

Shangri-La: James W. Hackett's Life in Haiku¹

Charles Trumbull

An abandoned board —
shaping, sunning, becoming
a Shangri-la for bugs.
[Hackett, *Bug Haiku*]

Introduction

Among the more problematic poets associated with the beginnings of the American haiku movement is James W. Hackett. He catapulted to international fame in 1964 when a haiku of his took top honors among thousands submitted in the first Japan Air Lines haiku competition. Hackett, a keen student of Zen, learned of haiku from a book of R.H. Blyth's given to him by a friend.² Hackett sent his work to Blyth, with whom he had begun a correspondence grounded in both men's conviction that Zen and haiku are inseparable. Blyth was impressed and included a selection of Hackett's work in his 1964 two-volume *History of Haiku*. Four years later a major collection of Hackett's work was published in Japan. At this point, however, Hackett virtually disappeared, apparently publishing nothing and making no public appearances for fifteen years. He surfaced briefly in 1993 at the time his collection of haiku was republished in America, then submerged again for another ten years until he began to become moderately active in non-American haiku circles. In fact, Hackett early on was aloof from the American haiku community. He was never a member of the Haiku Society of America or any local California haiku group and has not published a single new haiku in any American haiku journal since the early 1970s.

What are we to make of such an enigmatic figure? Hackett was clearly one of the founding fathers of English-language haiku and was recognized as a pioneer of American haiku by figures as august as R.H. Blyth and Harold G. Henderson. At the time of his greatest fame, in the mid-1960s, his haiku were unquestionably among the best being written outside Japan. Over the years, bits and pieces of Hackett's haiku aesthetic became known, and they have been gathered into an essay entitled "That Art Thou," which was published on Hackett's Web site in recent years. He never aggressively promoted his Zen-infused view of what true haiku poetry should be, and because of his long, largely self-imposed isolation Hackett's own haiku were marginalized. In the meantime most Western haiku poets rejected the notion of an ineluctable relationship between Zen and haiku.

In this essay I would like to bring out the high points in Hackett's biography and bibliography, discuss his haiku aesthetic, and indicate some of the salient characteristics of his haiku poetics and diction. I should stress at the outset that I have never met Hackett nor have I corresponded with him. This assessment of his life and works is based on the public record—his books, journal publications, and his Web site—augmented by secondary sources and observations from haiku poets who have known him personally or worked with him on haiku projects.

Bio-bibliography³

James William Hackett was born 6 August 1929, in Seattle, Wash. He attended the University of Washington, where, as he says, he earned an "honors degree in history and philosophy."⁴ He later obtained a graduate degree in art history from the University of Michigan.

A serious accident in his youth resulted in a redirection of Hackett's life. Details are fuzzy, and Hackett's own descriptions move quickly from sparse facts to mysticism and even melodrama, as in this excerpt from a 2002 speech:

[A]t this time, I suffered a life-threatening injury that profoundly changed my values and direction. This trauma was an apocalyptic experience in which I met death with each breath, and every live moment was an

epiphany. In a baptism of blood I became directly aware that the Way of Zen and Tao was ever present, in a NOW that is Eternal. Having survived, I sought redemption for taking life for granted. I resolved to somehow express my new-found love of life, and to honor the omnipresent miracle of Creation.⁵

Or again:

Spiritually reborn after a serious accident in the 1950s, my reverence for the reality of this eternal NOW led me to a Tao-Zen way of life. Finding Japanese haiku could best express my new-found love of this moment—directly perceived—I began to adapt it to English. For me, haiku has always been more than a poetic form, or even a literary pursuit, but rather a Way of living awareness—an art of Zen.⁶

It seems most likely that shortly after he graduated from college, Hackett was involved in a motorcycle accident and was thrown through a plate glass window. Severe lacerations developed sepsis and caused him to be hospitalized for a lengthy period and slightly restricted in motor skills thereafter. In any event, this event marked his turn toward the Tao, Zen, and, later, haiku.

Hackett married, probably in the early 1950s. His wife Patricia was a music teacher with interests in musical anthropology. She taught music at all levels, elementary through university, until her retirement as professor of music at San Francisco State University.⁷ They had no children, but Hackett was always surrounded by numerous pets—dogs, cats, birds, fish—that became frequent subjects for his haiku. I have found no evidence that Hackett ever held a salaried job; he seems to have been largely supported by his wife.

Hackett's residence was usually given as San Francisco in the 1950s and '60s. Later he and Patricia lived in what he dubbed a "garden house" he named "Zen View" at La Honda, California, in the Santa Cruz Mountains midway between San Jose and the Pacific. Nearby lived three other poets, Christopher Thorsen, David LeCount, and Christopher Herold. The latter worked in Hackett's garden for a period of time. After Patricia's retirement, in about 2000, the Hacketts moved to Maui, Hawaii, settling—where else?—in the village of Haiku. Among their neighbors there is poet W.S. Merwin.

Early Work

Hackett was encouraged along his path into Zen and haiku by two of the founding fathers of English-language haiku, R.H. Blyth and Harold G. Henderson. Blyth especially was a strong proponent of a close connection between haiku and Zen. In the biographical sketch he provided for the first edition of *The Haiku Anthology*,⁸ Hackett wrote that he discovered haiku in 1954 through the writings of R.H. Blyth and Alan Watts. Apparently by the late 1950s Hackett had written a number of haiku and began to look for opportunities to publish them. Most likely through an announcement in the *Saturday Review*, Hackett learned of plans to publish a new journal, to be called *American Haiku* and be the first publication outside Japan to be devoted to haiku.⁹ Hackett's work was very much in evidence in the first issues of *American Haiku*: 11 of his haiku were published in the first issue and 8 more in the second (both dated 1963). These included (in issue 1:1) these now-classic haiku that appeared in print for the first time:

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

Bitter morning
sparrows sitting
without necks.

and this one, which was awarded First Prize in the maiden issue:

Searching on the wind,
the hawk's cry

is the shape of its beak.

Relations with R.H. Blyth

Without question, Hackett's relationship with R.H. Blyth was the defining influence in his writing and haiku aesthetic. Hackett began to read Blyth's books in 1954, during his early studies of Zen, and at a certain point, probably in 1959 (Hackett writes that he was "not yet thirty"), he sent a letter to Blyth in Japan inviting a critique of his work. According to Hackett, he corresponded with R.H. Blyth for five years, until the spring of 1964.

Five letters from Blyth to Hackett are posted on Hackett's Web site.¹⁰ The one identified as "First Letter" is dated simply "late 1950's," and the Final Letter" is dated [April? 1964]. Blyth usually addressed him formally as "Mr. Hackett" and signed his own letters "RHB." To my knowledge Hackett has not made public any of his letters to Blyth. In one place he says that according to the family, Blyth did not retain his correspondence, so if Hackett did not keep copies himself, which seems likely, they may be lost. It is not clear how many letters the two men exchanged in these five years or with what regularity or frequency.

Hackett explains why he wrote to Blyth:

Significantly, it was not Blyth's awesome erudition or his intellectual genius that caused me to contact him. I did so out of respect for his spiritual-aesthetic approach to the haiku experience. Blyth possessed an acuity and spiritual understanding I found in no other translator....

After some six months of writing, I sent a collection of my haiku poems in English to Dr. Blyth, and in a cover letter told him that an unusual, Zen-revealing sentence in one of his books caused me to seek his counsel. His sentence read:

There's more significance in the sound of the nib I'm now writing with than anything I could say.

Already in the "First Letter," however, Blyth refers to "the volume you sent," suggesting that Hackett actually sent his manuscript at the very outset. In any event, in that letter Blyth proceeds to offer a rather stout critique of some of Hackett's haiku:

I feel that (the) one fault of your verses is that they contain too much material, that is, you must make them more simple. From this point of view, the following is excessively complicated and intellectual.

A bright quiet night;
Blown by the moon, a pine branch
Rests against the wall.

The first line is unnecessary. In the following there are too many epithets

The blocked line of ants
Broadened to brief chaos ... then
Smoothly went round.

Later, Blyth comments on

The wise child brought me
Such a precious birthday gift ...
This old withered orange

"Wise," and "Such," and "precious," and "old" are all worse than unnecessary.

Blyth plunged directly in to the 5-7-5 discussion, observing to the young poet, "The only thing to do, it seems to me, is something revolutionary for you,—either to forget the 5, 7, 5 in English, or do what the Japanese does, pad out the verse with meaningless syllables." In signing off, Blyth writes, "I suppose you are going to publish your verses. If so, I will be glad to go over them one by one, mutilating and disinfecting

and extirpating them.”

The second of the Blyth letters, dated 15 February 1960, that Hackett includes on his Web site suggests that Hackett had been circulating his haiku manuscript to publishers, but without success. “I too feel troubled at the fact that your works cannot be published at present. I myself believe in you and your haiku. As I have said before, I think your verses as good as, and sometimes better than those of the higher ranks of haiku poets in the past.” The last sentence of this paragraph certainly cheered Hackett. He used it in a composite of extracts from Blyth’s letters as endorsements for his later books. In this letter, moreover, Blyth wrote that he was “going to put the best of the verses ... at the end of my 5th volume of Haiku which I am working on now.” This became his two-volume *History of Haiku*.¹¹

A letter dated 31 May has “1964” in square brackets, apparently added by Hackett, but it must have been written a year or two earlier than 1964, if only because the “Last letter”—see below—was tentatively dated “[April? 1964].” This letter was sent to cover a collection, which Hackett says has not survived, of his haiku that Blyth had marked with symbols to indicate his reactions. Blyth’s intention to publish a selection of Hackett’s work in his *History of Haiku* was again mentioned, and an inkling was given as to why he was doing so:

I want to show people, I mean Japanese people, that there are Americans who can out-do them in their own field, when they have been shown how to play the game.... Or to put it another way, I would like to get rid of nationalism in culture as well as other things, and have Esquimaux play Othello and Hottentots excel in the organ fugues of Bach.

In Blyth’s last letter, tentatively dated by Hackett “April? 1964,” he wrote, “Your letter fortunately arrived in time to do what I suggested before, introduce your work in Volume II of The History of Haiku. This is all set in type, but after telephoning about it to Mr. Nakatsuchi [of Hokuseido Press], he was more than willing to have an appendix added....” The chronology of publication would suggest that Hackett’s final communication to Blyth was written within a few months before April 1964.

Hackett’s haiku, together with Blyth’s consideration of haiku and Zen in English-language poetry, appear in the last chapter of his *History of Haiku* (II:351–63). Blyth explained: “The following thirty [actually thirty-one] verses are chosen, not altogether at random, from a forthcoming book of haiku by J.W. Hackett of San Francisco. They are in no way imitations of Japanese haiku, nor literary diversions. They are (aimed at) the Zen experience, the realising, the making real in oneself of the thing-in-itself, impossible to rational thought, but possible, ‘all poets believe’ in experience.” Curiously, the format Blyth used for Hackett’s work was different from that for the Japanese haiku in the *History*. Hackett’s were set in all small caps. Why? Perhaps to call attention to these verses or differentiate them from “real” haiku? Four of the haiku selected by Blyth were among those that had been published in *American Haiku* 1:1 and 1:2, though this was not acknowledged in Blyth’s book.

