



Art by Amelia Mertha

flight path

by Kiki Amberber

(after & with Toni¹ / Julie² / Alexis Pauline³ / my unnamed griots)

because maybe flight is a body suspended over still water
where salt puckers glassy skin like too many thirsty tongues:

bloated bodies / of water float upon heaving bodies / of water, when
all that too-much water sighs and spreads like a blood stain, could it

carve a path to sun or gun-smoke sky? bullets are just heavy rain:
what is flight other than liquid so thin it forgets the word 'gravity',

forges a new current to hurtle down, drown- / gasp into? maybe
flight forms in sediment of sweaty palms or tiny angry flowers,

crushed & wrung out, dripping / scent, forgetting / the body violently, isn't
flight a synonym for empire -- sheds trauma like old skin, grows

wings that grow / teeth that smile while they choke / air (read: flight or fight)
out of brown-skin bodies? hungry rash blossoms out of pause before

speech: softened shoulders before / fists up, feeds + multiplies on the gap
between home & all the cold rooms (full of spores. hot with them:

isn't a prison a / field a / detention centre a / factory a / metallic whispered
'i can't breathe.' packaged in white / thickly, sent across wailing seas?)

that hunger obstructs flight in arbitrary logical incisions:
call it 'geography', breaking up land like clumps of wet-fisted sand.

cool rage rests on / cooler palms / sea salt wind on wet skin like imprint of a dream:
yesterday or was it tomorrow? leapt off cliff on wings that were compasses:

broke through metal that was water / stream of dark bodies going home
to the count of a music note emerging from river soil. leaving only faint smells

behind: sticky ginger, finger-lick of brine, olive oil, skin. which simply means
that bodies in water become bodies on water are bodies in air, and

the music carried 'home' backwards into tomorrow. which means: maybe
flight is always buried in the soil, beneath the surface another kind

of air, or in the hairline cracks in bright & blood-coloured time / waiting
/ already arrived on edge of knife-point margin and warmth between

glistening bodies dancing on their own time. to the sound of:
"take me where you go." & "you just can't fly on off and leave a body."

& "I remember / & I recall." flight paths are creases on hands always-reaching
into soil / for a glimpse of home: which really means: "and / she / was / loved."

(do you believe? do you believe in your skin?)
hear the words tremble, tiny un/doings, gentlest of openings

1. Toni Morrison, *Song of Solomon* (1977).
2. Julie Dash, dir., *Daughters of the Dust* (1991).
3. Alexis Pauline Gumbs, *M Archive: After the End of the World* (2018).