

TANKA BY WOMEN SINCE THE 9th CENTURY

Overview preceding the Author's bilingual collection, *D'âmes et d'ailes / of souls and wings* –
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“I write about women in order to write about myself,
about myself alone through the ages.”
Marguerite Duras, *Practicalities*ⁱ

The *waka*, known nowadays as *tanka*, first appeared in 8th century Japan, more specifically during the Nara era (710-794).ⁱⁱ It is, as it were, ancestor of the haiku, which came into being in the 17th century.

Although *tanka* was at its peak during the Heian-kyō era (794-1185), it is still considered the jewel of Japanese poetry. For purposes of this brief historical overview, we will look at two principal periods for *tanka*.

The first period is that of ancient Japan, specifically the eras of Heian-kyō and Kamakura (1185-1335). In considering this period, we will acquaint ourselves with five Heian-kyō poetesses (Ono no Komachi, Michitsuna's Mother, Sei Shōnagon, Murasaki Shikibu, and Izumi Shikibu), and greet a single Kamakura poetess (Abutsu-ni).

The second period will propel us into the 20th century, starting with modern Japan, and then France.

We will linger awhile with the star of early-twentieth-century Japanese *tanka*, Yosano Akiko. After that, we will explore the French Connection, beginning with two women of letters, Judith Gautier and Kikou Yamata, who forayed into the world of *tanka* through translation. Our follow-up feature will focus on the first French-language *tanka* poetess, Jehanne Grandjean. Our wanderings will conclude with a return to Japan to spend time with two contemporary poetesses, Tawara Machi and Mayu.

Prior to setting out, it might be worthwhile to know, or to review, the beginning of *tanka*. We will therefore describe the classical origins in Japan, and then note down our observations on some contemporary practices.

Japanese roots

What is this poem that has challenged poets from the land of the rising sun for 1300 years, and western poets for close to 130 years? What is the secret of its longevity?

The answer can be found in the principles set forth by two great pillars of classical *tanka*: Ki no Tsurayukiⁱⁱⁱ (872?-946?) in his long preface to the first imperial anthology, the *Kokin wakashū* (Collected Japanese Poems of Ancient and Modern Times, compiled between 905 and 913; he was its soul); and Fujiwara no Teika (1162-1241) in his various treatises on the concept of excellence in poetry.

According to Tsurayuki, “The poetry of Japan has its seeds in the human heart and mind and grows into the myriad leaves of words. [...] It is poetry which effortlessly moves the heaven and the earth, awakens the world of invisible spirits to deep feeling.”^{iv}

According to Teika, “it must be composed with gentleness and sensibility. Indeed, no matter how fearful a thing may be of itself, when it is put into a poem it is made to sound graceful and elegant.”^v He also says that “the conception [heart] and the diction [words] should be like two wings of a bird.”^{vi} Separated by nearly three centuries, the two poets were in symbiosis.

As well, there is a musical aspect to the poem’s “graceful” sound, as it were. In Japanese it follows an obligatory fixed form – i.e. it is composed of 31 syllables (5-7-5-7-7).

This short poem, for centuries practiced by imperial,^{vii} noble and bourgeois families, disregarded “satire, epic subjects, descriptions of the human body.”^{viii} We shall see that, with time, it became attuned to the societal preoccupations of its practitioners. Given the universality of its subject matter, regardless of personal variations, it is no surprise that this poem lends itself to lyricism. Themes of classical tanka have changed little in thirteen centuries. Love, for example, continues to be expressed under all skies, at all times, in all ways.

Some contemporary approaches to tanka

Nowadays, what characterizes a tanka is how it juxtaposes emotion and sensory experience. An image, a scent or a sound can bring on an emotion that relates to impermanence – of things and of beings in this world. The resulting outcome would be a feeling of sadness mixed with hope: nothing lasts, but seasons, aren’t they regularly reborn? The parallels between life and cycles of nature are therefore constant.

Though not a requirement, this five-line poem has Nature as an anchor or a trigger. One or more of the senses can feel stirred by the sight of foliage, moonlight, a smile; at the aroma of woodland or food; at the murmur of wind, a heartbeat; at the feel of sea grasses, long hair; at the taste of wine, a kiss.

This stirring may lead to a thought, an impression, an intuition associated with a happy or an unhappy romance; to separation through travel or the death of a loved one; to the birth of a child; to ephemeral beauty or to transitory youth. A suddenly-felt emotion, at times sweet or poignant, is often fleeting. It can bring pleasure or discomfort to the soul.

