interview

The Way(s) of Haiku

A Conversation with William J. Higginson, Penny Harter, and Tadashi Kondo

Tadashi Kondo, Penny Harter, William J. Higginson, Richard Evanoff

William J. Higginson is the author of The Haiku Handbook, *former editor of* Haiku *magazine, and founder of From Here Press. Penny Harter taught in the Poets-in-the-Schools Program and is a noted poet. Tadashi Kondo is well-known for his efforts to make haiku and renku more widely known in English. The following is a highly edited and condensed version of an interview conducted by* EDGE *Editor Richard Evanoff in Tokyo last year.*

Richard: How has haiku influenced you each as poets?

Bill: Penny and I have two very different experiences. In my case haiku was my starting verse. It was the first poetry I encountered that consciously drove me to seek poetry in a broader sense. It was haiku that awakened in me the desire for finding that community of poets to whom I could relate as "family." When I found William Carlos Williams, Denise Levertov, Gary Snyder, Allen Ginsberg, they were the family. They were the elders of the family that I wished to be included in.

Penny: I think haiku has helped to clean up my act in my longer poetry and made me much more aware of the necessity to be concise. I'd been writing long poetry for about ten years and then I encountered haiku. Unconsciously it influenced me, not only toward clarity, image, and conciseness, but also towards more awareness of seeing relationships, juxtapositions, and movement over that "spark gap," which I like to sustain in a longer poem as well.

Richard: How did you get started with haiku?

Bill: During a course for the Air Force at Yale University in 1960, I heard an instructor recite *furu ike ya / kawazu tobikomu / mizuo no oto* [Basho's most well-known poem: *old pond . . . / a frog leaps in / water's sound*]. Somehow I was immediately struck by this poem. It meant something to me that I couldn't define. Early in 1962 [while in Japan] I discovered R. H. Blyth's four volumes entitled *Haiku,* flipped it open, and very soon found *furu ike ya.* At that time I was very open to Blyth's "Zen-full" interpretation, and particularly enjoyed the first volume of the *Haiku* set, because it focused on an overview of Japanese culture and how it came to produce the haiku. I didn't start writing haiku until years afterward. I was translating—I call it translating in self-defense—because Blyth was not getting the compression of what I think of as the very tough grammar of haiku. Not tough in the sense of being difficult to understand what's happening grammatically, but tough in the sense of being very compact.

Richard: How did you get started Penny?

Penny: I was already writing poetry, met Bill, and got involved with the Haiku Society of America. Then I read some haiku, understood how to do them, and did them. It's really that simple. I didn't study about haiku. I think I just learned by osmosis.

Bill: She's a natural!

Richard: It does seem as if your approach to haiku is very intuitive.

Penny: Absolutely. I'm intuitive when I write haiku, although I'm also more aware now of some of the things that define haiku for me than I could name when I began. When I began I was just doing them and there they were. I knew in my tummy whether they succeeded or not.

Richard: In contrast to Penny's intuitive approach, it seems, Bill, as if you've been very interested in the use of language in haiku.

Bill: The thing that really impressed me—especially when contrasting what I saw in the Japanese with what I saw in Blyth's translations—was that the grammar of haiku in Japanese is really spare. Frequently there is no obvious grammatical connection from one segment of a poem to another. Or if there is one, it's ambiguous. For instance, *furu ike ya / kawazu tobikomu / mizu no oto* can be read either with *tobikomu* as the end of the sentence—the frog leaps in (and since you have the pond earlier, you assume that that's the pond the frog is leaping into). But then you have *mizu no oto. Tobikomu* can be attached grammatically to the water. So I translate it *old pond . . . / a frog leaps in / water's sound.* It doesn't have quite the same effect as the Japanese, but it does what the Japanese does in that the focus can be on the "sound"; "sound" is the primary noun, everthing else modifies and leads up to it.

Richard: So you get the image of the frog leaping into the *sound* of the water, not into the water itself?

Bill: Well, that's what I say in the English. The Japanese doesn't quite say that, but it's very close.

