

Balticon 40 Poetry Contest Winners

The Edge of the World

Ultima Thule weeks behind us
 we bear on to nor'west, unmindful of wind shifts,
 the swells that opposed us now swirling, churning,
 our sails taut as steel.
 Our captain, an old man, hand clenched to the tiller,
 says nothing as we climb the masts to trim canvas—
 he stares only forward.
 To where the sky darkens.
 We cling to the ratlines, reefing points salt-stiffened
 fighting our grasp as we pull sail in,
 the hull bucks, our ship cants—two men go over
 shrieking in blackness—as, far below, our rudder grips aether,
 our keel lifts, groaning, above the ocean's fall.
 Star points surround us and all, for a moment,
 is silent until we hear rushing of comets.
 The music of planets as we gird the moon.

James S. Dorr – First Place

The Missing Link

The news blared from the atomic TV:
 the missing link had been found
 on America Island.

We watched the removal of a dirt dress
 that revealed yellow remnants
 in a peculiar pattern.

An oblong object with three holes
 crowned a cylindrical column
 caged near the top

and flanked by two projections
 that each ended in five digits.
 Two longer appendages acted as antennae

to a misshapen butterfly
 frozen upside down and centered
 at the bottom of the column.

We stared in amazement.
 How could it be our ancestor?
 We looked nothing like that.

Where were its tiny tentacles and
 centralized brain of clustered cubes?
 Maybe time took them away

along with its shiny skin
 or maybe magma ate them
 from within the deep earth.

We fell silent, as the scientists conferred.
 No, they said, the species is *Homo sapiens*,
 a creature from long ago.

We smiled at each other
 and concurred that they were wrong.
 We knew these to be the bones of God.

Karen L. Newman – Third Place

Honorable Mention

No Real Monsters
 Val Grimm
 (Arlington, MA)

*A Composition of Magic (for non-believers);
 A Deconstruction of Love (for those who believe)*
 Genevieve Olivia Ballard
 (Walnut, MS)

Oracle
 Danielle Ackley-McPhail
 (Stratford, NJ)

My Life with a Latin Professor

Lorenzo has been taken by aliens again.
 They caught him four nights ago in the car park
 of The Conjuror's Half-Crown, took him up into the starry
 starry night, as he puts it. The mothership was retro,
 tricked out with silver plastic and plump crimson velvet
 like a '50s cinema foyer. They freshen the air
 with a lemon-grass scent. I smell it on
 his jacket, one tone above the cigarette smoke.
 Nicotine is a habit that hit the greys hard.

Last month I was carried off by a band
 of raiding seraphim. The smell of incense
 and burnt plumage lingered between my thighs
 for days. I hummed *Holy Holy Holy* as I vacuumed
 mats and rearranged our dust with feathers.
 Strange how he and I remain such tempting prey
 to skyfolk but perhaps the conjunction

of pheromones that first brought us together calls
 upwards like a signal beacon. And abductions,
 these enforced absences, are in one way welcome
 lacunae in the mundane act of togetherness. Who knows
 where Lorenzo will be next week, or how far up
 I will fly. I do not envy our friends' uninterrupted
 coupling, their drab separations by appointment.

Tomorrow I may be radared by an eagle
 seeking a swan. Today I scramble five eggs with milk,
 not forgetting a dash of mustard, and spoon
 the pale mimosa into two willow pattern bowls.
 With wholemeal toast and strong coffee, that will see us
 through till lunch. We step out under the open sky
 like eyelets waiting to be hooked. Our history
 will be as much vertical as horizontal. Our hearts
 are always thudding like wings.

M.A. Griffiths – Second Place

About the Poets

James Dorr (First Place, *The Edge of the World*)—James Dorr's new short fiction and poetry collection, *Darker Loves: Tales of Mystery And Regret*, is due out from Dark Regions Press <www.darkregions.com> as a companion to his current collection, *Strange Mistresses: Tales of Wonder and Romance* (Dark Regions, 2001). An Indiana resident, Dorr is a member of the Science Fiction Poetry Association and a multi-time Rhysling finalist as well as an active member of SFWA and HWA, an Anthony (mystery) and Darrell (fiction set in the US Mid-South) finalist, winner of Best of the Web 1998, a Pushcart Prize nominee, keeper of a gray and black cat named Wednesday (after Wednesday Addams of *The Addams Family* and whose favorite toy is a plastic fake spider!), and has had work listed in *The Year's Best Fantasy and Horror* eleven of the past fourteen years.

M.A. Griffiths (Second Place, *My Life with a Latin Professor*)—I was born in London, but now live in Dorset (Hardy's Wessex). I enjoy writing both formal and free verse, and I edit a poetry e-zine called *WORM*. My poems have appeared in *Snakeskin*, *The 11th Muse*, *Miller's Pond*, *Folly* and *Mindfire Renewed*, amongst others.

Karen L. Newman (Third Place, *The Missing Link*)—Karen L. Newman is the author of the poetry collections *EEKU* (Sam's Dot) and *ChemICKals* (upcoming from Naked Snake Press). She has over 100 publications and is the horror editor for *Afterburn SF*. She lives in Kentucky and can be found online at <<http://home.zoomnet.net/~karennew>>.