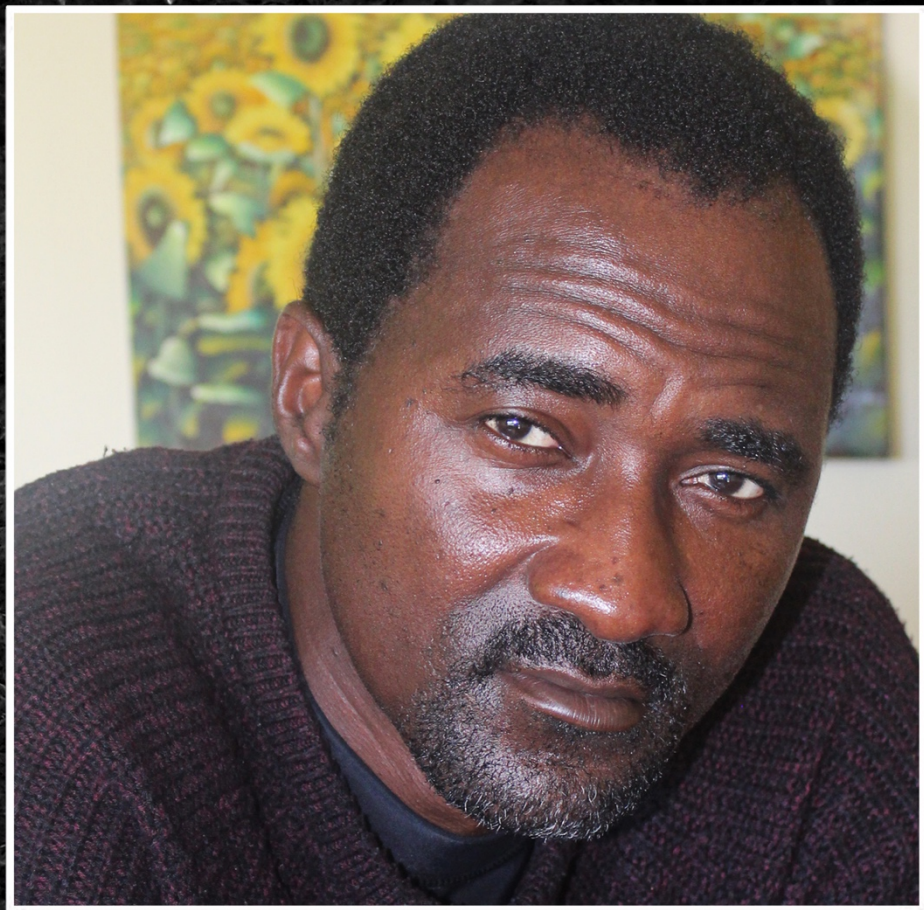


Foreword by Ben Grafström



FURY OF MY FART

Senryu poems by
Adjei Agyei-Baah

FOREWORD BY
BEN GRAFSTRÖM

*The Fury of
My Fart*

SENRYU POEMS BY
ADJEI AGYEI-BAAH

Fury of My Fart

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*To my children (Nana, Papa & Agyeiwaa)
that they will be encouraged to talk about
things that the world shies away from.*

A GUIDE TO THE PRONUNCIATION OF TWI

- /aa/ as in arm
- /ae/ as in aye
- /ɔ/ as in caught
- /ɔɔ/ as in call
- /ee/ as in page
- /ei/ as in fray
- /ea/ as in pediatrics
- /eɛ/ as in fear
- /ɛ/ as in step
- /ɛɛ/ as in herb
- /ɛe/ as in fed
- /hw/ as in wheel
- /hy/ as in shed
- /io/ as in kiosk
- /ia/ as in caveat
- /ie/ as in fierce
- /oa/ as in koala
- /oɔ/ as in plod
- /oo/ as in toll
- /kw/ as in quality
- /ky/ as in chief
- /gy/ as in gym
- /nw/ as in nude
- /ny/ as in nil
- /tw/ as in tweed
- /ua/ as in Tuareg
- /ue/ as in Puerto Rico
- /uo/ as in buoy

