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Jou Va, Jou Vyin

Hannah Chiodo
Denison University

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Jou Va, Jou Vyin

By Hannah Chiodo

Jou va, jou vyin. Day goes, day comes.
The sun washes dark from the dirt.
The head wraps of the women are tied
And the men wear straw hats like mine,
Askew to shade my good eye, sitting by
My tree the hot has bleached all life from,
Leaving cracks and crevices like concrete
In the shaking days following the quake.

But still I take its shade, my white straw,
My trade—spin it, wrap it, weave it.
My hands are scarred from the small pokes
Of angry dry stalks but my feet are shod,
I am clothed, beside me my wife crouches:
Gold hangs from the fertile soil of her lobes,
Fecund unlike the dust that cakes my sneakers
And creeps under concrete doors.

I am making the brim wide, wide like
The wings of the sun. I twist the straw.
A woman is coming, my wife says.
I know who she is before I look
And see her black lens as another foreign face.
It blinks once, twice, snatching a piece of us.
She leaves. I finish my hat, start another—
Nothing changes. *Jou va, jou vyin.*