



HAIKU RHAPSODIES (Verses from Ghana)

Mrs Celestine Nudanu

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Haiku as a poetry genre originated in Japan in the 17th Century, and is traditionally written in three lines of 5-7-5 syllabic arrangement. Over the years, this form has evolved into 3-5-3 syllabic arrangement and yet still into a three line form; short, long, short. Haiku in its simplest definition records a delightful and short moment in nature. A moment as short as the sound of a pebble falling into a pond. This definition posits the brevity and compactness of this genre. But though quite short, there lies a moment of 'aha' which leaves a lasting impression on the mind of the reader. Haiku as a genre is less known on the Ghanaian literary landscape. Against this background, the publication of HAIKU RHAPSODIES, (verses from Ghana) by Celestine Nudanu is very timely and historic. HAIKU RHAPSODIES explores a field where no Ghanaian poet has ever published in hard print. Hence Celestine Nudanu's work distinguishes her as a trailblazer among her contemporaries. And most notably HAIKU RHAPSODIES comes in at the opportune time to answer the world call for haiku to be added to UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage. HAIKU RHAPSODIES is a finely structured book arranged under the following themes; Afriku, Nature, Haiku My Heart, the Divine and Death. Through these themes, Celestine Nudanu succeeds in transporting the reader into her world by creating animated, serene and yet powerful scenes. At the same time, the poet draws the reader into the complex yet fascinating phenomena of what life is all about; Love, Death, Spirituality and Life itself. The beauty lies in her skill of brevity as a haiku poet. She writes with elegance, using few words which like magic are enchanting, leaving the reader exhilarated and wanting more. Under the first theme Afriku, (haiku with an African flavour) the verses vary in colour and taste, presenting a rich and yet delicate balance with strong sights and sounds peculiar to the African setting. The haiku below describes a very common scene. Here, it is not the fading sun, but the beggar who has the lead. It is a haiku in which one can easily recognize the spirit of Matsuo Basho. (One of the four greatest haiku poets ever) empty calabash reflects the fading sun a beggar sits in gloom Some of the poems also ting out loudly, even in a quiet room. Imbued with details of Ghanaian life, indeed of African life, the following verse jumps out at the reader: fireside kids chatter fills mother's cooking pot The haiku below arranged under the second theme Nature, is a masterpiece: morning dew on yellow buds blooming dandelions Celestine is a versatile poet who writes haiku in her own way to reflect both her immediate African setting and foreign lands. One can safely say that HAIKU RHAPSODIES transcends the present time and space as one is taken through the different seasons all in one breath. The following haiku is a fine example. these violets keep reaching for the skies summer baptism The poet also has that incredible ability to make you hear colours, see sounds and feel words. And those words are not always comfortable. Take for example the following haiku in which the poet is able to use words to evoke images of darkness and the ominous. dark skies the flap of wings in a death dance Verses under the third theme, Haiku My Heart evoke the simple pleasures of being in love; butter on toast the taste of you at breakfast The verses arranged under the fourth theme, the Divine, leaves one awestruck; it is refreshing to encounter God in such a simple but very profound way. choir celestial waves and waves flood the earth It is not easy to take a foreign art form and turn it around into a thing of beauty the way Celestine Nudanu has in her first publication. It is testimony to her uncommon appetite that she has discovered this poignant literary form and has proceeded to espouse it with admirable fervour. HAIKU RHAPSODIES is a great and beautiful addition to anyone's library or book collection.

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