

PIECWORK

A Magazine of Poetry by Women



Featured Artists - Contest Winners

Spring 1989

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.

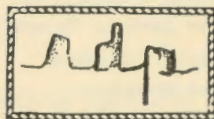
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GIFT

PIECEWORK

A Magazine of Poetry by Women Spring 1989 Volume 3, Number 2

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Cover photo by Carolyn B. Leonard

Featured Artists - Contest Winners

ADULT DIVISION

- First Place - "Time Out" by Gladys Mathis, Putnam, OK
Second Place - "Soap Bubbles" by Billie Marsh, Tulsa, OK
Honorable Mentions -
"April Woman" by Ernestine Gravley, Shawnee, OK
"Generations" by Billie Marsh, Tulsa, OK
"Man" by Ann East, Hodgen, OK
"Superstitious" by Susan Breedlove, Okmulgee, OK

YOUNG WOMEN'S DIVISION

- First Place - "The Old Room" by Aimee Ellis, Ardmore, OK
Ardmore High School
Second Place - "Neverending Beauty" by Cheryl Crawford,
Weatherford, OK, Weatherford High School
Honorable Mentions -
"Haiku" by Anne Harwell, Lawton, OK, Tomlinson
Junior High School
"Icy Daydreams" by Elesha Madden, Weatherford, OK,
Weatherford High School
"Passing Through" by Renee Steffensen, Weatherford, OK,
Weatherford High School

Our congratulations to these winners and our thanks to all the women who submitted entries. Watch for next year's competitions and get your poems to us.

The Women of Red Dirt Press, Inc., and the Editors of PIECEWORK, wish to thank Annette Van Dusen for her assisting in chairing the judging for this spring's competitions. The Guest Poetry Editor for this issue was Marian Hulsey.

This issue of PIECEWORK celebrates our contest winning entries, the Centennial of Oklahoma's Land Run, Spring, and surviving as women in the '80s.

FIRST PLACE - Adult Division

Time Out

At my back door window
I stand--seeing.
A cardinal flips his brightness
From the barnyard gate and flutters
In the cow tracks near the watering trough.
The creamy breast of a hawk
Glow as he perches
In a bare tree on the creek.
A flock of small birds
Sways upward,
Sun glinting on quick wings.
Tufts of grass stand, red
From fall frosts, on the pasture.
The white face of a Hereford
Turns toward me
Bedded down in winter sunshine.
Blue berries on the cedar
Near the door cling thickly, shining.
Two calico cats touch noses there;
Then one's away and the other
Washes her face industriously.
Brown vines of summer's grass
Line the cracks of the sidewalk
That leads to my door.
Four sparrows peck and twitter
Joined by a fifth, looking for seeds.
Scattered black walnuts hang
In the tree on the circle drive
Missed by my yard squirrel
In his early storing.
Long shadows show
The shape of elms on the south lawn.

Squares of the new corral fence
Are dull silver, held by posts
Level-topped,
Not a half inch varying
Set by a man who
Straightens his currency corners
Before walleting them.
The far corner of
Dismantled flower bed
Lies in cold shade.
Green snake of a water hose
Coils nearby.
Northeast over the horizon
A windmill peeks.
A misty half moon
Floats in a still blue sky.
I can't believe the stillness.
Interrupting close up,
Smudges hug the window
Where someone with
A nose taller than mine
Has looked earlier.

Gladys Mathis
Putnam, OK

SECOND PLACE - Adult Division

Soap Bubbles

Today we sit on the stoop
blowing soap bubbles,
lopsided little worlds
ringed with rainbows.
They pop too soon.

Too soon you will pursue
other rainbow worlds
that tempt and float
just out of reach,
or grasped by over eager
hands, shatter.

For now, I hold your hand
steady, slow your frantic
waving of the slender wand.
We make bigger bubbles.
Your tears dissolve
into rainbow smiles.

Mine is a fleeting power
at best,
I will use it while I can.

Billie Marsh
Tulsa, OK

Honorable Mention

April Woman

I walked against a sudden blue of sky
Discovering the first anemones
And sharp and wild I heard your petaled cry
Like golden rain among the listening trees.
I climbed the valley and I found you there,
As lithe and slim as any birch that stands
At dawn, with luna moths upon your hair,
With redbud clusters trembling in your bands.
O what will happen when the lunas fly,
When those bright blossoms wither in the sun?
For surely something fair and young will die
And something finish which has just begun.
Your April soul and mine will weep together
For something passing in the April weather.

