



Friends of
Lorine Niedecker

Issue #35
Winter 2022

*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”

I was the solitary plover...



Niedecker Poetry Wall Mural Corner of S. Main St. and S. Water St. W. in Fort Atkinson

Friends Bring More Niedecker Poetry To The Community

In October 2021 the third poetry wall installation was completed on the north side of the current Hometown Pharmacy building on the corner of South Main Street and South Water Street W. This piece was also designed and created by Jeremy Guzzo Pinc. Pinc has shown his artwork in the country of Belgium, and the cities of Chicago, IL, Milwaukee and Madison, WI.

Funding for this project came from the Friends of Lorine Niedecker Mary Gates Fund and from private donors.

This is the third poetry wall installation established in Fort Atkinson by the Friends of Lorine Niedecker. The other two walls are located on the north side of buildings located at the intersection of North Main St. and Sherman Avenue in Fort Atkinson.



A 1970 Visit That Never Happened

Daphne Marlatt

Lorine Niedecker's "Mother Goose" poem about an owl sitting on a fence and her question "... What/ is it the sign/ of? The sign of/ an owl" made me laugh when I read it in editor Jenny Penberthy's small collection of Niedecker's 1934-45 poems, *New Goose*. Owls and doves in Wisconsin, probably wood doves, Cid and Shizumi Corman on their way to visit Lorine in the fall of 1970. And my attempt to meet Lorine herself when, as a young mother, I had moved with my then-husband, Alan Marlatt, to a tobacco farm some miles out of Madison. Niedecker's "Paeon to Place" was all I knew about Wisconsin and I admired a woman poet so dedicated to her watery locale and to writing poetry about it. I'd written to ask if I could visit and she sent me a signed copy of her *Collected Poems 1968*. Our visit never happened because, she wrote, she was not feeling well and then I learned that at the end of December she died.

Lorine's rooted approach to life in her habitat was so different from my rootless attempt to figure out where I was, what bird life, what trees, what animals there might be in the hum of this new Wisconsin night around me. Or even in daylight, when, walking this farm where my then-husband had rented an old house, walking with baby son in my arms, I discovered trees at the boundary of a field some way past the shed with its huge leaves of tobacco plants hung up to dry. The trees were full of birds calling, my mind was full of Robert Duncan's "the owl is the only bird of poetry" and so I whispered to my son, "listen to the owls calling." In daylight?? That's how little I knew about birds.

It was a meeting that would have been peculiar at any rate. The urban girl I was, late 20s,

born just off the Tasman Sea in Melbourne, raised on an island in the Indian Ocean until almost 9 years old, immigrating with parents and sisters to 1950s North Vancouver where we took the ferry to town across an inlet extension of Pacific Ocean, I'd never seen drying tobacco leaves, let alone Rock River marshes, or even an owl and its night-time call. And here I was, a young poet asking to meet this woman poet elder who wrote of herself as a "solitary plover." I was intrigued by her short lines and their syncopated syntax, by all that was not fully stated. Her lines "In us sea-air rhythm/ 'We live by the urgent wave/ of the verse'" spoke to me. I was beginning to hear longer wave-rhythms in my own writing and I felt drawn to the unstated, to the syntax running over line-ends that marked hers. The deeply felt length of a life resonated through those short lines. I must have met her poetry first in *Origin*, the international poetry magazine that Cid Corman edited for years from Kyoto, Japan, in which he also published some of my own work.

So when Cid and Shizumi visited me on their way to seeing Lorine, I took them down in the afternoon to hear the "owls" calling. Years later, when ring-necked doves began to appear in my inner-city neighborhood in Vancouver, there was something about their call I recognized. Beginning to write the following poem, I found myself oscillating between two memory poles: a dove call in the symphony of birdcalls that would resonate in the early morning around the house of my George Town childhood in Penang and the somewhat embarrassed memory of those moments with Cid and Shizumi at the edge of trees on a Wisconsin tobacco farm.

for a wing-bone

where are you?

