

Blithe Spirit

Newsletter of The British Haiku Society

Number 1 Winter 1990

EDITORIAL

For those who have (even reluctantly) got used to HIG Newsletter our new title may come as something of a surprise, and can't pass unjustified. Essentially, HIG was concerned with setting up BHS, and it seems appropriate to draw a line between them. We believe that Blithe Spirit hints at the essential serendipity of haiku, its lightheartedness, and emphasises spirit as the hallmark of haiku rather than form. Beyond that, we are happy that the title echoes the name of R.H. Blyth, a prophet who belongs to the world, but who should not be forgotten in the country of his birth.

An encouraging number of you wrote to say that you had found HIG Newsletter 2 useful. However, from the editor's point of view it signally failed to do one important thing, and that was to bring in the sort of comment, argument and counter-argument which we need so that the newsletter can become a real organ of discussion between members.

In that respect I'm sure we shall do better this time, as we print several articles which ought to spark things off. So please do let me have, BEFORE 28 FEBRUARY please, your reactions to those articles, and also comments on various ideas floated in this issue. This is YOUR newsletter, not mine! Please also consider sending in your own haiku, senryu or tanka for the Season (previously Workshop) Corner section, as well as the newly proposed Acorns section. These are places where members can try work out before taking the bold step of attempting to find a wider audience for it.

We are particularly grateful to new member William J. Higginson (author of "The Haiku Handbook", Simon and Schuster, 1986; highly recommended) for sending us enough copies of his leaflet "Information on Writing and Teaching Children Haiku in English" so that all of us can have one. This leaflet will be of (almost a particular interest to English teachers; if you're not an English teacher yourself, you may like to pass it onto one. But not before reading it yourself: we are all, in some measure, "children" where the writing of English haiku is concerned. Or should be.

Despatch of this newsletter has been delayed so that we could also enclose the Society's Rules, and the flier announcing the Society's 1991 Open Haiku Event (thus saving postage).

Finally, I should perhaps tell you that we are still not in a state to appoint an editor as such, so the task continues to be part of my general factotumry, along with the duties of secretary

and treasurer. Ultimately we should look for a separation of these posts.

David Cobb

COMMITTEE

Colin Blundell has been co-opted to the BHS Committee, as an addition to the existing "triumvirate" (James Kirkup, Dee Evetts and David Cobb). We are still looking to coopt another person to the committee. Nobody should feel shy about offering their services!

THE MYSTERIOUS AFFAIR OF RULES

Some of you may be bored by them, some consider them the ultimate in small print, some wonder if they are really necessary. They are. Because of them we are well on the way to securing charitable status (this will entitle us to tax exemption), and able to keep the bank happy. Not to mention members who have a right to consider the possibility of David Cobb being a confidence trickster. (I have one letter on file already expressing doubts as to my real existence.) If you feel the Rules can be improved in any way, please note that Section VIII provides for amendments, though the earliest date at which these could be put to the membership would be January 1992.

MEMBERSHIP REPORT

With the formation of The British Haiku Society out of the original Haiku Interest Group, membership has been redefined and transformed. As we rather thought at the time of the last HIG Newsletter, some who "joined" HIG have not gone on to join BHS, but at the same time additional people have found out about us (particularly through a wonderfully helpful advertisement in Writers' News) and paid-up membership has climbed into the 50s. A new address list (of the BHS) will be issued with Blithe Spirit 2, so we have decided to save space here by not listing new members (though it will be our normal procedure to do so from Blithe Spirit 3 onwards.)

We didn't foresee that a much larger number of members (almost a third) would qualify, as students, pensioners, or people on low income, for the concessionary subscription of £5, which means that our income is less than we had expected. This has some implications for our budget and our publishing plans. We feel we must maintain the concessionary subscription for the less-well-placed. To compensate for this, possibly some of the better-off would like to consider donating more than their normal dues?

