

Michael Daniels' Selected Poems

Preface

On the informatical highway for weeks I traveled constantly with the headless and destructive speed in non everyday pursuit of the copyright owner of poetry that captivated me on the first verse. Browsing the web sites of skateboarding equipment manufacturers from other, purely personal reasons, by chance I ran into the the section of, so called, skateboarding poetry.

It all started on www.fakie.com where under the title *A Tribute to Michael Daniels* I had the opportunity to read a few poems of the same name author. From there I directly linked myself to www.michaeldaniels.com where, without much hesitation, I gave my credit card number in order to gain access for the symbolic sum of 1 US dollar to other poems of this young American poet.

Since I am not a literary critic, and my mother taught me that if I already do not have something nice to say about the others I better keep my mouth shut and say nothing, I will let Michael Daniels' poetry that speaks for itself. However, I cannot stand and really say nothing about my sensory perception and experience which an 18-year-old native New Yorker, crazy lover of skateboarding and everything to do with it, and a true child of the streets where he won a name for himself, 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' poetry is a fine mixture of Rimbaud's, Shakespeare's, and Jim Carroll's. While giving a nod to these great poetic role models, Daniels' poetry remains peculiar, recognizable and unique.

Daniels' poetry is full of images 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 it was created. (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, Michaels' 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.*)

Sitting opposite this work, however, are his other poems that are delicate, gentle, emotional, nostalgic, dreamy and filled with inexhaustible source of love for his mother, friends, life in general, and especially for skateboarding (*Summer Symphony, Unfinished Poem, Cacophony of Words, Departure, Haiku*); some poems are called even by manufacturers of the skateboarding outfit!

Between these two extremes, one can find a few romantically-themed poems: *A Postcard, You are 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 appropriate and necessary to mention it specifically here.

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

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understanding and identification with it can be found all over the skateboarding web pages that contain at least one of Michael's poems as *A Tribute to Michael Daniels*, especially when it comes to Michael Daniels Official Web Site whose creators are Michael's closest friends, proven exceptional skaters and a good quality young people – Alien and Victor.

These two I owe special gratitude (plus some) for not being too suspicious so they kindly responded to my call for help and connected me with Michael's sister Rebecca Daniels. With almost none financial compensation and already after a few exchanged e-mails, a copyright owner of Michael's poems allowed me to present part of her brother's work here. By my own selection and led by the internal (and hopefully infallible) 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 bleak biography on these pages, I strongly suggest that you look for the novel *Cruel Summer*. It is the story of Michael Daniels and his friends, told by the mouth of two actors – Victor and Alien – and written with a dictaphone and the keyboard of the author of this preface.

In Memory of Michael Daniels

(1980 – 1998)

Bernard Jan

My mind is collapsing under the
weight of the night.

The burden is heavy and tiresome.

Rest won't come.

Sparkles of illusions and
the world of troubled thoughts.

Blizzards of snow-borne 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
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 bit longer . . .
And my body will disappear from these banks
Awoken with mornings with no future
And lulled to sleep with restless nights

A little bit longer and I am leaving without a trace

A pair of worn out Droors pants
Is left in SoHo
And discarded memories that
Absolutely no one took notice of

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Once I believed in You
and my life wasn't a farce
Once while I soothed slept
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 a cross I carry on my leg
eager to be

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