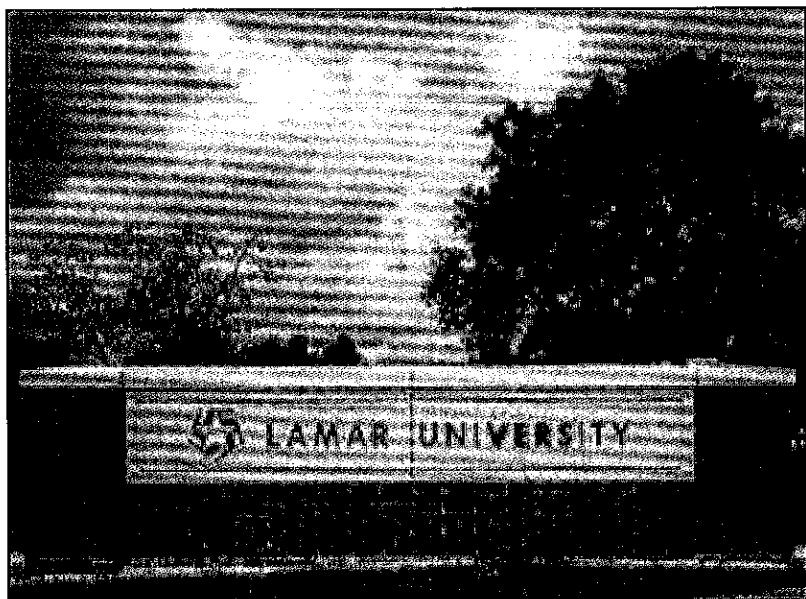


PULSE



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Spring 2002

Pulse

**The Literary Magazine
Of Lamar University - Beaumont**

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Department of English and Foreign Languages

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Acknowledgments

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Awards

- Eleanor Poetry Award** for best overall poem
Mike Dunklin, "The Wreck of the Six-Ten"
- Barnes Poetry Award** for best poem in traditional form
Linda Dousay, "A Sign"
- deSchweinitz Poetry Award** for best poem in open form
Sylvester Frazier, Jr., "Slow Progression"
- Rowe Poetry Award** chosen by *Pulse* staff
Kim Anderson, "Watchman"
- Honorable Mention Poetry**
Ann Alvarado, "Yo No Soy Mojada"
- Foreign Language Translation**
Adnan Mehmeti, "From Byron's Diary - in
Albania"
- Pulse* Fiction Award** for best short fiction
Ginny Nelson, "Burnin' Rubber"
- Pulse* Essay Award**
Beverly Williams, "Lifestyle Changes at Mid-life"
- Rowe Critical Paper Award**
Beverly Williams, "Swimming in Form
with Maxine Kumin"

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Mike Dunklin

The Wreck of the Six-Ten

It wasn't much of a story, but it stuck,
stuck for forty years,
even though I only got it at best a poor
third hand, my late father reading at breakfast
the reprint of a *Frankston Citizen* story
from 1921, telling how
Homer Logan, three years home from the war
and still drunk, smashed the padlock
on the turnout switch and shifted the bar.
No one knew what happened to him
over in the Argonne to make him do
such a tomfool, prankish thing
that August morning, the rails
still slick with the summer dew
as the southbound Dallas Mail
bore down in the dim light
and the engineer, leaning out,
a 28-year-old Thomas Neal,
prayed for his three girls back in Dallas
and set the brakes and hollered
for his nigra fireman to bail
and to the black man's credit,
my father read, the fireman
begged Neal to leap as well.
"She'll jump the tracks,"
the fireman screamed, then leapt
when Neal stubbornly shook his head
and leaned back on the brake
lever with one hand and yanked

