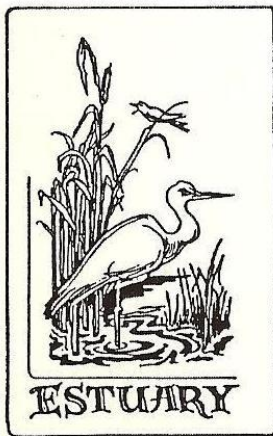


WORDS FOR THIS CAN NOT BE FOUND
Poetry of a Certain Sort

Henry Edward Fool

Henry Edward Fool



ESTUARY PUBLICATIONS

© 2010 estuarypublications.com
Mars Hill, NC USA
ISBN 1453740546

lovely little cover photograph by: S. Lambert

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'T was for her that I did these things so many write.

I'm not saying she likes the stuff. (She doesn't.)

MARGARET

Her name was Margaret.

I guess that comes as no surprise
to anyone who has ever known a Margaret.

She was standing
outside a bar,
smoking a cigarette,
looking many more than her 18 years
when Vincent wobbled drunkenly by.

"Are you alone?"

"No, my boyfriend
is inside."

"Wow," said Vincent,
"He must be some kind of an idiot."

"My boyfriend is no idiot,"
she said blowing a smoke ring.

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"My boyfriend is 26 years old,
and he could crush you with one hand,
and he's definitely
not an idiot."

There seemed to be nothing
Vincent could say to that
and so he took the opportunity
to say nothing.

It was only about 2 AM and the night still lay ahead.

"But," said Margaret
after a casual puff
or two
on her cigarette,
"why did you say that?"

"Why did I say your boyfriend must be an idiot?"

"Yeah, you know..." she whispered encouragingly.

"Because," he said,

“if you were my girlfriend,
I wouldn't leave you standing around out here
by yourself, where someone like me
might come along, scoop you up,
and carry you off
to bed,
where you belong.”

(There was no doubt about it,
at 2 AM
under the neon bar-light glow,
Margaret was a beauty.)

You **MUST** already
know the rest.

(I wish I could think of a more creative way to say that.)

It looked like a good beginning.
I mean, the clean
film-noir pick-up,
the sneaking up the squeaky stairs

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the rolling sonorous seduction,
recitation by candle-light,
the suppressed giggles of delight
under the blanket,

and, ultimately,
the discovery
by Vincent
that he was skilled at something
he had never done before,

which coincided perfectly
with Margaret's discovery
that Vincent had more natural skill
than her 26 year old abandoned
and now almost forgotten
boyfriend
... who was not an idiot.

“Words for this,” she sighed,
can not be found.”

THE HOKEY POKEY

Hey, Kids, hear that sound?
That ain't the hokey-pokey
But what do we know?
We're all sitting around here
In our wheelchairs
With our heads screwed on backward

Droling over the past,
Like mindless idiots
But (that's what they make bibs for)

I once knew something
No, it's true
I once did

But, I've forgotten it now
Should have written it downward
Damn my rambunctious soul

Most of us
Most of us did have a thought
Or could have had one
Someone who once knew me
Said I had
Had a thought once

I think we all did...
I think we all knew something.
Or did a pretty good imitation of knowing

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But hey, kids,
Hear that sound?
That's the sound of babies
Taking over *your* world this time

And running it badly

I don't know why I should find
Such humor in that.

Maybe it's
The hokey-pokey after all
It has that kind of
Nagging, senseless
Rhythm to it

OF NO CONCERN TO Editors,
Literary Agents or Publishers

They say they were not compelled,
that they were not driven;
their need for sustained action
was not really met.

Unwilling readers,
the words need to shove them forward,
or grab them by the collar
and drag them through the text.

They never throw themselves
into the river of words
just to see if it bears them up,
or wonder where it might carry them.

They are like old horses
(and some, I'm guessing, in more ways than one)
planted stubbornly in the comfort of their stalls,
refusing to budge or attempt new fodder.

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A two-by-four applied smartly,
with a resounding smack,
to their pale fat asses
is one possible answer.

But

to keep them plodding,
moving ever-onward,
application must be sustained and rhythmic.

(I'd say something about blinders, but
Prefer the credit for not having done so.)

They cast a cold eye on
anything for which
they can not find
an immediate passion.

(Just a note:

They use the word *passion*
a lot in their rejections.)

Did you know that in many good books
passion builds
almost unnoticed, underneath it all,
only to reveal itself
when you find yourself nearing the last page
with genuine regret.

That aside, I must ask,
with such regal discernment in place
how it is that
so much goddamned pure undiluted
and unadulterated CRAP
gets so consistently
into print?

How does that happen?

As a reader, I wonder what we're missing.
As a writer, I wonder
like other writers I suppose, what
these fucking idiots are thinking.

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Hey, I'm just sayin'
'stead of the stuff they put out there
there's might've been other stuff
that they coulda
put.

As if it ain't tough enough,
dealing with my wife—Whom I adore—
handing her
what I think is a fairly well-written piece for editing
is like trying to sharpen the blade of a lawn mower
while it's still running.

Her distance allows her
a perspective that I,
thoroughly, entangled,
could never obtain.

We now live in a world
in which
E.B. White and P.G. Wodehouse,

and H. Allen Smith--
anyone who parts his name on the left--
would never see print

Rex Stout and Ogden Nash and Bret Harte
and James Thurber...
editors today'd give 'em all
a fairly thorny
fairly smug
thumbs down.

(They never dither.)

And Dumas?
No ink would be wasted on Alexandre.
Of course, who am I to complain.

When my wife
laughs out loud,
I've done my job.

VINCENT

At a very early age
his mother was very often seen
surrendering to despair,
throwing both hands in the air,
and bending over,
fixing his unresponsive eyes
with her own unwavering glare,
screaming red-faced,
"What am I going to do with you?"

It was a rhetorical question.

Everyone pretty much knew,
even at that age,
that she could do nothing with him,

and most guessed
that, in life,
he would do nothing with himself.

Although,
come to think of it,
most of what he would do
throughout his life
would be done with himself
(we're not suggesting self-mutilation however.)

I think that's pretty much the beginning,
and, laughable or sad,
it's pretty much the truth.

For those who place much of the blame
on the fact that the poor kid
was named Vincent
I have to say that
I had an Uncle
named Vincent
and he was quite normal in every aspect
(almost invisibly normal);
he had no problems at all
with authority.

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MINDLESS DRIVEL

Let me just say something here.