The “forthcoming book of haiku” that Blyth had referred to saw print as Hackett’s *Haiku Poetry*,¹² a 5” x 7” paperback containing 150 haiku, including all but one of those that had appeared in the Blyth appendix. The book was published in 1964 by Hokuseido Press—Blyth’s publisher in Japan—and, as made clear in Blyth’s final letter to Hackett, Blyth had clearly used his influence to gain publication, a mark of his esteem for Hackett. There was some delay in the publication (as noted in *American Haiku* 2:1), as it was advertised and reviewed in *American Haiku* 2 as to be published in 1963. The brief review said in part: “[Hackett’s] wide representation in [*American Haiku* #1] established him as one of the foremost practitioner-authorities on haiku in English.” and went on to say that book was “necessary reading to anyone seriously interested in haiku in English.” The book was to be distributed by *American Haiku*.

I have dwelled at length on the chronology of the first publication of Hackett’s haiku because the events of 1963–64 caused a major rift between him and the editors of *American Haiku*, James Bull and Clement Hoyt, and probably the fledgling American haiku movement in general. In Blyth’s final letter to Hackett he consoled the young poet,

As for the foreword to your book itself, I am very willing to write one, but after reading Mr. XXX’s shocking letter, I feel that we should be imitating him if I scratch your back in public. I think your book should stand by

itself, and would be only weakened if the Archangel Michael wrote a foreword.

After I read XXX's letter, I felt miserable all day, not that I felt sorry for you, but for the fact that such a person exists. But still we know that all Kings and Emperors and Presidents and Prime Ministers and Heads of Universities and Companies and Popes and bishops and priests and even editors are liars and hypocrites and robbers, and, as Christ said, not one of these "rich" men shall set a foot into Heaven—so why feel miserable? You may say, "They all stand (or fall) together, so why should not we?" That's just the point, and just the difference between us and them. We stand each many by himself, in the style of Thoreau. (But I will write the foreword if you like, just as I sign my books for people as they like.)

The person designated as "XXX" was Clement Hoyt, who had taken over the editorship of *American Haiku* for the two 1964 issues. The recipient of Hoyt's letter is not entirely clear, but it seems that it went to Hackett, who sent a copy to Blyth. The letter may no longer exist (especially if the original was sent to Blyth), but certainly had to do with Hoyt's reaction to the news that Hackett had completed the deal to publish his book *Haiku Poetry* with Hokuseido. The manuscript had been developed in part with the help of the *American Haiku* editors, and they had agreed to publish this volume—it would have been their first book of haiku (as well as Hackett's, of course). *American Haiku* editor James Bull was deeply saddened by the experience, but Hoyt, a man known for his strong opinions and lack of reticence in expressing them, was furious at what he considered Hackett's double-dealing. Original haiku by Hackett were never again published in *American Haiku*—in fact, only one or twice were his haiku even used as examples in essays in the journal. Sportingly, Hackett's *Haiku Poetry* was mentioned among the recommended books of haiku through the 1964 issues (but as being published in 1963 by Hokuseido), and for one or two issues thereafter as being available from Japan Publications, Inc. or from the author directly.

Not only did Hackett no longer publish in *American Haiku*, with two small exceptions (17 poems that were included among a collection of 28 haiku in Leroy Kanterman's *Haiku West* issues 1:1, 2:1, and 2:1 (1967–69) and three haiku that accompanied an interview with Hackett in *Woodnotes* 30 [1996]), no new haiku of Hackett's appeared in any American haiku journal from 1964 on. He did start to publish again in non-American journals in the 1990s, but only after 25 years of silence.

A brief but balanced review by Gustave Keyser of Hackett's book *Haiku Poetry* appeared in *American Haiku* 3:1 (1965, 37). Keyser wrote, "Mr. Hackett successfully demonstrates that true haiku can be produced in English," and later, "For the most part, Hackett adheres to the objectivity, clarity, and simplicity he advocates; but sometimes his immersion in Zen mysticism leads him astray into statements marked by cultist subjectivity."

It was this devotion of Hackett's to Zen *over* haiku that was the crux of the argument between him and the *American Haiku* editors. Hoyt—himself a haiku and senryu poet and student of Zen under master Nyogen Senzaki since 1937, struck the next blow with a long essay in *American Haiku* 4:1 (1966, 20–28) titled "Zen in Haiku," which, without mentioning Hackett, was clearly aimed at him; rather the direct attack was targeted at Blyth. Hoyt warned against the fallacy that "weighty" scholarship had come to be understood as "profound" or "authoritative" and pointed out that of the ten books of haiku scholarship that had been published in English by that time, six fat tomes were by Blyth. Blyth's volumes were heavy with discussions of Zen in haiku, whereas the other scholars—Henderson (two books), Kenneth Yasuda, and the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science—devoted a few pages at most to the issue and generally took a very measured view of the influence of Zen on haiku and vice versa. Even Japanese Zen scholar D.T. Suzuki, a mentor of Blyth's and the person most credited with exposing the link between Zen and haiku, was not as extreme in linking the two as was Blyth. Hoyt went on to detail some of the confusing discrepancies between various of Blyth's explanation of the relationship between Zen and haiku, such as these, which he singled out from the Preface to the first volume of Blyth's *Haiku*, with page numbers in parentheses:

- "Haiku are to be understood from the Zen point of view" (iii)
- "the word 'Zen' is used in two different ways and the reader must decide for himself which is intended" (iii)
- "I understand Zen and poetry to be practically synonyms" (v)
- "haiku is haiku"

- “[Haiku] has little or nothing to do with poetry, so-called, or Zen, or anything else” (iv)
- “If we say then that haiku is a form of Zen, we must not assert that haiku belongs to Zen, but that Zen belongs to haiku. In other words, our notions of Zen must be changed to fit haiku, not vice-versa.” (v)
- “if there is ever imagined to be any conflict between Zen and the poetry of haiku, the Zen goes overboard” (v)
- haiku “is a way of life”; “it is a religion” (iv)
- “Haiku is a kind of satori” (vii)

Hoyt ends his essay as follows:

It is apparent that Blyth’s theories about Zen in haiku do not stand up. By their very nature, they cannot endure, except as others make him the High Hierophant of yet *another* sect of Zen (there are already several sects), the Patriarch of a new haiku-religion. Blyth’s monumental six-volume encyclopedia of haiku is invaluable—but *only* if the reader runs a mental blue pencil through every line about Zen, *except* when the word is used in a historical sense.

To the Zen masters for Zen; to the haiku authorities for haiku: by “weight,” by authority, by plain common sense, each separate study will lead to an inescapable conclusion—forget Zen in haiku.

This essay probably followed the general outlines of the letter two years earlier that had upset Hackett and Blyth so much. Hoyt’s attack on Blyth, a man whom Hackett idolized, was surely deeply distressing for the young American.

JAL Contest 1964

Nineteen sixty-four was also the year in which James Hackett was captured in the spotlight and suddenly became the top haiku poet in America. In that year, in connection with the 1964 Olympics, Japan Airlines organized a haiku contest in the United States. Seventeen radio stations in different parts of the country received a total of some 41,000 haiku entries from which the five best in each region were selected and submitted for a final judging. The contest was judged by Alan Watts, the preeminent Zen teacher and expert in America in the 1950s and ‘60s. Watts wrote in an introduction to *Haiku ‘64*, the JAL contest compendium that contained the 85 semifinal haiku, “Haiku represents the ultimate refinement of a long tradition in Far Eastern literature which derived its inspiration from Zen Buddhism.” Clearly Watts and Hackett were on the same wavelength in terms of haiku aesthetics.

Hackett first read Watts in the mid-1950s, and the two men were acquainted through correspondence at least as early as 1963. Hackett writes that he learned of Watts from the latter’s broadcasts on Pacifica radio and revealed in an interview that

[Watts] was always very kind to my work. Back in the 1960s, he read some of my haiku on his radio broadcast in San Francisco. He then suggested that haiku in English should make full use of poetic figures of speech, as is common in poetry. After the broadcast, I wrote Alan a respectful but critical letter explaining that the haiku moment, like Zen, is *not* a symbol of anything else, and should never be treated metaphorically or allegorically.¹³

Mention of Watts raises a larger question too: in what way was Hackett involved in the “San Francisco Renaissance,” one of the most important crucibles of American haiku? One would assume that a young man vitally interested in Zen and living in San Francisco in the years after World War II would have been deeply immersed in the group of seekers and poets that was exploring Oriental culture and religion at the time. I can find no indication, however, that Hackett participated actively in the San Francisco Zen Center or other aspects of the Bay Area intellectual scene.¹⁴ Watts certainly knew Hackett’s work, and Watts’s endorsement appears on the back cover of several of Hackett’s books. In the biographical sketch that he provided to *The San Francisco Haiku Anthology*¹⁵ Hackett dubbed Watts (and Henderson) “friends of my work,” but it is

unlikely that the two men were ever close. Thomas Merton, Aldous Huxley, and Jack Kerouac are among other literary and spiritual figures active in the period whose blurbs were used on Hackett's books but who similarly seem not to have enjoyed a personal relationship with him.

In any event, prompted by a desire to travel to Japan and meet Blyth, Hackett entered the JAL contest. The now-iconic haiku that was the National Winner was one he had not originally intended to submit, but was suggested by his wife:¹⁶

A bitter morning:
Sparrows sitting together
Without any necks.

As we noted before, this haiku had been published a year earlier in *American Haiku* 1:1 (1963) in a more succinct (and, in my opinion, superior) version:

Bitter morning
sparrows sitting
without necks.

It also appeared in Blyth's book in this version, but printed in small caps. Curiously, the text of this haiku that was included in Hackett's collection *Haiku Poetry* (1964) was the prizewinning version but with the Blyth-style indentations and small caps. Over the years at least seven versions, mostly with slight formatting or punctuation changes, have appeared.

The prize for winning the JAL contest was a trip to Japan, but this proved to be bittersweet compensation for Hackett. He later wrote, "I had been planning to pay my respects to Dr. Blyth in Japan. The ticket awarded by Japan Airlines in their first USA haiku contest was in my hand, and I eagerly looked forward to sharing silent tea with Blyth in his Oiso home. However, Dr. Blyth died on October 28, 1964, the same year in which I entered the JAL Haiku Contest primarily to visit him."¹⁷ According to the very laudatory biographical sketch of Hackett published by D.W. Bender in the online *World Haiku Review* (and included on Hackett's Web site),¹⁸ on his 1965 trip he also visited "Zen monasteries and temples, and their roshi and priests. Among them were Soen Nakagawa of Mishima City, and Sohaku Ogata of Kyoto who both felt that Hackett's 'way of haiku' was one of the best means for the true spirit of Zen to reach America."

