

Scaring Crow

Haiku

Adjei Agyei-Baah



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With a Foreword by Hiroaki Sato

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celebrating the publication of Adjei Agyei-Baah's chapbook *Scaring Crow*.

Cover Image: *Crow and Willow Tree* by Kawanabe Kyosai (1831-1889). Album leaf: ink and color on silk. 14.25 x 10.5 inches. 1887. [Background cropped away. Color adjusted.] **Public domain.**

Dedication

To the memory of a dear friend
and an Associate Editor of the *Heron's Nest Journal* (from 2000–2019)

Paul MacNeil
1948-2019

Foreword

Mr. Adjei Agyei-Baah's book of haiku, *Scaring Crow*, is a collection of his own haiku, all about scarecrows.

Scarecrows came into being as agriculture became the main source of human food, we are told, with early records in Egypt dating from 3,000 years ago. In recent decades, in America and other European countries, scarecrows have merged with Halloween figures patched up mainly to scare people for fun, but there remain many countries, among them Ghana where Mr. Agyei-Baah lives, where they are still used for their original purpose: to scare or repel birds and animals—although when it comes to the English name of this contraption, the “crows,” being wise, quickly learn it is just a harmless decoy, it has been observed.

In Japan, where haiku originated, the scarecrow is called *kakashi*. Some say it was originally *kagashi*, “something that makes animals smell,” as it referred to the custom of putting out a burnt piece of meat or fish to warn creatures that can't stand such smells. The set of three Chinese words applied to *kakashi*, 案山子, is obscure in its etymology, some finding its origins in a Zen statement in China. There are a number of names for *kakashi* if you include its local names.

Each haiku is expected to come with a *kigo*, “seasonal word,” and each *kigo* specifies a specific season. *Kakashi* was adopted as a *kigo* in 1641, and the season it specifies is autumn. This “rule” may not apply to some countries and regions, of course. Kawai Sora (1649–1710), who famously accompanied Matsuo Bashō (1644–1694) in the latter's grand trek into “The Interior,” wrote:

国々に案山子もかはる姿かな

Kuniguni ni kakashi mo kawaru sugata kana

The figures of *kakashi* change from province to province

Many of Mr. Agyei-Baah's haiku collected in this volume can be readily translated into Japanese 5-7-5 syllables, suggesting his deep affinity to this poetic form. Here are several of the 102 haiku in *Scaring Crow*.

there he stands
with a crown of bird poo—
field scarecrow

tsuttate fun ni mamireta kakashi kana
突っ立って糞に塗れた案山子かな

country walk...
passing on an old hat
to a scarecrow

inaka aruki furui bōshi o kakashi yari
田舎歩き古い帽子を案山子やり

This haiku reminds me of one by Kawahigashi Hekigodō (1873–1937), who trekked through Japan for five years, beginning in 1906.

我笠と我蓑を着せて案山子かな
waga kasa to waga mino o kisetete kakasu kana

I've made a *kakashi* wear both my hat my straw-coat

Back to Mr. Agyei-Baah's haiku.

black night:
a scarecrow scattering
fireflies

kuroki yoru kakashi chirakasu botaru kana
黒き夜案山子散らかす螢かな

morning light
a bird flutters from
the scarecrow's bosom

asa no hi ni kakasu mune tatsu kotori kana

朝の日に案山子胸立つ小鳥かな

And here is the concluding haiku.