almost downtown, certainly eastside in early morning's transparent light
from the tip of a fir, above rooftop streetside murmur repeat mourning
or calling, collared and intimate. coo and bill, coo.COOO the where-
ARE-you dove.

in a stand of trees at the foot of a Wisconsin field with baby son in
my arms, listen, listen, the owls are calling, the only bird of poetry
Duncan said. for v-ow'l breath sings through open sounds or spirit
holes in the small chitter of everyday field creature gossip.

so I said to Cid visiting with Shizumi, come hear the owls as we walked
to that stand of trees. Cid never said or didn't know (so urban we were)
those are wood doves calling, owls don't flock. we talked about Lorine
who wasn't well, they were on their way to see her on Blackhawk
Island, this poet who knew birds and water, flocks of, flecks of light.

so how had I forgotten the doves? Malaysia's spotted one, singing its name
terkukur from the durian tree, one in a drench of song we would wake to
liquid notes around the open verandah then...

but now is now, a raptor sound these collared doves also emit, ghost pterosaur
staking its territory diminished scale, hissy fit, and predatory -- for our time.

Daphne Marlatt

POETRY

A Millionth Speck

I may be 106 years old
Seen these bones
Crack a century and more
But never think
I am wise

I have lived
But a millionth speck
Of the life of a mountain
A continent the breath
Of an unborn child

There is wonder in small things

James P. Roberts

January Light

Time, and everything changes
at the pace of minutes each day.
Sun starts to linger.

While goblets gather dust,
we wait.

Nothing disturbs the lengthening.

Mary Rowin

From the secret notes

To find the right
needle

to sew these
remnant

memories of satin
and lace

of a pink dress

for a ball
you never went to

Virna Teixeira



What Bird

What young bird is it
who sings a high-
pitched song
of teeter-totter squeals
louder-than-expected
shrieks —

a player in a little band
sawing a solo line
that pierces eardrums
pricks the critic-
mind

of human hearer ignorant
of meaning, origin
the singer's name
yet pans the music
out of hand?

Georgia Ressmeyer

Overgrown Sky

past the orange cone
and into the ditch
wild chicory

*called westward
by an overgrown sky*

a rookery
I follow the delight
on her face

*summer showers
the evening prayer
of corn tassels*

dreams of flight
sleeping with a fan

*spillway dam
sunrise fills
the reservoir*

Dan Schwerin
Julie Schwerin



Rain taps silent tree
Hollow sleep leaves cold bed
His hands still warm

Christopher Kennedy

I must tilt

The Impulse

*I touched the hem of your
garment. You opened your side
feeding me briefly just enough to
show me why I ask.*
– Star Dust by Frank Bidart

For first minutes
they meet as children would

One brings a mountain and a book,
the Other a bed of moonlight and a goldfinch

They've grown up
As they leave the red room

One keeps the silence
the Other offers
dithyrambs & ligatures

The impulse to hide behind a peek
is an old one not to be trusted yet it comes

The Other has prepared for this with
a held out hand

*

it matters
where the sun is
winter birds

Donna Fleischer



Hen Craft

*"Arranging your poems can feel like herding
birds." -- Bonnie Jacobson*

If hens fly the coop
don't cajole
no need to speak.

You understand urgency.

Don't run after them
but get down low,
arms wide like wings.

When you are close enough
put your hand on the back.
She may think you're a rooster
crouch, present her private parts.

This is your opportune moment.

Pick her up
do not squeeze
or hold her by the feet.

You have saved her
from the sky's marauders,
from evisceration, oblivion,
unnecessarily long words.

Ronnie Hess



Cascade !

let me see that riddle gift
the moonlight settles
in the sand for eyes
to look
on

Steven Manuel

upon the pressure

The Rock

On her knees on the banks of a river
mucky, brown, full of carp
not fully understanding how she ended up here
trying desperately to see below the surface
she focuses on remembering
day after day, year after year.
She is witness to the turning leaves
the cold sealing all in
the melting ice
the water flowing once again.
Now tilted in prayer, humbled by the river
she leans, falls into the shadowy dark of dismembered debris
allowing most to flow by, reclaiming only what she needs
first fighting the current, then finally allowing it to carry her
downstream, back home.
She climbs the bank of the Rock
stands on her own two feet.

