**Survival**

I don’t know how you survived all those years,

your trunk bent and leaning

but clinging still to the rock under the soil.

My hearts breaks and breaks anew with every telling of your story; how you learned to smell anger the way a dog learns to smell fear; how the merest suggestion of wrath was enough to send your spirit scuttling for its tiny cave, herding your offspring ahead of you, pulling shut the stone that served as your door and defense.

I have read your poems, read of your desire to do the right thing in the face of overwhelming wrong, how you held on, day after year, spinning out the yarn of your love to knit the home of your children together, your spirit crying for release, taking succour in the leaves and branches of the trees that surrounded your family garden, and you never lost sight of the only things that mattered in a world of shame and hurt.

I don’t know how you did it;

my own trials were long,

but i would not have survived

what you did;

you shame me when you feel sorry for me.