

# 100 CANTOS

## A Response to *Spade* by Douglas James Martin

*Spade* is the first of three books of poetry, jointly written by Richard Denner and David Bromige that form together a work called *100 Cantos*. This name, the tripartite structure, and the epic scope of the work immediately suggests antecedents in both Dante and Pound, and an appreciation of this context helps clarify many details and intentions, and deepens the reader's response. At the same time *Spade* breathes its intertextuality naturally, as we do the air, and remains remarkably immediate and alive, quirkily independent, at once breezily conversational and mired in melancholy. It reads much as if we have stumbled into an entertaining backyard jaw between two cantankerous old versifiers, and the occasional neighbor, who spout anecdote, memory, joke, wisdom, and poetry, to each other and to themselves, with little care to posterity or the listener. And while we may not completely understand what is said, we are loath to leave the garden.

For the larger structure of *100 Cantos*, the *Divine Comedy* is the most relevant antecedent, with somewhat less of the divine, and more of the comedy. As the first of three books, *Spade* has an obvious correspondence to the *Inferno*. "Spade is a digger," Canto 8 tells us, and this digging stirs up worms and old bones along with rich soil. But rather than being trapped within the walls of Dis, we are more often striding the fields of Limbo with the virtuous pagans. Or as Denner has put it, we are in "the Sufi fourth heaven of the innermost heart," a place where the devil can still enter, though proceed no further. This is a place structured less by dogma than debate, though a debate suffused by a sense of mortality, by religious yearning and skepticism at once. In this way the joint authorship of the poem becomes a key to its overall structure: Denner, "who wanted to become a Buddhist monk", is in an endless, and endlessly productive, conversation with Bromige, "a terminal atheist." Though they may come to realize that they "do not share/certain beliefs," they both know that "the real was a making up," and that it "takes a lifetime to/learn to live in the world/or leave it.

At the level of the individual cantos, with their interweaving of fragmentary voices, personal, historical and poetic, Pound's *Cantos* are the obvious model. The opening of "Can't Do 5" (as it is written), gives a sense of this:

Bound by habit, unbound by love  
the leaves turn, the rains fall  
the creek rises  
and the homeless are homeless  
Takes my "I" out  
right view, right thought, right speech,  
right action, right effort  
the cats were here or hereabouts  
civil brutality of cats  
who just want a little stroke  
"Think you're man enough?"

In a few short lines the poets range across lyrical self-reflection, nature, politics, allusions to Confucius (through Pound), the habits of cats, and a recalled challenge, all without obvious connective tissue. But interestingly, the example of Pound himself, of his progeny, and of his modernist analogues in other arts, have domesticated and canonized this "collage" technique, on the one hand moderating its original shock and on the other allowing for conditions where the reader can delight in the verse, and explore its meaning or destruction of meaning, without oppressive irony, or any fixed ideas about the implications of the form itself. A fragmentariness which might have seemed tragic in a Pound or Eliot might be a rich and humorous plenum to us, or simply a realistic rendering of the jagged edges of consciousness and conversation.

Indeed, if we strip away the narrative line from the *Iliad*, or the Christian and Aristotelian architecture from the *Divine Comedy*, much of the delight in individual lines and sections remains. The larger structure serves to sustain the reader's interest through what might be a very long journey, and also to present a frame for the overall construction of meaning. Contemporary experience has made us skeptical of such artificial and unitary constructions, presented without irony. But Modernism has shown us that sometimes variety itself can be an organizing and sustaining principle,

and that merely presenting a construction as a work of art can generate in the reader a play of meaning similar to that more explicitly guided by classical art. Contemporary work, moreover, has the advantage of being able to invoke the architectural apparitions of the past, when convenient, to sustain and structure the reader's attention. In *Spade* the ghosts of Pound and Dante function much as Virgil does for Dante, mentors for the poet, and guides for the reader, and their invocation paradoxically allows for a more radical abandonment of the poet as narrator, without the abandonment of epic ambitions. The reader takes on the character of Dante himself, wandering through the underworld first-hand, without a prior sense of just where he is going.

