

I was the solitary plover

FRIENDS OF
Lorine Niedecker



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Welcome *Solitary Plover* Poetry Editor Peggy Turnbull

The Friends of Lorine Niedecker is delighted to officially welcome Peggy Turnbull as *The Solitary Plover* Poetry Editor. We asked her to tell our readers about herself. She will be the steady hand for poetry in the Plover.

Peggy Turnbull

I've been on the editorial staff of *The Solitary Plover* ever since work began on the Summer 2023 issue. I started by handling submissions and proofreading copy for editor Amy Lutzke, then poetry editor Tom Montag offered to mentor me in the art of selecting poems that honor Lorine Niedecker in theme, style, or content. Like Amy, I am a retired librarian, and understand the enormity of what she and Ann Engelman have achieved with the Friends organization. I know Tom because he was my poetry teacher at The Mill, a writing school located in Appleton, Wisconsin. Recognizing him as the legend he is, I enrolled in every class he taught. When he asked me to consider taking over as poetry editor I trusted his judgment and said yes without hesitation.

My greatest hope is that the extraordinary poets who have been submitting their work to *The Solitary Plover* will continue to do so. I also hope to find work of equal merit among poets who may be new to the newsletter. Thank you to all who submit. Your poems keep Niedecker's legacy alive.



Al Millen and Lorine Niedecker Together

Seven Productive Years

In the spring of 1963, Lorine Niedecker, Wisconsin's finest poet, was facing a future of crushing loneliness. She had no siblings. Her parents had died years earlier. In 1942, her 12-year marriage to Frank Hartwig ended in divorce after a decade of living apart. Her closest confidants were fellow poets in distant states. One lived in Japan. She maintained these friendships through letters.

Niedecker worked intermittently from 1928 until 1950 as a library assistant, writer and research editor, radio script writer, and proofreader. When not employed, she relied on a few rental properties from her father on Blackhawk Island, a small inheritance, and federal disability payments. Because of worsening eyesight, she took a job in 1957 scrubbing floors and doing other menial work at the Fort Atkinson Hospital. All of that supported her life in her much-loved twenty-by-twenty foot cabin that had neither electricity nor running water until both were installed in 1960. She wrote much of her poetry there.

Blackhawk Island is not an island, but a community of modest homes, some now vanished, on a small peninsula running along the Rock River until the river flows into Lake Koshkonong southwest of Fort Atkinson. Lorine's maternal grandparents ran the Fountain House, a bar, restaurant, bait shop, and fishing resort during Blackhawk Island's better days. Lorine was born on Blackhawk Island and would die there.

She left for two years to study at Beloit College, stayed two years with Hartwig in Fort Atkinson, lived four years in Madison working for the Works Projects Administration as a writer and research editor from 1938 to 1942, and spent several weeks in New York City between 1933 and 1939 with Louis Zukofsky, a fellow poet who was her mentor, promoter, and lover before he married another. Even then their friendship continued through correspondence for forty years.



Al and Lorine on their wedding day

She always returned to Blackhawk Island and the spring floods that sometimes flowed over her cabin floor and often into her poetry.

Fish

fowl

flood

Water lily mud

My life

in the leaves and on water

A tiny woman of birdlike step and birdlike voice, her eyes sought birds and wildflowers through the thick lenses of her plastic harlequin glasses as she walked the island. She often walked four miles to her hospital job in Fort Atkinson and four miles home. Her fellow workers and most neighbors were not aware that she was a poet. She guarded her secret lest they mute the workplace chatter that sometimes found its way into her poems.

This self-enforced anonymity seems to have led to an inner conflict. Should she move among her neighbors and fellow workers as a shy, even naive colleague, sacrificing the satisfaction of being recognized and admired for her art, and suffer deep loneliness as a result? Or should she avoid loneliness and seek long-term male companionship, although, she feared, it might impair her ability to create poetry?

There is no doubt that Niedecker responded warmly to men. There had been, and in a sense always would be, Zukofsky. Aeneas McAllister, a younger neighbor on Blackhawk Island, won her friendship through his self-taught Beethoven piano concertos. In 1960, Harold Hein, a Milwaukee dentist and six years a widower, sought out Lorine, whom he remembered from childhood forty years earlier when he visited relatives on Blackhawk Island.

"I never laughed just previous to the time Harold came," she wrote Zukofsky. "Just about the time you're rotting with seriousness or serious boredom, something happens or else you'd die."

