

Balticon 39 Poetry Contest Winners

Why Your Robot Dog Has Been Recalcitrant

You feed him too many nuts and bolts,
not enough rivets.

You scolded him for killing the Doberman
who lived next door.

You ignore him most of the time
and then expect mutual joyous affection
at the oddest and most inopportune moments.

He has read far too much Sartre.

You can't find the instruction booklet and
the lights blinking suddenly and insistently
on his chest mean nothing to you whatsoever.

He's never been the same since he lost
his tail in the mower.

He's been talking with the robot cat.

Bruce Boston – First Place

South

You promised me no problems
when the temperatures dropped,
assured me that we were prepared.
Holding hands we watched
the great migration south.

With synthetic skins, cryo foods,
and prefab domes, you said we couldn't lose.
There was little need to leave the domes.
Safe from the fierce glacial winds,
we made love on autumn colored furs.

Yet you were the first to grow restless,
to stand all night at the southern window
following the great move of stars.
We shared the bitter smoke of silence
until one morning, you were gone.

I waited for you, my fingers
tracing love symbols on the icy glass.
I slept with the red wing of your guitar.
Then moon-shadow tall, you came home.
Inside the door, I didn't know your eyes.

This year, I read while you play solitaire.
Our conversations are textured with frost.
I ache for your laughter,
the taste of grass on your skin,
a bouquet of crocuses in a blue vase.

Marge Simon – Third Place

When The Dead Do Not Depart

They live in towers and basements:
preserved by chill and shadow
and if they sleep,
they sleep with one eye open
and dream of life after death.

They watch the world in silence:
between doorways and mountains
consuming their own passion
digesting the sights and sounds of the living.

They are never lonely in their aloneness:
their invisible solitude flourishes under a godless sky
waiting for history to happen
without passing judgment
without passing through.

They sacrifice time in a self-made ghetto:
there is no escape from their prismatic prison
doors only lead them into darkness
enticing no warmth, no comfort.

They continuously search for truth:
knowing their death was premature
knowing their haunting is important
wanting to change the mundane
bring light to their (non) existence
and somehow make an undisclosed difference.

They are too lithe to disappear:
they move quickly and colourless
around the house
huge in the breeze
laying down roots that shiver.

Bunny Iskov – Second Place

Honorable Mention

Childhood Laid to Rest
Eleanor Perriss

In the Flow of Cosmic Bathwater
Chris Kuehn

Relativity and Reason
Greg Beatty

Shadow Friends
William H. Roetzheim