*Spade* is in several respects more radically fragmentary than Pound's own *Cantos*. This is partly the consequence of the only partially resolved dialogue in the poem between two distinct personalities. Pound, in contrast, consistently foregrounds a point of view that he at least intends to be consistent and prescriptive. Furthermore in *Spade* there simply seem to be more voices at play, not just in quoted selections or in italicized allusions, but in the flow of directly presented lines. The two speakers themselves dissolve into myriad masks, at issue with each other and with themselves. Canto 20, an expanded version of Plato's *Parmenides*, is characteristic. It begins with a focused dialogue on the Many and the One, gradually incorporates multiple philosophic voices past and present, and ends in a smart-ass joke by Jerry Fodor (presumably), which does not quite undercut the earnestness of what goes before. *Spade* also makes rich use of the arbitrary constructions and witty discontinuities typical of Language poetry. In the following section from Canto 21, for instance, a central pun becomes a logical pivot, a movement that expresses a key ambiguity as well as a joyful burlesque:

and I am amazed at the amount  
of material, which in this way is like  
Pound's *Cantos*, sure he labored  
over his more than we, and it shows  
in his writing and not in ours,  
ours is laborless writing  
Laborless writing is a good idea  
I'll put this in as a line.

Laborious writing is a good idea  
to remind us of our task

Reading *Spade*, however, is never laborious, even when it is most bewildering. The voices are always lively; the jokes work; the self-meditations have an immediate force. Repeated readings help make clearer the lines between the voices of Denner and Bromige, though this precise distinction is not central to appreciating the work. A judicious use of *Wikipedia* helps make sense of some of the references, but as in Pound this knowledge usually only confirms the context within the cantos themselves. And an overall unity is maintained through the skillful interweaving of central themes and preoccupations.

And what are these themes? I have mentioned above an awareness of mortality and the debate between faith and skepticism, between the many and the one. One might add strains from politics, philosophy, and history, the limitations and possibilities of art, and reminisces of the poetry scene of the Beats and early Sixties, in rough parity. Indeed it is the inclusiveness of this material, as well as its equal balance, that suggest the epic form. Even the theme relatively absent in *Spade*, romantic love, is suggestive of the overall design, since the next volume in the triptych is called *The Petrarch Project*. And all these themes are themselves united by a point of view that arises naturally from the situation of the poets themselves. Like Homer, Milton, Dante, and the late Yeats and Pound, these are mature poets, closer to the spade than the forceps. Their broad focus, and their balance between memory and humorous anecdote, pity and sober self-assessment, arises effortlessly from long experience not quite freed from desire.

The poignancy of this self-questioning encompasses both art and ethics. *Spade* begins with an epigraph from Pound's Notes for Canto CXX:

I have tried to write Paradise  
Do not move  
let the wind speak  
that is paradise  
Let the Gods forgive what I  
have made  
Let those I love try to forgive

what I have made.

*Spade* ends, in Canto 33, with a summation that is itself a witty collage of lines from each of the thirty-two preceding cantos. Is this a proper way out of the underworld? Will Denner and Bromige remain as useless “as a hydrogen bomb,” or should they embrace this uselessness like “a lazy river, heaven sent,/or else a happy accident,/Just flowing there?” Will Bromige manage to leave “enough money for a quiet funeral?” Will Denner succeed, and does Spade succeed, by losing the “Self to gain/the Beauty of the Union?” These questions are not answered, but the conversation lives on.

I cannot close without saying a word on Denner’s method of “writing right into the book,” a procedure which contributes much to capturing the immediacy of the conversations that are both the genesis and the structural frame of the work. When I said above that *Spade* reads “much as if we have stumbled into an entertaining backyard jaw” I could have left out the “as if”. The 100 Cantos are quite literally based on a series of lively garden conversations between Bromige and Denner, conversations which were recorded, edited, and transcribed immediately into a succession of chapbooks. The chapbooks themselves were then further corrected and edited, and gradually assembled into the complete work. The unity of the book as a whole, then, blends seamlessly into the experiential unity of two real characters in genuine conversation. The frame of two selves in time, and the frame of one garden in place, is transmuted into the literal frame of the book, and recreated in the abstract frame of art.

## ***Spade* by David Bromige and Richard Denner**

**Katherine Hastings**

Inside that seed  
is a syllable  
Inside the syllable  
is joy (51)

This passage from Canto 12 of *Spade* could easily be a description of the book itself. Although the emotions throughout the book are as varied as the voices themselves, reading *Spade* — tripping from one swatch of conversation to the next — is a joyous experience. “Swatch” is an appropriate word here for our eyes don’t rest long on one topic of conversation before they are moving on to some other intriguing subject. Yet put all those conversations together and you have a literary, coherent quilt of related threads that connect two seemingly different men, their thoughts, beliefs and experiences.

