



*Friends of  
Lorine Niedecker*

*Issue #18  
Summer 2013*

# *I was the solitary plover*



## Lorine's Birthday Celebrated in Toronto

Hoa Nguyen sent us this photo from Toronto Canada. She is leading a Niedecker study group. The group celebrated Lorine's birthday in May with this whiskey cake with sodden dandelion decorations.

Hoa says "I learn so much from Nie-decker's poems and am eager to read and write through them again. I moved to Toronto from Austin, TX about two years ago and love that I can bring her

poetry to the Canadian poets, many of whom are unfamiliar with her work. The new edition of Lake Superior by Wave Books is fantastic and I love that the writing includes Canada as part of the text for that connection to landscape and place.

"In addition to 12 local poets, I have 3 poets in Nova Scotia participating virtually as well as all over the US for 36 in total."



*I was the solitary plover*

*a pencil*

*for a wing-bone*

*From the secret notes*

*I must tilt*

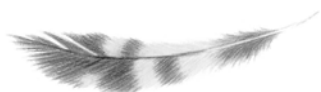
*upon the pressure*

*execute and adjust*

*In us sea-air rhythm*

*"We live by the urgent*

*wave of the verse"*



## NEWS

### **Niedecker Poetry Inspires Composer and Isthmus Vocal Ensemble**

The Isthmus Vocal Ensemble of Madison, under the direction of Scott MacPherson, celebrated its tenth anniversary by commissioning a piece from composer Jerry Hui. The piece is made up of three parts based on three of Lorine's poems.

Friends of Lorine Niedecker president, Ann Engelman said, "When we heard about this performance several of us traveled to Madison to hear it. We were not sure what to expect. We were astonished. The pieces are beautiful and reflect the spirit of Lorine's poetry. The performance by this remarkable group of gifted voices created an extraordinary experience. We asked permission to post the performance to the Niedecker Web site. Someday, we hope a group will perform it here in Fort Atkinson."

Composer Jerry Hui, who is also a member of the Ensemble, shared his notes. "Niedecker had a magical voice in evoking the people and nature of Wisconsin. Her works using "condensery" language, in her own words, read like miniature paintings, reflecting her life living on Blackhawk Island. It is the visual nature and the intriguing sounds within her poetry that drew me to setting them into music.

The first piece *My mother saw the green toad* is a nostalgic recount of childhood. Beginning with simple, unadorned duet lines, the harmony swells and breathes with increasing complexity of emotion in the text. The second piece *My life by water* is a composite of images, as the poet recalls animals and objects she encountered near the river – spring frogs, board bridges, muskrats, rabbits, boats, birds and floods. In

the music, each phrase takes on the character of its subject to paint the picture. The third piece *From my bed I see* is a dreamy description of the pastoral Wisconsin night. Likewise the music is impressionistic and free-form; singers at times proceed in individual tempo and rhythm and at times come together, as if casting a spell to conjure a timeless night in the woody swamp."

Engelman also noted that during the performance a bat, literally, came out of the belfry. Everyone was startled at first but came to accept the creature with the music and story being presented. Following the performance, the bat disappeared. "We think it was Lorine! Many might not understand that but anyone visiting Blackhawk Island would just take it in stride.

Amy Lutzke, Friends of Lorine Niedecker and Dwight Foster Public Library arranged for the three songs, approximately two minutes each, to be posted on the Lorine Niedecker Web site [www.lorineniedecker.org](http://www.lorineniedecker.org) under "About Lorine, Listen."



### **Niedecker Library Bibliography Update**

This winter the Friends put Margot Peters to work updating our bibliography of the books from Lorine's library. She has completed that project. This bibliography contains citations for only the books from Lorine's library. We will work on the periodicals next.

# for a wing-bone

We have created a PDF of this bibliography that is available at [lorineniedecker.org](http://lorineniedecker.org). It is on the Archive Access page under the Research menu. We are also updating the records in the database based on the corrected information. And finally, we have started adding the collection to LibraryThing where you will also be able to view images of the covers of the books.

Many thanks to Margot Peters for her excellent bibliography skills!