This is a good place to record our welcome and warm thanks to new member Kōko Katō (editor of Ko haiku magazine in Japan) who sent us her congratulations and a crisp 10,000 yen note, which amounts to a donation of £25 over her year's subscription!

BUDGET 1991

The income we already have in will enable us to carry out our minimum programme for 1991 without any problems. That is, four Blithe Spirits averaging 12 pages each (the present one is 14!); covering the costs of mailing these to members, as well as other secretarial costs, including one or two which are relatively expensive and non-recurring (e.g. getting rules and letterheads designed and printed). Apart from the Blithe Spirit logo at the top, we shall have to put off any idea of improving the physical quality of the newsletter.

We shall be left with a sum of maybe £150 which can be used to finance additional publications.

PUBLISHING PLANS 1991

Reading the newsletters of societies similar to our own, in America, Canada and Germany, as well as letters from some of our members, it is absolutely clear that we have to satisfy two loyalties: to our members, and to haiku. The incoming president of Haiku Canada, Marshall Hryciuk, has something pertinent to say about this in his inaugural statement:

"There are two poles of operation here: the perfection of haiku at one end, and the nurturing of members at the other. Concerning the work, the writing, publication, appreciation and evaluation are important; whereas in the life, inclusiveness, mutual support, camaraderie and goodwill are the priorities. Every organization and each individual needs both of these aspects. I can think of no aspect of haiku writing or of haiku living that is going to be improved by any individual who claims that one of these poles of operation is all we need to support our development."

Translating those principles into a publication programme means different organs are needed to represent - and at the same time clearly distinguish - both "poles of operation". The function of the Newsletter is mainly one of "mutual support" through information and critical comment; there will be limited space for members to present "work in progress" for discussion. (Workshops we organise will augment the "mutual support, camaraderie and goodwill" aspect.) Since space in the Newsletter for actual haiku may be limited, and tend to be confined within topics set by the editor (see Season Corner below, for example) an additional outlet for all members' work is needed. BHS members' anthologies, a new one every few years, might serve this purpose. Members would decide how to present their own work in a personal way; there would be a minimum of editorial interference. Such licence would however inevitably mean that we would not be producing something likely to "perfect haiku".

And the Society must remain committed to publications which DO tend to "perfect haiku".

The dilemma faces us already in 1991, where there are two possible ways of spending the available £150. We could begin a series of broadsheets, an external publication of the very best in haiku writing in the British Isles, available also for sale to the general public; or we could produce a Member's Anthology, with restricted circulation within the Society only.

We feel a decision which it is to be should be postponed for a bit, until we see how the BHS Open Event turns out. This event will itself do something to set standards. It should also bring in a number of new members who might not be able to submit work in time for a Members' Anthology deadline, so that we would later come to regret having published something before the membership had stabilised. The Open Event may also yield work suitable for broadsheet publication. In the meantime, we'd like to test the water.

HOW ABOUT A MEMBERS' ANTHOLOGY, SAY IN 1992?

We would ask each of you to prepare your own page (one side of A4) and submit it to a deadline about 6 months ahead. Your page would have to fit within margins which we gave you, and be clear enough to photocopy well. Beyond that, decisions about typeface, calligraphy, illustration, lay-out and design would be your own. If the editor thought your page would not reproduce well, it would be sent back for you to try again. About one-third of the page would be for information about yourself (especially what has led up to your becoming a writer of haiku), and any publications of haiku or other poetry you may have had. You may like to include a sketch or caricature of yourself; photos we couldn't accept unless extra money became available for half-tone blocks. The remaining two-thirds of the page would be for your haiku, senryu or tanka. To avoid crowding, there would be a maximum of six. It would not matter whether haiku had been published before somewhere. Copyright would remain yours. The Anthology would have a printed card cover and be ring-bound. Each member of the Society would receive one copy of the anthology.

We're holding our next meeting in London, on Saturday 18 February. What we need to know for the moment is: Would you take part? When would you like it to happen? Would you be prepared to pay extra for a more "superior" looking publication? No questionnaire provided - just write a letter, please.