A much longer paper than this one could easily be written about *Spade* — the limitations of time and space preclude me from discussing the poets’ inclusion of everyone from Plato to Plath, Pound’s *Cantos*, wars — including some of the more recent on-going atrocities — and more. Instead, I offer a few of my initial personal responses to this sometimes whimsical, sometimes very serious work.

A total enjoyment of language is evident from the first page of Canto 1 when the words “spade,” “spay,” “splayed” and “played” skip down the page. This is a wonderful way to enter the book. But all is not fun and games. There are stunning moments of tension. Following the lovely passage Like moons in water/sights deceive us (86), we are immersed in a memory of sitting in a café where one customer, whose modern tool is a lap top computer, observes another who sits

sharpening old razors on a whetstone. “Can I work with these razors being sharpened? “Maybe,” he concludes...“it is just his luck to sit next to a man sharpening razors.” (87) Another interesting collision comes with the observation “Neitzche was upset by a buggy whip/What would he do if a leaf blower/interrupted his silence?” (64)

There are moments of great tenderness in *Spade* that offer refuge from the tougher observations of modern life (“If I was an angel/I’d run out of energy/giving praise”), indictments of mankind’s failures, laugh-out-loud scenarios (“...what I don’t understand is, when I piss, it goes ‘shhhh shhhh’ in the snow, but when you piss, there is/a roar like thunder.”/“That, my friend, is because I am pissing on your overcoat,” (53) and astonishingly beautiful insights into the affection felt by these two men:

“We understood a way of being  
that we shared. He was adopted,  
and I was abandoned.  
Then repossessed.  
Something radical happened.” (153)

In short, every emotion “in the book” is, indeed, in the book. From the peaceful scene of a cat licking herself on a towel to a car accident, from walking in sea spray to the wars of Afghanistan and Iraq, *Spade* never lets up in holding our interest, propelling us to the final lines infused with wonderful, self-deprecating humor. As Denner inscribed in my copy of the book, “Welcome to...Goofy 4th Heaven.” Perhaps not so goofy after all — there is so much more to this little heaven than that.

### **The Petrarch Project: An Introduction by Douglas James Martin**

The thirty-three Cantos included here form the second book of a three part work, the *100 Cantos*, jointly written by Rychard Denner and David Bromige. The first part of

this work is called *Spade*, the third part, *Garden Plots*; the current volume is *The Petrarch Project*. The epic scale of the poem as a whole, the use of the canto form, the tripartite structure, the playfulness, the mad allusiveness, the interweaving of multiple voices and snatches of narrative, suggest obvious antecedents in both Dante and Pound, and indeed these models are useful towards our understanding and appreciation of the current work. But, as the title suggests, the most obvious literary predecessor is Petrarch himself, and the work he is most famous for, *The Canzoniere*, a collection of 366 poems focusing on the trials, joys and broader significance of romantic love.

Dante himself, as *La Vita Nuova's* celebration of Beatrice attests, was strongly influenced by the courtly love tradition, and by his personal experience of romantic passion. But Dante was still primarily a medieval thinker; in the *Divine Comedy* his Beatrice finally appears in Paradise, embedded in a floral and cosmic web symbolic of religious order, a heavenly transubstantiation of human love. Petrarch, in contrast, was one of the first true Renaissance humanists, and he had a humanist interest in the details of individual psychology. There is a certain objective distance, to be sure, in the urbanity and realism of the classical writers Petrarch far preferred to his medieval contemporaries. But this very realism also suggested a way to talk about love as something more universal, and something fundamentally more important, than a courtly, aristocratic game. Undoubtedly Petrarch could never fully escape the shadow of Dante's influence, and indeed leaned on his master's confidence in the anagogic transformation of erotic energy. But Petrarch's explorations of romantic love were firmly rooted in, and celebrated, the vagaries and paradoxes of the individual human heart, with its foolish enthusiasm, its insistent carnality, and its stumbling attempts at transcendence.

