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# Going to China Girls, The Agit-Prop Train V.I. Lenin No. 1, Not Everybody Loves a Uniform

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# Three Poems

PAGE DOUGHERTY DELANO

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## Going to China Girls

1.  
Those wishing to sell their daughters  
Please consult us. 600 yen  
For six years service.  
The famine of 1934 sent many girls  
To entertainment,  
China, California or the cities,  
Sake server, Geisha, brothel worker.  
To become a prostitute shows filial piety.

2.  
I don't think it's wrong to sell our daughter  
Whom we raised ourselves. Other people  
Use the money for excursions to famous sites  
So we feel we shouldn't be ashamed.  
We sold her to pay debts.  
Some even travel to hot springs.

3.  
It is better than eating yams  
And doing hard physical work.  
You can make money and lead a sedate life.

4.  
Only the rough hands  
Slapping our buttocks, the smell  
Of gun oil on their arms,  
Men who want to raise  
Their whole fist inside us  
Which is now allowed  
As if law exists here.

They claim our powder sweetness,  
 Our sex-sweat makes them feel alive.  
 Iron hands, tongues, erect guns.  
 At times the crippled and amputees come,  
 War's great clay.  
 They need comfort, we're told.  
 But they cannot forget how to be killers,  
 Sucking our toes and crying.  
 We squeeze pleasure from some stories,  
 Ridiculing the boy-men whose arousal  
 Stems from baby days.

## The Agit-Prop Train *V.I. Lenin No. 1*

Women in skirts the gray of achievement,  
 boys and girls in cotton caps and scarves  
 stand in the frozen cusp of mud.  
 Political work, typhus, civil war  
 have weeded the railyard workers.  
 The women from the work brigade organize  
 a queue out of the wind to marvel  
 at the *V.I. Lenin* train, painted  
 like a baby's wail that promises  
 a future of full plates, not dreams  
 so much as daylight's future dazzle.  
 Think of the art school team on boxes  
 scaling heavenly orbs, massive workers  
 grasping shovels, storming every crevice  
 of consciousness, as if white blocks  
 stood for reactionary ideas  
 that could be cancelled out by color.  
 The art students drank tea and smoked,  
 those near the paint fumes dizzy,  
 shivering in the night lit by bulbs  
 stolen from the station manager's office.  
 Their painted workers are not the grime-faced  
 testy fathers and brothers, or husbands  
 whose sweat these women breathed or feared,  
 not wife-beaters, not the ones who swiped

the savings for drinks or pamphlets.  
*These figures* stand square, convinced  
 to hold that flag so when the train races east  
 to Jaroslav or Tashkent the flag flies  
 backwards toward its western source.

What should they have known—  
 that tracks are laid on the levellest ground,  
 that when art is shaped its message will freeze  
 and crack. *And I was there, chatting*  
*in the line of waiting women or I painted*  
*wedges and bulky hands with joy.*  
 In a season of dry bread, in another Moscow  
 winter, death and promises the size of peas,  
 like stars now to the bare eye, we worked  
 or waited in the windy breath of river.  
 This was the world we'd married.  
 History, in a cloth coat and a sable hat,  
 took a seat somewhere on that train,  
 served water and oranges by a young red waiter.

## Not Everybody Loves a Uniform

Not every man loves another man  
 In uniform, or he doesn't love  
 Guys in fashion, padded shoulders,  
 Peg-top trousers reaching to  
 The armpits. So the servicemen  
 Stationed or passing through  
 San Diego, zillions of these  
 Anglo hot-to-trotters, when they've quit  
 Bobby-soxers who open to them  
 At Walgreens or in off-zone bars,  
 They see Mexicans done up in zoot suits—  
 How a local boy wages fun  
 In Mexicantown, the dames blackhaired,  
 Deer brown, with half-bared necks waiting  
 For the *chicos* in those big animal suits.  
*Hey boy, come here,* Arkansas or Detroit commands.

*Hey shrimp, hey lady's man, why you got  
Those balloon pants on if your dick's  
So small. Hey shit on a shingle.*

Mad Mexico, mad clothing binge,  
I'm going to hurt you, Spic,  
You fruit-stooper, cotton-hauler,  
Dockyard loader, officer's boy,  
This is what the Mexican men hear.  
So the spit begins, marines, sailors,  
Khakis opening warfare on a curb  
Until all Browntown is besieged.  
And *guapas* waiting at the corners  
With babies are killed, the babies  
Crushed or chucked into fires,  
And the men in zoot suits cut or slashed  
To the ground, then clubbed.  
Workers who pick grapefruit and cukes  
Or clean houses, who twist bolts,  
Who rake the dust of the military bases,  
Mobbed through the night.  
The MPs lance out justice,  
The he-men go off to war or home.  
Oblivion salts the tears, women's  
Zoot-suit wails dance the dead to sleep.