

BETWEEN TWO DATES

HAIKU & SENRYU



KWAKU FENI ADOW

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Twi Translation © Adjei Agyei-Baah

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FOREWORD

Kwaku Feni Adow is a writer and poet from Ghana, a member of Africa Haiku Network, Ghana Haiku Society and UHTS (United Haiku and Tanka Society, America).

In his three-lingual collection of Haiku/Senryu, *Between Two Dates*, he chose the theme of mortality, loss, funeral and death. The title is taken from the phrase in his haiku

*tombstone—
between two dates
the length of life*

Edmund Husserl, a German philosopher, wrote: if you can think about your fear, it means that you have already freed yourself from fear, you have already stopped fearing; if you can think about the world that surrounds you, then you are already somewhere else; if you can think about your death, you are already above it.

Reading Adow's poems, I have the impression that he tames the theme of death in his own way, encouraging reflection ("memorial"), showing tenderness ("after the funeral"), wistfulness ("flowers for the grave") and a sense of beauty ("churchyard").

Although these poems talk about painful and final matters, they are full of warm sorrow ("old diary"), and at the same time suggest a look with a grain of salt

*funeral—
his sleep empty
of snore*

or unexpected but logical reasoning ("death in the prison").

When I finished reading these poems, I had two equivalent thoughts - *memento mori* and *non omnis moriar*. I am quite sure that due to his book, Kwaku Feni Adow shall not wholly die.

Marta Chocilowska
President of Polish Haiku Association
Warsaw, Poland
December 2019


*To the memory of Ivy Asantewaa Adow,
mother, daughter, sister.*

Toil is temporal but rest is eternal.

funeral dance
one man follows the lead
of liquor

ayie ase asa
apetesi di obrofo
abaaba

*danse funèbre
un homme suit
l'exemple de l'alcool*



funeral—
his sleep empty
of snore


ayiyɔ—
ne naɛɛ a
nkrɔmo nnim

*les obsèques—
son sommeil
vide de ronflement*

death in the prison—
his other way
of escape

afiase wuo—
ne kwan baako a
ode gyee ne ho

*la mort en prison—
son autre moyen
d'évasion*



after the funeral—
slipping into
father's shoes


ayiyɔ akyi—
me firi me mpɔboa mu
wura m'agya deɛ mu

*après les obsèques—
glissant dans
les chaussures de papa*

water pistols
my brother and I play
Vietnam

nsuo totia
me ne nua di
Viëtenam agorɔ

*des pistolets à eau
mon frère et moi
jouons au jeu Guerre Vietnam*



graveyard
a family leaves short
of a member


awusiebea
abusua ba fie gya
wɔn nipa koro akyiri

*le cimetière
une famille s'en va
laissant derrière un des leurs*

new arrival
the broadening community
of the cemetery

owu mono
adakaman nso tre
wɔn mpɔtam

*un nouvel arrivant
l'élargissement de la communauté
du cimetière*



old diary
its missing pages
of grandfather's life


nkaee krataa
nanabarima abrabo yera
wo ne wuo akyi

*le vieux journal
ses pages manquantes
sur la vie de grand-père*

flowers for the grave
this fresh memories
of old friendship

nhweren a ɛgu na so
kae madamfofa bi a
abesene kɔ

*des fleurs pour la tombe
ces souvenirs frais
d'une vieille amitié*



Memorial Day fireworks
sound of war celebrates
end of war


nkaee nna gyato
yede ako mbobomu
bra ako

*feux d'artifice du Jour Commémoratif
le bruit de la guerre célèbre
la fin de la guerre*

