

# PIECEWORK

A Magazine of Poetry by Women



JANEMARIE LUECKE

Fall 1987

Red Dirt Press, Inc., is the result of the vision of eight women who wanted to provide more publication opportunities for women. The publication of this magazine of women's poetry, aptly named PIECEWORK, which draws on all the images of women's work that is done "by the piece," is dedicated to all the women who write poetry, sometimes in spite of their lives and families.

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GIFT

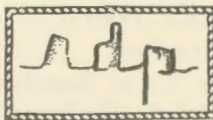
# PIECEWORK

A MAGAZINE OF POETRY BY WOMEN

FALL 1987

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## HAPPY BIRTHDAY, RED DIRT PRESS

The camaraderie of "women from all areas, from all levels of education and life, brought together by a single thread--writing poetry," was the feeling one of the poets expressed to the women of Red Dirt Press, after being a part of the press' first birthday celebration, July 25. As the group of unacquainted poets gathered to share in the celebration, all the things that can divide women were dismissed and the focus became the stories, the threads of similarities, the ties that bind us together. There were stories of near suicides, addictions to inappropriate relationships, of poetry's healing and saving their lives. "Does our poetry come as therapy or as a result of a sensitive soul which requires therapy?" was the question posed in the letter which came the next week. "I no longer feel like an oddball," she continued. "It's wonderful, knowing there are other women who have felt and do feel as I do."

The afternoon reception featured the poets' reading their own selections and relating a little of their lives. There were art displays by Gail Garloch, Rebecca Friedman and Dorothy Moses, photography by Robin Smith, jewelry by Theila Elliott, quilts and crafts by Visual Memories, and dulcimers made by luthier Anna Koester.

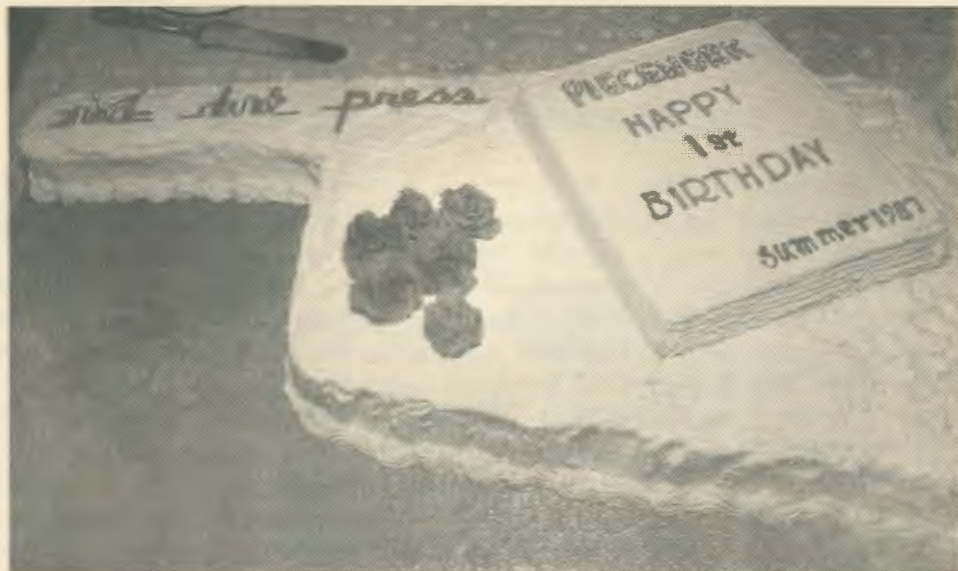
The evening's festivities were kicked off with showing three videos by Norman artist Jeanne Hollenbeck, followed by the poetry readings of Abigail Keegan and Doris Davenport, and the wonderful music of Mary Reynolds and the Sisters of Swing.

A very special visual greeting from Maine poet May Sarton was printed on a computer-banner for all to share:

"I salute PIECEWORK for publishing so many fine women poets in the region. So many new voices! It is one more proof that the best writers these days appear in the little magazines. Bravo to the editors and to the poets!"

May Sarton

All the women of Red Dirt Press wish to thank all who attended and those who have supported our first year with their subscriptions to the magazine, and with their marvelous poetry, without which we would not have a magazine to publish.



**RED DIRT PRESS' AND PIECEWORK'S BIRTHDAY CAKE**  
by Dorothy McGuinness, Moore



**POET DORIS DAVENPORT** shares some of her poems with the anniversary group shortly before leaving the state for a new teaching job at Bowling Green University.

(Photos by Marian Hulsey)

## FEATURED ARTIST -- JANEMARIE LUECKE

Janemarie Luecke, O.S.B., is a native Oklahoman, born to the western wheat lands of Okeene. As a member of her Benedictine community she has lived and taught in a number of other areas of the state--Guthrie, McAlester, Oklahoma City and Stillwater. She has taught Old and Middle English at Oklahoma State University since 1966, and although she retired last year, she continues to teach one class per semester at OSU.