the whistle cord with the other, sending
up a white feather of steam and sounding
a deep throaty wail through the barely
stirring town, causing those working
at the packing sheds to look
downtrack towards the whistle
around the bend and Barry Fields
at the depot to fire away a warning
telegraph, ordering Jacksonville
to hold the northbound freight.
Jump the tracks she did,
the drivers plowing up the red clay
there in the curving cut,
though Neal's braking saved
the rest of the train, for only
the tender followed the big
churning Texas, the mail car and two
passenger cars clinging to the rails.
It was bad enough, for Thomas Neal
was killed, crushed between tender
and firebox, a toothpick still between
his dead lips, my father said.
"The fireman's name, I think,"
my father added, "was Jack Coker.
At least I think that was his name. His boy
used to cut ties for your granddaddy.
Papers never mentioned blacks by name
back then, except in the obituaries
or the police reports."
Anyway, Jack Coker was busted up,
for he came down on a stack of ties,
screaming at the posse that
rushed past him to hunt down

the drunken Homer Logan, found
puking and ashen in a plum thicket
alongside the tracks,
dumbstruck by the turn fate
had taken when he threw that switch
and killed one man and maimed another.
We looked at the accompanying picture
that calm morning, still two years before I left
for my own historical human wreckage,
playing hooky from school to enlist at seventeen.
My father poked the photo with a thick finger,
rubbing the three girls posed on the cowcatcher
of the derailed wreck, and showed me my grandmother
and both my great-aunts preserved in the grainy
picture at ages ten, eight, and seven,
pointing last to a tow-headed boy in coveralls,
standing a bit away, aloof.
"That was my daddy," my father said.
So now I wonder, forty years later still,
about that distant tragedy, which still echoes
third-hand in my head,
long after Homer Logan stepped up on
his cot in the county jail
and wrapped his belt around a steam line
then leaped to catch a train.

Linda Dousay

A Sign

A spreading oak on
solid ground, shed the twisted
dried up twig I found.

A Promise

Transparent shades of blue and red
shimmering in the sky—
concentric and colored
arcs that may
be seen with the naked eye.

Within the shades of blue and red
around and in-between—
indigo, violet
yellow, orange
and wavering shades of green—

Cutting across the darkened sky—
ending of rainy days—
bending of light in small
drops of rain—
ribbons of glorious rays.

For You

I cannot Tell the Hour—
Nor the Moment— or the Day—
I only Heard a whisper—
You're going the Wrong Way—

Persistent Preservation—
Natural instinct— call it Pride
Is Shattered by Delusion
When the heart Controls the Mind—

It's buried Now— I stopped it Cold—
I shudder Still within—
So close we came— to Brass, not gold—
To Shame, and Mortal sin—

Mr. G's Latin E's

One Used to Be's

1. The Grass Widow

Patiently, she waits on time—
she was first, you know, in his long line.

Two Wanna Be's

1. The Prophet

Some people say he goes too far,
but they can't see his rising star.

2. Mama's Little Man

He clomps around in daddy's shoes,
quite confident, he cannot lose!

Three Are's

1. The Matriarch

She quietly smiled, then left the room—
Chantilly lace, Chanel perfume.

2. The Loan Officer

He listens carefully to their woes,
then turns them down: "Well, so it goes."

3. The Tenured Professor

Why should he care what students say?
He draws a paycheck anyway.

No More Alone

I threw the pages of our life into the atmosphere—
They wrapped themselves around me twice, before I felt
the fear.

The memories were images I'd cast in mortar stone,
A brief encounter magnified because I stood alone.

The shadow of perfection, confused with pain and time
Became reckless adoration controlling soul and mind.
Passion, once forgotten, when awakened in the night
With longing to be satisfied was winning in the fight.

I stood upon those mountains and I looked within my soul
To boldly face the chilling fear and longing taking hold.
Patience was a virtue— as yet I could not see—
Perhaps I'd found the answer— perhaps a simple key.

Then deep within the valley, a glint of light revealed
A gentle flowing river near a field of daffodils—
Shadows of the mountain, enhanced the image still—
Of the sweetly flowing water and the dancing daffodils.

I felt the softness of a breeze blowing through my hair,
As melodies unheard before floated on the air—
Written words of poets slowly filled my troubled mind,
As whispers blended with the wind to leave the past
behind.

