



Blue Flax & Yellow Mustard Flower

Alison Hawthorne Deming

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Trifle, in poet speak, refers to what doesn't make the cut, to all of the musings and ideas that are deemed unworthy—why bother? Trifle, in other words, offers a wonderful window into a poet's head and what they care to keep top of mind as a poem finds itself. In her forceful rumination on nature, existence, physics, Oedipus, terrorism, and other weight-bearing matters, Alison Hawthorne Deming inadvertently casts attention on the trifling work of others. The recipient of Guggenheim, NEA, and Stegner fellowships, she is the author of more than ten books of poetry and nonfiction.

DESERT LIGHT

—in memory of Helen S. Schaefer

*In the gold hour of desert morning
sunlight strikes the green bark
of the paloverde and what alchemy
the tree has conjured begins again
a self-renewing process that is life.*

*When I say strike I do not mean
a blow that wounds but like the clapper
of a bell that sends its song out
over a great distance so that it reaches
someone feeling along and in need.*

*Call such translations of light and sound
a gift-giving, organic, photosynthetic,
defiant of so much that is cruel.*

*This Helen launched no ships
bound for war but her presence*

*could disarm a bully and embolden a poet.
She understood that art is necessary
and rare. She gave it room to grow.*

*What consolation can there be for death
but leaving behind so much to treasure.*

MATT SUTHERLAND (March / April 2025)

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