

## Bushido: The Warrior's Floral Way

“A military man without poetry is a savage, not a samurai”

— KUOZO UCHIMURA

They deployed a florid language of death:  
the rhetoric of Brooke's precious earth  
is far outdone by the troops of Arakan  
whose rotting flesh would turn to grass  
and wave forever in the breezes that blow  
from Japan; a general versified how  
his men were plucked like wild flowers  
of the mountains; another could dream  
the screaming Burmese hills would become  
his next-world highway; what their foes  
dubbed crazed *kamikazes* blossomed into  
Ten Thousand Petals, Floating Chrysanthemums.  
Capture dishonored the warrior  
whose sword was his soul,  
whose last choice was to impale  
himself in the sap and flush  
of a life anyhow frail:  
the poetry was in the spring cherry —  
*Sakura! Sakura!*  
signaled the deathward defenders of Peleliu,  
we are the scattered brief blossoms. . . .

MICHAEL THORPE

*Arakan, Peleliu*: Two of the bloodiest battlefields in the Pacific War, 1942-45.

*Floating Chrysanthemums*: Code-name of the *Kamikaze* (“Divine Wind”) suicide-bombing campaign.

*Sakura*: Cherry blossoms.