

The Rules of Courtly Love (abridged, rev. ed.)

after Andreas Capellanus

- 1 You may love only in autumn, when
the grapevines brown, and the graves
along the fenceline disappear
under leaf mounds.
- 2 Unrequited love is like insulation—toxic
cotton candy hidden beneath gypsum board.
It will keep you warm all winter.
- 3 Marriage is no real excuse for not loving—
that person wearing your ring is not
the harridan you imagine, and the years together
accumulate like rings inside a tree.
- 4 It is not proper to love the letter carrier
simply because s/he brings you checks and correspondence.
- 5 A man in love is a platypus, venomous and growling.
- 6 A true lover is constantly and without intermission
possessed by the ghost of Elvis Presley,
circa 1973, Aloha from Hawaii.
- 7 Nothing forbids a cross-country trip—
with hitchhiking, Hostess-donette breakfasts,
and sore feet—to confess your love.
- 8 Nothing forbids the answer of no.

—Lisa Ampleman