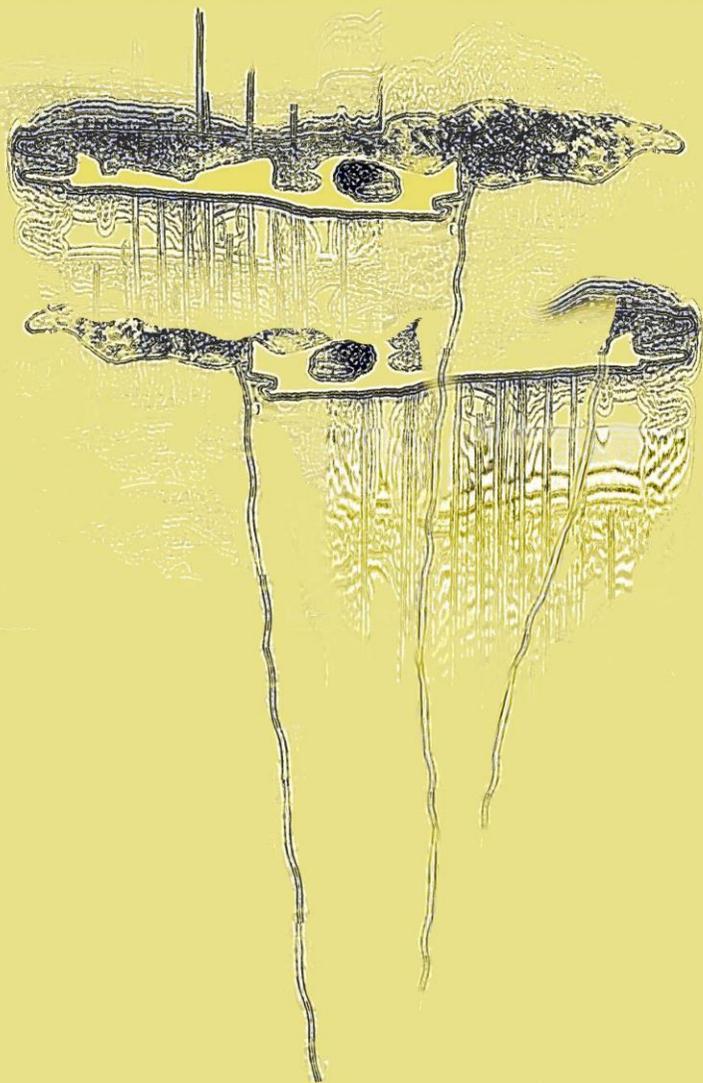


a dangerous vacation



poems by Dale Michael Houstman

Cover image
The Hill He Dreamt of Returning to You, 2015
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§

In memory of two marvelous women: **Joyce**,
mother and friend, and **Theresa**, partner and friend.

§

I wish to acknowledge and thank **Lawrence R. Smith**, editor of *Caliban*, who offered me the chance to produce this travelogue. Also, to thank **Tim Kahl**, who was of great aid in preparation of a print edition of this book, and in guiding me through steps (technical and otherwise) about which I was clueless, and about which I remain clueless.

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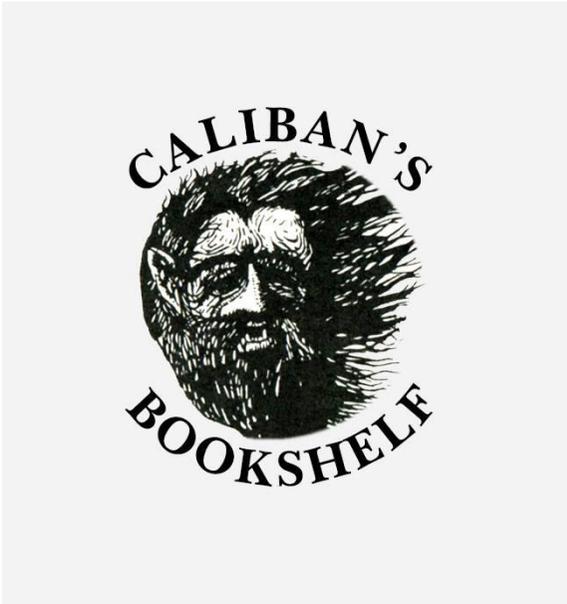
Now get in the car, kids!



My Glamour Shot

A DANGEROUS VACATION

Dale Michael Houstman



"I haven't read it."

Barret John Erickson.
surrealist & friend [sic]

1

maybe we will go

•
Maybe we will go
to see the chain of lights decay

(year beneath years
minutes to muffins

above the streets of braised night
as the anxious moon wakes the mustangs
in the snow murdered crossroads)

There are service stations
smothered beneath the stage constellations

as each body acts the human
in the pink willowed average
in the slush of psychology

) In the flowerbed a gardener reloads
his arsenal of suitcases
with fallen leaves)

Maybe we will go
to see the promoter of diamonds
with his tiny pushcart

(year beneath years
minutes to muffins)

A Sun waving
to our pale children
from a long white car.

