HAIKU SAMPLERS FROM JAPAN
3. Shiki through The World Wars

Selected and Translated by Jim Kacian

Shiki

shadow on the window
of an late autumn dragonfly
once in a while

Meisetsu

spring day —
from the peacock’s feathers
light

Seisei

in the water
the fish are still —
autumn wind

Kyoshi

in winter
rain stops and starts
the darkness
Suiha

a bright day
like myself
falling leaves

Shihōda

the storyteller
has finished his tale —
the long night

Tōyōjō

a wife to lean on
I’ve decided against —
autumn evening

Otsuji

rain starts and stops,
wind starts and stops —
the quiet night

Kanrō

May rains —
where I go to leak,
the roof does too

Roseki

near the ocean
a millet field
in the summer sun

Chikurei

in the evening sky
the treetops all line up —
second spring
Kōyō

a beggar loiters
by the temple gate —
falling willow leaves

Shachiku

in a stone hollow
guarded by a maple
water gathers

Rogetsu

sucking on seaweed
I wonder if I’m real
or just an actor

Sōseki

above the bay
where the stakes are being driven
their sound

Keion

a black cloud
hangs over them —
cherry blossoms

Hōsai

a whole day
without speaking
butterfly silhouettes

Dakotsu

the black iron
windbell of autumn
as it happens
Fūsei

evening cherry blossoms —
gazing back toward them,
they recede

Sekitei

spring rumble —
somewhere in the distance
a skylark

Fura

winter mountains —
where the roads meet,
the one flat spot

Takeshi

spring ends —
in a garden without cherry blossoms,
fallen leaves

Santōka

my home
so far away —
tree buds

Hekigodō

this road —
other than that, it’s
all His

Seisensui

at my house
I own a rice bowl —
going home
Hōsha
first to the ear
from returning home
becomes the flow

Ippekirō
a flock of gulls
makes for the woods —
coping

Issekiro
just now cutting
down a tree — how still
as I look up

Seison
hanging there,
a wild boar before
snow

Sujū
like feathers dividing
a flying beetle
jumps off

Takeji
frigid water
green hills
day darkener

Seiho
Katsuragi Mountain
and lying in its’ bosom
The Buddha
Kusatao

as with courage
so it is with salt —
the white of new plum

Seishi

at the crossroads
as it is everywhere —
autumn evening

Fukio

cold crow —
onto its shadow
it descends

Takashi

the sound of rain
bitten into by their cries —
the insect cage

Gyōsui

the night clerk —
how stupid, his having
a child bride

Hisajo

mending socks
I am no Nora —
teacher’s wife

Shizunojo

short night —
this one without milk . . .
throw it away?
Yorie

a farewell —
an equinox flower blooming
barely

Midorijo

autumn wind —
a stone-laden horse
doesn't move

Takako

broken clouds
as soon as I leave the house
I think of home

Teijo

goldfish and
my May rain
umbrella drops

Sōjō

scudding, scudding
until the lungs feel blue —
ocean travel

Zenjīdō

roof garden —
cherry blossoms against the sky
round to the horizon

Hakkō

mountain fire —
the dusty coal mine with
fog above
Seihō

shop window —
on the cheap paper
winter sunbeams

Hakyō

a firefly’s light
the flower left behind
still swayed

Hakuu

a cricket cries
just once suddenly
my life

Sanki

sweet grapes
quiet at his death
my anger

Hakusen

red lilies
so the railroad guard
is black

Shūson

I’ve become a teacher
and hold within me
a cough

Tomoji

a period of drinking
then returning quietly
to the Milky Way
Bakunan

wakened at noon —
the scissors-grinder
passes by

Sosei

my fried is free . . .
tears today at
the high wild geese

Akio

into the sunset
into the sunset
a red army

Tōshi

broken ones,
unbroken ones —
summer butterflies