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## Lorna

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# Lorna<sup>1</sup>

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*Mary Dengler*

In a simple classic yellow dress,  
she stood inscrutable and tall  
and smiled “welcome”  
to our two-week summer book affair.

From that auspicious start,  
I’d hear of Lorna now and then  
as editor for years, she worked  
to educate the Christian world with articles  
on pedagogy, scholarship, and faith,  
and wrote her poetry, still teaching all the while.

One winter day we met again  
somewhere—a college ladies’ room—when she  
was interviewing for a job and I  
uneasily secure was teaching there.  
A moment’s sympathetic smile and word  
we gave, then went our separate ways,  
both drifting on uncertain seas.

Returning to the institution of her youth,  
she later welcomed me, newcomer  
to a world she’d helped to shape.

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At Dordt, she carried students to the truth  
and form of fiction, poetry, and journalistic prose.  
Not static or imperious, her way  
encouraged independent thought, a love affair  
with books. Her quiet conferencing each day  
bought students to maturity and grace.  
Her other work—liason bridging Anglo and Hispanic race  
and worlds through words and guiding works,  
translation of the Holy Word,  
and teaching in Hispanic schools—  
helped weave together kingdom strands  
on one small loom.

She wove the cultures well,  
like language in her poetry.  
We feel the texture strong  
enough to bear the strain of years,  
and watch her passage  
to another sphere of work,  
bereft but grateful for the friendship and support  
of this well-tempered teacher, artist, guide,  
and graceful child of God.

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<sup>1</sup>This poem is dedicated to Professor Emeritus Lorna Van Gilst, who taught in the English Department at Dordt for many years and is now teaching in Costa Rica.