

Richard DENNER
& Co.



Selected Poems

Richard DENNER

Edited & with translations
from the Portuguese by

Bouvard Pécuchet

Denner & Company

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CONTENTS

Salutation

Doug O: Lost Favors of Sister Mean

Eu Duvido Este

I Doubt This

Matéria Escura

Dark Matter

Mandala

Mandala

Tração Racial

Racial Drift

O Curador

Janitor

Woman in a Burqa

Jubal Dolan: What the Thunder Said

Da Da Da

What the Poet Said

If I Am, I Am

Harmony

Picnic Next to the Pier

Love Drives the Lover Mad

Latin Lyrics of Luiz Mee

Chilling Out with the Eclogues

Omni-spatial Matrix

Cleo on Her Hands and Knees

In First Light

Takes on a Blue Set

A Way She Walks

SALUTATION by Bouvard Pécuchet

Richard Denner is not a reincarnation of Fernando Pessoa. They are separate emanations of the multi-faced God that sneezes in the cosmic air of creativity. Pessoa deconstructed himself in an age before the philosophy of *deconstructualism*; Denner is reconstructing himself in a post-post-post modern age, where philosophy and culture are rapidly disintegrating.

Pessoa lived a quiet life, perhaps creating his "heteronyms" to make his life interesting. Denner has been living a full life. He has married three times and has children by his different wives, who in turn have presented him with grandchildren. He lived in Berkeley during the fairytale 60s, where he was the Poet of the Berkeley Barb. He fled Berkeley when the teargas began to fall and traveled to Alaska where he lived in a cabin in the woods, hunting and fishing for survival. He has worked at a wide variety of professions—cowboy, tree planter, bookseller, carpenter, printer. He has drawn his metaphors from his life experience and written about what he discovered in the world, and he has developed an elaborate inner life and written from the heart.

As a boy, Richard was charmed by the shenanigans of Frank Demara, known to the public in the 1950s as The Great Imposter. Richard saw him interviewed live on *The Jack Parr Show*. Demara was able to create different personas and find employment in a vast number of posts—everything from being a medical doctor in the military to a Latin teacher in a private school. Demara said that when he picked up a scalpel, it was as though he had used it before. Denner found an explanation for this, as a freshman at Cal, reading the works of Plato, where it is said that we know everything but forget it all at birth, that knowledge is the process of remembering what we have forgotten. Later, when Denner *rediscovered* the Dharma of Gotama Buddha, he had a similar understanding. It is not the Self that is the problem but the incomplete Self. One solution to the problem of Self is to discover there is no Self—no Self, no problem. Another solution is the integration of the various "selves" by allowing them full play—*integration*, like a drama with a cast, not the conflicting, schizophrenic isolation of the parts of the personality but an association of the members of the cast in the play of consciousness, each with their lines, each in character. In one of Rychard's terse, large-lettered poems, *all/over/all/all*, I find the Poundian components, logopoeia, melopoeia, and panopoeia. The poem can be read as temporal *all over* and as local *all over*, as a point of view, *over all*, and visually, with the word *all* being place over itself. There is formal structure, yet an innovative playfulness is evident.

There are ontologically questioning poems by Doug O, the "O" suggesting *nothingness* or *infinite space*. There are the "Sensationalist" poems of Jubal Dolan:

no thinking, here
just looking

and the romantic-pastoral mode of Luiz Mee ("Luiz" perhaps a tip of the hat to Luis Garcia, Richard's long-time friend and mentor). We have the thinker, the worker, the lover poets, with their different hats, pets and facial tics. As Rychard once said, "Everything is everywhere, and God is gift horse, a kind of cornucopia with teeth."

It is difficult to say exactly when the personalities first emerged. Most likely it was part of a 9/11 meltdown. However, I am certain that before our author discovered the works of Fernando Pessoa & Co. in June of 2003, I, Bouvard Pécuchet, had already begun writing reviews of books that didn't exist, and the scattered Buddhist poems of Jampa Dorje had been collected under one cover. There was the forgery, *Another Artaud*, as well as works by Rychard from the Berkeley 60s. The drama was well underway,

needing only a bit more prompting by the Muse. Rychard is here, and we have been joined by Jubal Dolan, Luiz Mee, and Doug O. Welcome!

