Poem in Which You Are Joan of Arc’s Lover

You expect it to begin like a battle,
but there’s no bite in her. She doesn’t kiss
you, doesn’t coo like the girl she is.

You jut your hips like you own her.
It’s strange to you that her tunic smells
of myrrh and smoke and saltpeter.

When you try to frame her face
in your fingers, she pins you
with her eyes until you do as you’re told:

_plus dur, plus fort, plus, plus, plus._
You almost expect her to cry
out, but when she unhooks

her mouth and flashes her eyes,
blank and white as salt, she does not name
saints or gods, but fortresses—

_Saint Loup, Jean-le-Blanc_—and tactics
gasped in a strange language: _Advance
advance. Hold the line. Steady now. Steady._

She makes you feel as if you’re all
the army she needs, until her vision
clears and she’s not a vessel anymore,

just a girl waving you to the door,
scrambling to scrawl heaven’s help
on the map tucked under her pillow.

You know now that if you sink
your hands into her hair,
God will tongue lightning

down your back, that only a girl
like her could bathe all of France
in the holy milk of her eyes.