For two years, Lorine and Harold shared idyllic days in the beauty of watery Wisconsin. They walked among the Indian mounds around Lake Koshkonong, pole-fished under a Rock River bridge, and shared meals in local restaurants and in Lorine's cabin. He escorted her through Milwaukee art galleries and the gardens of Whitnall Park.

She hoped for, even expected, a marriage proposal. When it did not arrive, she raised the question herself. His answer was clear. Having endured the loss of his wife after six painful years of cancer, he would never marry again. He said he would retire eventually and move to California where he had a brother.

With that, he agreed that their visits should be less frequent although Lorine missed him terribly on weekends when he didn't show up. By 1962 the relationship sputtered to a near stop. His presence in her letters to Zukofsky dwindled to a few matter-of-fact sentences: April 18, 1962, "Harold coming Apr.

29th instead of for Easter—goes to his daughter and granddaughter then ..." Sept. 26, 1962, "Harold returned my saw, Sat." Feb. 24, 1963, "No word from Harold since before Xmas. Warmer days must come soon."

Not two months later, on April 3, 1963, she wrote: "Going to dinner Sunday with Al Millen, Milw., man who bought my house that was in trouble, you know. One hand but drives very well. In the labor movement, 59, tall, slender and straight sudden melting look in black eyes. I'm a little suspect. I have no TV but - we'll see - "

Millen, a hard-drinking, third-shift industrial painter for a large factory in Milwaukee and a divorced father of four grown children, was pursuing a retirement of fishing and gardening in just such a place as Blackhawk Island. Lorine showed him one of the cottages she inherited from her father.

Clearly, they were attracted to each other. On May 13, Lorine wrote to her friend and fellow poet Cid Corman in Japan: "No flood this spring, very unnatural. Unnatural also my immanent (sic) marriage. At sixty one does foolish things. I hope I'm happy! He's my connection to life."

Eleven days later, Albert Millen and Lorine Niedecker were married in a country church with a few of her Blackhawk Island friends and some of Al's family in attendance. Al, 59, was rough-hewn, handsome and at six feet tall still straight with black hair and black eyes. Lorine, 60, was just over five feet, slim with short blond hair. A photo of the couple in front of the church shows Lorine to be a full head shorter than Al.

I married

in the world's black night

for warmth

if not repose.

At the close—

someone.

Al got drunk on his wedding night. He awoke the next day, mortified, and offered Lorine a divorce. Gail Roub, a sensitive younger new neighbor on Blackhawk Island who valued her poetry, told her later that she should have accepted the offer. "Well, Gail, it isn't so bad," Lorine responded. "You know, he's the only man who ever told me he loved me."

Roub was not alone in thinking her marriage was a mistake. Others disapproved, including some who knew her as a poet as well as some Blackhawk Island neighbors who didn't, all presuming that her artistic sensitivity and his blue collar gruffness could never be reconciled.

But theirs was not young love. Both brought to the marriage the bruises of six decades of living. Al's daughters called him a functioning alcoholic whose weekends spent in bars wrecked his first marriage. He had little formal education and had lost his right hand in an industrial accident as a young man. Lorine had deteriorating eyesight and had lost her chance for motherhood years earlier. For two divorced people edging up on social security it was either bond now or face the end alone.

With marriage, the couple's lives changed profoundly and quickly. She quit her hospital job. He was paid union wages and destined to receive a good pension at retirement in a few years. He drove a long, low Buick sedan with a knob on the steering wheel that enabled safe steering with his left hand.

On July 21st, 1963, with his "little Lorie" beside him, Al pointed his Buick westward for the first of several road trips that were to result in some of Lorine's most admired poems. Their first stop was Wyalusing State Park, high bluffs above the confluence of the Wisconsin and Mississippi Rivers. Here she confronted the 1947 monument to the passenger pigeon, a bird that once migrated by the billions but was driven to extinction by hunting and deforestation in Wisconsin by 1899 and in the nation by 1914. The pigeon flew into Lorine's Lake Superior poem a couple of years later.

Lorine photographed Al on the bluffs overlooking the two rivers, labeled it "Wy-Al-using" and sent copies to his children. Then the Buick turned north to Sand River, a hamlet in northeastern Minnesota where Al was born and attended school from age 8 to 13, his only formal education. Al released a flood of memories of a hardscrabble childhood. Lorine transferred his voice in notes that she wrote into a Christmas letter for Al's children.



Al at "Wy-Al-using"

"At thirteen I started work - on railroad ties at the village. I was tall and strong and the work did not hurt me. Not much juvenile delinquency when kids have quite a bit of work to do. Following that, I worked in a gravel pit at road construction. I walked two miles to get to it, worked ten hours a day there, and on returning home at night helped with the chores. And on Sundays Pa would say, "Take the gun and see what you can bring home to eat."