DOUG O: LOST FAVORS OF SISTER MEAN

Doug O, born Douglas Oporto in Santa Clara, California, in 1938. His parents were wine growers, and he was raised on a vineyard. He became Doug O because he was one of four Dougs on a planting crew. The shortened name stemmed from the need to distinguish the different "Dougs" on the field. There was *Doug Um* for Doug Mitchell, *Doug Ee* for Doug Eichmiller, *Doug Ha* for Doug Harrington, and *Doug Oh* for Doug Oporto. Doug O met Paul X around the time of the closing down of the Wobbly Hall in San Francisco in 1965. They became inseparable, like the *x* & *o* of a game of *Tic Tat Toe*.

The title of his poem collection is a reflection on his Catholic upbringing. Clandestine activities were early evident. In the third grade, he secretly watched Sister Rose, who was a teacher's assistant, remove the hood of her habit and reveal her short-cropped blond hair. She became for him a *golden mean* in contrast to the strictness of other sisters, who whacked his hands with a yardstick when he was passing notes in class.

EU DUVIDO ESTE

Eu duvido este
sou levantei-me

Tem a forma
Tem os espinhos

cheira como
mas eu não posso ser certo

Não é uma escada
ou uma sera
ou um violino

Mas é levantou-se?

I DOUBT THIS

I doubt this
is a rose

It has the shape
It has thorns

It smells like
but I can't be sure

It is not a ladder
or a saw
or a violin

But is it a rose?

MATÉRIA ESCURA

Eu flutuo no espaço infinito
ou no nenhum espaço

um illusion de mim em um lugar
obsuro
uma reflexão flutuando

nada que mantem levantado me

DARK MATTER

I float in infinite space
or no space

an illusion of myself in an obscure
place
a floating reflection

nothing holding me up

MANDALA

Onde estou eu, e como eu comecei aqui?
Por que eu me sinto devo estar em algum lugar?
Eu faltei algo?
Quando ele começam?
Aonde sairá fora?

MANDALA

Where am I, and how did I get here?

Why do I feel I must be somewhere?

Did I miss something?

When does it start?

Where will it leave off?

TRAÇÃO RACIAL

Eu falto-o, Jarra
Nosso amor é uma guerra
religiosa falhada
É o vigésimo quinto
anniversary de nosso amor
embora nós fôssemos somente
junto por três anos

Eu fiz exame de uma barra-
ônibus

à Níla da Universidade

Eu parei pela Estrela Azul para
um latté

sonhar de nossa república
falhada

Você está em seu continente
mim está em meus
nos tração

RACIAL DRIFT

I miss you, Jarra
our love is a failed
religious war
It's the twenty-fifth
anniversary of our love

although we were only
together three years

I took a bus to

University Village

I stopped by the Blue

Star for a latté

dreaming of our failed

republic

You are on your

continent

me on mine

drifting

O CURADOR

curador com cabelo
cinzento
excepcionalmente
eficiente

que arrasta um pé
entre latas de lixo
nunca um
movimento
desperdiçado

etapa, etapa, etapa
torç-gira, levanta,
laço

etapa, etapa, etapa
torç-gira, levanta,
laço

lance o saco em
seu carro
ao continuar um
diálogo com você
o, homem velho

o que você têm em
sua mente?

Talvez pensando
da viagem de
Magellan

OU...

JANITOR

gray-haired

janitor

efficient in the

nth degree

limping

between trash

cans

never a wasted

move

step, step, step

twist-turn, lift,

tie

step, step, step

twist-turn, lift,

tie

toss the bags in

your cart

talking to

yourself

o, graybeard
what's on your
mind?

Maybe

thinking of the
voyage of
Magellan
or...

OMAN IN

A BURQA

for

Jenne and

Belle

I walk

straight

ahead.

All I can

see through

my hijab is
the horizon.

I know they
want to see

my ankles.

Last week a
woman was

shot in the
leg.

A woman
was burned

with acid

for not

following

the dress

code.

