

# I was the solitary plover

FRIENDS OF  
*Lorine Niedecker*



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## *Welcome Poets*

*Colin Crowley*

Early in the fall of 2023, my friend Nick Gulig asked me if I would like to accompany him and some other writers on a road trip around Lake Superior. He wanted to gather video footage for a documentary project he envisioned about a Fort Atkinson poet. I enthusiastically signed on.

A resident of Fort Atkinson himself, Nick had recently been named to a two-year term as the poet laureate of the state of Wisconsin. He was taking this trip to pay homage to the late Lorine Niedecker.

I was not familiar with Lorine at this point, despite having grown up just a few miles down the road from Fort Atkinson in Beloit, where I spent much of my youth on the Rock River, the same water that flowed through her life and work. Not knowing much about Niedecker, I wasn't sure what form this documentary project would take. I understood that the trip would retrace the vacation route Lorine had taken in 1966 with her husband, Al Millen, which formed the basis of her poem, "Lake Superior," but I didn't know how we would translate this into a documentary.

Over the course of a short week in the perfect weather of a late Midwestern summer we circumnavigated the lake, retracing Lorine's path, guided by her notes and verses. I shot hours of footage of the changing landscape of the water and the plants, rocks, and freighters that she mentioned in her poem. I also tried as best I could to discern the visual meaning of Nick's journey, but it wasn't until the last day of our trip that I understood its fuller meaning.

On the last day, Nick told me about the first time he drove into Fort Atkinson. Having spent several years living in his mother's country, Thailand, after his father's death he decided to move back to Wisconsin, bringing his immigrant family with him. This was the summer of 2016, a presidential election year when anti-immigrant rhetoric inflamed the state and the country.

But as his car turned down Main Street Fort Atkinson, a sign tempered his anxiety. This sign hung marquee style above the door of a small local diner. It read, "Welcome Poets." On the brick wall of that same building, the following words were laid out in a bright mural:

*Fish*

*fowl*

*flood*

*Water lily mud*

*My life*

That was how Lorine Niedecker welcomed him home. Lorine Niedecker's life and work, and the ways in which the Friends of Lorine Niedecker and the Fort Atkinson community cared for and promoted her legacy, meant that he and his family could start their next chapter here.

The trip around Lake Superior suddenly made sense. What we had just filmed wasn't the story, it was the end of the story. And the scene that Nick had described to me about the sign on Main Street was the beginning of that same story. Our job was to fill in the rest. Nick and I presented our idea to the leadership of PBS Wisconsin, where I am a producer. They responded enthusiastically and encouraged us to flesh out our ideas across six brief episodes of a web series to be released online. Over the course of the next year and a half, we created a multimedia project that told the stories of two poets, Nick Gulig and Lorine Niedecker, and how their work and experiences intertwined through the nexus of Fort Atkinson.

In planning this project, we had several goals and aspirations, some well-defined at the outset, others discovered along the way.

# Fish fowl flood Water lily mud My life

We wanted to tell the story from Nick's point of view and express the thoughts of a contemporary poet finding his way back home. We also knew we had to show how integral Lorine's life and work had been for Nick's journey, and why she matters not just to him, but to many others.

We wanted to tell her story in a way that would introduce her to new audiences, avoiding the herculean task of making the definitive documentary of her life story, which would require resources we didn't have. More than anything, we felt that if we were going to succeed in making a multimedia project about poets and poetry, the documentary itself had to be a form of visual poetry.

In service to this ultimate goal, we took inspiration from the physical world Lorine Niedecker inhabited during her life in Fort Atkinson. Nick, my colleagues, and I spent a great amount of time in and around Lorine's cabin on Blackhawk Island. Through this process I personally became closer to her simply by allowing myself to observe and to exist momentarily in the same spaces where she spent her life. My strongest impressions were in the moments I spent alone on the riverbank outside Lorine's home. During certain hours of twilight, the river becomes still and transforms itself into a blank page where the local birds write their verses. A white pelican skimming the mirrored surface of the water, the swallows divebombing insects, a blue heron ascending to its perch in a treetop, and the parade of geese trumpeting through the air and across the water, all harmonized into an avian symphony that set Lorine's life to music every summer night. You don't have to be a poet to understand this, but to experience these moments helped me understand Lorine as a poet.

