

Autobiographical Sketch

Graham Hillard has written for *The Los Angeles Review of Books*, *Memphis*, *The Oxford American*, and other magazines and was a 2012 finalist for the Livingston Award for Young Journalists. His poems have appeared in *Image*, *Southern Humanities Review*, *Tar River Poetry*, and numerous other journals and are forthcoming in *The Believer*, *Birmingham Poetry Review*, and *Sou'wester*. His work has been reprinted in the *Best New Poets* series, *The Southern Poetry Anthology*, and *American Society: What Poets See*. A resident fellow on several occasions at the Virginia Center for the Creative Arts, he will attend the Sewanee Writers Conference this fall as a Tennessee Williams scholar. He holds degrees from Union University and New York University and is an associate professor of English at Trevecca Nazarene University, where he teaches creative writing, contemporary literature, and composition and serves as editor of *The Cumberland River Review*, a quarterly online journal. He lives in Nashville, Tennessee, with his wife, daughter, and son.

Brief Commentary on “Pope Calixtus III Excommunicates Halley’s Comet: Rome, 1456”

I wrote “Pope Calixtus III Excommunicates Halley’s Comet: Rome, 1456” in a rented cabin in a North Carolina forest. A friend and I had booked the place as a makeshift writers’ retreat and were surprised to find there an extraordinary private library, among whose many volumes was a work of medieval history that told the (apocryphal) story of Pope Calixtus and the comet. The poem obviously had to be written.

Careful readers will note the debt this poem owes to “Musée des Beaux Arts,” and indeed Auden’s vision--itself borrowed, of course, from Brueghel’s *The Fall of Icarus*--was an explicit influence. I’ve long been intrigued by the limitations of the Great Man theory of history, and this is a poem that means to have some fun with those limitations. To paraphrase Auden, world-historical figures can cast whatever spells they want; the rest of us will keep walking dully along.

Links to Webpages Featuring Other Poems

“Lascaux” (in *Image*)

<http://imagejournal.org/page/journal/articles/issue-80/hillard-poetry>

“The Timpanist” (in *32 Poems*)

<http://www.32poems.com/issues/graham-hillard-%E2%80%A2-timpanist>

“Sidewinder” (in *Valparaiso Poetry Review*)

<http://www.valpo.edu/vpr/v15n1/v15n1poetry/hillardsidewinder.php>

Additional Selections Not Available Online

“Elemental” (from *Southern Humanities Review*, Summer 2013) - see below

“Oil Painting, Artists’ Colony” (from *32 Poems*, Spring/Summer 2013) - see below

“Genealogy” (from *The Journal*, Summer 2012) - see below