

# **THE PROSE POEM: AN INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL**

Volume 7 | 1998

## **A Piece Of Black Coal Found Under A Tree**

Robert Bly

© Providence College

The author(s) permits users to copy, distribute, display, and perform this work under the following conditions: (1) the original author(s) must be given proper attribution; (2) this work may not be used for commercial purposes; (3) the users may not alter, transform, or build upon this work; (4) users must make the license terms of this work clearly known for any reuse or distribution of this work. Upon request, as holder of this work's copyright, the author(s) may waive any or all of these conditions.

*The Prose Poem: An International Journal* is produced by  
The Berkeley Electronic Press (bepress)  
for the Providence College Digital Commons.  
<http://digitalcommons.providence.edu/prosepoems/>

## Robert Bly

### A PIECE OF BLACK COAL FOUND UNDER A TREE

This is a small piece of coal, black to the core; it's a one-inch by three-quarters inch bit of coal, ignored and ignominious. The surface gleams a little, like Iago's thoughts, or a peacock's foot in the dark. It's like the tooth of a corrupt judge that gleams as he opens his mouth.

There were farm mothers like this, self-satisfied after feeding so many kids, some of whom will pass their twenty-first birthday in jail. Shall we say the coal is like a father who can't wait to burn himself up by being a bad boy, abandoning "all he was taught"? This bit of coal gives my lips the longing to kiss it . . .

The chunk of coal lies on the table at this moment two feet from my lips and from my writing hand; it is as heavy as I am and as depressed; well, it is pressed out of old vegetation, we know that . . . Eventually I'll come walking along while visiting this girls' school, looking for some object to write about with them, and I'll find it.