Honorable Mention

Generations

For generations our family
has lived in the prim grey
Victorian, third from the
corner of Cherry St. & Vine.

Each June the house blossoms
in white; dimity curtains,
cool cotton spreads, organdy
graduation frocks, Grandma's
Irish lace bridal veil
worn once again.

August brings giggly teenage
cousins in string bikinis
to sun bathe on the East lawn
where Great Aunt Sarah
played croquet in midddy blouse
& navy serge skirt.

In September, books & school
bags collect on the polished
second floor landing where
Uncle Max taught Annie
The Charleston & where platoons
of toy soldiers fought bloody
battles & inter-galactic wars.

Our December doors are hung
with holly tied in tartan bows.
A regal spruce Dad planted long
ago waits now in the parlor
for Christmas Day & the annual
arrival of a baker's dozen
assorted aunts, uncles, close
friends, distant relations.

Of course the house is haunted.
This is their home,
where else would they go?

Billie Marsh
Tulsa, OK

Chickasha Hotel

Do not desert me,
O my lover
in morning's mist,
cloud touched regions,
as moon descends,
silver disc
in a diamond sky
brown blanket soft,
against my skin,
soft glow of lamp light.
You say
"How pretty you are,"
as I pose,
half pretense,
half shyness,
as I hurry to your kiss,
in April wind,
wearing your jacket,
my hair tied back,
deserted street
7 a.m.
almost cold,
as we walk
I have these thoughts
and I love you.

Susan Breedlove
Okmulgee, OK

Honorable Mention

Man

Stark faces emerge in bas relief
from the shrouded land
the dark intensity of these eyes reflect uncertainty.
One face predominates the rest
his eyes are almost hidden in shadow
sloped shoulders reflect resignation,
perhaps exhaustion,
or the unfamiliarity of sitting still.
Blackened by both the land and the sun
his large hands rest unaccustomedly on his knees.
One single unfastened button on his starched collar
reveals the work shirt beneath.
Nondescript dark hair lies flat
across an unwrinkled forehead.
Ears like jug handles lend the only touch of humor
to this stark, strange face
which remains half-hidden behind a full beard
thus adding to his poignant sense of mystery.
His eyes remain shadowed
the land remains shrouded
uncertain
yet how valiant this unseen individual
lost in the generalizations of history.

Ann East
Hodgen, OK

Honorable Mention

Superstitious

It's bad luck
not to wear my gold earrings
everyday,
bad luck, not to have champagne
at all our summer picnics,
to leave you without a kiss
when you go away.
Your magic transcends
ordinary days,
with no letters in the box,
when white Iris and blue Larkspur
aren't blooming.
I see bare branches
covered with crystal ice,
snow a white carpet outside,
our footprints lead
to enchantment,
autumn gold falls all around us
in leaf patterns,
some days of the year,
when you are near,
seasons reappear,
May rites now,
unordinary walk
to a flower garden
I see castles in clouds,
memories in old houses,
your voice brings
a magician's promise
you have always kept.
I dress in lace for you,
red necklace, and
a wine red rose,
kept forever in my heart,

wishes made,
throwing small coins
in a fountain,
all for you,
and my love besides.

Susan Breedlove
Okmulgee, OK

FIRST PLACE - Young Women's Division

The Old Room

The lamp, crystal base glistening,
makes strange shadows
in the corners of the room
and on the wrinkles
of the old woman's face.

On the same table as the lamp,
cookies on a yellow plate
release a sweet aroma.
The small, bite-sized treats
are from an earlier time,
made from a recipe
long unused by most.

In the woman's favorite vase,
yellow roses, fully bloomed,
fill the room with their scent.
The marble vase,
shaped into the delicate form
of a young woman's hand,
marble pearls at the wrist,
was given to her by her mother.
The older woman said,
"Here is a never-ending reminder of youth,"
as she placed,
arthritic hands shaking,
the package in her daughter's soft hands.

Picture frames,
black and brown with silver lining,
shrines to ancestors,
encase images of her mother as a young girl.

