

Millennia of a tree

Just below the ridge
where the track falls into line
beside wood and field,
a tree dies slowly.
Arteries lopped, trunk hollow,
dwarfed by younger, stronger neighbours,
it's sentinel presence completes the skyline.

There are no beginnings or endings.
The tree is the environment,
the environment the tree.
The old oak tracks sun and moon,
sleeps through Winter's chill,
wakens to Spring's promise,
vibration of plough, shrill of skylark,
woodpeckers' drum.

Unseen by human eyes,
a subterranean web entwines
and binds and feeds the forest.
From dying to a wildlife tree,
a slow transformation;
a hundred years later, an ancient stump
still nurtured by its companions,
as millennia pass, velvet layers,
lichen and moss, line the hummocks
of its resting place.

©Anne Hodnette