## The very variants: A few revisions to Lorine Niedecker's *Collected Works*

Jenny Penberthy

This is a note to readers of Niedecker, particularly those who use the early printings of the *Collected Works* published by University of California Press in 2002.

A prefatory digression: in 1992, *The Library Chronicle of the University of Texas* published my account of the Lorine Niedecker holdings in the Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center. I titled the essay “The Very Variant’: Lorine Niedecker’s Manuscript Collection,” meaning to echo her line “the very veery” in the poem that begins, “We are what the seas” (240) and to re-echo Niedecker’s play on Stein’s “The Very Valentine” — the precise, the singled out, the necessary, the insisted upon, etc.

I’m using the same title here (although this time in the plural) in order to correct the error I made back in 1992 where I put the “The Very Variant” in quotation marks as if I were quoting Niedecker. Given the small readership for the *Chronicle*, I have winced perhaps too often at that error. Using the same title here at least allows me to note my error while announcing a handful of far greater sleep disturbers in the *Collected Works*.

Before launching into those, I should mention another error in that 1992 piece in the *Chronicle*. There is, in fact, no “Lorine Niedecker Manuscript Collection” at the HRHRC. The collection that my essay described covered the Niedecker manuscripts that formed part of the 1964 Zukofsky bequest. Further papers were sent to the center by Niedecker and later by her husband, following Niedecker’s instructions. These papers were all absorbed into the Zukofsky collection. Look up Niedecker in the HRHRC catalogue and there’s no sign of her: a cataloguing error waiting to be addressed.

## Errors and omissions in Lorine Niedecker’s *Collected Works*

- 1) Anne Kingsbury, stalwart executive director of Milwaukee’s legendary Woodland Pattern Book Center and brilliant multimedia artist, is misnamed Ann Kingsley in the acknowledgements (xxii).
- 2) The title of Niedecker’s “Xmas 1934” calendar poem (41) lacks a vital comma. It should read: “NEXT YEAR OR I FLY MY ROUNDS, TEMPESTUOUS.” Thanks to Elizabeth Willis for alerting me to the omission. Crucially, the comma allows the title to function also as an apostrophe, thus transferring the stormy epithet from the speaker to the addressee.

Pages where the comma is missing: vii, 41, 371, 469.

The note for this poem (371) lists the dimensions of the original pocket calendar as 5 ½ x 4 ¾ inches when they should, in fact, be 3 ¾ x 4 ⅞ inches. Many thanks to Andy Oler for drawing my attention to this.

- 3) The final line of the penultimate section of “LAKE SUPERIOR” (236) should be an uncapitalized “home.” Regrettably the error has been reproduced in the elegant Wave Press production titled *Lake Superior* (2013) — a collection that includes several key texts related to Niedecker’s poem.

# From the secret notes

I'll take this opportunity to add to the notes on "LAKE SUPERIOR" (434) an excerpt from an early version of the poem:  
from Circle Tour

Sault Sainte Marie  
Old day pause for *voyageurs*,  
bosho (bon jour) sung out  
by garrison men

Now the locks, big boats  
coal-black and iron-ore-red  
topped with what white castlework

White-flying birds

Iron the common element of earth  
In rocks and freighters—  
And most things living

Arrowed rest room signs in the park  
between us and the freighters —  
the arrows of our day  
and the momentary unsinging pause

The waters working together  
internationally  
gulls playing both sides

Niedecker's 1966 Xmas card to Bob and Susan Nero includes the above excerpt "from Circle Tour." Strange that she should still be using the title "Circle Tour" when she had revised it in October 1966 to "TRAVELERS / Lake Superior Region." See my essay "Writing Lake Superior" in *Radical Vernacular*, edited by Elizabeth Willis (University of Iowa Press, 2008), 61–79.

4) "*J. F. Kennedy after / the Bay of Pigs*" (246) lacks a line space above "I've been duped by the experts." Thanks to Jim Cocola for drawing my attention to this error, one which has unfortunately been reproduced in the wonderful French translation of Niedecker, *Louange du Lieu et Autres Poèmes (1949–1970)* translated by Abigail Lang

and Maitreyi and Nicolas Pesquès, published by José Corti in 2012.

