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# Dirge For An Imaginary World Poems

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**HANCOCK TIMOTHY**

*The Blind Loon - A Bestiary* Able Muse Press  
In *Second Rain*, Elise Hempel gleans anecdotes of uncommon poignancy from the seemingly commonplace, and crafts them into memorable poems. Family settings and the world of nature are captured and shaped into insight through the poet's discerning eyes: here an only child in her room with a lone and captive katydid; here a feisty grandmother in the hospital; here a father fond of household projects, building two swimming pools, a basketball hoop in the driveway, and transforming the yard into a skating rink. This inspirational debut collection, charged with nostalgia and longing, is fittingly finalist in the 2015 Able Muse Book Award. PRAISE FOR SECOND RAIN: The apparently domestic poems in *Second Rain* (poems about family, gardening, dogs, birds, and a few memorable tigers) deliver enough controlled intensity "to shake the trees all down." A special gift of Elise Hempel's art is to evoke

and suggest passions without spelling them out; we readers get to unscramble the anagram, to find the ache—and our own corresponding ache—beneath the poised surface. —Rachel Hadas, author of *Questions in the Vestibule* [Elise Hempel's] curiosity and insights singled her out as special, but her ability to shape her feelings into words remains what I find most unique . . . From the opening title poem on, this is a book about the often ignored, simple gifts that come to us, like "the second rain that comes/ when the first is over," that "gentle scattering of drops" the breeze shakes down from the trees and "briefly blesses you." —Bruce Guernsey (from the foreword), author of *From Rain: Poems, 1970–2010* From the title poem on, Elise Hempel's *Second Rain* matches form with feeling, delivering insights that seem at once inevitable and necessary. Her sense of the sonnet—its grace and shape—lends quiet force to what's remembered and observed, from a pet shop crow to memories of now-absent loved ones, mother-daughter conflicts to the ambiguities of language itself. Like the

flock of geese described in one poem here, Hempel's collection succeeds in many "different keys." —James Scruton, author of *Thrift* Through admirably controlled and marvelously controlling language, the compressed imagery in Elise Hempel's powerfully compact poems subtly evokes emotional responses, while the poet also smartly engages readers with an authentic and persuasive voice. Indeed, to borrow a phrase from the eighth and final line in the collection's title poem, each piece in *Second Rain* "briefly blesses you." —Edward Byrne, author of *Seeded Light*  
[Animal Psalms - Poems](#)  
Able Muse Press  
*Virtue, Big as Sin* is impressively wide-ranging in theme and style. It illuminates everyday vignettes with solicitous spotlights such as the bereaved son sorting the contents of his father's medicine cabinet, or the father whose son's driver's education recalls the time his own "unharnessed" Mustang went "bungeeing" around a bend; it celebrates the artist's creative highs, or reflects on the misfortunate who is forever nearing the

threshold of achievement, aware that life may prove a “most inept librettist” and should thus be paired with our “strongest song.” Osen’s dexterity with both formal and free verse is apparent. His wit and humor prevent the serious from becoming ponderous while his intelligent insight lends depth to the lighthearted. Reading and rereading this outstanding debut collection, it is easy to see why—from the first poem to the last—it is a worthy winner of the 2012 Able Muse Book Award. PRAISE FOR VIRTUE, BIG AS SIN: Frank Osen’s *Virtue, Big as Sin* offers one witty, elegant poem after another. The rhymes are especially clever, the meter sure, the stanzas well-shaped, but this poet’s sense of proportion is also reflected in wisdom (and what is wisdom but a sense of proportion?). An urbane maker of sparkling phrases like “that genuine Ur of the ersatz,” Osen can also write plainly, movingly, about a young girl’s funeral. And he reflects often on art itself, which he so rightly calls “the conjured awe.” —Mary Jo Salter (Judge, 2012 Able Muse Book Award) In his talent for tragedy and comedy, and for mixing them, Osen takes his place in a

distinguished line of English-language poets that runs from Chaucer and Shakespeare down to our day. —Timothy Steele (from the afterword) Reading *Virtue, Big as Sin* has left me with the sense of satisfaction and enduring pleasure that really good poetry always produces, even when it also does the rest of what honest writing may do: confirm suspicions about ourselves we wish we could refute, bring to mind aspects of nature we’d rather forget, and deliver alarming news about the future, both public and private. Frank Osen does all of this and much more, all with grace and wit, in language that makes the messenger thoroughly “one of us.” —Rhina P. Espaillat Frank Osen’s poems revel in beauty and pleasure, in technical dexterity and high-gloss finish. Readers who care about such things will be abundantly rewarded. But the reveling is haunted by loss, awful possibilities of failure, a nothingness glimpsed beneath the carnival. One of Osen’s avowed tutelary spirits is Wallace Stevens, and his probing of his subjects can often seem like an extended, heart-wrenching commentary

on Stevens’s line, “Death is the mother of Beauty.” The fragility of beauty, the omnipresence of death, and the intimate connections between them, are everywhere present in these marvelously heartening and effective poems. —Dick Davis *How to Cut a Woman in Half* Able Muse Press Rhina P. Espaillat’s *And after All* meditates on the passage of time. The perspective sweeps from the panorama of foreign landmarks to the close view of a lover’s feet in failing health, held and cared for. And after All displays the wit, wisdom, subtle voice, and supple mastery of forms that have established Espaillat as a contemporary master. This long-awaited collection from Espaillat is a treat not to be missed. PRAISE FOR AND AFTER ALL Rhina P. Espaillat’s *And After All* combines the formal fluency of Richard Wilbur, the precision of Elizabeth Bishop, and the easy conversational tones of Frank O’Hara, and yet her poems speak in a voice that is distinctively her own. They address the loss of loved ones and loved things of the world, but their extraordinary empathy and gentle wit

