
please come back. But I remain hostile  
to clarity, hating the details of accents

Cont.

("The Ugly American," cont., no break)  
in this language that I'll never marry in,  
churches with black walls and faded prints  
of slant-eyed icons, long gone. Repeat  
after me, America, you foreign pinkbitch world:  
I think of money, only of money.  
My pajamas have bloodstains. As always  
this goes unexamined. The next needle,  
I think rationally, better hit its mark  
more cleanly. There is no moral here,  
even less, purpose. These are only words  
about fucking and dying, chic Chinese pictures  
that when translated by me mean mercy.  
All of my life I wanted to kill  
someone with my bare hands. The problem  
is I don't know where to begin. If alphabetical  
my heroes, the Chinese rebels, needn't worry:  
all their names begin with X. Sooner than later,  
then, happily I will get to myself.