

Graham Hillard

## **At the National D-Day Memorial**

*Bedford, Virginia*

Like a wound, or a medal pressed into a widow's hands,  
it lies upon the landscape, one hundred acres

called to attention, gathered into such stillness  
that even the birds seem wary of it, flitting away before

I can name them. The names one finds here  
are artifacts, antique as ration coins: Vester, Eldridge,

boys innocent in the telling they have left us  
along with this bronze necrology, careful arch

on which our dead are graven. Nearly everyone  
who knew them is gone. Soon the names will be

mere letters, codes for which the cipher has been lost,  
knowable only by this context: sculpture park,

gardened plaza where even now Eisenhower gazes  
toward Normandy, his face as white as England's

chalk horses. I don't know if I can claim this  
suffering, this desperate victory. Beneath the Overlord Arch,

the *Ad commemorandum* has begun to fade. Soldiers  
sprint, frozen, through early tide, their helmets dully gleaming.

Above a stairway, men of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Ranger Battalion scale  
Pointe du Hoc without ceasing. They will not meet my eye.