Second only to his correspondence with Blyth, Hackett values his relations with Harold G. Henderson, from whom he received some 85 letters from 1960 to 1974. Bender writes, "Hackett also corresponded with American haiku scholar, translator and author, Harold Gould Henderson for almost eleven years and together with Blyth, these three pioneering men interacted and inspired one another through their common interests," but she surely overstates their comity a bit, as Henderson and Blyth's relationship cooled in later years, probably precisely because of disagreements over the importance of Zen in Japanese haiku. Nonetheless, Henderson clearly thought that Hackett's haiku were among the best being written (not unqualified praise, however, as Henderson found most of the thousands of English-language haiku he had been sent "hopeless junk."¹⁹ Henderson included for discussion three of Hackett's signature haiku, as well as his twenty "Suggestions for Beginners and Others" in the 1965 booklet *Haiku in English*. In a letter reacting to the news of Blyth's death at the end of 1964 Henderson also made clear that he thought Hackett to be Blyth's heir-apparent. He wrote, "Willy-nilly—his mantle seems to have fallen on you. Not that you can be the form [firm?] prop that he was. But I hope that you will be willing to try to be."²⁰ Willy-nilly, however, by the end of 1964, while Hackett's star was nearing its apogee, his influence on the direction of English-language haiku was already diminishing.

The Books

J.W. Hackett's first book, titled *Haiku Poetry* and published in Japan in 1964, contained 150 of his verses in the format Blyth had used in the *History*. As appendices Hackett included twenty "Suggestions for the

Writing of English Haiku” and a long spiritual poem, “Way Beyond Reason.” The entire body of his haiku, and the appendices, next appeared in four volumes (to suggest the four volumes of Blyth’s *Haiku*?), also called *Haiku Poetry*.²¹ Volumes One and Three were printed in June 1968, Volume Two in July, and Volume Four in November, not by Hokuseido but by a new publisher, Japan Publications, Inc. Volume One contains the exact same 150 haiku as *Haiku Poetry* but formatted without the small caps and stair-stepped with initial capitals and terminal periods. Volumes Two, Three, and Four each has 198 new haiku in the same format, a few of which had appeared in *American Haiku* and one of which had been among the Blyth collection. These books are subtitled “Original Verse [or Poems] in English,” a point he underscored in his Preface: “The poems in this series are original creations in English and are not translations of Japanese haiku,” as books of English-language haiku were still quite rare.

A notice on the back cover of his 1968 books indicated that a compilation of all four volumes of *Haiku Poetry* was to be published in June 1969. The individual volumes underwent several printings at least through October 1969, when the promised compendium, titled *The Way of Haiku: An Anthology of Haiku Poems*, was issued.²² This volume contains all 744 haiku in the four-volume set.

Hackett’s next three books were revisions and reworking of this basic corpus of work. In 1968 he selected 135 haiku, all but one published in his earlier books, and packaged them in a large format book for children with two-color illustrations titled *Bug Haiku: Original Poems in English by J. W. Hackett*.²³ This is a charming book and in many ways Hackett’s best because it has a unifying theme and an integrity that his other books lack.

With the publication of *Bug Haiku* and *The Way of Haiku*, Hackett slipped almost entirely out of the public eye. He apparently received visitors at his garden home, including Kiyoshi and Kiyoko Tokutomi, the founders of the Yuki Teikei Haiku Society, an event that was documented by Teruo Yamagata, now president of the Yukuharu Haiku Society in Japan, in *Haiku Journal*, volume 3 (1979);²⁴ however I am unable to document any other public activity or publication of new work for 15 years, although it is possible that during this time he was judging American entries in some of the JAL contests which had become international, biannual, and involving only children. Twelve of Hackett’s earliest haiku were included by Cor van den Heuvel in the first edition of *The Haiku Anthology* in 1974 and were continued through the following two editions.

Hackett’s next blip on the radar came in 1983 with the publication of *The Zen Haiku and Other Zen Poems of J. W. Hackett*,²⁵ again by Japan Publications. This is one of only a few books I know that uses “Zen” twice in the title (Blyth did so too in his collection *Zen and Zen Classics*), underlining that Hackett considers *his* haiku to be “Zen haiku,” something to be differentiated from haiku at large. This book contains 775 haiku, only 50 of which were previously unpublished. A few of the older haiku were revised, however, some of them quite extensively; for example, this one, which had appeared in *Way*:

<p>Each rippling wind refracts upon the streambed its pattern of light. [<i>Way</i>, 192]</p>	<p>Winds play on the stream, designing the bed below with patterns of light ... [<i>Zen Haiku</i>,</p>
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[“Refracts” is an apparent typo in the original and I am not sure whether “reflects” or “refracts” is intended.] Most revisions are minor, however, and tend to improve the haiku

<p>Mountain meadow now is so full of spring wonders, hawk eyes turn to rocks. [<i>HP4</i>, 9; <i>Way</i>, 191]</p>	<p>Mountain meadow now is so tall with spring wonders, hawk eyes turn to rocks. [<i>Zen Haiku</i>, 165]</p>
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<p>The cantankerous crow sleeps in a nest that’s made of broken branches. [<i>HP3</i>, 6; <i>Way</i>, 122]</p>	<p>The cantankerous crow sleeps in a nest that’s nothing but broken branches. [<i>Zen</i></p>
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The front cover flap of the book sheds some light on Hackett's long silence and the rationale for bringing out a new book of old haiku: "For the past decade he has been writing longer forms of poetry: some mystical, some idyllic, and some similar to the nature poems of the Chinese." A large sampling of these longer poems is included in the book, and he appends as well his "Suggestions for Writing Haiku in English," now reduced to eighteen in number. In addition to a preface by Abbot Eido Tai Shimano of the Dai Bosatsu Zendo in New York state and Hackett's own "Author's Introduction" and "Acknowledgments," the book carries a "Foreword and Comments," the same text as appeared as a foreword in *The Way of Haiku*, plus some praiseful excerpts from letters by Blyth, who at this point is almost twenty years in his grave. Herewith, Hackett again retreated into his privacy and isolation for another nine years.

Seventeen of Hackett's haiku were included in the 1992 *San Francisco Haiku Anthology*. Hackett read from his *Zen Haiku and other Zen Poems* and signed copies at the Kinokuniya Bookstore in San Francisco, on 21 March 1992.²⁶ Garry Gay's review of the event seemed restrained: "The event was especially exciting as he read many well-known and favorite haiku that are often talked about in haiku circles." Reportedly, Hackett is a strong reader and cuts an authoritative figure at the lectern. Audio samples of Hackett reading some of his longer poems are available on his Web site. Hackett was also in attendance at the Yuki Teikei Haiku Society's Asilomar retreat 9–12 September 1993, where he gave a talk and slide show about his visits to Japan.

Other activities in the U.S. in the 1990s included judging the Timepieces haiku contests organized by Rengé /David Priebe in Los Angeles from at least 1993 through at least 1997 and several of the JAL children's haiku contests. In the summer of 1993 he delivered the keynote address at the second Haiku North America conference in Livermore, Calif. On 16 September 1995, according to a note about the occasion in *Woodnotes* (#26), Hackett read some of his published Zen haiku, plus 21 new haiku, as one of the features at the second reading in the Haiku City series, at Borders Books in San Francisco. In 1995 he also gave an interview to John Budan that was published in *Woodnotes* 30 (1996) and is cited here in several places. Ten of Hackett's haiku, all published, were anthologized in André Duhaime's *Haïku sans frontières* Web site in 1998.

Travels and Foreign Connections

The past ten years have seen the reemergence of Hackett as a grand old man of haiku—but now in an international context. In the 1990s and 2000s the Hacketts did a fair amount of traveling. In the Author's Note to his most recent book, *A Traveler's Haiku* (2004), Hackett includes a remarkably ironic rendering of the platitude "travel is so broadening": "At its best, travel helps us transcend the insularity and hubris which can distort and limit our understanding of the world." Apart from his visit to Japan in 1965, Hackett visited China and Japan in 1993, Romania in 1994, Western Europe in 1996, and Japan again in 2002. Places mentioned in his book also include India and Nepal, Egypt and North Africa, Canada, and Mexico. He delivered keynote addresses—both of which excerpted material from his essay "That Art Thou"—at the International Haiku Festival—Romania in Constanța in September 1994²⁷ and the World Haiku Festival in Akita, Japan, in 2002. As he had done on earlier visits, in 2002 Hackett spent about three months in Japan visiting mostly temples. He also went to Blyth's home in Oiso, met with members of Blyth's family, and paid his respects at the graves of Blyth and D.T. Suzuki at Tokeiji in Kamakura.²⁸

Over Blyth's grave:
an offering of spring rain,
muddy knees, and brow.²⁹

One might observe that from the beginning the style and diction of Hackett's haiku in many ways seemed as British as they were American, so it is not surprising that he hit it off well with the top British haiku poets. In about 1990 Hackett made the acquaintance of James Kirkup and David Cobb of the British Haiku

Society, and that year he was invited to lend his name and judging skills to a new BHS haiku contest, the first of which took place the following year. In 1994 he was in London in connection with the British Haiku Society's publication of a book of readings from Blyth, *The Genius of Haiku*³⁰. The BHS journal *Blithe Spirit* also published a short essay of Hackett's, "Bashô and Nature" in 1998.³¹ At his time he also met Susumu Takiguchi, former vice-president of the BHS, who had recently founded the World Haiku Club in Oxford. The WHC organ, the online omnibus journal *World Haiku Review*, published "A Personal Conclusion" from "That Art Thou: A Way of Haiku" in its first issue (May 2001)³²; an essay "Reflections," a haiku he had selected for commentary, and one of his haiku sent to UNESCO in celebration of World Poetry Day in volume 2, issue 1;³³ and a long biography of him by Debra Woolard Bender in the second 2002 issue.³⁴ Hackett was named honorary chairman of the World Haiku Club and contributed a foreword to Takiguchi's 2000 book *The Twaddle of an Oxonian*.³⁵

Possibly owing to Kirkup's key editorial role in the Japanese biannual journal *Kô*, Hackett's haiku, longer poems, and essays began to appear there in 1992 and were much in evidence though the autumn-winter 2000 issue. In 1995 a Japanese crew came to Hackett's home and recorded an interview with him about haiku in America for broadcast on Japanese TV.³⁶ Likewise, thanks to his acquaintances in Ireland and France, two books of translations of Hackett's works appeared in the mid-1990s: *Le cri du faucon, haïkus et autres poèmes zen* (1996),³⁷ in French translations by Patrick Blanche, and *30 Zen-Haiku* (Cló Iar-Chonnachta, 1995)³⁸ in English with Irish translations by Gabriel Rosenstock.

