

## *Bonaparte*

The pasty Teuton bows to his dusky Emperor. Behold the Thuringian rabble—all those blue eyes, all that yellow hair, all that pigskin stretched over well-upholstered Saxon frames. The Prussians were not as politic as they might have been. They issued ultimata. Now their armies are routed. Armies? Farmboys waiting upon the orders of incompetent officers. Thus far the Holy Romano-German Empire.

Dreary rain. October more like November this far north. Brother Joseph has it so much better in Naples. Vesuvius for warmth. Closer to home. I wonder how brother Louis will fare in Amsterdam?

See how the women lift their babies to their new Emperor!

*“Hoch soll er leben! Es lebe der Kaiser!”*

Yes, the new emperor, in his new clothes.

That one there can only raise her belly—she has some months to go yet. Oval face, comely but slavish, smiles like a coquette from Paris.

Jena. Monotony of gray houses along well-ordered muddy streets.

Who is that, slinking from doorway to doorway, shifty eye cocking this way and that? Professorial frock, a package under his arm, a bundle of ragged pages. He hasn't seen me yet; he is unnerved by someone in the crowd. Who is he running from? There: he sees me now. His eyes open wide above the purple bags. He's been burning the midnight oil. So have I. Don't worry, Professor, I have not come to seize your latest literary ex-crescence. Carry on, Professor of the Mightier Pen, carry on!

Raise your babies to me, *mes dames*, lift your bellies to the regnant spirit of the world! Stand in awe of your sallow Emperor astride his white charger! Pallid, pasty people, be pricked by this ebony eye! Get used to it, O my subjects, get used to it! On to Berlin! To Prussia, then Russia!

Louis is planting flower bulbs in Amsterdam, Joseph peeling oranges in Naples. Oranges too acidic for my stomach. Not that the campaign is doing it any good: eating on the slash and burn and run.

Regnant spirit of the world?

I gather my cloak against the driving rain out of the east, feel the bite in my gut. Better to have been the spirit of the earth.