While on the subject of the JFK poem, it might be worth adding further detail to the note (440) about the first surviving version of the poem. The six lines of the undated manuscript sent to Gail Roub are grouped in couplets.

5) Page 414, "I rose from marsh mud," was conceived in June 1948, not 1945.

All but two of the corrected errors are already reflected in the 2011 reprinted paperback edition of *Lorine Niedecker: Collected Works*. The final two corrections (dimensions of the calendar poem and the spacing of the JFK poem) will appear in a reprint later this year (2013).

My apologies to those I've misled, and my thanks to the University of California Press for their willingness to respond to my requests for changes. I'm aware that most devoted readers of Niedecker will have copies of the earlier printings. Be warned! Either buy a paperback in 2014 or get out the marker pen!

to variants and ...  
emendations, ...  
Let me hear good night.  
("Ten o'clock," 151)

This article originally appeared on Jacket2  
(jacket2.org). Reprinted by permission.



# *I must tilt*

## **POETRY**

### **Industrial**

i  
no air  
no light  
no space

ii

no sky  
no law  
no trees

iii

no love  
no water  
no sound

\*

open window –  
the roofer's whistling  
meets mine

**Donna Fleischer**



### **Work**

mine is a work of words  
a nudge with question  
a twist of metaphor  
that lights the spot  
outside locked door.

**Nancy Shea**

### **Yesterday**

Three of us went looking  
for wild mushrooms in the woods  
Sydney in flip flops, Austin in high tops  
I wore shorts, long socks & rain boots  
The grass was deep & wet  
We had a colander  
I said look for tall brains with stems  
Crossing over dead corn stalks  
we listened for turkeys  
Be careful of burning nettles  
I don't know much about them  
A storm came up & stopped us  
Batman the neighbor's black kitten  
& his friend the crow  
ran into our path to play  
Who had ever seen a cat & a bird be friends  
We stood watching them  
Sheets of rain came down

### **Pesco**

We live on Rome Street  
near the ocean. Everything is on one floor  
and smells of salt air.  
I picked up a bruised peach  
from our prized tree. It should have been picked  
and eaten but the wind came.  
I see blue every day—blue sky, blue sea, blue shoes,  
my blue eyes. But green is the color  
of the smallest blade  
that holds the tiny mustard seed.

**Carrie Schonhoff**



# From the secret notes

2

Woke this morning at 2:30,  
the votive candle for my mother blinking  
in the living room, the bathroom night light  
casting shadows across the floor.

Some of the clocks have stopped,  
the liquid crystal displays are flashing,

but there has been no rain or thunder,  
no power outage that I can tell.

It is as if time has stopped for one of us,  
or your rhythm is different now from mine.

I turn on the lamp since I will not wake you.  
I go about the house resetting the alarms.

## Ronnie Hess



### My Privileged Observation

Today I saw a baby  
take an unsteady step  
off the cold concrete path  
on tender bare feet

His soft tiny toes curled  
in the dewy tickle of spring  
for the very first time

He was so surprised  
he stopped and wobbled  
on wide spread legs

Then squatting down  
he reached out  
and grabbed a handful  
of wet green grass  
to taste

## Elizabeth Harmatys Park

### In Sync with the Netherworld

(A camera pans slowly across the room)

Woman: (slipping onto the couch) That guy over there has an asterisk by his name.

Man: (sliding in next to her) Why can't you quell your inane observations?!

Woman: What I'd like to do is ride on a catamaran.

Man: That's so yesterday!

Woman: Well, I'm tired of huddling under the Juniper.

Man: It's fine on the leeseide.

Woman: Look! That young boy coming toward us is lugging a tablet!

Man: And a shovel!

Woman: It's risible – maybe he's myopic.

Man: Or a kleptomaniac.

Woman: Oh, if only I could dumb down my desire for a fillip.

Man: Thank heavens, the pandemic has passed us by!

Woman: Why do you utter such nonsense?

Man: It's hard to remain in sync with the netherworld.

Woman: I've begged and begged you to consider writing an opera.

Man: Would you please pass the gravy?

