

*Daniel Hales*

Beard of Bees  
**#114**



*Shake My Ashes*

# SHAKE MY ASHES

by  
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## **On Their Cell Phones**

The Jedi insult the Sith on their cell phones,  
mock Darth Sidious' hiss on their cell phones.

No ring tones, text messaging, email, or Tetris;  
we had no choice but to diss on their cell phones.

The lovers sweet nothing, talk dirty, confess;  
soon they'll be able to French kiss on their cell phones.

Why is it they can't get through to friends downtown  
but can, with ease, call Paris on their cell phones?

At last, you can get it on anywhere you like;  
phone-sex-addicts buy mobile bliss on their cell phones.

This one goes out to all the wedding guests  
who got sloshed on free booze then pissed on their cell phones.

Landlines are for chumps who don't mind getting tapped;  
pimps, cons, and dealers subsist on their cell phones.

Gossips were thrilled by the technological leap,  
found a better mill for grist on their cell phones.

Strangers, side by side, talk to people who aren't there  
and perfectly coexist on their cell phones.

They debated Eve's role in the fall of man,  
cross-referenced Avalon's Mists on their cell phones.

While most prefer nooses, shotguns, or poison,  
some have tried slashing their wrists on their cell phones.

They moved away from the nuclear power plant  
once they started growing cysts on their cell phones.

Tired of clichés, small talk, telemarketers?  
Try calling up surrealists on their cell phones.

Reception's so lousy they can't get roaming  
never mind radiant gists on their cell phones.

It's fun watching apes deny their mortality  
as they tighten the grips on their cell phones.

I was snapped by Cingulars at the party,  
now megapixelated blips on their cell phones.

You could do worse than reincarnate as one;  
look at all those hotties' lips on their cell phones.

Chain-smoking goth kids in the Last Drop Cafe  
hunch over journals and lisp on their cell phones.

Some have Black Sabbath, Pink Floyd, Dio ring tone riffs;  
others opt for a lick from Liszt on their cell phones.

Do they hate freedom, want the terrorists to win?  
No? Then why didn't they enlist on their cell phones?

First, they beat it with mastodon bones: no reply.  
Next, tried to call the monolith on their cell phones.

Headless snowman in  
repose. Scarf and hat spare us  
his pulverized face.

## The Water

*A ghazal for Joel on the occasion of The Wanderer's launching*

Here lies One  
Whose Name was writ in Water. — Keats' epitaph

See how the wind folds and pleats the water?  
Hear how each wave says, repeats: the water?

After two years marooned on pine needles  
how eagerly your prow greets the water.

Can you recall the first time you saw it:  
that thoroughfare of tall fleets, the water?

It seems I must reintroduce myself  
each time that my paddle meets the water.

Bees emerge from flowers pleased as can be.  
Where do herons find their treats? The water.

Have you ever begged for some need as one  
lost in the desert entreats the water?

I've liquidated all my metaphors  
except for my favorite conceits, the water.

Is the bottom near? Farther than it seems?  
Master of countless deceits, the water.

There's always more waiting to be reborn;  
a cloud congregation completes the water.

Thanks to hydroelectric engineers  
a dam efficiently eats the water.

Never content to remain in one place,  
it approaches and retreats, the water.

A truly humbling sight to behold:  
how a waterfall unseats the water.

Though a sea insists it is infinite  
how easily the sky beats the water.

If I could ask it to teach me one thing:  
how it accepts its defeats, the water.

Eventually time will erase me  
just as a long drought deletes the water.

I'm another whose name's writ on the waves,  
syllables scrawled on its sheets, the water.

You challenge me: go ahead and name one:  
a poet better than Keats? The Water.



The wind wants to be  
warm, too. That's why it pushes  
through the chinks round your  
windows, shivers, blows till the  
embers glow in your wood stove.

## **An Historical Ghazal**

When one stubs one's toe, one's said "ouch" throughout history.  
Man's goal has been repose on couch throughout history.

Note to predators who wish to approach prey unseen:  
it's proven effective to crouch throughout history.

Homo sapiens disinclined to gossip or grin  
have earned the designation "grouch" throughout history.

Man's had a hard time keeping his sword in his scabbard  
and his gold pieces in his pouch throughout history.

For it is written: where there's a mute harlequin  
you'll find a stuck up Scaramouch throughout history.

A dance craze more rad and retro than the Monster Mash?  
The Bi-Millennial Rough Beast Slouch throughout history.

I've got a lousy habit of misplacing textbooks;  
my Social Studies grade will vouch: I threw out history.

## The Last Song For Spring

*an extended vilanelle*

Imagine a day: no new songs left to play or sing  
when every word/note combination has been tried.  
First gone: songs brief as a twenty-first century spring.

Each possible sequence of notes fretted on each string...  
the last song of Orpheus was an inhuman cry  
predicting the day there will be no new songs left to sing.

Who composed the last processional for a king?  
Sick of words, he'd vowed to translate all song into sigh.  
First up, songs brief as a twenty-first century spring.

Would you hire a trombonist with his arm in a sling?  
What could be sadder than a bird that can't sing or fly?  
Imagine a day: no new songs left to play or sing.

Here: exact space where the lost craft sent back its last ping.  
If they don't hit satellites, a song's limit's the sky  
'til the day there are no new songs left to play or sing.

This wouldn't be the first time I've consulted the I-Ching.  
A pair of mating dragonflies landed on my thigh  
fucking faster than a twenty-first century spring.

I dreamt I wrote each word, bent each note in "Little Wing."  
Is culture possible sans music to signify?  
Tunes sad and short as a twenty-first century spring?

