Empire Burlesque

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Sore-eyed from sand and river glint,  
a thunderhead off the bow, Labiche dreams  
of Truffles Morella, how she’d stand for him  
come spring, in nothing but her hat and boots,  
as it seems she does now, high aloft, in curls  
that disembogue along her ample curves,  

*comme ça?* and frisks his shirt again—  
It’s enough to stop a young man’s heart.

And as a dream carries its own momentum,  
its own pitch and timbre, into a wilderness  
busy with birdsong and death, so  

his line of sight like some surveyor’s chain  
against the river’s argument, propels him  
now, with us implied, in tow.