

# Guy Daniels

## Selected Poems



# Guy Daniels

May 11, 1919 [Gilmore City, Iowa] –

February 24, 1989 [New York City, New York]

Daniels was born in Gilmore City, Iowa, attended high school in Redlands, California, and graduated from the University of Iowa. He was briefly part of the Thomas McGrath circle in the 1950s. Poems appeared in *The Nation*, *The National Review* and *The Kenyon Review*. Daniels had published more than 40 translations, from Russian and French into English, including *The Complete Plays of Vladimir Mayakovsky* and *Racine and Shakespeare* by Stendahl. He specialized in Soviet literature of dissent and translated *My Country and the World* by Andrei D. Sakharov.

*Poems and Translations*. San Francisco: Inferno Press Editions, 1959

# A Prophecy

(After Lermontov)

A year will come—for Russia, a dark year—  
When the crown so long worn by the czars will fall;  
The crowd will lose its former love for them,  
And many will be fed on blood and death.  
Then innocent young children and young wives  
Will not be guarded by the trampled laws;  
And Plague from stinking bodies of the dead  
Will roam the streets of mourning villages,  
And Hunger's teeth will tear at this poor land,  
And reddening skies will make the rivers red.  
On that day will appear a powerful man.  
And you will know him, and will understand  
Why in his grasp he holds a blade of steel.  
And woe to you ! Your weeping and your groans  
Will only make him laugh. And everything  
About him will be frightening and dark,  
Like his black cloak, beneath his towering brow.

# The Sail

(After Lermontov)

A lone sail makes a patch of whiteness  
Against the blue mist on the sea.  
What is he seeking in far places?  
What has he put behind, to flee?

The waves leap up, the wind is whistling,  
The mast is laboring, and creaks.  
It isn't happiness he flees from,  
Alas! not happiness he seeks.  
Below, the sparkling bright blue water;  
Above, the sun, golden and round.  
But he, rebellious, seeks the tempest,  
As though in tempests peace were found!

# Sonnet for Anne

Somewhere beyond all music was that place  
I travelled to: the way led through strange lands  
Where words were noisy rattles in the hands  
Of shrunken, bearded babes; where Mother's face  
Flowered and died and bloomed again; where fires  
Of fear swept through the tangled past, and all  
My loves came running wildly, to fall  
Dead in the clearings of black-stumped desires.  
I came at last to that place where Before  
And After meet and merge into those things  
That even music cannot say. Dark wings  
Eclipsed the sun; dark, lonely was the shore  
Of your deep fragrance, wherein every sound  
Was stilled, and all my dark-eyed girls lay drowned.

# The Mooring Line

(After Paul Fort)

Why try to patch up the affair?  
Is loving worthwhile after all?  
The mooring line's broken, my dear.  
Was it you that was tugging too hard?

Was it me? Was it God? Was it somebody else? Well,  
It's broken, and who's to blame no one can tell.

Love goes into so many hearts,  
It's a line passed to so many ships,  
And it's wound around so many bitts,  
Whose fault is it if the line parts?

There are too many lovers on earth all heaving away at one sin.  
Is it really the fault of love if the rope is worn so thin?

Why try to patch up the affair?  
Is loving worthwhile after all?  
The mooring line's broken, my dear.  
And it's you that was tugging too hard.

# A Federal Poet

Beloit Poetry Journal  
Spring, 1985

(Composed upon learning of the existence of an organization calling  
itself the Federal Poets)

I'm stuck. My images are all cartoons:  
Churchill and his cigar; the French premier's  
Romanesque nose; the smirks and solemn sneers  
On the faces of Congressional buffoons.  
Or when (frustrated journalist) I'm moved  
To fantasy, I prophesy the year  
Of Armageddon, and profess to hear  
The stirring of the next bombs in the womb.  
And so it goes. Good God! I'd rather be  
A pure Romantic, quite unfederalized—  
Old Wordsworth, watching (from some pleasant lee)  
The sun go down between a milkmaid's thighs;  
Or Baudelaire, seeing in his dark Ennui,  
Reflections of his own hypnotic eyes.

# A Biologist Looks at the Civil Service

This curious growth, labelled a noxious weed  
By every politician,  
Is actually part plant, part pedigreed  
Academician.

And though at times they scarcely seem alive,  
These very much neglected  
And misused florae and/or faunae thrive  
Where least expected.

In fact, it has been claimed they'll live forever.  
But most experts incline  
Towards the French view: they sometimes die, but never  
Never resign.

# Envoi

For best results, spray with Security,  
Promise higher positions,  
And keep in humid, crowded places, free  
Of Inquisitions.























































































































































































