

A Courtyard in Ravenna (Fonte Avellana)

Ah! but there are joys unexpected ...

Walking down a sun-baked street,
the golden stones cracking in the heat,
keeping to the shadows like a cat,
I chance upon
an open door
and beyond it
in cool, dark terracotta depths
a bar.

Entering,
my trilby cotton hat and walking stick
betraying a certain careful Englishness,
I order a drink.

And then, as if this were not heaven enough,
see, further ahead, a courtyard.
Pale ivory canvas awnings cast their shade
on wicker chairs with dark green cushions,
burnt umber, yellow ochre walls,
grey shutters, red geraniums in tubs
bay trees in clay pots
sunlight and shadow patterning the courtyard
with clean-lined precision.
And at the very centre
a fountain splashing,
caressing the limestone bowl
with silvery gentleness,
drops of water cascading
into the pool beneath.

It only needs two pure white doves
drinking at the fountains lip
to complete the Placidian scene.

I enter the courtyard
as silently as possible,
tiptoeing into heaven,
there to bask,
in joy's simplicity.