Today it is Dante, and not Petrarch, that maintains, and quite rightly overall, the highest reputation. This is abundantly evident in a comparison of the number of translations devoted to each poet. Nevertheless, Petrarch's point of view remains much closer to our own, and it is Petrarch who has had far greater influence in the subsequent history of poetry. Indeed, we would not be wrong to see Denner's and Bromige's *The Petrarch Project* as a direct continuation, rather than an ironic echo, of Petrarch's original intentions: as a serious exploration of the centrality of romantic love to human experience, and of the various ways in which we attempt to justify this centrality. Both the *Canzoniere*, and *The Petrarch Project*, furthermore, can be seen as attempts to challenge the spirit of their times. Petrarch's humanism was an affront to the prevailing medieval orthodoxies; *The Petrarch Project* wittily tweaks our modern and post-modern embarrassments before the insistent reality of romantic emotion.

Nevertheless, just as Petrarch's erotic seriousness benefits from Dante's suggestions of the transcendent significance of human love, our interpretation of the *Project* can benefit from its structural analogies to the *Divine Comedy*. The first book of the *100 Cantos, Spade*, is in the *Inferno* position, the third book, *Garden Plots*, clearly aligns to the *Paradiso*; the current volume, naturally enough, can be seen as a kind of *Purgatorio*. The "Laura" of Canto 59, (a canto which, incidentally, functions as a useful key to the work as a whole), makes clear this thematic shift from the first volume's preoccupation with physical mortality. While the characters in *Spade*, she tells the author/protagonists, "bewail injuries to their physical bodies," in "this second set of cantos, you seem to be suffering on the level of the romantic heart, and the wounds are inflicted on your psyche rather than your body."

Purgatory, indeed, can be seen as a kind of quest, a midpoint between the finalities of hell and heaven, the natural abode of figures who are neither damned nor saved, and for that reason it may well be an appropriate figure for the actual trials of everyday life. Placing the drama of romantic love in that position only underscores the continuing and universal, centrality of that drama. Love is, on the one hand, the ordinary theater where we may express all aspects of being human, from the most bestial, to the most abstract, from the most selfish to the selfless. On the other hand, erotic love is a natural symbol for the force that holds together any number of restless oppositions, a path that mediates, like purgatory itself, between all extremes.

Petrarch's *Canzoniere* explored, for his own time, the multiple ways that erotic love could find meaning, as a locus of symbolic energy, and as an insistent biological and social fact that demands justification. *The Petrarch Project* exhibits much the same range, in a contemporary context that may well be closer to Petrarch's than recent fashion would admit. We find *eros* here as a simple biological fact, an aspect of physical pleasure that can be desired, appreciated, scorned and regretted, a consequence of the reality of the body, which as Canto 34 suggests inevitably imposes a "whole handful" of its own rules on the mortal lover. We find physical beauty as well, poised in the imagination somewhere between desire and aesthetic order, and expressed everywhere in the *Project* using the same type of highly figured speech that Petrarch mastered at the beginning of the modern era. Denner and Bromige, like all poets of love hereafter, find their own way to remake this speech, through their unique invention, and through particular strategies of theft and subterfuge. *The Petrarch Project* also explores throughout the functioning of love in its social context. Love sickness disturbs, as it always has, our comfortable independence, thrusting us towards adventures we may or may not regret. Love is still played out like an elaborate game, even if its various moves today are played out more commonly

online, with rather fewer exchanges of perfumed letters. And marriage is still a fact, in our enlightened times, as are temptation, betrayal, happiness and frustration. The cantos present all these scenes, both tragic and comic.

Significantly, *The Petrarch Project* does not refrain from exploring, as Petrarch himself explores, the potential relationship of romantic love to what still might be called the transcendent. This might be seen as a simple “aesthetic” transcendence. Alternatively, there may be a kind of “moral” transcendence possible through an ideal of married love. But Petrarch also celebrates, without obvious irony, the power of the beloved and the faithfulness of the lover as figures of the force of the divine, and of the moral purity possible through this devotion. To him this relationship is not simply symbolic; love often seems to serve as a sphere where one might legitimately “practice” one’s devotional discipline. And romantic love may also have its uses as a direct path towards the spirit; perhaps it can even become a direct expression of the divine. Similarly, *The Petrarch Project*, particularly in its flirtations with the forms and rituals of Tantric Buddhism, celebrates the potent analogies between erotic and spiritual force. Significantly, these allusions to Tantric practice here are also ambiguous; is the erotic symbology of the Tantra merely a co-opting of profane power for spiritual purposes, or are erotic rituals meant to celebrate the infusion of the divine directly into the world? The connections developed, towards the end of the volume, between the marriage of Albert Einstein and Mileva Maric, and the marriage of energy and matter in relativity, are a witty exploration of this latter possibility. This potential holy marriage of opposites also echoes the ecstatic Neoplatonism that is as important to Renaissance thought as the urbane humanism most often associated with it. If modernity demands a focus on the dignity of man in the world, rather than on the unapproachable majesty of God, where else can spirit express itself but in the matter all around us? Nevertheless, regardless of any preference for symbol or incarnation, the desperate hunger for meaning is clear. Erotic power must have an explanation somewhere, and an explanation adequate to our intellectual and imaginative curiosities; otherwise, what could possibly justify the attention we end up giving it, whether we wish to or not?