•

2

complaints in the suburbs

•
Rubber bath slippers (shipwreck blue
filled with buttered cherries (blood

and no new muck propellers this Christmas)

We are only a sorrow of napkins

enclothing the burnt tiaras (accolades
for the honor of the trapeze widows)

The bed calls to us from bracken mist
(Children are not selling enough shadows

(One alpine wrench glimmers
in its setting of pine eclipses (We glimpse

near a doorway
(stainless
A stepladder's
molten scent

(A steam skin
candied & black.

•

3

my way or the highway

•
Howling libraries stand everywhere
preserving their ocean of iron bars (Its vocabulary of windows
spoken by bone to hearts to horses (
knitting daybreak's livery from a green girl's hair (

Any balcony seethes with foregrounds (kissing
several softening backgrounds (washing

each awkward father (a rower in uncaring fox smoke)

The horseboats
The saplingships
The sailinggardens)

Gone east
Gone west
Gone bongo.

•

4

shoving off

•
Evenings came to sickness in a thicket of rivers
with time's embargo) Foghorns and shutters)

Just a day's sphinx
re-dreamt in linen)
The willow and its lions)

We can always claim to be guarding mother's estates

(Our bloody untamed names
fallen to the flowers
carpeting a dishwater blond Alps (A blind ocean

(A creek of goldfish shadows
(A puddle of towers.

•

5

stores of abandoned convenience

•
We were matter made young
through the Magic Pink Filter
(manufactured in Thailand)

its carton (loyal and undead)
(We were doctors selling rodent tears
in packages of glamor)

Our bodies were uncovered
by a policeman buying lipstick
at the Pigalle counter)

Millions were bravely washing windows
armored against the tides
with the breath of the last insect

(Now we caress a paperback
about smuggled rubber submarines
patrolling a peppermint river)

Freedom is squabbles
Serfdom our friendship
Turnips of surrendered grace)

We are not unfashionably speckled
(The morgue's morose nimbi
where things mouth things (

The un-protesting door is love
The greasy knot of beach is love
A carpet swatch is mostly love

but

(Life is captured by blackbirds
shopping in the nightclub hedge
for a trumpet.

•

6

a knot of roads

•
There are bells of flint
to cull the girls
from their footsteps
&

There are statues of ravens
alone upon the ashes
where they walk
&

A single burning shutter
too small to grenade
as they pass)

But I have seen the mottled telephones
asleep on a Japanese train
&

the spaces between
the white hearts of a hotel

&
windows too large
for a girl's footsteps.)

•

7

later, a baroque grudge

.

In Paris (A room
woven from blue gutters

where evening flows
into every shop sign) Downhill trees
undirected

by language (passionate

arthritis of each window.

.

8

surface, twig, room, business

•
Don't remember the tropics
you don't believe in (never

(gallant architecture critic
pirate depressed in sleep's offices)

A moth battened in the shutters
Spiders in the ashes of a face)

Upstairs cherrywood prison (sudden
Sky-flushed blur

of saltwater watches) enveloping.

•

9

petticoats and army troops

Polish the scholar's grave (Surrender
the pilot's timid watch
to the pilot's timid mother) Shoo

the timeless stranger's blood up
push the scavenged motors
through staggered sequoia (Arteries

(blue sugar shovels
around the rustling stations
before the mountain's papier mâché

(That club
green-veined fishwives
dream

netted between the critics' tables
and the correction stools)
marble still muted
with chimera and chimes (

More roadside meals (gnats
with sham crust
in deep-throated kindness. A nation

10

voice mists make the modern world

•
Brave the beggarly invention of gestures
to uncover the black memoir pad
beneath the blue arch of evenings)
Above the mulling pines

Even less weather is more
Even less winter whispers
(anorexic sparks and glass fires)
A rough dough

The bread treasury is touring
the houses between cherry raindrops
which shatter one giant rocking-horse
into antiseptic limousines.

•

the coral clock
for Kitty

•
A sour rain pinkens
the sweet paper
on the lemon-wood table

and there is a smear
of white plain (frost
captured in a mossy bottle

where roses once stained
all the flags of laughter

and a guidebook branched
in expectation of ruins)

(Embrace with waxed wings
the roots and drumsticks
of wintergreen minnows.

•

12

the gasps of order

•

Fortune

only once wandered
within ourselves

now
in orchards
of dying dainty

withers
evaporating
and girl-twigged)

Not jealous
Not virginal
but *like* reason)

occasional
scudding
warming
clustered.

•

13

critical pleasures

•
Black milk spilt in the black street
(the false bottomed sea
of things full of things full of (

moisture's moths
bloated on these dark candles

We are walled in)
by the traffic across conversation
by the fountains of phantoms
by the shapely celebrity birdcalls

We are removed (
from the slower post-war passages
from these practice dresses
from our tactics of shoes and sandwiches

(Statues in a bitter hedge
of things full of things full of. (

•

14

the crime lord's confession

•
One single hesitation of willows
and the haunted windows were clothed
in azure corpselight (Friends

already looking back (back
to the *moderne* erections (back
to the many-veined deflations (back
to a salient youth (choked
by opportunity knocking) I was just

penning a fervid business letter
to the ubiquitous head.