In 1992 *Kô* included his essay "Why I Entered the 1964 Japan Airlines Contest"³⁹ in which he confirmed that his motivation was indeed to meet Blyth, his "mentor and friend . . . , with whom I wished more than anything to simply share tea and silence. (A rare spiritual affinity made our relationship one that could dispense with words.)"—a rather remarkable statement considering the fact that the two had never met. The autumn–winter 1993 issue of *Kô* (11) printed three of Hackett's previously published haiku in holographic form under the heading "Zen View" and dedicated to Kôko Katô, *Kô*'s editor. A photo of the two of them at Nagoya station appeared too. An essay entitled "Haiku: Another Endangered Species," which was later published in Ion Codrescu's journal *Albatross*,⁴⁰ is also included. Three of Hackett's long poems appeared in spring–summer 1994 (26), autumn–winter 1995 (3), and autumn–winter 1997 (2) issues. *Kô* published several of Hackett's haiku, some of them new, in its issues in 1996, 1997, and 2002, the latter issue featuring 38 haiku.

Following his participation in the Constanța haiku conference, Hackett became a regular contributor of haiku and short essays to Ion Codrescu's international journal *Albatros/Albatross*, beginning with volume 3 (1994), and in Codrescu's later enterprise, the journal *Hermitage*. A number of Hackett's haiku from this period were published virtually simultaneously in *Kô* and *Albatross*.

Recent Activities

In 2004 a book of new haiku—new at least from his basic collection from the 1960s—was published by Hokuseido Press.⁴¹ *A Traveler's Haiku: Original Poems in English* presents 191 of James Hackett's verses written on his world travels over several decades. They were new verses, except for 24 that were published in *Kô* from 1995 to 2000, 2 that had been included with the 1996 interview in *Woodnotes*, 2 from *Blithe Spirit* in 1998, and 5 that appeared in *Hermitage* in 2004. Inexplicably, this book was not reviewed in *Modern Haiku*, *Frogpond*, or *Blithe Spirit*. In his very positive review in *Hermitage*,⁴² however, Michael McClintock compares it to "a long, chatty letter from a favorite uncle." He goes on to write:

The remarkable instrument that Hackett invented for himself way back then, to express his special haiku vision and consciousness, remains intact today and is as flexible and wide-ranging as ever. The poems unfold, phrase by phrase, like bubbling creek water, with good humor, calmness, and unhurried pleasure. The language is rich in sound and variously modulated to carry its freights of mood and tone; the imagery is full of tactile cues and physical presence: Hackett's style reaches out and touches his subject matter but never pokes or jabs at it.

McClintock explains, "I infer that this collection has been cumulated from mostly unpublished, travel-

themed haiku Hackett has written over the past thirty years. They will be new poems to his readers, but they are not necessarily newly written.” He finds many of Hackett’s haiku significant and memorable:

Poems like the following exert an iconic power, giving memorable expression to some of the deep problems of our time in history, and asking questions that have adhering to their substance issues that are both spiritual and practical....”

High rise construction ...
cut and roped into riggings,
the Pandas’ forest

In the case of this haiku one can agree with McClintock, but others that he singles out in this passage are subverted by melodrama, cliché, and mannered diction:

Building a campfire ...
suddenly sent straight to hell
by front page news [*Traveler*, 1]

Mid manicured shrubs
and designed gravel, my spirit’s
longing for the wild [*Traveler*, 29]

Apart from *A Traveler’s Haiku*, since 2002 little of Hackett’s work has appeared in ink on paper. Four of his older haiku were recycled in the *Mainichi Daily News* online haiku column in 2003, 2004, and 2008, and three others were published in *Hermitage* 3 (2006). According to Bender, “He has at least 1,000 unpublished haiku and other Zen-influenced poems,” but it is not known whether he has any plans to publish them. Mostly Hackett continues to work on his long poetry, “That Art Thou,” and his Web site.

Hackett on Zen and Haiku: “That Art Thou”—Part One

James Hackett has only gradually revealed his views of haiku and Zen and his own path in haiku. The main statement is a long essay entitled “That Art Thou: A Spiritual Way of Haiku,” of which bits and pieces have appeared in various non-American journals.⁴³ Several sources suggest that Hackett was intending to put out the essay in book form in the mid-to-late 1990s, but it seems likely that publication on the Web has proven a better choice for him. The version of this essay on Hackett’s Web site—dated “Maui 2006”—seems to be the most recent statement of his haiku aesthetic, so we will use it for a more detailed examination.⁴⁴

“That Art Thou” is organized in a rather complicated manner, divided into two parts—the first an explication of Hackett’s Zen haiku aesthetic and the second dedicated more directly to the composition of haiku—and several sections and subsections.

Preface.

Hackett defines haiku as a *way* and cites his letter to Blyth in 1953 that was picked up and put in Blyth’s *History of Haiku*, vol. 2:

For haiku is ultimately more than a form or even a kind of poetry: it is a Way—one of living awareness. This, together with its rendering of the Suchness of things gives haiku a supra-literary mission, One of movement.

Hackett continues:

The *raison d’être* of traditional haiku poetry is distinctly beyond humanistic anthropocentrism, wit, didacticism, or conventional “poetics.” The haiku poet seeks rather to share (through suggestion) those special experiential moments in which we *see into*, and *emotionally relate with*, the world of nature.

and goes on to say that haiku for him has never been merely a form of poetry nor has it been primarily literary. In these words, Hackett lays down a basic definition of what he calls “haiku poetry” or, later, “‘That Art Thou’ haiku,” and begins to draw the line between his definition of haiku and other common understandings in which “certain existential qualities (and even metaphysical aspects)” are overlooked. The

further discussion is divided into six points having to do with Zen and the creation of Zen arts and writing: This Eternal Now, Greater Nature, Thusness, Suchness, Centering Contemplation, and Spiritual Interpenetration.

1. This Eternal Now.

Key to Hackett's Zen/haiku aesthetic is the idea of the moment, or "This Eternal Now." For a Zen practitioner each moment is precious, and the poet "endeavors to suggest this 'lifelike moment' in a haiku poem."

Hackett cites Blyth citing Bashô, who responds to his Zen teacher Butcho: "Haikai is simply what is happening in this place at this moment." (Blyth, *Haiku*, vol. 4) and similarly, from Senzaki and McCandless's book *Buddhism and Zen*, "Zen is the actual business of the present moment."

In one confusing passage of his essay, however, Hackett seems to turn *volte face* and underplay the role of Zen in haiku:

While the spirit of Zen has influenced many haiku poets in the West, Zen spirit would seem not to play any explicit role in Japanese haiku composition—this despite Bashô's admonition regarding interpenetration between poet and subject in haiku creation.... Or perhaps Zen's spirit may be so embedded in Japanese culture that its influence on haiku's creation is evident, though perhaps not explicit or intentional.

2. Greater Nature.

Hackett begins this chapter as follows:

For centuries haiku poetry has been known as a unique form of nature poetry—one wherein humans, if present at all, are suffused with "Greater Nature." That haiku's dedication to the natural world has been one of the most distinctive characteristics is largely due to the compassionate, universal spirit of Buddhism together with Shinto's animistic *ken*.

Hackett does not directly define "Greater Nature," but it seems safe to assume it is what we would normally call Nature with a capital N, that is, all of Creation, including humans only as one of thousands or millions of equally important and integral species and objects—certainly not something superior to the rest of Nature.

Hackett sets up a straw man here. What he really is getting at is the perversion of "true haiku" by poets who pay insufficient attention to Greater Nature and unduly concentrate on human beings and their unnatural works:

When compared to the depth and breadth of this all-encompassing spiritual vision, ... attempts to create an urban or anthropocentric haiku seem myopic. And for the sake of clarity, I believe such quasi-haiku should be classified as something other than just 'haiku': perhaps quasi-, urban-, or neo-haiku might be considered.

Hackett is being rather polite; in other places he waxes vitriolic in his condemnation of haiku that does not square with his definition, as in a brief article from *Blithe Spirit* in 1998,⁴⁵

[T]oday Bashô's Way of Haiku is scarcely taken, or even understood. What a sorry devolution of a great art is modern writers ignore haiku's spiritual and aesthetic heritage. The aesthetic anarchy of modern haiku has even resulted in modern writers divorcing haiku from nature. Today "haiku" is written about everything from elevators to computers—a dire fate for such a rare poetry.... Sadly enough, urbanisation is making haiku itself an endangered species.

His sweeping vision of "Greater Nature" notwithstanding, Hackett actually views nature narrowly. Others argue that all of human nature is part of Nature, and that for the purposes of haiku it is a key part. Even Master Bashô peopled his haiku with travelers, rice farmers, partygoers, revelers, drunks, prostitutes, warriors, and many others; wrote about human industry and ideas such as cormorant fishing, market scenes, temples and bells, paintings and poems. Furthermore, one could also argue that haiku is not so much about

nature as it is about season. William J. Higginson has pointed out that human-related seasonal topics make up a substantial percentage of the *kigo* in Japanese *saijiki*.

American poet Gary Hotham responded to Hackett in the next issue of *Blithe Spirit*⁴⁶ and argued forcefully in favor of keeping humans in a prominent place in haiku. He invoked Henderson:⁴⁷

It may be noted in passing that the use of *ki* is probably the base of a charge that has been advanced that haiku are more concerned with nature than with human affairs. Such a statement is ridiculous. Haiku are more concerned with human emotions than with human acts, the natural phenomena are used to reflect human emotions, but that is all.

Hotham also drafted a pair of unlikely allies: poet T.S. Eliot, who maintains that “the possible interests of the poet are unlimited,” and quantum physicist Werner Heisenberg, who, in his book *Physics and Philosophy*, makes the point that natural science is part of the interplay between nature and human beings. Hackett too appeals to quantum physics in support of his position:

Today, subatomic [quantum] physics and ecological science agree that the anthropocentric hubris of the *West* (that has dominated Occidental culture for millennia) is only a verisimilitude: a dangerously limited view of reality, that human consciousness needs to transcend into Oneness—if life on Earth is to survive.

To be fair, in “That Art Thou” Hackett does admit that the urban landscape can be the setting for some haiku, and he supplies several examples from his own work. Note that all of these, however, juxtapose an image from “Greater Nature” with an urban image, to the distinct disadvantage of the latter:

Breaking gray pavement
in a barren world of words:
a flowering weed⁴⁸

Flying back and forth
through the supermarket
a ranting sparrow⁵⁰

City loneliness ...
dancing with a gusty wind:
yesterday's news⁴⁹

Too cold for snow;
the loneliness standing within
each flop house doorway⁵¹

In this same series Hackett includes one haiku that is a bit more positive toward city life:

Flashing neon light
blurred through a steamy window:
a concert of colors!⁵²

Hackett has always been a student and devotee of Nature, but in the Japanese sense (Hackett terms it “a unique ethos”⁵³ that a well-tended garden, an ikebana arrangement, and zoo animals represent Nature—that is, nature as it should be rather than nature as it is. In later years his concern with nature and the incursions of urban life upon it became significant concerns for the poet—to the brink of polemic. Hackett ends the nature section of his essay with this incantation:

May “*That Art Thou*” haiku’s devotion to Greater Nature (and to spiritual Oneness) help focus our consciousness and concern upon Earth’s precious biosphere—which every day is further endangered by nationalistic and corporate greed that places life on Earth in greater jeopardy—so insidious is the morphing of ‘democracy’ into what is now an unfettered and ruthless plutocracy created by corporate fascism. Might that we learn from history previous periods of unfettered capitalism the evils that result from ungoverned greed.