The next night I dreamt blue turtles devouring Sting.  
He tried building a fortress nine-hundred meters high.  
His turtles chomped towards the day of no Sting left to sing.

Our success depends on what expectations we bring!  
Our corporate logo's written on the flag we fly:  
*Let us work towards the day there no more songs to sing!*  
*Lives sad and short as a twenty-first century spring!*

## **Futuristic Ghazal**

Maps will be holoprojecting graphs in the future.  
We'll teach our kids to speak with giraffes in the future.

Sorrow will be the only thing we let go extinct.  
There'll be no shortage of belly laughs in the future.

Witches will craft wind-powered brooms, rechargeable wands.  
Wizards will wield parabolic staffs in the future.

Global warming will not only cease, it will reverse;  
icebergs will reunite with their calves in the future.

Food—for those who still choose to eat it—will cook itself.  
We'll drink ambrosia from gold carafes in the future.

Failures and bad choices will be rendered obsolete.  
With time machines, we'll edit our gaffes in the future.

In the future, we'll live completely in the future:  
past and present: marked by cenotaphs in the future.

## 5 Niantics

*a syllabic form borrowed from a monument at McCook's Beach, Niantic, CT*

NEHANTIC INDIAN  
BURYING GROUND  
TRIBE DECLARED  
EXTINCT  
1870

---

Where Niantic feeds At  
-lantic, currents  
chew my wake.  
Gulls like  
waiters I won't tip.

---

Corpse of a red balloon  
reincarnates  
as a new  
kind of  
fluttering seaweed.

---

Reading at the beach I  
grew so drowsy  
I mis-read  
the word  
fetal as fatal.

---

Bittersweet gets greedy  
binds our trees, then  
claims my care  
-fully  
curated driftwood.

## **Orange Moon**

Levitating swedge of orange, the moon  
it could no longer hide its door-hinge, the moon.

As much as it loves Swiss and gorgonzola  
prefers the smoky taste of s'mores singed, the moon.

Last week it sipped a glass of white wine each night  
but now it's on a tawny port binge, the moon.

## To Sleep

Tired of counting countless sheep, I started writing this poem to sleep.  
When Buddha had insomnia he'd intone one long OHM to sleep.

One tenet of my religion: sleep is sacred, a sexy gift.  
I've slept in tents, trailers, trees. My preference is being home to sleep.

How do astronauts find repose in the cold, dark abyss of space?  
Martians snore out beneath the stars, but we need heated domes to sleep.

I couldn't stop for death, but he was bro enough to stop for me.  
I have yet to ride a chariot of celestial chrome to sleep.

The second hand's smug ticking, an insomniac's only music.  
I know people so boring they could put a metronome to sleep.

Junked out on jetlag, coffee, vertigo, shots, ominous cloudscapes  
I had to wait till my twelve-hour stop-over in Stockholm to sleep.

Each oracle you've met so far on your quest contradicts the rest.  
*You must precisely repeat each syllable of the gnome to sleep.*

People think pollination's just a fun little buzz in the park.  
Sick of sexting flowers, I went back to the honeycomb to sleep.

Relaxation's hue gets sicklied over with the pale cast of thought.  
Perchance to dream? If I could be cured of Hamlet Syndrome to sleep.

Too much Excedrin, I wake up more tired than if I hadn't slept.  
Words can work better than pills; peruse a ponderous tome to sleep.

Zeus keeps scheduling more board meetings, Skypes, mandatory trainings.  
With an Olympian groan, Poseidon sinks 'neath the foam to sleep.

Try not to think too much about clearcut forests at 3 a.m.  
Why waste real estate on a corpse? Don't put me in the loam to sleep.

"Was it a car or cat I saw?" "Did Hannah see bees? Hannah did!"  
Selah Hales insists: insomniacs, try a palindrome to sleep.

Green always leaves me  
too soon, as summer falls through  
a yellowing roof.



## Epitaph

“When packing your bags, skip books on tape and take my ashes.  
Yes, toothbrush and parachute, but don’t forsake my ashes.

Each new place you stop, open my urn, scatter one or two;  
come autumn, amidst their leaves, strangers will rake my ashes.

I won’t rest till I’ve spread across all continents and seas.  
At the Equator, flurry a few flakes of my ashes.

Each bridge or border you cross, scatter a little of me.  
Put me in a snow globe so future hands can shake my ashes.

In California, cast my flecks into the fault-lines  
so when the plates grind they will also quake my ashes.

In Transylvania, wear me in a locket ‘round your neck;  
they deter vampires better than wooden stakes, my ashes.

Do not number them among your frail, precious possessions;  
they want nothing more than to crumble and break, my ashes.

Beaten down by despair? Let my soot sift through your fingers  
and remind yourself that they no longer ache, my ashes.

When rejoicing, let me float on the intoxicated air;  
think of me as New Year’s confetti,” thus spake my ashes.

In a thousand years, you’ll pick my dark matter from your boot soles;  
the tread of traveling feet once more will wake my ashes.

DANIEL HALES is the author of the chapbook *Blind Drive* (White Knuckle Press), and *Tempo Maps*, a chapbook with the companion CD *Miner Street Symphony* (ixnay press). His poems, flash fictions, and hybrid writings have appeared in many journals, including *Verse Daily*, *Conduit*, *H\_NGM\_N*, *Sentence*, *Quarter After Eight*, and *Booth*. He's in three bands: The Ambiguities, Umbral, and The Frost Heaves, whose most recent album is *Contrariwise: Songs from Lewis Carroll's Alice's Adventures In Wonderland and Through The Looking-Glass*. You can find him online at [www.danielhales.com](http://www.danielhales.com).

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