Before the rose petals turn to brown flakes,
before the cookies dry and crumble,
she will cast them out,
savoring their delicacy until the last moment.

Aimee Ellis
Ardmore High School
Ardmore, OK

SECOND PLACE - Young Women's Division

Neverending Beauty

Rainbows
stretch high in the air,
over the mellow earth below,
and under the billowing clouds above
like
a halo over my head,
a box of crayons used to perfection,
and an infinite highway to glory,
shining
only to soon disappear into the
Earth's atmosphere.

Cheryl Crawford
Weatherford High School
Weatherford, OK

Honorable Mention

Haiku

On the horizon
Waves crashing against the shore
The evening wind sings

Anne Harwell
Tomlinson Jr. High School
Lawton, OK

Honorable Mention

Icy Daydreams

Snow
drifts along mountain tops,
in crested valleys,
and down country roads.

Like
a white lace table cloth,
feathers from angels' wings,
or a shattered crystal vase.

Floating
slowly to the ground.

Elesha Madden
Weatherford High School
Weatherford, OK

Honorable Mention

Passing Through

Clouds
roll
in
Darkness
and
gloom
fill
the
atmosphere
Lightning
flashes,
thunder
roars,
rain
pours
and
slowly
fades
away
as
the
storm
trespasses
through
the
ghost
town.

Renee Steffensen
Weatherford High School
Weatherford, OK

Yesterday's Riches

I was born an Okie farm girl,
In the way back days of yore.
My family certainly wasn't rich,
Too proud to call themselves poor.

We took our bath in an old tin tub
And read by kerosene light.
Our bathroom was a three-holer,
What a scary walk at night!

We never had a lot of toys,
So few, I remember them all.
Some roller skates, some cowboy boots,
Some jacks and a brand new doll.

Summers were filled with water fights,
Brown bodies in the sun,
Cooling off in the water tank,
Long days of wild, sweet fun.

Winters, close to the pot belly stove,
Playing games and dominoes,
Reading books and munching fudge
Or listening to radio shows.

Nothing since can ever compare
To those days when I was young,
When, without thought, worry or care,
I ran barefoot in the sun.

Barbara Thrash
Texhoma

Lucid Legacy

Sitting small in the dark house,
Drinking tea from thin pale cups,
I learned history from a grandmother,
From faded photographs of cousins,
Smiling young men, bodies stiff
And unsure in strange uniforms.

On the wall, behind the dark Victorian
Wood, flowers and silver,
My mother, young, in a print dress
Stands, her hand on a chair,
Living here as I never knew her.

I sit in the chair now, drinking tea
With my grandmother. I study her
Lined face--
Magnificent, almond-shaped eyes,
Silvery gray with flecks of blue,
Steadfast, as if looking back
Across the landscape of time.

The strength of her ninety-three years
Enduring.

I touch her wispy white hair,
And cherish most these moments from her
Final decade, reflecting her unwavering
Strength as life's options diminish.

My grandfather sits solid in his chair,
Brought to the fireside. A blanket
Covers the pain of his legs.
His talk is of horses, Civil War,
Land and weather.

I have heard his stories
Since I followed him, a tall horseman,
Across the garden and around the square.
This is my past that he recites,
In this house, old before I was born,
Here in this small room
Under the glass eyes of the years.

Oneta M. Whitlock
Altus

Matriarch

The cold--the common clouds belied the day
Because a most auspicious prayer was held.
Though the shroud was gold, it was a funeral still
For my grandmother. It was arranged
So well. We, her prodigy, were raised
On stubborn, hard red clay. Yet the family mosaic fell.
If our outstretched hands caught shards, we couldn't tell,
As on Eagle's Wings we sent her away.

And yet, though March is cold, another year
Remembered, wind like through an open door
Blows, and I know that you are here.
The tapestry you wove--like crystal--clear
Catches the light, throws rainbow sighs.
Elliska, we are your laughing eyes!

Margaret Hrencher
Perkins

The Two Trees

I

Today it is my job to feed and water the horses my parents keep on the quarter-section east of town homesteaded in the 1880s and passed down to them by men I never knew.

The barn is intact, kept in repair by men who found it practical to store hay, while the house, an out-of-style romantic dream, was left to crumble.

