

# Dry Bones Poetry

Issue One  
*National Poetry Month, 2016*



The hand of the LORD was upon me,  
and he brought me out in the Spirit of the LORD  
and set me down in the middle of the valley;  
it was full of bones.

And he led me around among them,  
and behold, there were very many on the surface of the valley,  
and behold, they were very dry.

And he said to me,  
"Son of man, can these bones live?"

And I answered,  
"O Lord GOD, you know."

(Ezekiel 37:1-3 ESV)

As long as humanity faces mortality and uses language to describe its existence,  
poetry will remain one of its essential spiritual resources.

-Dana Gioia, *Disappearing Ink: Poetry at the End of Print Culture*

## ISSUE ONE

Joe Holland and I connected long ago over social media because we are both like-minded pastors. We later discovered that we share a common love for poetry, both as readers and poets. We began to dream of a poetry project, something that would be an outlet for our writing and hopefully in some small way a means to promote a love for poetry among our peers and through our social media networks. The conversation was put on hold until early 2016 and we are now taking the next step.

Dry Bones Poetry isn't much of anything yet. It's two guys with the idea that the world needs more poetry, especially among tribes like ours. Just go into the average Christian bookstore and look for the poetry section. It doesn't exist. We want that to change. This is the beginning of our effort to develop a community of poets who have a common faith as confessing Protestants.

We wanted to make this available for National Poetry Month and so we kept this first issue short and sweet. Joe and I each have a handful of poems and haiku. We've also asked a few of our "common faith" friends who have connected with us over social media to contribute and a few did. For this first issue, we've included a poem or two from everyone. And while that may change for future issues, we wanted to start whatever this thing is going to be by letting our words breathe. Can these dry bones live? We'll see.

Steve K. McCoy

— — —

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STEVE McCOY

— — —  
*April*

Warm southerly wind  
in springtime.  
The backsliding woods  
take shallow breaths  
at first, this  
holy ghost revival  
for winter's death.  
Paws claw  
along sawdust trails  
laid beside the deadwood  
fallen trees  
thick with beetles.  
A choir of songbirds  
reverberate to the edges  
of re-creation,  
their pitch-perfect hymns  
rousing every rock,  
now rain-washed clean  
from frozen stain,  
to praise.

Haiku

Windy city night--  
storms erect thunderbolts to  
gentrify the sky.

Two furry bandits  
spar-- a property dispute  
over one man's trash.

Sips of midnight tea  
interrupt encroaching fears--  
midlife night terrors.

Saturated ground--  
the pitter-patter, not feet,  
is but rain's resound.

## *Blue Days*

Artists make beauty  
out of pain,  
blue sadness and red anger,  
but we on our blue days  
refrain.

Be unafraid!  
Be a poet!  
Sketch a heart well broken!  
Be an artist of dreams  
unspoken.  
Embrace frailty unfettered,  
fear not to show it.

The Fall's remedy comes  
to those who know  
cracked pots  
redeemed  
hold better truths.  
This truth,  
when everyone we meet  
is broken,  
is truly good news.

## *Leaving Trails*

Powdered graphite and clay,  
slurried to cakes,  
fired and hardened, and  
pressed into shapes  
that fit snug into cedar, and  
sandwiched between  
two identical halves  
a symmetrical being.

I'm a pencil they say,  
hurried awake,  
set to be sharpened, and  
ground into shape  
sitting snug into fingers, and  
pressed to the page  
leaving trails, forming words  
dullness tells of my age.

These hundreds of lines are  
taking their toll,  
the cost of these shavings:  
slightly less whole,  
but my stub between fingers are  
proving my worth,  
leaving trails, forming words  
my destruction/rebirth.

My all I have given--  
whittled to none--  
leaving trails, forming words--  
sanctified, done.  
But for dust blemished fingers and  
poem, now signed,  
we all will be measured  
by the trails left behind.