keep them from becoming depressing or sentimental. Savor this book and share it with people you love. —A. M. Juster, author of *Sleaze & Slander: New and Selected Comic Verse, 1995–2015* Rhina P. Espailat, more than any living poet in English, gives ordinary language the glow of the sacred. Workaday words, trite with custom like thin coins, accrue new resonance and weight; plain objects are haloed with aureoles like figures in gold mosaics. Saints with their visions used to do this: wave away the veils that separate our shallow perceptions from a deeper reality. But not everyone is granted visions. How much harder it is to use the same words we all use and misuse, the same objects we all touch and ignore, common experiences we dismiss, and, by using words with precision, using the serendipity of rhyme, and the convention of metrical patterns, to give the reader the experience of revelation. Craft is not the opposite of inspiration, Espailat reminds us, it is the only way to it. —A. E. Stallings, author of *Olives* For most of its poems *And After All* is, as the title

indicates, deeply elegiac in tone. There are many poignant evocations of the past in the book, rich with quotidian surface detail but always suffused with undemonstrative but palpably real emotion. A poem about the poet's grandmother, a tough no-nonsense farmer's wife who described how cows inarticulately but unmistakably grieved when they realized their calves were to be slaughtered, ends with the line, "She told it simply, but she faltered there." In its quiet pathos the line seems to sum up much of the book; exactness, no fuss, unforced fidelity to the anecdote, but the tremor of poignant empathy always present. A very eloquent collection of beautifully crafted poems, and one that it is hard to read dry-eyed. —Dick Davis, author of *Love in Another Language* [Credo for the Checkout Line in Winter: Poems](#) Able Muse Press Alfred Nicol's *Animal Psalms* begins with the baseball field's organized uncertainties, and continues on many a trajectory of animal ruminations—with the human species well accounted for—ending in the imbalance of the

everyday "Nuts" around us. The subjects include the elephant, snake, sheep, skunk, bee, couple dynamics, the trials and triumphs of the ruler or the everyman. This is a collection rich in aphorisms on the bright and shady spectra of our interactions. Recognizable soliloquies with the meditative self or dialogues with the beloved are unraveled for keen insights on the human condition—deconstructing them until the knotty connecting threads are exposed. Nicol gives us a mature collection of quiet reflection, with wit and wisdom deployed through finely crafted poems of masterly formal dexterity. PRAISE FOR ANIMAL PSALMS: Dear reader, I've fallen in love with this book, and that will happen to you too. Read, for instance, the very last poem, "Nuts," and read the great "How to Ignore an Invisible Man," and you're hooked forever. Read all the rest, these poems by Alfred Nicol which have our numbers, and have his own too, that tell about our lives, and his, and the lives of snakes, and bees, and elephants, with such humor, and pity, and praise, for all of us,

human and animal, in our situations. It's impossible not to fall in love. —David Ferry, author of *Bewilderment*, winner of the National Book Award

As the title *Animal Psalms* suggests, there is reverence here—a reverence that derives less from religion than from a religious attention to the things of the world, from baseball games to zoo elephants to the newly beloved. Nicol is a melodic writer, called first to the music of words, to “speech that lets the sound/ carry the greater part of what is said.” He’s also a poet whose images you won’t soon forget. They summon the real world and simultaneously render it otherworldly. While the poems offer moments of ecstatic escape, they’re more often held in check by an Augustan wit, ironic humor and a touch of Baudelaire. Poise and wit prevail in these psalms; they give us both despair inflected by light and illumination held fast by darkness. —Erica Funkhouser, author of *Earthly*

If we would only take the time to let one of Alfred Nicol’s poems sink in through the brilliant latticed grid of its formal exterior, how the truth of what he has to say about

the human condition would hit us the way a line drive whips toward you on a dreamy summer’s afternoon, startling you back into the electric now. I love these poems because they evoke for me the zany, spiritual energy of the Beats welded as only a workman can work unwieldy things to the tempered grid of six centuries of formalism. Don’t be surprised if—after reading these poems—you find them turning back to their true subject, dear reader, which turns out to be none other than you. —Paul Mariani, author of *Epitaphs for the Journey*

Motherland Able Muse Press

In Sally Thomas’s *Motherland*, the poet keenly observes the ephemeral and the everlasting in the lens of time—the daily into seasonal transformations, the gifts and wonders of nature and people. *Motherland* by turns hails and interrogates in matters of flesh, of faith and spirituality—especially so in the “Richeldis of Walsingham” poem sequence. This finalist in the Able Muse Book Award is a collection abounding in insight, hope, grace, surprises,

and yes, love. PRAISE FOR MOTHERLAND: A core of spiritual knowledge resides in the poems of Sally Thomas’s *Motherland*—knowledge that might seem strange to the poet herself, in fact, though it definitely resides in her, and radiates throughout this collection. *Motherland* is the perfect title, since the poet, herself a mother, regards all her human occupations as native and yet mysterious, occurring in a place which is both foreign and familiar. The final sequence, on Richeldis of Walsingham, includes lines that describe the expression of that knowledge, as “the eloquence/ Of the small river moving always forward to the unseen/ Sea.” *Motherland* is a book of the presence—radiant, benevolent, challenging—for which there is often no word, except as we find in poetry, like the poetry of Sally Thomas.” —Mark Jarman, author of *The Heronry*

The poems of Sally Thomas are poems in which the act of looking at the world in all its depth and complexity is just about as close as possible to being fully realized in the corresponding “world” of poetic language and form.