Another revelation was discovering that Lorine was an avid photographer who documented her surroundings not only in written verse, but also through visual images. In her personal archive the subjects of her poetry were laid out in small, square compositions she captured through the modest lens of a Kodak Instamatic. Here were colorful scenes of the river in its seasons, flowers gracing roadsides and riverbanks, birds hovering about her beloved cabin, and myriad daily minutia and natural phenomena that made up her world, all documented with the quiet, contemplative intention of a visual poet.

These scenes and archival images were combined with selections of Lorine's words, Nick's poetic commentary, and a host of audio, visual, and musical resources woven together with the help of more people than I can name here. We dubbed the resulting web series (which we later joined into a single film), "Welcome Poets," after the sign that first welcomed Nick to Fort Atkinson. This multimedia project became a collective tribute to the role that poetry can play in our lives and the way that our lives can play in our poetry.

While the title is an obvious reference to the sign above the diner on Main Street Fort Atkinson, a part of me hopes that viewers will also come to understand it as a quiet exhortation told in the imperative voice. These six episodes and the resulting film are about more than just telling the stories of two poets, they are an invitation for all of us to welcome poets into our own stories, communities, and lives.



**Colin Crowley** is a producer and photographer from Wisconsin. Before relocating to the Madison area in 2017 he worked as a communications specialist for an international aid organization in Nairobi, Kenya. In 2022 he was awarded three Chicago/Midwest Emmys for Directing, Photography, and Editing for his work at PBS Wisconsin.

The PBS Wisconsin production *Welcome Poets* is available to view as a six-part web series at <https://pbswisconsin.org/welcome-poets/> as well as on Youtube and on the PBS app (<https://www.pbs.org/pbs-app/>). The resulting film made by combining the six episodes together is being screened for audiences around the state and has been submitted for consideration in several local film festivals. There are also tentative plans to broadcast *Welcome Poets* on PBS Wisconsin. The Friends of Lorine Niedecker will communicate future developments and public screening events through email updates. If you are interested in hosting your own public screenings of *Welcome Poets*, you can make a request to PBS Wisconsin through this link: <https://pbswisconsin.org/welcome-poets/host-a-screening/>.

sunrise  
on the front steps  
a fallen robin

winter solstice  
the stag's antlers  
hold the moon

the silence before  
the hummingbird's return  
the silence after



**John Pappas** is a poet and teacher whose work has appeared in many poetry journals and anthologies. His haiku have garnered a Touchstone Award from The Haiku Foundation, a 2023 Trailblazer award, a silver medal in the 2023 Ito En New Haiku Grand Prix, Best in the United States in the 2023 Vancouver Invitational, a Sakura Award in the 2024 Vancouver Invitational, three New Science Awards in the 2025 Heliosparrow Haiku Frontier Awards, among others. His first chapbook *dimes of light* was published in 2024 by Yavanika Press. His work is featured in the recently published haiku anthologies off the main road: *six contemporary haiku poets* (Alba Publishing, 2024) and *New Resonance 14* (Red Moon Press, 2025). He lives in Boston.



### Winter Goldfinch

In the din of the city  
gold  
finch  
trill  
in the oak  
canopy  
above the garage

fooled by the warmth of  
fall  
stayed in winter  
longing

*open crick  
scent of dandelion  
purple thistle  
at dawn*



**Trish Stachelski** grew up in Milwaukee, Wisconsin and attended UW-Richland Center where she met Phyllis Walsh, one of the earlier biographers of Lorine Niedecker. The influence of the short poem and living in the coulee region of Wisconsin, helped shape Trish's creative process. She presently lives in Minneapolis with her family and enjoys gardening, walks near the Mississippi River and her job teaching English to adults from all over the world.

### Window Lunes

Through the brown woods, white  
tails flash—I  
should have such insight.

A cup of green tea  
with a stick  
of ginger—just that.

Window's a cold friend  
through which I  
bring the outside in.

At night when I can't  
see a thing—  
glass too inside me.



**Scott Keeney** has published six books, including *Sappho Does Hay(na)ku* and *Wahoo Sunset*. His poems have appeared most recently in *Sheila-Na-Gig* and *R&R*. He lives in Connecticut.