Such avid advocacy seeps though into Hackett’s haiku and often gives them, for me at least, a lecturing tone.

Buildings hide the sky
and pavement the earth, and yet

Crumbling with rust
upon a deserted shore ...

this weed grew to seed.⁵⁴

the weight of war.⁵⁵

One final point of interest: Hackett suggests that because it is firmly rooted in General Nature, which is shared by everyone everywhere, haiku poetry can serve as a cultural bridge among people. More than commentary on the universal nature of haiku and the Zen that underlies it, this could be read as a call for “international haiku.”

3. Thusness.

“That Art Thou” haiku exhibit “thusness,” immediacy or directness of each haiku moment, the importance of confronting and being aware of each thing directly. The value for the haiku poet, Hackett asserts, is as a centering device. Again, this discussion veers off into polemics as he uses it to thrash people who cannot think for themselves: “Among the most egregious impositions perpetrated in our modern life is that so many persons become routinized and blindly led by abstract conditioned notions and abstract concepts.” Then, quoting Adolf Hitler, “How fortunate for leaders that men do not think.”

4. Suchness.

Having confronted a moment directly, the haiku poet attends to its essence, the “‘is-ness’ of things as they are,” or “Suchness.” Hackett here counterpoises the spirit of a thing, whether it be animate or inanimate, and the ideas or words used to describe it. Metaphors and symbols are inadequate descriptions of the essence of a thing. “That haiku poems seem so real and lifelike stems directly from their Suchness: the direct presentation of thing just as they are.” This suggests Shiki’s concept, though *shasei* is not mentioned in Hackett’s essay.

Hackett presents a useful quote from Blyth (*Zen and Zen Classics* 1): “The great mistake of life and poetry is the desire to get away from things instead of getting into them, escaping from the [material] world into a dream world [of words].” He also makes the point that “particularity in haiku may best be achieved through the use of singular rather than plural subjects (though at least one of Hackett’s signature haiku unnecessarily uses a plural subject:

Deep within the stream
the huge fish lie motionless
facing the current⁵⁶

5. Centering Contemplation.

Writing haiku poetry demands that the poet focus his attention on the object, deeply penetrating with his mind into the essence of the object. He mentions the insufficiency of “snapshot haiku” and the “importance for the poet and the subject to spiritually interpenetrate (to become one) in existential identification: a numinous (spiritual) union that contemplation and communion alone can reveal.”

6. Spiritual Interpenetration.

This is the subject of the last and by far the longest chapter of Hackett’s essay. “That Art Thou,” *tat tvam asi*, a concept from the Upanishads, is the essence of Hackett’s Zen haiku practice:

From [Blyth’s] insight into the interpenetrative spirit present in my haiku, I came to the conviction that “Zen haiku” be a veritable window of That Art Thou spiritual union. And that Zen haiku itself could provide “... the only possible answer to the question ‘What am I?’ must be ‘That Art Thou.’” (Ananda Coomaraswamy)

It is difficult to argue with a Zen adept, but much of Hackett’s “Spiritual Interpenetration,” especially as seen in his haiku, seems to this reader to slip into anthropomorphism and the pathetic fallacy, or at least a strong projection of Hackett’s ideas and emotions onto non-human beings and non-sentient objects. Hackett is aware of the problem. He quotes Nobuyuki Yuasa’s interpretation of Bashō’s lesson:

Go to the pine if you want to learn about the pine, or the bamboo if you want to learn about the bamboo. And in doing so, you must leave your subjective preoccupation with yourself. Your poetry issue of its own accord when you and the object have become one—when you have plunged deep enough into the object to see something like a hidden glimmering there. However well-phrased your poetry may be, if the object and yourself are separate then your poetry is not true poetry but a semblance of the real thing.

and adds his own contention:

Despite Basho's admonition, some Rationalists peremptorily dismiss spiritual interpenetration as a mere projection of human feelings. Given the sanctity that Rationalism accords itself, it is not surprising that those bereft of intuitive experience, and ignorant of (or indifferent to) Basho's teaching, misconstrue and ignore what they cannot experience or understand.

Count me among the bereft, ignorant Rationalists, but I cannot help but question whether Hackett's spiritual unity with the eagle, the spider, the scow and the frogs, and a speck on a page in the following haiku is not more a projection of his own feelings and emotions than those of the creatures and things allegedly expressing themselves in the poet's voice:⁵⁷

Never more alone
the eagle, than now surrounded
by screaming crows

A spider crouches
at the center of his empty web,
trusting his design

The derelict scow
answering the mocking frogs
with timbers of bloom!

This speck on the page
that blowing doesn't remove
has a mind of its own!

Hackett continues the argument that "Spiritual interpenetration is not anthropomorphism," asserting that "the latter term stems from self-centered hubris." One might suggest that Hackett's belief that he is able to interpenetrate spiritually with things is itself an instance of "self-centered hubris," but no matter. The facility to get into an object at a deep spiritual level is one thing; to represent it in a haiku without seeming to speak on behalf of that object is another.

Summation.

"That Art Thou" ends with reprise about the verity of Hackett's approach to haiku poetry and the fate awaiting the Fallen:

If spiritual interpenetration and Basho's advice were utilized in haiku creation, I believe there would be fewer 'snapshot' and 'so what?' verses to sully the name and spirit of haiku poetry. But a major reason for writing this "That Art Thou" essay is to renew and reassert the neglected Tao/Zen aspects of haiku. Any by so doing, raise and return haiku's status to that of poetry, and beyond—to the spiritual Way I know Zen haiku can be.

...

Greater Nature remains a wondrous world—though one made hellishly divisive by our species' hubris and damning reverence for words and concepts.

Such is the dichotomous and abstract (*a priori*) world of ideologies before which we genuflect—conditioned by inculcated, sacrosanct notions of nation, 'race,' and faith, many of which we reverence unto bloody human sacrifice.

Though relativistic, these divisive, jingoistic, racial, and sectarian prejudices have for millennia damned countless generations of Eden Now ... by abstracted 'walls of hate ad divisiveness, that metaphorically seems to make our world a sinecure of Satan.

As a discussion of haiku, "That Art Thou" is remarkable for the topics it does not cover. There is no word about the importance of "image," which most haiku poets today consider central to the understanding and practice of haiku. Hackett says nothing about the haiku being a medium of communication between people;

only in one place, Part 1, does he even mention sharing a haiku poem with others. For him, the purpose of writing haiku is very personal, even egocentric: to express his own intuition of the great here and now. This essay reveals a man who studied first Zen then haiku in the 1950s and 1960s, made up his mind about where he stood, and has not budged a whit ever since.

The first hundred years of haiku study in English-speaking lands focused on the Japanese classics, especially the “four pillars” and specifically Bashô, and it is not too fanciful to say that in both form and content English and American haiku for decades were simple imitations of classical Japanese haiku. Hackett exemplifies this situation. Throughout “That Art Thou,” besides his own haiku, only Bashô’s work comes in for positive comment. For interpretation and theory of haiku, Hackett’s reliance on Blyth is near-total, with occasional uses of other’s translations (Henderson, Miyamori, and Ichikawa Sanchi et al.) that appeared before 1960 (also uses Yuasa’s translations from 1977). Although excoriating writers of so-called haiku generally, he never mentions any names or gives any specific examples of what he finds wrong with what is being written by others. Hackett’s reading of scholars and teachers of Zen is more catholic, though still focused on the period fifty or more years ago: the works of D.T. Suzuki primarily, as well as the teachings of Nyogen Senzaki Roshi and Ogata Sohaku Roshi, and his personal relationship with Nakagawa Soen Roshi. He also mentions Ananda Coomaraswamy, Alan Watts, Aldous Huxley, and a few others as influences.

Hackett on Writing Haiku: “That Art Thou”—Part Two

Creating Haiku Poetry.

In the second part of “That Art Thou,” titled “The Haiku Poem,” Hackett moves from his haiku aesthetics to a discussion of poetics—the mechanics of the genre. He begins with a definition that draws a line between “haiku,” a term that Hackett views as now corrupt, and “haiku poetry,” his suggested replacement. The word “haiku,” he avers, has “virtually subsumed the use of haiku’s traditional designation as poetry.” [One might desire more information about what “traditions” Hackett has in mind here—certainly not Japanese traditions.] Some lamentable characteristics of contemporary “haiku” include “so-what verses,” “obscure word puzzles,” “cyber-concoctions” [?], “salacious puns,” and “crass commercial ploys.” Unfortunately, Hackett does not go much beyond this sticks-and-stones critique, so it is hard to know which poets and editors are responsible for this “aesthetic anarchy.” He does, however, identify some of the “characteristics that have traditionally distinguished haiku as “poetry,” some of which we have seen before: focus upon Greater Nature, the suchness of nature, and selflessness (in Zen called *muga*) or seeing things through God’s identifying eye. To these he adds “a measured use of English syntax, wherein discretion, clarity and naturalness should govern any use of ellipsis” and “some emotive quality.” He later states flatly, “The sanctity of haiku’s intuitive emotive experience should, I believe, take precedence over theoretical considerations of form, syntax, and style.” (Hackett singles out James Kirkup as a poet skilled in making 5–7–5 haiku, and, in a later discussion of writing haiku in quasi-normal English syntax, puts in a plug for the journal *Kô* and its editor Kôko Katô, who encourage this.) “Quasi-normal,” the term Hackett tortures out from haiku practice, apparently represents something of a compromise between his agreement with Wordsworth that “poets should employ a selection of language really used by men and women” and the imperative to include “some emotive quality” in one’s haiku.