Penny: That's sort of like the poem I composed in Iga-ueno [Basho's birthplace] during our visit a few days ago: *arriving home / my feet / dust on the road.*

Richard: When you wrote that haiku you mentioned it as having come from "somewhere" [perhaps as a personal, psychic identification with Basho returning home three centuries earlier]. How does the psychic and the mystical fit into your work?

Penny: It seems that I have many voices. Some of them I recognize as my own, and others I have no idea where they come from. It's what I call my AM and my FM channel. My AM channel is the everyday me, the poem that I am consciously constructing about something I have experienced or consciously fantasized. The FM poem sometimes comes so fast it falls out of the pen. Of course, I may look at it with an AM eye later and see if I want to shape it or not.

Richard: What actually comes to you is not the language, but the image, and then you put that into the language?

Penny: Well, I think they come simultaneously. I'm definitely seeing the landscape. It's like I'm watching a movie. I see as if watching a slow-motion movie what's going on, but I'm hearing words at the same time. I can deliberately access that, as I have done more than once. I can sometimes feel that it may be coming from the spirit of Basho or the spirit of Emily Dickinson. But who knows? Or it can just be coming from the deeper layer of myself that knows more than I do. I've *dreamed* poems. I've dreamed entire texts.

Bill: I've seen her wake up and furiously scribble in a notebook, trying to remember before the writing fades from her mind.

Penny: The problem is that after you dream it, if you haven't retained it or if you haven't dreamed the entire poem, you're stuck with having to finish it while you're awake.

Richard: Bill, you mentioned being interested in Zen. Does any of what Penny's been talking about influence your work? In other words, are you coming at haiku more from the language, or as Penny seems to be doing, more from the image, more from the intuition?

Bill: Part of it for me is that I have an interest in literary history, particularly in influences and how they flow and what not. So on the one hand, the initial hook for haiku for me was the business of the language. As for this business with Zen, I have problems with Blyth's position now and I've had them for years, because a haiku is really a poem. And when he goes on about a haiku not being a poem, he's crazy. A haiku is a constructed object. It's an *art*-ifact. It's a fact made by art.

Penny: See, I don't think what I just described has anything to do with Zen.

Richard: Well, not directly. I'm thinking more just in general terms of the mystical, the intuitive.

Bill: The *aha!* The *aha* experience, if you want to talk about it that way. Or the epiphany, if you want to use Joyce's term. Sure, I think many, although not all, good haiku may have their origin in some kind of little click that hits you in the head.

Richard: Sometimes called the "haiku moment."

Bill: Exactly. First hearing Basho's frog poem was like *that* [slaps his hands]. Some of the poems I've written were like that. But with others, the experience of writing the poem became a process unto itself and it was a very involved process, compared to the supposedly "simple" result. In at least a few cases, the poem ends up creating its own previously-not-existing experience. This is a "made-up" haiku, if you will. Most people regard that as a pejorative. But I don't regard that as a pejorative, provided there is an essential honesty about the elements that you're combining and the richness of the new experience you create for yourself in that combination.

Penny: Well, that's an intuitive thing.

Richard: In this case, the source being the imagination?

Bill: Imagination and memory, a mixture. One of the things we've done in teaching haiku to kids is to make them aware that there are at least three sources for haiku in your life. One of them is the here-and-now, which is perhaps the most common source in the experience of most people who write haiku on a regular basis. But there is also memory. When I first started writing haiku I immediately recognized that I had many, many memories from childhood, from young adulthood, that would be appropriate to encapsulate or somehow capture in a haiku. You try to focus the language so sharply that it will assist you in recreating some touch of that experience and hopefully also communicate some elements that may be meaningful to others as well. I think that the process of constructing a haiku, on the one hand, is practically like building a memory aid; on the other, it is building something that will create a paradigm that can be shared.

Richard: Direct experience, memory, and what was the third?

Bill: Fantasy.

Penny: I would say the same thing—the unknown.

Bill: I use imagination to mean all of those. To look at something and to make the image in your mind is imagination, as well as to remember. Even fantasy is a subdivision of imagination.

Penny: Who knows? My unknown may be a form of memory.

Richard: From the collective unconscious?

