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Red Hen Press

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Call Me Fool

POETRY BY

William Trowbridge

Call Me Fool concerns the misadventures of a character based on the fool archetype.

Trowbridge's Fool is based on an archetype that runs from the beginnings of storytelling up to modern films (silent and sound), fiction, poetry, and stand-up comedy. He is combination *schlemiel* and *sblimazel*, alternately the spiller and the spilled-on. Often the scapegoat, he is, as St. Chrysostom put it, "he who gets slapped." Trowbridge's Fool, after blundering into hell with Lucifer and company, is reincarnated in various historical times, with occasional unplanned visits back to the heavenly realm, operated as a mega corporation by its Enron-style CEO. Trowbridge thought he was through with his not-so-distant relative after his collection came out, but the Fool is back again, none the wiser.

ADVANCE PRAISE

In his latest collection, *Call Me Fool*, William Trowbridge proves that you can't keep a good Fool down. He proves again that he is one of America's best and wittiest poets: funny, tender, wry, compassionate, full of insight and rueful understanding of what it means to live, cream pie in the face, pants falling down, as the Green Weenie rampages through our foolish, beautiful world. Stand with me, readers, and bellow, "I am Fool."

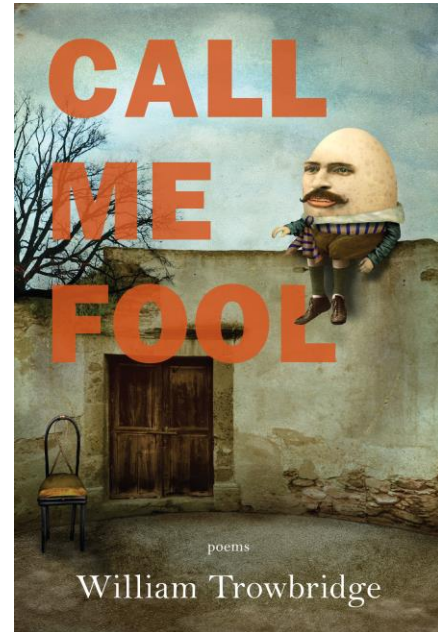
—Charles Harper Webb, author of *A Million MFAs Are Not Enough*

William Trowbridge's latest collection, *Call Me Fool*, is a trip through time from before history to after now. Charming, funny, irreverent, and a bit snarky, Fool ends up taking over for God, who's taken "early retirement / to an unlisted galaxy where He plays golf // and watches *Lamp Unto My Feet* reruns." Fool doesn't do too bad a job of it either, concentrating on "April showers that bring May flowers," but he does miss a lot—floods, famines, and assorted miseries. Bless William Trowbridge for giving us someone to blame! I love it.

—Alice Friman, author of *Blood Weather*

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Call Me Fool is William Trowbridge's ninth poetry collection. His poems have appeared in more than forty-five anthologies and textbooks, as well as on *The Writer's Almanac* and *American Life in Poetry*, and in such periodicals as *Poetry*, *The Gettysburg Review*, *The Georgia Review*, *The Southern Review*, *Plume*, *Rattle*, *The Iowa Review*, *Prairie Schooner*, *Epoch*, and *New Letters*. He lives in the Kansas City area and teaches in the University of Nebraska Low-residency MFA in Writing Program. He was Poet Laureate of Missouri from 2012 to 2016.



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FROM CALL ME FOOL

PLEISTOCENE FOOL

When Fool's friends noticed some chips
and scratches he'd made on the cave wall
with stray spear chucks, it dawned on them

that they'd never seen anything quite
so graceful looking, so evocative. He was
honored with a new word: "eep" (artist).

Members from other caves came to admire
his masterpiece. Some saw a deer in it,
some a mammoth, some a buxom woman.

Wherever they moved, the eyes seemed
to follow them, a feature they agreed
distinguished "eep" from aper, and why

they clubbed to death some local wannabes.
Fool, now revered clan-wide and getting paid
large sums of hind quarters and axe heads

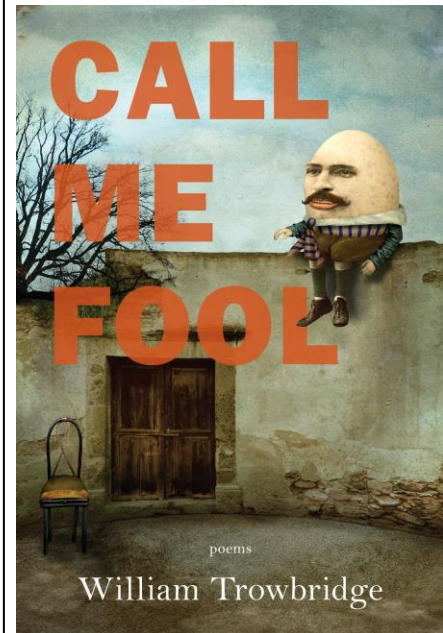
for even talking about his work, grew
aloof and oversensitive, demanding
larger fees and greater adulation. Though

a few insisted all they saw were random
chips and scratches any fool could make,
Fool's demands grew more excessive.

The elders might have killed him but for awe
of the magic powers he claimed his art
endowed him with, immortality for one.

Given that, they asked him to quell
the latest menace, a raging cave bear,
with this mighty art they called "Deap."

He was to "Deap" the bear, a word which
could also mean, "meat," "nudge," "hello,"
"nostril"—and a little later, "dead eep."



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