**Clothes-Lines**

On bad nights their rhythmic flapping

calms me, though I didn’t hear them,

sealed inside the carriage climbing towards

Florence; but I did see them, as we clattered

through the Tuscan hills, past village after

village, (whose names I meant to look up,

never did), those rows like prayer flags

signalling a welcome to devotees of the cult

of clothes-lines.

I saluted back,

well versed in the white art of hanging

sodden outfits in the public eye

to dance dry, heedless of the watchers

counting blemishes and out-dated styles,

having hung dripping underwear and stained

bed clothes beyond our orchard, in full view,

to find them light and frisky by evening,

flirting with my grasp, crisp to the touch.