Through her scholarship, teaching and lecturing, Janemarie has contributed greatly to education in this state. She is a dynamic orator and for many years has challenged and inspired audiences here and around the country to face our most complex contemporary issues--civil rights, women's rights, U.S. involvement in Central America, and the nuclear arms' race, to name only a few.

Besides being a skilled poet, Janemarie is the author of scholarly articles, essays on social justice and religion, a book on Old English rhythm, and a handbook on prosody. She has published two books of poetry, *THE RAPE OF THE SABINE WOMEN* (1978) and *WILD BIRD EGGS AND OTHER MYSTERIES* (1984). She is preparing her third volume for publication. In addition, Janemarie has published her poems in numerous magazines and journals, such as *KUDZU*, *NEW MEXICO HUMANITIES REVIEW* and *THE POETRY SOCIETY OF AMERICA BULLETIN*.

Janemarie has won honors for her poetry in contests and has received grants to both Yaddo artists' colony in New York and the MacDowell Colony in New Hampshire. Recently in the *NEGATIVE CAPABILITIES* contest, judged by Marge Piercy, she received an honorable mention for her series of ten "Cancer Poems." In these poems, as Denise Levertov said, she "wrests poetry from the cancer," the cancer she is now battling. These moving and painfully beautiful poems will be published in *NEGATIVE CAPABILITIES* this year.

On a personal note, I want to thank Janemarie, for she was my literature teacher and poetic mentor through my twenties. I am proud to be publishing the work of one of Oklahoma's outstanding educators and poets.

A.K.

## WILD BIRD EGGS

A robin's egg came in the mail today  
nested in cotton. The match box shape, the plain  
brown paper wrapping, did not betray  
the quaint fragility that it contained.  
A tucked in note, warning care, gave way  
to layered batting sheltering a stain  
of sudden blue that thrilled with pleasure. Such  
vulnerability I could not touch!

The long lost child saw the broken shell  
lying between the stubbled cuts of wheat  
short after harvest--its fragile wisp of yellowed  
white and yolk splattered--and knew the grief  
of trust tested and failed, of a hand that fell  
just as her brother's fist unclosed in brief  
encounter. She could not hold in case  
he'd drop on prickling flesh an infant mouse!

Love too comes in fragile selves of weakness  
shelled in pastel, carefully hidden in hands  
so lightly clutched that only the touch of meekness  
--of weakness matched with tested trust--can stand  
its frightful prospects: the risk of surface coldness,  
of losing self in another's shifting sand,  
of being tricked, the rational conclusion  
that eggs will always shatter on collusion.

Just now I took the blue from out its cotton,  
felt its coldness warming to my palm,  
and wondered if my human touch had gotten  
response of any sort inside. The calm  
exterior unnerved my latent passion.  
But you, my love, whose fingers move like dawn  
need only touch to carefully unpeel  
my years of fear, my layered garnered steel.

Then may we prick our weakened shells to free  
the dove whose bones transparent still reveal  
the marrow; from there only can we hope to be  
built whole, and--loved--lovingly unveil  
the force of dove's wings, the mystery  
of wounded life which garden stones conceal,  
until our endless strokes of love engender  
trust that (wild bird eggs) we can surrender.

--Janemarie Luecke  
Stillwater

from WILD BIRD EGGS

## TUNDRA

*The flower-rich meadowland  
growing above the limit  
of trees,*

It was August. The humped  
backbone of the continent  
was vertebrated with snow;  
bald tops of mountain  
juttied out meekly, fringed  
with a hairline of boulders;  
far below, the timbered  
chest of the Rockies  
glowed dark and rugged.

*tundra is fragile  
and may be permanently  
damaged  
if walked on repeatedly.*

Reading the leaflet,  
picking our way  
between rocks algaed to green  
and black, between talking,

*It takes some of these plants  
several hundred years  
to achieve the growth  
you see here: grasses,  
herbs, sedge,  
and a few dwarfed shrubs;  
the Mountain Dryad,*

She said,  
"Will you be there--always--  
when I need you?" and I,  
"If I am--if I surrender  
that space, that free rapture  
of striding unencumbered  
the world's rafters--will you need me  
then--when I'm weak, and wanting . . ."

*Greenleaf Bluebells,  
Alpine Forget-me-nots  
(five-year-olds, low-growing,  
may have stems a quarter-inch only  
in diameter, with showy flowers,  
more blossom than leaves)  
Sky Pilots.*

*Drought may occur  
both summer and winter; blizzards;  
be aware of lightning hazards  
with thunder.*

*Small leaves are protected  
by masses of hair  
or waxy substances  
pigmented with red.*

*High winds, and  
freezing—all winter  
and even in summer—  
make for slow-growing*

Westward one day near the pole  
six hours I rode  
the curved rim of the world  
watching a sunset.  
Now stooping over stick-like  
leaves I watched it blow  
purple, pink, yellow,  
feeling it rise in her reading:

(I answered)

(She said:)

"But . . ."

