

—after Ana Mendieta's *Nile Born*

I was so young I was the blood
still in my ears.

I was so small
I was small as a kitchen cabinet

& watched the adey at the window
on her knees, her back to me but

the palm of her one foot, brightdark —
with henna, human-shaped,

its shoulders & waist where the arch was,
then the plumpness of the lower part

atop five legs or little, reddish eggs.

Eyeless, it faced me, & was my company
waiting for my mother to get off work.

I cannot recall the adey's face, her name,
but the smooth slope of netsela makes her

sometimes a snowcovered hill,
or a cloud I witness briefly.

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Three days have passed since I wrote:
"I cannot recall her face."

I see her eyes now, wet, dark petals, her eyebrows barely there,
& on her forehead the green, fading cross,

the green of tears,
the green of flies.

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I am a fly as you are a fly. Pollinating.
Maybe you already know this feeling?

To bristle with another so suddenly
you find her in the flower.

The memory or particle once her briefest part
catching like a fleck of rivergold in your hairs.

So there she is out of whom the flowers grow.

& there she is she is asleep inside the breaths

that fall like cloudlets from our mouths
onto each other's shirts & shoes this day.

What part of us was a drop of rain, what part
a river filled with dark to wash the children in.

I am listening through Mendieta
for the schools of quiet,

the silences of silt, the quiet of some sentences
with their dark, green awnings shading the melons & combs.

The quiet of the adey's foot studying me
is like the quiet of the window through which she listens,

so quiet she can sense her sons alive & sleeping somewhere
on the road to Khartoum. Maybe it is just a dream.

So shake the dream for what is real
of their crumbs & hair & dust.

Here, fly, take this. Carry this.