FOREWORD

*he wo hitte
okashiku mo nai
hitorimono*

*ripping a fart
isn't so funny to me
since I live alone*

It is a great honour to be writing the foreword for *Fury of My F(art)*, the sequel to *Piece of My Fart* (2018) on behalf of Adjei Agyei-Baah. Unbeknownst to him, I first encountered Adjei in 2014. Although I did not meet him in the physical sense, he was introduced to me, and I to him, through his beautiful poetry. I had recently joined the faculty of Akita University in Akita, northern Japan as an assistant professor of language and literature. Shortly after, I received an invitation to attend the awards ceremony for the 3rd Annual Japan-Russia Haiku Contest held by the Akita International Haiku, Senryu, and Tanka Network (now known as the Akita International Haiku Network). The contest organizers accept entries in Japanese, Russian, and English from poets all over the world. That year, poets from forty-six different countries submitted a total of 442 *haiku* to the English *haiku* category. Out of those submissions, it was Adjei's *haiku* (leafless tree — / lifting a cup of nest / to the sky) that won the prestigious Akita Chamber of Commerce and Industry President's

Award. Thus, this was my first time to read and enjoy his wonderful *haiku*. What drew me to his poetry was that Adjei captured an African experience, but expressed it in a universal, timeless manner.

As a Japanese literature and culture scholar and a native English speaker hailing from the United States, it had never occurred to me until that day how popular and important Japanese traditional poetry styles like *tanka*, *haiku*, and *senryū* are in the world. Indeed, it is quite an odd phenomenon that English has become a *lingua franca* and that Japanese *haiku* has become an almost ubiquitous form of poetry composed in multiple world languages. The latter is due in no small part to passionate poets like Adjei—a Ghanaian poet who somehow felt drawn to and found a voice in Japanese traditional poetry. For years now Adjei has been prolifically writing poetry all the while continually working at honing his poetic skills. He has also been propagating the *haiku* and *senryū* traditions in the fertile minds of poets throughout Africa: he is a co-founder of Africa Haiku Network, a lead promoter of an African form of *haiku* called *Afiku*, and a founding editor of *The Mamba Journal of African Haiku*. He is the recipient of awards from international *haiku* competitions and his work has gained recognition by organizations like The Haiku Foundation and the Living Senryu Anthology, among others. With such an established presence in the global *haiku* and *senryū* communities,

I am sure poets the world over will be eagerly reading this latest collection of his work.

The Senryù tradition's flow and structure

For readers new to Adjei's poetry or who may be encountering *senryù* for the first time, allow me to introduce the genre. On the surface, a *senryù* poem resembles a *haiku* poem—indeed they are both branches of the same poetry family-tree. The poetic tradition that Japan inherited from China consists of a variety of poetic forms composed in lines of 5, 6, and 7 syllables (for arguments' sake I use the word “syllables,” but perhaps “beats” is more precise). *Haiku* and *senryù* both emerged from a type of game or pastime during which a number of well-educated poets would compose short verses of poetry and then link them together. The literati of the time called these resulting poems “*renga*,” literally “linked verse.” The first poet would compose a 17-syllable verse with a 5-7-5 syllable pattern, which included a mandatory seasonal word. The next poet would compose a 14-syllable verse in a 7-7 syllable pattern. Multiple poets would continue alternating between 17-syllable and 14-syllable verses until anywhere up to one hundred verses were linked together resulting in one lengthy *renga* poem. Unlike its progeny (*haiku* and *senryù*) *renga* poets avoided comical topics and other subjects viewed as undesirable. Instead, poets

tried to show off their education and wit, while at the same time pay homage to the great poets of classical times.

As time progressed, composing a 17 syllable, 5-7-5 syllable patterned poem became an art unto itself. Some schools of poetry chose to retain the rule to include a seasonal word, while others did not. Perhaps more importantly, the poets of this new form selected more mundane or even humorous topics from their everyday lives as subjects rather than choosing to venerate the classics. Furthermore, composing this type of poetry became an individual, private pastime, rather than a prestigious group event. No longer “*renga*,” poets began calling this new form of poetry *haikai*, today known as *haiku*.

Senryū on the other hand evolved in a slightly different manner. Like *renga*, groups (or perhaps more accurately, pairs) of poets composed *senryū*, but in a more anonymous manner. First a judge (or *tenja*) would compose a 14-syllable verse with a 7-7 syllable pattern. The *tenja* would then post the verse publicly and openly invite anyone in the area to submit a 17-syllable verse with a 5-7-5 syllable pattern to link to it—kind of like a call and response. Many people would submit their 17-syllable response (and would often have to pay an entry fee). The *tenja* read each submission, assigned points, and then selected the best response. At the time, budding new poets referred to this system of composing poetry as *maeku-*

tsuke, or “attaching verses to the first.” After the *tenja* selected the winning response-verse, he posted his first verse along with the winner’s connecting verse for all to see.