*rapid in season.  
Harebells, Rydbergia—  
they know how to hold  
from summer to summer,  
budding in one,  
bursting in bloom  
a year later.*

The cragged meadow unrolled  
to the north hiding drops  
of 5000 feet. We turned to the myth  
of the Utes ringing this table in clouds,  
drinking from bowls that are lakes  
frozen black in the rocks.  
We breathed in their strength,  
leaving the plants

*undisturbed  
for the thousands  
who follow.*

--Janemarie Luecke  
Stillwater

## JULIA'S MESSAGE

Do not forget the people of the mountains!

Julia's words fell like small fingers of rain  
piercing our breastbone  
dislodging the marrow, sending  
shockwaves through the membrane  
of our entrails. We felt  
her pain like the wretched path  
ascending nearly perpendicular  
to Abuelita's hut, her hope  
like Esperanza  
leading us onward.

How can we forget you

guttled rock, hacked to spines  
worn down to treacherous smoothness  
by oppression; rising relentless  
but granting us glimpses  
of your distant, snow-ringed volcano.

Can we forget

your faces--showers of bougainvillea  
tumbling over walls in purples, magentas  
masking the scars of hunger  
the horrors: Magdaleno's eyes  
devoured by ulcers, leathered feet  
unwashed through years of scant water.

Can a mother forget her baby

cradled in her dingy veil  
coated with three days vomit  
its whimper becoming death's rattle.

**And if she forgets**

having buried so many  
replacing them quickly

**Can we forget the mothers**

Angela, gentled by love  
fired by struggle, by survival  
Her--in Guatemala  
her riven womb robbed of its child  
stuffed with the head of her husband  
Her sisters--searching the corpses  
for missing sons and daughters.  
Can we forget their eyes  
full as the moon that later  
washed over our faces.

**We shall never forget you**

Esperanza, who never left us  
all the way back  
down that torturous path  
like a mountain goat  
like hope  
-waving your baskets  
(for bread, for tortillas)  
before our flagging spirits.

**Te llevamos en nuestro corazon  
El pueblo de las montanes.**

--Janemarie Luecke  
Stillwater

## MOM

My mother bore us  
spaced through eighteen  
years, lost her teeth at thirty,  
faced each season's change with certitude  
of work, each month with cramping pain,  
each day or two with gratitude  
of folding yeast in flour  
and kneading bread.

She took us in a stride  
that multiplied her output:  
not just some dozen jars of food  
preserved for winter, hundreds--picked  
from fields of garden, shelled and  
peeled through endless hours  
monotonously ticked  
from child time.

She cut out blocks  
of white from a blackened  
pot she'd hung over live embers  
full of tallow, lye, and other facts  
a child could stir and wonder at,  
how it dared to come out soap  
for washing, and bring her  
ribbons at the fair.

Sliced a roof of  
apples, spread on a sheet  
and turned to dry out in the sun  
then stored in bags under the stairs  
along with raisins and apricots  
for munching on in random  
hunger when fresh ones  
were all gone.

Pieced quilts from  
scraps, and crocheted  
rugs from yarn of stockings  
dyed to match the moods of children  
stretching to independent youth  
and so released the spinning  
colors of labor unrelieved  
but, whistling, done.

--Janemarie Luecke  
Stillwater

## A BENEDICTION

The earth is tired;  
she's worked hard  
all through the spring  
and summer  
so that we may share  
in the harvest.

Her store-rooms are full.  
Her jars overflow  
with corn,  
her baskets with fruit.  
Her vines sag  
with sweetness  
and her fields shine  
in the cool evenings.

No wonder  
she is drowsy  
and can scarcely  
stay awake  
to tell the geese good-bye  
or to listen  
to the Ripe Corn Song.

Now she needs to pull  
the radiance  
of her patch-work quilt  
over her head.  
To rest  
and, when winter comes,  
to sleep long and deep,  
warm in her soft  
white blankets.

--Katharine Privett  
Pawnee

## AUTUMN MAGIC

We stand on the summit  
Of Sparrowhawk Mountain  
Overlooking the Illinois River.  
The wind, crisp as a Granny Smith apple,  
The earth, moist and nutty,  
The sycamores, golden and blood-red,  
The river, a snake tumbling over boulders and  
broken tree trunks,  
The valley, glistening and sweet,

We stand on the summit.  
A word, a look, a touch  
Communicates a comfortable feeling.  
The channels of your mind  
Are carved in a different pattern  
From mine. So  
The climb to reach this peak  
Has been arduous.

