

- I. I have known her since my life began.
From the earth she emerged, and though
she knew not what life meant for her,
she knew that she desired it, to reach the sky -
take root. I took my first steps toward her, spoke
my first words in her ear. At night I listened
to her lullaby, the wind's song whispered through
her fingers, and together we shared our dreams.
- II. When spring came she was fuller, stronger,
lusher arms grazed the heavens, though
she seemed twisted in her own gnarled mandala
all knotting limbs - no trace of the elegance
displayed by her kinfolk. Despite this,
I saw a beauty in her that I never seemed to see
within myself.
- III. Summer arrived. Birds flew from the South;
in their nesting they found a home, as did I,
and despite the motions of life, I often still returned
to find solace in her presence, I sat at her base,
told her the trials of living, and she listened.
I picked a fruit, hanging low, and tasted its sweet
fireworks on my tongue. She did not protest.
- IV. By Autumn her birds had left, flown for clearer skies,
I too had moved on and found that time was slipping
through my fingers. I came home to find her
withering away, at her feet a carpet of her own
misgivings. I recalled in her infancy how hope
seemed to be woven within her veins, then
how she always listened, yet never spoke.
- V. Winter. With trembling hands I gesture to my grandchildren
illustrating the arcs of her great branches.
It pains me that they cannot see her in her glory
as I did. Reduced to a stump, she was skeletal,
ashen like the hands of pale death.

And though I mourn her loss, I know
that deep in the earth, her roots remain,
and within them infused
the love she gave, and bore like a brand.