Maeku-tsuke topics were lighthearted and humorous. One not needed abstract flowery language to compose a winning verse. In fact, one could think of this type of poetry as the anti-poetry of the day, as it celebrated the real, non-glamorous conditions of life in the gritty city. Because of this, people from all walks of life and social position participated in *maeku-tsuke* contests—the contests were not limited to the well-educated warrior-aristocratic class. The contests became overwhelmingly popular and drew large numbers of submissions, so *tenja* started publishing collections of submissions after each contest. Karai Hachimon (1718-1790) was one of the most popular *tenja*, and one whose contests drew record numbers of participants. He soon began printing collections of the submissions to his contests in a publication called *Yanagidaru*. He and his successors printed 167 volumes of *Yanagidaru* between 1765 and 1838. (An example of a fart *senryū* from *Yanagidaru* volume 3 precedes this Foreword). Karai became so well-known and was such an active *tenja* that he adopted the pen name *Senryū*. It is from Karai’s pen name that this comical, satiric, street poetry took its name.

One more interesting aspect of *senryū*'s evolution is with regards to early *senryū* authorship. Of course, poets composed *renga* publicly in social settings and the poets took great pride in having written a well-composed verse to link to their [friendly] opponent's, so their names gladly accompanied their verse. *Haiku* poets also readily identified themselves by signing their names. *Senryū* poets, however, normally remained anonymous due to guilt by association (*You saw the head-constable in the red light district? What were YOU doing in the red light district?*), or because satirical statements that were too critical of the heavy handed, ruling warrior class could have invited unwanted persecution from the authorities. Also, since *senryū* had entry fees, leaving the authorship unknown would help better allow the judge to remain unbiased.

The tone and mood of Adjei's poetry in this collection is similar to the earliest forms of *senryū*, particularly in the way he depicts the everyday lives of people across all social spheres (doctors, ministers, community elders, and teachers, to name a few) in a humorous, often humbling light. This is important for readers to keep in mind as they read Adjei's poetry, and all *senryū* for that matter.

“Passing gas” as a poetic motif

The title of this collection, *Fury of My F(art)*, comes from poem #10 of this collection:

elevator lockup / face to face with / the fury of my
fart

Some readers may be perplexed by “passing gas” as a central, unifying image. After all, *senryū* is a Japanese art form and when one thinks of Japanese culture, the images that come to mind are usually those of high culture like silk-kimono clad women, tranquil gardens, exquisite temples, and fancy cuisine. Some, too, may say that haiku, despite its brevity, is a deeply refined and delicate form of poetry. On the other hand, people generally view (and smell) farts with disgust. Thus, one may wonder, *why a collection of fart-senryū? What is the connection?*

Farting has a dual nature: it’s been both the cause of celebration and the cause of embarrassment; something done both in private and in public. This is true not only in Japanese culture but, I dare say, in cultures all over the world. Adjei tapped into this shared, universal experience and by doing so is able to bring readers from all walks of life together through his poetry. Here is an example of how he captured this dualistic role of farting. In poem #53, he writes,

how would / I tell her to wait, nurse/ walking into
my fart

and in poems #87, he writes,

storytelling by the fireside / laughing behind /
someone's fart

It is not clear whether these poems were put in this order deliberately or not, but together as a pair they perfectly illustrate the dual nature of farting and the social experiences associated with it. In the former *senryū* the reader understands that the speaker clearly faces some sort of shame at the idea of another person (a cute young nurse, perhaps?) noticing his gas and wishes it to go unnoticed (i.e. remain private). In the latter *senryū*, the deed is done publicly, apparently amongst friends, and is celebrated with laughter. These are but two examples of how Adjei has captured the private/ public and shameful/ celebratory associations with farts, thus calling attention to farting's dichotomy.

I began this Foreword with an 18th century fart *senryū* from *Yanagidaru*. Thus, by choosing farts as a *senryū* motif, Adjei is firmly establishing himself in Japan's modern poetic tradition as well as drawing attention to the common human experience in seemingly two

dissimilar cultures: those of Ghana and Japan. Though perhaps not as well-received as cherry blossoms, farts have indeed been a regular motif of Japanese art and poetry. There is an entire sub-genre of picture scrolls from the early 12th century that depict *hòhe gassen*, or “farting competitions.” During these fart fights, judges would rate the farts on their reach (i.e. the distance from which they could be smelled) and the potency of their stench. Of course, the contestants were all men! In the 17th century Japanese cities like Edo (modern day Tokyo) and Osaka experienced a population boom, particularly of merchants, laborers, and common folk. While the ruling samurai and aristocrats enjoyed their more civilized and subdued past times, the plebian masses revived fart humor, but this time, in the trendy new poetic form of *senryù*. In time, composing *senryù* became a pastime in which people from all walks of life could come together and be viewed as equals.