There were more long road trips marked by Lorine's deep research into the new wonders ahead that became the substance of two of her longest poems, *Wintergreen Ridge*, inspired by a road trip to Door County, and *Lake Superior*, a tour around Lake

Superior. The good-natured banter between Al and Lorine on such journeys found its way into her hand-made booklets that she gave Al's children for Christmas.

In December 1963, the couple moved to Al's dingy apartment on South Sixth Street in Milwaukee. After her thorough cleaning, Lorine set up her little writing table with Al's portable Royal typewriter under a window for good light. While he slept after his third shift ended at 7 a.m. she worked at poetry and wrote letters, keeping up her correspondence with Zukofsky, Cid Corman of Japan, and others.

Lorine wrote poetry with intense concentration. When she was at her little desk in summer at Blackhawk Island Al grabbed a hoe and retreated to his big vegetable garden. After they moved to their new house in 1969 between the original cabin and the river bank he took refuge in winter in the garage where he relaxed in a comfortable chair near a wood stove, read his science fiction, and drank beer.

It is possible to believe that Lorine had Al in mind when she inserted this verse into *Wintergreen Ridge*, about The Ridges in Door County, a series of ancient beaches created by Lake Michigan's wave action that evolved into one of the greatest concentrations of rare plants in the Midwest.

*Nobody, nothing
ever gave me
greater thing
than time
unless light
and silence
which if intense
makes sound*

When Lorine married Al in 1963 she hoped for another ten years of writing. After he retired, the couple moved to their new home on Blackhawk Island in September 1969. Three handsome books of her poetry were published: *North Central* by the Fulcrum Press, London, in 1968, *T&G: The Collected Poems 1936-1966*, The Jargon Society, Penland, North Carolina, and *My Life by Water: Collected Poems 1936-1969*, Fulcrum Press, London.

On December 1, 1970, Lorine was in the kitchen when she told Al that she felt strange. He called an ambulance. Having suffered a cerebral hemorrhage she lingered in the hospital unable to speak for the rest of the month. She died on December 31 at sixty-seven, three years shy of her goal. But she was being noticed nationally.

Today her poetry is found in Jenny Penberthy's magnificent *Lorine Niedecker: Collected Works*, *Norton Anthology of Poetry*, and the Library of America's two volume *Twentieth Century American Poetry*, among other places.

After recovering gradually from a debilitating grief, Al carried out Lorine's instructions to "Burn These," which she wrote on a box of papers. Further instructions directed him to send other papers and correspondence to the Universities of Texas and Wisconsin. Margaret Millen, his former wife and mother of his children, joined him in Fort Atkinson where they shopped and sometimes ate together, but she refused to live with him on Blackhawk Island, stating, according to Julie Schoessow, their youngest daughter, "I won't be your housekeeper."

He died on July 28, 1981, and was buried next to the Niedecker family plot in Union Cemetery west of Fort Atkinson. The adjacent gravestone bears the names of Lorine's parents, Henry and Theresa, and Lorine herself. Al's smaller stone identifies him as "Albert O. Millen 1904-1981, Husband of Lorine Niedecker."



Al with fish

Author's Note:

My motive in writing this article was to call attention to the largely ignored working-class man who enabled Lorine Niedecker to compose, in their seven-years together, unforgettable poems as *Paeon to Place*, *Wintergreen Ridge*, *Lake Superior*, *Darwin*, *Jefferson*, and *My Life by Water*, and much more. Without Albert Millen, his big Buick, and his gifts of time and occasional silence, the English-speaking world would be measurably poorer.

Although he was described by his children as a “functioning alcoholic,” he respected and accommodated her need to create her art and to maintain her ties with other notable modern poets. Niedecker had experience with heavy drinkers, including her father and, for that matter, the entire fishing culture of Blackhawk Island, of which her grandparents' resort and bar was a part. She dealt with Al's drinking fatalistically as a fixed condition.

The facts of my narrative are embedded in my shelf of books by and about Lorine Niedecker. Most important are by Jenny Penberthy, the foremost scholar of Niedecker's poetry, including *Lorine Niedecker: Collected Works* (University of California Press, 2002), *Niedecker and the Correspondence with Zukofsky*

1931-1970 (Cambridge University Press, 1993), *Lorine Niedecker: Woman and Poet* (National Poetry Foundation, 1996), and *Lorine Niedecker's Century, 1903-2003*, a public lecture given at the University of Wisconsin-Whitewater in 2003 and published in 2015 by Friends of Lorine Niedecker.