Dee has enjoyed some outstanding successes in contests recently.

THE 1991 BHS OPEN HAIKU EVENT

Full details of this are in the enclosed leaflet. You'll be glad to see we've been able to negotiate substantial financial support from Japan Airlines for this (they've designed and printed 10,000 leaflets), despite the fact that in 1991, as part of Japan Festival (celebrating the centenary of the Treaty of Friendship between Britain and Japan) they will be organising their own national haiku competition. (Details of this when we have them.)

We have responded to the consensus of members present at the

Cambridge meeting, who felt our event should NOT be a contest with winners and prizes, and that haiku shouldn't be written in a competitive spirit, but as a celebration of life. We have plans for wide distribution of the leaflets, but ALL MEMBERS have a part to play by telling us where leaflets, or "news items" in the press, can usefully be placed. If you yourself can put leaflets on display somewhere, please write to David Cobb, saying where it is, and how many leaflets you would like to have.

NOSTALGIA

In Britain in the past there have been a number of closed haiku competitions, such as the one organised by the Society of Civil Service Authors only last summer, but we know of only one national competition, and that was organised by the Sunday Times in 1959. Recently, James Kirkup came across the announcement of the results of this competition (since when in thirty years so little has happened!) and it seems a good moment to republish at least two of the winning set, by Laura Beckingsale:

Sun-warmed cherry tree - She kneels, as bidden,
A blind bee seeing blossom At the tea-ceremony,
No one else can see. Her trembling hidden.

NEWS OF BHS AND ITS MEMBERS

On October 20 ten of us met in Cambridge for the day. This number of participants may seem small, but actually proved ideal for the exchange of ideas about (I quote from James Kirkup's report since published in Ko) what was "the best form for haiku in the English, on the use of English poetic techniques, particularly punctuation and alliteration and care with line-endings in the composition of our haiku, whether in strict syllabic or in "free" form. Finally, we all read one or two of our own haiku which were discussed and criticized by the rest of the members. Altogether it was a most enjoyable occasion." James enlarges on one or two of these techniques in an article later in this issue.

We're holding our next meeting, in London, on Saturday 16 February 1991. Jill Bamber has very kindly made us welcome in her home for the day. Dee Evetts will be over from Canada and hopes to attend. Hope you can make it too! Fuller details enclosed.

Dee has enjoyed some outstanding successes in contests recently. Following his prize in the 1990 International Haiku Contest organised as part of the 5th National Cultural Festival in Ehime, Japan, he also gained First Prize in the senryu category in the Kaji Aso Studio Boston Haiku Society's Third Annual Contest. Then he also got an "honourable mention" in the 1990 Harold Henderson Memorial Awards. We reprint the three prize-winning poems here:

summer's end: with a flourish
the quickening of hammers the waitress leaves behind
towards dusk rearranged smears

(morning sneeze -). Perhaps we won't have to wait as long as 1994
the guitar in the corner shop's death - for it to be re-shown?
resonates

Margret Buerschaper, president of the German Haiku Society, has
Several BHS members have had haiku or senryu accepted for this
winter's first issue of The Haiku Quarterly (editor: Kevin
Bailey, 39 Exmouth St, Swindon SN1 3PU), and David Cobb has found
another magazine in Britain ready to consider haiku, though this
is not an unqualified blessing, as Candelabrum (editor: Len
McCarthy, Red Candle Press, 9 Milner Rd, Wisbech PE13 2LR) is
"open to submissions of haiku and waka, provided they're strictly
formal - haiku 5/7/5, waka, of course, 5/7/4/7/7." Anybody not
know that waka is another word for tanka? NB I have clarified
with Len McCarthy that he does not count a caesura as a syllable,
even though in performance terms it counts as a beat.

