

TAKE HEART

A Conversation in Poetry

*Edited & Introduced by Wesley McNair,
Maine Poet Laureate*

Jeffrey Thomson of Farmington dispels the darkness of November in Maine with this sunlit view from a café in Seville, describing the lively scene around him in a single, breathless sentence.

El Café a la Esquina de Agua y Vida, Seville

by Jeffrey Thomson

Near the café at the corner of Water and Life
in the plaza of blood oranges at the bend
of the whitewash and archways of old stone,
between the congregation of traffic and
the soft hammers of the cathedral bells,
near baths made by Peter the Cruel and
alongside the tiny carapaces of smartcars
hived in the old Jewish quarter where
the exhausted-piss-whiff of the city
wanders off into the Jardines de Murillo
where fists of palms and geometric rigmarole
circle the fountain—figus and terra cotta
frescoes of the Christian everlasting:
the gold leaf, the halo, Madonna adoring—
near the dead-end of the road of death,
beneath keyhole arches at the mark of midyear
and in the shadow of *el Real Alcázar* (layered
cathedral of all that's holy here—Christian
on Muslim on Roman on something far older),
where wings of the canopy angle out to hide me
from the wallop of the noonday sun in the square
where I'm sipping a vinho verde that tastes
like the effervescence of granite and hot straw,
the woman at the public fountain, with an ache
and a fine delicacy, runs damp hands through
her spray of dark hair, sops the hot arch
of her neck, and trails fingers down her bare
arms the way Christ might have washed
Magdelane had he been a just bit more human.

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