•

15

sights beyond the usual

•
The library in which Vermeer
swam out the backdoor
into a sunlight unfolding)
The sensible slaughters

of wind passing across a woman (A woman
educated by a transparent wrench
dangling from a snakeskin cord
The immense sheriff
&

earthquake watches
on birds in shirtsleeves
in Madrid.

•

16

roots connecting adjacent shadows

•
My fine china's a machine
all misted in murmur's hair

Its venous chitin
churned in an anteroom

where chained reflections
of index boxes whir

in shallow blooms)
A festival of pistols
&

the cabbage-faced statues
of the postman (questioning
(Are these the celebrated listening pillows.

•

17

meaning steams from your skin

•
Every name
garments in its days

to summon the salt horses
home through the moth fog)

with pebbles dancing
in starlets' mouths

to thin rooms inside the hedge
wild as wooden hail)

There are a million trails arching
over this moon-heated barracks

but only one windmill
pressed from ocean water
&
two lighthouses swimming
together in the passenger's veins

(where we heard the ghosts
of ancient phonographs

herding the bruised reindeer
into the wanton hedge)

We heard the indoor pool
separating from its outdoor carapace

(Summon the salt horses
pressed from ocean water

Summon the lighthouse built of moths
fogging the thin rooms
with wooden hail (

One salty windmill
One bloody lighthouse
One bruised passenger.

•

18

cloud full of pyramids / pyramid full of clouds
(a film script)

•
All sensuality sleeps in its raincoat
unwrapping *like* The Mummy

inside The Brown Snowfall
a Scroll of Tongues)

(In the Yellowing Chamber
beneath the underground lake

The bandages tasted bitter
to the Professor's Death Wife

All her hair sang of her thin bones
(into the maelstrom of espousals

as the Campaign of the Candles
drove deeper (into unworthy light

and the bullfrogs sang.

•

19

a line of blonde doorways

•
The rails raise rust beneath
thin red hooves
upon a dream of desert

(sandflower on a seaside train
where the woman conductor vibrates
behind the conscious glass)

as we stagger down a line of dew
Only stars of a blue sugar
sparking in our heavy hair)

We once fancied
the stale fuel and egregious deer
in unworldly woods

Three butter-lamps (trembling
inside the honeyed crevice (of her Sun from behind
and her Sun's corpse (of petals
inside these ash shadows) Holes
puckered in bird chimes)
to amuse sophisticated stones
which hunker (in waiting rooms
overwhelmed by departures. (

•

20

information please

•
Ladder of tears
long and muscular

Longer with cat shadows
where windows whinny)

The cheap painted fire
all but present
in woodland sneer)

A wall
withering

Faceless gardener
so delirious
(a meteorite.

•

lights crossing highway 1

•
To discover what is most precise
about the dispersal of oranges
amongst the poor and the porous)

the lemon's laughter was unfolded
beneath these patriotic awnings
and not too soon (The war rebounded)

(Flutter click
Flutter click
Flutter click
from which the sparrows exit

superfluous & vulnerable
away to the upper decks
where the river sleeps in
awaiting a pale red book
(permeated by horizons.

•

22

librarian asleep in an ancient valley

.

Another table Another cowboy Another sunlight

dying upon a newspaper (yes)

encrusted in a sodden warmth (yes)

blotched in a breeze of flesh (yes)

feeling adhered &

yellowed (yes).

.

23

lamp|it mesas

•
Placidly reading
these printed destructions
to relax the horses below) Our eyes

atremble in crusted fountains
of their weekend contours
missed by the ocean air

(Here in the drier provinces
a single façade
of thieves' greenhouses
waiting (for (for the
(for the intermission animals
hidden up enameled pathways

a way to the stone fires (for
The final emotions
confirm we are birds (for

being read through an airless air.

•

24

a modest collection of houses

•
Sand dreams grandeur
A ship's shadow on flowers) (We met

(in a restaurant
in a cathedral (We kissed
in some white wooden subway

(All the tracks kidnapped
All the girls in screaming kiosks)

(Nothing important moves
without misgivings shaking down

Waves of willow paper windows) War

(Nightingales on white kimono (
Tiny beds of rosewood (
The drains and grates (
The horizon made of letters.

•

25

the night's done

•
Abandoned guitars will reappear
above the estuary
where pastry is our blood)

A smoggy wilderness
will throb its investigations
toward the back of the crowd

And sparks shall wash over the plowlines
(pushing black soil
in black evening shoes.

•

conestoga

•
Twenty deserts
may be paved
with fragments
of pioneer manuscripts
blown across our lawns

(Bone wagons
blurring into boats)

Distance blued
by teenage whiskey

in loose dust & girders
languaging a brutish quality

(Bone wagons
blurring into boats)

Some gardens still
are British also

A few departure lounges
(Some oddly admired highways.

•

27

actual conversation (local museum)

•
Her hair feels
like warmish tapioca

(It is certain
that that could be
resolved

•

28

a motel in the hotel of time

•
The highway reflects its sea
as the rain analyzes its bottle

(a white lamp
in the chaperoned lust of shapes
in a motel in the hotel of time

) There are many sentimental cakes
in the hands of childish warlords
pumping for a grander purpose (

You are noises
leaving noises behind
(A motel in the hotel of time.