"We are
asking

Muslim
women to
wear the
burqa,"

Mohammed

Aftab Alam

president of

the Mumbai

Regional
Muslim
League's
youth wing

told Reuters
on Monday,
but he added:
"We will not

force

anyone."

Gloom

envelopes

everything.

Nothing

moves any

more.

Life is too..

I dare not

say it.

I shop.

I look

straight

ahead.

IN FIRST

LIGHT

Crows fly

up, and I

divine

your name

in their

flight.

The

world's

new and

true and

lovely,

nothing
else to be.

JUBAL DOLAN: WHAT THE THUNDER SAID

Jubal Dolan was born in 1939 in Island Park, New York, to teenage immigrant parents. When he was 16, his parents were killed in an auto accident, and Jubal ran away from a foster care home and headed west. He found his way to Berkeley, California, where he met Jack Spicer, who took him under his wing. One of the "translations" in *After Lorca* is dedicated to Jubal.

HAND IN EMPTY HAND

A translation for Jubal

In the early morning,
empty, empty, empty.
A gypsy walks the streets

holding a guitar as a banner
early in the morning.
Empty, Empty, Empty.

An *enfant terrible*, he was scheduled to read at the Six Gallery, in 1955, an event which launched the Beat Generation. At the last moment, he opted to seal his poems in an envelope on which he inscribed, "Not to be opened & read until 2003!" and thus the venue had six poets instead of seven. His experiments with sex and fast driving led to his early demise, in 1970.

DA DA DA

Nothing exists—Beyond ruin, death dies
and Time is defeated

CLEO ON HER HANDS AND KNEES

I hunt in rubble
for a way beyond
novelty

to fulfill the promise
of organism
and will.

I've heard it said,
Time flies like an arrow;
fruit flies like a banana.

A WAY SHE WALKS

Fire is water falling upward,
says sage Heraclitus.

An old man stutters when he talks.

A girl in pink flutters when she walks.

What is the limit she'll permit?

Fire is water
falling upwards.

ASTRAY

It begins with the sun going down.
Venus flings off her gown.

Who is drowned
emerges from the sea of drunken illusion.

Astray, I am an atom
whirling.

PLEIADES

Orion chased them.
Sterope fell into a faint.

Vulcan set a net to catch
Venus in her embrace of Mars.

Sappho saw the seven sisters set.
She knew love makes a poet into a boar.

You say, "All's fair,"
and I, "Boars have wings."

RYCHARD'S CAFÉ POEMS & LINOLEUM NUDES

The *Café Poems* are poems that Rychard wrote on the street or in the cafés along Telegraph Avenue. He would inscribe them on someone's arm or leg with four color markers, held between his fingers, creating a rainbow of letters. Sometimes he would write on paper and sell a poem for a few pennies, which he would put toward another cup of espresso.

The poems printed in the large type format were the original books printed at D Press and are now out of print. Rychard writes,

I began D Press in an attic apartment in 1967 after finding an old Kelsey handpress and several fonts of worn type and hauling the lot away for \$50. Days I worked in the backshop of the Ketchikan Daily News doing layout, burning plates, and assisting run a 3-unit Goss webpress. At night, I set type and hung my prints to dry on lines nailed to the angle of the attic roof. Grant Risdon showed me how to cut linolium blocks, which enabled me to disguise some of the irregularities in my printing and add a dash of color to compliment all the big, bold words now showing through. Given a 4X6 inch type case, how much poem can be printed with 60 point Bodoni Bold!?

The y in Rychard's name has raised questions. He says it is an Old French spelling of his name. It is to be

noted that his sister, Lynda, spells her name with a y, and at the time of the name change, his father had been appointed a "Y-man" in the reformation of State Farm Insurance, where he was an executive, the "y" meaning there were three branches of leadership. It might, also, have symbolized a fork in the life path Rychard was following, moving away from the study of medicine towards becoming a student of the world.

in every molecu-
le

in every second

big &

small

sent

i men

tall

y yours

truly,

I am trapped
in my
thought

a glance
becomes
a gaze

does love hurt?

—yes, it hurts

my cup—

enough or
too much?

enough

& more than enough

Place is
another

word

for God

here

there

where

on

at

in

all

over

all

over

all