*

So Much Depends Upon the Chickens

In black and white houndstooth and herringbone plaid
seasonal colors of clay-pot orange
bride's white or black-tie attire
they strut
confident, important, gregarious
making sure their voices are heard.

They can go only so far with their feathered fashions
so they return home, flock together
when darkness settles.

Scratching the surface for what lies beneath
they unearth food that nourishes.
Graced, they leave simple gifts
of white, brown, pale green
hidden now for me and you to discover.
So much depends upon the chickens.

Angela Hoffman

Sent from Wisconsin

Does it matter where I sit
When I write?

Dare speak of rocky elevations
without them leaning

over my shoulder
humming delight

at the peaks and the sweep
of the word

Mountains

Nancy Shea



after
her last breath
the others take a breath

*

keepers
in her hands
shells the ocean didn't break

*

night cools down the message
watching stars find
their places

Gary Hotham

execute and adjust

Unearthed

I'd like to be a charm found underground by a small child as she digs with a tarnished spoon in the soft damp earth on a cool summer morning. A coin worn smooth, words unreadable. An oval stone, rose-colored, specs of gold catching the light. Or half a silver heart, a little Scottie dog, a tiny high-heeled shoe, fallen from a woman's bracelet long ago as she kissed a man, the two of them embracing under the budding maple he'd just carved their names into. I'd like to be the charm that child finds. Feel her fingers brush the earth of years away. Hear the wish she whispers as she lifts me towards the sun in her outstretched palm.

Jean Preston



The Best Memorial To a Poet Of Place

In memory and honor of Lorine Niedecker

You bear a reader's will.
And your poems strike a chord,
as a harvester of poetry--
as a poet of place.

You filled your life with pages of brightness--
in the form of Haiku and long poems,
that only a *Granite Pail* can have
in their changing limestone glow.
You *catch a dozen*, yet their range is broad.
I wish I had them.

The landscapes of Blackhawk, your at-home--
where *the place was water*,
have *more trees for friends than people.*
A depth of *water lily mud*,
your life by water bears the richness
of freshness to date.
I wish it were *between your house and mine.*

Your poems in their lucidity,
in every part of every living thing that once was rock.
As I read them, it takes me to *a labyrinth of pleasure*,
and as I complete the last one,
it takes me to the first one.

Lakshman Bulusu

Movement and Light

This is the thing.
Your thing and my thing
are as far apart
as the moon from the sea.
You, happiest with your
strong scarred hands
swinging a hammer
or pushing a saw across
sweet smelling wood,
making some thing
that will last well beyond
you or me. Me, lost
in a book, a collection
of Mary Oliver's poems
perhaps, or at my laptop
writing a new poem,
revising an old one.
Poems that might or
might not last. Construction
of a kind for sure, but
the material words not wood.
Still, in the quiet of night,
the sea takes in the light
of the moon, the moon
gently moves the sea.

Jean Preston

Note: we published this piece in the Summer 2021 issue but left off the last line.



In us sea-air rhythm

CONTRIBUTORS

Lakshman Bulusu is a Princeton NJ based poet, author, and educator. He is published in *OpenDoor Magazine*, *US 1 Worksheets*, *Local Honey - Mid West*, *Vox Galvia*, and other literary journals in USA, and UK.

Donna Fleischer is the author of five poetry chapbooks, most recently, *from beyond my window: the Covid-19 Poems* (Meritage Press, 2020), < *Periodic Earth* > (Casa de Cinco Hermanas Press, 2016), and *Twinkle, Twinkle* (Longhouse Publishers, 2011). She received the support of a Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art – Tupelo Press residency and the University of Hartford’s Creative Writing Award for Poetry.

Ronnie Hess is an essayist and poet, author of five poetry chapbooks and two culinary travel guides. She lives in Madison. Find her at ronniehess.com

Angela Hoffman has lived in Jefferson, WI her entire life, not far from BlackHawk Island. Lorine’s story has inspired her with possibilities for her own poetry.