In general practice, this five-line poem devotes the first three lines (the tercet) to a description of a sensory experience. Its final two lines (the couplet) reveal the emotion that the experience induces or recalls. To facilitate a harmonious shift, or the integration of the two parts, some poets formulate a center line that pivots between the first two and the final two lines. We should mention that in Japanese, tanka consists of five sections (units) on a single line, while in the West this principle is conveyed through five unrhymed lines, albeit unintentional rhyme does occur.

Many Francophone poets, from French-speaking Canada and France, retain the poem’s musical qualities by drawing on their own prosodic devices such as alliteration, assonance and rhymes at the beginning of a line. Many others also look to preserving poetic cadence, and count out spoken sound units rather than written syllables.

All reflections considered, the secret, the force of this poetry rests undoubtedly in how it unites a profoundly intimate emotion with an intense physical sensation – both expressed effortlessly.

Let us now see the two main periods of women’s tanka.

Ancient Japan

The Heian-kyô era

Ono no Komachi (821?-880?) was the first of the great poetesses of tanka. Her melancholy poetry has crossed time and distance although scholars attribute only some twenty poems to her.^{ix} There is a haze surrounding her life at the imperial palace, her romances, and especially her final days, apparently in poverty. As a result, she has become an object of passion and a cult figure for future generations. She is the legendary heroine of five Nô plays.

Komachi is one of the “Six Poetic Geniuses,”^x an honour conferred on her by Ki no Tsurayuki in his preface to the *Kokin-wakashû*. She is the only woman in this select group.

This body
grown fragile, floating,
a reed cut from its roots...
If a stream would ask me
to follow, I'd go, I think.^{xi}

Michitsuna's Mother (936?-995) is how history refers to the author of *Kagero nikki* (954-974; The Gossamer Years). She was a highly regarded poetess and is said to have been “one of the three most beautiful women in the empire”^{xii}.

While the diarist, at the beginning of her work, refers to “her own dreary life”^{xiii} she comes through as having exceptional emotional intelligence. She candidly analyzes her recriminations and her jealousy regarding her husband's numerous escapades and drawn out abandonment. In fact, the couple more or less separated before the birth of their only son. After fourteen years of marriage, her situation is as precarious as it had been at the beginning. At times, she asks herself “whether I have been describing anything of substance”^{xiv} from which the autobiography's title could well stem. The marriage lasted twenty years, and ends with the author's self-abnegation. There are 261 poems in the *Kagero nikki*, most of which are tanka.

Do you know how slow the dawn can be
when you have to wait alone?^{xv}

Sei Shônagon (967?-1002?) one day received “twenty rolls of magnificent paper”^{xvi} from the Empress. When asked what she would do with them, the lady-in-waiting had replied, “Let me make them into a pillow”; and she “set about filling the notebooks with odd facts ...”^{xvii} Lucky for us because without the notebooks, who knows if future generations could ever have enjoyed these personal jottings which we know as *The Pillow Book*. These journal entries record the author's impressions of various courtiers, bits of conversation with the Empress and other ladies-in-waiting, anecdotes such as one about the Emperor's faithful dog, tales like that of the ants and the jewel, and of course tanka. Especially unique in this work are the lists the writer has composed – things that produce deep feeling, things that are hateful, images one remembers without knowing why, things that make one blush in shame, notes such as how to respond to scandalous rumours.

After the Empress's death, the poetess entered a convent and, they say, sank into misery to the point of begging. Sei Shônagon appears to have been the most spirited woman of letters at the end of the 10th century.

Thanks to the paper that the Goddess gave,
My years will now be plenteous as the crane's.^{xviii}

Murasaki Shikibu (978?-1015?) was the author of the first novel ever, *Genji monogatari*.^{xix} This historically-based psychological novel, considered a masterpiece, is still highly regarded both in Japan and elsewhere one thousand years after its initial publication. In its close to 2,000 pages in Japanese, it contains nearly 800 tanka. Lady Murasaki also kept a diary^{xx} from 1008 to 1010, the same period when she served the Empress and, in her spare time, wrote this monumental work that tells, more or less, the life and loves of a fictional prince, Genji.

