

At the Grave of the King and Beloved of Martyrs

RAYMOND HUDSON

In the dusk and warmth of a July evening
after the uniform shadows of the great mosque
of Isfahan, its towering blue mosaics,
I was trying to see the world the way

I see a painting. I was looking at the world.
I didn't understand the words chanted
in the tablet of visitation or what it meant
to be a member of a martyr's family and ready

for the repetition that was inevitably
to come. It came after I left, my visa stamped,
my prayers completed. But that evening
I was given cold water in a cup and greeted

as though I belonged there, as though
I had come back after being gone for too long.