

# PIECENWORK

A Magazine of Poetry by Women



ABIGAIL KEEGAN

Summer 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**

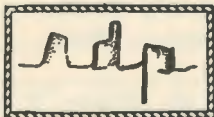
# PIECEWORK

A MAGAZINE OF POETRY BY WOMEN

SUMMER 1987

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This issue of **PIECEWORK** is pleased to publish some more of Oklahoma's younger poets. Lauren Barnes is in junior high school, Jaylynn Bailey is a senior, and Stephanie Booth and Frances Fong are recent graduates.

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(Cover photo by Ann Carlton)

## FEATURED ARTIST -- ABIGAIL KEEGAN

With pride and gratitude, PIECEWORK features the poems of one of the women whose vision and energy helped bring this journal of women's poetry into existence.

Abigail Keegan is one of the founders of this journal and through her creative insight and effort, helped bring the idea to actuality. She is well known for making things happen--writing workshops, political consciousness-raising groups, social action seminars, reading and discussion groups, student field trips, parties and cross-country eating adventures for her friends, being just some of these happenings. With all that, she still has time to bring a major work of her own to the press, the recently published first book of Red Dirt Press, Inc., THE FEAST OF THE ASSUMPTIONS.

Speaking of her writing, Abigail says:

In my creation of art, I want to provide what religion has in its best moments--a form that orders the chaos--the hungers, desires, deaths, darkneses and weathers--and in that ordering, I want to allow myself and my reader a moment to see meaning, to have faith in our failures and our survivals, and, at times even to have faith in our own immensity. Through the art of language, to put it most succinctly, I want to make us companions in what is most real.

Abigail, in addition to writing poetry, has kept a journal since she was eleven. She also is working on a series of short stories, a book about Oklahoma cafes, and a critical study of Sarah Orne Jewett, a 19th Century New England writer.

She is not an Oklahoman by birth, but by adoption is saturated with the vibrant red soil of the state, and she loves its beauty, a love she reflects in her writing. Her inspiration comes from small towns, city streets, people of the land, whatever gives her a heightened sense of existence. Abigail was a woman religious in a Benedictine community for ten years, and often credits this experience with generating her insights and sensitivity to the seasons of our lives. She is currently finishing a master's degree in American literature and teaching at the University of Oklahoma.

Abigail has included "Listening to a Mother's Death" in this issue, for the three of us whose mothers have died during this first year of our being together as a press. This shared experience has made us "companions in what is most real."

We have also included "I Always Sweat in Silk," a poem which was collectively written by the women who attended the first party to celebrate THE FEAST OF THE ASSUMPTIONS.

Abigail has provided us with another example of the discoveries that are made when women begin to talk about their poetry. When her great aunt, Pearl Koplin, heard about her niece's poetry journal, she admitted she had written poetry for years. Abigail persuaded her to unearth some of it and was delighted by what she found. While this introduction was being written, Abigail remembered that her Greataunt Pearl was the one who gave her her first diary, so the link runs in full circles, and this art becomes another way women make connections in their relationships and visions.

We are pleased to publish one of Pearl Koplin's poems with Abigail's in this issue of PIECEWORK.

(THE FEAST OF THE ASSUMPTIONS may be ordered from Red Dirt Press, Inc.

## LISTENING TO A MOTHER'S DEATH

I am at this home of ours  
separated from you,  
but not,  
you send words to me  
through electric wire links;  
your intravenous cry  
pumps through me  
as you start past  
the graveyard with your images  
of her, your mother.

You looked at her legs  
just a week ago,  
thinking, as you said,  
they were "still pretty" at 91.  
They are now inseminated in you--  
as she once bore you inside her-self,  
you now bare her--body and spirit--  
inside your-self  
with a new king of knowing.

When a woman's mother dies,  
everything changes.  
I've seen women  
curl back into  
their first body womb forms,  
drawing in, laboring with questions  
they could then never answer,  
or chopping the questions  
like onions--  
pieces always on the divide--  
with tears and a reason to cry.

For years after the death  
some tried to C-section  
the time they spent  
with their mothers  
from the bellies of memory.  
One woman awoke at 2:00 a.m.  
exactly one year after her mother died,  
feeling a presence, a hand connected;  
it was the hour her mother bore her.

We are separate, become separated;  
but connected,  
for women know their self in connection.

