

Awake in Oxford

A horn to wake the dead, wakes him
and Wycliffe rises to his elbows
in the semi-dark, on a straw mattress

while the old Steward passes by
with the instrument to his lips
and blows again, god-awful noise

like a goose coughing at daybreak.
It will become an old joke
in which the scholars of Balliol

first grumble at the rude awakenings,
then toss shoes at the man,
then finally steal his horn

and hide it under Wycliffe's bed
because no one would suspect
the scrawny boy from up North.

But so far no one has noticed
young Wycliffe, who follows them
in a line down the rough-hewn stairs

and into the common room,
to a trough filled with water.
He stands shoulder to shoulder

with strangers who will become
known to him, he to them,
and dips his hands into the water,

splashing his face for the first time in Oxford.

THOM SATTERLEE teaches creative writing at Taylor University in Upland, Indiana. In 2007, his poetry book, *Burning Wyclif*, was named an American Library Association Notable Book.