POEM

Volere
for Susan
Kate Middleton

Between non capisco and dimentico we learn to speak a little: our history always taking place in the present tense.

Between mistranslations you’re still not sure he meant it.

‘I mean it,’ he said. ‘I want to work in Canada. I have a nice face — why won’t you marry me?’

And you search in the heat of Verona streets for the word for shade.

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Days begin in train stations, the search for familiar accents. The story hooks my eye.

No doubt someone actually remembers it —

the two-year-old swim celebrity, five miles down the Mississippi at her father’s urging —
dead three years later. Her body’s ruptures and contusions a father’s final kiss. ‘Fifty years on.’

A trivia spot in Thursday’s Herald Tribune.

A flashback of a life in brief, from a newsstand in Firenze.

In class we learn the verb to want.

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(I learned something about volere from her weak voice, playing Holly —
that shambling, piano ‘Moon River’.

You see, the stunned forget to run, are caught all akimbo.
It’s what’s left —
the wanting.)