Roy Batt organised a haiku evening for members of the Highgate
Poetry Group in September, and invited David Cobb to join them.
This was an interesting experiment in presenting haiku to a group
with mixed poetic interests and experience. The following formula
seemed to work: 1) hand out a sheet with a dozen very various
poems which have previously been published as haiku, without
revealing the poets' names; don't tell the group they have all
been styled haiku; ask them to pick out those they themselves
recognise as haiku, and think about the criteria they used in
making this decision. 2) discuss the results, which inevitably
throw up new criteria, e.g. on this occasion one participant
(our own Jill Bamber) justified her selection - and in the
process shocked some of the others - by declaring that she had
chosen more poems than anyone else because she thought the spirit
of haiku was as important as the form. Use this discussion to
feed in some of your own ideas about the most important
characteristics of haiku in English. 3) hand out a worksheet
with five or six different versions of the same haiku, showing
how it developed over time in the poet's hands. Ask them to apply
their criteria (which hopefully will have grown in the course of
the session) to decide which version is the best. Enlarge upon
ways in which a haiku poet works.

Ruby Spriggs is the new editor of Haiku Canada Newsletter
(address for subscriptions: Box 123, Lasalle, Quebec H8R 3T7)
but writes that she still hopes to find time to do some reviewing
for us. (Of haiku in our last HIG Newsletter she liked
particularly those by Cy Patterson, Kevin Cowdall, Colin
Shaddick, Emmeline Hardy, and Colin Blundell.) Dee Evetts is
editing a new series for Haiku Canada called "Cutting Edge",
devoted to haiku and senryu "that have either social, political
or ecological significance." "There will always," he says, "be a
place for haiku that observe and celebrate things-as-they-are.
We also need haiku that observe and question things-as-they-are,
where those things are unjust, or inhumane, or endangering."

On December 11 the Japanese Cultural Centre in Piccadilly
screened the documentary "A Haiku Poet's Pilgrimage", retracing
the steps of Basho on his "Narrow Road to the Deep North"

(Oku-no-hosomichi). Perhaps we won't have to wait as long as 1994 - the tricentenary of Basho's death - for it to be re-shown?

A thin response to this request, after all, but here you are: Margret Buerschaper, president of the German Haiku Society, has come up with the idea of holding a European meeting to discuss haiku, in 1992 or 1993, possibly in Cologne, where the Japanese Cultural Centre has been very helpful to them in the past. We've written to Margret telling her we shall follow the development of her idea with great interest and collaborate if possible.

David Cobb has been invited by the Gateway Exhibition Centre, Shrewsbury, to judge the Shropshire Haiku Contest in October 1991, which will also form part of Japan Festival Year.

It was a form I enjoyed reading, without ever considering trying

MORE RECOMMENDED READING

Kenneth Yasuda: The Japanese Haiku, its essential nature and possibilities in English, pub. Tuttle, distributed in the UK by Simon and Schuster. (Members may like to know that a copy of this, also of Blyth, is available for loan (2 weeks) at the Japanese Cultural Centre, 101 Piccadilly, London.)

Margret Buerschaper: Das deutsche Kurzgedicht in der Tradition japanischer Gedichtformen, pub. Verlag Graphikum, Wilhelm-Baum-Weg 31, D-3400 Göttingen, Germany. (For those who read German this gives an excellent survey of the traditions of haiku in Japan and the possibilities of adaptation to a European language and culture.)

During 1991 we intend to get out a more comprehensive reading list, also a full list of magazines which publish haiku regularly, and give this out to members on joining or afterwards from time to time, as this should prove more convenient than suggestions coming out in dribs and drabs.

NEWS OF OTHER ASSOCIATIONS AND CONTESTS

Lewis Sanders, founder of The American Association of Haikuists, asks us to draw attention to his organisation. Dues: \$3.00 a year. Two newsletters a year. Considers haiku for publication in The Red Pagoda, a journal of haiku, renga, tanka, four issues a year, \$14.00 airmail, or \$3.50 a copy. (125 Taylor St, Jackson, Tennessee 38301)

New Zealand Poetry Society 1991 International Poetry Competition. Deadline January 19, 1991. Haiku section: a single sheet of not more than 5 haiku. 2 Prizes: Best sheet \$NZ 50, Best individual haiku \$NZ 50. Fee \$NZ 3 per haiku sheet; no limit on number of entries, but these must be unpublished. On entry sheet write nom de plume and haiku only, but enclose separate sheet with nom de plume, name, address, and first lines of haiku. Send at least 3 IRCs for results.

