

nancy brady

Three Breaths





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Also by nancy brady:

Ohayo Haiku

nancy brady

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Three Breaths

Nancy Brady

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1870

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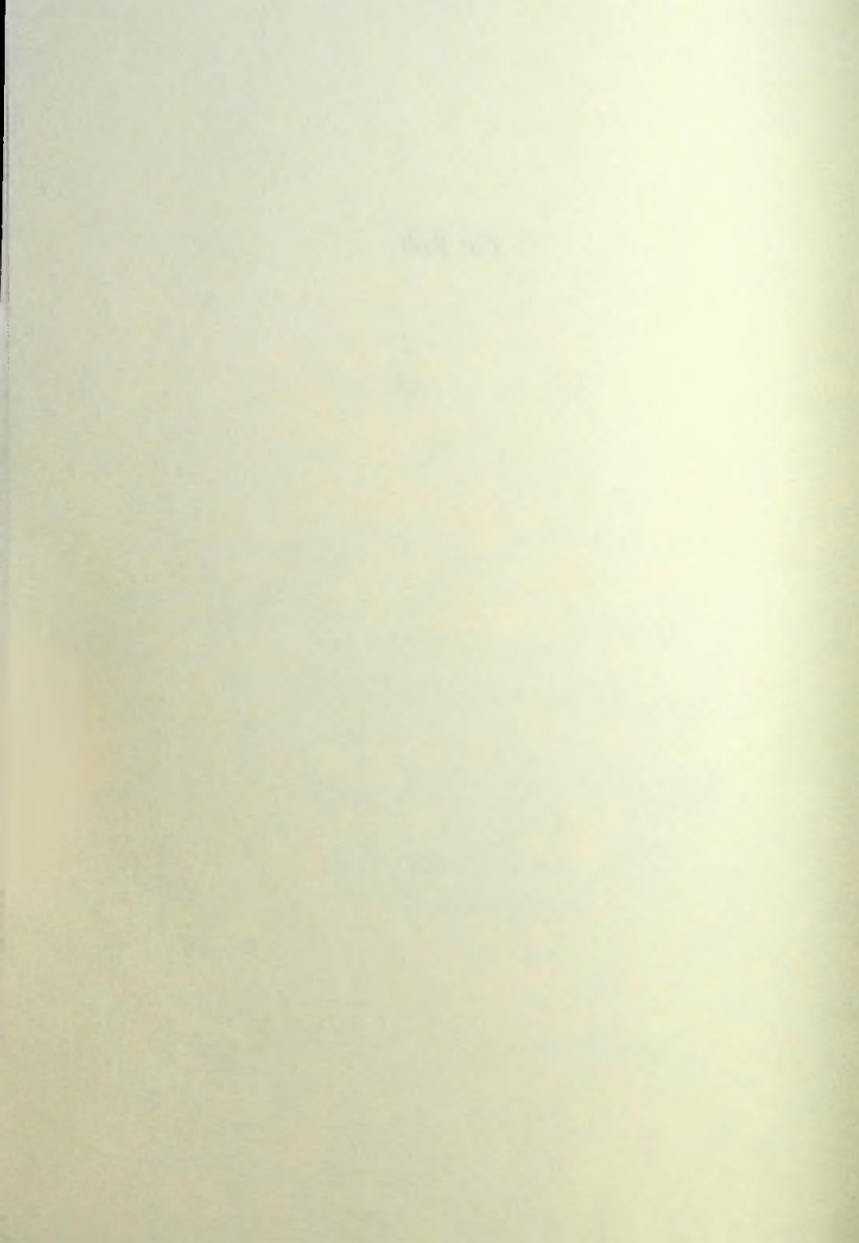
1877

1878

1879

1880

For Rob



Haiku Reduction

Haiku Reduction

When I was first introduced to haiku, it was defined as a nature poem tied to a strictly regulated pattern of seventeen syllables broken into three lines of five-seven-five. At the time, this public school definition seemed inviolate and everyone in my small class set to counting syllables on our fingers. When cultural awareness of this Oriental form set in, however, the rules were relaxed. Five-seven-five, as it turned out, meant something different in English than it did in Japanese. The real concept was a poem in one breath which soon translated as three lines, short-long-short. As the form evolved in the Western world, those on the leading edge of the poetry made the argument that a single word could be a haiku. (I don't believe that this newer construction would have ever satisfied the criterion of my high school English teacher, but there it was in a literary journal.) The single word had to then be explained with a paragraph of prose so that the reader could hear a clear poem in a single word.