Also essential are Lisa Pater Faranda's *Between Your House and Mine: The Letters of Lorine Niedecker to Cid Corman, 1960-1970* (Duke University Press, 1986), Margot Peters' *Lorine Niedecker: A Poet's Life* (The University of Wisconsin Press, 2011), and *Radical Vernacular: Lorine Niedecker and the Poetics of Place*, essays gathered by editor Elizabeth Willis (University of Iowa Press, 2008), the most useful by Penberthy and Glenna Breslin.

Important insights into the relationship of Niedecker and Millen are found in the booklets Lorine prepared as gifts for Al's children. Al's daughters Julie Schoessow and Alice Green have donated their booklets to the Hoard Museum in Fort Atkinson, where they are available to interested scholars. Finally, I have revisited *At the Close—Someone*, which I wrote for *Wisconsin*, the *Milwaukee Journal's* Sunday magazine, relying upon deep interviews with Gail Roub and Julie Schoessow. It appeared on December 30, 1990, one day short of the twentieth anniversary of Niedecker's death. It was reprinted in the National Poetry Foundation's 1996 *Lorine Niedecker: Woman and Poet*, edited by Penberthy.

I thank Ann Engelman, whose nurturing of the legacy of Lorine Niedecker has continued with great effect for more than two decades. As the indefatigable President of the Friends of Lorine Niedecker and her role in organizing annual Niedecker festivals she has done more than anyone to elevate Niedecker to her rightful place as Wisconsin's finest poet. She was ably helped throughout by Amy Lutzke, now retired librarian at the Dwight Foster Public Library, Fort Atkinson.

—Paul G. Hayes

Today we have mountains—

a lavender range
northwest of downtown
on a large, frozen lake,
above a skyline
of two-story buildings.

It's a privilege to live
in a shifting landscape
with the wind as
town muralist and
sky its gesso.

Never contented,
wind paints over,
paints anew.
Mountains disappear
or move elsewhere.
Sometimes they
feather away in wisps.

The wind experiments
with every shade of
blue and gray, purple,
pink, red, gold,
sometimes green—
as beautiful as
any I've seen.

The world is here,
outside my condo window—
travel no longer required.

Georgia Ressmeyer, a three-time Pushcart nominee, is the author of two published poetry chapbooks and two full-length poetry collections. Her most recent is *Leading a Life* (Water's Edge Press). Others include *Today I Threw My Watch Away* (Finishing Line Press), *Waiting to Sail* (Black River Press) and *Home/Body* (Pebblebrook Press). Her poetry has won numerous awards.

Nostalgia

The wind
sighs
the pines
like early mornings,
like my grandparents'
soft voices
waiting
for me
to wake.

Jill Fuller (she/her) is a librarian and writer living in Wisconsin. She is also the co-creator of *Let Genius Burn*, a podcast on the life of author Louisa May Alcott. Her work has been published in *Emerge Literary Journal*, *Humana Obscura*, and more. Say hello and read more at

jillfuller.substack.com

Juncos

They're back—
dancing with glee
in the dim light
this chilly mid-October morning—

while I struggled
to fly out of bed and suit up.

Christel Maass lives in southeastern Wisconsin where she enjoys the solitude of the winter months to catch up on reading and writing. Her more recent poems appear in *Bramble* and the *Wisconsin Poets' Calendar*, among other publications.

Christmas Cactus

the morning
of the solstice

we woke to news
of your father's death

and to the Christmas cactus
he'd given us the year prior

in full bloom
maddeningly punctual

today—
three years gone

you notice it
budding again

you place your head
against my chest

Julia Ross (she/her) is an emerging poet and educator living in Austin, TX. Her poetry appears in *About Place Journal*, *The New Verse News*, *The Marbled Sigh*, and elsewhere. When she's not sitting at desk and condensing, she's enjoying the city's vibrant music scene with her spouse and children.

Another Niedecker Reader (Let's Call Her Jane Doe) Who Carries a Niedecker Book from Room to Room

On the ironing board, a two-foot
metal Statue of Liberty that Jane dipped
into bright yellow paint

next to a grey kitten

stretching
near the pair of a man's
folded purple pajamas with red vertical stripes. Atop

the pajamas, the *Collected Works*

of Lorine Niedecker—many white bookmarks
extend

from this volume, so many. And I wonder where
Jane (nowhere
in the photo), returning, will

open the book to
first,

to re-
read one

of so many
loved ones.

for Jenny Penberthy



John Levy lives in Tucson. His most recent poetry book is *54 poems: selected & new* (Shearsman Books, 2023). Two chapbooks of his poetry were published in 2024: *Guest Book for People in My Dreams* (Proper Tales Press) and *To Assemble an Absence* (above/ground press).