I know that this
may be unraveling
in what feels maybe just
a little too *real-time*,
at this point, you know,
right now, as we plod along.
Together.

But the wolf
is on its way
and will appear at the door
very soon.

Perhaps, sooner
(you can predict this part)
and, it's hungry
(I supposed you could have
predicted that part too).

Believe me,
I've scrapped a thousand words
for every one that remains.

The craft is in allowing you to think
it's all just mindless drivel.

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THE NEW KID

Something about the new kid
didn't seem quite right.
And I think,
he would himself agree.

The first night there,
in the dorm,
surrounded with renegades
from every tribe,
Vincent lay awake
contemplating his situation.

This was no dream,
he assured himself.
It was no dream.
Though that afforded him
little comfort
Vincent felt not the urge
to bolt.

He, like a hero, remained calm,
remained still and pondered.

For this he took
the classic pose,
hands behind the head
while staring at the ceiling.

Looking around in the dark,
he could see by the light of a distant begrudging star,
the huddled sleeping forms
of his fellow cast-offs,
as he considered:
"Sure, they got it made;
the food, the arts,
but I understand
the taxes are killing them..."
said a distinctly British voice,
and Vincent
was jolted awake.
Talk about dreams.

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"Weeks passed
and Vincent had become
the most popular kid..."
said a narrative voice,
and Vincent was
jolted awake again.

Talk about nightmares.

Weeks passed
and Vincent was
as abstract from the crowd
as he had been at his arrival.

He watched as alliances formed
and camaraderie lead to whispered
vulgaritys
and back-slapping friendships.
There was some snorting,
such was the cleverness.

He stood off alone.
He stood off alone,
at a distance (over there near the rusty forgotten
basketball hoop mostly),
forming no alliance,
and whispering no vulgarities,
and, slapping no one's back
and snorting not at all,
and, as the bible says,
he understood them not.

He had no real,
you know, palpable,
craving for friendship.
But, (here's hope)
deep within the gurgling mess of his loins
...need I say more?

We find our ways.
We all find our ways.

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So here he is now,
sneaking out the window at night.

We see him as
he makes his way
under the moonlight
across an open expanse,
as if escaping
from a movie-set-prison.

And here he is
at the gate
and, now, already he has slipped through.
And now he takes to foot
down a winding dusty path.
(Let's not forget that moonlight.)

And here he is now
already lying beside her
in a small cot
with only an old army blanket
over their skinny jutting frames...

and, as they say,
the bony bodies bumped through the night.

(This is how quickly things happen in Life.
It's a wonder that upon returning
from some disappointment or another
we don't bump into ourselves departing
with the idiot grin of expectation
still upon our ever-hopeful faces.)

Oh,
and I meant to say something
about the chicken incident
but forgot.

Only let me say this much about that:
I suppose in any real kind of writing
Vincent would be held responsible
for the chicken incident.
After all he seemed a likely suspect,
always keeping to himself

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and quiet

and similar, somewhat trying
misdemeanors.

In the best American writing
he'd be wrongly accused and
OH, the injustice of it all!

But, Vincent had his own problems—
chickens aside.

TRAVEL BY STARLIGHT

(You're allowed to take breaks.)

Though initially intrigued,
he had to admit,
in the light and insight of morn,
that her idea of love
frightened him.

But, he's still thinking about her
as the ceiling fan wops by
carelessly overhead.

He's thinking
that her idea of love frightens him.

I'm not saying that he knew anything at all about such stuff
at this point,
he didn't.

But, later,
when he did know something,
he realized that he had been absolutely right
to be frightened by her ideas about love.

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This is an open-ended thing
where you fill in the blanks.

For example:

do we have to go through the part
where she yanks him around for months
on end until,
one night
stumbling back to school
very very very goddamned'runk,
he thinks, "How much can-a-man take?"

These were his exact words.

Do we have to say,
'Vincent was about to find out' ?

By his third year at school
Vincent was going nowhere,
but
he was going there steadily,
rapidly,

and she
was going there with him.

The bruises on his forehead
were proof enough,
for anyone really,
that these two
could not
or would not
find healthier ways to express
their urges.

That doesn't mean he was not content...
although he wasn't.
She wasn't either—
and so,
inevitably,
one day,
she stomped out of the room,
leaving the door
open behind her.

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When she returned,
he stomped out.

Then she stamped out
and slammed the door.

Soon though,
she was back again, and it was his turn.

When he returned
several months later,
looking somewhat shame-faced,
it was only after being
with, you know,
others,
none of which were as weird
or as clever as she...
or as frustrating...
or as intriguing.

So, he returned yet again
to his original torment.

That is not to say
he sipped once again
from the ever-flowing cup
of reason.

It's saying something
else entirely.

Addiction is the word
I've been looking for.

They were together again.
That's all that matters.
That's the point
I'm struggling to make.

Quickly though,
very shortly after a
fragmentary languid peace in his arms,
she wants out or
he wants out or
she wants brunch and
he wants travel by starlight,

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and what young relationship
can withstand the impact of an onslaught like that?

Do we have to
go through the part
where they begin the endless squabble?

I can tell you this,
TOO MUCH of that
takes place in cafes
and other public places,
with people gawking
or purposefully
ignoring them,
which ever you think worse.

Let me just say this about her
(not that Vincent is an angel):
when push came to shove—
she proved to be
a highly-skilled
shover.

So, considerable
confusion reigned
when she suddenly discovered,
to her great surprise—
his too--
that she loved Vincent,
and could not live
a single day without him,
even if it meant pretending
to be nice.
That made things (I like to think)
unbearable for both of them.

In the movies
of course
this sort of thing
happens all the time;
and there is a reason for that.
Although
admittedly
I

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have no idea what that reason is.

It had been a rocky beginning.

Even as he hit on her that first night,

he had doubts

about the percentage

Destiny played

in the affair.

That she had used the phrase

"my boyfriend"

six times

in the first two sentences

she tossed his way,

was not the kind of encouragement

Vincent had hoped for.

But, the work boot of alcohol was on his neck...

What more needs to be said about that?

Just an aside:

Somewhere in here he became fascinated with ships—

not boats, ships.

Square rigged, not fore and aft.

Wooden hulled, not iron.

And while he devoured

what he could in print on the matter

his mind began to pull loose of its moorings

and find itself (thankfully) adrift.

But, returning to port,

he always found her there;

sometimes waving, sometimes fuming,

each

and every

time

impossible to fathom.