Early on, Hackett developed his “Suggestions for Creating Haiku Poetry” that range from the philosophical to the practical. Like his other writings, these Suggestions have been tinkered with and revised over the years. The version here is the one published in *World Haiku Review* and dated 2002. Hackett introduces them as follows:

My first books, *Haiku Poetry, Volumes I–IV*, published in 1968, included some carefully considered suggestions for creating haiku poems in English. These have proved of value to many poets. And after almost half a century these suggestions still remain fundamental to my poetry, and to my mind and spirit. Following is an update of these suggestions for WHC’s worldwide community. I encourage readers to decide for themselves which of these suggestions might prove helpful in their own writing:

SUGGESTIONS FOR CREATING HAIKU POETRY IN ENGLISH

BY JAMES W. HACKETT © 1968 Revision © 2002

1. *NOW* is the touchstone of the haiku experience, so remain centered in this eternal present of life.
2. Remember that Greater Nature—*not* human nature—is the province of haiku.
3. Contemplate natural objects closely: unseen wonders (and dramas) will reveal themselves.
4. Carry a notebook to jot down subtle haiku moments, for these intuitive experiences may be easily forgotten.
5. Spiritually interpenetrate and empathize with nature. Become One with ‘things,’ for ultimately, “That art Thou.”
6. Reflect upon your notes of nature in solitude and silence. Allow these recollected feelings be the basis of your haiku poem.
7. Write about Nature just as it is. Haiku are neither word games nor puzzles. Basho brought haiku poetry back to life and nature; let us emulate his noble mission.
8. Choose every word very carefully. Use words that best suggest the moment of haiku experience you wish to share.
9. Use verbs in present tense, and singular subjects whenever possible.
10. To add aesthetic dimension, choose modifying words that vivify, including those that suggest the season, location, or time of day.
11. A haiku poem can be more than a verbal snapshot. Avoid such “So what?” haiku by suggesting your emotional reaction during the haiku moment.
12. Use common language in a syntax natural to English! Don’t attempt ‘minimalistic’ copies of Japanese usage. Haiku composed in English must seem ‘natural’ and uncontrived.
13. Write in three lines using approximately 17 syllables. (Forego the traditional Japanese line arrangement of 5–7–5 syllables, as this practice can invite contrivance in English.)
14. Read each verse aloud to make sure it sounds natural. (Avoid end rhyme.) Make use of articles and punctuation common to English.
15. Remember that *lifefulness*, not beauty, is the essence of haiku.
16. Never use obscure allusions: true haiku are intuitive and direct, not abstract, symbolic, or intellectual. Include humor, but omit mere wit.
17. Avoid poeticism. The haiku poem should be direct, sensuous, and metaphysically ‘real.’
18. Work on each poem until it *suggests* exactly what you want others to see and feel. Remain true to your initial experience and the feelings elicited.
19. Remember that haiku is ‘a finger pointing at the moon,’ and if the hand is bejeweled, we no longer see that to which it points.
20. Honor your senses with awareness, and your Spirit with zazen or other centering meditation. The ‘haiku mind’ should be reflective as a clear mountain pond: reflective *not* of thought, but of the moon and every flight beyond ...

The first several of these, with the exception of number 4, are the points Hackett made more than once in “That Art Thou,” discussed earlier: the Eternal NOW, Greater Nature, close contemplation, spiritual interpenetration, reflection in solitude and silence, and writing about what IS. Suggestions 19 and 20, also, have to do with the poet’s focusing on the object and his or her own Centeredness. No. 8, choose every word carefully and make it suggestive, seems sound advice for any kind of composition. Suggestion 4, carry a notebook, is just good common sense.

Suggestions 9 through 13 have to do with craft, specifically the form of the haiku and the choice of appropriate language. No. 9 advises using the present tense and singular subjects. Hackett practices both of these for the most part. In Suggestion 13 Hackett settles on the sensible compromise of approximately 17 syllables and urges poets to “Forego the traditional Japanese line arrangement of 5–7–5 syllables, as this practice can invite contrivance in English.” In the second part of the “That Art Thou,” he observes that 5–7–5 in English “is frequently too rigid a structure for natural expression,” but he cautions that “haiku in English does need a moderate, loose norm of syllables—not only to garner literary respect, but more importantly, to discourage the ‘anything goes’ anarchy that too often now seems to characterize haiku in English.” This seems a bit of a pronouncement from Parnassus, but in fact in his own work, Hackett hews closely to 17 syllables and almost always writes in three lines clearly tending toward a 5–7–5 structure—but he is not enslaved by the “rule.”

Suggestions 10, 11, and 12 deal with the quality of words used, the poetics of haiku, and the permissibility of poetic language in haiku. In this area Hackett’s work is significantly different from that of other haiku poets. Part of Suggestion 10 calls for the poets to use words suggestive of the season, location, or time of day,

the closest he comes to specifying the need for a season word. The *kigo*, of course, is traditionally a major requirement of haiku in Japanese, and Hackett is passive about the use of such a convention in English-language practice. He follows Blyth's advice that "A season word is not necessary, or even a season, but is greatly advantageous." Hackett seems to have sidelined seasonal words, sanctioning their use, along with location or temporal words, only to add specificity to a haiku.

In the first part of Suggestion 10 and in Suggestion 11, Hackett urges poets to vivify their language and suggest their "emotional reactions during the haiku moment." This reads to me like an open invitation to introduce Western-style poetics into haiku—a practice that Hackett certainly adheres to himself. Before returning to the twenty Suggestions, let's look more closely at Hackett's use of devices such as rhyme, synesthesia, unusual turns of phrase and unique words, and other ways in which he vivifies his haiku language and records his emotional reactions.

Rhyme.

Hackett is at heart a rhymers. In Suggestion 14, he admonishes haiku poets to "avoid end rhyme" and cautions against excessive ornamentation of the "bejeweled finger pointing at the moon" variety. In Part 2 of "That Art Thou," however, he writes, "the use of inner rhyme, alliteration, and onomatopoeia can be very effective in haiku creation." Still, he cannot resist incorporating rhyme of various kinds (we won't go into slant rhyme, etc. here) in his works. Hackett generally does avoid end rhyme but is masterful in his use of internal rhyme. For example, these two haiku have rhyming lines 1 and 3⁵⁸:

Sunrise ... unseen till now,
the strands of web that unite
each flower and bough.

Nasturtiums flower
one nectar ... in some it's sweet,
in others, sour.

these two rhyme adjacent lines⁵⁹:

Clouted by a dew,
the horn of this snail withdrew
and just disappeared!

The beak of the hawk,
rounds all the way down to where
it can tear the air!

and a few haiku even feature three-line rhyme!⁶⁰

Rubble everywhere ...
except for a flight of stairs
ending in the air.

Hackett frequently uses internal rhyme and consonance:⁶¹

Night shades disappear,
and within each dew begins
a play of hues ...

Bitten, the thread now
is refusing to let go
of the kitten's tongue!

In some cases it is difficult to pry internal rhyme and end-rhyme apart, however. The first haiku is written with a forced break after a five-syllable first line but which, thanks to the internal rhyme, separates into an end-rhymed 6-7-6-syllable haiku. The second resolves into a rhymed tetrameter couplet⁶²

Let's also give Faust
his due: from Corinth's bauxite mounds
to this stratospheric view

On wiping up wet
puppy shit: the gagging smell ...
right now, this is it.

Other Poetic Devices.

Hackett uses the full panoply of poetic devices. The first two of these verses feature consonance and alliteration (with rhyme too!); the third has alliteration.⁶³

Free at last, the fly
flew out the window—and then
right back in again.

Bumblebee bumping
against the window ... something
you want me to see?

Still going strong
after blocks and blocks of stops:
my doling dog.

Synesthesia.

Synesthesia is another favorite poetic tool of Hackett's. His corpus of work includes phrases such as these:⁶⁴

Searching on the wind, / the hawk's cry / is the shape of its beak.
At one with the silt / the crawdad, but on each claw / there's a shout of white.
Huge trumpet flowers / heralded by bumblebees, / whitely scent this tree.
These barnacled rocks / just uncovered by the tide ... / how busy they sound!
A single cricket / warms the quiet / of this lonely night.
With every gust of sun, / a halo of golden down / surrounds the hawk.
Startled garter snake / defends himself with a tongue / that's rapidly red.
The nameless flower / climbing this trail with me / is a yellow you can taste!

Japanese Poetics.

Hackett believes haiku to be a form of poetry, and is probably for this reason that he speaks of haiku in terms of Western aesthetics and poetics and tends to short-change the Japanese equivalents, at least those that do not pertain to Zen. *Kigo*, as we have seen, is held by Hackett to be appropriate for classical Japanese haiku but is not necessary in English haiku. Of other Japanese aesthetic devices or principles that most American haiku poets strive for in their work, Hackett writes, "By the way, there are some Japanese spiritual/aesthetic qualities (such as *sabi*, *wabi*, *shibui*, *yugen*, *muga*) that I believe spontaneously accrue from the 'That Art Thou' Way of haiku."

Punctuation.

One whole section of Part II of "That Art Thou" is devoted to punctuation. Here Hackett's main intention seems to be to flog other haiku poets who have abandoned normal punctuation in their work, if not done without colons and commas completely. Hackett sees this as an illiterate attempt to imitate the Japanese language and a succumbing to "today's expediency in personal and business matters, and in business usage." He argues for "the discretionary use of punctuation." Included in this section is a list of punctuation marks appropriate for haiku, but it is not very useful, unfortunately: we are told that the question mark suggests "quizzical or wondering," while the dash can be used for almost anything else: "introduction"; focus and emphasis"; "important pause"; contrasts, comparisons, introducing a series"; ironic suggestion or a break in thought"; and "strong emotional feeling, or surprise."

Unusual Words and Expressions.

Hackett's oeuvre is speckled with words that only he has used in haiku, for example:⁶⁵

The wakeless way / of the Jesus bug is revealed / by lunging minnows.
Consolingly white, / the knees that the mosquito / must bend with his thirst.
 Noisy woodpecker / is gummed-up by the old pine, / to stopping silence.
 Still going strong / after blocks and blocks of stops: / my doling dog.
 No longer a kitten, / the cat now pounces on my hand / clawlessly ...
 Puppy lies wag-end up, / barking at the bumblebee / too busy to play.
 My mouser cat, though / merciless with flies, just sits / and blinks at the bee.
 Pampas grass offers / such strokeable plumes, to hands / that will dare its leaves.
 The cantankerous crow / sleeps in a nest that's made / of broken branches.
 Resplendent peacock / flappingly guards his throne—/ a mound of manure.

For poetic meaning Hackett invents locutions, twisting intransitive verbs into transitive and turning nouns into verbs that are not recognized as such by Mr. Webster, e.g.⁶⁶

As Nile dusk deepens / egrets blizzard to the same / solitary isle.
 Come! The mountains / have hazed into a painting / and tea is served ...
 Swords of the iris: / all so alike, yet some bend, / talling the others.

Hackett is fond of all sorts of poetic diction, some of which seem British, or mustily antique, or both, in their inspiration; for example:⁶⁷

Rare wine for the eye: / the bougainvillea, flowering / this ancient mission.
 Gulls heavy with sun / swoop down over breaking waves / and wing through the spray.
 Broken last winter, / this branch dangling by a strand / is full of blossom!
 Mid manicured shrubs / and designed gravel, my spirit's / longing for the wild
 The pauses within / robin's song to the dawn / are long draughts of dew.

Minimalism and Tontoism.

Hackett's drive to put poetry into his haiku can go a bit too far on occasion. As we have noted, "minimalism" is one of Hackett's big bugaboos. His discussion in "That Art Thou" suggests that attempts to emulate Japanese usage in English is the main culprit: "The hard fact is that the great differences between the Japanese and English languages are virtually unbridgeable. In Japanese, the absence of articles, pronouns, tense, and the comparative lack of modifiers make bare-boned minimalist attempts in English seem fatuous and spectacularly inept." Moreover, "[minimalism's] advocacy by some, whiffs of what possibly may be an ethnocentric bias." I'm not sure what that means, but clearly Hackett prefers "quasi-natural" diction.