While not a *senryù* poet *per se*, even *haiku* masters like Kobayashi Issa (1763-1828) wrote about farts on occasion (the period Issa wrote *haiku* overlapped with the time *senryù* and its related imagery began developing). No doubt, Issa had the image of a public fart contest in mind when he composed the following *haiku*:

ore yori ha haruka jòzu zo hehiri-mushi

Fart beetle! The reach / of your stink's blast zone
is so / much farther than mine!

(translation by Grafström)

Instead of finding himself in competition with other men, Issa finds himself in competition with a fart beetle (*hehiri-mushi*). He even appears to be graciously accepting defeat and praising his opponent's skill.

A true devotee to *haiku* and *senryù*, Adjei has of course read and studied the masters, including Issa. Indeed, the first *senryù* in this collection pays homage to Issa's many fart-related *haiku*. Adjei writes,

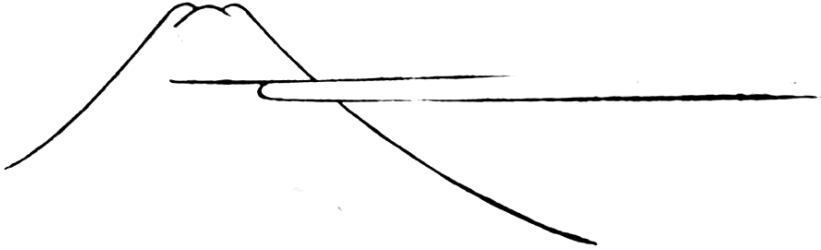
oh fart bug / I bag my fart / at your presence

The reader feels the sense that the speaker in the poem is celebrating the fart bug's talent rather than deriding it, thus celebrating its superior skill at casting an odor. By placing this poem at the beginning of the collection Adjei has firmly linked himself with the long tradition of *haiku* and *senryù* poets who have come before him.

In closing

I am sure that you, reader, will find many of the scenarios in this collection of *senryū* all too familiar. Hopefully, they will not remind you of embarrassing moments that you wished had remained private, but rather remind you of funny, sociable times that you shared with friends. Such memories may cause you to smile or chuckle as you read and bring levity to your day. With that, please enjoy *The Fury of My (F) art*.

— Ben Grafström, University of Akita, Japan
May 2, 2019



**If you let go of fart jokes, you've
let go of a piece of humanity.**

~Andy Samberg



oh fart bug
I bag my fart
at your presence

o atee
meka mframa hye
wɔ w'anim

for and after Kobayashi Issa (1763 - 1827)