And the verses are compelling because in every line something is at stake: our very understanding of creation, the human condition, and the mystery of thought and its language that link us, however imperfectly, to what may be called the given world. As Thomas says in "Frost," "Tricky winter light and my own eye/ Bend the world, if not to beauty, then/ To strangeness." -David Middleton (from the foreword), author of *The Fiddler of Driskill Hill* In her most recent collection of poems, *Motherland*, Sally Thomas gives us a world we live in but, alas, too often don't seem to see. So much is lost, these poems tell us, even as they manage to reinstate and re-imagine these losses for us. All poetry is elegiac, even as it can, in the hands of a serious poet, celebrate the very world which for all of us keeps slipping away in the great wheel of time. Then too there is her mastery of poetic form—among these the sonnet, the villanelle, the couplet, and her unparalleled command of rhyme and slant rhyme. What a delight to discover a poet who has found a way to allow the sacred and the sacramental

inform her poems in a surprising range of contemporary idioms. - Paul Mariani, author of *Epitaphs for the Journey*  
**ABOUT THE AUTHOR:** Sally Thomas was born in Memphis, Tennessee, in 1964, and was educated at Vanderbilt University, the University of Memphis, and the University of Utah. She spent some years living in the American West and in Great Britain before settling in North Carolina, her current home. She is the author of two poetry chapbooks, *Fallen Water* (2015) and *Richeldis of Walsingham* (2016), both from *Finishing Line Press*. Over the last two decades, her poetry and fiction have appeared in *Dappled Things*, *First Things*, *Relief: A Journal of Art and Faith*, *Southern Poetry Review*, the *New Yorker*, the *Rialto*, and other journals in the United States and Great Britain.  
[Slingshots and Love Plums](#) - *Poems* Morgan Rice  
 Amy Glynn's *Romance Language* is a wellspring of culture, nature, natural phenomena, myths, esoterica. A kaleidoscope of sciences and disciplines—spanning archeology, acoustics, botany, zoology, psychology, cosmology,

meteorology, mythology—are freely juxtaposed with the bliss of romance gained to longing for the one lost, the celebration of nature and the teeming creatures therein to hope for their enduring sustenance. A logophilic showcase and worthy winner of the 2022 *Able Muse Book Award*, *Romance Language* transports the reader into a sensory and cerebral world of the real and imagined, ever reaching for stimulus, wisdom, understanding, and enlightenment. **PRAISE FOR ROMANCE LANGUAGE** *Romance Language* thrills to the natural world in all its boggling multiplicity, while reserving a barrage of tart ironies for the fallen humans who inhabit it—the lovers who fail us and those, long gone, we can never let go of. Glynn understands that science is no check to mystery, that we subsist in "an ocean of cadence" that was here before us: "The beginning was music. There was music first." Her songs channel that original music "of tide, chaos, and rhythm" with such fierceness and sorrow that we are compelled to listen. Their effect is revelatory.

—David Yezzi, author of *More Things in Heaven and Late Romance*: Anthony Hecht The poems in *Romance Language* consistently, and seemingly without effort, manage a remarkable feat: they're unfailingly attentive to the situational subtext that underlies each foray, whether into nature, art, or mythology. With their rueful irony and wit, their candor and self-awareness, these poems are not only technically flawless but also insistently, and sometimes tetchily, human. —Rachel Hadas, 2022 Able Muse Book Award judge, author of *Love and Dread* Amy Glynn has built upon her naturalist's precision, her musician's ear, and her talent for unexpected but apt metaphor, with a heightened attention to what we learn in love. *Romance Language* is as much about language, though, as it is about romance. Glynn is a dazzling word-hoarder and -shaper. With serious wit, she entwines autobiography with the life of other creatures (most beautifully, birds) and knows our own scale in the landscape and seascape. For all her artifice, her plainest truths are the most

moving, as when she hopes for a "gift // for seeing as a gift whatever happens / to us." These poems "happen" to the reader as a great gift, too. —Mary Jo Salter, author of *Zoom Rooms and The Surveyors* Glynn brings a polymathic sensibility to her writing, conversant in both high and vernacular diction on subjects ranging widely from science and classical literature to current politics and pop culture. The poems—bold, vibrant, mercurial, mysterious, sometimes wickedly funny, and always highly musical—remind me that form is a living, breathing part of our contemporary canon. Whether fixed like the sonnet or ghazal, or nonce, or free verse—these poems are constructed with great passion and precision, and the result is a luminous, powerful, and utterly original outpouring. —Rebecca Foust, author of *Paradise Drive and Only ABOUT THE AUTHOR*: Amy Glynn is a poet and essayist whose work appears widely in journals and anthologies including *The Best American Poetry*. She is the author of *A Modern Herbal* (Measure Press, 2013). She has received the Troubadour Prize, The

SPUR Award of the Academy of Western Writers, Poetry Northwest's Carolyn Kizer Award, and two James Merrill House fellowships, among other honors. She lives in the San Francisco Bay Area. Able Muse Press In William Baer's *Times Square and Other Stories*, there are everyday characters walking extraordinary paths for love; there are smart, skillful characters struggling to reconcile their viewpoints and convictions with the status quo in fields such as art, education, the cinema and religious doctrine. There is baseball and the story of the skills, training and ethics of pitching in the big leagues. And there is war and an enemy invasion juxtaposed with a do-or-die chess game. The stories take us coast to coast from New York to LA, away to South America, and overseas to Eastern and Western Europe. This is a fun-filled, fact-filled collection that smoothly melds scholarship with the everyday for unique, fresh, and highly intelligent stories, which are also highly entertaining. PRAISE FOR TIMES SQUARE AND

OTHER STORIES: How wonderful to come across such a serious collection of short stories! Not “serious” as in boring and tendentious; but serious as in grown-up, broadminded, large-hearted, sharply observed, and dryly, obliquely funny. Bill Baer’s fiction kicks ass. — Pinckney Benedict, author of *Town Smoke* As elegantly written as they are inventive, the short stories in *Times Square and Other Stories* engage the reader all the way from the title piece, an ambitious tale that draws upon art, love, and the complex beauty of the human narrative, through eight other works that touch upon the timeless questions of what it means to create and to act, to be and to pretend. Baer’s collection achieves that Horatian goal so sorely lacking in much of contemporary fiction—informing while delighting at the same time. The obligation to craft is taken very seriously in these pages, but the effort that undoubtedly went into their composition could easily be overlooked due to the skill with which they are rendered, and the degree to which they are enjoyed. — A.G.