But he is not immune to dropping articles and lapsing into a kind of tontoism that makes haiku like this one, for example, sound like a Native American legend with overtones of dark doings among Goldfinch, Thistledown, and Breeze:

As goldfinch gathers
 a beak full of thistledown,
 the seeds freed to breeze!⁶⁸

Hackett is probably trying to increase the specificity of his referents—a recurring theme of his—but in the process he seems to violate part of his Suggestion 14, "Make use of articles and punctuation common to English."

We observed earlier that Hackett does not shrink from having his haiku be full clauses or even full sentences:

While peace plies the Nile
and awe tours the tombs, fear
rides our guarded coach⁶⁹

It is not the case in this haiku, which enjoys an abundance of images—or rather, abstractions—but in other cases, writing a haiku as a sentence or continuous phrase eliminates the break, *kire*, and thus the juxtaposition between two images that is the main engine of the haiku. Here is one example, which also demonstrates the tontoism problem:

Time after time
caterpillar climbs this broken stem,
then probes beyond.⁷⁰

Clearly, Hackett has difficulty with his Suggestion 17: “Avoid poeticism. The haiku poem should be direct, sensuous, and metaphysically ‘real.’” There is a dissonance in his work between that advice and his Suggestion 18, which emphasizes that the poet should *suggest* exactly what he or she wants others to feel. In many cases above we have felt the tension between the stenographic description of objects or events and the poet’s need to express his feelings about them.

Humor.

For the most part Hackett is consistent with his advice in Suggestion 16 to employ humor but avoid pure wit. His humor is typically genial, low-key, and tasteful. The very many haiku about his dogs and cats certainly fall in the humorous category, but this pet owner is certainly not above a good pun ...

When finally caught,
the kitten’s tail is given
a real good licking.⁷¹

Sometimes Hackett grasps for humor in his work by an exaggerated delicacy of expression:

The sleeping dog’s wind
first awakens him ... and then
drives him from the room.⁷²

Writing and Revision.

A close study of Hackett’s publications reveals a constant tinkering and rewriting. One of the most celebrated and dramatic example of this is one we have seen before, the early classic that was first published in *American Haiku* [1:1 (1963)] as

Bitter morning
sparrows sitting
without necks.

and in Blyth’s *History of Haiku* (II:355) and Hackett’s *Haiku Poetry* (12) (both 1964) formatted as follows:

BITTER MORNING:
SPARROWS SITTING

BITTER MORNING
SPARROWS SITTING TOGETHER

WITHOUT NECKS.

WITHOUT NECKS.

but won immortality in *Haiku* '64 as

A bitter morning:
Sparrows sitting together
Without any necks.

The poet has padded up a very fine haiku, adding three words that are not at all necessary, in order to bring it to 5-7-5, probably a requirement (or a perceived requirement) of the 1964 Japan Air Lines contest. This version became the standard, and in dozens of repetitions after 1964 it was this version, with slight changes in punctuation and formatting, that was used.

Even Hackett's recent haiku bear the marks of revision and re-revision. This one appeared in *Blithe Spirit* (6:2, August 1996) in the first version, but had morphed into the second version by the time it was included in *A Traveler's Haiku* (2004):

Shrill heat: a beetle
runs over furrows of sand
to the temple's shadow

Shrill heat ...
beetle runs over waves of sand
to the temple's shadow

To second-guess Hackett's composition and revision process, it appears that he thought up the unusual synesthetic formulation "shrill heat" and wanted to pair it with "to the temple's shadow," then equivocated as to whether it was preferable to have the first line be five syllables or the second line seven. Though "furrows" implies the action of a human hand, the use of this word rather than "waves" better calls to mind the image of a Zen rock garden. In the second version, line two becomes hypersyllabic, but changing from "furrows" to "waves" keeps the count to eight syllables. A further weakness is introduced in version two by dropping the article before "beetle"; as we pointed out earlier, this makes the subject of the haiku sound like "Beetle," perhaps a character in an aboriginal folk tale. There is more than an echo of Bashô's "cicada cry piercing the rock" haiku.

From the same two publications here is another pair of Hackett's recent haiku that shows his compulsion to tinker:

At Omaha Beach:
from bunkers of Nazi gall,
the stench of relief

At Omaha Beach ...
from old bunkers of Nazi gall
the stench of piss

We could quibble about the punctuation. More important, though, is the insertion in line 2 of "old," a cliché and unnecessary because we understand "Nazi" to include a more specific time reference. Stranger is the fact that "old" brings the syllable count of line 2 up to eight. The change of the last word is most interesting of all: Hackett forgoes the multiple pun of "relief" (meaning the provision—or lack of—additional Wehrmacht troops to defend the bunkers over Omaha Beach, the feelings of the French citizenry that the Allies had finally invaded, and the physiological reaction of troops faced with a massive attack, and the urination of tourists at the site) for the specific term with the foot-soldier specificity and resonance of "piss." Also note this haiku's single-phrase/single image character: it stretches to make a political-historical point and says, when all the telling and all the decoration is stripped away, only "the stench from the bunkers."

An Assessment

So what should we make of James W. Hackett, his Zen life, and his haiku poetry? He was clearly a pioneer of American haiku, probably the first to devote so much of his life and study to the writing of haiku. After 1964, the magical year in which he won the JAL contest and had a collection of his work published with the

blessing of R.H. Blyth, and for at least a decade thereafter, Hackett was also the most widely known and heralded haiku poet in the nation. The reaction of the British haikuist Stephen Henry Gill is not atypical: “James Hackett was the only American haiku poet I had heard of until late in the eighties.”⁷³

Whether to admire Hackett for his decades-long singularity of purpose and dedication to the preeminence of Zen in haiku or to find his brand of mysticism and deliberate self-isolation from other poets and spiritual thinkers adequate cause to dismiss him as quaint, peripheral figure we each will have to decide for ourselves. In the 1960s, in very short order, other North American haiku poets outstripped Hackett in prominence and quality of work. Ironically, these other pioneers were quite mindful of the relationship between Zen and haiku and were themselves literary and spiritual children of R.H. Blyth. All, however, took a broader view of haiku than as an art bound hand and foot to Zen, and they looked for inspiration to Japanese *haijin* other than Bashô. Hackett, meanwhile, was tending his garden of 750 haiku poems, absenting himself from the tempestuous public discussions of haiku craft and practice, and grumpily complaining about the direction that English haiku, as well as humankind, was taking. Hackett concludes “That Art Thou” with “A Personal Testimony,” which includes this remarkable paragraph:

Naturally, some writers would be followers and even participate in the intellectual maelstrom if they so choose. But others would courageously follow their own star—solitary or unconventional though their way may be. Then, steeled with resolve, endeavor to take the way—come Hell (*the maverick’s aloneness*) or high water (*the high dudgeon of critics*).

In sum, I would suggest that early on James Hackett earned his niche in the pantheon of haiku, partly because he was there “firstest with the mostest,” and partly because a few of his early haiku are true classics—sparrows sitting without any necks, the fish motionless in the stream, the shape of the hawk’s cry, and my personal favorite, which I haven’t yet cited,

Half of the minnows
within this sunlit shallow
are not really there.⁷⁴

Like the minnows, however, perhaps the other half of Hackett’s presence is now not really there.

¹ Shangri-La is a utopia featured in British author James Hilton’s bestselling novel *Lost Horizon* (London: Macmillan, 1933; New York: Morrow, 1936). According to *Wikipedia*, for example, “In the book, ‘Shangri-La’ is a mystical, harmonious valley, gently guided from a lamasery, enclosed in the western end of the Kunlun Mountains. Shangri-La has become synonymous with any earthly paradise but particularly a mythical Himalayan utopia—a permanently happy land, isolated from the outside world. In the novel *Lost Horizon*, the people who live at Shangri-La are almost immortal, living years beyond the normal lifespan. The word also evokes the imagery of exoticism of the Orient. The story of Shangri-La is based on the concept of Shambhala, a mystical city in the Tibetan Buddhist tradition.” <[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lost_Horizon_\(novel\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lost_Horizon_(novel))>; available Dec. 1, 2009.

A version of this essay was presented at the Haiku Society of America Quarterly Meeting in Eugene, Ore., March 7, 2009. Corrections and comments are welcomed by the author at <trumbullc@comcast.net>.

² *Woodnotes* 30, 34.

³ Details of Hackett’s life are based on various published biographical materials, notably the author blurbs on the covers of his books; biosketches in anthologies, including Cor van den Heuvel, ed., *The Haiku Anthology: English Language Haiku by Contemporary American and Canadian Poets* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday Anchor Books, 1974); and Jerry Ball, Garry Gay, and Tom Tico, eds., *The San Francisco Haiku Anthology* (Windsor, Calif.: Smythe-Waithe Press, 1992); the biographical article by Debra Woolard Bender, “James W. Hackett (1929–).” *World Haiku Review* [Web] 2:2 (2002), <http://www.worldhaikureview.org/2-2/whf2002_prelude6.shtml>, republished on *The Haiku and Zen World of J. W. Hackett* [hereinafter Hackett Web site]. <<http://www.hacketthaiku.com/>>; and conversations and correspondence with friends and professional associates of Hackett’s, including Christopher Herold, Michael Dylan Welch, Gayle Bull, William J. Higginson, Cor van den Heuvel, Ikuyo Yoshimura, and David Cobb.

⁴ James W. Hackett. *A Traveler’s Haiku: Original Poems in English*. Tokyo: Hokuseido Press, 2004.

⁵ James W. Hackett. “R.H. Blyth and J. W. Hackett,” keynote speech, World Haiku Festival, Yuwa-town, Akita 20–22

September 2002, on *The Haiku and Zen World of J. W. Hackett* [hereinafter Hackett Web site].

<<http://www.hacketthaiku.com/>>.

⁶ “James W. Hackett” in Ball, Gay, and Tico, eds., *The San Francisco Haiku Anthology*, 185.

⁷ A short author sketch about Patricia Hackett appears on the Web page for her book *The Musical Classroom* on the Barnes & Noble Web site, <<http://search.barnesandnoble.com/The-Musical-Classroom/Patricia-Hackett/e/9780130262622>>.

⁸ van den Heuvel, ed. *The Haiku Anthology* (1974).

⁹ *American Haiku* was published in Platteville, Wis., from 1963 to 1968, with various issues edited by James and Gayle Bull, Don Eulert, Clement Hoyt, and others.

¹⁰ Hackett Web site.

¹¹ R.H. Blyth. *A History of Haiku. Volume 1: From the Beginnings up to Issa. Volume 2: From Issa up to the Present.* Tokyo: Hokuseido Press, 1963–64. Hackett’s haiku appear on pages 352–61.

¹² J. W. Hackett. *Haiku Poetry*. Tokyo: Hokuseido Press, 1964.

¹³ *Woodnotes* 30, 34, and 38.

¹⁴ It is difficult to prove a negative proposition. Hackett was certainly not a leader of the San Francisco Zen students. He is not mentioned in *Zen Effects*, Monica Furlong’s biography of Watts, in Watts’s autobiography, *In My Own Way*, or in Jack Foley’s detailed “A California Timeline 1940–1999” in his *O Powerful Western Star: Poetry & Art in California* (Oakland, Calif.: Pantograph Press, 2000).