the great king's fart absorbed in
drumbeat

ohenekeseε ta yera tweneka mu

elevator —
meeting me with
someone's fart

ahweaa
de obi ta hyia
me kwan

my fart
blown back to me
on harmattan winds

hamatan mrframa
sane de me ta
brε me

rush hour
the slow walk
in someone's fart

anwummere ntempe
yetutu yen anamɔn breoo
wɔ obi ta mu

bus ride home
an old man keeps a straight face
after farting

ehyɛn akwantuo
ɔpanin twii n'ani
wɔ bere a wayi mframa

slowing my walk
this fart which had taken
an explosive stance

ɔreboto me nanteɛ
eta a ɔremma me kwan
nka no nhyɛ

farting unconsciously
the waitress'
popping eyes

mpofirim ta
adidibeasomfo ani hanehane
se kaakaamotobi

waking to a boom
from a sleeping mat
my head on sibling's butt

etuo to wɔ kɛtɛ so
mebo pitiri hunu sɛ
me tiri da me nua to ho

farting in class
I fan my nose and look accusingly
at my mate

mayi mframa awie
mehu me hwene ano de
soboo bo nea ote me nkyen

bunk bed
retraining my fart
from my brother

abronsan mpa
me ham seneā me nua
nte meta

farting ...
my child relocates
her doll

meta mpofirim
meba fa n'aboduaba
to baabi foforo

**And he had made a trumpet of his
arse.**

*~ Dante Alighieri (1265–1321)
Inferno, Divine Comedy*



first light
my fart cuts through
the neighbourhood

anɔpa hann
me ta
kasa fa mpɔtam

yet another pee
finishing it
with a trumpet fart

meredwonsɔ bio
me ta pue me to
sɛ totorobento

noisy town walk
how comfortable
my fart comes unheard

kurom nanteε
ahotɔ a menya
sε obiara nte me ta

Christmas coldness
stretching out of bed
with a toot of fart

bronya awɔberɛ
meretwe me mu wɔ mpam
na ta di akyire

school memories –
all the farts concealed
by shifting my chair

sukuu nkaesem bi
mframabone a mede sieee
wo m'akonnwatwetwee mu

at a public gathering
lifting one side
of my butt

nipakuo nhyiamu
mepagya me to fa
yi mframa

applause...
a perfect timing
for my fart

nsamubɔ berɛ
mede me ta
di afra

pulpit –
the heaviness of my guilt
behind my fart

pono so kasa
me tiboā bu me fō
wō me mframa yie mu

my loud fart
the table clock freezes
and resumes

me ta totorobento
εδῶν α εσι pono no so
gyina sane tutene

emptying my bowel
the closet adds a bass
to my fart

anɔpa yaane so
agyanan adaka de enne den
ka me ta ho



**Love is not having to hold your
farts in anymore.**

~Author unknown

perfect trade —
your fart
and my snore

dwadie a asisie nnim
wo ta
ne me nkorɔmotuo

April Fool's Day
she lures me
into her fart

oforisuo nnaadaa da
ɔdaadaa me
ma me hwea ne ta

after argument
the slip
of her fart

nkyiwahyew awieeε
putupru ta a ɔde twa
me mpoa

bathtub
the bubble burst
of my fart

adwareε adaka
me mframa bεgu nsuo ani
sε nkosua

double hell —
her fart
and a blackout

bonsam gyam
mmṵhoo mmienu —
ne ta wṵ sum kabii mu

returning my fart
into my stomach –
meeting the girl I love

merehyia abaayewa a medo no
mesane dane me ta
de ma me yafunu

snoring ...
my loud fart
pauses him briefly

ɔrekasa wɔ ne nna mu
me ta ka n'ano tom
wɔ mmere tiawa bi

ripping one by mistake
the childish look
in his eyes

putupru ta
opanin anim hantwo
se abofra

in bed with a lover
I turn over
to direct a fart

me ne me mpena da
mede me to kyere ban
yi mframa

a fart
defiling my cologne
jam-packed elevator

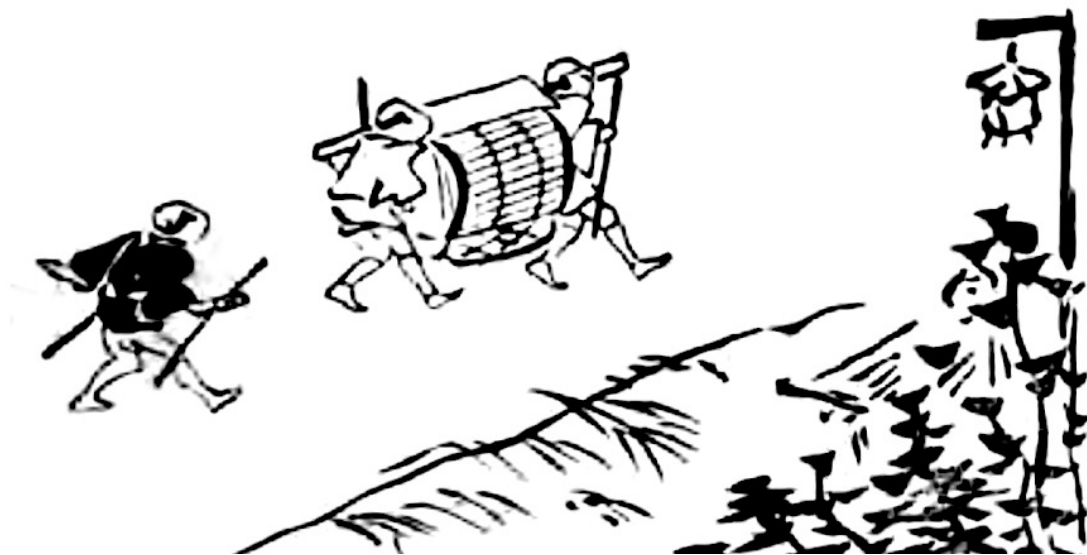
ahweaa aye ma
obi mframa bōnee dum
m'aduhwam

single again
the man learning from
passing gas

sugyadie biom
abranteε nya suahunu
firi n'atetateta mu

No one is listening until you fart.