Almost 1000 miles apart,  
Oklahoma to Tennessee,  
my world is responding  
to your mother's death.  
Yesterday,  
I felt some kind of crazy,  
deathly in my bones,  
even before the call  
from your niece came  
to tell me she'd died.

This morning I rose,  
still listening to your voice  
describing your mother's breath  
before her death,  
hearing too the wind pain howl,  
and branch bones clatter  
against this house.

The daffodils outside our door  
heavily press to the ground--  
spring froze dead  
in the night of your mother--  
tulips, hyacinth, iris  
everywhere I drove  
drooped down  
to the earth mother  
who will now hold  
your first love.

I don't believe  
in pathetic fallacy,  
but in an empathic world,  
and it makes me want to tell you,  
I'll be here, even be her  
as I can, when you come home  
after locking the doors  
to the house  
the two of you once shared.

Yes, things change  
because the mother of a daughter dies.  
What remains of her  
will be what you hold  
and what she leaves you;  
at the death of a woman's mother,  
daughter creates mother anew.

--Abigail Keegan

## THIS IS

living in mid-America,  
being in the eye of the tornado  
everything sucked inward,  
the big buckled belt,  
shattered into image of  
tall glass mirrored walls  
bouncing gold and silver,  
grain elevators lifting,  
the St. Louis arch rocking  
people in its whale belly  
above the Mississippi,  
red spinning police car lights  
flicking over plains like fire,  
long horns turned in on steers,  
pink lights spread like icing  
over hospital complexes,  
yellow full lines and dotted whites  
moving over miles of plained  
and hilled highways,  
leather boots covered red with clay,  
stuffed under plastic red seats  
in small town cafes,  
horse hooves dancing madly  
across exotic open grounds  
where cowboys yet lasso  
what once was free.

--Abigail Keegan

## THE MYTH OF NARCISSUS

(for Betty)

"I have promised to tell you of a few more psychical peculiarities of mature femininity...we attribute a larger amount of narcissism to femininity...The effect of penis-envy has a share...in the physical vanity of women..." (Sigmund Freud)

As children we pressed our faces  
into mirrors, pressed  
until features spread  
beyond their boundaries,  
pushed our heads til blood rose  
to redden our surface skin  
and the widths of us widened on  
into a time warp--  
a Twilight Zone  
we had watched on TV,  
where the world as mirror  
worked in reverse--  
ugly ones become beautiful,  
beauty turned to treason;  
we worried the grotesque  
might be the oppressor.  
We pulled the sides of our mouths  
with the index fingers of our paws,  
stuck out our tongues,  
rolled round our eyes  
like Carrie the epileptic girl  
who lived on our block,  
then we'd burst with laughter  
at our twisted selves--  
sad unquieted elves  
without gossamer wings  
to fly away.

And the myth has never passed;  
at night I do it even now,  
pull at skin, tug my hair,  
look at the mirror for myself  
but see only a refracted mother  
of my distortions,  
while I hear the Echo  
of the TV voice name beauty in a cream.

--Abigail Keegan

#### INVITATORY

If you do come for a visit,  
please do,  
do come in the Fall,  
when the trees are dipped  
in molten magic--  
their leaves  
with the scent of sweet moisture,  
and love's  
succulent and ripe as red apples.

--Abigail Keegan  
1981

from THE FEAST OF THE ASSUMPTION

## VISITING PRAGUE

If I lived in this small town,  
I would take a male lover  
who could tack down  
the flapping window screen,  
prop up the old chicken house,  
pitch rusted metal trash,  
and keep those guys who snicker  
as I jog by them  
out of my house.

On Saturday afternoons I'd drive  
down our street, cluttered with old cars,  
tilted houses and missing bricks,  
stop in the grocery and hardware stores.  
I'd look at dresses  
in a store front window, but pass on by.

Maybe I'd go to talk about him  
in the cafe on the highway,  
about his heart attack,  
his football game, his pulled muscle,  
and I'd most likely,  
call him my husband.

At night stroke his fur  
and smooth buttocks,  
maybe catch his eye before sleep.  
I would take a male lover  
if I lived in this small town,  
but I'm a stranger to it.

I live in the city,  
hire a guy who does his playing  
in a band, to screw down storm windows,  
and caulk the frames for winter.  
But on Saturday afternoons,  
I visit antique shops in towns like Prague,  
and eat apricot cobbler  
in the cafe on the highway  
before moving along.

