

An Infomercial for the Ladies-in-Waiting

When you find yourself on a fiscal cliff,
 overfull of participles— *going, going, gone*—
ashen, cashless, and tempted to trickle down;

 when you find yourself in an engagement
long-deferred, overdrawn even, with a stoop-
 shouldered duke with an ill-trimmed beard,

or his son, strumming Dylan on an ill-tuned
 harp, know this is a real medical condition
and the Troubadour is here to help.

 The Troubadour! Drop off your precipice
and convene an amorous congress. Sequester
 yourself with his kisses. Of course,

the Troubadour comes with some risk—
 decreased appetite and dry mouth. He'll get
your heart rate up, spending all the coins

in your twig basket, then asking you to cover
 his rent. The nerve! The tenor
on that one! He'll never stop, drowning out

 the memory of your mother's voice.
He'll sing through *Law & Order* reruns, immortalizing
 your soon-to-be sagging breasts—
 going, going, gone—

¹ first appeared in *Gargoyle* (Issue 61)

Guinevere, Facing Forty in Baltimore, Writes to Lancelot

Turn it all off. Light a candle to read this
and then unplug the toaster, unhitch
the cable, the WiFi, break the heart
of every circuit, shut it all down.
The king's satellites are circling,
tracking our ambling hearts even here—
not upon stacked Belgian block but
earlier, actual cobblestones. And
the king's satellites are neither hungry
nor lonely. They won't scratch and scratch
until they scab. But dear, how I itch
electric. So I'm on my way, tripping
cobblestones, each ridged like a hipbone.
I imagine them pitched at my head.
Not the crack when they connect
but the wind when they miss. *Adulteress*.
Love, his satellites are circling, his cell
towers are triangulating. So don't call.
And burn this. Then blow the candle
out and wait. Wear your armor.
What's a little extra weight?

² first appeared in *Carolina Quarterly* (Fall 2012)

Lancelot, En Route, Stopping Off at Fort McHenry

Oh say, can you see!— from 95 North, the swath
of city from stadium to incinerator smokestack

jutting up like teeth too-crowded in the bay's
small mouth. I've seen and Ginny, darling,

I can no longer breathe. Throbbing, I got off
the interstate, cut through an industrial park.

Then I saw an alley named Excalibur Drive.
How could I not pull over and sob?

My heart is, apparently, impure, clotted up
with more than cholesterol. In the afternoon meeting,

I was pulled off the Grail. The account went to one
less jaded— my own bastard. Damned Galahad,

kicked out of Oberlin, thrice, now sitting in Seattle rain
every weekend, protesting, waterproof in his Patagonia

and linked up with his iPhone. There's ignorance
and then there's innocence. If you don't want me, Ginny,

I don't know what will weigh me down. There's gravity
and then there's being grave. I rode the rim of highway

like the crease of your lips, searching by the twilight's
last gleaming. This fort offered succor. Here the sky

is spangled with spiral galaxies and the bay refracts
the dream of their strange light, a luminescence

gone liquid. Ginny, there's even light glinting
off your fillings. There's a city stuffed in your mouth.³

³ first appeared in *The Normal School* (Spring 2013)