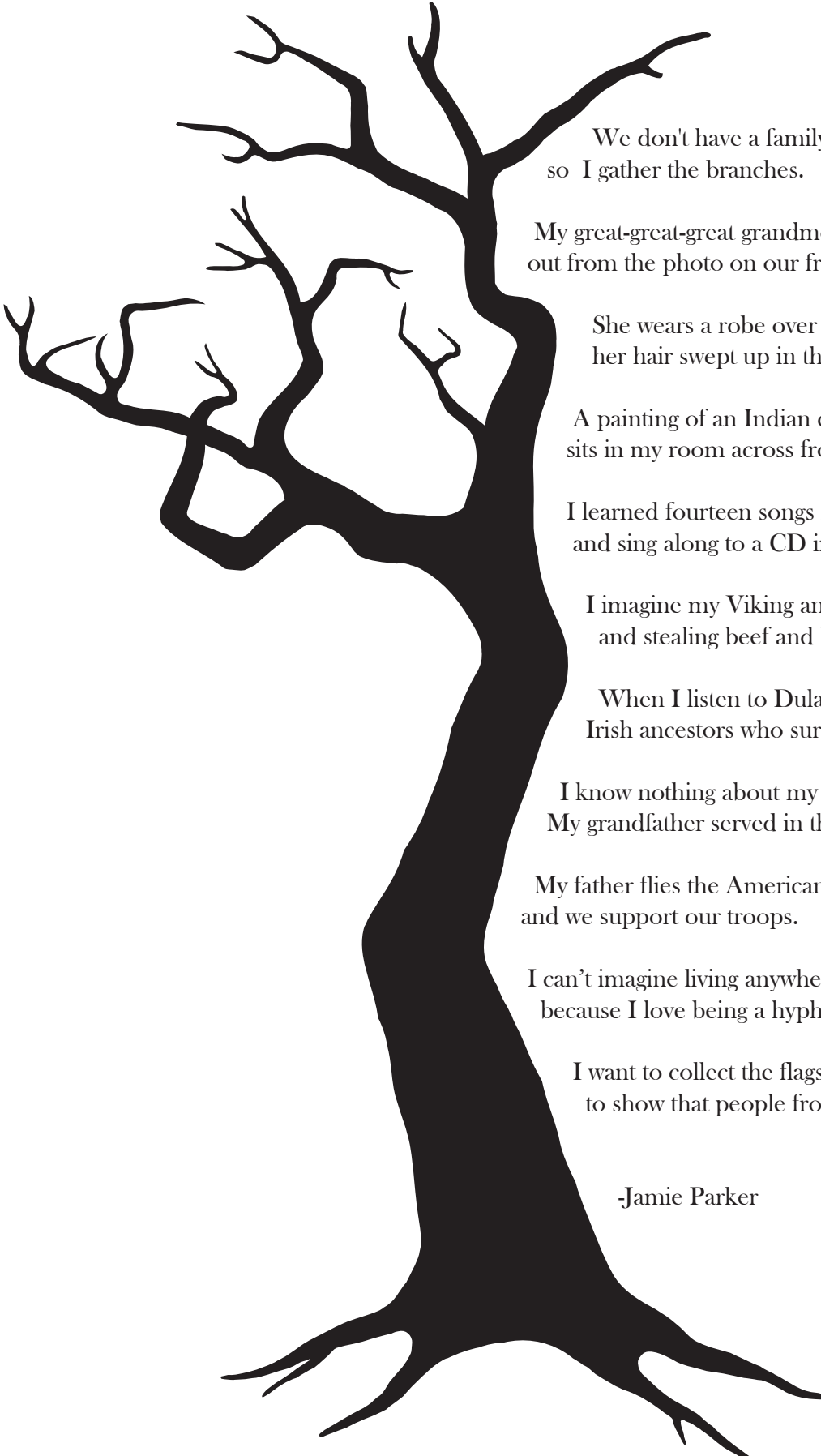


Heritage



We don't have a family tree
so I gather the branches.

My great-great-great grandmother looks
out from the photo on our front room wall.

She wears a robe over a skirt and blouse,
her hair swept up in the shape of a feather.

A painting of an Indian child made by my grandmother
sits in my room across from a Dream Catcher.

I learned fourteen songs in German
and sing along to a CD in my Jeep.

I imagine my Viking ancestors burning villages
and stealing beef and bread to feed their hunger.

When I listen to Dulaman, I feel connected to
Irish ancestors who survived the potato famine.

I know nothing about my peaceful Dutch heritage.
My grandfather served in the Navy.

My father flies the American flag
and we support our troops.

I can't imagine living anywhere else
because I love being a hyphenated-American.

I want to collect the flags of my ancestors' countries of origin
to show that people from so many places have made me.

-Jamie Parker