Harmon, author of *A House All Stilled* *Times Square and Other Stories*, William Baer’s twice-measured fictions, channel the reflecting reflections of James and Borges back into our self-conscious consciousness. Like the four-story signs plastering the “real” *Times Square*, these signs sing themselves, maps as detailed as the things they represent. These fictions resuscitate Poe’s unities of effects, breathing life back into the simulacrum of life. I loved this book; it can’t help but blurb itself! — Michael Martone, author of *Four for a Quarter* *Able Muse, Translation Anthology Issue, Summer 2014 (No. 17 - Print Edition)* *Able Muse Press* *Sea Level Rising*, John Philip Drury’s fourth collection, revels in water—flowing through rivers, splashing on quays and docked vessels, the wake of speeding boats, the elusive tang of sea salt in the heart of the prairie, even the water of baptism that rebirths the believer. The uplifting lure of water, as with a pair of honeymooners in Venice, may inspire a love “eager to divorce/ anything impeding its energy.” Our state of being might mirror water’s when

“everything’s in flux, repeated spasms/ of wake and wave, bright sun, reflecting pool,/ surges made up of intricate detail.” The waves of music, like those of water, are also prominent in the musings of this collection, where that which “rises and returns/ approaches music, a blessing/ beyond sound.” These are masterfully crafted poems of uncommon inspiration, and they whelm with a celebration and longing for that which ebbs or flows inside us. PRAISE FOR SEA LEVEL RISING: *Sea Level Rising* is about a lot of things, all in some way the same mystery—why we love tidal waters, why we feel a kinship with the pulse and ebb of time and emptiness, why we feel most alive when we stand at the fractal edges of perception, why the singing of a good poem evokes all those correspondences we can’t help loving. John Philip Drury’s new poems will please many and please often as he celebrates, and with mastery, the inexhaustible waters before and within each of us. —Dave Smith, author of *Hawks on Wires: Poems, 2005-2010* With candor and a close eye, Drury introduces us to a



world of love and literature, nostalgia and new experiences—a world where water pervades everything: a constant and comforting reminder that what we depend on is, like us, also always in flux. Drury is deft at numerous forms, with a delicate touch. You can become so swept up in a poem you may not recognize it as a sonnet until you reach its resounding couplet; but, the beauty of the form—the force of its rhymes and the rapture of their song—has resonated since the opening lines and in all the energy that follows. That’s the wonder of this collection: the “film of beauty, tides that keep on rising,” as Drury writes. *Sea Level Rising* is an amazing achievement. It should not be missed. —Erica Dawson, author of *The Small Blades Hurt*

John Philip Drury is a Marylander; it makes all the difference. The ever-changing sea defines these poems; Drury explores impermanence—destiny, the future, love, fame, desire—anchored by a rock-solid formal mastery. Land and sea interpenetrate here—loom up, fall away—transmuting one into the other, a way of

seeing. His favorite city is Venice, a perfect metaphor for a sensibility too large to be only one thing or its opposite. The masks and play of that ancient meeting place of land, sky and sea divert us from the serious business of its survival—and that might be a good way to describe Drury’s art. In impermanence, through our art, we survive. —James Cummins, author of *Still Some Cake*

*Asperity Street - Poems*  
Able Muse Press

Maryann Corbett’s second full-length collection, *Credo for the Checkout Line in Winter*, draws on profound experience of deep winter in the lived environment, while keeping alive faith that the thaw will come and bring with it the bloom of “uncountable rows of petals.” The themes of this finalist for the 2011 Able Muse Book Award range from the quotidian to the metaphysical. Corbett’s keen eye brings to focus uncommon detail. Her masterful technical repertoire spans received forms, metrical inventiveness, and free verse. This is poetry that amply rewards the reader with its boundless imagination, insight and visionary delight. PRAISE

FOR CREDO FOR THE CHECKOUT LINE IN WINTER: The crafted poems in Maryann Corbett’s new book are vibrant. She is a newborn Robert Frost, with a wicked eye for contemporary life. Each poem surprises. Read her poems and feel the howling snow, the mud, and the jubilation of the first warm fertile spring days. —Willis Barnstone

What makes Maryann Corbett such a rare, excellent writer must be her talent for weaving together various artistic impulses, so that her poems often sound both traditional and brand new, both humorous and serious, both worldly-wise and, as John Keats once put it, “capable of being in uncertainties.” [She] remains a poet of the first order, and her poems are cause for gratitude, and deep enjoyment. —Peter Campion (from the foreword)

Corbett is as comfortable and affecting within the tight confines of the Old English alliterative meter (“Cold Case”) and the Sapphic stanza (“Paint Store”) as she is with her supple blank verse and terza rima. Yet never does her rigorous craft interfere with the thoughtful, insightful content of these

poems. A stunning collection, from one of America's most gifted contemporary poets.  
 —Marilyn L. Taylor Do not dismiss this collection as “domestic poetry,” “women’s verse.” Though grounded in seasonal rhythms and familiar settings, it is as vigorous, as reflective, as important as any man’s. Sharply visual, skillfully and cleverly crafted, her poems draw out essences, “concentrated” and persisting. “Beauty changes us,/ calling up wonder from our deepest selves/ to its right place.”  
 —Catharine Savage Brosman These masterful poems announce themselves as winter pieces, and indeed they are so full of sleet and snow that readers may wish to dress warmly. But Corbett’s winter, a season when “dull forms come in the mail” and we eat “tasteless, stone-hard, gassed tomatoes,” is always lushly haunted by the other seasons, the way a house in one of her poems is fronted by a “three-season porch.” Corbett is one of the best-kept secrets of American poetry, and this is one of the best new collections I’ve read in years.  
 —Geoffrey Brock  
Able Muse, Summer 2017