Winter Walk

Black and white is the rigidity
in the middle
is the passion
of the trees
in their orange leaves

Coming Home

The night gives up
a steady beat:
Someone heading back
from work
a slow acceleration
home

Trish Stachelski grew up in Milwaukee, Wisconsin and lived in rural Wisconsin. She studied English and Spanish and moved to Bolivia and Chile to live and teach. She currently lives in Minneapolis with her family, watches birds, walks along the river, and volunteers at Soup for You, a community soup cafe.

Speechreading

Cracked-heart leaked muted
words, inaudible, except to
your ear, keenly listening



Sharon Daly is a retired teacher and credits the Greater Madison Writing Project with opening her pathway to poetry. She values kindred companions in the Wisconsin Fellowship of Poets and finds her muse in woodland walks, libraries, and teacups.

*

Lorine
in the pages
of *Hummingbird*

and now
this yellowed-nectar
already gone

*

*

Snow in the Boughs

The sparrows have gone into hiding. The descent of dark birds has come.
In times of danger the spruce boughs obey, whatever the snow.
Fear not. Use the words made of houses that people can live in.

Advent morning sandbagging the inner banks

*



Dan Schwerin's poetry comes from life on a farm or making his rounds across thirty-plus years as a pastor in Wisconsin, and now as the bishop of the Northern Illinois-Wisconsin Area of The United Methodist Church. His debut haiku collection, *ORS*, from Red Moon Press, won the Haiku Foundation's Touchstone Award in 2016. His most recent collection of American sijo, *lightly*, can be found from the author or Red Moon Press. You can find him on X @SchwerinDan or BlueSky @danschwerin.bsky.social.

Shadow Work

Exploring my cabin,
I amble by Sugar Sumac,
Mountain Mahogany,
Brittlebush, Wild Succulents
and a hedge of Rosemary
sheltering a gecko.

A pile of Pudding Grass
hums, awash with bees
keeping the cycle alive.

Tree frogs and crows
reassure me
there's treasure in solitude,
and so much work to be done,
here
in the shadows.



Carrie Voigt Schonhoff, poet and author of *The Liminal Space* and *The End of the Beginning*, captures the spirit of Wisconsin while encapsulating the growth of her life's journey and exciting next chapter. This work will pull at the heartstrings of those that continue to face challenges but never stop dreaming.



The Light of This Morning

The light this morning is a soft white
bluing the sky with luminous air.
The light is lighting itself
on this day

The river this morning holds splashing white
light on the rippling edges like stars
reflecting on the muddy green.
The river today is sparkling
as it rolls over itself.

This body of self this morning is light
falling from the sky above.
The self this morning is falling
over and over into itself.



Nancy Shea combines her deep knowledge of healing arts with a passion for writing poetry. As a Certified EFT (Emotional Freedom Techniques) practitioner, she is developing numerous groups and classes, guiding individuals toward personal transformation and creative expression. Through a blend of EFT, meditation, and poetic exploration, Nancy creates a supportive environment for people to connect with their creativity and deepen their relationship with their true self.

II Haiku

1/
clear sky over the battlefield
the tour guide talking over
the wind

2/
summer traffic
weeds blossom around
the guard rails



Gary Hotham currently lives in Maryland. He has scattered a long trail of haiku in various publications since 1967. His recent collection: *Soft Serve: Haiku Remains*, published in 2023 by Pinyon Publishing, received an honorable mention in the Haiku Canada Marianne Bluger Book and Chapbook Awards for 2024.

8 Views of Infinity

cloud crosses form
wings pullup
ring of
air be
-coming

cherry
blossom
-ing in
other cloud
be-coming

bottom
-ing green
blue-ing
ceiling round
red sun

shadow crow
growing in
eye of
holder

cold machine
warm hand
touching

swan murmur
ing cross
ing
lake

oar tow
ing laugh
ing duck

diving
up wind
wing-
ingwing



Donna Fleischer is the author of seven poetry books, among these, *Baby in Space* (Half Day Moon Press), and *Flaneur and Every Day Earth* (Longhouse Publishers, Vermont). Her poems are in over 70 journals and anthologies worldwide, including *A Vast Sky*, *EOAGH*, *Kō*, *Of Hartford in Many Lights*, *Password*, *The Fortnightly Review*, and *The Solitary Plover*.
https://www.pw.org/directory/writers/donna_fleischer

Hatched in Canada's Breeding Grounds

Rough-legged hawks avoid Lake Michigan's
open waters as they migrate south
in a long loop
to winter in Wisconsin.

