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## 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



MY  
FRIEND  
TREE

*Poems*

*by*

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To Fred. Hobe  
who as legal contact  
sustains Black Hawk Island  
and jetty — Lorine Niedeker

*Poems*

*by*

*Lorine Niedecker*

MY FRIEND TREE

*Linocuts*

*by*

*Walter Miller*

THE WILD HAWTHORN PRESS

1961

DESIGNED  
BY  
*Walter Miller*

and

PRINTED BY SHEPHERD  
IN EDINBURGH  
SCOTLAND

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New Directions  
Quarterly Review of Literature  
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Neon  
Origin

© Lorine Niedecker, 1946 and 1961



*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.



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