Now, a ruined chimney stands a few yards from the water well where I pause to catch my breath and watch the jet trails in the clear sky dissipate far overhead, like the memory of grandparents I knew only distantly as a small child.

II

An old pear tree grows nearby, planted a half-a-century ago. As its knobby limbs bend to the limit, heavy with fruit, as though they might snap at any moment, I am reminded of the woman I saw last week at a flea market who carved dolls' faces from shriveled apples.

The woman's shoulders were stooped with age and I imagined her bones were brittle and thin, unable to support any additional burden. Yet the scent from the tree is strong, thick and sweet, like the warm embrace of a grandmother in summer.

III

Turning to the business at hand, I grip the handle of the bright red pump. The metal is cool against my palms while water splashes into the galvanized bucket and against the concrete.

A mockingbird mimics the rusty pump and I look up to see it fly away from a redbud tree, the full green leaves flapping in the breeze where in the spring, bright pink and purple blossoms flush open.

My thoughts turn back, and I remember my grandmother placing a garden hose at the base of the redbuds in her backyard, saying that nothing was more beautiful than a healthy tree.

She loved to photograph her family in their Easter finery under the full-blown blossoms, and at night, she flung open the wooden sashes to let the breeze waft in the delicate scent.

IV

It is quiet now, as I carry water to the horses' trough.

Only the drone of bees and the flutter of leaves drift through the air. There is a soft thud as an over-ripe pear falls to the grass.

Suddenly the air is thick with memory and deep homesickness. Water sloshes on my foot as I stumble. Looking up, the two trees seem different to me now, more wilted and dry.

Pausing, not thinking, I bring the bucket of water quietly to each tree. Pouring cool water next to the roots, I watch it soak into the dusty earth.

The farm is still.

Susan Smith Nash
Norman

Oklahoma Safari, II

As a mother of small boys,
I tried to wash Oklahoma's red dirt
out of their clothes.
Now the challenge,
to wash it out of my mind
after clocking 600 meandering miles
of eroding, untilled red dirt,
through movie-set store front
small towns, sleeping,
coma-like old houses
worth a fortune elsewhere.

When all this is gone
the earth will still be red,
the clothing of all who work
or play on it,
permanently hennaed.

The soil that resists tent stakes
until pounded with a rock
does not match the green trees and grass,
does not welcome the green campers
on this Fourth of July weekend.

The water of the Neosho, dark green,
its abundant algae providing
a royal feast for the fish at twilight.
Light green perch, coming right up
to our perch on the rocks to feed,
(with an Okiebug we could catch a dozen).

Instead, we choose to watch them, to add our bodies to the masses of swarming, swimming schools of fish, as we seek to cool off after a day on the road, washing the red dirt from our bodies in Oklahoma's Red and Green Country.

Marian C. Hulsey
Oklahoma City, OK

Family Album

I think of the scene as an old snapshot, although nobody took one of it. Who would have thought of pointing a camera at such an event? Who takes a picture of the last nuclear blast, or the ice age just before it congeals us all ahead of it?

No one there was that sophisticated. WE have photos of puppy litters, strings of bream, new cars with running boards balancing cousins in Sunday dresses, aunts with laps full of babies, smiling more or less proudly and trying not to look harried or overweight.

Our history as usual stumbled forward into a new era, fumbling something expensive, looking backward in the motion of steadying against the doorframe to see what it was we tripped over, the door slamming against our heels, quenching the light, the decisive moment unremarked, past.

Ava Leavell Haymon
Baton Rouge, LA

The Greenwood Era

TUSK ... TUSK ... TUSK ...
Wailed the slowin', steamin' train.
Brakes pushed, pushed and pushed.
Black Porters scurried down the lane
Proclaiming proudly as they came
"COMIN' TO TULSA--THE OIL TOWN!"
Bellowing loudly all around
Sleeping cars, diners, coach and lounge,
Until they reached the 'Jim Crow' crowd.
Then they boasted, all callin' loud
THIS IS TULSEY--THE 'TUSK-HOG TOWN'--
"GREENWOOD"--'21s BATTLIN' GROUND!"
TUSK ... TUSK ... TUSK ...
Whoosh ... and the steam blew out.
Travelers greeted southwestern land,
Helped down steep steps by strong, black hands.