We stand on the summit  
To experience the  
Autumn magic.

--Susan A. VanSchuyver  
Oklahoma City

## AUTUMN TEMPTATIONS

The brisk, cool wind blows gently,  
twirling golden-red leaves  
into crossword patterns  
on the colorless grass.

Sweet smelling smoke,  
billowing from a neighboring chimney,  
climbs into the azure sky,  
losing its identity in a cumulus cloud.

Pumpkins lie in the halloween patch,  
ready to have their personalities  
forever imbedded in their orange epidermis.

Inside, the vegetable stew is bubbling,  
creating a steady rhythm of percussion sounds.  
The aroma of fresh baked cornbread  
wafts from the oven,  
like a secret vapor apprehending its quarry.

The fire's appetite for the seasoned pine logs  
is evident by the brilliant yellows and reds  
trapped in their pigmentations,  
trying to escape  
inside the stone-lined hearth.

With her awe-inspiring colors and unmistakable scents,  
Autumn has invited herself,  
once again,  
into our lives.

--Sue McGinnis  
Arlington, TX

## FEASTING

I am rushing headlong down this autumn stream of days.  
The fierce, fiery red of maples sears my senses.  
The coin gold of softwoods glitters in the sun.  
Nature's feast is spread before me.  
I want it all. One lifetime is not enough.

There are many selves inside this body,  
some have just awakened.  
Youth is now behind me,  
but mid-life's richness eclipses youth.  
So I'll take my days, each a new adventure,  
and let the well-spring deep inside me  
challenge rampant nature.

--Mary Menges Myers  
Oklahoma City

## PROCRASTINATION

The sun this first day of  
Autumn seems reluctant to  
Leave the tea party of  
Summer; and is dilatorily  
Sipping from the bottom of  
his cup.

--Riner Fitzgerald Moore  
Wanette

## WOMAN BURNING LEAVES

She's raked and burned all afternoon  
and into evening--  
engrossed in scarlet maple, yellow elm,  
star-shaped, star-fallen sweet gum.  
And stands now  
twined with ripe, dense, stinging  
vines of smoke,  
attentive to the hum of wheeling fire.

Leaves like old love-letters read again,  
combed through,  
then piled tenderly to be destroyed  
she's turned into remembered passion  
and new loss.  
One last time, desire consumes the earth  
and writes on air.

--Katharine Privett  
Pawnee

## THE RESTORATION

Dark shadows on dew-spangled grass  
Beckon my weary soul from troubled bed  
Bare feet find sweet relief  
Cool grass cushioned, dew washed.  
Beneath tall pines at last I lie  
Ten thousand needles soft, my bed  
Pine-scented breeze, my fan.

Locust violins lead in  
Lone dove's crooning  
Bumble bee bass drones by  
While sparrows' twitter weaves about  
Rapt woodpecker's percussion  
Pale spider swings on sparkling line  
And softer play the violins.

Sun fingers my refuge probe  
I wake to joy and dance my way  
Tiptoe in sun-warmed grass.  
This day that shall begin at noon  
Has conquered all my shades of night.

--Eve Lear  
Oklahoma City

## MISER

I heard empty cans clatter down a vacant street  
as I stood in the old woman's kitchen  
and watched yellowing scraps of paper  
flap in the box fan's breeze.

"She's such a pennypincher,"  
her daughter told me, "always  
clipping coupons from the  
newspaper, saving bread wrappers  
and brown paper bags,"

but now her scissors lay on the table;  
she had finished her ritual.

Her hands on a neat pile of clippings,  
she smiled, her blue eyes  
watering in the whites

she was quiet.

For a moment  
she did not hear the emptiness  
that holds its breath  
on the edge of outside,

waiting for the scraping  
sandblocks of dreams to  
rasp an unknowable pattern

and the sycamore leaves  
already yellowing  
and curling  
cry

to fall,  
finally,  
to the ground.

--Susan L. Smith  
Norman

## ABSENT MINDED

I put my scissors down right there.  
Now they are gone.  
No one knows where.  
Biding his time,  
Some gremlin crept  
While I was busy or I slept;  
Not bent on thievery or harm,  
But just in play  
With cunning charm.  
To see if I can guess  
T'was he, not just my mind deserting me.