Haiku reduction is an idea that I have been playing with for a few years. It begins with five-seven-five (or short-long-short) and "reduces" over three repetitions (hence, *three breaths*). It becomes, in a sense, a guided meditation which takes the form of three haiku, each mirroring the others. The final, and shortest form, becomes a single breath which is the heart of haiku.

A white puffball
explodes across green field
breath scatters seeds

white puffball
explodes in field
scatters seeds

puffball
explodes
seeds

wildflower field...
Queen Anne's lace, blue chicory
mirror sky

wildflowers
lace, blue chicory
mirror sky

wildflower
blue sky

shades of burnished gold
spread upon canvas of green
fall watercolor

shades of gold
spread upon canvas
fall watercolor

gold
canvas
watercolor

the rushing river
slows with the transformation
winter's ice and snow

the river's
transformation
winter ice

ice
transformed
river

white petals on trees
cascading down with the rain
gentle confetti

white petals
cascade with the rain
soft confetti

petals
rain
confetti

snowy white egrets
stalk through river's marshy weeds
avian hunters

snowy egrets
stalk through marsh
hunters

egrets
stalk

milkweed pods open
seeds scatter on the wind
to new life

milkweed pods
seeds on the wind
new life

wind
scatters
life

the soft white feathers
drift slowly down covering
the now silent earth

soft feathers
drift down slowly
silent earth

down
feathers
silence

night skies overhead
an inky blackness dotted
by thousands of stars

night skies
inky blackness dotted
by stars

night
inks
stars

cold and snow
crocus blooms open
hope of spring

cold
spring blooms
crocus

redbud in bloom
purple blossoms peek out
arrival of spring

redbud blooms
blossoms peek out
spring's arrival

redbud
blossoms
arrive

sky washed out by clouds
blues faded to nearly white
color of old jeans

sky-washed clouds
blues faded white
old jeans

washed
blue
jeans

light filters through
dappled leaves of vivid green
shades mossy grass

light through
dappled leaves
shades grass

light
dappled
shades

silhouetted trees
against the gold and mauve sky
while shadows deepen

silhouette trees
gold and mauve sky
shadows deepen

sky
shadows

a lotus flower
drifts lazily on the pond
frog on lily pad

lotus flower
drifts on pond
frog on pad

flower
drifts

pale orb in the sky
burns away wisps of fog
sudden clarity

pale orb
burns away fog
clarity

orb
burns
clear

quiet and pristine
open to the sky above
cathedral of white

quiet
open sky
cathedral

quiet
open
cathedral

red disk in sky
low on the eastern horizon
Japanese flag

red disk
on eastern horizon
Japan's flag

red disk
Japan

splashes of purple
peek out of dark woods
green soon covers

purple splashes
peek from woods
greens soon

woods
peek
green

the water eddies
trees surf down river in
the storm's aftermath

river
eddies
after storm

wings only a blur
flying over a deep pond
two dragonflies mate

wings blur
flying over pond
dragonflies mate

dragonflies
wing

in peaceful lagoon
leaves float on still water
crimson reflections

peaceful lagoon
leaves float on water
still reflections

leaves
float
still

snow on black branches
Canada geese in a Vee
flying of flurries

snow on branches
Canada geese in "V"
flying flurries

snow
geese
flying

tender buds on trees
burst into fragile trees
verdant spring

tender buds
burst into leaves
spring trees

tender
leaves
spring

a mossy garden
reflections in the deep pool
guarded by cattails

mossy garden
deep pool reflections
cattail guard

pool
reflects
cattails

frost covers the ground
fog soft-filters through the trees
night becomes morning

frosted ground
mist through trees
night to give way

frosted
misty
morning

angel in the snow
stands guard and protects
loved ones

snow angel
guards and protects
loved ones

angel
protects