Ruth Sigler Avery
Tulsa

Alight

A bulb whose roots toss it out of gravel

What amount of velocity it takes
when it takes levity instead

"who won" "who won" . . . a fledgling is only that
if he has wings that make speech I said
elevated speech

Take hold of this dish of pebbles

Elizabeth Robinson
Norman

The Quickening

Above me
whirling, swollen clouds race east
to rainy fulfillment

At my feet
red ants lift red dirt boulders,
opening their city portal to countrymen
and careless footfalls

Beyond my path
tree shadows leap and dance in happy patterns new
from new growth

Behind me
a black bird splashes ecstatically in ditch water,
light glancing off inky wings

On my left
a rat rusty robin explores the ground,
heeding a cue only he discerns

On my right
crocuses purple and white open wide their cups
Yes
oh Yes

Everywhere
a quickening

In me
too.

Robin I. Thevenet

(Editors' Note: Robin was teaching English at the
University of Oklahoma, when she died last fall.)

Spring

Spring is a virgin,
a thin-limbed girl
in a see-through dress
you see everywhere:
standing in white organdy or
pink voile,
kneeling in rose, lavender,
dancing in chartreuse over hills,
bending and waving,
wearing yellow.

Spring is a virgin
One day you notice her beauty
In one day, everything
you ever thought
about age, dirt, darkness, loss,
absurdity,
is made absurd by her

her cameo face, peach
and translucent bone shell,
the thin strength of her,
full of grace,
a woman worth doing for,
a woman with whom
to re-create the earth.
You begin
believing in love again.

Spring is a virgin.
The earth can be a virgin again
though she's lost so much,
grown so old;
though sometimes it seems
she is turgid
with death and filth.

Your eyes deceive you.
In her thin gown, thinned down
before your eyes
she reappears a bride,
a child, a communicant:
someone for whom
a very special gown has been made
for one occasion only.

Carolyn Trachta
League City, TX

Quiet depth of dark green foliage
almost obscures the appearance
of a solitary bud.
Softly her color responds
to the early warmth of the sun.
Almost unnoticed
she spreads her petals toward its radiance
a voluptuous jewel of fragile texture.
I pause
amazed at the simplicity of her beauty.
By late afternoon
she lies drooping
withdrawn
spent somehow
during those long afternoon hours
of unbroken heat.

Ann East
Hodgen, OK

Nests

You were gone
when the robins came . . .

My eyes, empty as glass-house dreams,
I watched them
two-step along the limbs
bubbles in the air,
their songs entwined as one

Left out
bits of string--
My need to build another nest?--

and watched again:
blue eggs hatching tiny twins,
ugly, drab, in unfinished dress,
and saw parents push taffy worms
into waiting mouths,
coax fledglings forth to fly.

My heart, warming, melted
as I watched them splash
in summer showers
their feathers, myriad rainbows
in the sun.

In time,
before their exodus,
my laughter, long submerged, gurgled,
burst free in wobbly flight,
and my heart, now light, took wing.

But OH! Today
yesterday's Winter returned
full-fledged.
A single robin, bereft and broken,
sits alone by the empty nest

and, solo, sings a song
I know too well.

Betty B. Barrett
Yukon, OK

Wind Dream

Still a child
Eager, taunting
Joyous
Precocious:
I fly
Into a wind-torn night
to you
Racing to where you stand
Hip deep in scrap paper

Blind and mute
You don't see me
Reaching to touch you
But grope instead at
empty air
Missing my hand
By a fraction of an inch.

J. Leigh Perry
Moore, OK

in black and white

dark clouds
umbrella the earth
huddling helplessly
beneath
their denseness ... earth
waiting for them to fold up
and hide themselves
in some closet
for another day

skyplanes
splatter wet air
hanging soggily
around
their engines ... air
dodging their streams of spitfire
rearranging rain
making room for
jet power plays

sunbeams
ray-gun black clouds
brooding ominously
over
their domain ... clouds
blasted into buoyant balls
powdering skies
with puffs of smoke
piled high on high

Alice King Greenwood
Odessa, TX

Eaglet

I Too Can Fly

As a child I sat at evening
on the concrete stoop of our old porch
watched unafraid the ponderous clouds approach
dreamed of flying in and out
over and above the bullet-grey shrouds

Pretending the lightning was my own
private torch I'd stretch my neck,
glance with rapid eyes side to side
unroll my feathers and lift
opening the air in ripples of light.