Now making a poleward shift
as temperatures rise, someday
they may just circle Hudson Bay.



Mary C. Rowin's poetry, essays and reviews have appeared in a variety of publications such as *Hummingbird*, *Panopoly*, *Passager* and *Stoneboat*. Mary lives in Middleton, Wisconsin near Stricker Pond.

a flock of robins

flies in —heads bobbing in my backyard
feeding on sunflower seeds i've scattered

i sing the song my mother sang so long ago
—the two of us—wondering at the windowsill
snuggled up—perched birds watching robins
hopping on a fresh snow

then clothed ourselves
in thin cotton coats (wool—wasted on Texans)
flung our warm bodies into the quickly
withering inches making angels

our cold cold hands under sticky wet mittens
rolled & packed a solid body—trying to build a snowman
without too much mud on his face
witnessed his staunch resistance to letting his short life go
long after the snow had gone from the lawn

our own warm bodies
making a collective sigh



d. ellis phelps' work has appeared widely online and in print. She is the author of four poetry collections and one novel and the editor of Moon Shadow Sanctuary Press (MSSP) and of the digital journal *fws: international journal of literature & art* where she publishes the work of others.

Mason Lake

A weed in water
I waver in wash,
undulate to the swell
like a tongue bathed
in luxuriant words,
evaporate in sighs

feel the current tow
tickle of bullheads
against my calves,
the long green scrim
of algae pierced
by a quick dive
two mallards and I
indifferent, stationary



Jeff Burt grew up in Wisconsin, from Superior down to the Iowa and Illinois border, and years in the North Woods and the Sand Counties. More of his work can be found at <https://www.jeff-burt.com>



An Hour is a Sea – after Emily Dickinson

Once time traveled
so slowly, ravenous,
eating all, demanding more,
would not be sated,
an agony of seconds
counting down
while nothing offered
could give it speed.

Yet joy can be
the single hour
ocean-born and swift
as mutating colors, crest of foam,
huge and gentle waves back again,
sand thrown about the dunes
reshaping the known (and unknown)
beloved universe.

Ronnie Hess is an essayist and poet who lives in Madison, WI. She is the author of seven collections of poetry, the latest, *Eggphrasis*, about raising hens in her backyard. ronniehess.com

Salmon struggled
leaves of yellow
and orange fluttered
into the racing creek
tea-colored waters
carried them away
gurgling and burbling toward
Lake Michigan
the salmon ran the other way

Kate E. Schaffer (b. 1983, Pierre, SD) is from the prairies of South Dakota, the waters of Milwaukee, and the clouds that drift endlessly in between. Her art and writing traverse ideas of struggle, vulnerability, and reciprocity. Schaffer is an Associate Professor at the Milwaukee Institute of Art & Design.

Offline

Not full blast
enough
to let faucet
trickle so
pipes don't
freeze

*

Lake frozen
overnight
slight liquid
trickle at
infeed/ outflow

*

No signal
for days now
suddenly a
flood of messages.

John Slater has published a collection, *Surpassing Pleasure*, a chapbook, *Lean*, and a co-translation, *The Tangled Braid: Ninety-Nine Poems* by Hafiz of Shiraz. Another co-translation, *This and That: Short Poems of Ryokan*, is forthcoming (Spring 2026). His work has appeared in journals including *The Antigone Review*, *Juked*, and *Drunken Boat*.

Willows

yellow
puddle-muddling
tips
squiggle the stream
wallow-swallowing
sipping
green

Julie Schwerin (she/her - Sun Prairie, Wisconsin) is an associate editor at *The Heron's Nest*, and a member of the Red Moon Anthology Editorial team. Her most recent book, *still growing wings*, was the winner of the 2024 Backbone Press Chapbook Contest. www.theheronsnest.com

After the Service

We sit at round tables with small cold plates, speak words
that suddenly we barely know,
while our hands feel blindly in the dark
for bits of pocket lint.

Beside the sanctuary door,
shoulder to shoulder on their white tagboard,
old photos from his long life are still chattering,
excited to see each other after so many years.

All these memories, hauled up and dumped out, silver and
flapping on the mossy planks,
while beyond us in the condensing fog,
far out, a troop ship plunges,
wave after wave, its back
turned to the harbor.

