

## Henry Stimpson – Two Poems

### Poor Fools

Among the Victorian tombstones  
only you, Obed C. Shepherd,  
stand lifelike in a granite gazebo  
with a stone beard and a corporation  
bulging under your supple vest.

Although someone hacked off  
the tip of your nose  
and the fingers of your right hand,  
you gesture serenely  
toward a grove of maples in flames.

Wistful emperor of dry goods,  
you don't sneer like Ozymandias.  
Are you in your Protestant heaven, Obed,  
or is stone your only immortality?

Bicycling the sun-dappled paths  
of Mount Feake Cemetery,  
I'm not like these poor fools.  
I'm smug. Foolish.

### The Speed of Light

Cool Papa Bell the champion  
Negro League base-stealer  
was so fast "he could turn off the light  
and be under the covers  
before the room gets dark,"  
Satchel Paige said.

Crickets sing softly,  
so I hit the switch and dive  
under the cool sheets,  
a split-second failure  
in the sweet darkness.

**Henry Stimpson's** poems, memoirs, essays and articles have appeared in *Cream City Review*, *Rolling Stone*, *Common Ground Review*, *Poets & Writers*, *The Boston Globe*, *Yankee*, *New England Ancestors*, *New England Monthly*, *Bostonia*, *Boston Phoenix*, *Beauty/Truth* and *The Philadelphia Inquirer*. He lives in Wayland, Mass.