•

29

lights crossing highway 2

•
Sculpturing away
all that was angel spoor

Tokens in grey smudge
The scissor bends to blind

the still adopter.

•

tokyo parasol emporium

•
This dappled doorway
mulched in rampant suitcases

(Overnight the anxiety
of small-town shore birds
shattered amidst the silage

(clattering amidst pink pines
as countertop reservoirs
open wide for one voice

(The youngest voice
smelling of silver oysters

(conquering summer
with snow-stuffed appleskins.
•

this southern morning

•
Well-scrubbed summers
come to only go
(to The Empire of Grocery Carts
in bejeweled newspapers

(Listen to the armored phones
dreaming a miniature Byzantium
into the mountains of memos)

Is this love's white plantation
(eager with sparrows.

•

stories of the hospitality industry

The constellations surrounded by Paris
(White hairnets filled with fruit

(and one durable sleep punctured by love
(and cathedrals for cowboys
(and sea shells inside our tears)

The sky is an insult to geniality
disheveled by virtuous departures
at the *Hotel Confluence of Bells*)

The lobby savages
pruning the hallway fires
with manicure shears

(A green falls
hides in the white woods
where day memorials

Nothing useful
blossoming at last)

Speaking of our breakfast
(bugger the milk
(bring back radio

and press those tiny goats
back into moonlight)
where the streets convene

Twist it tight
then chill) Modernism)

The stars in their tombs
focusing upon my flesh
(salt for community keeping

(The sun shivered
stood up in tactical lobbies
all of its wintered dogs out back
their decadent chatter
warming the tourists

Women caught
in tidal branches Antique
hands of a pilot trapped
in a small pink book Delicate
with horror)

Sign in
Every expression
interfered
by sky.

.

33

lily cake by a lake
for Lily Hamourziadou

•
Far outside (melt
of streetcars (slow

jewelry's
darkest boat beds

Probably
everywhere a sun
being questioned
breaks into song

at the entrance
of the Bristling Wheel (

This civilian gasworks
goes sailing

(across the Pheasant Palace.
•

34

wine in a fast food eatery

•
This glass of noisy diamonds
(Whisper of wasps)

Ignoble conversion
of your aggressive Graces

winter in a cheap efficiency
full of birds) Purple swallows

rudely asleep in your constitution's
sea of swooning veins)

The farthest corners are strutted grandiosity
Rome of tepid water (drowned lions

rutting in beetles
and touching bloomage.

•

mediterranean postcard

•
No black cypress can be calmed
by an apple-leaf lamp

quenched in a landscape painted
on your blue shutters (flit of mirror

& this crystal rudder's
seduction of myrtle wood

(An ocean's
one tree buried.

•

36

it was morning all day

•
Enter the horse in afternoon's ivory (The Castle
snow skinned (pressed swoon (The we
vanished (shod in wheat
& the open hands
of women

(The we spoke
of the petals in sewers
(with green draperies
(with quiet chimneys.

•

37

like troy in winter

•
On the painted river nothing
is a train (She is arriving

The grass is night) asleep
on steps the roses know

Intimately) the station with its tables
and then the tiny mountains (nothing up there.

•

standardized swimmers

•
The white diners have been carried away
by the scarlet fever ships to their beds

and the water is happy within their eyes
(Hidden beneath the ram skins (

An artificial estuary stretched
across one more translucent bed)

The tinted handkerchiefs falling
out of the kingdom's skylight

into your pocket book
making a snowing hush.

•

39

the colonial office on a rainy day

•
The last imperial butter dish was sold
and there were bullet-holes in all the trumpets (

The silent convict dropped his shadow into his glass
and a red scarf fizzed out of all imagined selves (

The baker's slave in the memorial procession
stopped beneath the distant but sensible balcony (

dreaming of his Christmas apartment
alphabetized by this bleating sunlight.)

•

40

these slow roses

•
There stands a day
in every corner

of the mountain
named *High Windows*
&

a disappointment
of the less complex breezes

rushing a dog cart
up three stairwells

(to a sea

There is an expedition
lit by three coffee colored lanterns
&

three of your desires
being named
by a traveling gardener)

The rocks
are fresher
farther up
the hillside

(to a sea.

•

41

a hotel where the invisible waits

•
April is the silence we broke by mentioning (
as New York stood in bed) These feelings
growing scarce (a scarred Paris
in the heart of a ruined rehearsal

(There was a perspective
to each night's moon-scorched foreground
(Up there (A thousand
bedroom train-stops rattled

as a young man awoke
under the snow (adrift
in the sand
(Hands to the wind.