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POOR BOAR

Since my host
had not returned,
I picked up a notebook
which lay upon his desk and began
to look through it.
Selecting a random page
I read:

*No wonder he was grouchy, Poor Boar
Was hunted
everywhere he went.
And where he wasn't hunted,
he really wasn't wanted.
He lived a life of anguish and regret.*

When he came back
into the room, I asked,
“Are you the Old Boar?”
He handed me a beer.

“*Poor* Boar,” he said sharply.

“There’s a difference,” he said.

I looked at the text.

It did say *Poor* Boar.

I noted the difference.

“I’m sorry,” I said.

“If it was about me, it would have said

Bellicose Boar or

Battered Boar or

That Bitter Old Bastard, Boar.”

He threw himself into

an over stuffed chair

and drank.

Let me tell you frankly,

Poor Boar was hounded when in town.

And even in the forest,

where a Boar could be his boarest,

they tried to run him down.

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I ruffled through the
rough-torn pages
of the weighty volume.

“How long is this thing?”

“I don’t know, he shrugged.

“Un-numbered...” I mused.

“With illustration,” he countered.

“Maybe eighty pages...

“Hand-written,” he said

“With illustration,” he added,
somewhat grumpily.

It was all
very nicely done.

The illustrations
were simple.

Yet they had
an elegance.

(or two.)

The Poor Boar himself
was five or six quick lines,
but he was all there;
tusks and snarl
ribs and a
somehow too-familiar glint
in his
defiant eye.

“With illustration.”

he reminded me.

“Fast afoot and slow of wit...but dangerous,”

he said,

mostly to himself.

The hounds were quick of line and quick of foot.

“Swift little fools

with no concept of danger,”

said the rhyme.

“Quick to befriend

almost any stranger.”

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I flipped ahead
to see what
was to become
of these characters and found
myself, quite naturally,
inexplicably,
reading aloud.
(ahem...)

*He sat upon the precipice,
's heart o'rflowed with dread.
The hounds baying,
out of sight, behind the ridge,
sure soon he would be dead.*

*Nowhere to run,
Nowhere to hide,
No further could he go,
surrender in his eye,
but thundering surf
below.*

*He clenched an apple, Poor Boar,
in his grizzled maul.
Lay quietly in the new mown hay,
w'thin bow-shot
of the Hunters' hall.*

*When they emerged, he
tracked their every move.
Head bowed,
heart awash
in fear,
it fluttered like a dove.*

“I’m glad to see
it’s going well,” I said
sarcastically.

“Read on.” he said

“Your mockery
of my work
carries no sting.”

“Nuh.” I said, “But, I’m impressed.”

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He snorted and slugged down his beer.

“That’s funny,” he said.

“The only one I ever

really wished to

impress

was

never

impressed with anything I ever did.

Not one act,

one decision,

one statement.

Have another beer,” he said.

“Gladly.” I threw myself

into a chair.

“Tell me about her.”

“No.”

“Why not?”

“*Because*, that’s why not.”

“You still adore her?”

“What do you think?”

Though haunted,

not hunted,

Poor Boar was really...

You know,

actually,

kinda hard to like.

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SLEEP NOT DEEP ENOUGH

I've had many
opportunities to experience the progression
between wakefulness and sleep
and to study (if you will)
that interim state which lies
between.

I noted the unique structure
of thoughts that occurred
while in this interim
state and thought
that if I could I would
consciously induce
that kind of thinking—
you know, put
my mind into that state—
the next step would be
(can you guess?)

That has, in fact,
proven to be
the case, but
the question always was:
How do I initiate this interim state?

I certainly had the time
as well as the opportunity
to find out. And so
that is what I did.

I developed a technique
to persuade my mind
that it should sleep
by inducing that state
of mind that immediately
precedes good sleep.

No attempt was made
to harness the mind
but every effort was

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made to
allow it to run freewheel

NO drugs, either manufactured or grown,
no taped music (not even flute),
no aroma therapy,
no expensive beds (or weird-shaped pillows);
NO side effects whatsoever
only self-generated
whimsical contrivance

After I developed
this technique
I discovered
that it worked more quickly aaaa...
and
I slept more soundly.

In time
the technique
was no longer needed.

It was not
required at all.

Sleep is
the most nat-ural
thing in the world;
it can
be attained without drugs.

Side effects for some
manufactured drugs
are:

“Next day drowsiness, dizziness and headaches.”

Does that sound like
what you’d expect, nex’ day,
from a good night’s sleep?

The lesson here is:
don’t hire someone
who doesn’t care about flowers
to tend your garden.

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AGINCOURT

In Agincourt field
one soggy morning
back in 1415,
the French lined up on one side
and the English lined up on the other.

Several thousand yards of mud lay between.

When the English
refused to advance,
the French—
all done up nicely
in armor and regalia—
came charging forth,
righteousness and indignation
coursing through their veins.

That they outnumbered the invaders
six to one

may have added
somewhat to their enthusiasm.
But also, they were
defending their homeland,
so God was surely on their side.

As they set out slogging their way
across the muck and mire,
they knew in their hearts
the foe would be quickly
and resoundingly defeated.

Somewhere beyond the half-way point,
but still nowhere near the enemy,
breathless from the long charge
and the weight of their own armor,
with clay caking up around their feet and ankles
like quick-dry cement,
their optimism began to wane
as they bogged down in the mud.

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The English long-bowmen,
from a safe distance,
then began picking them off
with a hail of arrows
like driven rain.

So unexpected was this
turn of events that
the good French soldiers panicked.
And, as they turned
to retreat,
frantic to
save themselves
if they could,
they collided head-on
with their own rear guard.

Foundering French heroes
began piling up
in entangled helpless heaps
of armor and banners

and lost glory and mud
and confusion
and the smell and the fear
of imminent death.

All that was left
was for the English
to casually make their way
out to their downed and dazed opponents,
set upon them with swords
and slaughter them wholesale.

Of 40,000 French,
6,000 of gentle birth
were taken for ransom;
most of the others
died by the blade.

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ON SUCCESS

By anyone's standards
Marcel Bertrand is a success.
He came here from France,
a humble teacher,
and ended up
the owner of a fine hotel
in one of the most coveted
cities in the world.

By contrast I guess
you might say that I
am UN- success- ful.

By the time he was my age
Marcel Bertrand owned a hotel.
By the time I was my age,
I worked for
a guy
who owned a hotel.

