A Piece Of Black Coal Found Under A Tree
Robert Bly
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.