## Florence By Proxy

October's ochre changes everything to Italy.

Sunpainted

walls remember villas from Fiesole.

I've never seen

Fiesole.

Someday I will,
and it will seem a memory
of noon in the United States
when I became a Florentine
because the sun bewildered me.
Who among the Florentines
is listening?

Who else but me who sees in the Italians "the human race" that Goethe saw...

Today their cops
are commodore; their Fiats,
weapons in their whizzing duels
on the road; their shoes and gloves,
the very renaissance of calf.

Tribal to the death, they swear
by their mothers, breastfeed
their sons wherever, prefer
their pasta three-fourths cooked,
and sing whatever, whenever...

Mistaken for Italian half
my life, I'm of the tribe.

If it's Italian to speak
in tears before goodbyes,
I qualify.

If it's Italian to choose tomatoes one by one, I qualify.

If it's

Italian to laugh when no one else is laughing or to whistle at the wheel, I qualify.

One

murmur in Italian soothes the Florentine in me that French confuses, German contradicts, and Spanish misses by a hair.

One murmur, and I feel
what Goethe felt when Florence
wounded him with Italy
for life though Goethe spent
not quite three hours there.