It's a simple equation.

M. Bertrand worked THIRTY years
to get where he is today.

It was not easy; he worked long,
he worked hard.

During those same thirty years
I worked as well.

It was not easy for me either.

I worked long, I worked hard.

I put in my time as they say.

It is not as if
during those same thirty years
--while M. Bertrand was working
to attain his success—
I was laying around
on an old couch
in my underwear

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eating Doritos,
drinking beer,
belching,
and watching daytime soap operas.

(Though, admittedly, some time was spent in that manner.)

For the most part
however,
during those very same years,
while
M. Bertrand was working and slaving away,
I too
was working and slaving away.

(I have the scars to prove it.)

I must speak now
not so much for myself,
but for the tens of thousands,
hundreds of thousands,

or millions of other good
honest,
genuinely hard-working people
who,
during those thirty years
were also working and
slaving away.

Many of them do not now own hotels.
Some do,
admittedly.
Most don't.

It's just a fact that
people who work long
and who work hard,
and who put in their time,
do not always end up
owning hotels.

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These are things I feel must be said.

While M. Bertrand was fixing the wiring
in a room, in the hotel
which he did not yet own,
I was busy fixing broken windows
in apartment buildings
that I would never own.

Later,
while M. Bertrand was being asked
if he might be interested
in managing the hotel
which he did not yet own,
I was being asked
if I could fix more broken windows
in apartment houses
which I would never own.

And when the owner of the hotel
which M. Bertrand would inevitably own

died
and left the building to a careless drunk of a son
who had no interest whatsoever
in running a hotel...
that careless drunk
asked M. Bertrand
if he would like to buy the damned place.

The guy I was working for, meanwhile,
continued living (did not die, as they say),
but, passed his property on to a son
who did not drink,
and who
--very much interested in retaining his property--
then turned to me
and asked
if I would like to fix more broken windows.

I would.
And I did.

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I had to do something
with the time
I was wasting
neither managing
nor buying
unwanted hotels.

Sure I admit I should
own a hotel or two by this stage in my life,
and I would too,
had I not squandered all those years
working for a man whose son wished to possess property
instead of a man whose son wished only
to rid himself of it.

Looking back now,
I can see
that was my mistake.

(In my defense however, I must say,
it was difficult to see at the moment.)

In closing,
for philosophical reasons,
let me say only this:

If you look in Books In Print
under my name,
you'll find an entry
or two.
Maybe more.

If you look in Books In Print
under Marcel Bertrand,
you will find
nothing

only a blank space
where his entries would have been
had he only worked
just a little harder.

Henry Edward Fool

OBSERVATIONS OF A MEDICAL NATURE

We are all entitled to our opinions
and my opinion is that
the medical community, in general,
is not really concerned
about our health
so much as
they are about...I guess, other things.

I mean, when you talk to them—
or rather,
while they are talking down to you—
there is never any sense
that what is going on
has much to do with...you.

Besides,
these people don't even care
about their own health.

Have you never noticed
them dressed in their scrubs,
standing around, just outside the hospital, in the alley,
smoking?

Have you ever looked
at what's on the trays
of health-care professionals as they shuffle along
dull of eye, slack of jaw,
in the hospital cafeteria?

That the medical community
does not subscribe to a catch and release policy;
that they want to hook you,
set the hook,
and get it set up
so that you will never swim free again,
concerns me.

They are,
in my opinion,
perhaps just a bit too eager

Henry Edward Fool

to add us to their list
of those whose entire lives
pinion on visits with the doctors.

They want to do as many tests
as they can possibly do;
they want you giving as much blood
and taking as many drugs
as you can give/ as you can take.

They want to refer you to their friends,
who will want more tests,
more blood
and who will want to give you more drugs.

In short, they want you dependent on them.
If they can, they want to cut into you.

And throughout all of this,
if there is a less expensive,
a more natural means
by which to cure your problem,

they don't want you to hear about it...

They can be quite protective at times.

I've read what I've just written

and, now stand more convinced than ever

(such is my self-persuasive power)

that the medical community,

is not concerned

about our health

so much as

they are

about

the illusion

that they are.

Henry Edward Fool

IT'S OK

(The prose people don't seem to think it's prose either.)

“It's OK,” he shouted.

“The prose people
Don't seem to think
It's prose either.”

And grabbing his anvil,
He leapt, with great joy
From the plane.

Too suddenly
Things made a kind of frightening sense.

For the briefest moment (for that was all he had)
He thought that
Perhaps he might have
Made a mistake.
Might have made
A better decision.

Just between us,
Categorically speaking...
Whatever that means...
This may not even be writing.

The Awards Committee would later
Issue a statement:
“He just
Took some words
That he’d already written,
And, dividing them differently,
Called it poetry.

Naturally,
We were then,
And now remain,
All suitably
Outraged.”

Henry Edward Fool

A TYPICAL RECITAL

A chubby little creature
in a tent-like
flowery dress,
wearing sandals and pigtails,
with fully pressurized
unshaven calves,
squinted through her glasses
hands behind her back.

Swaying, she giggled
and took in
a gulp of air.
Then glared threateningly
at something
in her hand,
sighed and began
whispering:

What that ever if,

*It was no one's fault,
Historic caprice
Outside Jerusalem the Templar knights
Fried in their own armor
So, let us not forget just one....*

- *on-going molasses confusion*
- *liquid hand-blown fuses*
- *the clown-faced memories*

*That torment my window in code
Each night*

*Don't come to me
With your regrets
But, sidle up to someone new
For when I plot the distance
I discover in dust
That my heart can not stretch*

*And maybe
We could still do the lobster
But not like we used to*

Henry Edward Fool

Yeah that's me

Weak and corrupt and

Blah blah blah

It's a damned nuisance

Isn't it?

And you...

You goddamed fucking well know it

Don't you?

(There seemed to be a lot of anger
in some young women in those days.)

Of course, I know
that sounds like the sort of thing
that should have received thunderous applause,
but we were all too startled,
and maybe just a bit frightened,
to do anything but gawk.

Well,
and cower.

I guess she said
what she had to say
because she crumpled the paper
in her fist
and
after stepping down from the stage
dropped it (cast it with some force, actually)
to the floor.

People at their tables gave her
plenty of room,
I can tell you that,
as she went by.