(No. 23 - print edition)  
 Able Muse Press  
 “Morgan Rice's imagination is limitless. In another series that promises to be as entertaining as the previous ones, A THRONE OF SISTERS presents us with the tale of two sisters (Sophia and Kate), orphans, fighting to survive in a cruel and demanding world of an orphanage. An instant success. I can hardly wait to put my hands on the second and third books!” -  
 -Books and Movie Reviews (Roberto Mattos) From #1 Bestseller Morgan Rice comes an unforgettable new fantasy series. In A DIRGE FOR PRINCES (A Throne for Sisters—Book Four), Sophia, 17, battles for her life, trying to recover from the wound left by Lady D’Angelica. Will her sister Kate’s new powers be enough to bring her back? The ship sails with the sisters to the distant and exotic lands of their uncle, their last hope and only know connection to their parents. Yet the journey is treacherous, and even if they find it, the sisters don’t know if their reception will be warm or hostile. Kate, indentured to the witch, finds herself in an increasingly desperate situation—until

she meets a sorceress who may hold the secret to her freedom. Sebastian returns to court, heartbroken, desperate to know if Sophie is alive. As his mother forces him to marry Lady D’Angelica, he knows the time has come to risk it all. A DIRGE FOR PRINCES (A Throne for Sisters—Book Four) is the fourth book in a dazzling new fantasy series rife with love, heartbreak, tragedy, action, adventure, magic, swords, sorcery, dragons, fate and heart-pounding suspense. A page turner, it is filled with characters that will make you fall in love, and a world you will never forget. Book #5 in the series is now available!  
 “[A THRONE FOR SISTERS is a] powerful opener to a series [that] will produce a combination of feisty protagonists and challenging circumstances to thoroughly involve not just young adults, but adult fantasy fans who seek epic stories fueled by powerful friendships and adversaries.” --  
 Midwest Book Review (Diane Donovan)  
Able Muse, Summer 2015  
(No. 19 - print edition)  
 Able Muse Press  
 In Ben Berman’s second full-length collection, Figuring in the Figure, poems laden with

aphorisms, puns, and witticisms meditate on shapes, angles, thinking about thinking, marriage, and the joys and trials of bringing a daughter into the world, among others. Sometimes with a Frostian spirit, sometimes with a touch of Zen, the known is questioned and wisdom gleaned from daily experience. This is a book that challenges us to reimagine the familiar, both physical and spiritual, while reminding us not to “wander through this world without wonder.” PRAISE FOR FIGURING IN THE FIGURE: “Because design, alone, doesn’t hold weight,” Ben Berman writes in his remarkable second collection of poems, “we need concrete material—the image/ of a bridge over the sound of water.” In *Figuring in the Figure*, Berman explores the nature of form in its deepest most complex sense. His luminous details evoke a world of mutable forms and shapes that suggest the fragility of our lives. The book culminates with a moving, realistic yet lyrical sequence of poems about the birth of his daughter. This is a quietly beautiful book that deserves attention and recognition. —Jeff

Friedman, author of *Pretenders Figuring in the Figure* is a self-portrait of a man becoming a father. Ben Berman writes inside a modified terza rima that makes a virtue out of clarity and discernment. The influence here of Frost returns us to Frost’s virtues: these poems make points and have a point of view. Like Frost, Berman is unsparing in his introspection. He offers us an ongoing philosophy: when faced with the pain and contradiction of everyday life, “to delay judgment and contemplate . . . incompatible thoughts.” —Rodger Kamenetz, author of *The Jew in the Lotus* Ben Berman’s nimble terza rima is the perfect vehicle for the poems of *Figuring in the Figure*. Both expansive and structured, the interwoven stanzas allow him to form and reform probing questions of identity without ever forsaking a deep musicality. We watch the speaker ponder mouse droppings, hit the wall in a marathon, describe the great molasses flood of 1919, diaper a doll in a birthing class, then try to manage his “tiny fascist” of a toddler who wouldn’t stop until “every bookshelf toppled/ like a/

failed coup.” His observations are enriched with various kinds of humor—aphorisms, riddles, word plays, and puns. This book is wise and wonderful. —Beth Ann Fennelly, Poet Laureate of Mississippi, author of *Unmentionables* Ben Berman’s fine, clever poems are never merely clever. Their frisky formal play is finally and importantly about the finding of forms that might adequately contain our feelings. As his title, *Figuring in the Figure*, suggests, Berman is fond of double meanings; indeed, he is in love with all the twists and turns of language, as well as all the structures that display the pleasures of thinking. If invention is his inclination, order is his learned yet sly companion, “a partner,” he writes, “the type/ that coyly invites chaos to dance.” —Lawrence Raab, author of *Mistaking Each Other for Ghosts* Second Rain Able Muse Press This is the seminannual Able Muse Review (Print Edition) - Summer 2014 issue, Number 17. This issue continues the tradition of masterfully crafted poetry, fiction, essays, art & photography, and book

reviews that have become synonymous with the Able Muse-online and in print. After more than a decade of online publishing excellence, Able Muse print edition maintains the superlative standard of the work presented all these years in the online edition, and, the Able Muse Anthology (Able Muse Press, 2010). ". . . [ ABLE MUSE ] fills an important gap in understanding what is really happening in early twenty-first century American poetry." - Dana Gioia. CONTENTS: A TRANSLATION ANTHOLOGY FEATURE ISSUE - Guest Edited by Charles Martin EDITORIAL - Alexander Pepple. GUEST EDITORIAL - Charles Martin. ESSAYS - Michael Palma. POETRY TRANSLATIONS BY - X.J. Kennedy, A.E. Stallings, Rachel Hadas, William Baer, Willis Barnstone, Tony Barnstone, Michael Palma, Dick Davis, Jay Hopley, Ned Balbo, N.S. Thompson, John Ridland, Kate Light, John Whitworth, Andrew Frisardi, Diane Furtney, Teresa Iverson, Julie Kane, Maryann Corbett, Bilal Shaw, Mark S. Bauer, Michael Bradburn-Ruster, Heidi Czerwiec, Claudia Routon, Brett Foster, Catherine Chandler,