Winds whip me, slap me
I flapped frantic with wild desire
not caring where I flew

My wings stronger more certain
dodge the darkling clouds, duck under
the telephone lines waving in the wind
leave the jagged lightning spears behind

As plops of rain wet my feathered hair
I'd land with satisfied wings
on the concrete pillar at the top
of the stair, tiptoe into my home
under the eaves.

--Rosemary Bachle
Oklahoma City

The Fighter Pilot

I planted periwinkles today,
digging in the earth
of last year's memories,
finding you,
again.

Was it the little boy in you
who captured me so
thoroughly, and
still;

the little boy who joked about
Vietnam buddies, and told fun
stories of match poker
played in that camp where
the prisoner lives still;

the little boy who cried
when I read Steve Mason's poem
"The Wall Within."

Is it the little girl in me
who tints my vision
of the retired hero--the one
of too many women
and too many bars;

the little girl who sees
only a handsome fighter pilot
with medals for bravery
and accolades for charm;

the little girl who
loved you somewhere
in time, and
still.

Audrey Streetman
Oklahoma City, OK

Periwinkle Rainbows

You fling sharp words at me,
 like knives,
What do you want?

What do I want?
 The moon,
burnished gold by careful handling.
 The stars,
birthday wrapped in silver paper.
 Rainbows,
banded with pink and periwinkle.

I want May scented mornings,
 mint flavored nights.
I want the fidelity
 of ocean waves
returning always to waiting shore.

What do I want?
 More.

Billie Marsh
Tulsa

The Rising Fall

Somewhere off I-70 in an abandoned field
two kids have just now become Icarus
outside the workshop where balsa frames
hang veiled in Easter colors, winging
across the glue-soaked, fan-blown air.

Counting on wind (our fingers crossed)
to sustain our creation, we launched our gliders
into space to catch small thermals, lifting above
gingery stubble into still turns, loops, and rolls.

I ran crazed, then, and happy after shadows
chasing my purple gliders, twisted and brought down.
Broken wings and skeletons that knew desire
and nursed defeat all in a single day.

And now, this disaster, blinding still:
the tissue torn and scattered rudely;
the frames that have to be rebuilt,
needed whole, now failing, now whirling.

Linda Nowlin
Salt Lake City, UT

Sadie Does It

Any ordinary day
You'll find Sadie hard at play
She rides studs and motorbikes
Sadie does what Sadie likes

Every evening through the week
You'll find Sadie cheek to cheek
Jeffreys, Matthews, Richards, Mikes
Sadie sees whom Sadie likes

Every moment of her life
Sadie seems the perfect wife
She wears lipstick, diamonds, spikes
Sadie shows what Sadie likes

Out in public, while on view
Sadie names things she won't do:
Diapers--dishes--taxes--tykes
Sadie knows what Sadie likes

Further in, where no one sees
Sadie sinks down to her knees
"Thirty, single, selfish; yikes!"
Sadie loathes what Sadie likes.

Emma Meyer
New York City, NY

Living in Kansas

There are no movie seats that rock
in Kansas. Mothers leave their children
home in Langdon, Turon, Preston, Pratt
and go alone to matinees. Not surprised
to find they breathe life into words
better than Garbo.

Tomorrow's cutting of alfalfa is far away,
surely ten more scenes, must be ten more breaths,
ten more men away, Italians, whispering ...
"piccolo amorista" ... the sweet words ...
"la dolce vita."

The woman's hair and silk chiffon sweeping
from the roadster must mean Sicily,
the sciroccos, the south of France,
that the sea is near, that suddenly she is
going there alone.

Still, it is only the threat of bindweed,
no, the triumph that seems important now,
the terrible, secret love transgressing
what is sown, nourished, transgressing
in some field, where women clap their hands:
a silent, white world.

Linda Nowlin
Salt Lake City, UT

Paper Doll

My life print was decided
long before I was born.
Many things I can change
but my pattern was cut
by scissors that do not
fit my hands.

Laura Sensenig⁴
Phoenix, AZ

The Modern Homemaker

A bundle of nerves
Tied with a ribbon
To make a pretty bouquet
For the world;
Sometimes she fears
The ribbon will unfurl.