Woman: You know perfectly well we've put an end to the gravy train.

Man: Why do you utter such nonsense?

Woman: Oh, dear, I'm so on edge! (as she slips off the couch)

(The camera zooms in, weaves back and forth from Man to Woman, withdraws.)

## Ruth Roach Pierson



# execute and adjust

## Falling from Nest

Something streaks  
from the tree top  
and we hear a soft  
*plop* on asphalt.

Infant squirrel  
eyes still closed  
lies on the hard  
surface. Dead?

No, stunned.  
Moves a little.  
Mouth opens  
and closes.

Above, a ruckus  
of sharp chirps.  
We back away  
so mother can...

Black diagonal  
flash. Crow  
snatches creature  
and is gone.

**Mary Rowin**



## CONTRIBUTORS

Hartford, CT native **Donna Fleischer** is author of three poetry chapbooks: *Twinkle, Twinkle, Indra's net*, and *Intimate Boundaries*. She writes in open and Asian-derived forms appearing or forthcoming in journals and anthologies worldwide: *Bones*, *Contemporary Haibun Online*, *EOAGH*, *Esque*, *Exit Strata*, *Fiera Lingue*, *Kō*, *Jupiter 88*, *Lilliput Review*, *Naugatuck River Review*, *Otoliths*, *Poets for Living Waters*, *Solitary Plover*, and *South by Southeast*. Donna posts primarily contemporary poems and articles on poetics, depth ecology, permaculture, and feminism, at her curatorial content blog *word pond*.

**Ronnie Hess'** writing has appeared in national and regional newspapers and magazines. Her poetry has been featured in *Alimentum*, *Poetica* (including the Mizmor L'David Anthology, 2010), the *Wisconsin Academy's People and Ideas Magazine* and *Verse Wisconsin*, among other journals. She is the author of a poetry chapbook, *Whole Cloth* and a culinary travel guide, *Eat Smart in France*. She lives in Madison, Wisconsin.

**Elizabeth Harmatys Park** is a native of Wisconsin, now settled in Burlington. She is a sociologist by profession, a teacher by vocation, a prison volunteer and peace activist by hope, and a wife, mother, grandmother and friend by love.

**Ruth Roach Pierson** has published three poetry collections: *Where No Window Was* (2002), *Aide Mémoire* (2007), a finalist for the Governor General's Award in 2008, and *Contrary* (2011). Currently she is editing an anthology of movie poems entitled *I Found It AT the Movies* to be published by Guernica Editions in 2014.

# In us sea-air rhythm

**Mary Rowin's** poems have been published in *Verse Wisconsin*, *Stoneboat*, *Solitary Plover* and the Wisconsin Fellowship of Poets *Calendar* and *Museletter*. Mary participated in The 2013 Winter Festival of Poets in Madison, and *Distilled from Nature*, poems celebrating artist Ellsworth Kelly. Her work will appear in the forthcoming *Echolocations, Poets Map Madison* published by Cowfeather Press. Mary lives in Middleton, WI with her husband and cat Rio (rhymes with chee-o).

**Nancy Shea** lives near the confluence of the Rock and Crawfish rivers. She is a member of the Solitary Plovers, a Lorine Niedecker study group. Her poem *Work* is inspired by *Poet's Work* by Lorine Niedecker. Nancy has worked for over 23 years as a psychotherapist, which is a work of words.

**Carrie Voigt Schonhoff** likes to write poetry while gazing over the scenic view at her rural Wisconsin farmette she shares with her two inspiring children. More often than she'd like to admit, she pens pieces from her iPhone at the grocery store. She writes about life, loss, love and occasionally, complete fantasy.



## 2013 Lorine Niedecker Wisconsin Poetry Festival

The schedule for our festival is located on the opposite page. The festival continues to be free. We will be catering lunch on Saturday. Cost for the lunch is \$10, payable at the festival. We are able to accept cash or checks only.

Registration is also required for the Blackhawk Writer's Workshop on Saturday afternoon. There is no fee for the workshop.