--Abigail Keegan

### THE INVESTITURE

Hundreds of wires stretch  
miles and miles over land and sea  
reconnecting me to my mother  
like giant multiple umbilical cords.  
We talk on the phone, make plans to meet  
in a city unknown to either of us;  
we'll eat our lunches in cafes  
walk the myriad of shops and aisles  
and she'll recreate me  
with one outfit after another.

When we've finished,  
I'll go to my home, she to hers;  
in my moments of frustration and weariness,  
I'll try on shirts and skirts  
over and over again,  
thinking I'm looking for the look  
that's really me;  
she'll run her clothing store,  
suggesting to each woman who enters  
just the right dress for the occasion.

--Abigail Keegan  
from THE FEAST OF THE ASSUMPTIONS

## WINTER TREES

Long skeleton fingers  
stretch forth toward sky,

Adorned like entombed ancients  
with pearls and diamonds,

Dark dry limbs  
await their resurrection

While hidden roots  
suck earth for life.

--Abigail Keegan  
from THE FEAST OF THE ASSUMPTIONS

## TREES

Tall and gaunt, stretching its fingers in the sky,  
the wind gently caressing it with a sigh  
sometimes swaying and bending like a weird lance,  
then quiet, and still as if in a trance.

Whispering to God way up in the sky,  
watching the world at its feet go by,  
catching the raindrops in its arms,  
sheltering little birds from harm.

A thing of beauty in its dress of green and gold,  
but barren and grey in the winter cold.  
Trees, a gift from God to all mankind;  
protect and keep them through the realm of time.

--Pearl Koplin  
Akron, Ohio

## I ALWAYS SWEAT IN SILK

The solitude is broken by signs  
oh, the daffodils and the sun...  
red streamers float a welcome on spring air...  
in your young/old life you struggle  
again and again to center yourself.  
Fruit ripens when it is desired,  
where's the food?  
Cycles and circles, rhythm and flow,  
these days drip molasses in my boot  
with hope.  
I heard a white line being drawn,  
La plume de ma tante,  
la plume de la mer,  
Le bloom of us all,  
sun and light makes the day bright;  
my black cat sticks out his tongue and smiles.  
"What grade 'ja gimme?"  
Fruit and flowers do not poison;  
only God poisons.  
Living is meeting;  
absolve me, sister confessors.  
Blue moving across the stage,  
if writing poetry is fun  
why do I sweat with finding words?  
Creativity comes only  
when I am open to receive it.  
run out of lines from the past,  
past the needed words,  
words we sense in the closet of our minds.  
I always sweat in silk.

### by The Collective Unconscious

Nancy Walker  
Sharon Miller  
Ginger Barton  
Marian Hulsey  
Muriel Perkins  
Pat Colognesi  
Sue Tatro  
Beazley Kanost  
Ann Carlton

Connie McDonald  
Annette Van Dusen  
Gail Addis  
Nancy Viviani  
Marie Nisson  
Eloise Dycus  
Elaine Barton  
Norma Lewis  
Dee Butler

Mary Black  
Peggy Beavers  
Carolyn Goodrich  
Abigail Keegan

arranged by  
Martha Hayes

COMPETITION PRAYER, INDIAN MISS AMERICA

(from "Totem Princess" sculpture by Robert Haouzous)

Marquee Minnehaha  
about to dive into water or dance for rain,  
one piece, two breasts,  
a shadow of a belly encased in maillot,  
studded head and heart.

Honey skinned,  
frybread served instead of cheesecake,  
eyeless, lipless with only a nose  
to smell the scent of smoke signals  
coming from a distant blowing fuse.

--Mary Crescenzo Simons  
Tulsa

## POW WOW

Over in Tahlequah, Oklahoma,  
the new chief of the Cherokee Nation  
has been installed.

I read in the paper that the head  
of the #2 Indian tribe,  
68,000 strong, "wore a black suit  
and carried a Bible." Okay.  
Times have changed and so have chiefs.  
This one is a lady named Wilma,  
Wilma MANKILLER.  
Don't you love it?

Now, me, I'd rather have a little pomp  
and play-it-on-the-tom-tom ceremony.  
I can drop the Bible and the black  
and see Heap Big Chief Wilma  
eagle bonneted and leather fringed,  
red-painted toenails hidden  
by her beaded moccasins.

