

ELEGANT MULES

Napoleon had more buttocks than your usual dictator by a cool dozen. Stalin couldn't hold a candle. Well, he could, but you get my meaning. Me, I've got this theory, how rings on trees and buttocks aren't so very different. Elegant mules, I called her buttocks, twin oxen of soaped-up desire. Desilu and Jeanine. They were good oxen, the best, and once held off a whole cursed platoon of Japanese with a grenade and some dishwater. The general bestowed upon each a delightful bouquet and called their mothers "golden women of the night." We never forgot that moment and even now their lowing reminds me of nothing if not the dewy lotus of that April morn.

James Heflin 2002

A SELLER OF GLOVES

I walk my rope above a sluggish Rhine.
Mourners call to me, snakes arrive, a rash
of whispers steams up from silt and water;
slow currents part at the feet of Lorelei.

I've scribed my head with a cross of ash,
taken to air with no lodestone or rudder.
Rivermud hides my only alibi
where the bottom sleeps and sands realign.

I will swallow the moon, leave only a lash.
Bronze my feet, cut out the voice for your slaughter.
Stare at the green of this arm, how it shines,
these fingers whose grace you cannot deny.

Would you dare to embalm such hands as these?
I am a seller of gloves among amputees.

James Heflin 2001