

# Studio One

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## Ribs and Skulls

Russel Rowland

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## Ribs and Skulls

I was walking today  
where an old broken-down stone wall  
descended from higher up—  
couldn't help but think  
what a hapless, thankless way to live:  
farming begrudging hills,

trees to fell, walls to build  
and rebuild each spring, dead offspring  
to line up in little plots.

No wonder they left  
walls and cellar holes behind them  
for the promise of better.

I have walked before  
where such stone walls run as parallel  
as a skeleton's ribs,

and cellar holes lie about like  
empty skulls. Yet I heard cows, ewes.  
Children still alive, playing.

It was when the setting sun  
slanted through translucent foliage  
the old way, that I heard them.

Russel Rowland