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Prayer rug

by Jeffrey Harrison

The rug itself is a kind of prayer.
Certainly the making of it was one,
the weaver kneeling down before it
to perform an act of laborious devotion:
the slow revelation of a holy pattern.
The finished rug becomes wholly itself
when it is pointing toward Mecca
and someone kneels on it and prays.

But even on the wall of a museum
it is not fully separated from prayer.
People file by quietly, with reverence,
and a few stop and stare as if to burn
the pattern of the rug into their minds—
until the rug becomes a dazzling portal
inviting the viewer to walk through
to a space beyond where the sky is green.

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