In that tree climbing,  
pistol packing,  
bow and arrows made of  
sycamore and string,  
always having to be a squaw  
part of my mind  
I see her, Mankiller,  
stand before the tepee council  
head and cheekbone high  
in tomahawkish splendor.

Hot damn, the woman has made  
every tomboy's dream  
come true.

--Judith Rycroft  
Edmond



DEATH  
OF  
A  
BATTLE  
GROUND

A boy swallowed  
In the horror of  
damp pungent fungus  
Squats in the underbrush.

Fingers twisted.

A change of mood in the  
vegetation  
Does not possess this mind  
from its silent  
Synchronicity.

Earth trembles  
And he is awake.

Wrapped in violent green  
and black  
He begins to chant  
To a dying mushroom  
below.

Reaching down, plucking it  
from its captured home  
He heaves it onto his knee  
and hears its cry:

"Èsè fue mi casa. Èsè fue me padre."

He slips the mushroom into his mouth  
and replies:

"Yo soy tu casa. Yo soy tu padre."

Poison drags the boy  
Closer into its  
Tremoring world.

And a bomb  
Silent  
Slips out of the sky.

--Jaylynn Bailey  
Oklahoma City

## BELFAST

Two iron gas tanks pose like buddhas  
at the edge of our yard.  
The dog reclines lazily beside them,  
making the line of her domain  
clear. Like us she's particular  
who crosses her boundaries.  
Inside we are cooking what we want,  
after weeks of restaurant dinners  
limited by menus.  
In my mind, we're alone here,  
and this is no resort.  
Ireland, not Maine.  
That place my grandmother used to tell  
about where the water was forever  
in the viewpoint.  
Sensing the importance  
of where we are, talk is serious,  
each word a little death of its own.  
We dissect our mothers  
into questions and answer them slowly  
like cannibals anxious to know  
just how much of them we might become  
in later years.  
Over the miles, their love decides  
a place in us, a legacy they can't die without  
leaving. Together  
we are many people. Some  
we've never met and never will.  
But no matter who you are  
at this moment, I know you.  
This one kissing me deep in the poem  
I love best.

--Susan Powell  
Rogers, Arkansas

## DOWNWARD MOBILITY

Out in Asia somewhere  
The Ambassador and his lady  
share a government funded  
stately home and stately life.  
But upstairs, in a stately room,  
our public faces peel away  
and lie, two empty smiles  
like cracks in the veneer.

Our stately room, soft-bottomed  
with thick pile in Wedgwood blue,  
is hung with damask drapes-  
and furnished in solid  
something made by craftsmen  
in Hong Kong.

A crew of servants spends the day  
in stately care. They search  
on hands and knees  
for hairs of dog or specks  
of tummybutton fluff  
and polish my 22  
lipstick cases daily.

Away from public selves we hide  
in our shining stately room  
where a modern miracle, machined  
in Singapore, exhales cool air  
at tasteful pitch. Beneath the vent  
one King Charles spaniel sleeps  
on a Tudor blue cushion of silk.

In that private stately room  
at night, I lie awake  
on an inner sprung posturepedic  
non-allergenic king size  
bed with satin sheets and velvet  
headboard fringed in Saxony blue  
beside a man I do not know.

There, I listen to gurgles  
and snores and turn away  
from the smell of sour whiskey  
and sweat. The man awakes,  
sits up unsteady on the mattress edge.  
I pretend to be asleep and watch  
with slitted eyes the play of light  
on wire curl golden hairs  
sprouting from the cleavage  
of his buttocks.

His hand shakes almost too much  
to hold the glass. He sips  
and swallows, burps and farts,  
turns out the light  
to reach for me  
and pump away and gasp and groan  
until he forgets, I think,  
what he is doing there.  
He grunts, rolls off,  
and snores.

I sleep these days somewhere  
in Oklahoma on a campbed in the corner  
of my friend's room, among stacks  
of cardboard boxes, and my dog  
looks hot and sad  
on the ragged towel on the floor.  
But I can smell red dirt  
in the splatters of the rain  
and hear the creek bed waken  
through the trees, and no one  
reaches for me  
in the night.

--J. Arre  
Edmond

## EVENING RITUALS OF A MEXICAN WOMAN

Flour  
will drift  
for days  
over the unwashed dishes.  
I greedily swallow the heavy oval  
tortilla that my grandmother  
would say I've flipped as  
gracefully as one flips a mattress.