JOE HOLLAND

— — —

*Broken body, bones*

Broken body, bones,  
A healing that never comes,  
Though sure enough to taste it,  
    eucharistic,  
May,  
    the not now but yet,  
Comfort grave stones  
    to mark, patient,  
Where the party will start.

*Buds and birds comes the spring*

Buds and birds comes the spring  
over the snow trodden to mud  
and never as warm as you'd like  
    a sweater with finer knit  
        than you expected.  
Seasons don't change  
    they slouch into one another  
        a reluctant lazy  
        heavy and suffocating.  
But they always speak of life,  
    its beginning, end, and laughter.  
Four different conversations  
    slouching into one another  
    and talking about the only  
        important thing.  
Almost as if someone bound them to do it,  
    to mark time, remark life, remake life,  
    like spring with its  
        buds,  
            birds,  
                and trodden snow mud.

## *Neo-Stoicism*

The Christians and the Stoics party together,  
until something gets broken,  
and their parents get home.

## *PTLu*

When darkness has its way,  
It stays.  
Cold to the bitter, ember-less,  
And distress.  
Covering what wants to hide,  
Then I died.

But dark and light, tooth and tusk,  
Dawn and dusk.  
Vitriol, violent, covenant enemies,  
Dark, it flees.  
Darkness, absence, negation, burden,  
Light is a person.

He came to . . . , as far as the curse is found,  
Heaven's hound.  
Once I was . . . , but now I see,  
Crucified for me.  
This Christ, Sun of God, toward me looks,  
Post tenebras lux.



RANDY ALSTON

— — —

*Daily Grace*

A virgin gives birth to the Savior of the earth;  
In obedience He gives His life in service as He lives;  
Miracles, healings, teaching and preaching;  
All came down to a final moment;  
"It is finished" He cried from the cross;  
And gave up His breath for those who were lost;  
Those in rebellion who saw their great sin;  
Could call out to Jesus, again and again;  
Those who call upon His great Name;  
Would be forgiven, and never the same;  
This great glorious truth is still true today;  
So preach to yourself, and near Jesus you'll stay.

BILL MOORE

— — —  
*All I Know*

There were times when I saw her  
That I thought my stomach would implode  
With nervous attraction  
She with her golden brown hair  
And beautiful face and skin so clear  
That it seemed like a picture  
Of beauty in a Spiegel catalog  
And it simply took my 4th grade breath away  
We talked the way 9 year-olds do  
And waited  
And waited  
And once held hands as we walked down Frank's street  
(It was heaven)  
The connection we had was appetizer -  
Who knew the meal to be served years later would be so fine?  
And so costly, and the thing that made me feel  
Like I was the richest man in America  
Who knew that we would become one  
And she a little ADD and I a little more focused?  
Ah, we couldn't know – it was too much  
Too much for 9 year-olds  
And too beautiful  
It was enough to simply be there in her class  
In her blessed 4th grade class  
On picture day she did her hair special  
And my stomach heaved within me  
How was I to know that she would, one day, know all of me  
And love me, and walk through the fire with me?  
It was too much to know then  
It is all I know now  
It is all I know

## *These Boys*

These boys, they walk the path we trod  
Their thoughts – the same as ours  
Of summer breezes filled with girls  
And laughter and of cars

Of moon-lit nights, and wedding bells  
And bridesmaids' pretty dresses  
Of champagne in the afternoon  
And nothing that distresses

They do not see beyond the turn  
Where things begin to change  
Where laughter is a sound unheard  
And brides are filled with rage

Where men look down and stammering speak  
And rarely ever smile  
And the distance from my hand to her's  
Feels like a windswept mile

We walked this path, boys, and walked it well  
In summers just like you  
And looking back we might have asked  
The aging what they knew

How summer fades and lovers hate  
And good men stumble badly  
How some break down, and many quit  
And some just limp on, sadly

And had we asked the graying this  
We would have heard, no doubt  
That summer's breeze is good but brief  
And fades like summer's flowers

And champagne turns to vodka then  
And bridesmaids scream in terror  
As husbands rule with iron fists  
And brides die in their error