Scott Lowery's collection, *Mutual Life*, won second place in last year's Wisconsin Fellowship of Poets chapbook competition. Recent poems appear in *RockPaperPoem*, *Wisconsin People & Ideas*, and a winter show of ekphrastic poetry at the Trout Museum of Art in Appleton. Lowery and his wife live near their young grandchildren in Milwaukee. Find more: www.scottlowery.org

Cid Corman Erases the Past

you can erase a good woman
from a photograph
of cherry blossoms
floating on the water
& still drown
in a dry creek.

Lorine of Quiet Fury

a solitary breeze
with frenzied hands.

John Dorsey is the former Poet Laureate of Belle, MO. He is the author of several collections of poetry, including *Which Way to the River: Selected Poems: 2016-2020* (OAC Books, 2020), *Sundown at the Redneck Carnival* (Spartan Press, 2022), and *Pocatello Wildflower* (Crisis Chronicles Press, 2023). He may be reached at archerevans@yahoo.com.

Feb. 9, 2024
Raven Lake, Minocqua

Dear Ones—in this too-warm-to-snow weekend of the Super Bowl game we're hiking our usual ski trails, stopping to stand with outstretched hands by the warming hut, offering our tithes of dark sunflower seed to the chickadees and nuthatches tamed to winter visitors. The downy woodpecker searches bark for bugs. The trails show our footprints in a dusting of snow, and the lake ice we used to ski fractures into the wet of a bog under weight of an unwary foot. The phones in our pockets record the steep hills as ten flights of stairs and our steps enough to improve our health; and the trees, roots clenched in earth, stand tall and warm to our hugs, in slow restoration of that old tragedy—Wisconsin's logged-over old-growth forests—as a new tragedy's hot breath stalks us through winter's woods.

Robin Chapman's most recent books of poetry are *The Only Home We Know* (2020) and *Panic Season* (2022), Tebot Bach, available from Ingram. Her poems have appeared recently in *Poetry East*, *Moss Piglet*, and *Portage Magazine*. She lives in Madison.

at the window
the first bloom of winter
frost flowers

Katrina Serwe loves poems of place. Her current project is foraging poems on Wisconsin's Ice Age Trail. Her poetry has been featured in publications such as *Bramble*, *Portage Magazine*, *Scrawl Place*, *Moss Piglet*, and *The Blue Heron Review*. You can follow her journey at katrinaserwe.com.

This Small Pond

Water lilies fixed on canvas.

Monet applied those colors, those shapes
to transform *l'Orangerie* walls.

Paint daubs. Brush strokes
static, soundless.

Almost a century later
I sit on a log near water, scribbling words,
unable to realize—as Monet could not—

the delicate sweep of dragonfly wings
or the lily's throbbing center,
the fertile bed beneath,
or the hum.

Rising at the edge of this small pond
my shadow enlarges, ripples.

How insignificant I am.

CJ Muchhala's work has been published in *New Poetry from the Midwest* and other anthologies, in print and online journals including *Gyroscope Review* and *Thimble*, displayed regionally in collaborative art/poetry exhibits, and nominated for the Best of the Net and twice for the Pushcart Prize.



Hear *The Solitary Plover* Reading

The Friends of Lorine Niedecker will host a reading by the poets published in the Winter 2025 issue of *The Solitary Plover* on March 13th at 6:30pm CDT.

Sign up for FoLN News and Events
<https://tinyurl.com/Niedecker>

North Central: A Virtual Reading Series

Sunday, April 6th, 2025

Friends of Lorine Niedecker (FoLN) are delighted to host poets Lisa Fishman and Jordan Dunn for a virtual reading on Sunday, April 6th, 2025 at 5pm CDT.

Lisa Fishman is the author of eight books of poetry, a short story collection, and several chapbooks. Her newest poetry book is *One Big Time*, out on Wave Books in spring, 2025. *World Naked Bike Ride* was published in Canada by Gaspereau Press in 2022 and was a finalist for the Canadian ReLit Award in short fiction. Other Wave poetry titles are *Mad World, Mad Kings, Mad Composition* (2020) and *24 Pages and other poems* (2015). She continues to live primarily on the farm she and her husband started in 1999 in Orfordville, Wisconsin, dividing her time between Wisconsin and Canada. She is a dual US/Canadian with earlier roots in both the Detroit area and Montreal.

<https://www.wavepoetry.com/products/lisa-fishman>

Jordan Dunn is the author of *Notation* (Third Hand Books, 2024) and *Physical Geography as Modified by Human Action* (Partly Press, 2022) as well as various chapbooks and ephemeral prints including *Common Names, Reactor Woods*, and *A Walk at Doolittle State Preserve*. He lives with his family in Madison, WI, where he edits and publishes Oxeye Press.