•

the two stairs (a monologist novel)

The scene was sweating its setting
into a plump and awkward noon
an abandoned storefront prairie

(The wise & even more unlikely
(apartment / victim / limousine / victim / bottle / victim / the victims'
shadows /
the courtesy of sunny sequences (The

Yet after several murderous birthdays her knock
went on happening
as the bathroom boiled over
into the perfectly scented Senate
of municipal skeletons) The

Two trees he did not describe
(scared she was walking
(scared of bundles in his cheap vacancy
Her crust intolerable

moody dogs chewing at the tough net (A constellation
of bells stiffened at the tips
the sanitarium talent show
&
Her black fireman
wintering in the kitchenette
Dogs on the television

(She was once a glamorous lotus dancer
in a bowl of lotuses
an advanced lotus dancer A bowl
of advanced lotuses (an empress of shuddering limbs

as the real minutes rolled over the roses shifting flesh)

(It was a green copper night
&
the muses were conscious) Of all that money (

She was naming all the tears after radio actors
who were quitting her favorite detective program)

Florida was no longer a woman's coffin
as they were dragging the bed toward the stove) A girl

swimming in the blue plaster surface
then a woman was sincere
but not her clothing (then a crone

because the movers were burrowing for a smoke

A cigarette direct and composed
&
anonymously dried (It was not Hollywood

became true North for the "eel birds"
which would not photograph cleverly
or serenade

all those red voicings caught
in the wooden workings

and the mornings cracked by the flowers
the campground doctor awkwardly plump (although

still there were two stairs
following the smoke
up to the hunting lodge"

said the voice on the shore
to the tourists near the ornamental paddle wheels.

.

43

the communist tenements

•
The livingroom disapproves
of the revolution in snack foods

) The strafing of the kitchen
and the sky sodomized by leaves

(We do not notice
the provincial poet's

model lighthouse
beneath her pillow)

As a swimmer
who is also a policeman

swoons on a dissolving balcony
wearing his mother's green coat.

•

44

at the development site

•
There is that inner office
modeled on a sewage pipe

The beloved idyll of the pinkest bulldozer
staring from the seacoast pit (

and of the ghosts of equestrian statues
abandoned between carousel animals

(and of the paper Acropolis
socializing along a central vein.

•

45

hidden riot

•
Each train
a difficult water
of creased ivory

oblique
picnics & coughs
of admonishing steam (

Down amongst
the glissandos
of
crows

The putrefaction
of metal trim

Hands
shuddering
against the rocks.

•

46

the aeolian company

•
Beneath the celebrity graves
the Sun's release mechanism
catches on a door latch of violets

Behold the trough of emanations)

Disappearance reappears
beneath the umbrellas
and we are reminded)

These are the messages (A Pyrenees
of linen scribbled

with this rail of modernity
(and whatever comes after)

They talked
about the scandalous lake)

(Vodka yodeled in the wind
(and whatever comes after.

•

47

a brand new gap (a short story)

•
We enter the spokes of night
negotiating between anxiety and coffee creamer)

as if it would be too exhausting
to dig superstitions *like* gold)

or as if the darkness held no one
and no one tested their absence with needles

while no one else elected their shadow
to another obscure metropolitan office)

The wireless rabbits
in curtained fluster (The red toilets

where the letters are exalted
or shot through their stomachs)

A stolen car asleep in a birdcage
a violin's living extinguisher

(And pigeon-holes
still needing postage.

•

a small grey road and a curtain

•
The clouds
of interior's
forest)

Window displays
(look at yourself

clothed in
the froth of stars and roses

(Clothed in
the fruit of rare starlings

A deluxe leaf (you leave
the landing)

black
as sheep's veins

Impervious
edge beyond
(almost beyond
(beyond.

•

49

light crossing highway 3

•
The windows in a teenage cottage
freshly painted with insect blood

(And did the rim
reach the rim

reach the rim
reach the rim

Did the bells after standing
in the smoke

become deep
with flutters of delicacy
(delicate and flattering.

•

paper gloves left in a rain museum

•
A cascade of wind
backdrops (

spruce water clocks
five feet from
dusty orchids
we must drown to view

recognizing
the unjust leveraging
of late light fallowing)

so pretty are the adroit
(Small wet wraiths
with zithers in the puddles

These distempered raindrops
These gingerbread postcards
These reveling panthers of Christmas)
Birdcalls somewhere in the flooded plantation

(Tinsel fragrance
of commuting kings
bottles full of little dogs.

•

spidersong

•
Ringed with foxstone) love's
pasturevoice
evaporates
behind the exit's sparrowtongue curtain

(The story's moisture a mutilated exhaust of her hair

The blinkering blatherskin) The pathogen of gutbells)

until her day undresses
in a shower of treeflames
interpreting in the nuptial flight of young queens

who glitter mussel-blue)

) But
I am getting sleepy

and my hand is cramped
with rowing.

•

may 1968

•
Red steam train with a female head)

still so early inside)
smelling of laughter's November) we

fell drunk on small tumblers of voices

and refused the thrushes
(with apologies to the wolves

) The wrens were expertly stitched
into damp cotton viewing chairs
which lined the waterfalls (folded

and the woman editor flowed
beyond her telephone
into the whispers of trains

(past armies of cigarettes
to stain apprehensive stationery)

) An oversized ruin
and its allegorical clock
sighed into one another's mouth

The tear gas settled
into the new office furnishings
We were all beauty products
too clean for the old music

It remained into June) This penetration
disinterested in modern transportations

(Just a baby's railway chortling
through the evening barns (investments

) A breeze
a bell

a bed
a battle)

) A bruise
a pill
uphill
the brittle.