Norma J. Lauer
Granite, OK

Image of Truth

When I reflect on your progress
since our first introduction,
you'd be very pleased with yourself
if you saw in the mirror
what I have witnessed
through the windows of my soul.

I observe a woman
who has grown as a tree grows;
strong sheltering branches,
colorful foliage,
reaching for the warm sun
with your tallest limbs
to grab a fresh breath
of rejuvenation
while digging your roots
into the rich earth of life.

You should be extremely proud
of your accomplishments.
Any trivial achievement to you
is a monumental trophy
to others.

That's why you've grown.
Grown in self-respect and humility,
the qualities that many women strive for
but sometimes fail to reach
for the forest is very crowded
near the sun line.

You've reassured others
in the shade of your boughs
and you will continue to nurture
with hearty drinks of your
life's vocation.

Yes, I like what I see.
Now, it's your turn to
look in the mirror.

Sue McGinnis
Arlington, TX

She walked in my house
one evening, a stranger.
She went upstairs when I did
and slept in my own bed.

In the morning she put on
my clothes, fumbling for
the unfamiliar buttonholes.

From my mirror
(she brushed her hair with my brush)
her face looked out.
No one looked over her shoulder.

Ava Leavell Haymon
Baton Rouge, LA

To Judy

I wish we had time to be friends,
You and I,
To go places and do things together,

The many things we have in common
Are the very things that keep us apart:

Homes, Jobs, Children,
Husbands, Pets, Errands,
Hopes, Dreams, Plans,

And if we're lucky,
Time to fit ourselves in ...
And time for a friend.

Marjorie A. Hall
Tahlequah, OK

Destiny

Too soon,
for your tiny, naked body
to be lifted, so suddenly,
from its
dark, warm protective place
into a world of
harsh, white, glaring light
and loud voices.

Awed whispers from viewers,
"She's a Premie, I'm told.
Three pounds, something.
Just a few minutes old."

When I saw
your perfectly formed body,
angry, crying, kicking,
then I knew
we had a winner,
just beginning
the fight that lasts
a lifetime.

Barbara Thrash
Texhoma, OK

Unconditional

On Sunday I hear that extra"ordinary woman"
Read her "Sonora Beautiful "
On Monday, Parents' Day at ballet.
I consider this and ask Jenny,
"Will you be embarrassed if I wear these?"
Knowing that I, a literary type,
Sometimes appear out of focus in a picture of mothers.

"Why would I be embarrassed?" she answers
"It doesn't matter what you wear."
And she gives me a smile and a hug
But I realize what I've really been given,
Something rare and precious,
Not just hugs and kisses,
But love without conditions

Sharon E. Martin
Cushing

For our younger readers

Charming Champ

Her doll was all frazzled
And minus one arm
Was grimy and germy,
But still had some charm.

I sought to discard it,
Even bought another;
But the new one was shunned
By the small, loyal mother.

And tonight on her pillow
By Stacy, who's three,
A bedraggled doll lies grinning
Victorious over me!

Oneta M. Whitlock
Altus

The Issue is Hair

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 the subject of "Hair." Many of you have submitted your "hair pieces" but we need more.

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?

Send all your "hair pieces" by June 15, 1989, to:

"Hair"
PIECEWORK
P.O. Box 60693
Oklahoma City, OK 73146

Prose Anthology

Red Dirt Press, Inc., in response to your inquiries about publishing prose works, is making plans to publish an anthology of essays and short fiction by women of this region in late summer or early fall of 1989.

Send your double-spaced typed submissions, with a short biography and a self-addressed stamped envelope by June 15, 1989, to:

Prose Editors
Red Dirt Press, Inc.
P.O. Box 60693
Oklahoma City, OK 73146



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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: May 15 for Summer issue; August 15 for Fall issue; November 15 for Winter issue; February 15 for Spring 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 above. Payment is in one contributor's copy. Please include a SASE.



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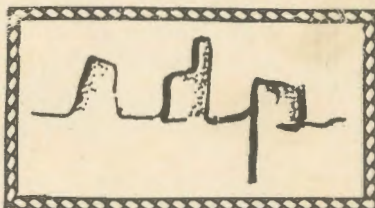
A Magazine of Poetry by Women

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"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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