Terese Coe, Adam Elgar, Rima Krasauskytė, Kent Leatham, R.C. Neighbors, Deborah Ann Percy, Dona Roşu, Arnold Johnston, Maria Picone, Robert Schechter, Wendy Sloan, Jeff Sypeck, Ryan Wilson, Shifra Zisman, Laine Zisman Newman. POETRY TRANSLATIONS OF - Victor Hugo, Arthur Rimbaud, C.P. Cavafy, Fernando Pessoa, Miguel de Unamuno, Catullus, Charles Baudelaire, Francesco Petrararch, Rainer Maria Rilke, Asadullah Khan Ghalib, Horace, Martial, José Luis Puerto, José Corredor-Matheos, Cecco Angiolieri, Delmira Agustini, Heinrich Heine, Christine de Pizan, Nur Jahan, Ayesheh-ye afghan, Jahan Khanom, Reshheh, Gaspara Stampa, Dante Alighieri, Armand Sully Prudhomme, Gérard de Nerval, François Villon, Euripides, Georg Trakl, Nelly Sachs, Tautvyda Marcinkevičiūtė, Gavin Douglas, William Fowler, William Dunbar, Bertolt Brecht, Antonio Malatesti, Giovanni Raboni, Fosildo Mirtunzio (Pseudonym), Zaharia Stancu, Paul Valéry, Tove Ditlevsen, Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, Giacomo Leopardi, Paul the Deacon, Giovanni Pascoli, Meleager, Lope de Vega, Dovid Zisman.

*Time Is Always Now* Able Muse Press  
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Anna M. Evans). FICTION - Cheryl Diane Kidder, Charles Wilkinson, Blaine Vitallo, Donna Laemmlen. ESSAYS - A.E. Stallings, Peter Byrne, Philip Morre, David Mason, Chrissy Mason. BOOK REVIEWS - Rory Waterman, Jane Hammons. POETRY - Rachel Hadas, R.S. Gwynn, Catharine Savage Brosman, John Savoie, D.R. Goodman, Jeanne Wagner, Richard Wakefield, Melissa Balmain, Tara Tatum, Anna M. Evans, Matthew Buckley Smith, Stephen Harvey, Elise Hempel, Marly Youmans, Amanda Luecking Frost, Rachael Briggs, Chris Childers, James Matthew Wilson, Alex Greenberg, Catullus, Sappho, Theocritus. Figuring in the Figure Able Muse Press  
Carrie Shipers's *Cause for Concern* traverses a landscape of assorted disasters—such as overwork and layoffs, the ill-fated explorer, circus mishaps, nuclear disaster and radiation—but at its heart is the personal disaster of spousal illness. While a spouse might avow faith in the sentiment of love in sickness and in health, the practice of such faith might come undone when faced with the reality of the ravages of illness on

the stricken body of the beloved, alongside the caregiving mate who “could love/ [her] husband but distrust his body,/ expect betrayal at every turn.” Full of incisive meditations on frailties and fortitude often delivered with visceral honesty, *Cause for Concern* is spellbinding from start to finish and, deservedly, the winner of the 2014 Able Muse Book Award for Poetry. PRAISE FOR *CAUSE FOR CONCERN*: Carrie Shipers's magnificent endeavor aims to control the uncontrollable. In her splendid collection *Cause for Concern* she gives us her spirited poems—subversively satisfying in our era of cool wordplay. Both her comfort with ambiguity and her sassy candor aid the poet as she writes of a wife who is hoodwinked into a necessary patience—one she both chafes from and rebels against after her husband falls seriously ill. In rhythms that alternate between hope and defeat, the poems track the illness, but also punctuate the couple's changed world with quirky observations and a scrappy spirituality. (Not to mention a canine companion.) Her poet's

craft, palpable in every arresting line, makes the subtlest turns of vulnerability with enviable poise. —Molly Peacock, 2014 Able Muse Book Award judge, author of *The Paper Garden* Only a poet of unquestionable bravery and technical acuity could rehearse the quotidian details of a middle class, middle aged existence with such exquisite, irresistible and terrifying honesty. —Kwame Dawes, author of *Duppy Conqueror: New and Selected Poems* If illness is a country inhospitable to guests, then Carrie Shipers's second poetry collection, *Cause for Concern*, is our guidebook, preparing us for what we will find in the waiting room, by the bedside, in the bathroom, or on the skin when the gauze is lifted. These are naked, open poems. They say things that make us wince, as when we look at an incision still puckered and red. Shipers reminds us that our lives must first be prodded and cauterized, if the injured parts are ever to heal. —Jehanne Dubrow, author of *The Arranged Marriage* **All the Wasted Beauty of the World - Poems** Able Muse Press  
Reimagining the iconic Mexican artist's life and

relationships, Stephen Gibson's *Frida Kahlo in Fort Lauderdale* explores Kahlo's passions and pains through vivid persona poems. Realized entirely in a modified triolet form, the collection is essentially an ekphrastic epic inspired by the paintings, photos, and personal effects on display in a 2015 Fort Lauderdale exhibition. Gibson probes the artist's inner world, giving voice to Kahlo's desires, anguish, and defiant spirit. He conjures her crippling injuries from a bus accident, her tumultuous marriage to Diego Rivera, and her affairs with Leon Trotsky and others, all filtered through her fervent art. This innovative collection brings Frida Kahlo's singular vision to life in visceral contemporary verse. **PRAISE FOR FRIDA KAHLO IN FORT LAUDERDALE:** In this book of incantations Stephen Gibson says, "What one loathes and desires can be the same thing," and those two strands weave through these poems like a double helix of beauty and repulsion. The trolley accident that impaled Kahlo comes up over and over, and each time there is a new layer added to the story in much the