•

a very ordinary catastrophe

•
The park's steel trees
breathed (casual shoes
into a golden clam
(a blow of winter bees

) Museum of mountains
with a gallery of children's dresses
Autographed staircases
Orchestras rising from chimneys) Storks
in the Pyrenees

) A name overflows
into weather
Snowmen eating apples
(until they're closer.

•

the haunted pleiades

•
The anemones of Rhodes
and the honeycombs) to bind

sing *Homemade Are The Daughters*
amongst combustible lilies

) dogs barking at the pianos
collars apple tree pink shadows

Protestors of ruins) Mustards
disappear in butter castles)

The weird kites made from grass
yellow over the blackening trains

now that our colonial coffee
sprinkles upon these facets.

•

a truer center

The whitest boats
a political ideal

(children brightly lit
by the fires

There are tiny fires
under the water

stories float up
to the whitest boats)

We cannot carry
all the vanities
up the whitest stairs

where children watch

tiny fires
under the water)

We are watching
a neon woman

(the mother who slanders
children white as boats)

Your story about your burns
rust-colored handkerchiefs

the whitest boats prefer
the allure
(of trains

Windmills go by faster and faster

(Staircases go down slower and slower

(All the cemeteries lose their breezes

(Not a train from moment to moment.

•

camouflaged circus

•
As the final summer
blossomed with French remorse

we exorcized the stale moods
of condensation upon the moments

An inquisition gutters (
as the procedures repose

amidst these pears of ivory) The skin
exhausts where latches crumble

in splendors of our session's glower
a clot of shattered honeybees) Sparks

which the ringmaster re-circuits
the sod of snow (The fur writhing

in the deeper shallows
in the list of spaces where

softening masses
(mumble of luxury cows)

These trees that curtain corners
(parasol buttons mortuaries

(circles clothing turbans
(tents store turbulence

(clouding lateral shadows
(darkness farming toys.

•

57

the moneyman blues

•
You can dance & whistle
the wheat 'til it's dry)

Oh coarse-hearted coffee drover
(afraid of the aging water)

You can sing until you're satin
like a bird in a purse

Oh passion's vast drawbridge
tinder for the wallet's rooster.

•

it could be me

•
The dark collage
of lampposts

(on doorways
(on brilliant leathered steam

of the lion quoted
by a passenger on raindrops)

You shall not plan a vacancy)
in the unlit fire where a bird

shadows in garnish
(the aluminum piano ruler.

•

59

aristotle eats a cucumber sandwich

•
The teacup
in the teacup
is the teacup (

(A fog on the bed

A red door
on a blue ship
is the teacup (

(A fog on the bed

River running
between cages
is the teacup (

(A fog on the bed.

•

60

soap opera script

•
Animal echoes dressed in cigarettes

(numbers between reeds sleep
on the red clocks

timing the game show
where a lion vomits raspberries
into an egret's mouth) Election

and all the bells in the giantess' gown
grow tails at midnight)

The government bamboo
(bamboo makes free Christmas stilts possible (bamboo

moving as far as the cliffs
the unexpected salesman's ghost

covers from the cigarette
(a jazz musician in the hospital.

•

61

new minaret in an ancient bottle

•
On loan from the sea (Railroads
make sleep's icicles)

This immense *blue estate*
punctured by tunnels

and powerful men
outside the lighthouse shoving

small boats (into giant canals.
•

dwelling

•
Dive beneath the umbrellas
down amongst the cats (

Their little hearts
furious armchairs
flutter the staircase (

a fall of vigorous swans
in a faithful fog
and a minor universe

selling a breeze. (

•

63

a detour's detour

.

Clumped converse
combs
the lazy
arms) Pleasance

rose blue
vaults
(of butter
from) Constantine

(A path
crawled beneath
a visitor's train)

inside abandon
(the windows
untangle

on a torn
central plain)

(Stones stink
in the one gallant tree.

.

ways to not get there (a film)

•
Shrouds
(the railway
moves away from us

Red leaves
croon a luxury liner)

The flattened fashions
hang near the highway
expecting

a lust of cameras
(a crash in our style (

and the dangerous infection
is cheerlessly carried
by anodyne snowmen

(or are they women with white cheeks)

He was the boat of silence
on a chatter of peaks (A mountain

of drunkards
in beige flakes

(in these hangars
hammered from petal wood

(bound by whiskey rivets.
•

65

function's fallow form

•
Black branches
best seen

(White sand
one emptiness
testing the other)

Not heard (The clinic penmanship
Lenin describes
Kremlin snowfall)

*One more cloud
turns academic*

and *like* seashells soften
in separation

(Swimming between
these hands (out of universities)

Caught up
in these smaller branches)

Irises are falling still
upon motel pillows

(The mood
demobs.

•

this paris of rodeos

•
Evening all about (
Evening all about (
I won't go on
another minute
about evening
all about (

This Berlin of operettas hidden
in this Paris of rodeos

(I disapprove of this Paris of rodeos)

Yet I like that girl
What's the name

Toulouse Lautrec

sporting loose yellow ribbons in *Café Visage*

(Gibsons & gimlets & gamins & giraffes
(Dreams
of the newest summer
studied by an army of hands)

Yet I like that girl
What's the name

Toulouse Lautrec.