Governor Dodge State Park  
Lake Mendota, Dec. 8

**Dear Ones**—a red-tailed hawk waits in the woods at the edge of the lake where we have come to hike and look for tundra swans. It stays there as we pass, feathers blending in with fallen leaves and the trunks of winter black—hunting, another birder explains, for the shrew it dropped mid-flight, who’s had the luck to scuttle off into the underbrush while we trudge past, binoculars strapped around our necks, to find the white wings and graceful necks of the swans, hundreds blown to the far side of the iced-over lake, accompanied by half-grown young, fledged into their light grey—

and we find ourselves marveling at how each bird picks out from all the rest its kith and kin, the way we ourselves recognize each human face we know—how even in the great stadiums of games or music fests we go about, calling and greeting those we meet and know— as these do, we see in our binocular views.



**Robin Chapman** hikes Dane County parks weekly with friends and is author of ten books of poetry, including *Abundance*, (*Cider Press Review* Editor’s Book Award); *the eelgrass meadow* (Tebot Bach), and *Panic Season* (Tebot Bach), poems of the pandemic. She is recipient of the Helen Howe Poetry Prize from *Appalachia*

Found

Two things I did this fall  
for the first time: shot a can  
off a post thirty feet  
from me at a first shot,  
and read aloud.

The reading  
didn’t go as well as the bullet.

In a 1970 letter from Lorine Niedecker to British critic Kenneth Cox, published in *The Full Note*. p. 41



Poet and essayist **Maureen Scott Harris** grew up on the Canadian prairies and lives in the watershed of buried Garrison Creek in Toronto/Tkaronto, Canada. *Drowning Lessons*, her second book, won the 2005 Trillium Book Award for Poetry. She’s grateful for the sustaining presence of the more than human world even in large cities.

Measuring

My smartwatch tracks—  
steps, sleep, stress.

BMI, FICO, IQ—  
Health, wealth, intellect.

Smiles uncounted.



**Stan Winarski** lives in Germantown, Wisconsin. His chapbook *The Woods~Trails and Tangents* won the 2025 Finishing Line Press Chapbook Contest and will be published in January 2026. His work has appeared in *Solitary Plover*. He writes about the small and marginalized.

## Portrait of a Mother

Lorine Niedecker's

portrait of her mother  
in her poem *Wintergreen Ridge*

is nine words  
long:

*how she loved*

*closed gentians*  
*she herself*

*so closed*

and Lorine, the daughter, whose  
belief

in being open,

giving full

attention

to words and  
all

forms

of love

In the long line of ants carrying

dried mesquite blossoms, this one carrying the fragile  
almost

transparent blossom that's almost twice the size  
of

its own anatomy—and far bigger than any of the  
others

other ants hoist—makes me wonder if an ant  
ever

wants to show off, or simply recognizes superior  
strength

or was thinking of last night's dream when it chose a  
blossom



**John Levy** lives in Tucson. His most recent book is *54 poems: selected & new* (Shearsman Books, 2023). He is married to the painter Leslie Buchanan.

## Resolution

Understand the world is not  
against me, but just something.

I am like a tree, rooted  
buffeted by time and seasons.

Pay attention  
look carefully, listen closely.



**Mary C. Rowin** writes poems from her home in Middleton, Wisconsin. She is supervised by Charlie the cat. In fine weather Mary walks between Tiedemann and Stricker Ponds for inspiration.

## Marsh Light

a heron slides  
over ice-slipped cattails,  
wind bending  
the frozen reed

water whispers  
its slow undoing:  
thin glass breaking  
into river memory

I step lightly  
on frost cracked leaves,  
small bones of the season  
beneath the pale sky  
even the winter sun  
hesitates at the horizon,  
teaching the quiet art  
of holding still



## Floodmarks

the river scripts  
mud lines, driftwood  
hung like calligraphy  
children's footprints  
vanish in rising water,  
old fenceposts swallowed  
by silt and memory

the wind leans  
against the roof  
and murmurs  
soft instructions:  
bend, wait, endure

the moon slides  
low over the floodplain,  
rehearsing  
the seasons  
all over again



## Sandhill Mourning

dawn moves across the sandhill,  
tall grass bowing  
to nothing but itself

a lone crane rises,  
its shadow long  
on dew-soft soil,  
calling a name  
no one answers

I plant my hands  
in wet earth,  
feeling roots and water  
pulse under frost,  
learning the language  
of quiet survival

each winded day  
the marsh teaches me  
how to hold  
and let go



**David Anson Lee** is a poet, philosopher, and physician from Texas whose work explores the intersections of nature, human experience, and environmental change. Drawing inspiration from place, seasonality, and interdependence, he seeks to illuminate quiet moments and survival within the natural world. His work reflects attentive observation, precise imagery, and lyrical minimalism

