

Pauline Plummer

The Baobab

The world is white in the shine of the afternoon.
Above the scrub and the grubby sheet
of the savannah stands a baobab,
an obese sugar bum-bum
raising her short fat arms in a wild gesture
broad-bellied and elephant-legged,
trunk twisted in a frozen twerk.
Her branches are stiff, too-tight braids.
The heavy beads of her seed pods sway.
She carries herself like a queen.

A tourist leans from a jeep to photograph
her dance in the fire of heat.
A village woman seeking shade
leans against her broad spongy back, as did
her mother's mother's mother.
Children throw stones to knock
down the pods, cracking them
for the white pulp and black seeds.

When God made the baobab He gave
it to the hyena, who laughed and laughed,
throwing it into the scrub
where it landed upside down, dancing.