

## **Stranger in Both Lands**

Ethel Liao

She's born by the East, raised in the West,  
Comes into the world with this burned bright as a brand.  
(Really, such a union couldn't be for the best.)

Her different looks are the first object of detest;  
She's too conscious of the shape of her eyes, the skin on her hands.  
She's born by the East, raised in the West.

She accepts her mispronounced name without protest,  
Tries to adpt customs foreign to her supposed native land.  
(Really, such a union couldn't be for the best.)

With her parents' halting English she is forever obsessed,  
Knowing if she isn't, her self-taught native accent will crumble like sand.  
She's born by the East, raised in the West.

Racial slurs ache, but still she humors their jest,  
Because otherwise she's abandoned and no man is an island.  
(Really, such a union couldn't be for the best.)

When she returns to the distant land she's never addressed,  
She realizes too late the lost home she can't understand.  
She's born by the East, raised in the West—  
Really, such a union couldn't be for the best.