

Text by Demree McGhee after Mark Bradford's "What Hath God Wrought"

What Hath God Wrought?
after Mark Bradford

GOD is a girl.
a little girl (god)
in the back of my throat—
lodged like cherry pits.

She stands, keeper
of my abandoned temple.
Her step is heavy.
She scratches branches

against my throat in search for water,
and only manages to make the walls swell,
ache and shrink.
She scratches—snaps

pops blue bubblegum—cheeks bit
red like dimming streetlights.

MY GOD!
is awful—a tight wound balloon

trembling, fit to burst.
to the beat of her branches she demands
and *what is living* and *what are you* and
how many angels can dance on the head of a pin

and i am crushed by possibility
and burdened by choice.
i am so close to godliness
as She is close to me

overrun with miracles:
astronomical heaviness, sinking into
a concrete floor, becoming unstitched from my own body,
harboring earthquakes in my chest, always unsteady.

i look up for an answer
that doesn't give to

rubble beneath my step,
and only the sky looks down on me—

black tarp billowing
over the earth, unflinching
in its reach
untouched,

and a pale eye blinking back at me.
i trudge my way towards its form,
its winking a sign that i
am being looked at from the outside.

it stands, a pulsing star perched on metal,
cold spire. the source
a red peak, a house for light,
a cherry on top, reflecting in the black sky

girl God—hot stone in my throat—
glows red. we are hungry.
i wrap my limbs around
the needle and climb.

The metal creaks under my weight,
but holds. kisses my arms, my
hands, the skin sticking in the cold
until i'm a raw pink thing.

the light's stuttering heartbeat floods my eyes
tosses spots to the ground, and I can't tell
what is a side affect of light
and what is gathering beneath me,

so I call down, I WANT AN ANSWER—
as girl God is screaming questions—
I WANT AN ANSWER THAT I CAN HOLD,
KEEP WARM AGAINST MY CHEST.

i want an answer that when
I question if it's real
bites me back, (this is
the only way i love)

i want it to leave a mark
that i can show others, and we
can all worship

the outline of teeth on my neck

and say LOOK!
HERE'S A REASON
TO OPEN OUR EYES TOMORROW—
to look at this.

we get to the top
the blood and air rushing
in my ears is cheering. I grab
the light, it burns only for a second

then blinks shut, flips cold,
a writhing fish,
then dripping, the sea,
then a limp bouquet
of bruised flowers, an
empty soda can, a
necklace broken in the chain,
a single locust from my garden
skipping flying away.

in its place, above the
empty red shelter, a worn
spot in the sky, shimmering
pale in the dark.

I reach to touch it
my nail worrying a thin wound, until
I poke through the veil
and look!

a light streaming
just as blinding as all
the questions lodged
in my throat are heavy.

girl god asks me
how many angels can dance on the head of a pin?
i ask—well how many angels are there? and
how many of these angels even want to dance

anyway and what what music do they like?
do they waltz in straight lines
or do they boot, scoot, and boogie to the
Beach Boys in their finest threads?

I could continue ceaselessly—
the same way the sky is ceaseless,
unfurling back into itself
only broken by this light

which offers nothing but more questions,
and a light. this tower is not a javelin
to something solid, only a line
to more.

we huddle here for now,
me speaking to the girl in myself, and her
to the girl in herself, in herself, in herself,
letting our bodies warm against questions with no answers.