Henry Edward Fool

WHILE TURNING IN GREASED VEST POCKETS VELVET

While *turning* in greased vest-pockets velvet stove-
pipe dreaming and *standing* ready to meet any
intruder with the *howl* of the jackal and, of
course, the *sobs* of those infidel dogs
Swine- *groan*- grunting southward,
When the first *smell* broke the air...

'Course it breaks my heart
To break your heart
But, it's somethin'
A man's just
Gotta do

And, like she
Like she's transfixed
Finally backstage at last
Eyes aflutter (mouth agape)
Yet to face the endless lament.

MEMORABLE UNFORGETTABLE

One memorable
(and by that I mean unforgettable)
night
an old woman stood up suddenly beside her table.
She hesitated with one hand
anchored
on the back of her chair
and turned to look for assurance
from the woman
behind the coffee counter.

Given the nod,
she, bent like God's own humble bow,
stepped up onto the stage (riser really)
and began to dance.

It was like nothing I'd ever seen before.
At the same time it seemed strangely familiar.

Henry Edward Fool

She started out wrapped up quietly
in her shawl,
pacing slowly about,
then metamorphosed
into a winged creature
fluttering about the room and shrieking.

She was all eyes and claws and wings,
and, actually, pretty scary.

She scuttled across the platform,
then poised on one toe
she spun,
she leapt,
she fell crumpled to the floor.

For the briefest moment I thought I understood,
I thought I knew the feeling she had captured
(which had captured her).

She rose again (triumphant, apparently)
and began to sing.

She sang:

*OH, I dreamed a dream,
I dreamed of one I thought was dead
You know the one I mean!
He stood right there beside my bed,
And I recall each word he said*

*There is a watery world above
Awash in many things
They clump together
Randomly
And fall into our dreams
And fall into our dreams*

I was dumbfounded by this.
Literally struck dumb.
I guess everybody was.
It was the strangest thing
I had ever witnessed.

I never saw that old woman again,

Henry Edward Fool

but I was certainly glad I'd had then.

For all I knew

she was the most highly honored and beloved performer in
the history of modern dance.

When I left that night

I stopped to ask the woman behind the counter,

“What was the name of that woman who danced and
sang?”

She looked at me for a while as if determining

whether I was eligible

to receive such information,

then said, “I don't know,” and turned her back on me.

So, my guess is,

it was her mother.

Had she been *my* mother,

you might have guessed

from the gun that remained

clutched in my still twitching hand.

UBIQUITOUS RIDICULOUS

The ubiquitous award-winning Bobby Crill.
His stuff was every where
Back then.
It showed up in ev-ery poe-try jour-nal.

Why we had the great honor
of having him around
I do not know
perhaps he lived in the neigh-bor-hood.

He was always quite serious
when he read
taking long painful pauses
between phrases and
apparently suffering greatly under the weighty demands of
pro-nun-ci-a-tion-nnnnuh!

From his point of view
each syl-lable

Henry Edward Fool

was sa-cred.

A view

I still

find ri-di-

cu-lous.

You turn your face

A-way

And stare

Out the win-dow

With out a word

Is that

a tear?

That kind of crap.

(Yes,

You i-di-ot,

It's a tear.)

After such (maintaining a proper)

Pre-tense (distance between poet and audience)

it was always
refreshing
and enlightening too
to see The Circadian Rhythm Band
take the stage and sing:

Oh, I've had my share of turkey
So much one fact remains
That whether I've died
Or am buried alive
There'll be turkey fat in my veins
Oh, I'll have turkey fat in my veins

Oh, I've had my share of one-nights
I'm a one night son of a gun
But I won't deny
After I've kissed her goodbye
I'd miss her in a crowd of one
Couldn't find her in a crowd of one

Dear bar-fly schizophrenic

Henry Edward Fool

New clingy fright'nin' friend

Not to be unkind

But if I were blind

I'd hope to never see you again

I'd never want to see you again

And do you know

(well, how could you?)

who used to play there also,

and on a regular basis too?

Duck Baker.

Man, he was good.

He was ev-ery thing

Bobby Crill

Was nottttttttttt-tuh.

THAT STORY-TELLER, BINK

Of the regulars, there was a story teller
named Bink.

His stories went something like this:

*'Member one year when five feet of snow fell in one night.
Poor old Grandpa was only 4 foot 8.
Until the Spring thaw we thought he'd just run off.*

*'Course Grandma was quite relieved
when the stuff started to melt
and Grandpa's hat finally
reappeared. (She always liked that hat.)*

*She was upset of course
when his entire head emerged and,
after an hour or so,
his tongue began to thaw.*

Seems that while he was out there,

Henry Edward Fool

*in that suspended state,
Grandpa had a lot of time to think,*

*and one of the things he thought was
that he never wanted to see such
cruel weather again.*

*Once he started to speak it proved pert-near impossible
to shut the man up.*

*He went on and on about moving to
a more hospitable climate.*

The time seemed right.

*After all Grandpa was gettin' on in years,
as was his outerwear.*

*His overcoat was thread bare at the elbows,
his boots worn out in the sole,
his hat hadn't taken well to being frozen so long
His mittens, well,
you couldn't even call them mittens no more;*

rags is what they was.

*Soon enough it would either be replace all this gear
or move down south to a better climate.*

*Grandpa somehow got fixed on a paradise
called Up State New York
and that was all he ever talked about,
moving down there to Up State New York.*

*Someone at the travel bureau
told him that, down that way,
they never got more than a foot or two of snow
in a single night. And,
the poor old man believed it.*

Henry Edward Fool

CLAYTON L. BIGGS

I remember Clayton L. Biggs,
a tall black man,
maybe twice the age
of anyone else in that cafe.

He was always dressed in overalls
like a tobacco farmer—
and perhaps that is
what he was.

He would sit in the back,
like me.
But, unlike me,
he held his head up.

I thought that per-haps
he was the
sole remaining vessel
of a noble heritage.

In truth I knew that Mr. Biggs
probably ran,
when he left that café,
and didn't stop until he was back
wherever he had come from
inside
and the door securely bolted.
(Those were the time we were living in.)

I thought he was great.
One time, we occupied a table together.
Or, did I say that once already?

Listen now as
Clayton L. Biggs shouts out:
JAZZ-DADDY BROKE DOWN

*Once crippled, Jazz-Daddy fell from the sky,
and though his wounds were cool,
Sweet Maybelle, let me tell you,
after he stumbled, he could not play a lick.*

Henry Edward Fool

(or maybe this you know)

*Back-stage, in the darkness between sets,
he sat 'splayed like a spider,
worried his hands as if
he might find something harmful in there.*

He said, and this I really quote,

“My fingers is like dry twigs.”