~Author unknown



staff meeting
a quick dissolution
from a fart

adwumayɛfoɔ adwentoatoa
ɛta de nhyiamu
ba awieɛɛ prɛko pɛ

commotion ...
the kids point at the
dozing teacher

mente me ho ase
mmofra de wɔn nsa kyere
ɔkyerɛkyereni a ɔreto nko so

late night drinking
the barman's fart tells me
it's time

merewe nsa anadwo
nsahyεfoε ta kyere me se
εbere aso

amid passengers' complaint
of stench from a pig farm
I let go of my fart!

akwantufoɔ rekwan
fa panpan a efiri mmoayɛnbea reba
mede me ta di afra

still night
my neighbour's fart hushes
a cat's cry

anadwo dasuom
ofipamfo ta de ka
okra ano tum

prolonged sermon
a sleeper's fart
winds it up

nyamesemka tenten
ɔdafoɔ mframa
de ba awieeɛ

hard to complain –
the holes underneath
his pants

ne ka yε kana
ntokuro a atutu
wɔ ne pieto ase

choking fart —
the teacher asks the children
to leave for break

eta a etua home
tikya ka kyere mmofra no
se wɔmpue nkɔdi agorɔ

bedtime
granny's story ends
on my fart


ɔdabere
mede ta twa aberewa
anansesem so tia

end of the day –
paying the mean barber
with a fart

owia akoto
me de mframa bonee
tua tiyifo ka

farting ...
the cat silently leaves
the couch

mpofirimu ta
agyinamoa ma ne mu so
firi me nkyɛn



**It would be nice if people said,
God bless you not just when you
sneezed but also when you farted**

~Demetri Martin

the stepchild
gets a ladle whack
for passing gas

agyanka gye brɔ
sɛ w'ayi
mframa

taught
to be wordless —
an elder 's fart

opanin ta —
yese abofra nyi
n'ani

a pause
in mother's smile
a baby's fart

ena gyae agodie
preko pe
abofra yi mframa

at the point
of saying I do
almost a fart

berε a
meregye me yere atom
εkaa dε sε meyii mframa

father's knock on my head —
knowing where
to leave my fart

agya kotosie
mehunu baabi a
εωω σε meyi mframa

family dinner
searching each other's eyes
for the farter

abusua nhyiamu adidie
obiara hwe ne yonko ani ase
pe tafo

taking rest on our journey
the whiff
of my servant's fart

yeregye ahome wɔ yen akwantuo
me somfo yi
me mframa

night reading...
a sudden toot from
the baby's cot

dasuom akenkan
abofra ta firi
ne mpam

bench press
the weightlifter
breaks wind

dadeɛ mu duro
ɔdɔdɛpɔgyafoɔ
yi mframa

confessional box —
leaving behind
a piece of my fart

bɔneka adaka
megya ɛta panpan
wɔ m'akyi

**We are at the mercy of everything,
even our fart!**

~ Adjei Agyei-Baah



friends knocking on my door
I switch on the fan
to spread out my fart

m'ayɔnkofoɔ reɓɛsra me
mesɔ dan mu bomframa
de hwete me ta

cool airtight bus
then someone
lets go ...