Penny: That, or reincarnation.

Bill: You get to the point where you get irritated with those who try to pin down which type of thing it is, because those are empty categories. It's experience, it's given. Whether it's given in the sense that it's dropped in your mind from who-knows-where or in the sense of the growing ability to bring words to an experience that you've been trying to capture, it's still given.

Penny: Yes, because when I wrote *the monkey's face / between my hands / winter twilight* I felt it. I lived it. I held the monkey's face between my hands. I remembered it. I did it. And yet I've never done it.

Richard: We talked about the idea of a haiku not expressing the emotion a writer has, but rather as objectively presenting something.

Bill: I have an experiment that I conduct with classes when I try to make this point. I stand in front of the class and I say very slowly, "Sad . . . sad . . . sad"—I've got tears in my eyes. The kids are all laughing! I say, "Why are you laughing?" And it's because there's no stimulus. There's nothing there to make you feel sad except a person emoting at you, and that doesn't work. It's not honest.

Penny: I do it another way. I do it the 5-7-5 way [sing-songy]: *on the way to school / a dead cat was in the road / I felt very sad.*

Bill: Right! So *what?*

Penny: But then I quote Michael McClintock's poem to the students: *dead cat . . . / open mouthed / to the pouring rain.* The kids all go *uuggghh!* And I say, "See!"

Bill: —*See,* I didn't tell you how to feel. You were allowed to have your own feelings. That's the point. As a poet I don't want to control your feelings; I want to give you some possibility of experience and let you have your own feelings.

Penny: Some feel genuinely sad because they've lost their own cat. Others think, oh how gross. There's a whole range of responses. I'll say, "You can't see a 'beautiful.'" If you want to put into your poem the line "The sky was beautiful last night," I'll say right to your face, "So what?" What does that mean? All you're doing is telling me how you felt about it. You're not making me see that sky.

Bill: We have to modify this to a certain extent. It's true that there are some classical haiku, and in particular some haiku of Basho's, which name emotions. But they invariably do so in a context that gives you more than just the naming of the emotion. You get some sense of a passage of time or a physical place or whatever, that will provide you with some understanding of what it is that motivates that emotion. Without that, you're dead.

Richard: How do you think this relates to poems written out of the individual ego in contrast to poems written out of the collective ego?

Tadashi: I think this goes back to the issue of Zen and language. Zen has to do with not just clearing the mind, but when we talk about clearing the mind, the content of the mind itself is ego. So if you try to clear the ego or clear the self, what's left? That's super-ego or super-self. Clearing your mind is not just becoming empty. When we interpret that level of experience in terms of a system of symbols—and we definitely need symbols to express that—description doesn't work, because that domain of experience rejects analytical representation. So we just have to directly point at it. And in order to do that, we still have to use symbols, the language. But the language is so made that it can only represent analytical concepts. So there is a conflict here. We choose to either use the symbol in an ordinary way or to use it in a particular way, as a kind of meta-proposition. Since propositions reflect our analytical understanding of the world, we just go back to that and get closer to the original stage of experience. In that sense we can get rid of this judgmental attitude, which has to do with the personality or more personal activities of the mind. A lot of people think that haiku is just a shorter form of a proposition, but that's not right. Brevity is not the only issue; we're talking about an entirely different level of language.

Bill: When you say "proposition" you mean a statement *about* reality.

Tadashi: A propositional form consists of a subject and a predicate. The subject states what we're aware of; the predicate may describe its nature or the nature of our understanding.

Bill: It's action or its qualities.

Tadashi: But we can't really express this predicate content without our mental activities—judgment or self or ego. So we try not to do it. Also, the propositional level is much more abstract than the deeper, intuitive level of understanding. So why don't we get down to this more intuitive use of our symbol system? I think haiku is a form of symbol which is equivalent to that level of experience.

Bill: So we're driving the symbols closer to the things they represent—closer to an experiential level rather than an intellectual (or a propositional) level. That ultimately for me is the *sine qua non* of poetry in the broadest sense. We want poetry that will create in the reader some sense of direct contact with experience, rather than a veil between the reader and experience, which is what I think a lot of modern poetry is about.

