Italy

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Coming here was like falling asleep in December and waking up in June, stunned by the hue of the sky but forgetting your snow-born bones sweat and slip when soaked in so much sun. You are soluble in light, and you, shadow child, dissolve like a teaspoon of sugar, sweet and nothing. You speak a language that tastes like fruit and cream and feels like breathing underwater, each day acting out your most pervasive childhood dream-facing a world full of darkness unable to scream. You become a bundle of misunderstanding, blank-non capisco non capisco non capisco non capisco non capisco no. You learn to say si with a sweet little smile, since it doesn't matter if you understand, your frenetic, thrashing mind will stand the silence, and you will leak your words like a slow-bleeding animal dragging a gnawed-off leg through the brush. Florence was a dream or
a movie scene
and you weren't really there,
breathing in cigarette smoke
that smelled both like
your aunt's sweaters and boys
you tried to rub from your brain
like an oil stain, stubborn and flammable.
You try to exist in this place
or that place: your cells your hair your
blurry profile ducking out
of a tourist's photograph -- your
proof, souvenirs of you
left to the churches and
terracotta roofs.
You fly home sick and cold,
you don't exist in your
room, you don't exist in your
poems, you don't see why
moving from beautiful place
to beautiful place
does nothing to temper
the swelling space that
occupies your skin.