Gary Hotham currently lives in Maryland. He has had a number of chapbooks published since his first: *Without the Mountains* in 1976. Two recently received awards: *23* published by Longhouse received an honorable mention in the Haiku Canada Marianne Bluger Book and Chapbook Awards for 2020 and *Rightsizing the Universe: Haiku Theory* published by Yiqralo Press received an honorable mention in the Touchstone Distinguished Books Awards for 2019. Two more recent chapbooks: *Park Bench Memories: Haiku Tailwinds* in 2020 and *Mannequins Dressed for the Window: Haiku Secrets* in 2021.

Chris Kennedy grew up in southern Wisconsin and currently lives in Colorado with his family and an assortment of cats, dogs and horses. Approaching his mid-50s, and with some steady encouragement from his sister, he decided 2021 was the year to begin dabbling in haiku. The poem published in this issue was one of his very first.

Steven Manuel is editor of *from a Compos't*, a poet and lives in Asheville, NC.

Much of West Coast poet **Daphne Marlatt's** earlier work can be found in *Intertidal: The Collected Earlier Poems 1968-2008*, edited by Susan Holbrook (Talonbooks, 2017). Her most recent title *Then Now* (Talonbooks, 2021) is a hybrid text that includes excerpts from her father's letters written in the 1930s from Penang, Malaysia and Marlatt's poems written in response from Vancouver, Canada now.

Jean Preston holds a B.A. from Carthage College and an M.F.A. in creative writing/poetry from the University of Southern Maine’s Stonecoast Writing Program. Recently retired from Carthage College, Jean served there as an Administrative Assistant for 11 years, followed by 14 years directing the Brainard Writing Center and teaching as an adjunct assistant professor of English. Jean was the 2014-2015 Poet Laureate of Kenosha, Wisconsin, and is the author of two poetry collections, *All the Queen’s Horses* and *Like a Small Bird Soaring*, a chapbook, *Sixteen Mothers*, a photo journal, *Tete’s Story*, and a children’s book, *Banner and the Butterfly*. She is now busy writing, volunteering, and enjoying her family.

"We live by the urgent"

Georgia Ressmeyer, a three-time Pushcart Prize nominee, has published two poetry chapbooks and two full-length collections. Her most recent chapbook is *Leading a Life* (Water's Edge Press, 2021). Her poetry has received awards from the Council for Wisconsin Writers, *Wisconsin People & Ideas*, the Wisconsin Fellowship of Poets, The Washington Island Literary Festival, *Peninsula Pulse* and others. For more information, see georgiaressmeyer.com.

James P. Roberts is the author of 15 books of science fiction and fantasy, poetry, literary biography and baseball history. His latest poetry collection, *One Hundred Breaths*, was selected as the winner of the 2020 Portage Press Poetry Book Contest and was published by Portage Press in June of 2020. He is active in the Wisconsin Fellowship of Poets and also the Little Free Library movement. He lives in Madison. His minimalist website is www.wordwiz4you.

Mary C. Rowin's poetry has appeared in a variety of publications. Nominated for a Pushcart, Mary's poetry awards include prizes from The Nebraska Writers Guild, and *Journal from the Heartland*.

John Schott is a composer and guitarist of a wide variety of musics. Classically trained, his compositions have been commissioned the Left Coast Chamber Ensemble, the Taneko Ensemble, the Rova Sax Quartet and the Paul Dresher Ensemble. As a guitarist, he is best known for his work in the bands T.J. Kirk, Junk Genius, and with John Zorn, Tom Waits, Steven Bernstein, Frank London, Paul Dresher. He frequently works with poetry and texts: his song cycle *In These Great Times* (CD recording on the Tzadik label) sets words by Jacob Glatshetyn, Franz Kafka, and Karl Kraus. He has collaborated with poets Steve Dalichinsky, Jake Marmer, Steve Dickison, and Lyn Hejinian. He lives in Berkeley, CA.