akwantuo
wɔ baase nwununwunu mu
obi sɛe mframa no mpofirim

how would
I tell her to wait, a nurse
walking into my fart

menka sɛn na watwɛn
nɛɛsɛ tutu nanamɔn
ba me mframa mu

hide-and-seeK
my fart
owns me up

sie-hwehwε agodie
me ta kyere baabi a
me hyε

elevator lockup
face to face with
the fury of my fart

ahweaa ponomutoo
mete me ta nka wo
abofuhyew kwan so

beans stew gas
again and again
my rectum reloads

atedua abomu
mframa di me to mu
ahyemfire

deliverance prayer
a prolonged kneeling
in someone's fart

fawohodie mpaebɔ
mebu ntwere wɔ
obi mframa mu

bus stop shed
the rain keeps us
in someone's fart

baase gyinabere
nsutɔtenten ka yen hye
obi ta mu

sudden wind —
sweeping my wind
just in time

mframa ho me ta
wɔ berɛ a m'aninguaseɛ
reba

doctor's call
my fart keeps me
waiting

dokota refrē
me ta ma megyina
ntenten



**Fart for freedom, fart for liberty—
and fart proudly.**

~ Benjamin Franklin

after being caned
the student cheekily
farts

εboro akyi
abofra yi mframa de twa
tikya mpoa

crowded bed ...
after one loud fart, some agree
to bed on the floor

mpa so aye mma
eta ma ebinom nya won ho
nteasee se, wobeda fam

deep night —
the stir of mosquitoes
after my fart

dasuom
me ta bɔ ntontom
ahwetee

no one in sight
I fart loudly to the pleasure
of my anus

obiara nni ho
me ta ma me to kwan
ani gye

a loud fart in the loo
the sudden dash
of a spider

anɔpa tiafi so
me ta anoden ma ananse bi
pue firi ne bɔn mu prɛko pɛ

boiling porridge —
I add a toot
to the pop

anopa kokoka
mede me ta fra
potoporo

1000 Ways To Die In The West
a character admits a fart
from his penis

akwan apem a yɛfa so de wuo
siniyifoɔ gye tom sɛ ne ta pue
firi ne barima mu

childhood seesaw —
a toot from one end
a laughter from the other

mmofra berem adonkoto
ɔbaako yi mframa
ma ɔfoforo tue sereɛ mu

father's fart
a child's query
cut short

agya mframayie
abofra nhwehwemu
twa tia

broken trumpet
the gasps and gaps
in my fart

me ta pue
asinasin te se abεεfo
rebo totorobento



**We are here on Earth to fart
around, and don't let anybody tell
you different.**

~ Kurt Vonnegut



well site
bringing up the water
with a fart

abura ho
meretwe nsuo no
na ta di akyire

office vacation
the echo of someone's fart
in the corridor

adwumam ahomegyee da
obi ta twam
wɔ abranaa so

dawn serenity...
releasing my fart
in bits and pieces

dasuom
meyi mframa
asinasin

stretching out
of the taxi
her low tone fart

orepue
afiri taksi mu
ne mpofirim ta

theatre —
my fart
in the dark

siniyibea
me ta sie wo
sum mu

summer lust —
her fart
wouldn't stop me

ahuhubere akonno
ne ta mpo
mpusu me

at the urinal
a fart
from the other side

dwonsɔbea
me te obi ta firi
yaanebea

bank queue...
a fart served
before cash

sikakorabea
nea odi m'anim yii me mframa
ansa na me nsa reka me sika

cell congestion
our restlessness
in someone's fart

afiase dan ketewa bi mu
obi ta ma yengyina
ntenten

Independence parade
waiting for the president
in someone's fart

fawohodie da
yɛgyina yɛn anamɔn so twɛn
ɔman panin wɔ obi ta mu

**He who does not fart lets out
silent ones.**

~ Maltese Proverb



speechless —
the silent fart of my guest
after dinner

metɔremum –
me hɔhɔɔ didi wie
yi me mframa wɔ akyire

choking fart
the sleeping class
come alive

adesuabere
etaden ma mmofra worededa
ka won ho

corrupting the air
we walk home
distance apart

yɛnam afaafa
de ba fie, wɔ berɛ a
meyii mframa

classroom window seat
sandwiched between
a fart and the breeze

sukuu mpoma ano tena
eta ne mframa pa
kye me hwene fa

exams heat
