

Steven Cramer

DORADO
(For Wayne Brown)



Royal palms all over; men shimmy up
the trunks, machetes clenched in their grins;
coconuts thud like dud bombs on the lawn...

At the edge of this U.S. protectorate,
sun mutes the frogs, whose choruses of night-
chirps named them: *Co-quí*. By “the world’s

longest river pool,” hibiscus widen
red yawns; spider lilies and heliconia
mass in plots, their brass plaques, stolid

as palace guards, list phylum and class.
Our Hyatt has evolved a new wing:
time-share suites teem with whites

like us. The old crescent Cerromar
closed, except for the casino, its dreamed
future, more whites buying time, stalled

in litigation. Potted shield-ferns
block unlit corridors; elevator doors
jam into gap-toothed quiet. From Celia,

orchestrating poolside shuffleboard,
or from Diego, the Bohio’s quick-draw
bartender (so many years alert to thirst

his hair's gone gray along with ours)—
we hear their every *gracias* imply: *amigo*,
let us be the last resort of your empire.

But how one power ends, the next begins—
that's beyond us all. Halfway around the world,
in Beijing, thousands labor sunup to sundown

to fill our *Banana Republics*. A few *Yuan*
skim the first off a pallet of beach shirts,
then I'll pay eighty dollars for the last,

unbuttoning its silk off the manikin.
His pecs a brazen gold in the shop-glass,
he knows another *Medium's* on its way

to cover him. Capital: no more chance
to tame it than to rid the Swan Café
of *Chongas*—those aboriginal crows

Julio curses and fans three menus at.
Each year they thicken on the netting,
peck a new hole in, raid unbussed tables,

crap on the plates, beguile then terrify
the younger kids. There's one now, and look:
another's battling a third over some fries.