

DALE JACOBSON

# **Notes from the Travelogue**

Red Dragonfly Press

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“Who were you before your name? Who inhabited  
your clear eyes when you arrived with a thirst  
for the serene waters, and who in the dusk invited  
all the ancestral ghosts to polish the jewel of morning?”

When lightning scrawls across the blackened sky  
a signature that might be anyone’s enigmatic name —  
and when the foundation of thunder crumbles,  
hasn’t the stillness itself announced it is new?

## 11. A QUESTION OF THE LIGHT

Where  
is the openness of words in this angry nation  
that say, “we are better together than alone,”  
and say, “the wedding of the horizons encircles us” ?

Without talk, everything we touch is locked  
like the skin of stone.

The statues are darker  
in their cores,  
houses are closed in fear,  
doors stolid,  
and in the windows opaque distance has built a wall.

Eyes of strangers look askance. They are like  
pebbles in the cold stream.

And our hands ask:  
Is the life line a journey to the heart line?

And yet, the light will not be subdued.  
Its nectar condenses in the center of mums  
that float like small islands through the day.



If we let go of time as our master, and money  
as its measure, could we remember that time  
never was a wage, but always a beginning,  
and the earth builds a road at our feet with each step?

And discern how we are welcomed equally  
by arrival and departure?

And know that the same  
secret hands of time that knit fireflies into sparks  
above the grass also unweave the dark  
to dress the forest and the fields, and the skyscrapers  
awaiting our voices in their lonely suites?

We belong to our questions, which are each other,  
always hoping for an answer, a friendly hand,  
our heads filled with dreaming something more  
than the empty machine of survival, the need to eat,  
knowing the secret tear each of us cherishes  
in the vault of our hearts is a dissolved star  
like electric salt that remembers the expanse of the ocean.

What would happen if we said something other than  
subjugation between the intervals of sleep?

And we stood up to claim “This day is ours!” —  
raising a universal flag made from the uniforms  
of deceased soldiers, our brothers and sisters  
of all nations who did not choose to kill each other?

And said,  
“We belong here as we belong to each other!”

Each stranger is a recognition who arrived  
like ourselves through the infinities of light!"

(Then all the swords, illusions forged in iron,  
evaporate —

and the winged lion shakes off the dust of Eden!)

## 12. A QUESTION OF BEGINNINGS

Therese and I came to the circle of an Indian powwow,  
wacipi, dance of flowing and flowering colors,  
crimson, violet and yellow streamers swirling from  
arms gathering the ancient energies,  
feathers  
talking to sky and horizons,  
a flourishing elegance  
of living flame!

And the singing was vowels riding  
the magnetic field of the earth,  
penetrating to the rim  
of the prairie and the equilibrium of mountains,  
the harmonies of the elements  
traveling threads of crystal!

Each dancer a locus of motion, each person  
a nexus of the revolving human star, shining! —  
the center formed in our collective hands,  
while the deep pistons of the earth pound  
their drums, the buried thunders asleep  
in boulders send their affirmations,  
the unbroken powers from which we rose,

the dreaming earth that the small powers  
of momentary arrogance think they can conquer.

The dancers write on the air love notes,  
celebratory rhythms rising from our blood.  
They are birds in radiant flight of shared joy,  
born of the inchoate chaos that in the end  
take back our bodies, these manifest beings  
we inhabit of the invisible mind ...

How these recognitions came to me is a mystery  
in the deep cloud chamber of my psyche,  
the turn of my years, but I also knew a world  
that came before. I knew of other bodies,  
of all races, who are the keepers of the harmonies,  
who rose up against the annihilators, the takers  
that tread the earth with mechanical boots.

I thought of my friend at the University of North Dakota,  
that squabble-club of petulance whose white faculty  
of Indian Studies denied him emeritus status,  
the only Indian, but their stature next to his is like  
stink bugs in the shadow of a jutting outcrop  
over the valley of a mountain river releasing spring's outpourings!

I was still a kid being pulled apart by the adults  
when in the sixties Hunter Gray took his place  
at the Woolworth counter where only whites  
were allowed, in Jackson, Mississippi, a gentle soul  
in solidarity with Blacks enduring the taunts  
of white racists, the cuts and slashes of those  
who cast their shattered mirrors into the world,  
dim fragments they cannot bring together,