## Focus

*Havenwoods State Forest*

binoculars unlifted  
to aspen & maple  
black branches  
leafless bereft

but someone flits  
working deep in  
late dogwood  
thickets  
of red shadow

now out  
onto the sun-patch  
branch above us:  
kinglets!  
two  
maybe three

flip twist flutter  
gulping gnats  
their daylong  
weightless  
dinner

not stopping  
& never full  
while we stand  
flat-footed  
in the moment's  
one & only  
blink



**Scott Lowery's** collection, *Mutual Life*, won second place in the 2024 Wisconsin Fellowship of Poets chapbook contest. Scott and his wife live near their young grandchildren in Milwaukee, where he writes, watches birds, and works for climate justice. Find more: [www.scottlowery.org](http://www.scottlowery.org)

## July Heat

Hot muggy weather  
Slow mornings long days thinking  
I water the cukes

The interview did  
not reveal anything new  
Wilting in hot sun

The interview told  
of the mother who left them  
“my children”—*de trop*

Left out of story  
I'll write my own—take that!  
Try to shut me out

My heart crushed by her  
The nothing she gave me—she  
the bird with no mouth

Unfurl your leaves fern  
My body what is it? Stop  
taking the dark in

Why do I hang on  
to empty anger? Empty  
lifeboat goes nowhere

Summer another  
filled with still air plants drop  
their flowers I droop

The mourning doves this  
morning—mourn the loss & give  
children seeds to chew

Rain showers threaten  
Fires in California  
Rainbows of color?

*Ask nothing from words*  
& they'll surely surprise you  
Get out of the way!

The unnamable  
bleak how we treat each other  
flatness summer rains

Trying to climb back  
up into the bright world—word  
first was the ladder

**Eléna Rivera's** poetry collections are *Arrangements* (Aquifer 2022), *Epic Series* (Shearsman, 2020), and *Scaffolding* (Princeton University Press, 2017). Poems also appeared in *Bathhouse*, *Denver Quarterly*, *Three Fold*, *Golden Handcuffs*, *VOLT*, the Joan Mitchell Foundation website, and *Creature Needs: Writers Respond to the Science of Animal Conservation* (University of Minnesota Press 2025). She's a recipient of an NEA grant and poetry fellowships from MacDowell and Djerassi.

## Godspeed

Cracked corn and seeds scatter  
under the bird feeder  
on a hard crust of snow.

Raucous crows strut and bully  
lesser birds. Squirrels vie for prominence  
in the deepening twilight.

A fox emerges from the woods.  
For weeks, she has foraged here  
shedding fur, hunger in her eyes.

Each day, the end is more visible,  
her body leaner. Patches of bare skin  
increase as temperatures plummet.

The full Wolf Moon illuminates  
the tender flesh in a circle of light,  
closing in benediction.

**Sharon Daly** is a fellow of the Greater Madison Writing Project and an educator. She finds inspiration in Wisconsin landscapes and in the company of other writers and poets. Her poems have appeared in a variety of publications.



## Route #106: Woman in Trench Coat

A fall day  
Trees rain leaves  
which hit the ground running  
behind a woman  
walking, slight,  
almost invisible,  
into town  
She cleans  
the hospital kitchen  
Her gait knows  
who she is,  
whether you do  
or not  
She is someone's  
daughter, a neighbor  
a chewer of words  
this poet alone  
Lorine



**Margaret Schroeder** is a retired psychotherapist who lives in Fort Atkinson, Wisconsin, not far from the Rock River. She knows someone who recalls seeing Lorine walk from Blackhawk Island to town along the Rock River. She enjoys companionship with a group of people who meet monthly to study Niedecker's work.

something of the water even in the name Lorine



**Michael Nickels-Wisdom's** work has most recently appeared in *Kingfisher Journal*, *Password – very short poetry*, *Heliosparrow Poetry Journal*, *Lost Balloon*, and other periodicals, and was included in the annual anthology *Haiku 2025: 100 notable nu from 2024* and *Haiku 21.2: an anthology of contemporary English-language haiku*. He lives in Delavan, Wisconsin.



