

Baobab

Baobab on the desert skyline,
a granite tree
arching over boulders and dry brush,
soaring, timeless, separate.

People call it M' mbuyu,
upside down tree,
tree where man was born.

From beneath,
the arching limbs
like the limbs of elephants,
voluminous and fair,
seem to float.
Leafless twigs, and
pendant fruit,
are soft against the sky.

The baobab bark,
like molten lead
with a
lavender sheen,
is wrinkled and fleshy
like the elephant,
almost animate,
even anthropomorphic,
hermaphroditic.

Pits and pockmarks,
fissures like crotches,
pubic crests and scrota;
cavities nurture barbets,
bats, bushbabies and bees
and are home to nesting hornbills.

Batelier eagles build
their chaotic platform
among the upper branches.
A community of weavers build
there too,
under the batelier's protection.

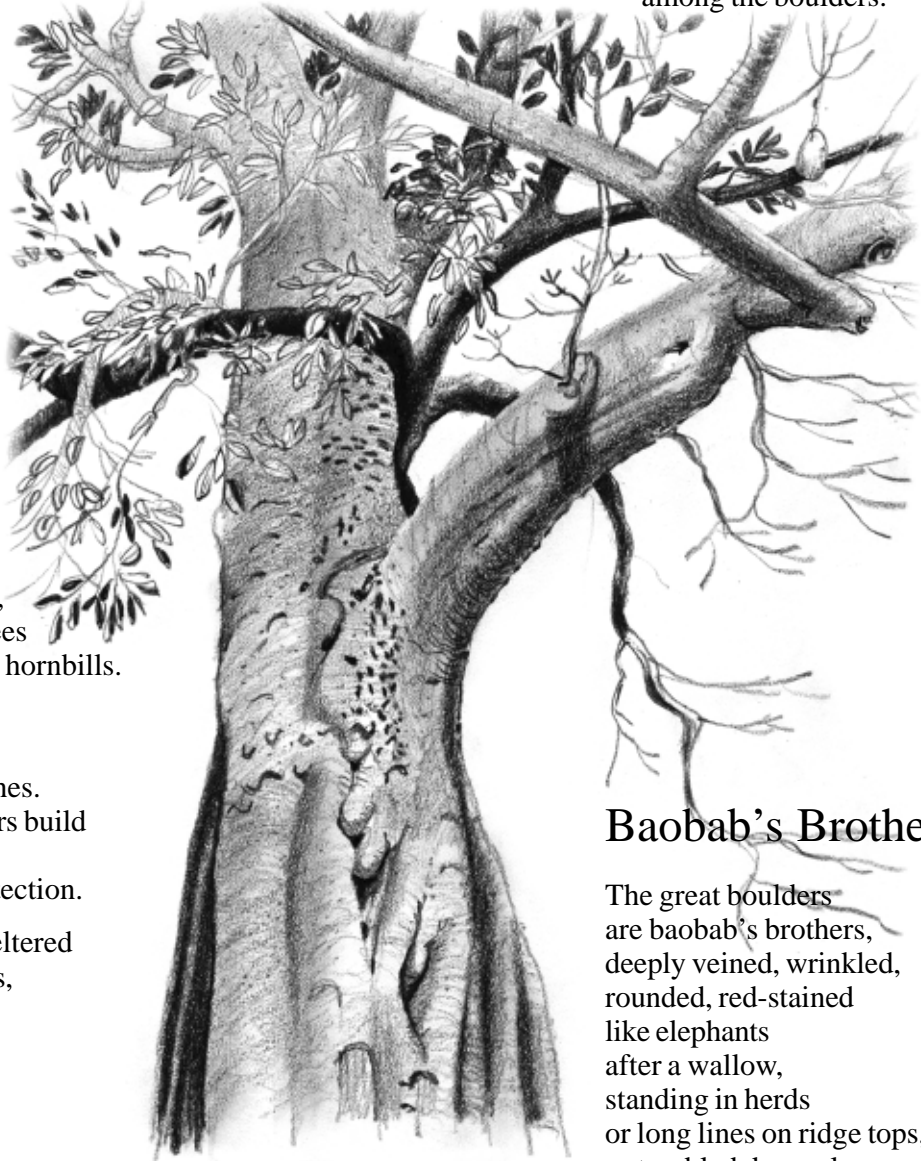
This old baobab has sheltered
generations of elephants,
split boulders,
suckled from stone.
The world moves
the baobab remains.

Baobab's Sister

Baobab's sister
the elephant
is both enemy and benefactor.
Thrusting her tusk
under the fleshy bark,
she tears away broad ribbons
of the baobab's hide
as high as she can reach
and eats them.

During drought she chisels
deep
into the moist pulp flesh,
extracting water,
gauging an arched cavity
almost as large
as she is.

In return the elephant eats
the pithy fruit
and deposits the seeds
prefertilized
among the boulders.



Baobab's Brothers

The great boulders
are baobab's brothers,
deeply veined, wrinkled,
rounded, red-stained
like elephants
after a wallow,
standing in herds
or long lines on ridge tops,
or tumbled down slopes
half buried
among the baobab.