My life and the year are closing together.
At the sound of the wind dreary is my heart.^{xxi}

Izumi Shikibu (979?-1033?), along with her contemporary Murasaki Shikibu, is considered one of “the most brilliant women of letters of her day.”^{xxii} She was loved by two princes, brothers, and loved them in return. After her second beloved prince died, she wrote 122 death poems which “demonstrate passion with a force rarely rendered in classical Japanese poetry.”^{xxiii} In the diary she kept in 1003-04, she recounts, in the third person, the beginnings of the relationship, after the death of the first prince. In this poetic account in two voices, and in her collection of poems, she was so daring in how she externalized her emotions that moralists tarnished her reputation both as a woman and as a poet. After having served as a lady-in-waiting for the Empress, it appears she ended her days in a monastery, perhaps as a nun. Just like our 9th century woman poet Ono no Komachi, Izumi so excited popular imagination that she is the heroine of two Nō plays. In the 20th century, her double reputation was magnificently rehabilitated by “one of the greatest poetesses of our century, Yosano Akiko.”^{xxiv} From Akiko’s point of view, Izumi Shikibu represents a woman liberated “from all the societal constraints based upon spite and repression of any vague desire for independence in matters of the heart.”^{xxv}

Lying alone,
my black hair tangled,
uncombed,
I long for the one
who touched it first.^{xxvi}

After the unequalled literary splendour for which the Heian-kyō era is so well known, women’s writing of tanka virtually disappeared until the 20th century. Prior to closing this chapter about ancient Japan, let us add that during the Kamakura era (1185-1333) history mentions another poetess.

The Kamakura era

Abutsu-ni (1209?^{xxvii}-1283) was the second wife of Fujiwara no Teika’s son. After her husband’s death in 1275, she became a nun (hence the suffix “ni” in her name). Then, with the intention of resolving a matter of inheritance, she undertook a trip from Kyōto to Kamakura. She kept a diary, *Izayoi nikki* (Journal of the Sixteenth-Night Moon) in which there are more than one hundred tanka.^{xxviii}

Modern Japan and France

Japan, early 20th century

It was at the impetus of Masaoka Shiki (1867-1902) at the end of the 19th century that the *waka* was renamed *tanka*. As early as 1898, Shiki dreamed of reforming classic poetry by trying “to promote ‘sketching from life’ (*shasei*), i.e. a vivid, unadorned and concrete description of objects and of the heart’s stirrings.”^{xxix} He died too soon... It would be from Yosano Tekkan (1873-1935) and his wife, Akiko, that tanka would get its second wind.

Yosano Akiko (7/12/1878-29/05/1942) and her pen removed mannered affectations from this thousand-year-old poetry and cloaked it in romanticism embroidered with wild love and burning desire.

Akiko's passion for Tekkan was equalled only in her passion for writing. Her first tanka collection, *Midaregami* (Tangled Hair), published in 1901, propelled her, at the age of 23, to a leadership position in Tōkyō's "New Poetry Association." This poem shows her eroticism, so daring for the time.

pressing my breasts
with both hands
I kick open the door
to mystery
a flower in dark red^{xxx}

Years later one of her eleven children asked her why she hadn't kept a diary, and she replied, "but my poems are my diary..."^{xxxi} As required by the classicism of "New Poetry," her poems are founded not only on expressing her feelings through use of an "I" but also a "you." And though her tone is anti-conventional, her poems adhere to the 31 sound units as practised in the Heian-kyō era by the poetesses she admired.

Her literary career spanned 40 years, and the body of her work is huge and diverse. More than 50,000 tanka and uncounted free-verse poems are published in 27 collections. She produced two translations into modern Japanese of the monumental *Genji monogatari* by Murasaki Shikibu. She translated the diaries of Michitsuna's Mother, Izumi Shikibu, and Murasaki Shikibu, and wrote biographies of these last two. As well, there are 15 collections of her essays and newspaper articles dealing with social issues such as pacifism and the status of women. These writings put Akiko at the forefront of Japanese feminism. She was one of the founders, in 1921, of Tōkyō's Institute of Culture. This private school set out to implement a philosophy dear to Akiko: that women would only develop fully as human beings when their education took them beyond the wife and mother roles that society offered.

Do not forget thy whip!
Thus Spake Zarathustra.
Women are still cows, sheep.
I would like to add here
free them to their fields^{xxxii}

The French Connection

Before proceeding with Jehanne Grandjean, let us acknowledge the contributions of two women of letters whose translations served to promote tanka in France at the end of the 19th century.

