

Yellow Woman

by Genny Lim

I am the daughter of
seafarers, gold miners, quartz miners
railroad workers, farm workers
garment workers, factory workers
restaurant workers, laundrymen
houseboys, maids, scholars
rebels, gamblers, poets
paper sons...

I have seen my father's dreams
crushed under bales of blouses
The buttonhole needle shattered
as it lowered to the cloth
A sliver flew into his eye
and the cacophony of sewing machines
drowned his startled cry.

I heard my mother's prayers
whispered as I lied awake
pretending not to see or hear
mnemonic chants to her gods.

Sicilian children
skipping to catechism
mocked our tongue
in sing-song syllables
Called Pop Chinaman
Mom, Chinawoman
while I threw stones
at Jesus.

The immigrants cursed the ways
of their only children
Blood of Asia
Flesh of the New World
our cross.