¹⁵ *San Francisco Haiku Anthology*.

¹⁶ James W. Hackett. “Why I Entered the 1964 Japan Airlines Contest.” *Kô* autumn–winter 1992, 20.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ Bender. “James W. Hackett.”

¹⁹ *American Haiku* 1.

²⁰ Harold G. Henderson to James W. Hackett, 25 December 1964, on Hackett Web site.

²¹ J. W. Hackett. *Haiku Poetry: Original Verse in English*. Volumes One–Four. Tokyo: Hokuseido Press, 1968.

²² James W. Hackett. *The Way of Haiku: An Anthology of Haiku Poetry*. San Francisco: Japan Publications, Inc., 1969.

²³ J. W. Hackett. *Bug Haiku: Original Poems in English*. Tokyo: Japan Publications, Inc., 1968.

²⁴ [not seen]

²⁵ J. W. Hackett. *The Zen Haiku and Other Zen Poems of J. W. Hackett*. Tokyo: Japan Publications, Inc., 1983.

²⁶ *Woodnotes* #12, 13.

²⁷ “Resumé of THAT ART THOU: MY WAY OF HAIKU.” *Albatros/Albatross* 4:1/2 (spring–summer/autumn–winter 1995), 5–9/9–13. See also the note of thanks from Patricia and James Hackett to the conference organizers in the same issue, 130/135.

²⁸ See description and photos, James W. Hackett and Patricia Hackett. *Journey to Oiso and the Home of R.H. Blyth*, on the World Haiku Review Web site: <http://www.worldhaikureview.org/3-2/jwhackett_journeytooiso.shtml>, and *Visiting R.H. Blyth’s Home* on the Hackett Web site: <<http://www.hacketthaiku.com/RHBlythsHome.html>>.

²⁹ *Woodnotes* 30.

³⁰ British Haiku Society, editors. *The Genius of Haiku: Readings from R.H. Blyth on Poetry, Life, and Zen*. Introduction by James Kirkup. Tokyo: Hokuseido Press, 1995.

³¹ James W. Hackett. “Bashô and Nature.” *Blithe Spirit* 8:1 (1998), 34–35. The essay had appeared previously in Ion Codrescu, editor. *Ocolind iazul / Round the Pond: a Romanian/English Anthology*. Translations by Mihaela Codrescu. Constanța, Romania: Editura Muntenia, 1994, in Romanian and English, and in French in Patrick Blanche. *Le Cri du faucon*. Nyons, France: Voix d’Encre, 1996.

³² “A Personal Conclusion” from “That Art Thou: A Way of Haiku” *World Haiku Review* [Web] (May 2001)

³³ James W. Hackett. “Reflections.” *World Haiku Review* 2:1 (March 2002). <http://www.worldhaikureview.org/2-1/jwh_reflectsuggest.shtml>; <http://www.worldhaikureview.org/2-1/jwh_selection.shtml>.

³⁴ Bender, “James W. Hackett.”

³⁵ Susumu Takiguchi. *The Twaddle of an Oxonian: Haiku Poems and Essays*. Oxford, England: Ami-Net International Press, 2000.

³⁶ *Woodnotes* 30, 36.

³⁷ Blanche. *Cri du faucon*.

³⁸ J. W. Hackett. *30 Zen-Haiku of J. W. Hackett*. Translated into Gaelic by Gabriel Rosenstock. Indreabhán, Conamara, Ireland: Cló Iar-Chonnachta, 1994.

³⁹ Hackett. “Why I Entered.”

⁴⁰ *Albatros/Albatross* 3:1/2 (spring–summer/autumn–winter 1994), 89–93.

⁴¹ Hackett, *Traveler’s Haiku*.

⁴² Michael McClintock, “Hackett on the Road and Still Longing for the Wild.” *Hermitage* 2:1/2 (2005), 184–87.

⁴³ “Haiku: Another Endangered Species” in *Kô*, autumn–winter 1993, 29–30; John Budan, “That Art Thou: An Interview with James W. Hackett” in *Woodnotes* 30 (autumn 1996), 34–39; “Haiku and Spiritual Penetration” in *Albatross* 5:1/2 and 6:1/2 (1996–97), 45–49; “Bashô and Nature” in *Blithe Spirit* 8:1, March 1998, 34–35; “Haiku and Spiritual Interpenetration” in Patricia J. Machmiller and June Hopper Hymas, eds., *Young Leaves: An Old Way of Seeing New: Writings on Haiku in English* (San Jose, Calif.: Yuki Teikei Haiku Society, 2000), 105–10; “A Personal Conclusion” and “The Haiku Moment” in *World Haiku Review* 1:1 (March 2001). <http://www.worldhaikuclub.org/pages/resources_websites.html>; “R.H. Blyth and J. W.

Hackett" (Address to the World Haiku Festival, Yuwa-town, Akita, Japan, 20–22 September 2002) in *World Haiku Review* 2:2 (2002) <www.worldhaikureview.org/2-3/whf2002hackett1.shtml>; "On the Veranda" in *Hermitage* 2:1/2 (spring–summer / autumn–winter 2005, 74–77—an abridged version of "That Art Thou"; "Haiku" and "Haiku Poetry" in *Hermitage* 3:1/2, 2006, 65–67; and "Reflections" in *World Haiku Review* [Web] 2:1 (2002). <http://www.worldhaikureview.org/2-1/jwh_reflectsuggest.shtml>. I have seen a reference to a printed version of this essay—J.W. Hackett. *That Art Thou: A Zen Way of Haiku*. Dayton, Ohio: Mead Corporation, 1992—but have been unable to verify its existence.

⁴⁴ James W. Hackett. "That Art Thou: A Spiritual Way of Haiku." *The Haiku and Zen World of J. W. Hackett* Web site. <<http://www.hacketthaiku.com/tat.html>>. Available 13 December 2009. Unless otherwise stated, all quotations in this section are from this version of the essay.

⁴⁵ "Bashô and Nature," in *Blithe Spirit* (8:1, March 1998), 34.

⁴⁶ Gary Hotham. "The Elevator Door Statement: Haiku and Nature: A Response to James W. Hackett." *Blithe Spirit* 8:2 (June 1998), 25–27.

⁴⁷ Harold G. Henderson. *An Introduction to Haiku: An Anthology of Poems and Poets From Bashô to Shiki*. Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday Anchor Books, 1958, 5.

⁴⁸ This text from the Web site. Earlier versions include:

Breaking the pavement
in a world of men and words:
a flowering weed. [HP2, 47]

Breaking the pavement
in a gray world, full of words:
a flowering weed. [Way, 97]

Breaking gray pavement
in a hard world, full of words:
a flowering weed. [Zen Haiku, 63]

⁴⁹ AH 1:1.

⁵⁰ From the Web site. An earlier version (in HP3, 24; Way, 140; and Zen Haiku, 132) is:

Flying back and forth
through the supermarket—
a frantic sparrow.

⁵¹ HP, 16; HP1, 16; Way, 16; Zen Haiku, 103.

⁵² HP, 37; HP1, 37; Way, 37; Zen Haiku, 51.

⁵³ "That Art Thou," part 2, section 4

⁵⁴ Way, 142; Zen Haiku, 86

⁵⁵ HP3, 20; Way, 136; Zen Haiku, 158

⁵⁶ Blyth, *History*, and reused in many other places.

⁵⁷ "Never"—HP3, 4; Way, 120; Zen Haiku, 94, *Hermitage* 2:1/2. "A spider"—HP2, 18; Bug, 11; Way, 68; Zen Haiku, 150. "The derelict" from the Web site; slightly different versions in HP4, 64; Way 226; Zen Haiku, 56. This speck"—Zen Haiku, 18.

⁵⁸ "Sunrise"—HP, 2. "Nasturtiums"—HP4, 34. Sources listed in this section are only place of first publication for this version.

⁵⁹ "Clouted"—HP3, 31. "The beak"—HP3, 8.

⁶⁰ HP2, 47.

⁶¹ HP, 50; HP3, 35.

⁶² "Let's also"—*Traveler*, 44. "On wiping"—HP4, 58.

⁶³ "Free at last"—HP2, 41. "Bumblebee"—HP4, 33. "Still going strong"—HP3, 26.

⁶⁴ "Searching"—AH 1:1; "At one"—HP4, 7; "Huge trumpet flowers"—HP3, 50; "These barnacled rocks"—Blyth, *History*, II: 359; "A single cricket"—AH 1:1; "With every gust"—HP, 1; "Startled garter snake"—HP2, 25; "The nameless flower"—Zen Haiku, 192.

⁶⁵ "The wakeless way"—HP3, 56; "Consolingly white"—HP4, 48; "Noisy woodpecker"—HP3, 66; "Still going strong"—HP3, 26; "No longer"—HP3, 30; "Puppy lies"—HP3, 36; "My mouser cat"—HP4, 59; "Pampas grass"—HP3, 39; "The cantankerous crow"—HP3, 6; "Resplendent peacock"—HP3, 27.

⁶⁶ "As Nile dusk deepens"—Kô, spring–summer 2000, 3; "Come!"—*Hermitage* 1:1/2 (2004), 31; "Swords of the iris"—HP3, 32.

⁶⁷ "Rare wine"—Zen Haiku, 41; "Gulls heavy"—HP, 34; "Broken last winter"—HP3, 26; "Mid manicured shrubs"—*Traveler*, 29; "The pauses"—Zen Haiku, 30.

⁶⁸ HP4, 16.

⁶⁹ *Traveler*, 59.

⁷⁰ HP, 43.

⁷¹ HP2, 40.

⁷² HP2, 42. One of Randy Brooks's students in his Global Haiku Tradition class at Millikin University in spring 2005 was

assigned to study Hackett's haiku and noticed another aspect of his word choice that is of some interest. Sarah Bassill writes: "One unusual topic that I discovered while reading the entire Haiku Poetry collection was that James liked to talk about poop. I thought this topic was bizarre to mention more than once in over four volumes of haiku, but it does truly capture nature in the simplest way; which was what Hackett's style of haiku is aiming for. For example: "Ceasing his sweet song, / the woodpecker takes a poop, / and then sings again." [HP, 26.] (See Sarah Bassill. "James Hackett's Haiku; A Mirror Held Up to Nature." Global Haiku Tradition class, Millikin University, Decatur, Ill., 2005).

<<http://millikin.edu/haiku/writerprofiles/BassillOnHackett.html>>. In fact, Hackett has published a little over 1,000 haiku, and the word "poop" is used in 6 of them. For those interested in bodily functions, "shit" appears in 2 others, "fart" in one; "piss" in two; and "pee" in three—plus a few other, more oblique references to, usually—as the case of his dog passing wind—the accidents of his puppies. Whether such language is an exercise of Suggestion 16 on the use of humor in haiku poetry or Suggestion 15, that *lifefulness*, not beauty, is the essence of haiku, we'll leave it to the reader to decide.

⁷³ *Blithe Spirit* 10:4 (December 2000), 54.

⁷⁴ Blyth, *History*, II:360.