--Jane Boese  
Graham, TX

## A LESSON IN MEDITATION

Sit  
Catatonic  
Eyes rolled back into the mind  
which is dead  
thoughtless  
This is an exercise for the soul

The body  
leave  
search for the web  
find the connection  
and follow the vibration  
Be nothing but a receiver  
to the motion

The drum beats  
and the lungs stretch  
in rhythm  
as the cavity fills with energy  
from the snake's rattle  
and the memory of a flutist

It is the attitude returning

--Teresa Anne Carson  
Stillwater

## A REFLECTION ON LIFE

As I awake each morning  
And start each day anew,  
I find that I get in a "fizz"  
With everything I do.  
I rush through all the household chores,  
Wielding broom and mop  
It seems such an endless thing  
With not a place to stop.  
I rush off on weekends  
To buy food to grace our table,  
To fill us with energy  
And make us fit and able.  
On Sundays I go off to church,  
And my spirits are lifted up  
For I know full well HIS BLESSINGS  
Overflow my cup.  
Then on Monday morning  
Again I start anew  
And do all the endless tasks  
I know I have to do.  
As I pause to reflect to days gone by  
When I did all these things and more  
But way back, oh say, twenty years,  
It wasn't such a chore.  
But now I get so weary  
And my bones, they creak and crack  
And I get that unpleasant feeling  
Of an aching back.  
'Tis then the light begins to dawn  
And it is plain to see  
That Father Time is close behind  
And catching up with me.

--Naomi Schmidt  
Barnsdall

## TARTARUS OF WOMEN

Spread-eagled on the gym floor  
I watch the other women stretch & strain  
bend & twist  
becoming that elusive other--  
putting themselves through torture  
for their men  
or themselves.

From our weird pelvis-tipped positions  
we implore the fluorescent gods  
ensconced on the pagan ceiling:  
"Approach: make love to our now-thin thighs.  
Kiss our sweating necks.  
For you we do this."

High priestess, the instructor,  
rebukes us by her own muscular presence.  
Like the servants of Artemis  
she seems to disdain the pleasures of our flesh.  
Through our pelvic-thrust positions  
her voice drones on, humorless.  
Her pure, untouched face floats above her perfect body.

Writhing on the sweaty floor  
I learn the lessons of a balking body:  
"One and two and one and two . . ."

The pagan, demonic light mocks me,  
and her voice chants on.

--Betsy Ballard  
Norman

## A BLOCK OF ICE

In a dark room  
hallucinations sit on a chair  
encroaching, often inundating him,  
as the sight of his familiar old, monogrammed  
robe momentarily comforts me,

enchantingly deluding me, fleetingly  
mirroring the facade of my beloved brother.  
Too soon, imploding reality shatteringly reminds me  
that time has frozen him in an alcoholic vise.  
Once beautiful, his face and body  
unesthetically devoid of vitality  
have become like his carpet stains,  
regurgitated life.

Love, come sit with me. Let's hold each other  
and pretend death isn't near.  
Ricochet those childhood days off the wall  
and I shall dream of feeding baby lambs,  
bright blue skies and Blackie.  
His words create images of happy days,  
a momentary feast. Then silence  
slowly slithers into the room  
and wraps itself around my tongue.

I bend and kiss him goodbye.  
Outside in the sun,  
staring at his unmowed lawn,  
my heart melts  
and runs down my face.

I bend and kiss him goodbye.  
Outside in the sun,  
staring at his unmowed lawn,  
my heart melts  
and runs down my face.

--Patricia Heck  
Miami

## DOUBLE FEATURE

When I was twelve years old  
I gave up Saturday afternoon  
movies in Capitol Hill.  
Not even Flash Gordon  
could save me from the danger  
that faced the silver screen.

On Saturday afternoons  
in the movies, the men come  
and pass an empty seat to take  
the one beside. They wriggle  
in their raincoats  
while their eyes, like minnows  
in a pool, dart and hover  
checking out the lay  
of land and possibilities.

One hand is deep inside  
a pocket. The other  
makes a megaphone  
to punctuate the soundtrack  
with ragged breath, or plucks  
at nose or lip, covering  
the mouth. What is it  
about shame  
the mouth wants to conceal?

One leg touches mine, a pressure  
so subtle that I think perhaps  
it's only my imagination,  
like Mother said. I grip  
my bag of popcorn and gaze  
in desperate concentration  
at the screen.

One time, pushed into  
unfamiliar courage, I blurted  
"Stop that!"  
The people in the row behind  
said hush. The raincoat man  
revealed his mouth  
and looked at me  
with cold and level eyes.  
"Stop what?"

He went home with me  
inside my head  
and stared at me  
through nightmares  
for a while.

I didn't tell the manager  
because who'd believe a kid.  
Child molesters  
hadn't even been invented.

Those raincoat men  
with minnow eyes  
and heavy breath...  
I used to wonder if they were  
somebody's daddy.

--Judith Rycroft  
Edmond

## HEALING IN THE OZARK MOUNTAINS

Traffic, sirens, cries for help  
beat me without mercy.  
Brutal pavement, pushes, pounds  
till even bones would break.

Hands over my ears,  
Spasms of pain jerking limbs  
and mind in seizures...until  
I can't live like this anymore.

Pulling this life together  
to throw onto Ozark Mountains,  
hoping a web there will hold  
And give me some time free.

Magic Circle, drawn in dust, opens the way  
from fearful deer to sharp-eyed crow,  
Soaring Eagle.