alone in the field
a scarecrow in the blaze
of morning sun

kyokujitu no hi ni hitori tatsu kakashi kana

旭日の陽に一人立つ案山子かな

Hiroaki Sato
Author of *On Haiku*
New York City
Fall 2021

grandpa's will
all his clothes go
to the scarecrow

drought's end—
in a scarecrow's chest
skeletons of scarecrows

winter field
a scarecrow whitens
into snowman

abandoned after harvest
a lone scarecrow
against the hurricane

harvested fields
under the scarecrow's feet
a pile of corncobs

All Saints Day
a scarecrow glows
in fireflies

a charred martyr—
the scarecrow after the passing
of forest fire

gleaning the field
a hidden melon
behind the scarecrow

ripened field—
an old scarecrow invites
birds to party

golden maize field . . .
a lone scarecrow puffs
in the wind

ghost story —
a scarecrow vanishes
from the pole

arms wide open
the scarecrow
catching nothing

flitting butterfly...
the scarecrow's shoulder
provides a rest

country walk...
passing on an old hat
to a scarecrow

harvested field...
a scarecrow reduced
to a cross of moss

after the storm
the scarecrow shows
the wind's path

parting mist...
the open arms
of a scarecrow

dead crows
hanging as scarecrows —
the bogeyman's farm

barren field
the bowed head
of a scarecrow

full moon
the scarecrow watches
its own shadow

Halloween
a scarecrow in
Grim Reaper's dress

storm passes
my scarecrow turns to face
the neighbour's farm

spring breeze...
corn leaves tickle the armpit
of a scarecrow

pitch dark:
the scarecrow's grimace
softens in fireflies

night breeze...
looming the scarecrow's shadow
back and forth

mountain summit—
a scarecrow warns
of danger

right under its nose
the scarecrow oversees
feasting birds

Harmattan—
even the scarecrow
testifies

billowing in the wind
a scarecrow set off
the feasting birds

farmland
a scarecrow opens arms
to the wind

a party
before the scarecrow--
locusts feasting

empty field—
scarecrow watches
scarecrow

black night:
a scarecrow scattering
fireflies

Halloween —
a scarecrow with
a crooked scythe

moonlit barn
the footfall
of a scarecrow

there he stands
with a crown of bird poo —
field scarecrow

harvest near
the farmer adjusts
the scarecrow's grin

settling sun...
the scarecrow's shadow
bars the farm path

no clouds, no birds
a scarecrow sways
in summer breeze

taking rest
the farmer sits in the shadow
of the scarecrow

daddy's clothes—
passed on to me
passed on to the scarecrow

yet another pee
the comfort
of a scarecrow's shadow

cricket in head
the scarecrow's mouth
wide open

behind the scarecrows
the farm owner's children
play hide and seek

midnight banter
the drunken farmer
and a scarecrow

after the storm
the tilted scarecrow
watches the stars

the remnants
of a scarecrow flapping—
winter whistles

storytime under moonlight
the scarecrow's shadow
also present

working peasants—
leaving their food
at the care of a scarecrow

headless scarecrow—
no shiver
down the crow's spine

harvest ritual
a piece of corn tossed
at the scarecrow's feet

veteran's farm
the scarecrow watches
in military uniform

shortcut route
a scarecrow bars
my way

all night long
the scarecrow
in the songs of cricket

the scarecrow
almost flying, the wind
gives it wings

country ride...
through the train's window
a scarecrow jumps at me

field grazing...
a young bull rages
against the scarecrow

winter wind
strips a scarecrow bare —
two breasts of straw

Zen garden
the storm-tilted scarecrows
watching clouds

abandoned windmill—
fanning the shadow
of a scarecrow

after night fires
the scarecrow smoulders
in fireflies

harvest over
a scarecrow leans
against an anthill

harvest time
scarecrows overseeing
reapers

still holding the fort
the scarecrow's post
eaten by termites

the shredded edges
of the scarecrow's cloth—
the ways of the wind

his coat was black
and his spine was bent—
the overseer of the field

All Saints Day —
a scarecrow wearing
a cassock

“No Thoroughfare”
a scarecrow mans
the farm gate

morning light
a bird flutters from
the scarecrow's bosom

Palm Sunday
the scarecrow too
waves a frond

how sad
the poor scarecrow can't kick
rodents at its feet

year of planting—
the community attire
passed unto scarecrows

gentle breeze...
the farmer's child ties his kite
to the scarecrow

old rags
knitted for the scarecrow –
World Charity Day

departed storm