same way a painter adds layers to a portrait. These are poems, but they are also music and paintings that give the lucky reader a luminous vision of this woman who forged a life of beauty out of the wreck of her pain. — Barbara Hamby, author of *Holoholo Frida Kahlo in Fort Lauderdale* is composed entirely of triolets about the artist and her paintings. The overall effect is akin to pointillism: the collection's fifty-seven triolets blend in the reader's consciousness much as the tiny dots of various colors in a pointillist painting blend in a viewer's eye to form a coherent image. In this case, the image is of Frida Kahlo, the renowned Mexican painter known for her many portraits and self-portraits. Gibson—brilliant as always in his mastery of formal poetic structures—has crafted a portrait of Kahlo that reads as a single long poem, and yet resonates in the mind as something painterly, a shimmering, vibrant portrait of an artist. — Edward Falco, author of *Wolf Moon Blood Moon* These punchy little poems rat-a-tat the reader like a boxer's jab-cross-uppercut. The

immediate subject is Frida Kahlo and Diego Rivera's bughouse marriage, but this is really a book for everyone. Even the happiest of married couples will react with some version of been there, done that. Divorce lawyers will get dollar signs in their eyes. Young singles will find Frida Kahlo in Fort Lauderdale a useful road map through the minefield of conjugal bliss. Mainly, though, these poems are for poetry lovers. They're smart, they're funny, and they sting like hell—they sting you in a way that makes you say, sting me again. — David Kirby, author of *Help Me, Information ABOUT THE AUTHOR:* Stephen Gibson's seventh poetry collection *Self-Portrait in a Door-Length Mirror* won the Miller Williams Poetry Prize, selected by Billy Collins. Earlier collections have won the Donald Justice Prize, Idaho Prize for Poetry, and the MARGIE Book Prize. His poems have appeared in such journals as *Able Muse*, *American Arts Quarterly*, the *American Journal of Poetry*, *Boulevard*, *Cimarron Review*, *Copper Nickel*, *Court Green*, the *Evansville Review*, *EPOCH*, *Field*, the

Gettysburg Review, the Hudson Review, the Iowa Review, J Journal, Measure, New England Review, Notre Dame Review, the Paris Review, Pleiades, Ploughshares, Poetry, Prairie Schooner, Quiddity, Raleigh Review, Salamander, the Sewanee Review, Shenandoah, Southern Poetry Review, the Southern Review, Southwest Review, Upstreet, the Yale Review, and elsewhere.

**Dirge for an Imaginary World: Poems** Able Muse Press

In *The Borrowed World*, Emily Leithauser transforms keenly felt experience and bittersweet memories into poems of impressive craftsmanship. She deftly muses on the dichotomies of, among other things, childhood and growing up, the headiness of love gained and the pangs of love lost, the joys of the nuclear family and the trials when it gets broken up. Although a first book, *The Borrowed World* is the seasoned work of poet of abundant talent coming into her powers and deservedly, the winner of the 2015 Able Muse Book Award. PRAISE FOR THE BORROWED WORLD: In *The Borrowed World*, Emily Leithauser's formal mastery—her

consummate knack for writing lines and sentences as crisp and elegant as the Edo prints to which she pays homage—entwines with the sheer immediacy and vulnerability of the poet's voice. Leithauser portrays the inevitability of loss, in romantic and familial relationships, and yet, without ever offering false resolutions or pat conclusions, she manages to make her poems themselves convincing stays against loss. I mean that this book is made to endure. *The Borrowed World* marks the arrival of a major talent. —Peter Champion, 2015 Able Muse Book Award judge, author of *El Dorado* Emily Leithauser's first collection, *The Borrowed World*, is an elegant meditation on inheritance, the vagaries of love and loss, familial relations—with all the devastating implosions within—and our relationship to the past filtered through the flawed lens of memory. These are deeply felt poems and Leithauser has a finely-tuned ear for the lyricism of syntax and the enduring rhythms of traditional forms. *The Borrowed World* is her stunning debut. —Natasha Trethewey, 2012–2014 US

Poet Laureate, author of *Thrall* If her intensely accurate perceptions of the physical world and the beautiful forms in which she sets those perceptions were all that Emily Leithauser gave us in these poems, they would be more than enough to satisfy the hungriest poetry reader. But step by perspicuous step, in poem after poem, she enlarges and encompasses, she broadens and deepens and transmutes perception into feeling, feeling into thought, and thought into revelation. —Vijay Seshadri, winner of the Pulitzer Prize, author of *3 Sections* Love poems, family poems, narrative poems: *The Borrowed World* is a moving and memorable debut which covers a lot of ground but is always rooted in actualities. The poems are very well-made, too, but their equally great distinction is to be well-felt—subtle in their account of the observing “I,” and simultaneously generous and shrewd in their understanding of others. Page by page, they create a series of powerful cameos; taken as a whole, their larger purpose emerges: to register what can be known and

(especially) not known about our lives as individuals, and to value what time allows us to enjoy on earth, while admitting the brevity of our stay here. —Andrew Motion, 1999–2009 UK Poet Laureate, author of *The Customs House* I have read *The Borrowed World* several times, and each time I find more in it to be delighted and touched by. Emily Leithauser’s art waits for you, and I am sure that you will be as pleased and moved by it as I have been. —Michael Palma (from the foreword), author of *Begin in Gladness*