Judith Gautier (24/08/1845-26/12/1917) collaborated with Prince Saionji Kimmochi to translate some eighty^{xxxiii} poems from the first imperial anthology, the *Kokin-wakashū*. Her art book, *Poèmes de la Libellule*^{xxxiv} [The Damselfly's Poems] (1884), is illustrated by Yamamoto Hosui.^{xxxv}

Kikou Yamata (15/03/1897-12/03/1975), a Franco-Japanese woman born in Lyon, produced two books related to tanka. The first is an anthology, *Sur des lèvres japonaises* [On Japanese Lips] (1924).^{xxxvi} It includes her translations of legends, tales and short poems (haiku and tanka; of these, seven by Yosano Akiko) which date from the 8th century on. Her second work, *Le Roman de Genji* [The Novel of Genji] (1928),^{xxxvii} is a translation of the first nine chapters from the *Genji monogatari* by Murasaki Shikibu. The novelist-translator based her version on Arthur Waley's English translation and the Japanese original.

In the first paragraph of her presentation of the work, Kikou makes a statement worth repeating: "the novel *Genji* transports us to Japan around the year 1000, to the court of Kyōto, City of Peace, then capital of a country known as the Land of Queens, so dominated was it by women."

Jehanne Grandjean^{xxxviii} (25/12/1880-12/11/1982),^{xxxix} member of the *Société des Gens de Lettres de France* [French Learned Society], authored four collections of poems between 1943 and 1948.^{xl} Through a partnership which lasted a good quarter of a century, Grandjean – artist, musician and poetess^{xli} – and Hisayoshi Nagashima^{xlii} – Japanese professor, eminent poet, illustrator and calligrapher^{xliii} – gave western tanka its wings. In fact, the woman who is quite rightly called “the pioneer of French tanka”^{xliv} devoted herself to promoting this poetic form with extraordinary energy, colossal will, and near-religious fervour. France’s “creator of regular tanka” (i.e. in 31 syllables) called herself “disciple” of the master Nagashima.

In 1948, Nagashima founded Paris’s *École internationale du tanka* (EIT; [international school of tanka]), a “philanthropic undertaking.” Jehanne Grandjean soon became his right-hand woman. In fact, the two grew so close over the years that it didn’t matter if one or the other were called founder, or both called co-founders. The *Revue du tanka international* (RTI), launched in October, 1953, became the school’s official publication. The magazine qualified itself as “poetic, literary, artistic, international, and independent.” Grandjean was its executive director/editor-in-chief, Nagashima its managing director/editor.

The goals of the review are clearly stated in the first issues. Among these, to foster spiritual, “intellectual and cultural exchanges” between France and Japan, “to provide all citizens with a taste for poetry because, in Japan, tanka is practiced by all classes of society,” and “to introduce tanka in Education and in world literature as a way of establishing solid ties of friendship among people of all races.” On June 25, 1956, the review was awarded a prize by the French Academy, a “rare distinction.”

The quarterly review published tanka in French and in several other European languages alongside French translations. Submissions in Japanese were translated by the two editors. They held contests for schoolchildren in France and in Japan. Grandjean’s by-line appeared on articles about Japanese culture (spirit of tanka, tea ceremony, music, weaponry in art, customs, painting, etc). There were announcements of artistic and literary events, including lectures by the master, as well as reports on these events.

Events were often organized by high-ranking dignitaries and cultural personalities of the day. An added feature was the master’s “chanting” of his own tanka, interpreted in French by his disciple.

In her spare time, Grandjean published her two collections. The first, in 1954, *Sakura – jonchée de tankas* [Cherry Blossoms; strewn with tanka] has 145 poems.^{xlv} Her second collection, in 1964, *Shiragiku – jonchée de tanka* [White Chrysanthemum; strewn with tanka] has 147 poems.^{xlvi} Between the two books, 1957 saw the appearance of *L’Art du tanka: Méthode pour la composition du tanka, suivi de tankas inédits*^{xlvii} [The Art of Tanka: How to Compose Tanka; followed by previously unpublished tanka]. The book has a letter-preface by Sasaki Nobutsuna^{xlviii} and a preface by Nagashima.

