

The Selected Poems of Michael Daniels

Afterward

On the informational highway, I have traveled for weeks with the headless and destructive speed in an uncommon pursuit of the copyright owner of poetry that captivated me on the first verse. Browsing the websites of the skateboarding equipment manufacturers for other, personal reasons, I ran by chance into the section of so-called skateboarding poetry.

It all started on iskatefakie.com, where under the title *A Tribute to Michael Daniels* I read a few poems of the same author. From there I linked myself to michaeldaniels.com where, without much hesitation, I gave my credit card number to gain access for the symbolic sum of one American dollar to other poems of this young, American poet.

Since I am not a literary critic, and my mother taught me that if I don't have something nice to say about others, I better keep my mouth shut and say nothing, I will let Michael Daniels's poetry speak for itself. However, I cannot say nothing about my sensory perception and experience which a seventeen-year-old, native New Yorker, crazy lover of skateboarding and everything connected with it and a true child of the streets where he won a name for himself, had left me in.

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And that sensation was deep and truly experienced. In a cocktail of melancholy, sorrow, hunger, desire, and a love for life, Michael Daniels's poetry is a fine mixture of Rimbaud's, Shakespeare's, and Jim Carroll's poetry. While showing respect to these great, poetic role models, Daniels's poetry remains peculiar, recognizable, and unique.

Daniels's poetry is full of imagery and symbolism; for some readers, it may be too dark or even too brutal. But one should always keep in mind the traumatic experiences in which he created it. (For example, many years of abuse and blackmail by his stepfather, a failed relationship with his girlfriend, the death of his mother.) Having this in mind, Michael's poetry, despite his personal good, cheerful, and generous nature, is raw, cruel, dark, and rough. ("Heart," "The Stealer of Dreams," "Death Can Dance," "Liberation," "Metamorphosis.")

In contrast to this work are his other poems, delicate, gentle, emotional, nostalgic, dreamy, filled with an inexhaustible source of love for his mother, friends, life, and especially for skateboarding ("Summer Symphony," "Unfinished Poem," "A Cacophony of Words," "Departure," "Haiku"); some poems are even titled by the manufacturers of the skateboarding outfit!

Between these two extremes, one can find a few, romantically-themed poems: "A Postcard," "You're Not Here," "Providence," "Spring," "The Bloody River," and a very unusual trilogy inspired by the "addiction" of young people in America (and beyond) with refreshment drinks, whose producer is doing well enough so I do not feel proper and necessary to mention it here.

How can we characterize and sum up Daniels's poetry in one word? The avant-garde? Extravagant? Alternative? Underground? It is difficult to pinpoint the exact word, as his poetry encompasses all these descriptors. Maybe that is why all attempts at categorizing Michael Daniels in a recognizable framework to facilitate the acceptance, understanding, and

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identification with it can be found all over the skateboarding websites that contain at least one of Michael's poems as *A Tribute to Michael Daniels*, especially when it comes to Michael Daniels's official website, whose creators are Michael's closest friends, proven exceptional skaters and quality young people—Alien and Victor.

To these two I owe special gratitude (plus something else) for not being too suspicious to respond to my call for help and connect me with Michael's sister, Rebecca Daniels. With almost no financial compensation and already after only a few exchanged e-mails, Rebecca allowed me to present part of her brother's work here. By my choice and led by the internal (and hopefully unmistakable) feeling, with the Daniels sister's blessing, I have chosen about sixty of Michael's poems to present in the collection of selected poems titled *Postcards From Beyond Reality*.

For those who would like to get to know Michael Daniels better than just reading a brief biography on these pages, I invite you to look for the novel [Cruel Summer](#) and read it. It is the story of Michael Daniels and his friends, told from the perspective of its two actors—Victor and Alien—and written through the keyboard of the author of this Afterward.

Bernard Jan

dEATH cAN dANCE

My mind is collapsing under the
weight of the night.
The burden is heavy and tiresome.
Rest won't come.
Sparkles of illusions and
a world of troubled thoughts.
Blizzards of snow-born sorrows.
Flight of the sparrows
in frenzied flocks.
Coming and going away.
Into the night.
Into surrender.
Into oblivion.
Into the dark fogs of eternity.
I saw Death on my window.
It was gray.
And it was dancing . . .

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tHE eAST rIVER hAS bEGUN TO wEEP

The East River has begun to weep
Spilling its sorrow over the shallows
Of New Manhattan

Swaying algae on the anchors of sleeping giants
And gnawing at rusty steel of their hulls
Looking for me

Knowing I won't be here soon

A little longer . . .
And my body will disappear from these banks
Awoken with mornings with no future
And lulled to sleep with restless nights

A little longer and I am leaving without a trace

A pair of worn-out Droors pants
Is left in SoHo
And discarded memories
No one took notice of

iNDEPENDENT

Once I believed in You
and my life wasn't a farce
Once while I slept soothed
on the feeding breasts of my mother

Now, now I don't know anymore what it means
to be calm, and I don't try to understand
lofty goals they taught me
I should respect

So I am taking a running start and escaping from everything
Hasting away from the eyes and alien looks
Eager to be different
Eager to be my own
Like a tattoo of the cross I carry on my leg
eager to be independent