*I looked and could see that
what he said was true.*

(but you were not there at the time)

They was; just like dry twigs.

*His nails were like small yellow leaves
attempting to emerge
long before the winter's end.*

“Just like dry twigs,” he mum-mum-mum-muttered.

And they were, yes they were now.

*“You can't play the guitar with twigs,”
he said bit-bit-bit-bitterly.*

*And he looked me in the eye,
as if it might be my fault.*

*Then he saw you, Maybelle,
comin' through the darkened door,
and I was relegated
to the position
of someone no longer worthy
of the man's spite.*

*"Oh, hey, My Dear Sweet Destiny,
come climb up on your Daddy's knee!"
He forgot all about the dry twigs.
And, too, forgot about me.
(which would make sense to any man)*

*He smiled like lit from within.
A jack-o-lantern of a toothless old man,
Crazy smile
carved deeply into his reddening face.*

Henry Edward Fool

And, of course I know what that's like. Until you picked me up, your fingers traced my jawline, your cool palms sweetened my weary brow with the sugar of their touch... until your eyes covered my face with honey and the lilt of your voice coolly kissed my feverish mind, my very heart was made of twigs.

My heart was like an old bird's nest.

Abandoned.

Empty.

Until you picked me up.

"You are a sight for sore eyes."

Jazz-Daddy de-de-de-declared.

And indeed you we-we-we-were.

Always, happily, have been.

Always will be too.

"Sw-sw-sw-sweet Maybelle!"

"Sight for sore eyes,"

he said as though you were a gift,

and wrapped his lanky arms around you.

*I love the way your neck curves into whatever else remains
down there; I really didn't care; sometimes a flowery dress,
sometimes who knows what—my eyes are trapped upon
your face. Stunned creature I w-w-w-was.*

*The twigs in my chest rattled as his old dry fingers pulled
you close. I knew the emptiness of the nest of my heart
when he laid his face against your breast and took in the
warmth of your presence. Your feel, your fragrance; things
I once knew; things I dream of still.*

*Then someone shouted, "Time to go back out there,"
and he went back out on stage
where the clatter of the crowd
would shore up his ancient riffs. (they listen with
compassionate ears)*

*"You comin', Shorty?" Skeetz asked me
the curtain in one hand, his horn in the other.*

Henry Edward Fool

“I’ll be there...”

“Hello there, Shorty,” you said, your eyes like a doe. My eyes, these eyes of mine, dazzled by the headlights of on-coming, impending, unavoidable, doom.

At times like this I stammer.

“You look real n-n-n-nice, M-M-M-Maybelle.” I said.

“Well, thank you, Shorty.”

The image of you straightening your hair, back stage; brushing away the wrinkles in your skirt remain to me a haunting thing.

. . .

Clayton L. Biggs

stood

hands hanging at his side

as if completely drained

and we would wait.

If we knew the man,

If we were LUCKY enough to have heard him recite before

we would wait,

in eager silence.

After a while he would sigh and shuffle a bit and you could see that he was in anguish, you could see that something was building inside him. Then, he would burst into a plaintive plea.

Who among us is so blind that he can not see the coming of the Lord? And who so foolish, that seeing, continues to ignore His coming? But we are like sheep who flee at the sound of their shepherd's footfall, for we know that when he comes, he brings justice. We glut ourselves and gambol and fornicate with one eye on the horizon, fearing His return. Don't we now?

“Wow!” someone idiot in the audience would always shout.

“You tell ‘em Clayton!” someone else would mumble quietly.

There would be a general mumbling agreement in the room.

Clayton L. Biggs would stare out into the darkness that was his audience and sigh.

Henry Edward Fool

Then he would shudder a bit and taking a deep breath,
continue.

(And, oh man, we were ready...we could not wait.

We were like children eager to accept correction.)

He comes nonetheless. Yes, he most certainly does. He arrives in anguish, soaked in the tears of regret for what we have done. Yet he comes. Our ears detect his approach while our hearts choose deafness. He brings in one hand compassion, and in the other he carries not but cold justice. Don't He now?

The flock is scattered and mingled with wolves; stiff-necked and proud. Yet will we feel betrayed when we see the light from the keen edge he carries? And where then will we run? And how long do we think we can hide?

Exhausted, this man in overalls
would clump down off the stage
and go directly out the back door
without looking back.

I thanked his God for the privilege of hearin' him read.

So, then

In those days

I had to ask myself:

What is this creature, seeing only in black and white, driven to leave his mark, infused with unassailable ego, steeped in private bitterness, whose response to every situation is violent, whose stance alone is a challenge, whose cold eye fixes on everything before him in warning, and leaves everything in his wake in ruin and who—despite his tearful public confession—has no real fear of God?

At the time, I thought that was a pretty good imitation

At the time I thought it was a good question.

And, I thought I knew the answer.

I'm not so sure any more.

That's what time does to us.

That, and this ridiculous waddle.

Henry Edward Fool

THE BOY WHO

PULLED HIMSELF INSIDE OUT

It was really pretty icky at first.

*And nobody understood how he'd managed
to do it.*

*And, even the emergency medical folks
were confused
and appalled also.*

But, (believe me) not a lot, just a little.

They'd seen worse.

*They knew it was just a kid foolin' around;
playin' with his equipment.*

*And, that's what lead to this. But that doesn't matter now.
It's too late.*

*Still, it was clear from the way everyone turned white when
looking at him in his disgrace that they were upset.*

*Sickened too. Why would he do such a thing? His mother
could not look upon him. It made her feel too ill to. Not so
much in the stomach but in her mind. She was screaming*

and shaking uncontrollably trapped in the arms of the man who they said was her husband when they arrived. And, this man who everyone said was her husband, didn't even seem to be able to look himself either. This man seemed also unnerved by this unlikely turn of events.

He, the boy, was taking it all pretty calmly. He didn't want people to notice.

Thinking myself the only
so-called writer to haunt that park,
when I found this laying around,
I was...what?
(Umbrage was involved, I can tell you that much.
There may have been some sputtering as well.)

Clearly the work of an untamed creature.
I couldn't help but to do a little editing,
to civilize the thing
to deaden it
so it didn't move around so much

Henry Edward Fool

or so casually

Upon the table

And so others

Might not fear

The word structure.

My jealousy

Never came up.

