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ON ENCOUNTERING

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I always have to brace to look in his eyes;
I'm never quite ready.
They look too much back, they hurt,
They wrestle mine to the ground.
What do you say to eyes that
Watched Pompeii crash under boiling mud,
Saw the Roman Empire flattened to pages of paper tongue,
Witnessed the fall of bombs, axes, heads, dynasties,
And the obscenities of Golgatha?
What do you say to eyes that still
Hold tears for you?