Richard: A lot of modern poetry is a veil between the author and the audience?

Bill: Exactly. I think so.

Richard: Deliberate obscurantism?

Penny: Not always deliberate.

Bill: Whether it's deliberate or not, I think there are two ends of it. On one end there's a kind of sloppy, naive, untrained group of writers who simply don't know how to communicate experience. So what they try to communicate is their own subjective response to the experience, and they get into bathos. On the other end are people like Ashbery who become tied up in the linguistic trap in itself. He's literally trying to destroy meaning. That is his effort; that's what he says he wants to do. And so whenever he finds three consecutive syntactical units that seem to make sense, he throws one away and turns in a new direction—not in the way that renku does, where the movement and flow shifts like a river or a stream coming down over a bunch of rocks, hitting a rock and moving in a new direction, but rather jumps out of the riverbed and goes off into some other area. I find, in fact, the presentation of work by the supposed professional poets—

Richard: Such as Ashbery?

Bill: —such as Ashbery—more irritating than the naive writings of, for example, adolescents. Adolescents can learn to find the experience they want to focus on with proper training. The main problem the adolescent has is that the concept of poetry in their minds tends to mean the expression of emotion. They don't understand that emotion can only be expressed by connection with an event, with experience.

Tadashi: That's the second point I was going to make related to Zen or to the issue of ego. The conventional Zen aesthetics of the Heian Period said that beauty was the balance between the subjective self and the objective world. Then, from the end of the Heian Period up to the Edo period they became more and more sensitive towards the objective representation of the subjective content. You can see in classic *waka,* for example, in the first half the subjective feeling is expressed with words such as "sad." Then in the bottom half, they present a subjective snapshot of the physical object. The two are superimposed, the subjective feeling and objective world, trying to achieve a balance or interpretation in terms of the subjective content.

Bill: What Eliot said with the theory of the objective correlative is that we have these emotions and we look out into the world for objectification—for objects, events, whatever—which will somehow project that emotion into the poetry and into the mind of the reader.

Richard: We look for something inside the landscape that will become a symbol of the feeling that we have?

Bill: Yes, following Eliot. But my feeling is that in the haiku process we more typically look at the landscape and then it generates feelings. So then we look for words which will capture the essential elements of the landscape that created the feeling, rather than looking for elements in the landscape to reflect the feeling. So I'm wondering if *waka* is closer to Eliot's idea.

Tadashi: Well, if there is a split between the object and subject, then I can still talk about the objective correlative. Now the issue of truth comes

Penny Harter

The Way Home

There is a way home.
It runs through the cornfields beneath the stars.
It rises like a river to wash the apple trees below the barn.
If you are careful you will not disturb the snakes
who curl in the tall weeds
beside the grassy path your feet have known.

Sometimes in the distance
you will see the others,
silhouettes on moonlit hills
carrying hoes over their shoulders,
returning from their fields
even as you go to yours,
sure-footed as a goat
down the stubbled rows toward sleep.

When you climb to the graveyard on the hillside,
stop among the old ones,
take off your clothes,
lie down on the earth,
your head in the shadows the moon throws
between tombstones, and begin
to count the stars in the Milky Way.

You will run out of numbers.
You will run out of words.
You will forget how to talk to the sky.
You will forget where you have come from,
or where you are going.
You will only know that you are light
among the stars,
and that cornfields spiral out from you
on every side, shining corn
as far as you can see—
even over the edge of the world,
that dark circle you have found
at last.

up. Haiku and waka have to be based on truth. That is, this connection between the object and subject has to be real.

Bill: So it doesn't make much difference which way it goes, from feeling to object or from object to feeling, as long as the connection is real?

Tadashi: Yes, as far as it is real, it is the expression of self-feeling. A good poem has an object which has an absolutely necessary connection with the feeling. That is universal, and among a community. So perhaps everybody may feel the same.

Richard: You used the word "community" there and I find that interesting. Because it's not a purely subjective gush of the emotion that the individual poet has, but it's rather connecting up with emotions that a group of readers or an audience or members of a community would have.