Her kitchen is undefiled.  
Balancing a grandchild on one hip  
She turns tortillas with a  
swift swoop of her hand.  
Her fingertips touch the hot iron  
as they always have  
and she doesn't feel it.

I wonder if she cried the first time  
her mother made her turn  
the tortilla.  
I wonder how many times it took  
before she ran out  
of names for the pain  
like she ran out  
of names for her babies.

Her husband named the boys.  
Her first daughter she named Maria,  
Second daughter, Mary.  
The third daughter she named for  
her own Mama', and after that,  
the first children named the younger children,  
because if a woman's name couldn't  
mean "Mother" then it didn't  
mean much of anything.

After everyone was fed, my grandmother  
climbed up on the high brass bed.  
Her husband got out the Bible  
and read to her the words  
she couldn't read.  
She sat beside him listening  
intently, her hands folded on her lap,  
her brown chunky legs dangling.

I've wandered away  
I call myself "Belinda"  
According to one source  
My name means  
Wisdom  
In another translation  
it means sea-serpent.  
The flour on my jeans will fade.  
I turn out the kitchen light.  
I put the baby to bed as if  
my life depends on it  
I begin to write.

--Belinda Bruner  
Stillwater

## MEDICINE SONG

### "Mummy"

I bind my feet first  
fold my toes under heel and wind tightly  
to sway slowly  
stepping on myself  
to keep in step with you  
my mind dogs your feet  
for the opportunity to leap between the back of your heel and shoe.  
I want to be with you.

Up my legs--too long, too wide--  
I wind bandages because there is too much flesh for you to handle.  
I wind tightly and sit upright  
and try to hide beneath my breasts and hair.  
I repair my genitalia  
with white criss-cross, criss-cross  
of gauze between my legs  
and bind the bloom and boom and rhythm in my hips and ass.  
I fold my belly in upon itself  
I cinch and strap around my diaphragm  
so as not to breathe or speak deeply.  
I raise and round my breasts  
into correct formation  
and sling straps over my shoulders  
then string them through my crotch to crouch me down  
so I won't tower over you  
or seem able to carry heavy loads  
such as my head.  
Bandages like boa constrictors or blood pressure cuffs  
I coil down my arms and squeeze.

I can't lift my hands to contend with the area above my neck.  
It would throw me off balance.  
It would jeopardize my poise.  
Like a bouquet clenched in a fist, my head blossoms.  
It is fantastic.

## "Medusa"

From my seat on the shore you are first a speck.  
Why should I look up from the waves swaying seaweed?  
You will get so close; I will raise my head;  
you will freeze, drop, and be gone.  
A shadow glides on the water  
and the waves chop it.  
I lean back and look up  
and down, stunned, my eyes numb and ringing.  
Was the eye of Cyclops disembodied in the sky  
on fire, skimming air, fringed with wings?  
It wheels--a bright, white angel horse ridden by a hero  
who holds his shield and face away.  
He swoops in dives fast past and feathers brush my breast.  
How soft.  
Again the shield catches sun;  
I'm blinded  
and smell the horse and wonder:  
has this hero come for me?

His arm shoots out of the dazzle  
I reach to climb behind between the wings.  
I feel air hiss;  
we miss;  
he wheels;  
I reach  
and he extends his arm  
which flashes  
and lengthens to a point,  
hissing;  
smooth as a shadow slipping between my eyes and dropping body.

The world bounces.

### "Mirror"

Detached, my head rolls back.  
I see two marble, bulging bull's eyes  
wreathed by writhing adders  
only when I look into  
the polished monocle you thrust at me  
because you know, a priori,  
if our visions meet,  
YOU will be petrified.

### "Me"

Severed, I wrench myself from reflection  
and see no stars or landmarks.  
North, south, east and west have left me.  
The maps in the mirror read backwards from where I am  
and when I use them to move by  
my body does monkey junk.

So I stand still  
and feel the wind whistle clouds stroked on blue  
in nude movement raising tree limbs  
shimmying color after color  
inlaid with shadow shaping depth perception of a Dancer  
gracing--  
even in my belly--  
my body dissolves into her--  
everywhere  
her voice calling me  
to feel for my head, with the scare washing off and running down  
and now I've found it rising in my hands above  
I crown it on me--  
tissue kissing tissue.

