

African Lullaby

My daughter never writes of drums.
Instead she feasts on Africa:
“I walk to the well, lift my bucket,
shower under the sun,
dip my fingers into beans and rice.
The sky bursts with stars.”

Yet I never stop seeing drums
as she tucks a mosquito net
tightly around her bed,
can never decipher a hidden sound,
conundrum of peanut shells,
sorghum, shortages of meat and rain.

Then the drums start. They taunt
in the middle of a night, seduce.
By day their patterns repeat:
the Congo, Mobutu, Lumumba
beat-seal a message
through a dry-veined hungry land—
they sear the viscera
cleanly as the brain.

My daughter's home is Diamou
where mosquito wings glisten
with disease, hum the sound
of a sleeping drum.
The Malians rename her in Bambara:
she *becomes* Adam Koné.
If earth transforms, she will follow
the sound that keeps me from sleep.