

*This Week's Montage*

—*Lifefulness*

*Comparative Haiku*

selected by

*Allan Burns*

In the coming week we confront grim anniversaries, the atomic bombings of Hiroshima on August 6<sup>th</sup> and Nagasaki on August 9<sup>th</sup>. By the end of 1945, more than two hundred thousand people had died as a result of these attacks, from the initial explosions and then radiation poisoning. Many others died in the following years of cancer—and, overwhelmingly, the victims were civilians. To date, these remain the only nuclear attacks ever launched against human beings. It so happens that a major pioneering figure of English-language haiku, James W. Hackett, was born on August 6<sup>th</sup>; he turned sixteen the day the first bomb was dropped. Noting this coincidence, Hackett observed, “I have always hoped that my poetry would act as a healing between our two cultures. And I believe this has been the case.” This week it seems appropriate to emphasize a defining haiku characteristic, “Lifefulness”—always to be found among Hackett’s lists of suggestions for writing haiku in English. This gallery celebrates his eightieth birthday and his seminal contribution to English-language haiku. His work here is flanked by that of the influential translator R. H. Blyth, whom Hackett has identified as his “mentor” (*A Traveller’s Haiku*, pg. 33), and by that of poet/editor/drummer/gardener Christopher Herold, who in the dedication to *A Path in the Garden* thanks “Jim and Pat Hackett, for taking me in when I was in need, and trusting me with their fabulous garden.” Here is one of the lifeful continuities of our haiku tradition: from Blyth to Hackett to Herold—in memory of the past, in celebration of the present, and in hope for the future.

*R. H. Blyth* (1898-1964)

*James W. Hackett* (b. 1929)

*Christopher Herold* (b. 1948)

In one single cry,  
The pheasant has swallowed  
The broad field.

The sun  
In the eye of the falcon  
That returned to my hand.

In the dawn,  
Whales roaring;  
A frosty sea.

Ebb-tide;  
The crab is suspicious  
Of the foot-print.

A trout leaps;  
Clouds are moving  
In the bed of the stream.

A fallen flower  
Flew back to its branch!  
No, it was a butterfly.

I walk over it alone  
In the cold moonlight—  
The sound of the bridge.

from *Haiku* (Everyman’s Library, 2003)  
the translated poets are: 1 Yamei; 2 Tairo; 3  
Gyodai; 4 Rofu; 5 Onitsura; 6 Moritake; 7 Taigi

Bitter morning:  
sparrows sitting  
without necks.

The fleeing sandpipers  
turn about suddenly  
and chase back the sea!

The last of winter  
melting in a mountain lake:  
this morning’s moon.

Half of the minnows  
within this sunlit shallow  
are not really there.

Deep within the stream  
the huge fish lie motionless,  
facing the current.

A cloud of bugs  
busily going nowhere  
in a ray of sun.

The peak looms above,  
but roots and rocks in the trail  
hold the eye

1 from *American Haiku* 1.1, 1963  
2–6 from *Haiku Poetry* (Japan Publications, 1968)  
7 from *A Traveler’s Haiku* (The Hokuseido Press,  
2004)

bird shadow  
from tree shadow  
to fence shadow

nearing the roses  
swallowtail  
from glide to flutter

no ripples—  
from under the lily pad  
a bubble

first light—  
the deep print of a sole  
among crocuses

spring dusk—  
pouring soil from my shoes  
back into the garden

cloud shadow  
long enough to close  
the poppies

dragonfly . . .  
a stream of thought pauses  
on the stone buddha

from “Within the Walls” from *A Path in the Garden* (Katsura Press, 2000)

*Previous Montages*

*July 19: Moonstruck*  
*July 26: Birthdays (II)*

*Next Week's Montage:*

*The Haiku Capital of the Midwest*

Bill Pauly  
Raymond Roseliep  
Francine Banwarth