

KWAME DAWES

## How To Dream

We who live with the streets at our ear,  
the flimsy zinc to guard us from  
predators; we who gather in kerosene  
light to hear the sweating politician  
promise us bread and the dignity  
of a manifesto made of our blood;  
we who rest our bodies on the unrolled  
mats, the yeast smell of dough  
warming to a swell overnight  
in the heat, the wood-smoke rising  
in the mud oven where embers  
glow waiting for dawn; we who know  
the lamentation of the wind  
in trees, or the giddy industry  
of a bicycle's wheels ticking  
through the night; we who bathe  
in the algae-covered slate of concrete,  
water flowing in a single line  
over our bodies; we who cover  
our bodies in talc, our foreheads  
with Limacol, the backs of our  
necks with rosewater; we who  
leave our Sunday garments to wave  
like flags in the wind; we who sleep  
to the soft quarreling of Kwaku  
the postman, (*Jesus, I'm drunk, drunk,  
drunk, my body can't work, oh no,  
Ama, Ama, Ama, Ama, Ama...*);  
we pray as if there is mercy in the hills,  
from whence cometh our help;  
we give thanks for the music in this,  
for the soft hope in these streets of standing  
water, for bodies softly opening to us as a song  
of the sea, for women with kindness  
in their eyes, and for our rooms anointed  
with the green incense of burning mosquito coils.