Indian Princess becomes wise healer,  
Strength straightens the spine,  
A song begins.  
Healer learning on herself.

Raindrops guide this body  
toward gentle cleansing, soothing.  
Aphrodite's softness becomes my own  
Naked Nature leading the dance, ever-flowing.  
Wind-power becomes motion-strength,  
breath of life.  
Harmonies uncover melodies buried  
in the heart.

**Hold me, Earth Mother  
Enfold me in your warm everything.  
Let me rest with you, rocking.  
If I close my eyes,  
will you still be here?**

**Rumbling violence, darkness, storm,  
I wake to these inside out.  
Trembling Life-Force in both of us,  
We are Terrible in common, so  
I dare to face the Dark.**

**Steps on the trail touching in time,  
knowing the song and the dance.  
Moving along with the rest of the Living  
My own steps in my own time.**

**A small campfire burns panic, grasping and failure,  
Courage, compassion and hope rise Phoenix from the ashes.  
Forest ritual soars, yet stays  
Sticks sacrificed for light and warmth.**

**Walking gently in these mountains  
I can know them up and down.  
Choices unfold petal by petal,  
immeasurable variety without confusion.**

**Webs of interdependence are imprinted as patterns  
To use later when my footsteps will be harder to hear.**

Millicent and The Bear sing to me of soaring.  
Floating just above, watchful that I am alert.

Millicent frightens little girls in fairy tales.  
Now she tells me we're sisters and she'll show me  
terrors unimaginable in make-believe.

The Bear touches my soul, swaying in familiar rhythms  
Fearsome beauty and strength are heavier happiness  
than I have ever known.

The three of us return together, becoming one another  
We bring a fresh song from the mountains,  
and want to give it away.

--Cindy Nietfeld  
Kansas City, MO

## TEACHER'S HANDBOOK INSERT #1

This is one of those days  
when I look out upon that dead sea  
of blank, stopped faces  
worn-out heads drooping upon unwilling arms  
and in every slouched expression  
I read a negation of my effort  
a stamping-out of my own sweet self.

This is one of those days  
when my messy desk blooms in a snide victorious garden of disorder  
and the work not done assaults my hurting eyes  
and the papers, unmarked, scatter on the unswept office floor  
to match my littered, muddled psyche.

Why did I want to teach?

In Dante's Hell, pale Count Ugolino gnaws the brain-pan  
of his eternal victim,  
in an eternal frenzy over his own disgustingly eternal cannibalism.  
On these days I become that victim  
and each duty  
each dead-faced student  
tears out another bite from my exposed and deadened skull.

Why did I want to teach?

Even in this arid desert of my own parched Hell,  
I sometimes manage to seize upon an answer.  
Somehow the ravaged brain knits itself whole  
the sun comes up  
the brow clears  
one remembers reasons.

I remember those who came to me  
on the last edge of their private desperations:  
a girl who wept of her secret pregnancy  
a boy who feared his suicide wishes would succeed  
another whose parents offered him only  
a fragmented, tormented picture of himself, saying,  
"See? That's how you really are."

They came to me.

And there are days  
small in actual calendar count,  
of hurting brightness  
when the light breaks through  
and the blessed idea  
sings through the classroom with a voice of grace  
and the bodies straighten  
and the glazed eyes clear  
and the universe, for a small moment,  
makes ordered sense in my disordered classroom.

They offer me the scarlet flowers of their wrists  
the sparkling amethysts of their tears  
the frightening blackness of their inner voids  
and even from my own brain-torn pain  
I find reasons to help them affirm their lives.  
Those born in fire believe the scars of others,  
and across the abyss, hands finally reach.

Now I remember why I wanted to teach.

--Betsy Ballard  
Norman

ANN LANDERS HERE

All day long  
They are there--  
in my chair  
on my stool  
hanging on me

These lost, seeking--yet afraid  
to be found.

These who are and are not  
my kids.

All day long  
I listen,  
Listen and marvel at the courage  
and strength of a  
"no-good-goin'-to-the-dogs"  
Generation.

My over-protected childhood did not  
Prepare me for their pain,  
Prepare me to advise them,  
providing them survival tips,

So, I listen  
And I envy them  
having someone to talk to.

The confessional is a lonely place.

--Marian C. Hulsey  
Oklahoma City

## A WOMAN'S PLACE

Sometimes I fancy myself  
walking toward you--  
you bending over a flower bed,  
taking care that your small plot  
will not wither and die.  
How could you, so in tune with nature,  
embrace a religion of medals and miracles?

You should have been born  
into a world of lush nature,  
of brilliant color, of temperate clime.  
Instead, your home was on the Kansas plains,  
where the weather was unkind to growing things.  
But you could have brought forth life  
from a stone, I think,  
A woman creates her own world  
when the world created for her is found wanting.

