

## FLOATING WORDS

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

*Epitaph for Memories* (The Bunny and the Crocodile, 2002)  
*trilogy & Hagoromo: A Celestial Robe* (Ikuta Press, 2010)  
*Aquamarine* (Glass Lyre, 2014)  
*Woman in a Blue Robe* (Isobar Press, 2016)  
*Further Center: Poems 1970–1998* (Ikuta Press, 2017)

WITH JAMES C. HOPKINS

*The Blue Door* (Word Works, 2006)

WITH JAMES C. HOPKINS & BERNARD STOLZ

*a sleeping tiger dreams of manhattan: poetry, photographs  
and sound* (Ikuta Press, 2008)

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FLOATING WORDS

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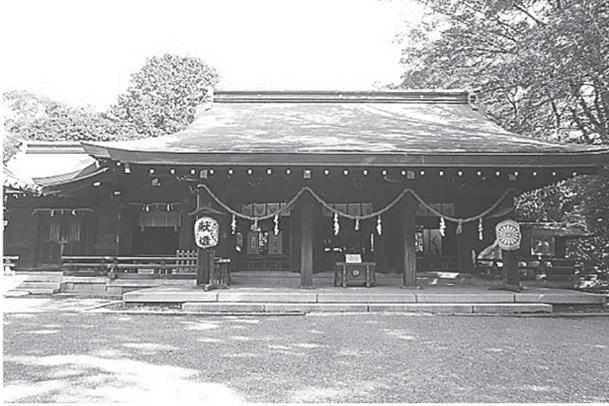
MINASE SANGIN HYAKUIN

A POEM OF ONE HUNDRED LINKS

COMPOSED BY THREE POETS AT MINASE

SŌGI, SHŌHAKU & SŌCHŌ

TRANSLATED BY YOKO DANNO



The Minase Shrine: reconstructed in the early Edo period.

## PREFACE

*Minase Sangin Hyakuin* is a *hyakuin* [a poem of one hundred links] that was composed in 1488 at Minase (near the point where the Yodo River and the Minase River meet) by three poets: Sōgi, Shōhaku and Sōchō. When they held this poetry gathering, it was only just over ten years since the end of the Ōnin civil war (1467–1477) in Kyoto, where many places were still in ruins. The *renga* [collection of linked verses] was composed to honor the 250th anniversary of the death of the ex-emperor, Gotoba, who in 1221 had lost the Jōkyū war; having failed in his attempt to win back Imperial authority from the Kamakura military government, Gotoba was exiled to the island of Oki, where he died in 1239.

The three poets took turns in composing short verses (alternating 5-7-5 and 7-7 syllable lines) on four sheets of paper folded in half. On the front side of the first half-sheet, indicated below as (I-1), are written eight units of verse, and on the other side of this half-sheet (I-2) fourteen units. Fourteen units are written on each of the following five half-sheets (II-1, II-2, III-1, III-2 and IV-1), and the *renga* concludes on the last half-sheet (IV-2) with eight units.

The notes, which follow the translation, include a fuller introduction to the *renga* form; biographies of the three poets; translations of classic poems alluded to by the three poets (in those poems marked in my translation with an asterisk); and a short bibliography.



MINASE SANGIN HYAKUIN

I—I

- 1 Snow still lingering,  
the foot of the hills is veiled  
in spring haze at dusk\* SŌGI
  
- 2 Water flows far – the village  
fragrant with the plum blossoms\* SHŌHAKU
  
- 3 A stand of willows  
swaying in the river breeze  
showing signs of spring SŌCHŌ
  
- 4 Distinct – the sound of a boat  
propelled with a pole at dawn SŌGI
  
- 5 Is the moon still there,  
hanging in the sky above  
this thick shrouding fog? SHŌHAKU
  
- 6 The field is all white with frost,  
autumn deepened to winter SŌCHŌ

- 7 Despite the pleading  
of chirping crickets, the leaves  
of grass are withered SŌGI
- 8 Visiting a friend, the path  
by his hedge bare of grasses SHŌHAKU

- 9 In a small village  
deep in the mountains, storms might  
not yet be blowing SŌCHŌ
- 10 Living in a remote place,  
accustomed to loneliness SŌGI
- 11 There is no use now  
in reflecting on living  
alone – it's too late SHŌHAKU
- 12 Have you not already learned  
this life is ever-changing? SŌCHŌ
- 13 Pitiful the dew  
that is hesitant to form  
on short-lived flowers SŌGI
- 14 In spring haze after sunset  
the landscape faintly shining SHŌHAKU
- 15 Taking mist for dusk,  
a flock of migrants, calling,  
fly back to the north SŌCHŌ

- 16 Walking deep into the woods,  
I've utterly missed my way SŌGI
- 17 It is fine now, but  
winter rain has wet the sleeves  
of my travel clothes SHŌHAKU
- 18 Seen from this bed of wild grass,  
even the moon looks wretched SŌCHŌ
- 19 Nights are spent in vain  
sleeping alone – as autumn  
passed into winter\* SŌGI
- 20 Woken from a dream, I blamed  
wind rustling the bush clover SHŌHAKU
- 21 Not a trace remains  
of my home and the old friends  
I met in my sleep SŌCHŌ
- 22 Upon whom should I depend  
in these, my declining years? SŌGI