A Niedecker Study Group at Margaret and Paul's

*Peace*  
not the structure—  
not slant rhyme or 5 line  
stanza,

But the meaning

Decide  
Mickey Mouse  
and scrubble  
suggests  
the relationship with that much  
younger man...

China?  
some suggest  
Consumerism,  
Communism  
War. not caring to win  
Peace  
a letting go...

Perplexed?  
that's Niedecker for ya



**Nancy Shea, MSE**, blends her extensive expertise in the healing arts with a deep passion for writing poetry. As a Certified EFT (Emotional Freedom Techniques) practitioner and a poet, she has created groups and classes aimed at guiding individuals toward personal transformation and creative expression. She lives near the confluence of the Rock and Crawfish Rivers.

## Stockings

A lone weathered leaf  
dangles in the maple  
like a forlorn stocking  
left on a fence post  
beside the path  
to the windswept beach.



**Christel Maass** lives in southeastern Wisconsin where she enjoys the solitude and simple pleasures of winter. Her poetry appears in *Bramble*, *The Orchard's Poetry Journal*, *The Nemadji Review*, *Creative Wisconsin*, *the Wisconsin Poets' Calendar*, and other publications.

river of wind  
flows behind the house  
grass blades ruffled

river slows to small  
creek, barely a trickle  
grass blades bounce up

small creek dries  
to stillness as the wind  
departs for elsewhere

elsewhere, whirling dervish  
dances through fields, scatters  
seed for the birds



**Frances Scott** is an Idaho transplant in Iowa. She's rediscovering the beauty of the Midwest as she meditatively walks through forests and fields. When not crunching numbers, she can be found writing under an ancient oak tree or blowing bubbles with her granddaughter.

## Zugunruhe

I am            he is  
we are  
one            autumn

days

shortening    my need  
to know        less  
and less

maples disrobe  
the harvest

moon

turning brown  
and            falling

this season too  
                  moves on

crane

by

crane



## Something Between

a gaze  
                  and a glare  
for the  
moon's next phase

through  
a cloudbank  
of whys

tethered

by transparent tentacles    running  
from the sleep  
  that won't come

my stockholm syndrome  
blooming    begging  
to be held longer

by your gravitational pull

not breaking  
the devil

i know    until

midway  
up  
a  
menopausal  
tree

the  
cicada's

shell



**Julie Schwerin** (she/her - Sun Prairie, Wisconsin) is an associate editor at *The Heron's Nest* ([www.theheronsnest.com](http://www.theheronsnest.com)) and a member of the Red Moon Anthology Editorial team. Her first full-length collection of haiku, *fencing with the moon*, is now available through Finishing Line Press.

## Confluence

Two or three rivers meet  
here

    stained water from tannins  
        tint of tea  
        color of coffee  
    leaches from leaves     maple   or oak  
before merging with the blue of *mishigami*.

In another time            this convergence holds  
a wetland of     wild rice  
                  *manoomin*  
    purifies water  
    nurses fish  
before joining the blue of *mishigami*.

In another age     glacial drift   deposits  
    clay   pebbles   boulders  
                  blue marl  
            lines lake beds  
    settles on shores  
    molds        moraines        or morasses  
before combining with the blue of *mishigami*.

In many others   inland seas     leave   limestone  
layers  
    which   now   form   mortar  
            in this building  
                  ancient skeletons  
            structure the present  
before slipping into the blue of *mishigami*.

In yet   another epoch   sandstone     concretizes  
    quartz crystals  
        submerged in  
                  a clear shallow     sea  
    shoreline breakers round each grain  
before moving into the blue of *mishigami*.

And   perhaps   farthest   back   in   time  
strata of     sediment  
              metamorphose  
              emerge as gneiss  
                  intense heat and pressure  
            fuse layers     vulcanized    sparkling  
before coupling with the blue of *mishigami*.

    Now  
at the confluence of two or three rivers  
    we   too   gather     flow   together     enchanted  
into the blue of *mishigami*.



### The Great Horned Owl

who does not screech in  
the darkness all around it

from the branch without bark  
attached still, to the tree dying  
from the top down, not the usual

i can almost see  
its shape in sound  
form of

solace and inquiry calling,  
in calling out to this world and

some other it knows, the one  
without us, calling us  
to it

**Donna Fleischer** has eight poetry chapbooks, *Baby in Space*, *FLANEUR*, and *Every Day Earth*, 2024. Her poems are in over 70 journals and anthologies, recently, *Half Day Moon Journal no.2*, *Kō*, *La Piccioletta Barca*, *Haiku 2025*, and *Haiku 21.2*. She blogs at word pond..