Rising eyelids catch the gilded forms of morning rise my hair  
everywhere floats glinting in the Dancing Spirit's breath.

--Beazley Kanost  
Norman

## LINKS

You, from your back hills  
and me  
a pavement kid  
With a generation in between

All the songs  
stories  
memories  
The living that went into you  
Your own  
and the generations stretching behind you  
were passed on to me  
bit by bit  
in a broken mosaic  
of words

The storyteller  
songster  
The rememberer  
(keeper of a past pride)

This you handed on to me  
my inheritance

--J. Leigh Perry  
Moore

VIA AFFIRMATIVA

and the only crop  
that never failed  
was the kids born  
every year, rough  
old times, when  
the thrasher didn't come  
we rode our horses  
round and round  
on the wheat, broadcast  
by hand in Spring  
lucky to have a cow  
you couldn't buy no milk  
nor go to school till  
all the work was done  
on the farm, didn't  
make one grade a year  
like kids today and  
when we reached eighth  
we was through our education

those was rough old times  
but them that stuck it  
had a good life

--Kennette H. Wilkes  
Edmond

TO MARY HELEN

They say that when a tree  
falls in the forest  
where no ears listen  
no sound occurs

Perhaps this is true  
after all

A giant  
fell in the classroom  
last year

Math teacher  
diligent laborer for years  
filler of young minds and grade grids  
hardwood standard of  
rational perfection  
axed slowly by the irrational  
tilted  
and crashed  
in a silent arc  
of death

--Ruth Dishman  
Lawton

## HER WORLD

The land was once rich, ready for harvest  
but lies barren now, aged and overworked.  
She sleeps within the fruitless soil, feeling the  
pain of her life. Her rural home rests quiet, silent,  
and childless. She parts the thin veil of two  
worlds and bridges the gap across time. Older now,  
yet the same age, she faces the mountain landscape  
which would have shaped her life.

She knew the reality of pain, like crops planted in  
early spring; only to wither and die when summer  
droughts plagued the once fertile fields.  
No rain, No tears.  
No trees to shelter from the burning sun. The seeds  
of life hidden from view, died each time they gave  
birth to new harvest crops.

She recalls her own death, looking towards  
the grey-hewn stone on the distant hill.  
Her dreams are colorless; mostly greys, and her  
secrets are only known by the shadows on her old  
tattered dress.  
Her face is always hidden from view, concealing  
moments that might have been,  
if she had lived.  
Flowers that might have grown. Trees that  
might have budded, all died when she died.  
Facing backwards toward her own destiny, she parts a  
withered blade of grass.

--Catherine J. Donnell  
Rogers, Arkansas

## ON HER GARDEN

Winter is gone  
I hope  
Because today  
I sallied forth  
With rake and hoe  
In mighty rototiller's  
Wake  
To groom my plot  
And row by row  
My seeds to plant  
By hours of  
Deep knee bends.

If every seed  
Would heed my care  
And every bug  
Would kindly sate  
Its ravenous  
Appetite upon  
My weeds  
Why then, I'd have  
And hold  
My dreams.

--Eve Lear  
Oklahoma City

## COMING FULL CIRCLE

Soon,  
when the crisp autumn leaves  
gently kneel to touch the  
hard, dark earth--  
it will sustain.  
Locked in the icy edges of  
A winter queen--  
and shut her marble grey eyes  
to true emotions.  
Let her obtain nothing but the  
blank stares of  
abandoned stars in  
a vast sky of emptiness.  
Lock-out.  
Overthrow the  
dry gulches of December and  
the starved, barren earth--and  
it will come again soon.  
An easy breath will come once again--  
The monogamous love between  
Earth and sky softly reassured in  
the gentle fingertips of the wind.  
Capture the warm essence of  
sunshine, and  
embrace its innocence and child-like mystique  
in your frail, winter-white arms.  
Soon,  
the  
opalescence of spring  
will prove  
the long wait  
worthwhile.  
And the circle will be complete.

--Stephanie Booth  
Oklahoma City

## LOGICAL CONSEQUENCES

Locking eyes, we sensed a bonding,  
Left over from lifetimes past.  
Rememberances were not needed  
for friendship to flourish.  
As the times we spent, surrounded  
with personal endeavors, grew...  
We were absorbed in succeeding,  
soaring above the feelings we  
tried to ignore.  
Once set free of ties we merely  
endure, we came together--  
using our logic.  
But, responding with the only  
consequence our hearts could  
hope for.