love

tiny buds on tree
burst into delicate blooms
petals of pale pink

buds on trees
burst into bloom
pink petals

trees
bloom

golden sun rises
casting a coppery glow
upon sky, trees, earth

golden sun
casts coppery glow
upon sky, earth

sun
coppery
sky

maples' leaves of gold
flutter down all around
ticker tape parade

golden leaves
flutter down
ticker tape parade

leaves
flutter
parade

pale moon
shines down on two lovers
a warm embrace

moon
shines on lovers'
warm embrace

moon
lovers'
embrace

Grand Teton Mountain
rising above Jackson Hole
where buffalo roam

Grand Teton
rises above Jackson Hole
buffalo roam

Teton
buffalo

Haiku

General Information
History of the Institution
List of Officers and Trustees

General Information
History of the Institution
List of Officers and Trustees

General Information
History of the Institution
List of Officers and Trustees



morning rain
hopscotching around
all the puddles



wind chimes play
in counterpoint to church bells
spring breeze



scarlet-clad
strips away raiment
one leaf at a time



blue jays call
screeching for peanuts
I am well-trained



hummingbird
at scarlet canna lilies
late summer morning



majestic wader
lives on Ohio's north coast
Great Blue heron



wildflower field...
Queen Anne's lace, blue chicory
mirror sky



summer walk
across the fence
blue jays' argument



the computer geeks
play nine holes on the golf course
the real hackers



liquid gold melted
by ice blue water
summer sunset



wings a blur
dragonflies mate
over deep pool



construction barrels
stack cars into single lane
-capillaries



giants' pillow fight--
down blankets
the ground



patriots
the few, the proud, the Marine
fledglings off to war



cornfields
nearly smooth with snow
old man's whiskers



gray winter
amid thorns and brambles
bird in papal red



a dusting of snow
peeping through, purple pansies
still in bloom



snow-covered branches
only color in landscape
cardinal on the bench



white petals
cascade with the rain
soft confetti



spring melancholy
rock 'n rock hits of youth
now classic songs



Cirque Soleil...
the squirrels' acrobatics
on the feeder



March blizzard
red-winged blackbirds
flock to feeder



late snowfall
after the ice cream stand opens
spring ala mode



red disk in sky
low on the eastern horizon
Japanese flag



cherry blossoms
drift down into the lake
the white swans



Morse code signals
through the dark woods
farmhouse lights



crabgrass claws
grab ankles on sidewalk
late summer



turned to gold
the silver aspens'
alchemy



imperious gaze
from wire perch
red-tailed hawk



shades of red
on canvas of green
fall palette



crimson trees
amid boughs of green
a first kiss



powdered sugar
tops freshly plowed field
late fall morning



Japanese maples
their leaves a fiery red
against ice blue sky



late summer
two leaves drift down
to the ground



summer storm
hosta leaves shelter
a rabbit



upon the old stump
bracket fungi multiplies
from decay, new life



dead of night
the long whooo whooo
of the train through town



Canada geese call
urge sluggish wings to flight
late summer morning



placebo effect...
Vicodin now in hand
patient's face changes to smile



African violets
in bloom on Grandma's birthday
summer solstice



Queen Anne's lace
remembrance of Grandma's
rhinestone brooch



irritated by a cell phone ring
only to discover
it is mine



gnarled tree trunk
my mother's
arthritic hands



dime on the sidewalk
a gentle reminder
to tithe



pecking order...
competition to be
mom's favorite



loss of family members
addition of new ones
lateral buds



pumpkin pie
still my favorite
birthday cake



heat lightning
lights up evening sky
teen's tantrum



Solar collector—the cat stretches her full-length on the
couch, catching the noonday sun, moving
as the sun moves