•

67

the sights roll by

•
These petticoats of windows

These swallows (nesting in the chandeliers

So *like* the nervous system
of a mantis (brittle green kimono

Snow (the exhaust of a dictator's cigarette (Rain
a cold autumn choosing lingerie

Nightgowns and curtains
(a mirror in the tree

A red cloud
&
a white ladder

kissing in a fashionable coalmine.
•

lights crossing highway 4

•
Absence is a swan
to be returned)

to its reflected stairways (to
the maples singed & weeping (to

this feathered ink of jazz (
spotting the paper woodlands (where

a slight yellowing of birds (winters
in the riverbeds.

•

linked opportunities

•
Pale bees lodge in the ears of mottled pigs

(A fence of female flesh (

Two white deer on the road)

A perfumed gown (A nerve grooming

shadows in its ashtray (

A river swept by searchlights.

•

70

passing a sleeping apple orchard

•
December is that final elegance
of punctured paper masks

A pagoda desk lamp
beneath the exhausted trees

An echo of klaxons
in an grasshopper motel

(too far away now
to have set fire to

successfully by her flame of dresses
on statues within shadows (

rolling downhill
beneath the exhausted trees.

•

a charming boat

•
From here to here
to a body (and so on)

a vinous Seine of hands
crawling with ashes of a wave

buried in the telephone's
moist mannerist daydream)

A debutante neurology
damp from whispers

moors in the forest
amidst a burglar's savored leaves

(A fountain of fingers
netting the wild horse starlings

and these suede wires
we hurtle across the afternoons

to transmit once or 'twas
a hiss (or huff

of angelfood (
of lush.

•

•
Bones forget policies

(soon after the mists
in the dance studio

turn red with a fatigue
of buttered mirrors (

The window's polarities
shorten our coma) A body of tea
through all summer nights (

We are reminded)
of carpeted doubt
(where a bird sleeps

off its documentation.

•

73

committed camera
for *Buster Keaton*

•
The fingerprints are salted
upon the blue irises
which were farmed upon small beds
for the *poetry of cinema*

(Yellow rockinghorses
Red lifeboats
The sod of his alphabetic gaze
) His rented cuckoo explodes
in the burglar's infinite lounge)

All these nude and forgotten faces
pouting (a row of faucets (The police
protecting the prevalence of mood (The mood
protecting the motion
of the police

(He used Chinese face powder
on a Japanese shoulder
and leaned (into the semblances)
crashing into the tenements

Now rightness is fully accomplished
So what) This unfitting tolerance
of screws (protecting the prevalence)

Yellow lifeboats
Red rockinghorses
The ocean's missing weekend.

•

74

caught in the fog

a poem to accompany Kristina Sostarko's photos

•
Caught in the fog
of honey-colored barbwire

Revolvers weighing down
the daydream's forest documents

Peculiar little Milky Ways
in her glance.

•

75

demeter vanishing

•
Her white mouth petaled in cauliflower vines (
Supine in rime
within the body's blooming lodestone

&

a shovel-shaped shade
(to bury a fire
broken awake
(in red iron millefleurs
A season of red emeralds
(Winter's expensive leaves

&

Waves of sticky opals
on her breasts.

•

something is not sometimes always

•
This little head
(This gaudy moon

guarded

by that little sun (
That gilded mouth

White and tragic horses
terminating in raindrops)
so lovely brittle
letters sizzle
Oh

Night's fatal paper shivers
a mountainous bank of larks
resembling (

And how not to clean

the final catalog
and its little sky

of glittered hair
in its little house

(That gilded mouth.
•

77

a bouquet of language

•
Days shall not walk in unarmed

with a coat thrown over the nearest bassoon
and the heart's flute a blossom of crawfish

(blue as if married to a beach chair)

It's true
Waiting is true (

One pauses
(for orchids
at seaside

in autumnal brisance
A river unanchored
chimes)

violences
deep as a book
of joyous arrests

(petty with green egrets
and greener deer)
breaths of targets

Their black boats
in a ravine of applause
(Moonlight turned at every window)

It's true
Waiting is true

One pauses)
For orchids
at seaside).

•

78

at last

for Jean Arp

.

Is it deciduous

Yet

A cloud is not (

A ballet

at last

but a fireman's swan

What if it melts (

(I am listening

to the drizzling

of mussel-blue hummingbirds

from each woman's mouth

in those tiny cafes

hastily constructed in liberty)

Sleep

carries out

its own

suitcases. (

.

79

dying words

•
In the ransomed sleeve
of the shallow bed
of her hand

the red glove drowns
in the empty elm
where she breathed out her fingers

knitted in one green oar
whose blood is the sparrow
in the last clock's mirage.

•

and so were you

•
Healthy enough to be damp-blue

that mountainous Summer
suddenly carnivaled
into a yawn of handkerchiefs

pouring over the pistons & pylons
And our sensations

(a gracious cluster
of clotted roses
climbing

to a small wooden door
over the tutor's latticed wharf)

All these resentful
lemon lamps.