So what? I asked myself.

So what if this kid was

twice the writer that I was?

So what if he had none of the pretense?

So what if his simple constructs had the punch of a
heavyweight? The kick of a mule.

I'd like to say,

In my defense that

That I cried or

That I laughed

Or that I pondered.

OK,

I'll admit to pondering.

MALPUS FOR A WHILE

I was.
had been.
At a time
John Malpus,
in print at least.
In high school, there for a bit,
I was John Malpus.

It was Malpus who, at 14 years of age, wrote:
*I will myself the cats be feeding
when love has gone away
their 'cessant d'mands, their constant bleating
they'll wield like prods to sway*

*Alone I'll face the mournful yowl
good shepherd to these furry beasts
as they collide both cheek and jowl
scrambling to the grav'ly feast*

Henry Edward Fool

*They jump around
they smell my feet
for them for now
their life's complete*

*While they chow, alone I lie
staring at the ceiling
and just like them, as time goes by,
'll forget that desperate feeling*

If that wasn't the beginning of it,
it is as near I can come to it.

The paper it's typed on
looks old enough,
worn enough.

Yellow and torn enough

What ever happened to that guy?

I think we'd both agree

He was better than me.

And clever too

But you decide:

*The most powerful sneeze I ever snoze
I sneezed myself right out my clothes
sneezed so hard, as the story goes
that the glaciers cracked and the oceans rose
sneezed again, as I'm sure y'all knows,
a wind so chill that the oceans froze*

It would be years before
I wrote a song called
The One I Can't Remember,
Is the One I Can't Forget.

And years again before
Returning to my roots, I wrote:
Vulture Culture

I'm sure that raw chicken
Would soon make me sick, an' so,
I'd like a sliver of liver, he said with a quiver
(The next line is yours
Try something enigmatic.)

Henry Edward Fool

HELLBOUND HAM

Wayward Ham, Oh, how I loved that book
(It's still around here somewhere,
gravy stained and dog-eared.)
Of course, I loved the whole Little Ham series
--Wayward Ham, Upward Ham and Homeward Ham—
but I didn't know what had caused me,
in this drunken state,
propped up on my elbows in the middle
of a dance floor,
to suddenly recall these
beloved tales.

Maybe I felt like Little Ham,
a bit lost, maybe a bit
embarrassed,
possibly due to my own weakness,
my own ineptitude,
my attitude,
maybe Fate itself.

If so, then
at that moment,
I would be better cast
as Downward Ham or
Dumpward Ham
Or—let's face it--Hellbound Ham.

*“Hellbound Ham was very drunk and no less pugnacious,
rarin’ to get into a fight. He was, in fact, in truth-- if the
truth must be spoken--acting a bit like a creep.
He looked at his prey and charged into the fray,
and was summarily nailed dead in his tracks.
His enemy struck him
one shattering blow,
as if to say: Go away, Ham,
we’re not interested in such rudeness,
especially today.
In one very sad, embarrassing instant
Hellbound Ham lay on the floor
all a-clump,
in a heap.*

Henry Edward Fool

He rose to his elbows

and like that,

for a moment, as if to consider,

he sat.

Unstable above him his looming publisher declared,

'Well, you took quite a bruise'

but it's of your own stupid choosin'

so don't bother to come cryin' to me.'

And she was quite right.

Hellbound Ham

wobbled to his feet

proudly, defiant, unbeaten,

perhaps not majestic-ally,

and staggering stood

to face what Life might next serve him up.

"Throw up, Ham," the spinning room whispered.

"I urge you, throw up

and tomorrow feel better."

For a bit, unmoved he stood

*wavering, pondering, then hacking a bit,
he pondered some more.*

*Then Ham tottered home-homeward,
clutching an empty bottle
his last remaining one and only true friend
(as the song goes)
in a world cold and cruel.
Was that jeering he heard?
A discouraging word?
Would the sky remain cloudy all day?*

*Next day arising,
upon bleary-eyed recollection,
and furtive reflection,
it wasn't surprising
poor Ham swore
never to drink
Rhine wine again.*

Henry Edward Fool

MY SUDDEN SIGHTING OF LAND

“Let us all go down to the sea
in our little rubber-tired boats
and discover the place
where they no longer stay afloat,” he said.

But, none of us took him seriously because,
frankly, we didn’t know what the heck
he was talking about.

We were just kids after all,
and he was a big weary son of a bitch
with hairy knuckles and bloodshot eyes.

“Come-on,” he said encouragingly, “let’s go.”
But we didn’t budge.
It was over five hundred miles
to the nearest ocean.

“Let’s go on down there and see

where our dreams drift off
into irretrievable catastrophic insolvency.”

“Let’s see where they snag on the rocks
of our piddling discontent and are
dragged under by the tedium
of damnable daily drudgery.”

As kids, we thought he’d been around forever.
The grown-ups, I think, were pretty sure
he’d still be around long after
they were gone.

Of course I’m leading up to why
it was such a shock when he disappeared.
After all, something you’ve never seen before is one thing,
something you’ll never see again is quite another.

It would have been the same if that statue of Randolph
Winthrop Tyrell, which stands forever glowering down

Henry Edward Fool

upon us from the center of town square, had suddenly
disappeared.

Nobody really liked that statue, but gone,
it would have been missed.

There would be an emptiness.

There'd be no doubt about the fact that it wasn't there.

Once you looked at him,
you carried him with you the rest of the day.
His eyes were like fish hooks:
his teeth like polished bronze.

I often wondered about those teeth,
Who did that work?
I could not picture him in a dentist chair.
He must have made an appointment by phone.

I just could not picture him doing anything
other than standing around
gesticulating wildly

and spouting weird poetic doom.

Enough hemming and hawing,
somewhere in here I have to tell you
that I really kinda liked that guy.

One day, in the midst of his diatribe,
he stopped me as I was passing
by placing one huge grimy yellow-gloved hand
on my bony little shoulder.

He stooped down to my level and looked me in the eye
and said quietly, just between us two—
“You know, Pup, this goddamned rotten tooth
is killin’ me.”

Then he stood up and went right back to the task at hand.

This private admission
—that having a mouth full of rotten teeth was no fun—
meant the world to me.

Henry Edward Fool

Why he thought I was the one to
confide in, I don't know.

Why he called me Pup,
I don't know.

But I felt differently about the madman
from that point on.
I liked being called Pup.

Beneath it all, we were just a couple of guys who shared
the damnation of soft teeth.

