

Legend of the Baobab Girl

by Bianca Spriggs
excerpt from “How Swallowtails Become Dragons”

...dream that the sky is ground and the ground sky
—Jeremy Paden, “When the Hills We Grew On Disappeared”

Here is a girl who cannot get enough
of everything. She crams everything
she cannot get enough of into her mouth.
She figures you can never know a thing
completely unless you swallow it. Fireflies,
they taste like prism light. When she shouts,
they burst into fireworks down her throat.
Marigold seeds taste like dawn an hour before
it begins. A field grows where her stomach
used to be. Family portraits? They are dreamcatchers.
They dangle from her teeth. This girl could get used
to the world living in her center like a hymn.
If she stands still, everything she will never get
enough of eventually has to pass her and pass
through her. So she stops moving. She opens
her mouth and leaves it that way.
Her skin hardens. People climb up to hang
bottles in her hair. They pour decanters of fire
water at her feet until her legs believe they are arms,
and her arms believe they are towers of timber.
And then comes the ground. In comes the sky.
And she lives until she is a pillar, ancient and broad,
until her feet are altars and her hands are rafters.
Until she has caught each and every daydream
from every wayward breeze on her tongue—whistles
them into petticoat clouds lining the horizon's skirt.
Until everything she reaches for reaches back.

Spriggs, Bianca (2011). How swallowtails become dragons. Lexington, KY: Accents Publishing.