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

## Grandma, Wind, and Night

A per son  
from the Greek  
meaning

a sound  
passing  
through.

For the Zulu  
a person  
is a person

through  
other  
persons.

The drunk driver,  
the blow torch,  
my votive,

a match fights  
to hold  
the wick.  
\*

\*  
blasts of cold  
targeting

windows  
here legally

in ICE times  
know your rights

every window  
a storm window

**Dan Schwerin's** poetry comes from life on a farm or making his rounds across thirty plus years as a United Methodist pastor in Wisconsin, and now as the bishop of the Northern Illinois-Wisconsin Area of The United Methodist Church. You can find him on Twitter @SchwerinDan or Bluesky @danschwerin.bsky.social.

## The Aftermath

the grandkids  
have gone  
and left  
me bereft  
with nine balloons

purple pink  
blue yellow  
some traces  
of faces  
marked on two

adult pursuits  
poor substitutes  
for the squeals  
and peals  
of balloon tag laughter

unbuoyant  
deflated  
what's ahead  
remains unsaid  
as daylight fades

## Shopping for the Afterlife

the info videos  
for green burials imply  
everything thrives  
on expired lives  
wasting no carbon

meandering The Meadow  
of flailing flaccid grass  
we make our rounds  
among the mounds  
of composting corpses

small rough boulders  
with expectant hyphens  
or engraved death dates  
— all our fates  
essentially the same

*(after Lorine Niedecker's 5-line form,  
influenced by haiku)*

**Sheila Sondik** is a poet and printmaker in Bellingham, Washington. She's a long admirer of Niedecker's concision. Niedecker's 5-line form with internal rhyme, inspired by her reading of haiku, is particularly intriguing to her. Her latest chapbook is *Lighting Up the Duff*, a collection of Golden Shovels.





## Wild

See me  
apogee of the forests

slow-growing, sun loving resonance  
of that cosmic tilt:

orders, genera, species

*such treasures do not proceed  
by leaps and bounds*  
mused Linnaeus

The terrible magic of Homo sapiens —  
factory warehouse clearance



**Julia Kadlec-Wagner** writes poetry, literary analysis, music reviews, and when time permits, good teaching practice for conferences such as the New Jersey Writing Alliance, Common Ground Publishing, The Modern Language Association and The Conference on College Composition and Communications. She also serves as Director of the Metro Writing Studio located on the Metropolitan Campus of Fairleigh Dickinson University where she lectures in Academic and Creative Writing. Find more information about her writing at [wagnerjulia.com](http://wagnerjulia.com).

## Along the Same River

i was born as you were dying  
only a few weeks between  
only thirty miles away  
you never had a child live, nor did I  
skipping words, instead of  
playing syllables in time  
your stepdaughter must've tucked you in  
on the shelves of your immortal cupboard  
and nursed your remains into the waters  
until finally you closed your eyes,  
as the snow gathered  
deep in the woods, along the same river  
becoming still with the rock,  
decomposing mud,  
sleeping with the plovers



**Cynthia Holt** lives in Fort Atkinson, WI with her husband, artist Guzzo Pinc. Holt is the Fort Atkinson Arts Council Board Chair. In addition to working and volunteering, Holt gardens, works with clay, and when time allows, wanders along the Bark River. This is her first public submission.

## Metamorphosis

When I slide into the universe  
I'll post a series of soprano trills

and you will know  
the wren in me finally  
burst forth

O hear the music  
inside my bones



**CJ Muchhala's** work can be found in anthologies, print and on-line journals. A Best of Net and two-time Pushcart nominee, she lives in Shorewood, WI.

patterns

outside on the first warm  
weekend day this spring

& all the neighbors  
run power tools

black flies swarming the back  
wall of the house the table

top the oranges one half-  
eaten the other's peel

appealingly rolled i draw  
it the cranes calling

flying over in pairs back & forth  
to the lake the wind kicks

up again thunderstorm to  
come all the tree limbs breaking

out in goose bumps  
& shaking in the breeze



**Wendy Vardaman, PhD,**  
([wendyvardaman.com](http://wendyvardaman.com)) works as  
a web and digital media specialist.  
The author of five poetry collections,  
she served as Madison, Wisconsin  
poet laureate from 2012 to 2015 and  
volunteers as a graphic designer for  
poetry-related causes.