Not a lot came in, again, but what we got may seem worth the effort:

HOW I BECAME INTERESTED IN HAIKU

A thin response to this request, after all, but here you are:

"Five or six years ago I discovered the work of Frances Horovitz. Here was the kind of poetry that I would risk life and limb to emulate. Further investigations revealed that much of her work was based upon haiku or near-haiku. Although I had read haiku before, I now approached it seriously and began writing it too. I have found much satisfaction in its exact form ..." (Lyn Darrant) (Lyn recommends Frances Horovitz's "Rowlstone Haiku", pub. Five Seasons Press, £3).

"It was a form I enjoyed reading, without ever considering trying it ... then somewhere in the early years of the Science Fiction Poetry Association, the form was given as the "workshop" for an issue of their magazine Star Line (late '70s sometime). I tried my hand and found the form addictive. The workshop also triggered off an interminable discussion among SFPAers as to whether it was possible to have a true SF haiku, or whether, as the form required seasonal references, all such attempts were in fact senryu ... a discussion I seem to remember was "resolved" eventually in a sort of stalemate of mutual exhaustion." (Steve Sneyd) (Maybe there was something almost senryu-like about the words man first spoke on the moon - "a small step for a man, etc."? - Ed.)

"There must have been an attitude of mind, spiritual seed-bed prepared by experiences to receive the concept, long before I came across haiku as a literary form. Was it perhaps contained in the making of miniature gardens (the size of a wooden seed-box) that I submitted each year to Junior School "Flower Shows" between 1944-47? Was it developed during a year (1946 or 47?) of being trapped in a classroom and finding escape in a large reproduction on the wall of Lenbach's "Shepherd Boy" (every classroom should have one!)?

butterfly weighs down
long grass stem - boy crushed between
blue sky and planet

A lot later, looking for something to believe in, I read Alan Watts' "Way of Zen" and, as a "mature" student in a College of Education, wrote essays linking Zen with Keats and existentialism. Later still I got kids to write haiku and did it with them in the classroom: "to write haiku get a three-foot child", says Basho. (Colin Blundell)

WORKSHOP CORNER

Drought and oppressive heat were set as topics - season words, even - for members' haiku and senryu contributions to this issue. Not a lot came in, again, but what we got may seem worth the effort:

stark lizard shadows
dart in the noon heat, fleeing
from coolness of stone

Lyn Darrant

oppressive heat:
the toddler's piddle dries
before she can touch

David Cobb

Savagely the sun
drew salt tears from eyes and skin
to a dry-eyed sky

Moyra Milsom

thirsting for life
parched gardens wait in vain -
hose-pipe ban

Joan Daniels

old cracks in her face
spell long dry season since last
she could spare real tears

Steve Sneyd

all the thousand miles
of summer cycling shrinks to
a sunset synapse

Colin Blundell

SEASON CORNER (CHANGE OF NAME FROM WORKSHOP CORNER)

The idea of setting a different seasonal topic for haiku in each newsletter could still prove a fertile one, so we'll persevere with it for a bit, even though the first response was not that good. With winter upon us, your season words this time are: snow, snowmen, ice, the cold, Christmas trees, New Year, Twelfth Night, berried holly, mistletoe. Even Father Christmas, if you actually see him. Let's have more of you taking part this time!