You can begin registering for both the lunch and the Writer's Workshop now. To register send an email to:

**[contact@lorineniedecker.org](mailto:contact@lorineniedecker.org)**

## Thank You!

The Friends of Lorine Niedecker would like to thank the many generous friends who contributed to our fundraising campaign this year. We appreciate your support!

Robert Appell  
Jane Augustine  
Mary Bailey  
Martha Berglund  
Nancy Breitsprecher  
Robin Chapman  
Ronald Crewe  
Ken & Marge Engelman  
Ellen Fuge  
Mary Gates  
Karen Griffin  
Frances Highsmith  
Dawn Hunter  
Joan Hyer  
Carol Keleny  
Mike Kriesel  
Ginny Moore Kruse  
Mary Linton  
Amy Lutzke  
Helen MacGregor  
Mike Michaels  
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Susan Wenger  
Mic Woicek



# *"We live by the urgent"*

## *Friends of Lorine Niedecker Wisconsin Poetry Festival October 11 and 12, 2013*



### **Friday, October 11**

- 5:00 Café Carpe opens for dinner Café Carpe  
5:30 Festival Welcome  
6:30 Open mic – Come read your poems or your favorite poems.

### **Saturday, October 12**

- 8:00 Poetry at the Farmers Market Parking lot across from Library  
Help create the Poetry Path.  
8:30 Poetry Cafe and Poetry Store Open Library  
Registration, freebies, exchanges, free Wifi, light refreshment  
9:00 *"Food Politics in Lorine Niedecker's 'New Goose' Poems"*  
Michelle Nieman, PhD candidate, University of Wisconsin – Madison  
9:45 *"A Tally of Contemporaries: A Reading of Lorine Niedecker's 'If I Were a Bird'  
and a study of the poets who inspired it."*  
Nancy Shea, Solitary Plover Study Group, Fort Atkinson  
10:30 Break  
11:00 *"Marketing Your Poems In The Digital Age"* – John Lehman  
11:45 Lunch with Poet Laureate, Max Garland Poetry Cafe  
Box Lunches available (\$10, sign-up required)

### **Concurrent**

- 1:00 Wisconsin Poetry Festival Open Mic. (sign up in Poetry Café) Library  
Moderator – Max Garland  
1:00 BHI writers Workshop (Free, registration required) BHI  
Leader - Lisa Fishman  
2:00 Poetry: The Art Of It - Blackout Poetry Library  
Moderator – Amy Lutzke  
2:30 Poetry Round Tables - Each group presented twice, 2:30 and 3:30.  
Kara Candito - Winner, Council for Wisconsin Writers, Lorine Niedecker Poetry Award  
Geoffrey Collins – Winner, Wisconsin People & Ideas, Poetry Award  
Marilyn Anucci – Associate Professor, UW-Whitewater  
William Stobb – Assistant Professor, UW- LaCross  
Group A – Marilyn and Geoffrey Group B – Kara and William  
4:30 Tentative - River Front Reception Blackhawk Island  
Dinner on your own  
7:00 Nature of Wisconsin Poetry Library Jones Gallery  
Wisconsin Poet Laureate Max Garland  
Blackhawk Island Poems  
Poetry: The Art Of It  
Artists - Helen Mary Beck, Dawn Hunter, Karen Ragus, Diane Washa  
Poets - tba  
8:30 Closing Remarks

## ABOUT US

The Friends of Lorine Niedecker is a non-profit corporation. There are no staff, just devoted volunteers. Our goals include preserving and expanding the legacy of Lorine Niedecker, as well as, offering educational materials, access to archives, a semiannual newsletter and events as time and resources are available. We are supported through donations and grants.

Donations are always welcome and are fully tax-deductible.

The Solitary Plover is issued twice yearly, in winter and in summer. Sign up for the email version on our website.

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Find Lorine on Facebook

## THIRD THURSDAY 2013

In April of 2011 the Friends of Lorine Niedecker began a monthly poetry reading, held at the Dwight Foster Public Library in Fort Atkinson. The program features a guest Wisconsin poet and a community open mic reading. It has proven to be a great success. Here are some of the scheduled featured poets:

**August 15** - Tyler Farrell

**September 19** - James Pollack

**October 17** - TBA

**November 21** - Rodney Wittwer

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