Bill: Another one of the irritating trends in any given period is the "hermetic" trend, where the poetry may be attractive, may have well-constructed verses, and may have interesting images, but the meaning that is there for the writer is so different from the literal presentation that the reader is, again, somehow being closed out. We have examples of that from ancient Chinese poetry as well as from twentieth-century American and British poetry. Certainly a lot of surrealist poetry is like that. There may be Jungian tendencies to go for what people would think of—perhaps what the authors would think of—as archetypes. The archetypes which Jung proposes may well exist, but if you start playing with those in ways that don't communicate, then they don't communicate and you're cutting yourself off from the community. One of the biggest blights on poetry, to me, is the period in the eighteenth century, both in England and America, where there was a tendency to make light verse about serious things. When you think about Alexander Pope, the Connecticut wits, and people like that, poets were practically writing doggerel about the most important questions of life. They were not examining these questions from the point of view of deep personal angst and questioning and trying to understand the world, but rather simply reorganizing platitudes.

Richard: Do you see poets today doing something similar?

Bill: I think what happened is that poetry's popularity was rising—poetry in the sense of the individual poet who writes a poem and then shares it through the medium of publication—into that period, then turned. The Romanticism which followed had its day, but it died out. When you get through all that, you find poets more and more cutting themselves off from the community, focusing more on their own inner processes, and not seeing themselves as having the function of the voice of the community. In the West it's not the same idea of community as in Japan, nor is it the same relationship of the poet to the community. But you still have the basic sense that the poet has a mission with respect to the community. That goes back to tribal culture. There's also a community of experience which is not just a matter of this particular group in this place and time having a collective sensibility, but we are connected to others in other times and places. One of the attractions of traditional Japanese poetry, for me at least, is that, even though with haiku we work separately, there is a community of experience which is shared, and a community of tradition. You feel yourself connected to something larger than your own poem at this moment.

Tadashi: I think this concept of community is best represented by the season words in haiku.

Richard: As being something that everyone can readily understand, appreciate, and share?

Penny: Everyone in *Japan.*

Bill: Well, not even everyone in Japan, but everyone in the community of haiku poets.

Penny: In the community that recognizes and shares that view.

Tadashi: But even in the States people would understand it. Although your season words are not organized yet, they will be.

Bill (laughing): It's coming!

Tadashi: You're already doing it.

Bill: Yes, we're doing it.

Penny: The difference between Bill and me in this, though, is that he wants to do that, he sees the importance of doing that, and he pays attention to doing that when he writes his haiku. I back off from it. I don't want to hear about it. Just let me write my poem! And if there's a season word in it, wonderful; and there probably will be because I'm going to be attuned to the nature and time that I'm in. But I really don't want to see any lists, thank you. Keep them far away from me.

Tadashi: Yes, stick with that purely empirical approach and, if your mind has reason, some day your concept of season will find a kind of uniformity.

Penny: Well, perhaps. But I don't want to know about it. I just want to write my poems!

Bill: Well, there's a problem. To me the *saijiki* [a dictionary of season words used in haiku] is simply a codification of a set of otherwise informally agreed-upon understandings. This takes place, of course, over generations. It doesn't happen in one week. We notice that we tend to write poems about frogs in the spring. We notice that mosquitoes are particularly pestiferous at a certain time of year, so when we write about mosquitoes, that's a poem of *that* time of year. This sensibility builds and after awhile you find you've named 98% of the world's natural phenomena and they fit into these perceptions.

Penny: Where that becomes important to me is if I want my poem to be appreciated by someone who has that viewpoint.

Bill: Then you're knocking on the door of that community.

Penny: And I hope it falls into one of these categories so that it can be received. But that is the *farthest* thing from my mind when I write a poem.

Tadashi: My hypothesis of the season word is that the world has reason and the universe has a reason.

Penny: No, it does not!

Tadashi: If it has a reason—

Penny: It doesn't have to have a reason.

Tadashi: —and if our mind is in tune to it, and if we think our mind has reason, and if in finding out all the laws of the world, of the universe, we think all the things scientists are finding out have regularity and universality—you believe the scientists' theory of the world, right? You believe Einstein?

