

By **Stephanie Burt**

Complete in ourselves,
we look like scraps of paper anyway:
left alone, we could tell

our mothers and one another our owners'
flimsiest secrets and play together all day

until we became intertwined, which is why
you try
to keep us permanently apart.

One of us is a gossamer pirate ship,
a frigate whose rigging the industrial

sunset highlights, sail by oblong sail.
Another resembles a Greek letter — *gamma*,
or *lambda*; others still

a ligature, a propeller, a fat lip.
Our will is not exactly the wind's will.
Underlined by sand,

whose modes of coagulation and cohabitation
none of the human pedestrians understand,

we take off on our almost arbitrarily
lengthy singletons of string

towards the unattainable, scarily
lofty realm of hawk and albatross
and stay, backlit by cirrocumulus.

It seems to be up to you
to keep us
up in the air, and to make sure our paths never cross.