ACORNS



This is a new section for members' haiku, senryu and tanka. It's a home for what new member Eric Speight calls "nervous work". If you submit here, it will be an invitation to other members to "network" with you direct, and offer their personal criticisms, suggestions, and encouragement. Blithe Spirit editor will consider haiku, senryu or tanka for this section from any member, but give preference to work which is interestingly experimental. As "instant feedback", we'll print an acorn symbol next to any submission which already seems to stand up as good haiku (though this will not mean that the editor thinks it can't be improved still further). When sending haiku for this section, please mark them "Acorns". As distinct from poems for Season Corner, an Acorn doesn't have to have a current seasonal reference, or any season word at all.

REVIEW OF HAIKU IN HIG NEWSLETTER 2, by Dee Evetts

I was delighted to see how many members sent in samples of their work for sharing. At the same time I hope that no-one will take it amiss if I state frankly that all except a handful of these should be regarded as haiku-attempts, rather than haiku. This is no cause for discouragement. A review of the collection offers an excellent opportunity to notice some of the more common problems encountered by someone setting out to write haiku in English.

The first thing that struck me was how many conform to the 5-7-5 syllable pattern. While there is nothing inherently wrong with this, it needs to be understood that to take a thought or observation and arrange it in this way does not necessarily produce haiku. (I will go no further into the question of form, since William J. Higginson discusses it with great clarity in the open letter which follows).

In general, most of the contributions are trying too hard to be poetic, or significant. For a start, there is a temptation to use ornate language, the poetic or literary word instead of the everyday one: "heavens" for "sky", "onerous" for "heavy", and so forth. Closely allied to this is the use of simile and metaphor ("wine-dark sea", "prison of my soul") and personification ("flowers lift their faces"). We are so accustomed to these devices in our own literature that it is often difficult to understand how haiku manage without them.

Then there is a tendency, one to which we are very prone as westerners, to want to make an intellectual or philosophical statement - to tell the reader our idea about something. About truth, serenity, paradox, intimacy, solitude. Yet as D.T. Suzuki has put it so succinctly: "A haiku does not present ideas, but puts forward images reflecting intuitions".

Let us take an example of a long-standing favourite of mine, Gary Hotham's

distant thunder
the dog's toenails click,
against the linoleum

Notice the utter plainness of the language, in particular how few adjectives there are. Then the straightforwardness. The thunder doesn't stand for someone's anger, it is simply thunder. And while this is an animal poem, it shows no trace of sentimentality. The reader is in no way directed what to feel. Does this mean that the poem is devoid of feeling? On the contrary. It is marvellously evocative of the heavy, ominous prelude to a storm. Hotham's master-stroke is that highly accurate detail, the sound of the dog trotting nervously from room to room.

Here is a suggestion for us all. Forget the grand themes. Look, listen and notice. The clicking of a dog's toenails before the storm, the removing of a glove to point at stars, the taste of a mushroom while staring at rotten wood: such moments of awareness, and the feelings they evoke, are the stuff of haiku. The next step is to find the words that most effectively express the moment, and thereby to convey the feeling without naming it - without exaggeration.

(Our American member Bill Higginson says something encouraging about the haiku in *HIG 2*: "the range of works parallels that found at the first few meetings of Haiku Society of America, so you are not unrealistic in hoping that better things will come.")

AN OPEN LETTER from William J. Higginson (slightly shortened)

Good People: congratulations on gathering a band of those interested in haiku in Britain. Since the last issue of Gerry Loose's excellent haiku magazine *Byways*, more than a decade ago, I have hoped that others would take up the banner

(Bill's letter goes on to mention the gift of the leaflets, already noted, and adds:) They are the product of the New York office of JAL International Service, the division that handled the contest (for schools) here. While I was a consultant to JAL in this instance, I did not suggest that 5-7-5 is possibly desirable for us. Along with such other translators and poets as Cana Maeda, Hiroaki Sato, and Lucien Stryk, I feel rather strongly that 17 syllables is just too long for a haiku in English. The argument is presented more fully in my *Haiku Handbook*, but for now let's just note that the four of us, however much we may disagree about other matters, all agree on a range of roughly 10-14 syllables as the closest English equivalent to Japanese haiku length.