I would like to gather
Some of this spring’s flowers
To adorn my head...
But given my white hair
Would they care to pose?^{xlix}

On December 7, 1971, our pioneer was awarded a knighthood, and its medal, from the *Ordre national du Mérite* [National Order of Merit].¹

As far as we know, the RTI published its final edition, number 76,^{li} in July, 1972. There, Mr Nagashima praises « my dear and devoted collaborator, co-founder with me of the EIT. [...She] bears her heavy responsibilities [...] to the detriment of her health, as she has suffered for several years...” One must

not forget that by then, Madame was well past 91. She lived another ten years, thus becoming a centenarian.

The professional pair of Grandjean and Nagashima willed bequests to the *Société des Gens de Lettres*. The funds enable the SGDL's social aid commission to provide financial help to authors in need.^{lii}

Contemporary Japan

Tawara Machi (3/12/1962-) rolled tanka onto a powerful wave – or tsunami, rather – with the publication of her collection in 1987 at the age of twenty-five. *Sarada kinenbi* has sold three million copies in Japan and six million in translation. The first English version of *Salad Anniversary* appeared in 1988.^{liii} French readers had to wait until 2008^{liv} before they could read the book's 440 short poems. In 31 rhythmic sound units and a laid-back style, Machi shares her amorous trials and tribulations. Her reactions are often spontaneous, her thoughts sometimes fatalistic but always tinged with freshness. Love plays itself out within the day-to-day of errands, leisure and food.

Eating takeout sushi with you
only 300 yen –
tastes so good I know I'm in love^{lv}

Mayu (1982-), from Tōkyō as well, launched her bilingual collection twenty years after the wave unleashed by Tawara Machi. The book is titled *Bunboichi* in Japanese and in French, *Dénominateur UN! – tanka d'une jeune fille de 20 ans* [One Common Denominator – tanka by a young girl of 20].^{lvi} Using contemporary language, her 69 tanka create a realistic portrait of a young woman of her age in this century – a cell phone's importance, a comic strip character, a pop music group. The “I” has a strong presence while Nature is notably absent. The poet, however, follows the rule of composing with 31 Japanese symbols.

As she explores love in search of the genuine, she is by turns romantic, calm and headstrong. Without rose-coloured glasses, her clear-eyed gaze focuses on current events and ordinary life with its share of large and small miseries: war, pedophilia, pets abandoned and in pain.

We will become memory of this woman
that our father truly did love.^{lvii}

A final word

And so ends our tour, or better put, the pilgrimage we undertook in homage to these ten poetesses and two translators of tanka.

Without equivocation, we admit that initially we had only intended to spend time with three poetesses of the Heian-kyō era, Komachi and the two Shikibu's, and with three from the 20th century, Y. Akiko, Jehanne Grandjean and T. Machi. Without our having sought them out, others caught our attention and made their way into our hearts. How could we ignore them.

From the readings we undertook to learn more about the poetesses of ancient Japan, a recurring theme becomes apparent: after having garnered honours and reaped glory, they became indigent or were forgotten. Then their works, sometimes only partially, resurfaced thanks to women and men who persevered in research, and in translation from Japanese into French or English. We are grateful to them.

We could not overlook the missions that Kikou Yamata and Jehanne Grandjean, who never met, had set for themselves. The former wanted to promote, through her novels and her translations, the

Japanese woman and her heart, the latter, to disseminate tanka in French. In our opinion, they were successful.

Before closing, we express the wish that the work of the poetesses here discussed should live the lifespan of the turtle – that is, ten thousand years.

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Notes

ⁱ Translator's note: *Practicalities (La vie matérielle)*, trans. Barbara Bray (Collins, 1990) 46. References to English translations from the Japanese differ from the French versions cited by Janick Belleau. For French references and resources, see her notes in the French original.

ⁱⁱ In Japan, the capital city is chosen by those in power, which results in the phrase “such and such a city's era.” Many cities have served as capitals, among them Nara (710-794), Heian-kyō/Kyōto (794-1185), Kamakura (1185-1333), and Edo (1603-1867). After the abolishment of the military governments of the shogunate in 1867, the young Emperor Mutsuhito (1852-1912) left Kyōto and established himself with his family in Edo, renamed Tōkyō, which has been the capital since the imperial restoration in 1868 – known as the Meiji era. Since Akihito (1933-), the current monarch, acceded to the throne in 1989, Japan has known the Heisei era.

ⁱⁱⁱ We respect the Japanese practice of placing the family name before the given name except for the poet Hisayoshi Nagashima who lived most of his life in France (see the section “The French Connection”).