The seemingly archaic dignity implicit in a focus on romantic love is all the more surprising, and indeed all the more powerful, in a work whose style is joyfully jagged, and playfully avant-garde. In form and style *The Petrarch Project*, like *Spade* before it, owes much more to Pound’s *Cantos* than to the architecture of *The Divine Comedy* or to the intricacies of the *Canzoniere*. There is above all an abrupt juxtaposition, and an enfolded interweaving, of multiple voices, including multiple Petrarchs, and multiple Laura’s, with no Virgil to guide us from circle through bolgia. The contemporary reader, of course, has grown accustomed to the “negative

capability” of these structures. Nor are the poets without pity. As mentioned above, Canto 59 provides a very useful key, and perhaps not a moment too soon, to the design of both *Spade* and the *Project*. As the Laura of this canto puts it:

*You and Bromige have several voices, a voice as each of yourselves in the first person and a third person omnipotent voice, which I take to be the narrator. . . On top of this you both have a voice in the persona of Petrarch. . . Also, Laura is given a voice, and this is where the story seems to get distorted, as there seem to be a wide variety of Lauras.*

The play of voices in the *Project*, in fact, is less complex and oblique than in *Spade*, and the focus, as mentioned above, has shifted from physical suffering to psychic struggle. But there is a similar multiplicity of tone; the comic, the pathetic, the sacred, and the profane, are all tossing in the same bed. Somehow, an authorial spirit that might best be described as Chaucerian allows all these voices to coexist in good humor.

Similarly, in keeping with its understated epic ambition, and perhaps its Chaucerian spirit as well, *The Petrarch Project* can be seen as a cheerful compendium of genres. We will find here all manner of free verse lyric, several approximations of sonnets, a canzonni, even a sestina. We will find several letters, a transcription of an online chat, a prose fable in the Renaissance style, even a purloined table of contents. And in its evocations of Petrarch himself we will find every conceivable approach to allusion and translation. Not surprisingly, there are countless references to the *Canzoniere* throughout. There are snatches of lines directly translated, and there are several sonnet-like structures that pick up on Petrarchan themes and images. There are even some delightfully anarchic exercises that owe something at once to Pound’s quirky translations, to the playfulness of poetry exercises, and to the serious zaniness of the language poets. Thus Canto 62 boldly renders Petrarch’s “rodendo intorno, onde 'l tuo nome prendi” (rushing on from where you take your name), from Canzoniere 208, as “rodents of introspection fight over my name.” And yet the transubstantiated sonnet still makes a kind of perfect sense!

The emotional center of *The Petrarch Project* may well be found in Canto 54, which consists of a free verse sestina addressed by David Bromige to his wife, Cecilia. There is a refreshing directness and a poignant emotional realism to this lyric, a power to move us that is strengthened both by the playful variety that surrounds it, and by the serious attention to romantic love throughout that this playfulness never completely undercuts. This power suggests something that contemporary serious poetry has all too easily given up. Modern literature has countless examples of

“realistic” dissections of sex, love and marriage, as doomed or absurd institutions, as products of archaic social structures and linguistic habits, or as distorted displacements of an internal psycho-sexual drama. And it may well be that the twentieth century purgation of romantic expansiveness was a necessary correction to the sentimental enthusiasms and convenient social assumptions of the previous century. But has not another century turned over once again?

Indeed, recent investigations in cognitive science and evolutionary psychology have begun to question in turn our *modernist* assumptions of mental plasticity and the social construction of personality. But if there is a human nature after all, it may be a nature that at its core contains all the contradictions and paradoxes that one could ever wish for. Desire itself, the apparent pursuit of a purely selfish pleasure, may yet be the unknowing instrument of a genetic imperative that cares nothing for the individual carrier of those genes, as long as these genes are themselves reproduced. Is this a battle of our judgment against our passion, which would otherwise drive us into personal destruction? Or is this a revelation of how desire itself can be the vehicle of self-sacrifice, an expression of a wish to transcend one’s own body and time?