I agree with British haiku critic R.H. Blyth's suggestion in "A History of Haiku" (vol. II, p.351) that a rhythm of two, three, two accented beats in English best approximates the length and rhythm of the 5-7-5 pattern in the traditionally counted Japanese haiku. Blyth was also a professor of English literature, and knew a good deal about our traditional poetry as well as that of Japan.

As James Kirkup has noted, "wordiness" is often one of the main problems when we try to write haiku in English. The rhythm Blyth suggests, or the 10-14 syllable length, leads to a good deal less wordiness. Then we can concentrate the haiku moment and seasonal element into more powerful, evocative poems.

(Editor's note: From members' letters it's quite clear a majority are initially attracted to haiku by the form. They regard 5-7-5 as tough as well as beneficial medicine; but it's addictive, and they're reluctant to move on to something even more concentrated. Myself, I found it useful to try capturing the same moment in 5-7-5 and also in any shorter form which didn't resort to maltreatment of the English language. When I compared the results I often became aware of something almost akin to padding in the 5-7-5 version. I still hold on fondly to quite a lot of 5-7-5s for which I can find no more succinct expression. I believe syllable weight counts as much as syllable number (which is, of course, the basis of the point on which the "four eminences" all agree). If you must have 17 syllables, for breath's sake spare us syllables like "breathe"!)

SPECIAL OFFER!

This is a probably a good moment for a sales-pitch for a book containing hundreds of top-class haiku, generally in the 5-7-5 mode: BHS has secured a supply of copies of J.W.Hackett's "The

Zen Haiku and other Zen Poems" (258pp., cased) which normally retails in this country at around £16, and is able to offer them to members for only £12, including postage and packing. If you are building a haiku library, this is a "must". Orders, with cheques made out to The British Haiku Society, to David Cobb.

MATSUO BASHO: SOME HAIKU - translations and commentaries by James Kirkup (we are grateful to Kōko Katō, editor of *Ko*, for the permission to reprint the part of this article which develops some of the points made at the Cambridge meeting).

Listening to them, it's hard to believe they'll soon die -- the cicadas.

One of the advantages of writing English haiku in three lines instead of in one is that we can use English line-ending effects. In English poetry, the ends and beginnings of lines are very sensitive, and words placed in these positions can acquire a special resonance.

In this famous haiku, the placing of "soon" creates a light pause, and almost a feeling of slight suspense before the important word "die", whose isolation at the start of the next line adds to its force.

After "die", a longer pause, using a dash, introduces, right at the last moment, with a certain dramatic surprise, the subject of the poem: "the cicadas". The dash is a useful element in English poetry for the purpose of pace and suspense.

The full moon shining all night long I've been walking round and round the pond

In translation, and also of course in original English poems, punctuation is very effective when carefully used. Punctuation is the musical notation of poetry, and can be used in many subtle ways to indicate speed, tone, rhythm and pauses of varying lengths. In translating haiku, the dash helps to produce impressionistic effects, to accent contrasting images, to both separate and combine apparently conflicting words and ideas.

Here the use of the dash after "shining" helps to prolong that word, and also to emphasize the power of the moonlight. As "shining" is a present participle, it suggests something continuous.

Repetition is another favourite English poetic device. "Round and round" suggests continuity as well as repetition of movement, as does the present participle "walking". Basho spent all night walking and walking around Hirosawa no ike. Perhaps the strong moonlight stopped him from sleeping after he had spent some hours viewing the full moon. In a play of meanings, "round" also makes us think of the image of the full moon.

Upon a dead branch
a crow comes and perches --
evening in autumn

Here also the dash after "perches" suggests the sudden pause after the bird alights on the withered branch. By using the form "comes and perches" the actual movement is expressed more vividly: we see the crow "coming" before he "perches". The preposition "upon", rather than just "on", also gives a sense of both motion and rest.