--Patricia Wade  
Owasso

## THE BITCH

You asked me to tell you what drives me up the wall,  
And I wanted to tell you, to tell it all.  
But I didn't want to whine like some victim of circumstance;  
I wanted to make the subject sort of DANCE;

### I. (Fast and furious)

I wanted to speak with great authority  
About the evils of bureaucray,  
To point out the contradiction, the indignity  
Of putting in your 9 to 5 in pure futility,  
To slash with crystal clarity  
The petty politics of mere expediency!

### II. (Slow, with grandeur)

I wanted to defend impoverished spirits,  
I wanted so much to stand tall, to paint  
a compelling vision of another Way; to  
enlist your commitment to the Cause.

I wanted to be a strategist, or, if not,  
a courageous heroine in a catacomb or the  
underground railway.

But when you asked me to tell you what drives me up the wall,  
My revolutionary fervor went right out the window;

I slouched onto the nearest couch,  
Lifted a glass of gin to my lips,  
And like some toothless old wino,  
Rendered up today's version of...

**THE OLD FAMILIAR TALE.**

And you listened, like a friend,  
To me "bitching about my job again,"  
And knowing me well, you saw behind this dope;  
You heard the pain, the passion, and the hope.

So we had another gin or two, and talked all night;  
Then laughed, when morning surprised us with the light.

Thanks, I needed that.

--Pat Weygandt  
Oklahoma City

## THE DEVIL QUOTES SCRIPTURE

"I thought he was a preacher."

"Yeah, Mom says a devil found him."

"But those precious little girls!"

"Yeah. They would say to their mom, 'I hope  
Daddy dies on the way home.'"

"And she didn't suspect?"

"No. It's good she found out when she did,  
before either of them got pregnant."

"If they were my girls, he'd die."

"Yeah. He called and asked if he could come home."

"Doesn't he know what he's done?"

"Sure he does. Know what he said? 'But  
Lot lay with his daughters.'"

--Sharon E. Martin  
Cushing

## A PSYCHOTHERAPIST FRIEND

It's wonderful to have a psychotherapist friend  
Who carefully analyzes your every word,  
expression, bodily movement.

Why are you tapping your foot?  
How do you feel about that?  
Why do you love your cat more than  
your friends?  
Are you aware that you just sighed?  
What does it mean?

It's wonderful to have a psychotherapist friend  
Who advises you to go into group therapy to  
discover your real self.  
(Is your "real" self different from the  
one you've been living with for 33 years?)

Why aren't you more assertive?  
What does that expression mean?  
Why don't you date?  
Don't tell me what you think. Tell  
me what you feel.  
Be true to yourself!

It's wonderful to have a psychotherapist friend.

--Susan A. VanSchuyver  
Oklahoma City

## READ MY LIPS

"When you speak, it is my thinking out loud."

Ann L. Zoller

If I could  
I would drink only  
Asti,  
eat only croissants  
and dessert  
on Perugina,  
I would wear only  
Fiorucci,  
have my car last  
forever,  
never yell  
at my daughter,  
take the moon  
for my heart  
and kiss only  
your mouth.

--Mary Crescenzo Simons  
Tulsa

## YOU STAND THERE WAITING FOR THE PHONE

You stand there waiting for the phone  
to ring three times and stop.  
It's a signal you have with your mother.  
Or else you call and ask for someone else  
and she calls back knowing it's you  
to this phone booth on a deserted roadside  
half way up the coast of Maine.  
Last week she didn't return your call,  
though you waited twenty minutes  
in the rain, either of which would have  
given you reason to be angry.  
But you came back, cussing yourself  
instead. As if some harm had been done  
without your say so, you created stories  
for why she wouldn't want to talk.  
Something that happened months ago,  
making it your fault.  
All week you punished yourself,  
not knowing what for  
but that you had it coming.  
This is the signal, the love  
that hurts and will not stop.

--Susan Powell  
Rogers, Arkansas

## EARTH-THROB

"My heart, have you no wisdom thus to despair?  
My love, my love, my love, why have you left me alone?"