From the center of this beauty, a banner came alive
Singing, shouting: *Victory for God, our Lord and Guide—*
Forget those things that are behind—press on, press on,
press on—
A brand new day is dawning soon! I felt the crumbling
stone.

I looked beyond the mountains into the setting sun,
And knew this valley now was mine, sweet vic'try had
been won:

How can we know perfection if pain is never born,
And who on earth has witnessed a rose without a thorn?

There's beauty in the ashes, of every dying thing,
If one can cease to worry, and let the future bring
The image of the shadow of the perfect harmony—
A soul and soul united, throughout eternity.

Let longing lead to tempered dreams; on these you then
can build

A firm foundation followed by the virtue of his will.
He's yet to fail a brother or a sister who believes
That all things are quite possible—Voila!—the daffodils.

Turning from the mountain tops, I sought but could not
find

A single hint of anguish in the passage of that time.
I placed the pages of our life before the feet of one,
Who gently touched my longing, and I walked no more
alone.

The Seer

A stone upon this vast domain
I travel, sealed by fate
to stand alone among my own
and beckon all: *make haste!*

*There's light beyond—press on, press on
you'll see, it's time—it's late—
lay aside, you cannot hide
hold on—let go— of waste.*

“Leave me be in agony.”
Wake up, my friend, no way—
A stone within this promise land
You'll win—I'll win— The race!

Sylvester Frazier, Jr.

Slow Progression

The faded city limits sign
turns a smooth ride rough.
I exit a bumpless highway
to a potholed street.
As I drive, I try not to see
the town's boarded shacks,
and lawns entangled
with two foot tall weeds
strangling beer cans
and fried chicken boxes,
but like at a car accident,
my gazes continues
at this worst than dead town.
A dead city would go away
instead of just rotting.
The thick factory air
in this place of never was,
or never will be
and certainly not now,
brings a cough to my chest
and water to my eyes
as I catch a glimpse
of a ragged motel sign
with the simple message:
Welcome Home.

Marked Grave

A phone message reminds me
that my mother has decided
it is time to visit
my father's grave.
The visit is never sentimental.
She does not ask to be alone
or ever sheds a tear.
She just drops the flowers or
plastic plant or flag or whatever it is
and babbles on about how
the last set of whatever has been stolen.
The roadside spot has not been marked
because the VA is supposedly
backlogged with requests
for military headstones.
So this time as I drive
to the familiar little dip
in the road I see a metal cross
at the head of Dad's dirt bed.
leaving my mother to fumble
her way out of the car
with a fake African Violet,
I read the bronze lettering
only to find it is I:
not my father, who is dead.

Kim Anderson

Watchmen

sit down again, Sam
sit down and listen to the rhythm of the new wheel turnin'
she's spinnin' and she's spittin'
and she's unashamedly prophesyin'
of the new day a dawn'n
the world's giving birth again, Sam
and this firecracker's coming out red-headed
kickin' and screamin'
and tap-tap-tap dancin'
flyin' right past old yester's year
those are some nimble little dancin' feet

somethin's creakin' in the air
vague omen of a new tomorrow
you better peel open those glazed-over eyes
better get you a warm rag
and scrub that sleepy out quick
don't be left starin' at Eternity's backside
I got this monster by the hem of its garment
holdin' on by a thread
holdin' on for dear life
my heels are skiddin' on the pavement
they're diggin' in
trying to wait for you
but Time,
she's marchin' right on
Time slips like slippery jellyfish on
and she ain't waitin' for no one

somethin's in the air
it's crisp like the first cold front
silent like the prelude to a storm
tangible like a deafening something dreadfully large
sitting right over there in the very next moment