^{iv} From Ki no Tsurayuki's preface to the *Kokin-wakashū* (ca. 905), quoted by trans. Jane Hirshfield with Mariko Aratani in their “Introduction,” *The Ink Dark Moon* (Vintage Classics, 1990) xiii.

^v Teika, “Fujiwara Teika's *Maigetsushō*,” trans. Robert H. Brower, *Monumenta Nipponica* 40:4 (1985): 412.

^{vi} Teika in Brower 415.

^{vii} The practice continues to this day. The Empress Michiko (20/10/1934-) has written two waka collections: *Tomoshihi* (Fujingahosha, 1986) and *Seoto* (Daitō, 1997). There is an English translation of the first, *Tomoshihi/Light: Collected Poetry* by Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko, edited by Marie Philomène and Masako Saito (Weatherhill, 1991). As to *Seoto*, the Empress authorized 53 of the 367 poems for a translation into French, by Tadao Takemoto with Olivier Germain-Thomas (Signatura, 2006; see the review by J. Belleau in the *Revue du tanka francophone* 9 [Feb. 2010]).

^{viii} Michel Vieillard-Baron, trans. *Fujiwara no Teika et La notion d'excellence en poésie – Théorie et pratique de la composition dans le Japon classique* (Collège de France, Institut des Hautes Études Japonaises, 2001) 8.

^{ix} Armen Godel & Koichi Kano, trans. *Ono no Komachi et autres, Visages cachés, sentiments mêlés* (Gallimard, 1997) 25.

^x Hirshfield & Aratani xviii.

^{xi} Ono no Komachi in Hirshfield & Aratani 42. All poems are laid out as they appear in the referenced works.

^{xii} Jacqueline Pigeot, trans. [Japanese-French]. *Mémoires d'une Éphémère (954–974) par la mère de Fujiwara no Michitsuna* [Memoirs of an Ephemera (954–974) by Fujiwara no Michitsuna's Mother] (Collège de France, Institut des Hautes Études Japonaises, 2006) 199.

^{xiii} Michitsuna no Haha, *The Gossamer Years: The Diary of a Noblewoman of Heian Japan*, trans. Edward Seidensticker (Tuttle, 1964) 33.

^{xiv} Michitsuna no Haha in Seidensticker 69.

^{xv} Michitsuna no Haha in Seidensticker 38.

^{xvi} *The Pillow Book of Sei Shonagon*, trans. Ivan I. Morris (Columbia UP, 1991) 218-19.

^{xvii} Shonagon in Morris 263.

^{xviii} Shonagon in Morris 219. The crane was said to live a thousand years.

^{xix} The most recent English version is *The Tale of Genji*, trans. Royall Tyler (Viking, 2001, Penguin paperback, 2002).

^{xx} “The Diary of Murasaki Shikibu,” *Diaries of Court Ladies of Old Japan*, trans. Annie Shepley Omorei & Kochi Doi (Houghton Mifflin, 1920) 69-146.

^{xxi} Murasaki Shikibu in Omorei & Doi 120.

^{xxii} René Sieffert, trans., in his “Introduction,” *Izumi-shikibu Journal et Poèmes* (Publications Orientalistes de France, 1989) 15. An English version of “The Diary of Izumi Shikibu” is also in *Diaries of Court Ladies of Old Japan*, trans. Omorei & Doi 147-196.

^{xxiii} Sieffert 14.

^{xxiv} Sieffert 34.

^{xxv} Sieffert 34.

^{xxvi} Izumi Shikibu in Hirshfield & Aratani 49.

^{xxvii} Abutsu-ni might have been born in 1222, according to Helen Craig McCullough, ed. comp., *Classical Japanese Prose: an Anthology* (Stanford UP, 1990) 22, 289. The anthology includes *Journal of the Sixteenth-Night Moon*. 340-76.