The vodka in our father's breath  
We loathed and said no never  
But now we drink the devil's pour  
And breathe it out forever

We do not feel, and rarely talk  
As winter's winds a-howling  
Blow through our houses late at night  
Our brides forever scowling

What man, you ask, what man indeed  
Could weather such a storm?  
All sons of Adam and of Eve  
Die wishing they were warm

And on their deathbeds faintly heard  
Are words of vain regretting  
Of loves long lost and hope deferred  
Of terror and of fretting

So hearken, boys, and listen well  
And bend the knee at first -  
To pour one's life out lovingly  
Is Heaven here on Earth

Smart lads, to listen to the gray  
And Wisdom's soothing voice  
To walk in Wisdom's golden steps  
And not like other boys

Walk then, boys, keep pressing on  
And give your lives away  
We find our lives by losing them  
We die to live this day

ERIC SCHUMACHER

— — —

*Cigarettes and Warm Mountain Dew*

"Cigarettes and warm Mountain Dew.  
They're all that I've got now  
but they get me through.  
If you'd seen where I've been  
And been where I've seen,  
You'd be happy with either one too."

He grins as he sucks in a breath,  
All bloodshot and whiskered  
And rotted by meth,  
As he stares back at us  
From his seat on the bus  
Where he waits for a handout and death.

Though none may care,  
There's an image there  
Of an ancient and unending face.  
Though none may see,  
Who knows what may be  
Through an ancient and unending grace.

They're staring at him and at me.  
With eyes wide and wondering,  
O, what will they see?  
Will they see what I've taught  
Or find I've forgot?  
This moment's the measure of me.

Though none may care,  
There's an image there—  
An ancient and unending face.  
Though none may see,  
Who knows what may be  
Through an ancient and unending grace.

If my mercy must wait upon merit,  
Then my mercy is not worth its name.  
If my grace is for those who deserve it,  
Then my grace is nothing but shame.

He says, "Man, I used to be you.  
Four boys and a girl,  
We took trips to the zoo.  
Who knows what's in store,  
All this could be yours:  
Cigarettes and warm Mountain Dew."

DANNY SLAVICH

— — —  
*Fathering*

Boppie (dad's dad) smuggles peanuts  
into Giants games,  
roasted and salted, ziplocked  
inside his jacket pockets.

He cracks the shell,  
(pop)  
and shucks the nut,  
dappling his pants with brown flecks.

(He always shares with me).

Mr So-and- So  
professor of English 1C  
(Critical Thinking) lines out copies  
of Skeptic Magazine, upright in the marker trays  
of the class whiteboards.

He assigns us a paper:  
observe a peanut, three pages.

I see things:  
Boppie's husk-speckled pants,  
baseball on an warm(ish) afternoon by the Bay.  
I write one line, among others:  
"We mistake plainness for simplicity."

"The test came back positive,"  
says Dr. Malka, the allergist.  
(We aren't shocked,  
because we had seen that quadrant on her  
back redden and swell).  
"Watch for swelling, redness, difficulty breathing."

He prescribes EpiPens.  
And now, always,  
she carries them with her  
and I read labels carefully.

LORE FERGUSON WILBERT

— — —

*Cathedral Billboards*

Colored plates held by twisted metal boundaries —  
Illustrated religion for those who cannot read  
the signs on interstate 40  
announcing potluck dinners and that Jesus Saves.

Ten feet tall, no one imagines measuring up;  
They never could — sinners and saints alike —  
All in their pale or pretty garb,  
none with intensity so rich it fills a window  
and stuns the parishioner into silence.

The whore with her crown of beauty let down at her Lord's feet,  
The rock upon which He built His church, even after three denials,  
And the real first communion — with a traitor present and accounted for.  
They are easily understood lessons when they are told with blues,  
and greens and yellows and vermillion orange.

When words fail and tone cannot convince,  
we understand color, we understand stains,  
blots on clean plated glass.

God bless the sinners and the stunned parishioner, him too.  
No wonder it's called Stained Glass.  
Only the stained understand.