the wheel of the ancient gates are turning
turning
Zion's doors are inchin'
opening
the light's escaping out,
it's searing hot
plastered and smashed against the doors
the fists of an army raining down from the inside
like the fury of a hurricane
you ain't never heard a drum circle like this
ready to pounce out on the prey like a lioness
like a hunting hound
fed up,
there'll be no more
of the darkness corroding the destined like it has a right to
like it takes pleasure from it
like the new world order isn't already established
the light hounds aren't waitin' any longer
I hear the creakin' like a forest of California Redwoods
crashin' down simultaneously

the King's saddled up
and he's marvelously jealous over his own

Exodus

This ought a be simple, a snap
Just gotta' get you out on paper
Out of me
Like an exorcism
And onto the paper-
Exit, catharsis-
*"Please just stay still, don't move a muscle,
these self-portraits are a monstrous business"*

You're pumping like all hell's broken loose
Running around like an Olympiad
Being hugged
At every thought, around every tight corner
Like Daphne fled from Apollo
Desperately clinging to her freedom

You, my steed,
My song
My cherished time bomb,
Dichotomous-doom-of-civilized-suit-and-manners-stay-
content-with-less-than-you-dreamed-of-me
You are wild like fury
Unbridled and unpredictable
You are a hurricane, a tornado
Caught in a corked bottle
Annihilating the tediously built miniature ship
That at least holds up the facade
That there IS such a thing as organized,
Still
Life

You scream like a raging woman lost in the psychosis of
wounded love

You howl and rip the little vessel to shreds
Moaning, sobbing to be unrestrained

I've heard this plea threaded like DNA
From all my bygone days
Since the earliest crack of light in my memory
Rocking me to sleep with my mother on her knees
Singing, "Kookha Bearah sittin' in the old gum tree"

Even then you whispered that you were free
And this thing called life was harnessing me

Ann Alvarado

Yo No Soy Mojada
"I'm Not a Wetback"

Yo no soy mojada.
Why do they take offense?
Proud of our heritage
Yet we betray our conciseness

They swam across filth to a promised land
Whole families side-by-side, dripping sweat.
We care for them with our calloused hands
Pinche jefes gringos watch over our step
No, *Yo no soy mojada*

But my father was one.
Educated and drafted by the government to fight
Only discovered when his service was done
His illegal citizenship, after years, was in plight

Generations of families, mine is not unique.
My temper peaks at those who despise and forget
Had it not been for prosperity that they seek
Would my future not have been so rightly set.

We came from warriors who were loyal, intelligent and
full of pride
Why would anyone not want to be stereotyped?
No, *Yo no Soy Mojada!*
Pero ay Dios, como quisiera.

Wetback: a derogatory word that is changing to be a status of pride
pinche jefes gringos: stingy white bosses
ay pero Dios como quisiera: Oh God I wish I were

Suegra

She worked in *los labores*
Her six children by her side
No matter the pay it was "less"
The men she met always lied

She danced in *cantinas* for money
He was playing in the band
He promised milk and honey
Should have been a one-night stand

Her children did grow and left; all six
Now *mi pobre suegra* sits alone
After all her struggles she holds a crucifix
Nadie le tiene compassion

My *suegra* had some hard times then
But now in old age, it isn't easier
Siempre solita y tambien,
Scarred by *mala vida's* harshest burr

Que Dios te bendiga
Y duermes con los angeles
Siempre sus hijos te sigan
Que nunca sabes otros Dolores

Labores: fields
Cantinas: bars
Mi pobre suegra: my poor mother-in-law
Nadie le tiene compassion: no one gives her any compassion
Siempre solita y tambien: always alone and also
Mala vida: hard life

God bless you
And sleep with the angels
Your children will always seek you
May you never know future heartaches

Adnan Mehmeti

*The following poems are the original work of the author
in his native Albanian language.*

From Byron's Diary - in Albania

So pretty are country girls
Byron writes in his diary
So rare are those girls
They ask to keep his heart hostage.

Like their sisters, the eagles
They join their husband in a war.
Where do they get that beauty?
Where do they get that joy?

I am dying with open eyes, for three loves
For England, my birth place
For my liberation was in Greece
For Vasilika the prettiest women in Albania.