Julie Warther Schwerin (she/her - Sun Prairie, Wisconsin) is an associate editor at *The Heron's Nest* (www.theheronsnest.com) and a member of the *Red Moon Anthology* Editorial team. She was instrumental in establishing several haiku installations in the Midwest. The most recent is *Words in Bloom: A Year of Haiku* at the Chicago Botanic Garden which features the work of haiku poets on signs throughout the garden.

Rev. Dan Schwerin is the Wisconsin Conference United Methodist Church Clergy Assistant to the Bishop and poet. He is the author of *ORS*, from red moon press and has resided with his wife Julie in Sun Prairie, Wisconsin since 2021.

Nancy Shea lives near to confluence of the Crawfish and Rock Rivers. Sent from Wisconsin is a reflection on missing her daughter, and being surrounded by mountains, in Tucson.

Virna Teixeira is a Brazilian poet, short story writer and translator based in London. She has collections of poetry published in Latin America, Portugal and the UK. She translated a few poems of Lorine Niedecker for Brazilian literary magazines many years ago.



wave of the verse "

"In moonlight lies"

Words: Lorine Niedecker
Music: John Schott

Freely and plainly

The musical score is written on a single treble clef staff in 4/4 time, with a key signature of two flats (B-flat and E-flat). The melody is simple and lyrical, with lyrics written below the notes. The piece concludes with a double bar line and repeat dots.

In moon - light lies the riv - er pas - sing
It's not qui - et, ___ and it's not laugh - ing. ___
I'm not young, ___ and I'm not free, but I've a
house of my own by a wil - low tree.

John Schott submitted this musical setting for solo voice of "In moonlight lies the river passing." He says "It's one of several such settings I've done. I'm a composer and guitarist who has written music to texts by several authors, both living and not-living. Loving Niedecker as much as I do, which is a lot a lot a lot, I had wanted to set something of hers for a long time, but it wasn't until I lit upon the solo voice idea that it took shape." A recording of this piece will be available on lorineniedecker.org when available.



NEWS

Tension Zones: Landscape, Memory, and Writing

WI Academy of Sciences, Arts & Letters Presents
An 8-week Virtual Workshop with Chuck Stebelton
Thursdays, March 17 to May 5, 2022; 6pm to 8pm

A forest, an old field, a prairie remnant, or an urban tree canopy is each a set of constant tensions. In natural history terms, the Tension Zone is an S-curved boundary where Wisconsin's southern plant communities and northern plant communities converge. Many of our most subtly dynamic landscapes exist in proximity to this zone. With naturalist May Theilgaard Watts and poet Lorine Niedecker as our primary guides, let's practice reading tension in the landscape.

Scholarship available. [Details and Registration here.](#)

Chuck Stebelton is author most recently of *An Apostle Island* (Oxeye Press, 2021). His previous poetry collections include *The Platformist* (Cultural Society, 2012) and *Circulation Flowers* (Tougher Disguises, 2005). He served as Literary Program Director at Woodland Pattern Book Center from 2005 to 2017. He is also a member of the Board of Friends of Lorine Niedecker.



On the Website

The Friends of Lorine Niedecker have added audio recordings of the three short stories written by Niedecker: "Uncle," "Switchboard Girl," and "Evenings Automobiles" to our website. These were recorded by the actress Flora Coker and [are available here.](#)

We have also uploaded the two most recent monographs from the *What Region?* series.

"Lorine Niedecker: the Poet And Her Place" by David Wilk

"Lorine Niedecker In Spain" by Natalia Carbajosa

[You will find the monographs here.](#)

Essay Revision

As an addendum to the essay, "Lorine Niedecker's Haiku Library," in the Summer 2021 issue of *Solitary Plover*, **Michael Dylan Welch** offers two revised and expanded paragraphs, plus an entirely new paragraph, that discuss haiku-related books in Niedecker's library, including a new awareness of at least one additional book that is particularly relevant to haiku. To read the entire essay in its expanded form, [please visit his website here.](#)

The Solitary Plover

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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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