- xxviii Lucienne Mazenod & Ghislaine Schoeller, eds, *Dictionnaire des femmes célèbres – de tous les temps et de tous les pays* (Robert Laffont, 1992) 3.
- xxix Claire Dodane, *Yosano Akiko: Poète de la passion et figure de proue du féminisme japonais* (Publications Orientalistes de France, 2000) 308.
- xxx Yosano Akiko, *Modern Japanese Tanka*, trans. Makoto Ueda (Columbia UP, 1996) 40.
- xxxi Dodane (269 n.1) refers to Yamamoto Fujie, *Kogane no kugi no utta bito* (Kōdansha, 1985) 725, 1.6, .7.
- xxxii TN: With gratitude to Kozue Uzawa. English translation from the Romaji version in Dodane 237. The first three lines quote Nietzsche.
- xxxiii Different sources report different numbers of poems: 80, 85, 88 or 89.
- xxxiv Published by Charles Gillot, Paris, printer of fine books.
- xxxv According to André Duhaime's web site, in France Jean-Richard Bloch wrote a few tanka in 1921 for *Cabiers idéalistes* [Idealist notebooks], and in Quebec Jean-Aubert Loranger included some in his 1922 collection, *Poèmes*.
- xxxvi Éditions Le Divan, Paris. The anthology's letter-preface is by poet, Paul Valéry.
- xxxvii Librairie Plon, Paris.
- xxxviii All information about this poetess comes from four sources: the *Société des Gens de Lettres de France* (SGDL; [French Learned Society]) and the department of Literature and Art of the *Bibliothèque nationale de France* (BnF; [National library of France]); warm gratitude is extended to Mme Zahia Zebboudj of the SGDL, and to M. Roger Musnik of the BnF. Without their precious help, we would have had little information to offer our readers. The other two sources are articles from the *Revue du tanka francophone* (RTF) and the *Revue du tanka international* (RTI). We are grateful to Patrick Simon, founder and director of the RTF (Laval, Quebec) who graciously provided us with copies of the RTI. Nearly all phrases quoted from the RTI are in issues 1 and 76.
- xxxix SGDL.
- xl Bnf. All published in Aurillac (Auvergne). The collections include illustrations and reproductions of miniatures by the author.
- xli Jeanne (as it was then spelled) discovered her vocation of artist at the age of 12 (1892) when she visited the *Musée de la Manufacture* in Sèvres. Although she used charcoal, water colours and oils, it was her miniatures on porcelain which brought her notice and some awards. As a musician, she played the mandolin. At the age of 62 (1942), she discovered her passion for poetry, and as of 1949, her life revolved around writing and promoting tanka.
- xlii Roger Fleury, "À propos du Maître Hisayoshi Nagashima," *RTF* 4 (Jun. 2008). H. Nagashima is from a Samurai family in Tōkyō. He left Japan for France just "prior to the terrible earthquake of 1923." 61.
- xliii *RTI*.
- xliv Patrick Simon, "Jehanne Grandjean, pionnière du tanka francophone," *RTF* 3 (Mar. 2008) 84.
- xlv Dominique Chipot, "*Sakura (fleurs de cerisier) – jonchée de tankas*," *RTF* 6 (Jan. 2009) 83. The preface and the illustrations are signed by Nagashima. A Japanese edition was published in Tōkyō in 1959. 84.
- xlvi Chipot, "*Shiragiku (chrysanthème blanc) – jonchée de tanka*," *RTF* 5 (Sep. 2008) 79.
- xlvii Bnf. *Sakura*, published by Éditions Gerbert in Aurillac. *Shiragiku* and *L'Art du Tanka*, published by RIT, "scientific publisher." In 1966 *Shiragiku* was republished in a dual-language edition with French original and Japanese translation on facing pages.
- xlviii The poet was born in 1872 and died in 1963. He was co-founder in 1896 of the modern poetry group *shinshi-kai*, with Yosano Tekkan and Masaoka Shiki among others. After a falling out among the members, his revue *Kokoro no hana* [Flowers of the Heart] was the rival of *Myōjō* [Bright Star], launched by Yosano Tekkan in 1900. Sasaki had less than a little fondness for Yosano Akiko's collection *Midaregami*.
- xlx *RTI*.
- i *RTI*.
- ii The final edition prior to summer holidays. Theoretically, issue 77 of the review was to come out that November. We don't know whether or not it did.
- iii SGDL.
- iiii Two different versions of *Salad Anniversary* became available around the same time: Jack Stamm, trans. (Kawade Bunko, 1988); and Juliet Winters Carpenter, trans. (Kōdansha International, 1989).
- lv *L'Annuaire de la salade*, Yves-Marie Allieux, trans. (Picquier, 2008).
- lv Tawara Machi in Carpenter 31.
- lvi Akiko Agui & Irène Bogdanović, trans. ISBN 978-4-434-10484-8 (Revook, Tōkyō, 2007).
- lvii Mayu in Agui & Bogdanović. 38.