an old farmer straightens
the scarecrow's spine

lying
at the door of the farmer –
storm-tossed scarecrow

wind ways –
a scarecrow's
various poses

a sickle moon beneath a scarecrow

the ploughman
fixes the scarecrow's eye –
crow territory

noon drizzle
a scarecrow steams
from sunshine

a missing button
of the scarecrow--
the crow has an answer

unable
to watch its back--
paddy scarecrow

windless night
a lone bat circles
the scarecrow

midnight howls
a scarecrow's gown
trickling moonlight

sorghum harvest
swallows manoeuvre between
reapers and scarecrows

scarecrow and its shadow
on vigil
a night owl watches from safety

new season
the farmer stuffs a scarecrow
with straw

old pond
a kingfisher dives in
from the scarecrow

alone in the field
a scarecrow in the blaze
of morning sun

harmattan fields...
a lone crow pecks the armpit
of the scarecrow

flooded croplands
a scarecrow keeps its head
above water

countryside bride –
leaving her bouquet
in the arms of a scarecrow

scarecrow –
all the days of rain
and thunder strikes

full moon
a scarecrow's hat
in Jackson's pose

and still he stands there
the scarecrow – a preacher
to a dozen crows

November winds
a scarecrow joggles
on the pole

first light –
a red-head lizard sunning
on top of the scarecrow

lean season –
padding a scarecrow
with a scarecrow

African drought –
the peasant farmer, not different
from his scarecrow

Ascension —
a scarecrow rising
in the wind

back to the fields—
our shoes rest at the feet
of the scarecrow

how sad
the scarecrow remains dumb
on what he sees

bird hunting as a kid
counting the scarecrows
I met on my way

the skeleton
I'll become —
feeding the scarecrows to fire

About the writer:

Adjei Agyei-Baah is the author of *Afriku* (Red Moon Press, 2016), *Ghana, 21 Haiku* (Mamba Africa Press, 2017), *Piece of My Fart* (2018), *Finding the Other Door* (2021) and *Mamelon a Mamelon* (Edition Unicité, 2021). His coedited/co-authored books include *The Awakened One: Buddha-Themed-Haiku From Around The World* (Poetry Chaikhana, 2021) and *Trio of Windows* (JUNPA, 2018). Adjei is the primary author of the four *Haikupedia* articles about African haiku. He is the co-founder of *Africa Haiku Network* and *The Mamba* (Africa's premiere haiku journal). He teaches English and Literature at the University of Ghana's School of Continuing and Distance Education and is currently pursuing his PhD studies at the University of Waikato in New Zealand.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

“grandpa’s will” *Brassbell*, August 2021 Issue “winter field” *Asabi Haikuist Network*, #6 “a charred martyr-” *Cattails*, April 2017 Issue “ripened field” *First Place*, *Caribbean Kigo Kukai* #116 “ghost story” *Asabi Haikuist Network*, Aug 2019 “arms open wide” *Mamba Journal*, Issue 3 “country walk...” *Mamba Journal*, Issue 7 “cross of moss” *The Heron’s Nest*, March 2020 Issue “after the storm” *Akitsu Quarterly*, Fall 2020 Issue “golden maize field . . .” *Brass Bell*, June 2021 Issue “dead crows” *AFRIKU* (Red Moon Press, 2016) “barren field” *THF Per Diem/Daily Haiku*, Nov 2019 “full moon” *Shamrock*, #25 “black night” *Horror Senryu*, 8/23/21 “farmland” *The Heron’s Nest*, June 2019 Issue “the tilted scarecrow” *Akitsu Quarterly*, Winter 2021 Issue “harmattan fields...” *Seashores*, Issue 8 “flooded croplands” *Chrymansathrum*, #30 “moonlit barn” *Horror Senryu*, (6/28/2021)

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About *Scaring Crow*:

In 1999, Haiku Society of America co-founder Leroy Kanterman released an anthology of scarecrow-themed haiku and senryu. More than twenty years later and half a world away, Adjei Adyei-Baah demonstrates that these archetypal figures have lost none of their power to evoke a full range of human emotions, from pity to derision and from familiarity to wonder.

Scott Mason, Editor of *The Wonder Code*

Scaring Crow by Adjei Adyei-Baah is a collection of 102 haiku about scarecrows, which work together like a quantum leap in space, time, and imagination. It offers a tour as if in a scarecrow museum with the display of vivid images that pluck the visual chord of nature and human nature.

Jianqing Zheng, author of *Delta Notes* and *A Way of Looking*

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