Cemetery as Dog Park

Sunday afternoon—a cold gray nips
the air—the same gray that drove us
as boys to the cemetery, where sheltered
in the evergreens, protected from the wind,
we planned our futures, one dog
or another panting at our feet. Fifty
years is a long time for boys, an impossibility
for dogs, a big nothing for the sun. Even
the cold, creeping slowly into our thighs,
is as temporary as juniper berries, bagworms,
sprawling limbs. Memory comes and goes
as we count the winters, the dogs that
licked their balls, chewed our shoes,
ran into traffic like happy fools.

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Al Ortolani is a winner of the *Rattle* Chapbook Prize and has been featured in Garrison Keillor's *Writer's Almanac* and Ted Kooser's *American Life in Poetry*. He is a two-time recipient of the Kansas Notable Book Award. *Bull in the Ring* a novel was recently published by Meadow Lark Books. His most recent collection of poetry, *Controlled Burn,* was just released by Spartan Press. Ortolani is a husband, father, and grandfather, currently entertaining the idea of becoming a hermit. However, his wife prefers the company of the neighborhood feminists, and his dog Stanley refuses to live without Milkbone.

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