**Bad Fame - Poems** Able Muse Press

*Greed: A Confession* showcases D.R. Goodman’s honed sensitivity to the human experience and the natural world around us. Her sensible scientific background melds with a meditative outlook: “this// is a vertebra/ from a cow./ It will win no prize./ It is just the childish wonder/ from which the rest derives.” This collection is a wellspring of keen observations, insight and secrets of nature, freely spilling out for those greedy for knowledge and enlightenment—as in the immediacy of “a certain

joy/ that depends on nothing” and “wraps a tightness around your heart.” Here is a masterfully crafted finalist for the 2013 Able Muse Book Award—one brimming with delight, wit and insight. PRAISE FOR GREED: A CONFESSION I feel incredibly fortunate to have learned of D. R. Goodman’s poetry. Her technical control and powers of observation are extraordinary; diction, meter, and rhyming, superb. Writing about an egret, she details its “mind,/ a laser-focused eye, the weight of will”—attributes that apply equally to the poet. In “Autumn in a Place Without Winter,” she says, “The season brings/ no clarity, but this: we’re here, alive. . . .” This poet is alive to everything. You want this book. It’s terrific. —Kelly Cherry Goodman is greedy for things of this world—not in the rapacious, bottom-line manner of plutocrats, misers, and Wall Street brokers but for the enlightenment of the senses and the enrichment of her poetry. She’s sharing the wealth she accumulates. —John Drury (from the foreword) At the core of *Greed: A Confession* are natural ironies, or disjunctures, or

improbabilities replete with intrigue. The poems are frames through which we view the events. D.R. Goodman is a scientist of natural history, which, for her, includes human experience. The poet shows us how to see. The deep pleasure she takes in the process displays itself, with characteristic irony, in “A Certain Joy.” —Clive Matson D.R. Goodman’s carefully crafted poems register a deep appreciation of the intricate meanings emanating from Nature’s tangible riches. “Depth cannot hide” from Goodman’s keen eye. “And so it flutters, sings,/ Betrays itself upon the face of things.” From the sudden appearance of a hundred tiny, freshly metamorphosed frogs, to ginkgo leaves’ brilliant, moonlit gold that “spurs imagination to those old/ heroic, dangerous quests of greed and sin,” the wondrous wealth of existence evokes joy that compels the poet to confess her “greed” in the presence of such good fortune. Even the blithe partake of a “certain joy”—certain: particular and definite—that is not attained or stumbled upon; it simply is—the gift of being: “There is a certain joy/ that depends



on nothing./ One inhabits it./ It is there in the day/ when you walk out, whether chill and gray/ or magnified by light, and you inhale it." Complex yet accessible, these formal and free-verse poems gift us with abundant insights to enjoy. —Beth Houston

**Able Muse, Winter 2019 (No. 27 - print edition)** Able Muse Press

Asperity Street, Gail White's most balanced poetry collection, explores the breadth of human existence with cutting wit, irreverence, keen intelligence, and an uncommon mix of empathy and asperity. Besides the cynical or the lighthearted, which are hallmarks of White's work, there is a newfound earnestness and gravity in these poems in their survey and interrogation of the human condition. White journeys the span from nursery to hospice—in between, she navigates the prom, family occasions, mating, gossip, and money matters with masterful formal dexterity. This is a collection that rewards the reader with a thoroughly entertaining and illuminating experience. PRAISE FOR ASPERITY STREET: In her remarkable collection,

Asperity Street, Gail White takes on the whole sweep of existence. The street becomes the road of a lifetime, beginning with a Southern childhood and ending with a hospice finale. Laconic, ironic and comic, White's drily resourceful, wickedly companionable voice takes aim on patrimony, matrimony, religion, money and the myth that assumes we choose our lives. With her sublime linguistic choreography, these poems dance to complex metrical tunes. We feel and hear them pulse with equal parts sympathy and vitriol. In Gail White's capable hands, Asperity Street unfolds as a brilliant mural we can return to again and again, as the poet does—still vulnerable, and wiser each time. — Molly Peacock, 2014 Able Muse Book Award judge, author of *The Paper Garden*

Gail White has done it again: here is another collection by one of America's wittiest, most technically adept, funniest and most serious commentators on what it feels like to be human. — Rhina P. Espaillat (from the foreword), author of *Her Place in These Designs*

I looked forward to reading Gail White's new book of

poems, Asperity Street, because I know she is one of America's funniest poets, so when I got the manuscript I sat down to read it immediately. I knew how much I would enjoy it. I was not disappointed. The first three sections of this four-part collection have wit and bon mots in good measure, socko endings, words I'd never seen in poems before, like "cloaca" or a made-up word ending, "substitutth," to satisfy a droll rhyme. But nothing prepared me for part four. Nothing procedural changed. The insights were as sharp as ever, the language exact and clear, the cleverness and dexterity with form as deft, the music as mesmerizing . . . but this was a serious poet I'd not encountered before: there was a deepening of vision, an enhancement of feeling, the rueful treatment of life and death took on a cutting edge that slices to the bone. Don't miss reading this book. — Lewis Turco, author of *The Book of Forms*

*Greed: A Confession - Poems* Able Muse Press

This is the seminannual Able Muse Review (Print Edition) - Winter 2016 issue, Number 22. This issue continues the

tradition of masterfully crafted poetry, fiction, essays, art & photography, and book reviews that have become synonymous with the Able Muse-online and in print. After more than a decade of online publishing excellence, Able Museprint edition maintains the superlative standard of the work presented all these years in the online edition, and, the Able Muse Anthology (Able Muse Press, 2010). ". . . [ ABLE MUSE ] fills an important gap in understanding what is really happening in early twenty-first century American poetry." - Dana Gioia. CONTENTS: WITH THE 2016 ABLE MUSE WRITE PRIZE FOR POETRY & FICTION - Includes the winning story and poems from the contest winners and finalists. EDITORIAL - Alexander Pepple. FEATURED ARTIST - Mitch

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