He had the voice of God...
deep, booming, unavoidable,
nagging, relentless;
the voice of God.

There was rumbling authority in it.
“Let's go,” he said and gave us that big vaudeville wink
as if he was just another kid
leading us to a grand, and glorious, new playground.

“Come on,” he’d say with a winning metallic smile,
but we stayed put,
we didn’t even glance in that direction;
we kept a close eye on him.

Instinctively we knew that particular playground destiny
was perhaps just a bit too big for any of us to handle.

He pouted broadly,
miming disappointed,
but, we didn’t go.
We didn’t run away either though.

We were riveted.
Is that the word?
Dazzled?

We could neither take his huge hand and amble along
beside him mindlessly secure, nor could we run for our
lives as fast as our little scrawny bowed-legs could carry

Henry Edward Fool

us. We just kinda stood there, awe-struck, until he grew red in the face and bellowed, “Let’s GO, Goddamnit!”

Then we ran.

Boy, THEN we really ran.

We scattered like chickens.

No, the sea would come home to us soon enough,
dragging its struggling entangled habitants,
goggle-eyed and gasping, behind it.

That’s the picture he painted.

Our hope, if we had one,
was to escape being caught up
in the nets of our own making.

Those were his words.

What kind of a writer would I be
if I didn’t mention that?

Wait, I have an inkling.

“Come on,” he said, “let’s all go rolling down to the quagmire and sniff out the vestiges of lost stability.”

But we had better things to do.
As we grew up and, as we grew older,
we had other things to occupy our time.

Here’s a list: Discuss the price of bread. Swish away the grit that somehow finds its way in between the sheets. Labor to dislodge some vulgar thought that traipsed around loudly in old boots in the attics of our minds. Feed the wolf to prevent him from ransacking our homes, breaking our furniture, frightening or bruising our loved ones and throwing us all in jail (in the name of the Law).

There were things to do before the sky—
dumping grounds for a nation’s futuristic emissions—
came tumbling down upon our heads
in justifiably righteous chunks.

Henry Edward Fool

Thump. Whap. Sploot.

Those were the sounds which disturbed our sleep.

Those were the fears he instilled in us as children,
which chased us into our adulthood, and were bound to
haunt us in old age. The feeling I got was that the fear of
catastrophic justice would only, eventually, surrender its
cold grip upon us in the grave.

That was the hope anyway, as he painted it.

On the other hand,

there was a kind of freedom in his prophecy.

Since regrets would accomplish nothing,
we regretted nothing.

And, no amount of last-moment communal wailing,
no matter how desperate, no matter how sincere,
would deliver us.

That belief carried with it license
to take our time when deciding
between chocolate and vanilla

or which puppy to choose.

If the sea was going to claim us, we'd all be awash.

If the sun was slated to fall from the sky

it would incinerate the timid, the cowering, the austere, the benevolent, the greedy, the opulent, the pretentious and the proud,

all in the same fiery blast.

I was pretty sure I fit in there somewhere.

So, I'll take the chocolate. And...

That one with the too-long ears has his charm.

Wait,

how's his breath?

Henry Edward Fool

A KIND OF UNDERSTANDING

I didn't think I was a wino.
I had NO real desire
to become a wino,
but,
after several months of eavesdropping
I started to understand
what the winos in that park were saying.

When someone said:
"Several of the men
gallantly
rushed forward
to clothe the naked savage girl."
I laughed.

When
they shouted, in unison
"His grandma was starting
quarterback for the Detroit Lions,"

I cheered.

When one mulled:

“We need light to see;

we see in dreams;

what light lights that place?”

I rubbed my chin

in wonderment.

“And who

changes the bulbs?”

I thought.

‘nd I thought

They’d understand

that thought.

Henry Edward Fool

IN FOND MEMORY

Perhaps living a long and privileged life
with bitterness festering in her empty soul
was punishment enough.

But if we should
bump into one another,
in Hell,
I hope we can share a brittle,
near-forgiving,
completely unconvincing
laugh, while
playing
distractedly with the metallic taste in our mouths and
counting the thunderous seconds
as we plod ever more fearfully toward eternity.

My guess is that neither one of us will have much hair
by then.

ONE HUNDRED EIGHTY DEGREES

Sometime in or around 1968 I recall
a lovely little creature
of a happily ragged sort
skipping up to me and asking
in a sing-songy eager, smoke-laden,
somewhat breathy voice,
“Hey man, do you want to go out to California
with us?
Out there,” she said dreamily,
“EVERYONE *is a STAR!*”

I didn't even have to think about that.
“Christ no,” I said (perhaps somewhat huffily),
“that sounds like Hell to me.”
It's peculiar that I should
maintain that position for so long
when almost all
of my other views have, in that same period,
changed nearly 180 degrees.

Henry Edward Fool

ANKLES 'n' THINGS

My ankle gets better but slowly.

I walk with a cane

and my foot comes down with a slap

because the tendons haven't returned.

But, I can walk maybe 8 blocks

before the hip-knee-and-ankle-out-of-whack aspect

begins to weary me.

While we walk, I tell my wife

this tale for her entertainment.

There once was a king

Self-appointed

Not by any authority

Ever anointed

Lived in a tiny world of his own ma-king

For what is a tiny world without a tiny king?

Upon his daughter th' king one day his ire did vent

Bringing her to tears, he thought, justifiably.

She'd 'betrayed' the king through

"intellectual abandonment"

Whatever, in Christ's name, **that** might be.

Her husband--subject to the king's disregard--

With nary ever a word to say,

One evening--under dark sky, brightly starred

Carries the daughter far..... away.

The king nex' day looking 'round,

Detecting their absence in his court

With Justice issued pound for pound

Tastes abandonment

Of a more tangible sort.

Henry Edward Fool

'HAPS NEXT TIME

'Haps nex' time

I'll stick to one thing

Stick to one theme

Women

Or writing

Or drug experiences

I won't be wanderin' all over

From one topic to another

I'll be just kind of

What they call grounded in

A predictable

WHEN WILL THIS OLD MAN MOVE ON

Quagmire of consistency

I do have plenty to say

I've discovered that

I suppose

You've
Discovered that too

'Round 60 or so
A man finds
As I did
That
You either have a great deal to say
Or you have nothing
Whatsoever

It hardly matters
Of course
But it becomes your choice

For now
I've chosen this
And that's all I have to say
About that

• • •

Henry Edward Fool

