

*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.