Whatever the answer we are somehow compelled to keep asking the question. In our private lives we go on lusting with artistic flair, loving with absurd expansiveness, marrying into uxoriousness, or slipping into pain and betrayal. We may still feel too embarrassed to reveal all this in our serious literature, without plentiful doses of a knowing irony. But our pop songs betray us. And why should pop songs have all the fun?

## TESTIMONIALS

*Spade* manages to be witty, insightful, silly, cantankerous, profound, hilarious, and though-provoking all at once. In a narrative resembling several phone conversations cutting in and out, the threads of story woven through these cantos combine pearls of real-life whack and wisdom with lively voices and uncanny

juxtapositions of reference and imagery to create a vivid, unexpected ensemble. You must read it for yourself, and laugh out loud, to understand its glorious, goofy power.

–Kathryn Christman

Good God Almighty, I just got around to reading some of *The Cantos*. What a way to start Sunday morning. I think if you had Indian names, they would be He Who Feeds Back Into Himself. Or: He Who Recycles the Recycled. Or: What Goes Around Comes Around. I mean, nothing seems to drop by the wayside in your world, everything is plowed back in, reconfigured, and the thing just keeps growing and growing. It's really quite a phenomenon.

–John Bennett

Much of the finest American writing is rooted in the vernacular—Twain, the WC Williams of *Paterson*, not to mention Finley Peter Dunne's Mr. Dooley on "ivrything." Vernaculars in *100 Cantos* range from philosophical to mystical religious mystical to "common" discourse. It takes grace and wit to ground speculation in the concrete. Bromige and Denner are like Whitman's "Noiseless, Patient Spider" spinning intricate structures trapping each other and us, as we hear the formalities and informalities of their dialogues emerge. No poison here (nor innocence): there's the sap of whatever plant or substance feeds your or my particular spirit. Pure esprit. An amazing performance that will take its place in the selective list of American verse epics that began with *Leaves of Grass*.

–Lou Rowan

What a stunning book you have made...the size of the print, the shape of the book and most of all, the words! The tone, the chattiness, the history, turning it all over with a SPADE.

–Joanne Kyger

[In *The Petrarch Project*] David Bromige and Rychard Denner are two mischievous and eloquent gods laughing at, and lamenting, the trials of human love.

–Gabriela Anaya Valdepena

Although both have denied it, Bromige and Denner knew what they were doing from the start. Combining techniques of experiment with down-home poetry, *The Petrarch Project* celebrates and bewails Love through the ages. From bed chamber to chat room, nothing's missing from this book.

–David Mansfield

O Love, its purgatories and its transcendences, its Lauras and its Petrarchs. What a romp this book.

—Sharon Doubiago

## JIM MCCRARY Reviews

*Spade* by David Bromige & Rychard Denner (Dpress, Sebastopol, Ca., 2006)

*Spade*. Here the first selection of a collaboration between Bromige and Denner and contains Cantos 1-33 of what became 100 Cantos. This book gives me great pleasure foremost because it was signed and handed to me by David Bromige during a recent visit in June. These two, Bromige and Denner spent great time together on a regular basis and this is the result. It is, as is said in the intro, a great conversation...a record of "...what was said between them...". Now...not that we overhear what they said but that they choose and collected what was said. It is valuable in that sense to me to have the privilege to read and react. What is it about? Oh come on you know how it is to listen in to others...you know the airport full of cell phone conversations...nothing to recall. That here too. Sure but don't ask me to tell you. I, personally, find it hysterical and sarcastic and fretful

and unknown. It is, well, entertaining and newsworthy... ack! And it is timely, torn from the nightly news...back to you Katie. All that and more. Sure the bits about the Berkeley Poetry Conference are as if live from Comedy Central. And the Plato dialogs between DB and RD...and Iraq and cannibalism. It is talk, to say the least.

If nothing else...look for this...to see and read the possibilities. You know you have thought about collaborating with someone. Well, here it is. Find this book (there is some on the web) and do not let it discourage your own attempt. Even if these guys nailed it, don't let that get you down.