<https://3rdhandbooks.com/product/notation-by-jordan-dunn>

<https://www.jordandcunn.com>

North Central is a virtual reading series providing a space to gather and hear living poets who connect in various ways to the poetry of Lorine Niedecker. The series takes its title from *North Central* (London: Fulcrum Press, 1968), the third book of poems published in Niedecker's lifetime. The readings are curated by Chuck Stebelton and Richard Meier and supported by the Friends of Lorine Niedecker. This event will be recorded. Please join us Sunday, April 6th at 5pm CDT on Zoom here:

<https://carthage-edu.zoom.us/j/96514563296>

Meeting ID: 965 1456 3296

New Monograph – *What Region? Lorine Niedecker's Short Fiction*

By Jenny Penberthy, Kate Colby, Karl Gartung and Flora Coker

This issue of *What Region?* is meant to give Lorine Niedecker's fiction the respect it deserves. Jenny Penberthy's essay explores the first two of the fictions, *Uncle* and *Switchboard Girl*. Kathy Colby examines Niedecker's poetics regarding *The Evening's Automobiles*. Karl Gartung provides a preface and Flora Coker performs supplemental recordings of all three fictions.

<https://lorineniedecker.org/multimedia/>

Lorine Niedecker's Short Fiction and past issues of the *What Region?* Monograph can be purchased for \$15 through Woodland Pattern Book Center.

<https://woodlandpatternbookcenter.com/collections/writers-of-the-upper-midwest/products/lorine-niedeckers-short-fiction>

Monograph Title Note - Lorine writes to Cid Corman, December 7, 1969, "I sent the University of Wisconsin - Milwaukee a copy of *T&G* way back in Sept. A few days ago I wrote: Did you fail to receive? They answer they've placed it with regional materials. I should ask: What region - London, Wisconsin, New York?"

Poetry - In Case You Missed

The Friends of Lorine Niedecker website has North Central Readings and presentations including Merrill Gilfillan, Joshua Beckman, Tirzah Goldenberg, José Felipe Alvergue, and Shannon Tharp and Patrick Morrissey. Sign up for FoLN News and Events to be alerted to new readers and presentations – about four emails per year.

<https://tinyurl.com/Niedecker>

Most recently poet and essayist Patrick Morrissey presented *Lorine's Binoculars*. The talk considered the significance of double vision, shifting scales and embarrassment in the poetry of Lorine Niedecker. Through close consideration of a few favorite poems and speculation about the value of poetry, Morrissey opened a conversation about Niedecker's ways of seeing and ways we might "carry our clarity with us." This presentation was recorded.

<https://lorineniedecker.org/event/niedeckers-binoculars-a-virtual-talk-by-patrick-morrissey/>

Past presentations are also available here.

<https://lorineniedecker.org/events/list/?eventDisplay=pas>

FoLN – Help Wanted

The Friends of Lorine Niedecker are looking for volunteers to help with updating our website, including maintaining a bibliography of Lorine Niedecker-related publications. This volunteer opportunity will be supervised by members of our Communications & Marketing Committee. Virtual training will be provided (via Zoom). Expected workload: 2-3 hours per month. Required skills:

- Must be dedicated to preserving and expanding the legacy of Lorine Niedecker.
- Must be comfortable working with computers.
- Must have experience with or be willing to learn the basics of WordPress.

If you are interested in volunteering, please send a brief email introducing yourself and describing your interest to swagstaff@lorineniedecker.org

Your Financial Support is Needed

The Friends of Lorine Niedecker is funded through donations and contributions and sometimes grants. We use funds to maintain the lorineniedecker.org website, produce *The Solitary Plover*, fund events and educational activities.

There are no paid staff, just dedicated volunteers.

Your contribution to the Friends is fully tax deductible. We appreciate your support.

You can make a donation through PayPal on our website: <https://lorineniedecker.org/friends-lorine-niedecker/>

You can also mail your contributions to:
Friends of Lorine Niedecker
Hoard Historical Museum
401 Whitewater Ave, Fort Atkinson, WI 53538



FRIENDS OF
Lorine Niedecker

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The Friends of Lorine Niedecker is a non-profit corporation.

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.

Request

If you are receiving a paper copy of The Solitary Plover please consider sharing this with another reader when you are finished.

To support the Friends of Lorine Niedecker, go to:
<https://lorineniedecker.org/friends-lorine-niedecker/>

