

EUROPEAN SNAPSHOTS

There I am, on the deck of the *Isle de France*
a 1950s star
in a calf-length skirt and a frizzled Toni
my newfound waist pinched like an hourglass
ponytail bobbing in the wind
waving goodbye.

You are next to me, beaming,
a winter sun.
I am the favorite grandchild, the first of sixteen,
a plump, young moon
glowing in your reflection.

It was a choice between braces or Europe
that summer I turned sixteen.
Decades have passed
and my lips still part
to crooked teeth.
The EU is now a bitter dream
but I retain images of moonlight
in St. Marks Square,
and a sudden turn in the road on a Scottish moor
and a piper in full regalia.

All over the continent you chased me that summer
while I tugged at your leash
like a young dog in heat,
chased romance in every piazza,
wore the proverbial pinch in the Piazza Navona
like a purple heart,
and imagined the thrill of a sneak kiss
after dark
in the Grande Hotel Bar
with Rudolfo.

There we are again,
posing amid the tragic glory of Pompeii:
a city instantly embalmed
in the act of living--
a snapshot, like this
memory of you.

It is winter now.
My children who were once
young moons now have children of their own,
and I have become the winter sun.
The bedspread you crocheted
in expectation of my marriage,
my only souvenir of you, has
long since gone. I kept mending it,
but it insisted on tearing.

~Sheila Collins