the soft purr that rumbles and warms me through to my
core



winter's chill
wrapping hands around a warm cuppa
and the cat's purr



hunkered down on porch
eight cats and kittens
bask in the morning sun



cat as familiar
warmth, comfort of soft purr
close by



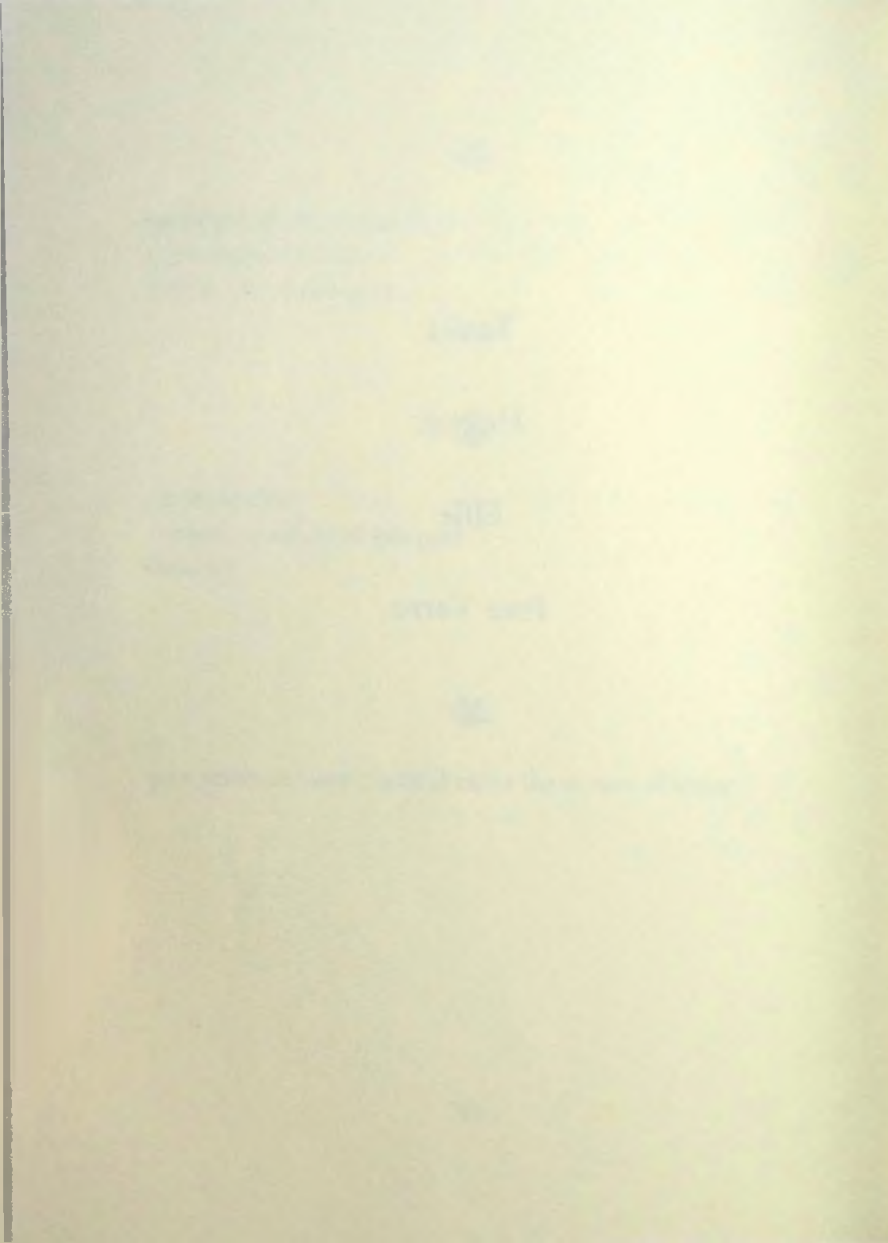
paw prints in snow...a feral cat to the stream of water

Tanka

Haibun

Elfje

Free Verse





lapful of cat
soaks in sun's warmth
through windows

I, too, am warmer
from the sun and cat's purr



the grass becomes green
yet, sprinkled between blades
violets of blue

I know they don't belong
but still bring a smile

Summer Sail

When motoring out the river to sail on Lake Eric, we pass the local limestone plant and note the smoke stacks for the wind direction. The limestone is brought to the riverbank via large tankers that cruise the waters of the Great Lake, and then is piled up alongside the break wall.

Gazing northward towards Ontario are the Great Blue herons. Flexing their wings like giant bats, black cormorants sit upon pilings that sit above the river's water line while the snowy egrets fly over to the other side of the river to the shallow, sheltered bay to fish. Various species of ducks glide alongside our boat, but the largest flock of birds are the ring-billed and herring gulls. All the while the great mountains of limestone play host to hundreds of gulls and terns. Screeching loudly, they sun themselves as we put up our mainsail on the way out of the river for a day of sail.