from errand : returning

dry reeds  
dotted with red-winged blackbirds  
shine wet  
in morning sun

moving alongside the second pond

muted gold whited out  
bush brush

thin wash of too shallow water

a dark shine around  
weed clumps  
& willows

up

five red-winged blackbirds

scatter  
& three

three more

off



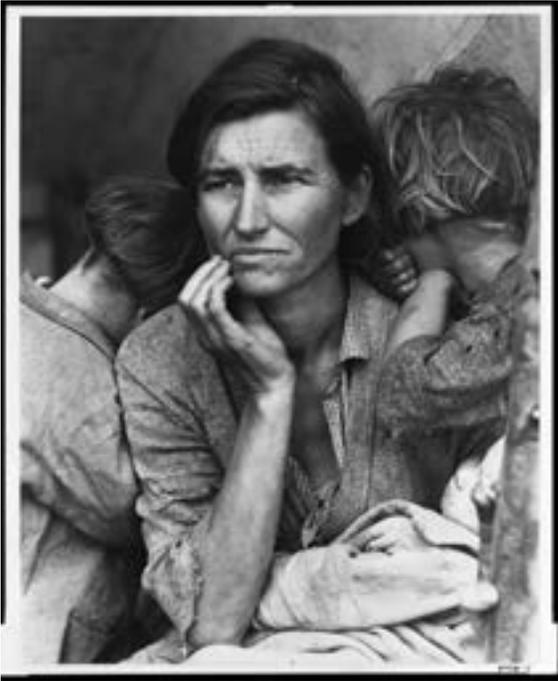
**Brad Vogler's** latest project is *A Viewing Space*, a platform created for various place/time investigations. The first publication launched with *Quietly Between*, a collaborative book of poetry and photography. He's the author of *my radius a small stone*, and *i know that this ritual*.



# Overlap

Lorine Niedecker 1903-1970

Dewey Stickley Oakley 1895-1992



During a Dust Bowl unit in high school history, my middle son announced that I favored Dorothea Lange's "Migrant mother." To me Florence Owens Thompson resembles my maternal grandmother. She died before my son was born so he never saw her depth of expression, her eyes that hid nothing from the camera. In 1936 the year the photograph was taken, my granny was pregnant with her fifth child. At age 44 she would give birth to my mom. When I study the photograph—the composition, the light, no filter softening worry lines or blurring the needs of her children I feel a connection to my granny. Born in 1895, she was able to hold my daughter (born in 1990) once. At that time, I lacked the words and phrasing for questions I wish I had thought to ask. It's doubtful I had the experience and patience required to fully listen and understand her history—her life in rural poverty—what gave her joy, what brought her sorrow.

I stare at ripples  
the choppy lake—my face  
better broken by

waves and floating weeds—lilies  
surface—soften deep creases.

Now that I have grandchildren I miss her more intensely. My sisters and I claim to be first generation college grads though our granny attended Normal School in Harrisonburg VA and became a teacher in a one room schoolhouse in 1916. I taught elementary students for 30 years, she had to give up teaching when she married. In her "old age" she had time to read and had both a day book (usually non-fiction) and night book--a novel kept on her nightstand and only read in bed. In my retirement I have adopted her practice. I don't know what her favorite genres were or if she enjoyed reading poetry. I search for other commonalities—our rural settings, passion for reading, ongoing insomnia, baking, tending flowers, thyroid disorder. That list explains almost nothing. I need to document her hardships, her suffering, her strength and endurance but I'm not certain she would allow it.

When I was little I would sit next to her and she would unclasp the pop beads of pearls (not genuine or manufactured but imitation) she wore around her neck to camouflage her large goiter.

I would connect the strand and pop it apart over and over—a "fidget" toy before they were labeled as such. I would rub the smooth scars on her arm with my small hand. The scars were beautifully pink and made from post third degree collagen. My grandpa became mean when he drank. He threw the scalding hot coffee she had brewed for his hung over mood at her. I am not certain how I know this but have a vague memory of my uncle telling me when I asked him about my grandma's scars. I will never know if she worried about staying a spinster teacher or if she was relieved when my grandpa proposed to her at age 24. She would have been eight years old when Lorine Niedecker was born and outlived her by over twenty years.

