

My friend tree. 1961

Niedecker, Lorine

Edinburgh, Scotland: The Wild Hawthorn Press, 1961

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MY FRIEND TREE

Poems
by
Lorine Niedecker

Linocuts by Walter Miller



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John as fairly
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THE WILD HAWTHORN PRESS
1961

DESIGNED BY
Walter Miller

and

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My friend tree
I sawed you down
but I must attend
an older friend
the sun



You are my friend—
you bring me peaches
and the high bush cranberry
you carry
my fishpole

you water my worms
you patch my boot
with your mending kit
nothing in it
but my hand



The young ones go away to school come home to moon

like Frederick the Great what was it he ate

that had to be sown in the dark of the moon

Isn't it funny people run their acres without a hat figuring rain in the next moon change

while you on a stool at numbers in a heavenly scale know the moon changes night and noon



There's a better shine on the pendulum than is on my hair and many times

I've seen it there.

Black Hawk held: In reason land cannot be sold, only things to be carried away and I am old.

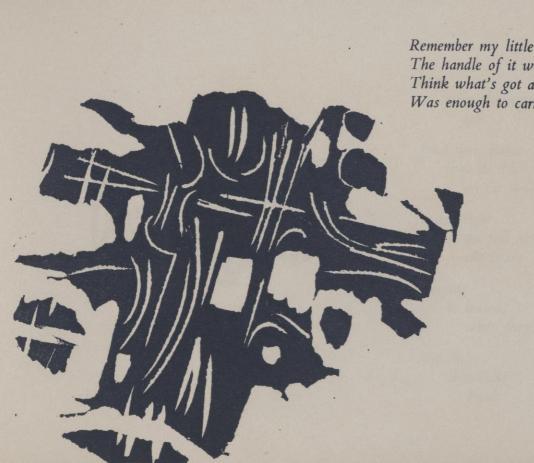
Young Lincoln's general moved, pawpaw in bloom and to this day, Black Hawk, reason has small room.





I'm a sharecropper down here in the south. Housing conditions are grave.

We've a few long houses but most folks, like me, make a home out of barrel and stave.



Remember my little granite pail?
The handle of it was blue.
Think what's got away in my life!
Was enough to carry me thru.



Paul when the leaves fall

from their stems that lie thick on the walk

in the light
of the full note
the moon

playing to leaves when they leave

the little thin things Paul



Along the river
wild sunflowers
over my head
the dead
who gave me life
give me this
our relative the air
floods
our rich friend
silt

Old man who seined to educate his daughter sees red Mars rise: What lies behind it?

Cold water business now starred in Fishes of dipnet shape to ache thru his arms.





Don't shoot the rail!
Let your grandfather rest!
Tho he sees your wild eyes he is falling asleep,
his long-billed pipe
on his red-brown vest.

He built four houses to keep his life. Three got away before he was old.

He wonders now rocking his chair should he have built a boat

dipping, dipping and sitting so.



Not feeling well, my wood uncut

And why?

The street's bare-legged young girls
in my eye

with their bottoms out (at home they wear long robes).

My galoshes
chopped the cold

till cards in The Moon where I sawed my mouth to make the bid and now my stove's too empty to be wife and kid.





My man says the wind blows from the south, we go out fishing, he has no luck, I catch a dozen, that burns him up, I face the east and the wind's in my mouth but my man has to have it in the south.

Well, spring overflows the land, floods floor, pump, wash machine of the woman moored to this low shore by deafness.

Good-bye to lilacs by the door and all I planted for the eye.

If I could hear—too much talk in the world too much wind washing, washing good black dirt away.

Her hair is high. Big blind ears.

> I've wasted my whole life in water my man's got nothing but leaky boats my daughter, writer, sits and floats.



The clothesline post is set yet no totem-carvings distinguish the Niedecker tribe from the rest; every seventh day they wash: worship sun; fear rain, their neighbors' eyes, raise their hands from ground to sky and hang or fall by the whiteness of their all.



INTRODUCTION

by Edward Dorn

These sounds mark the placements of an inner world.

What is in will come out, it does not always work the other way. What there is to be claimed by a common, external, large recognition, is the bony superstructure, the form one might say, but I wouldn't (a too evident form is boring), the word seems the rocks of the whole thing, not pebbles certainly, phrase, no. I don't "understand" the poems very well. The "meanings" are always a little mysterious, to me. So much is said, and heard, portrayals of a landscape with seas and boots, and water, wood, the size is of some kind of nation (people). "Black Hawk held:" That is, not quite incredibly, brief, and very clear. It lays out a yet active tradition, however hard to detect, and embraces Keokuk with folded arms and a stare.

Such notations of an inner world are a little touchy now. We live in a time of the calculated poem, many "intelligent" people like to think they left behind much in these poems in some kind of depression, or abstract world manipulated difficulty, if the noise isn't a certain place on the scale now, they don't hear it. "I've wasted my whole life in water / my man's got nothing but leaky boats / my daughter, writer, sits and floats." It is distinctly unusual to speak of failure with anything but the rankest of distaste. As if that were the point, as if any so called situation is possessed of success. I like these poems because first they attach an undistractable clarity to the word, and then because they are unabashed enough to weld that word to a freely sought, beautifully random instance—that instance being the only thing place and its content can be: the catch in the seine.

THE WILD HAWTHORN PRESS

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