--Mary Menges Myers  
Oklahoma City

## FAREWELL SONG

for Diane Glancy

my friend leaps across distances  
faster than prairie fire

for a bundle of corn clumps  
she sings the wind

she is a thief she  
steals away my words

a smoke cloud blurs the vision  
of moccasins that leave no steps

her leather fringes flap  
like falcon feathers

she leaves quiet as a shadow  
her message stretching across the plains

a dark spot scars the earth  
where a pole held my friend's teepee

I am left behind  
remember to scatter last night's embers

--Renata Treitel  
Tulsa

## THIS KEY

This is the key I never gave back  
because it reminds me of you  
with its blank hole of an eye  
turned outward        no vision  
with its small, steely teeth  
of numerals  
cold and organized to wound  
with its stem        encrusted with  
past beliefs, long-layered  
someday I'll discard it  
mail it back  
maybe deface or mutilate it  
at the proper hour  
timing is crucial

--K. Sue Starkey  
Oklahoma City

## THE PUSHME-PULLYOU

Magic hangs in the balance,  
a slender tracing in the sky,  
an infant's fingernail sliver  
too slight for hanging clothes to drip,  
too silvery to be stacked in golden  
caches.

The magician stands before children  
awakened from a night sweat.  
They jeer at his tricks  
and want to believe.

The unicorn poises in her white suit,  
places ear to earth between dawn dances,  
cavorts chained to a tree,  
  
and I shoot myself down  
from my covey.

--Carol Hamilton  
Midwest City

## SURREAL INFLATABLE WHALE

Come out, Margaret,  
Mona called to the sun  
and lay back in the dazzling kaleidoscope  
her tits shooting into the sky  
and butted casually by jellyfish

like coffee filters gliding by

Sometimes I get visions that I'm floating  
or that I'm just not here,  
I am the water  
and I lie back falling

You have to love falling  
she said to the damp sand at the foam-line  
(And isn't it enough to say  
a seagull stole potato chips from our hands

ghosts sleepwalked past our blanket  
Albiononi perched beside the blind lighthouse  
as we peered into the fog at Kismet and said

Now we are in the future

how we goat-danced along the shattering  
wave singing Look Away Dixieland  
under a disintegrating sky and the jellyfish  
smashed on the sand and the shy  
toads hopped away from our shadows beneath the streetlight

I abandoned my Guillaume Apollinaire boots  
to the dark sand where a hunchback bulked on the lifeguard stand,  
the Goddess of Loneliness,  
the moon welled up like a blood drop  
and we transfixed the waves with our clothes on  
and sambaed in the glittering sea

she pointed her toe in a pool and halos swam  
boiling into light, the moon burned from red to valium,  
her clothes unlatched like veils in the tide, how she changed  
her name to champagne, how poetry is where  
you are and how you feel, saying,  
Now: as we wade from the ocean dressed in phosphorescence?)

--Robyn Perry  
Brooklyn, NY

#### DUPLICITY

Your love was like  
A nectar-foxed bee  
In a crabapple tree;  
Where all the blossoms  
Are compellingly sweet.

My love, I own, was in Eden  
Self-confined...luckily the  
snake was asleep.

--Riner Fitzgerald Moore  
Wanette

## LANDSCAPE, WITH SHOWERS

Droplets spatter off the craggy peaks of your brow,  
joining the mist at the edge of the waterfall  
that send its spray  
to dampen the dusty mounds of pectorals and biceps.

Rivulets collect, form channels that run  
shallowly across the plains of belly, then  
course, east or west and white-watered,  
around the forested divide of your member

To descend the travertine falls of your knees,  
branch into sluggish bayous and moist swamps  
that muddy clay feet.

--Sharon E. Martin  
Cushing

## THE QUESTION OF BEAUTY

I solved it, I think,  
One day seeing a south window  
Frame a branch at the extremity  
Of the giant, disease-ridden elm,  
Green grace lacing the sky,  
There every day. Or the evening I  
Stretched beneath the blossoming  
Mimosa -- the pink-ballerina-skirt  
Flowers stamped on the white moon.  
Isolation. That is my answer.  
Photographers lift and transport  
One square of experience. Eve's  
Translucent skin has never again  
Been touched by such awe;  
No poet's work cradled with such  
Gentle tucking as his own,  
No child's sleeping out of  
The ordinary except to that  
Forefinger which would trace  
The curve of his brown cheek  
In wonder. Stare at a lizard's  
tail; Chart Thomas of Harkle's  
Marginal scrawls til your eyes  
Ache; look the sun in the  
Eye until you are blind  
And perhaps can see.

--Carol Hamilton  
Midwest City

# For our younger readers

The loud East Wind  
    is a banshee wind.  
It's an old wind  
    and a bold wind.  
It's a bitter wind  
    and a cold, cold wind.