I reread Niedecker's poem [I married]

Untaught  
I thought  
he drank  
too much.  
I say  
I married  
and lived unburied.  
I thought—

I can't know if my granny missed teaching, ever wrote poetry, would have wanted to continue her education. I'm not even sure where she got her books—she never drove so I don't know who would have taken her to the nearest library. When she passed away at age 97 her medicine cabinet held outdated aspirin, a pink flask of Pepto Bismol and clove oil for ear aches and tooth decay.

I would be much more interested to receive a list of the books she was reading right before she died. Even better would be to hold the books she owned. I would look for underlined phrases or notes in the margins. I would hope to find coded messages or layers of meaning as I find when I reread poetry.

*Photo: Dorothea Lange, photographer. Mother of seven children. 1936. Image is in the public domain*



**Jenna Rindo** worked as a pediatric RN in hospitals in VA, FL and WI and then became an ELL teacher at elementary schools. She now tutors and mentors refugee students. Her poems and essays have been published in *AJN*, *JAMA*, *Calyx*, *WI People and Ideas Magazine*, *Bramble*, *One Magazine*, and other journals. She received the Lorine Niedecker prize for poetry in 2022 and co-edited the *WI Poets Calendar (2026)* with Katrina Serwe. She writes to better understand the complications within the human body, mind, and spirit.

## Your Financial Support is Needed

There are no paid staff, just dedicated volunteers. The Friends of Lorine Niedecker is funded through donations and contributions and sometimes grants. We use funds to maintain the [lorineniedecker.org](https://lorineniedecker.org) website, produce *The Solitary Plover*, fund events and educational activities. 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:

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401 Whitewater Ave, Fort Atkinson, WI 53538



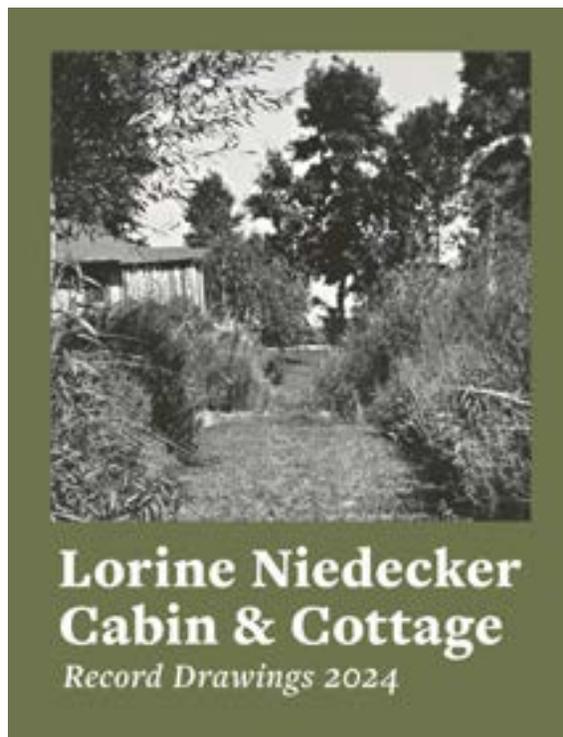
## Hear *The Solitary Plover* Reading

Hear *The Solitary Plover* is a virtual reading series featuring readings by poets who have published work in the most recent issue of *The Solitary Plover*, the bi-annual newsletter published by the Friends of Lorine Niedecker. Hear *The Solitary Plover* readings are hosted on Zoom, along with our friends at Woodland Pattern, and held twice per year, in February/March and August.

The reading of the Winter 2026 issue of *The Solitary Plover* will be on March 12th at 6:30pm CDT.

Sign up for FoLN News and Events

[lorineniedecker.org](https://lorineniedecker.org)



## Cabin and Cottage Book Available

The Friends of Lorine Niedecker commissioned architect Rachel Leland, AIA, and designer Mitchell Bobitt to create a 32-page volume recording the dimensions and architectural structures of the cabin, cottage and their locations on the property. It has long been a concern that should anything happen to the buildings we would have a record of the originals. Beautiful photographs, illustrations, detailed floor plans, and elevations help envision Lorine's life in her place.

*Lorine Niedecker Cabin & Cottage, Record Drawings 2024* is available for \$30 (\$10 s/h) through the Hoard Historical Museum. (920-397-9914).

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

Our mission is to preserve and expand 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/>