Sometimes we can use a dash very effectively at the beginning of a line, or in the middle of a line, like a caesura. But in this haiku, the dash must come at the end of the second line, creating that pregnant pause that fills the third line with such great tranquillity. It is not necessary to make a complete sentence: the three simple words express everything, just as our eye completes spaces left empty by an artist in a painting.

The bee leaves the heart
of the peony flower
-- so reluctantly!

The dash here could also be at the end of the second line, but it creates an added surprise when placed at the beginning of the last line. I always try to use exclamation marks sparingly, unlike some translators who try to make up for the inadequacy of their techniques by putting exclamation marks all over the place, thus robbing them of their true value and tiring the reader's eye. But here I feel an exclamation mark is justified.

The bee is almost drugged by the sweetness at the heart of the peony's rich stamens. Perhaps he is also loaded with pollen and honey and finds it physically difficult to extract himself from the flower. So the dash and the exclamation mark suggest both the bee's pleasure and his struggle to release himself from it, however unwillingly. There is a busy pause, in which we can feel and almost hear the bee at work before he has to leave.

First winter shower.
The monkey too seems to want
his little raincoat.

The period at the end of the first line suggests the force of the sudden rain. It also separates the larger image of winter rain from the smaller image of the monkey shivering and trying to find shelter. It is a playful contrast, made more effective by the use of the full stop. I have tried to express this playfulness a little more pointedly by writing "his" little raincoat, which makes us feel the monkey is fairly tame, or a pet who sometimes wears clothes - in this case a rain-cape of reeds - in imitation of humans. This haiku shows the poet's deep affection for, and understanding of animals. His eye is like a painter's.

FOUND HAIKU by Colin Blundell

For some years I have been in the habit of constructing "Found Poems" from the books I chain-read and through my garden-shed operation, Hub Editions, I have published five volumes of Found Poems. The idea of finding poems in other writers' work may sound like plagiarism (it is always important to acknowledge one's original source, of course) but it has a very respectable ancestry in poems like Coleridge's "Kubla Khan" and Wordsworth's "Solitary Reaper", both of which were constructed from other writer's prose works; and Eliot's "Waste Land" is a noteworthy blend of bits from other writers.

Provided you have a particular "mental set", haiku/senryu seem to occur from a sudden insight while reading, deriving from the way experience thrusts itself at you; books being, after all, a valuable part of experience, can thrust haiku/senryu at you in the same way as primary experience does; they are a legitimate source of haiku.

Often the precise words of a novel fall naturally into the 5-7-5 format (which I choose to adopt):

The *khamseen* blows. The windows have to be kept closed. The hot wind rattles the shutters and the kitchen boy sweeps dust from the hall floor three times a day.

the hot wind rattles
the shutters and the boy sweeps
dust from the hall floor

Penelope Lively: Moon Tiger

Sometimes a very slight modification achieves the 5-7-5 format:

... released from the Embassy for the essential afternoon rest. Down in the garden, the gardener also sleeps, in the shade of the banyan tree, hunched up into a bundle of old rags. Hoopoes pick delicately at the lawn; the petunias and marigolds blaze.

the gardener sleeps too
in the shade of the banyan -
bundle of old rags

ibid.

Haiku/senryu produced in this way fit nicely with the Zen attitude towards using the "accidental" in life and art. The sudden apprehension that there's a haiku in what you're reading gives you a real kick in the brain - the same moment of excitement that occurs when one comes from primary experience.

In the spirit of Zen, it is fascinating to contrive "accidents". The following occurred as a result of reaching idly to my bookcase and opening a page one wet Sunday afternoon.

... of Heaven is the Candle.
It is well known that foxes like to be hunted by squires and farmers but cannot bear to be chased by cockney sportsmen.
Is it nice to take so much notice of nature. nature never troubles

foxes like to be
hunted by squires and farmers
not cockney sportsmen

Just as haiku invite the reader's participation in a reconstruction of meaning, so the Found Poem maker participates in a process with the writer of the original.

(Richard Jefferies: Notebooks p182)