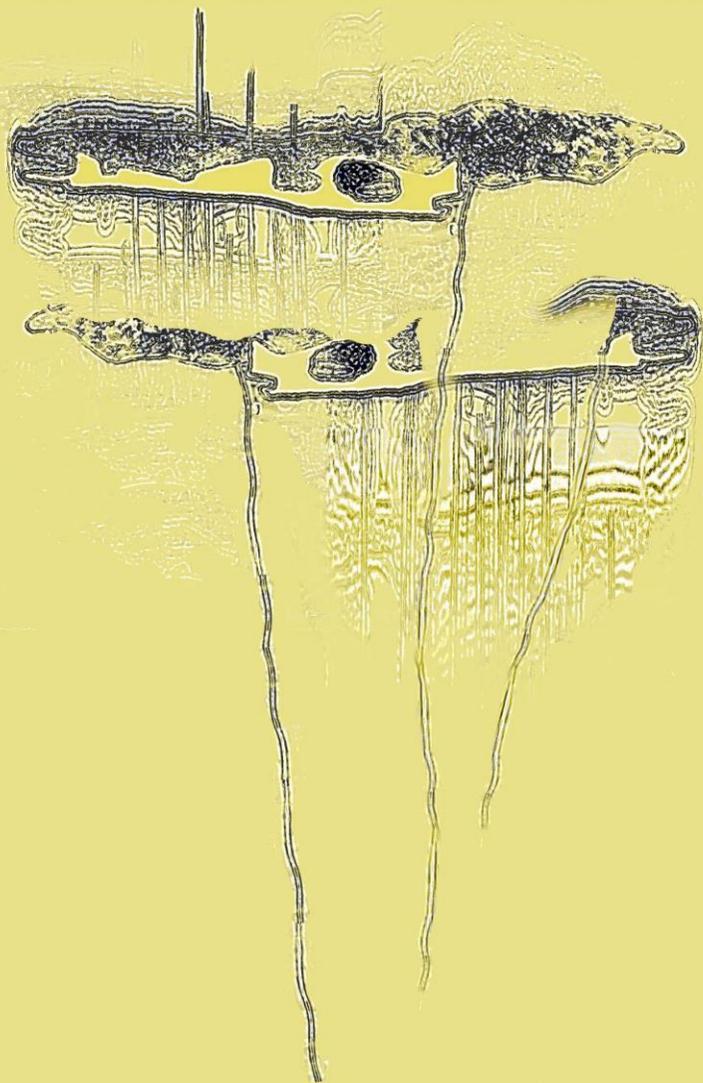


# a dangerous vacation



*poems by Dale Michael Houstman*

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

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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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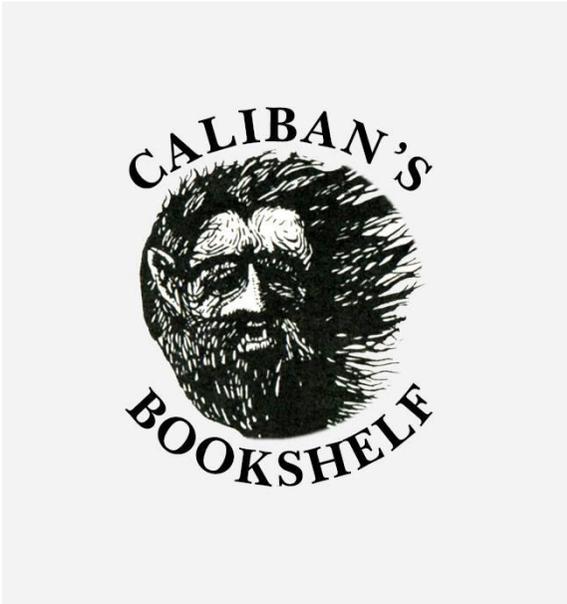
**N**ow get in the car, kids!



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

•  
**B**rave 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

•

**F**ortune

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

•  
**B**lack 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 lit 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)

•  
**H**er 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*

•  
**F**ar 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

•  
**E**nter 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*

•  
**B**eneath 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

•  
**R**ed 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*

•  
**T**he 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

•  
**A**nimal 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

cowers 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

•  
**B**lack 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.

•

## 69

---

### linked opportunities

•  
**P**ale 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.

•

•  
**B**ones 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).

•

**T**he attainable luxury of cucumber flies

tourists on an etching of a brown hill

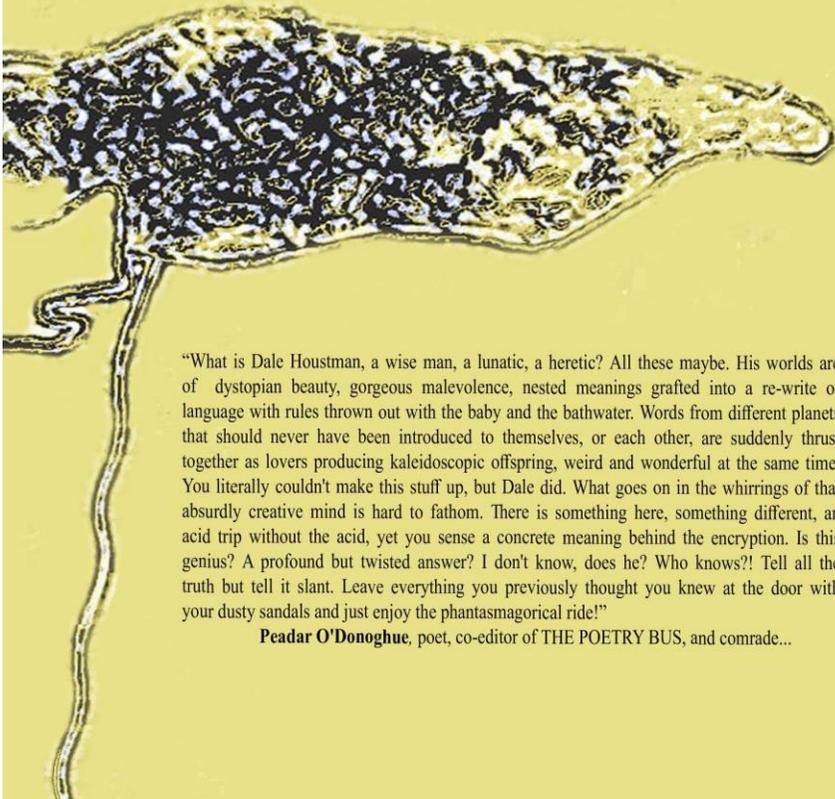
(And so I awake  
and stare  
through the blue blinds  
at a train wreck.

"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...