Penny: I don't care. It doesn't matter to me at all. What I know about the nature of reality from my own experience is that categories, names, codifications, mean nothing!

Tadashi: But the earth still goes around. The earth doesn't care if you know it or not. It's still there.

Bill: This is why I think it's a very legitimate activity to look at poems by Westerners who are not attuned to the *saijiki,* who don't even know it exists, and to see if I can find in those poems phrases which literally translate into elements which are recognized in the *saijiki.* And when they are, say *aha!* For me, and certainly for Japanese readers of the haiku tradition, a certain poem will appear to be a poem of autumn, spring, or whatever season it is. That doesn't mean I restrict the poet—

Penny: You're building a bridge.

Bill: —and tell the poet you must have written the poem in that season. But it says to me that it's more enjoyable for me to give the poem that context. The beauty of the season word is that it immediately expands the meaning of this very short poem. It immediately provides an extra element of context which is not semantically in the poem. When I say "frog" to a ten-year-old American kid, it could be the latter end of August, which traditionally is more or less the middle of autumn in the Japanese haiku sensibility. But nonetheless, when I read "frog" in a haiku, I'm going to think spring because I know that most poems about frogs in the haiku tradition have to do with spring.

Penny: I understand what you're saying, but it just doesn't enter into my mind when I'm writing.

Tadashi: Understanding and practice are different, I think. I can't explain how I ride a bicycle, but I ride it.

Bill: A physicist could give a very complete explanation, but maybe the physicist couldn't ride a bike, though!

Penny: Obviously society needs both. There's a wonderful book called *The Medium, The Mystic, and The Physicist* by LeShan which talks about how the outer fringes of mystical experience and the outer fringes of physics research are both coming up with the same things, but they're just putting different names on them. The physicist codifies on the basis of his knowledge of physics and the mystic doesn't care to. But if pressed, the mystic will describe his or her experience. You find that you can take some—most—of the elements of the mystic's experience and correlate them with some of the most advanced theories of astrophysics. The mystic speaks of timelessness, and the physicist will have a further development of Einstein's theory, or whatever. But frankly, I don't think the mystic cares. It's not relevant.

Bill: You can't speak for all mystics, though. You can say that most mystics, perhaps, don't care. But there are some of us mystics who are very interested!

Richard: Don't you think the mystic has an obligation, though, to try to understand his or her experience to the extent possible, because that itself is a state of consciousness?

Tadashi: I think they have a responsibility toward the world.

Penny: Yes, but that doesn't involve understanding the physics of the thing. It involves living out on an experiential level the fruit of what you have experienced.

Tadashi: If there's only one mystic who can ride a bicycle in this world, he'll have to teach others how to ride it.

Penny: You can't teach it—

William J. Higginson

Surfing on Magma

Try to understand it
as riding a wave
on the planet's crust,
cast like bread
on molten waters.

Some day a fish will come,
open its steaming mouth,
and take us home
to the bottom of the lake.
The only hooks it knows
are apogee and perigee
pulling each satellite back
to the blazing core.

Tadashi: Well, obviously you have to help.

Bill: Maybe there will be some mystics who are very open to an investigation of the physics of mysticism. There are Zen Buddhist monks who have participated in psychometric experiments to try and discover what is the actual electrical status of their body—not just their brain, but their whole body—during deep meditation. And that's very important to them.

Penny: To get back to the discussion of haiku, to me, a list of season words doesn't mean community. If I were to live in Japan and wanted my haiku to be integrated into the community of Japanese haiku writers, I would study up on season words and use them more. I would want that sense of community. But what I'm after communicating more is the essence of that moment and the thing-in-itself, whatever *it* needs to be at a given moment. If it doesn't shoot a season word at me, I don't want to clutter my mind with having to remember to use a season word or anything like that. I just want the thing to come into me and come out of me.

Bill: But for many the season word is a readily available tool for promoting that experience in their own practice.

Richard: What type of community, then, do you see developing in the United States for haiku?