The loud East Wind  
    is a banshee wind.  
It's a wind that teases.  
It's a wind that wheezes;  
    it tears and it pushes  
    and goes where it pleases,

It rattles the windows--  
It bashes the wall--  
It rushes, screaming,  
    down the hall.  
It cries and whines  
    with a banshee call.

The loud East Wind  
    is a banshee wind--  
It's a moaning wind--  
It's a groaning wind--  
It's a vicious wind--  
    and a lone, lone wind.

The loud East Wind  
    is a banshee wind.  
It's an old wind  
    and a bold wind.  
It's a bitter wind  
    and a cold, cold wind.

--Carolyn Marel  
Edmond

Mr. President:

There is a threat hanging over us.  
Is it just a matter of time?  
Who will do away with whom?  
For what reason or rhyme?  
Do you know the name of the man you hate?  
Do you know his street address?  
Do you know what he eats for breakfast?  
Does he live east or west?

I can't answer these questions  
And neither can you.

Who will press that final button?

Lord help us all if it's you.

--Elaine Wiggins  
Sulphur

# CONTESTS

## POETRY CONTEST FOR FEMALE STUDENTS

Ages 14-18

Any Subject, Any Style Poems

First Prize: \$20

Second Prize: \$10

Three Honors Awards

All prize winners will be published in a special issue of **PIECEWORK**

**ENTRY FEE: \$2** (1-3 poems--no more than 3 poems per contestant)

All entries must be typed

Keep your original, entries will not be returned (no SASE)

All entries must be unpublished when submitted

Type name, address, school on each entry

**\*\*DEADLINE: All entries must be postmarked by Jan. 15, 1988\*\***

Winners will be announced in the Spring issue of **PIECEWORK**

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## POETRY CONTEST FOR WOMEN

Any Subject, Any Style Poems

First Prize: \$35

Second Prize: \$20

Five Honors Awards

All prize winners will be published in a special issue of **PIECEWORK**

**ENTRY FEE: \$3** (1-3 poems--no more than 3 poems per contestant)

All entries must be typed

Keep your original, entries will not be returned (no SASE)

All entries must be unpublished when submitted

Type name and address on each entry

**\*\*DEADLINE: All entries must be postmarked by Jan. 15, 1988\*\***

Winners will be announced in the Spring issue of **PIECEWORK**

Send to: Poetry Contest, **PIECEWORK**

P.O. Box 60693

Oklahoma City, OK 73146

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The American novelist Edith Wharton said in 1900, "Genius is of small use to a woman who does not know how to do her own hair."

Women have been in battles with hair, its sexual and political significance, for centuries. Hair makes statements for and about us, and we are looking for the statements women make about their hair. The editors want to do an issue of poems, photographs and line drawings on hair.

If you have work, send it. If you don't, here's an idea to work with: how do you see hair--yours, the blonde goddess' hair, Veronica lake's dip, Clairol's creations, anyone's--how do you see it?

We will put our issue together as soon as we have the material from you, so start coming over ideas.



M 001 109 403

Red Dirt Press, Inc., a women-owned and women-operated publishing company, is seeking manuscripts by women writers. Novels, volumes of poetry and books of short stories will be accepted. Send your typed, double-spaced (except for poetry) manuscripts for consideration, along with a SASE, to Manuscripts, Red Dirt Press, Inc., P.O. Box 60693, Oklahoma City, OK 73146.

**SUBMISSION DEADLINES:** November 15 for winter issue; February 15 for spring issue; May 15 for summer issue; August 15 for summer issue.

**SUBMISSION POLICY:** **PIECEWORK** accepts submissions of poetry by women, particularly from Oklahoma and the south central region. Payment is in one contributor's copy, with Red Dirt Press, Inc., retaining first rights only. Simultaneous submissions are acceptable, but please inform us of this. Submissions should be typed and accompanied by a brief biographical statement of the poet and a SASE. We will report within three months.

**PIECEWORK** is also accepting submissions of art work and photographs, especially seasonal to be used as covers for the quarterlies. Send black and white photographs or black ink line drawings to **PIECEWORK**, Red Dirt Press, Inc., P.O. Box 60693, Oklahoma City, OK 73146, by the submission dates listed above. Payment is in one contributor's copy. Please enclose a SASE.



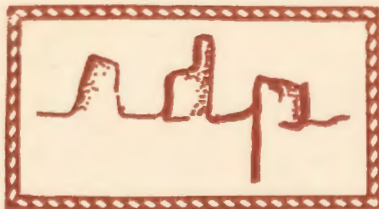
# PIECEWORK

FALL 1987

VOLUME 2, NUMBER 1

"I salute PIECEWORK for publishing so many fine women poets in the region. So many new voices! It is one more proof that the best writers these days appear in the little magazines. Bravo to the editors and to the poets!"

May Sarton



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