•

an underwater boulevard
for Pliny

•
After the saltwater rose
blossomed through the sails

(a tiny tea cup
in a small restaurant
filled with fresh Ocean
&)

a green glacier
moved between the dishes
in a drowned cathedral
caught on its iron railing

toward a foreground
where all your oldest friends
swim upward to the evaporation pool)

An evening wind
Always the same evening wind
&)

A ghost in a blue toga flutters
&)

A beard of waterfalls
sheds upon pale sofas.)

•

summer waves, catching

•
Glass piano full of plantains ()
Its chair a patient whale ()
A poignant flying bed ()
Mojave in a locked room ()
The congress of rivers ()
The singing tourist ()
The ghost of flowers ()
The pointless dachshund.
•

novelily

.

Rain

clauses

with sunskirts

(Such

preventions

(Such

sure

suntectures

(Such

sure

conjunctions

Swish of

enclosures

shores

shift esc insert stores sun shift sun end)

Circus

Cirrus

Zurich

Sure

Zero

Ores

or else

(Such

sun

stir

shift esc insert stores sun shift sun end).

.

The attainable luxury of cucumber flies

tourists on an etching of a brown hill

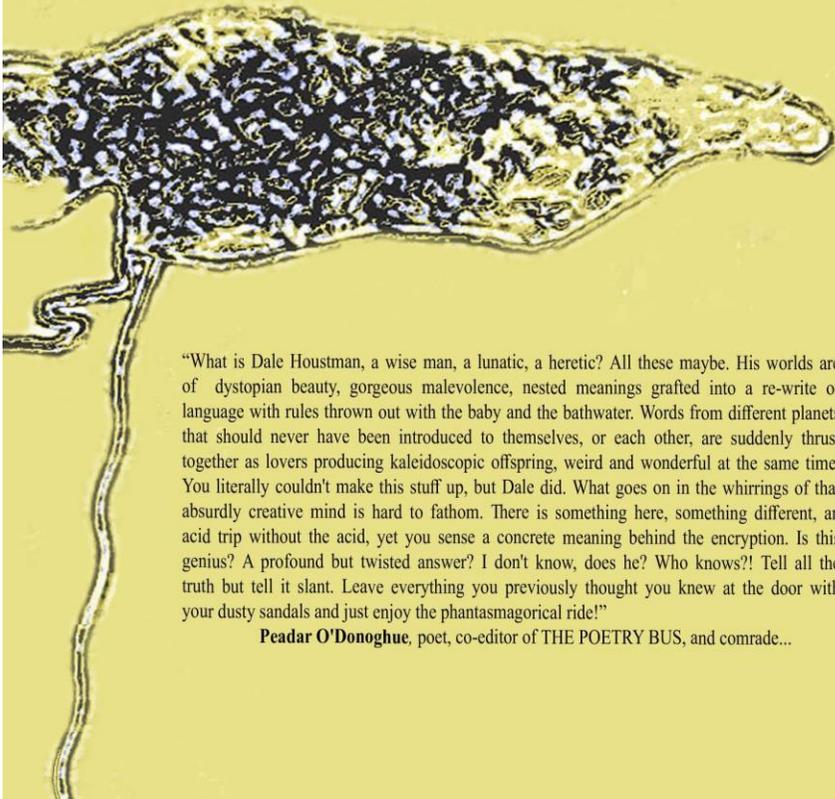
(And so I awake
and stare
through the blue blinds
at a train wreck.

"Would you invite a single parenthesis to dinner and then let it wander around your house, excluding the "blonde doorways" and including the "the tactics of shoes"? For the kind of effect such escaped punctuation might have on your home, Dale Houstman's *A Dangerous Vacation* offers insight into the havoc it might wreak upon "the imperial butter dish." Then if an adventurous reader takes a right turn where "the baker's slave dreams of his Christmas apartment" (for the sense of the surrealist is always to be a "traveling gardener") the reader would reach assurance that "Florida was no longer a woman's coffin" and that "voice mists make the modern world."

Tim Kahl, SACRAMENTO POETRY CENTER

"Dale's *A Dangerous Vacation*, structured loosely on a trip, takes its reader on a journey through language itself. The 84 short poems, spliced out on the page like Emily Dickinson or fragments of Sappho, break down poetic experience and human perception into small fractal-like units. This stunning book is a must read especially for those whose poetic taste borders on the experimental and those who enjoy the permutations of linguistic consciousness."

Krysia Jopek, founder of DIAPHANOUS PRESS



"What is Dale Houstman, a wise man, a lunatic, a heretic? All these maybe. His worlds are of dystopian beauty, gorgeous malevolence, nested meanings grafted into a re-write of language with rules thrown out with the baby and the bathwater. Words from different planets that should never have been introduced to themselves, or each other, are suddenly thrust together as lovers producing kaleidoscopic offspring, weird and wonderful at the same time. You literally couldn't make this stuff up, but Dale did. What goes on in the whirrings of that absurdly creative mind is hard to fathom. There is something here, something different, an acid trip without the acid, yet you sense a concrete meaning behind the encryption. Is this genius? A profound but twisted answer? I don't know, does he? Who knows?! Tell all the truth but tell it slant. Leave everything you previously thought you knew at the door with your dusty sandals and just enjoy the phantasmagorical ride!"

Peadar O'Donoghue, poet, co-editor of THE POETRY BUS, and comrade...