the lingering scent
of someone's fart

nsɔhwɛ mfifiretɛ
obi mframa bɔne
ɛsisi yɛn hwene

after the stranger's smile
I bumped
into his fart

ᵛᵛᵛᵛᵛ sereε akyi
metu tene
wᵛ ne ta

storytelling by the fireside
laughing behind
someone's fart

egyaho anansesɛmtɔɔ
yɛsere sie
wɔ obi mframa bɔne akyi

city park
I let a stranger have
the bench to himself

kurom ahomeggyeε adwa
ɔhohoɔ bi ta
ma me tu tene

elevator lessons —
learning to embrace
fart and fragrance

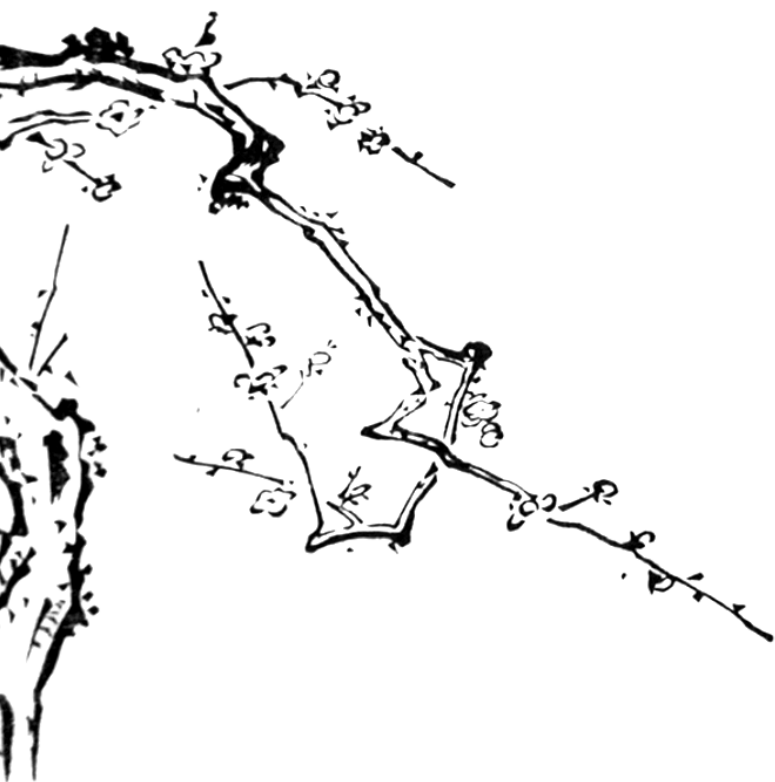
ahweaa adesuahunu
megye mframe bone
ne aduhwam tom

stillness of the night
restraining the sound
of my fart

anadwo dasuom
medwom me to sɛnea
me ta nnye nsam

**I don't know the ultimate fate of a
suppressed fart.**

*~ Mary Roach, Gulp: Adventures on
the Alimentary Canal*



interview heat
sitting hard
on a fart

adwumape anotoṭoṭo
meham wo
me ta so

all dawn
my fart punctuates the call
of the muezzin

anopahema
me ta di kramokokɔnin frɛ
mu ahyɛmfre

airport security
frisking me, an inch away
from my gas

wiemuhyenbea banbɔni
rehwehwe me ho
ɛkaa dɛ sɛ meyii no mframa

public toilet —
masking my fart
with the closet flush

amansan tiafi
mede tiafi nsuo nne denden
sie me ta

freeing myself at last
from my fart —
elevator door opens

ahweaa pono bue
ne korakoraa,
meyī ho firi me ta mu

musical chairs
distancing myself from
the farther ahead

ntwanho agodie
mete me ho firi ɔtafoɔ a
odi m'anim

at the library alone
I turn left and right
just to be sure

akenkanbea
mehwε benkum ne nifa
ansa na mereyi mframa

sneezing...
the excess through
my arse

merehwensi
meto gye
me nsam

morning light
her side of the bed emptied
by my fart

anɔpa hann
ne mpa dabɛ da mpan
firi me ta ho

harmattan breeze
wondering how far
my fart had journeyed

hamatan mframa
medwene kwansini a
ede me ta atwa

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“rush hour” *Modern Issue 51:2*, “taught to be wordless” *Prune Juice Journal July Issue 2019*, “the great king’s fart” *Under the Basho, 2019 Edition*, “bus stop shed” *Prune Juice November 2019 #29*, “double hell” *Failed Haiku, March 2020*, “applause” *Failed Haiku March 2020*, “elevator lessons” *Kokako #33*, “Piece of My Fart” *Mamba Africa Press 2018*.



Adjei Agyei-Baah is a lecturer, translator, editor, and currently a Ph.D. candidate at University of Waikato, New Zealand. He is the cofounder of Africa Haiku Network, Poetry Foundation Ghana, and *The Mamba* (Africa's first international haiku journal). Adjei is a worldwide anthologized poet and winner of several international awards. His debut haiku collection,

Afriku (2016) was commended by Nigerian Nobel Prizewinner Wole Soyinka. His fourth book, *Piece of My Fart* (2018) is the first senryu collection from Africa. Agyei-Baah is the primary author of the four *Haikupedia* articles about African haiku; he lives in Kumasi, Ghana.

‘Man is the only animal that laughs’ is a quote attributed to Aristotle. Erasmus, Rabelais and the Russian thinker, Bakhtin saw the potential of “laughter” as a humanizing force. In Basho’s notion of karumi, a slightly comical effect enhances the detached tone. With a great word play in the title of his collection of senryu, Adjei Agyei-Baah employs the physical act of “fart” in the Bakhtinian sense of the “material bodily stratum” to look at life and the self in a fresh and honest way. In doing so, he also gives us an engaging evocation of his world.

—Sonam Chhoki
Principal editor Cattails, UHTS Journal



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