

Axatse Beading Heart

I often say, my father dropped my
rhythm genes in an ocean that
he never really crossed.
He flew but my version
is a better story:

On the boat from Ghana,
he took my rhythm genes
from his suitcase, scooped them up
for a quick once-over and thought,
“My children won’t need these.”
He thrust his cupped hands over the rail.

They hit the water like drum beats,
splashed like the high hat.
His hips shook on instinct.
He kept the generational curse,
thought I might need the evil spirit,
but never thought I
might want to dance.
He’ll tell me I got my mother’s rhythm.

I’ll cross that same ocean
and pray my genes found
their way home, washed up
on the shores of Cape Coast
where my father was born.
I’ll run up the beach
until my feet remember how
to march—1. 2. 1. 2. 1. 2.
All the way to the market
in Accra where my father grew up.
I’ll try on a dress made
of real kente cloth,
and the rhythm will seep back into my skin.
My DNA rewinds to
match the Axatse beading.
My heart becomes an Akan Drum that keeps beat for Adowa,
for my Homecoming. Finally.