Penny: There are a lot people interested in it. I don't feel a particular sense of *community* with any of them, though. Those whose haiku I really vibrate with and respect, I feel a sense of community with them.

Bill: The community of haiku poets is a ragtag bunch of people, most of whom don't know what the hell they're doing. That's as true in Japan as it is in the United States. But we're a part of that community, whether we want to be or not. You have a sense of community with people with whom you share a language base and with whom you share a perceptual base of the world. We have, first of all, the community of English-language people, and within that the subset of poets, and within that the subset of people involved with haiku. It's not a community in the sense of those you see every day and get to know personally. Rather it's a community of those who see and are struggling to apprehend the world in a way similar to yours.

Tadashi: The whole world is a community.

Penny: Sure it is, but that's different. I think that every living being is linked—the plants and the rocks and the animals and the planet itself. The haiku community, in the sense that Bill was using the term, is quite separate from the larger "poetry community" in the United States, although there are those few people who are in both. And, of course, within the larger poetry community, there are many polarities.

Richard: What kind of influence do you think haiku is going to have on poetry in the future?

Bill: To me the relationship between haiku and, quote, "poetry" is a non-issue. That relationship has already been demonstrated in the histories of individual poets, in the Imagistic movement that saw a certain aspect of haiku and tried to incorporate that into their work. What is significant as a trend is that more and more people are writing haiku now than have ever written haiku before—everywhere, even in Japan. There are groups of poets in Yugoslavia, Belgium, Holland, and Germany who write haiku regularly. There are contests in newspapers in Senegal and Morocco. People are showing an interest now in places that have never shown an interest before. And now Japan is much more open to the possibility of haiku in the West being something that Japanese can accept as relating positively to their tradition. There's a sense in which the popularity of haiku is part of a reactionary phenomenon against the increasing impact of man-made and earth-destructive technology on our lives. People are looking for ways to touch each other and to touch life in a meaningful way. So to a certain extent haiku may be something of a fad and may not have real depth to it. But on the other hand, haiku forces you to pay attention to your environment. You can't write haiku without seeing what's in front of you. You may do it poorly. You may not see very well. You may not write very good haiku. But you're going to have to, sooner or later, pay attention to what you're looking at. So I think this is hopeful for a shift in the application of technology to the environment. Maybe if a higher percentage of people cherish some minute aspect of their physical environment—collectively if we can get enough people to join that bandwagon so to speak—that may help each of us to be more conscious of preserving the environment. The other great threat to the environment is obviously our incredible self- and mutual destructive nature in terms of warfare and lack of understanding. I appreciate more and more deeply the need for sharing between human beings—

Penny: Absolutely.

Bill: —the need for that wider sense of community. I don't care if it's based on a *saijiki* or not! What is relevant ultimately is the basis of the everyday experience that has a small importance in our lives, that is more typical than any other important experience in our lives. You don't stand up too many times in front of people wearing long black gowns getting something put on your head or something shoved in your hand. You don't stand up too many times being told you're going to receive a fantastic promotion or a new job. You don't stand up too many times and receive a gold watch as you retire. But you stand up every day out of your bed and look at the world.

Penny: That's what history really is.

Bill: Yes, the *real* history.

Marginalia: *notes on Japan and abroad*

Lynx, a new quarterly journal of renga, is being published by Terri Lee Grell, at POB 169, Toutle, WA 98649 USA. $2 for sample copy and guidelines.

Tengu Natural Foods: Freshly Baked Whole Wheat Bread, Sugar Free Granola, Mexican Foods, 100% Natural Organic Peanut Butter, Herbal Teas, Maple Syrup, Whole Wheat Flour, Blue Corn Chips—and a variety of organic and healthy foods. Write or call for a free catalog: Inari-cho 11-14, Hanno-shi, Saitama-ken 357 (tel. 0429-74-3036).

New Age Video Events—an ongoing program of videos being shown in Harajuku, followed by discussions on the growth of consciousness and respect for all forms of life. Japanese/English. For a schedule and more info call René at 03-707-9257 or Takako at 03-705-5060. They also have info on public appearances and private sessions with psychic channel Rev. Neville Rowe in June and July.