James Joyce

The heartbeat of rare  
Intense earth--  
A mirage of sun baked clay  
Reflects  
To beat the wind from  
Whistling into death fields.

The shimmered eyes of dead babies  
Hurled past my vision  
Of emptiness  
Follow the sunken beads  
Of milk-white honey  
Fastened to a string of dead  
Sea horses, climbing  
The ocean walls, for they are  
Drowning.

A sand sprinkled wise man  
Gave birth to a white cold ghost  
He lost his way in a game and  
Never turned  
To see me sucking breath  
To birth a dying lamb.

I am pierced to a core of rotten  
Sea corral.  
An ageless, timeless void.  
God help the children  
Who savor the youth  
A spiral calling.

The falling bodies of stained wine cups  
Are placid in morning light.  
The open pits of flesh wounds and  
Vein colored maggots  
Drip to syrup.  
Bloody pin prick--  
Oozing gash of stained  
Breath.

Let the mindless one wander  
To find the knowing man  
And send him to Wisdom  
Where the skies are melting sugar cane  
And words are poppy dust in  
The damp dying fire of daybreak.

--Jaylynn Bailey  
Oklahoma City

## WALLS AND BRIDGES

standing  
in quiet solitude  
on a desolate beach,  
i can tell by  
the deep impressions  
in the sand  
(which are not my own)  
that i am really not alone;  
yet i continue to construct  
these granular walls,  
forming towering, silver sand  
castles  
and sensing the  
presence of a  
living soul on the  
other side,  
only to await the moment  
when i'd choose to  
build a billion bridges  
above the rolling waters.

--Frances Fong  
Oklahoma City

## CROSSROADS

I've come to a crossroads.  
Whichever turn I make the result will  
be the same.  
Trusting my feelings, never to return  
to the stagnant path of isolation.  
Moving onward, only stopping enough  
to balance the rocky terrain  
of logic versus passion.  
Yielding to the moment of indecision,  
yet, taking the turn which allows  
feelings without guilt.  
Crossing over to love, trust and feelings.

Living.

--Patricia Wade  
Owasso

## HOME

Our lives and homes now concretized,  
we wander back where windows looked  
on snow or summer rain,  
where this spring's colt sniffs  
grass and rocks of cellar hole  
which supported timber and  
whose windows looked on meadow blowing  
smooth around its horses' legs. He lopes  
where men and women, strong and wrestling  
with that ground, slept and cooked,  
bled children, held them close and looked through  
windows, curtained then with cobwebs, now with dust.  
Particles adhere and form their own peculiar valence;  
fields of morphology and those of grass  
allow science to explain that when the sun  
burns out what will be gone and what remain,  
while we, in looking through our windows  
create the universe.

--Ellen Dudley  
Marlboro, Vermont

## DUST BOWL DAZE

Tornadic winds whipped churning clouds to flight  
while shifting soil to sift it miles away;  
dust stifled breath and suffocated dreams.  
The eeriness of day turned into night  
as windows rattled at prodigious might  
of howling force that flung to disarray  
neat cultivated farms of yesterday.

As farmers watch destructive duststorms leave  
clean crackled squares on farms today, they grieve,  
search hopelessly in cloud-free sky for rain.  
Dust devils writhe in dervish twist again.

"They sure cleaned house in hell today," men say,  
as ashes, turned to dust, drift overhead.

--Marianne McFarland McNeil  
Amarillo, Texas

## THE RITZ

When I was humbly reading one day,  
Something just turned my head away.

I heard an "eeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeee!"  
So I went to see.

When I hit the kitchen floor,  
I hadn't worries any more.

When I asked what was wrong,  
I didn't have to wait too long.

I could see right through my mom,  
There was no reason to be calm.

In the cabinet was a field mouse,  
In my mind, "This house?"

It took a few hours but we caught it,  
So anxious, I almost threw a fit.

Luckily we still have it now,  
It eats more like a cow.

It eats lots of pecans to bits  
And even has some special mouse chocolates.

You can tell he feels he really fits,  
That's because he thinks he stays at THE RITZ.

--Lauren M. Barnes  
Edmond



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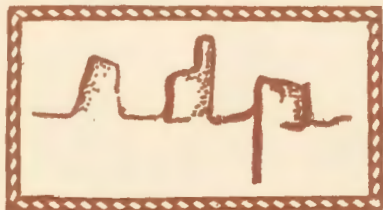


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