war memorial . . .
fresh tears
for an old grave

ako nkaee nna . . .
nisu mono te gu
na dadaa so

*le monument aux morts . . .
de nouvelle larmes
pour une vieille tombe*



playtime
the simulation of death
at the point of toy guns


agodie bre
yɛgyegye owuo tataa
firi nsu totia ano

*la récréation
la simulation de la mort
au bout des jouets en forme d'armes*

our temporal rest
on a grave—
cemetery walk

yen ahomegyee tietia
wɔ nna so—
asieye mpasatuo

*notre repos temporel
sur une tombe—
promenade au cimetière*



emptying the urn . . .
this space
you leave behind


merehwie
wo nson afiri toa mu . . .
wo akyiri kwan

*vidant l'urne . . .
cet espace
que vous laissez derrière*

pallbearing—
the weight
of his new residence

asiefon anamontuo—
n'adaka dan
koso yedu

*portant le cercueil—
le poids
de sa nouvelle résidence*



memorial candles
his place in this world
goes out


nakaee bere
ne gyinabere dum wo
kaneadua so

*bougies commémoratives
sa place dans ce monde
disparaît*

tombstone—
between two dates
the length of life

wusiebo—
efiri da a ɔwo no besi newu da
ne nkwa tenten

*des pierres tombales—
entre deux dates
la durée de la vie*



funeral procession
how each of us
is next in line


owufoɔ akwangya
sɛnea yɛ hyehyɛ yɛn ho
wɔ owuo akwan mu

*le cortège funèbre
comment chacun de nous
est le suivant*

burial grounds—
first into the grave
our shadows

awusiebea—
yɛn sunsum di kan wɔ
adakamena mu

*les cimitières—
les premières dans la tombe
nos ombres*



pallbearing—
her journey marked
by others' footprints


asieye da—
n'akwantuo a etwato
wo afoforo anamontuo mu

*portant le cercueil—
un voyage marqué par
les empreintes de pied d'autrui*

funeral procession
his dog pays respect
in its strides

owufoɔ akwangya
ne kraman mpo tu annamɔn bi
hyɛ n'animuonyam

*le cortège funèbre
son chien rend hommage
dans son démarche*



his first appearance
in the newspaper . . .
obituary column


ne da a edikan
wɔ koowaa krataa mu . . .
ne wuo dawubɔ

*sa première apparition
dans un journal . . .
rubrique nécrologie*

burial mound—
wishing you could grow
back into my arms

nkofie nna—
senea anka me pe se
wo befifiri aba bio

*le monticule funéraire—
souhaitant que tu puisses grandir
de nouveau dans mes bras*



obituary column
the ripe and unripe
set of ages


awufo atwerebea
mfie a abere ne bunu
di afra

*la rubrique nécrologique
les murs et les non murs
ensemble d'âges*

buying him
a second home
coffin market

yereṭo ne fie a
eṭo so mmienu
ne funu adaka

*lui achetant
une résidence secondaire
le marché des cercueils*



mother's tears
on a nine-month journey—
empty cradle


ena nisutee
wɔ bosome nkron akwantuo—
abofra adaka to

*les larmes d'une mère
pendant un voyage de neuf mois—
un berceau vide*

funeral wreath
a life
gone full circle

owufoɔ nhwiren
anokwa, abrabɔ kɔ san
besi n'anana mu

*la couronne funéraire
une vie
a fait le tour complet*



crying emoji
texting her my tears
and condolence


katun a ɔresu
mede me nisuo ne due
mane no wɔ tefefon so

*les emojis pleurant
lui textant mes larmes
et mes condoléances*

his pyre . . .
her world goes up
in flames

bokyiagya . . .
ne wiase wie wo
gyafruma mu

son bucher à lui . . .
son monde à elle part
en fumée



Memorial Day
taking a walk
with your stick


Nkaeε Da
mede wo poma
tu mpasa

*jour de mémorial
un promenade avec
ta canne*

tombstones—
names outliving
their owners

emusiεbo—
awufoodin gye atena
sen wɔn wura

*les pierres tombales—
les noms survivant
leurs propriétaires*



churchyard—
joining in the dirge
birdsong


awufosom—
nnomaa nso to dwom
degya ɔwufoɔ kwan

*le cimetière—
participant au chant funèbre
le chant des oiseaux*

memorial
more candles for him
than his birthday

nkaeɛ da
kanea dua beberee so
sene n'awoda

*mémorial
plus de bougies
que pour son anniversaire*



a story
behind each name—
gravestones


awufo nna
obiara abrabɔ twere
ne din akyi

*une histoire
derrière chaque nom—
pierres tombales*

Valentine's Day—
a walk around
her grave

Valentine Da—
mpasatuo wɔ
ne nna ho

*la Saint-Valentine—
une promenade
autour de sa tombe*



closing the door
on his child—
coffin lid

ɔreto ne ba
pono mu—
ne funu adaka

*fermant la porte
à son enfant—
couvercle de cercueil*

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Kwaku's interest in haiku was kindled when he came across the winning haiku of the 2014 Akita Chamber of Commerce and Industry President Award, Japan-Russia Haiku Contest by Adjei Agyei-Baah while in the University of Education, Winneba. The latter would gift him his first book on haiku which set him on a journey of discovery and practice of the haiku aesthetic. A practice that has since grown and seen him get publications in several online and print journals, even going on to land winning spots and honorable

mentions in haiku contests one of which being the winning prize of the 2016 Babishai Haiku Contest, Africa's first haiku contest. He has since become a member of the Africa Haiku Network, Ghana Haiku Society, and UHTS (United Haiku and Tanka Society) of America. Kwaku currently teaches French and English at Mpraeso Senior High School in Ghana and still enjoys his haiku engagements.

In this garland of poems presented in English, Twi and French, unspoken grief provides an additional layer, the language of loss.

—**Michael Dylan Welch,**
Founder, Seabeck Haiku Getaway

I find these poems to be quite poignant as they forcefully remind us of our own mortality.

—**Keith A. Simmonds**

Death will smile at this collection.

— **Adjei Agyei-Baah,**
Author, *AFRIKU* (Red Moon Press, 2016)



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