Zyzzyva, a West Coast American art/literary magazine currently seeks new translations of modern Japanese literature/poetry for future Japan issue. Non-mainstream. Send excerpts, query, SASE to Leza Lowitz, 3-6-8 Yanaka, Taito-ku, Tokyo 110.

Book Reviewers Needed! Short (750-word), paid reviews on recent Japanese literature/poetry for the University of Hawaii's literary magazine, *Manoa.* Send letter, clips, ideas, SASE to Leza Lowitz, 3-6-8 Yanaka, Taito-ku, Tokyo 110.

Sirius Productions, a Kyoto-based professional theatre company, is planning to present Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* in Tokyo, Osaka, Kobe and Kyoto in July 1990 and is currently looking for sponsors. For more info on the group contact Dan Furst, Artistic Director at 822 Bomon-cho, Bukkoji Omiya Nishi-iru Sagaru, Shimogyo-ku, Kyoto 600, or phone 075-822-2744.

Poets in the Kyoto area meet regularly with Cid Corman to discuss their work. For details contact Barry MacDonald at 075-712-7445.

Chikyu Saisozo (Renewing the Earth), Japan's Bilingual Journal of Gaian Thought and Global Activism, began publication following the Media for the New Millennium Conference held in Kyoto this past April. For info write to the Center for Global Action, Kachofugetsukan, 9-12 Ichiban-cho, Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo 102.

Books, etc.

The Dance of the Dust on the Rafters, Selections from Ryojin-hisho. Translated by Yasuhiko Moriguchi and David Jenkins. Broken Moon Press, P.O. Box 24584, Seattle, Washington 98124 USA. Ancient folk songs of the common people—a Japanese classic.

B. R. Nagpal, *Varied Textures.* Writers Worskshop Books, 162/92 Lake Gardens, Calcutta 700 045 India. One of over 900 titles available from the press.

Atsuo Nakagawa, *Tanka in English: In Pursuit of World Tanka,* Second Edition. New Currents, 22-12, Koraku 2-chome, Bunkyo-ku, Tokyo 112 Japan. Covers theory/history, ancient/modern, Japanese/English tanka.

Vernon Frazer, *Sex Queen of the Berlin Turnpike.* 132 Woodycrest Drive, East Hartford, Connecticut 06118 USA. Good mix of poetry and jazz at 33-1/3 rpm.

Mountain Tasting: Zen Haiku by Santoka Taneda. Translated by John Stevens. Weatherhill, 7-6-13 Roppongi, Minato-ku, Tokyo 106. A welcome third printing of one of haiku's most unconventional practitioners.

NETWorks: *recommended reading from Canada*

Matrix, c.p. 100, Ste-Anne-de-Bellevue, Québec H9X 3L4, Canada. Editor: Linda Leith. Biannual. Overseas sub: $15. "New fiction, poetry, interviews, translations and book reviews" and a broader cultural focus which includes "travel writing, polemical essays and articles on theatre, on film, on television. . . ."

The Plowman, Box 414, Whitby, Ontario L1N 5S4 Canada. Editor: Tony Scavetta. Bimonthly. Overseas sub: $37. International journal publishing "all holocaust, religion, didactic, ethnic, eclectic, love, and other. . . . We see the poet as a philosopher and lean toward poems of social commentary" (including "environmental issues"). *Literary Markets* warns, however, "If you send . . . manuscripts or money, it's at your own risk."

Tabula Rasa, P.O. Box 1920, Station B, London, Ontario N6A 5J4 Canada. Editors: Paul Laxon, Gord Harrison, John Kirnan. Bimonthly. Overseas sub: $25. Features short fiction, poetry and artwork from new and established writers and artists.

Secrets from the Orange Couch, 2508—34th Ave. NW, Calgary, Alberta TZL 0V5 Canada. Rotating editors. Triannual. Sub: $10. "New and innovative poetry and fiction."

The Conspiracy of Silence, P.O. Box 153, Station P, Toronto, Ontario, M5S 2S7 Canada. Editors: Stephen Pender and Michael Holmes. Overseas sub: $10. Energetic!

—*Chad Norman*