



ANCIENT ROOTS

ANCIENT ROOTS

I am an ancient oak
twisted, gnarled, permanent
indifferent to the passage
of time

I am amber and gold
russet and sage
bone-white
blood-red
moss-green

I am rain-blached and sun-bleached
and where once I was scorched
by lightening
I am an angry charcoal black
with keloid scars

Solid and thick-girthed
my thighs can resist
the fury of the elements
yet remain vulnerable
to the footfalls
of passing strangers
they twist and turn
charting new paths
into the rich, dark earth that nurtures me
they burrow deep
seeking life's sustenance
and other treasures

My skin is rough and weather-beaten
rain-lashed
yet wind-smoothed
and there are many unexplored places
secret nooks
colonised by teeming armies
whole cities that strive
beneath its protective bark

hidden crannies
where shy, itinerant seeds
once took root
and burst forth in a celebration
of reckless beauty
dark, barren places
where I was once torn
limb from limb
and nothing more can grow

I was once a sapling
exploding with energy
and purpose
I chose to make my home
by the river
where her calm, impassive face
could mirror my growth
her music a soft, sighing lullaby
soothing me as I sleep

When the sun parches the earth
sapping my strength
she revives me with cool water
from her own abundant store
her gentle waves
caress my aching feet

Her gift is an orchestra
with many players
drums and violins
a choir of joyful singers
rousing me from my slumber
as they herald the dawn
of each new day

Time is my armory now
scudding clouds keep their watch
as the changing seasons
offer new possibilities
healing wounds
renewing old paths

Tomorrow I shall be here still,
wiser and sturdier than before
for I have withstood the fury of thunder
the rage of forest fires
I know
my life-force
will prevail

And if by chance
an ax should fell me
should I succumb
to the vengeance of the hurricane
or the slow, creeping stealth
of nature's wrath
I shall sink gratefully into the earth
that has sustained me
through the centuries
returning my gifts
so that others
may grow to touch
the sky