

**The Eyes of Lawrence**

You were born with coal dust  
in your eyes, a mother  
who placed your cradle  
on top of Mose's mountain,  
a burning in your lungs  
crying for fresh air  
and pansies in the hands  
of all those women  
who would touch you  
when the moon went out  
and the only candle  
was the passion of the desert  
in your eyes

your coal dust eyes  
the mark of beauty  
in the fog of England  
the grimy garden  
where a man stripped  
off his pants  
and the ideal of a woman  
planted figs on his ankles  
and gentians on his thighs

the eyes of eighteen hours  
on the body of a poem

the slipstream vision  
of serpents trapped  
within a mine  
within a drawing room  
of dark intellects  
within a microscope  
of groin  
where heaven wears  
an angel to stop  
the sun from growing  
larger than the sky.

Those eyes  
they could not crumble  
like your bones

no man could hide them  
on a shelf

they have nothing  
to do with popularity.

Some wear them now  
like glasses  
others paste them on a canvas  
and call it art  
one woman held them  
to her belly  
and thought of marriage

but no-one swallowed them  
with wine  
no-one shared them  
with another  
no-one knew enough  
to crush them  
and spread the dust  
on pillows, bread  
or soap

the neglected eyes  
the misused sight  
of Italian winters  
German love  
Mexico full of mirages  
and the strange dry horses  
of hope.

The eyes  
coal dust eyes

they sit in our memory  
like a reputation  
instead of flying to the pinnacles  
of chrysanthemums

instead of growing  
to the size  
of an island

instead of covering  
bare dreams  
with a dust  
to turn gold  
in the first raw movement  
of morning.

—Barry Dempster