King of the mountain
A game played by seagulls
On the rock piles



Green
Fluttering fans
Tended by monks
Has it slipped memory?
Gingko



Dusty
Chalk marks
On the sidewalk
I toss a pebble
Hopscotch



White
Floats down
Drifts across sidewalk
Grass covered in snow?
Cottonwood



Jackhammer
Drills deeply
Hearing the rat-a-tat-tat
Did he find insects?
Woodpecker

Return to earth

Reduce, recycle, reuse,
the bird, not celebrated,
(except in Hinckley)
follows the premise.

Gliding, winging its way
Clearing
fields and highways--
each spring
returning
to winter's detritus.

The reaper's shadow
watches for death,
gliding and soaring on thermals,
joined now by companions.

Hulking Skeksis
tearing at decaying flesh,
ripping from bones.

Without status
of raptor hawk
Scavengers
feast on leftovers.
Reduce,
recycle,
reuse.

Dictionary Elles

Lewd, lascivious, licentious, lustful, libertine...

Who discovered them?

Was it Christy?

Karen?

Or, perhaps, another?

No matter, we learned them

Different words with subtle nuances

All with the same meaning.

We knew them, used them

We were the Dictionary Girls

Virgins all,

Dateless on Saturday nights.

We believed our teachers,

The ones who said,

"If you use a word ten times,

The word is yours forever."

And we made them ours,

Lewd, lascivious, licentious, lustful, libertine.

It became our mantra; each having her favorite

Mine, licentious...

I loved the sound, the feeling of it in my mouth
Feline, lithe, lean, and smoldering,
A svelte woman in a skinny black dress.

We're grown now,

Having lived the lustful life of the mind
Still Dictionary Girls

...and have become, in turn,

Lewd, lascivious, licentious, lustful libertines

At times.

but mostly we are just

Dictionary Girls.

Come September

The sky's blue enough
to rival
a jay's
wing.

Trees greening
in the last
hurrah of
chlorophyll
Not yet eclipsed
by crimson, scarlet,
and gold.

Burgundy spears
of sumac,
point in defiance,
not relinquishing
color

More vibrant now,
the colors imprint on
the mind,
to stave off
winter's grays,
so
come, September.

Golden fans

Carpets of golden fans
from four ginkgo trees.
I see them

on my walks
around town.

A giant at the park
overlooking the lake,
another in front of the library,
at a church, and
again, on the path from here to there.
Each leaving a carpet of fans behind.

The orphan offspring of monks,
the oldest of trees.
Male and female, they come
bearing the 'fruit' that helps
with memory.

Is that why they are planted?
To keep in memory those
who are gone?
With plaques to recall
when memory dims?

Living for thousands of years,
the trees will outlast the
people, the memories.
The golden fans will cover the rest.

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Dusty chalk marks (elfje) was first published on May 7, 2012 at www.simplyelfje.wordpress.com

Green fluttering fans (elfje) was first published on May 25, 2012 at www.simplyelfje.wordpress.com

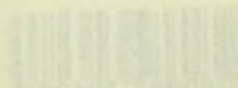
Crimson trees (haiku) was first published on January 19, 2008 at www.asahi.com

Morning rain (haiku) was first published on April 29, 2011 at www.asashi.com

Loss of family members (haiku) was first published on March 16, 2012 at www.asahi.com

Solar collector (small stone) was first published in the anthology *pay attention: a river of stones* edited by Fiona Robyn and Kaspalita, (Lulu.com) April 14, 2011

Other poems have appeared online at:
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Three Breaths

Nancy Brady is a pharmacist by profession and a poet by nature. A native Ohioan living near the shores of Lake Erie, she draws inspiration from the beauty of her surroundings, and captures moments in haiku and other short forms. In this volume, she experiments with haiku reduction by taking verse in the traditional form and sifting it through stages to its essential single breath.

She is a graduate of Ohio Northern University. Her first book of poetry, *Ohayo Haiku*, was published in 2006.



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