



GUY DANIELS

Poems and Translations

EXTREMES AND MODERATIONS:
EARLY SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA POETRY

A TEXT-TECH PAPERS PROJECT

Extremes and Moderations

Early Southern California Poetry

Extremes and Moderations is a Text-Tech Papers project devoted to recovering poetry written, published, and circulated in Los Angeles and Southern California. Each volume brings neglected books and poems back into view through carefully prepared texts, archival images, biographical context, and a clear record of the surviving sources.

Edited by Brian Kim Stefans

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Poems and Translations

Guy Daniels

A Critical Reading Edition

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Extremes and Moderations: Early Southern California Poetry

Archival Images

A short selection from the source record

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 Lemontov)

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!

Guy Daniels

Daniels's opening page in *Poetry Los Angeles I* (1958), preserving the first appearance of "A Prophecy" and "The Sail" in the anthology.

Editorial Note

This edition is reset directly from the Daniels pages in *Poetry Los Angeles I* (1958) and the later page in *Trace* (1965). It does not derive lineation from the earlier reader PDF. Stanza breaks, meaningful indents, subtitles, and the author's note have been checked against the scan images; physical wraps have been joined. The original periodical year of "A Federal Poet" is restored in its epigraph from the anthology's typographical transposition "1985" to 1956.

Inferno Press Editions published *Poems and Translations* in 1959. Boston University preserves a twenty-nine-page typescript and drafts, but no complete public or local scan of the printed pamphlet was found. The section bearing its title therefore presents the securely recovered Los Angeles sequence and does not claim completeness. Unrecovered titles are documented in the datasheet and research files.

Contents

Archival Images	I
Editorial Note	2
Introduction	4
Poems and Translations	6
<i>A Prophecy</i>	7
<i>The Sail</i>	8
<i>Sonnet for Anne</i>	9
<i>The Mooring Line</i>	10
<i>A Federal Poet</i>	11
<i>A Biologist Looks at the Civil Service</i>	12
Later Verse	13
<i>The Crow and the Fox</i>	14
Bibliography	15
Colophon	17

Introduction

Guy Daniels entered the Los Angeles poetry scene as a formal satirist and unusually deft translator, then built a forty-book career carrying Russian and French literature into English. *Poems and Translations* (1959), his single poetry collection, grew from the Thomas McGrath circle and the public readings gathered in *Poetry Los Angeles I*. This edition restores the securely recovered poems from their source pages, preserves their stanza forms and meaningful indents, and adds the later fable “The Crow and the Fox.”

Biography

Guy Emmett Daniels Jr. was born on May 11, 1919, in Gilmore City, Iowa, the son of Guy Emmett Daniels Sr. and Greta Ellen Van Alstine Daniels. Federal and state census records place his early childhood in the Lake Township area of Pocahontas County. By 1935 he was attending high school in Redlands, California, where the family’s move gave him the Southern California connection that would later bring him into the Los Angeles poetry community. He graduated from the University of Iowa. The *Daily Iowan* identified him as a graduate student in 1941, shortly before wartime service dated in the surviving family dossier to 1942–45; the service branch has not been independently verified.

By the middle 1950s Daniels was living and writing in Los Angeles. He entered the circle around Thomas McGrath and participated in the Poetry–Los Angeles readings at Barnsdall Park in 1957. Contemporary reports in *Coastlines* also record a reading on Peter Carr’s KUSC program “Poetry and Talk,” frequent literary gatherings at Daniels’s home, and his work as program director for the Pacifica Foundation during the preparations for its Southern California station. He served as an editorial associate of James Boyer May’s international little magazine *Trace*, where he wrote criticism, surveys of small presses, and literary satire. These activities place him at an important junction between the city’s political poetry, its little-magazine network, and its emerging listener-sponsored radio culture.

Daniels’s poems and verse translations appeared in *The Beloit Poetry Journal*, *The Colorado Review*, *The Fiddlehead*, *Flame*, *The Literary Review*, *Poetry Broadside*, and other magazines. Seven poems were selected for *Poetry Los Angeles I* (1958): translations after Lermontov and Paul Fort, the dreamlike

“Sonnet for Anne,” and comic attacks on literary bureaucracy and the civil service. Inferno Press Editions issued his only poetry collection, *Poems and Translations*, in San Francisco in 1959. The Boston University archive preserves a twenty-nine-page typescript and thirteen pages of drafts for that book. No accessible scan of the printed pamphlet has been located, so the present edition does not claim that the recovered text is its complete contents. His later “The Crow and the Fox,” published in *Trace* in 1965, extends the same satirical and translational poetics.

Translation soon became Daniels’s principal profession. His *Racine and Shakespeare by Stendhal* appeared in 1962, followed by *A Lermontov Reader* and *Fifteen Fables of Krylov* in 1965, *Ivan the Fool and Other Tales of Leo Tolstoy* in 1966, and *The Complete Plays of Vladimir Mayakovsky* in 1968. He edited and translated *Russian Comic Fiction* and compiled *The Falcon Under the Hat: Russian Merry Tales and Fairy Tales*. His range encompassed literary criticism, plays, folktales, fiction, memoir, children’s literature, and political writing; the *New York Times* obituary credited him with more than forty translations from Russian and French. He became particularly important as an English-language mediator of Soviet dissident writing, translating works by Andrei Sakharov and others for American publishers and periodicals.

Daniels also published the novel *Progress, U.S.A.* in 1968, the first projected volume of a Timothy Abbott trilogy. His papers, given to Boston University beginning in 1968, contain manuscripts, drafts, correspondence, publication files, an autobiographical “Account of Career,” a six-page publication checklist, and unpublished poems including “A Dream,” “The Water Nymph,” “New Year’s Day,” “Prayer,” “Cossack Cradle Song,” “Meditation,” and “Borodino.” The archive demonstrates how much of his work remains outside the printed record and supplies the fullest map of his career. Daniels died of prostate cancer at Doctors Hospital in Manhattan on February 24, 1989. He was survived by his wife, Josianne, three children, two brothers, a sister, and two grandchildren. His career joins the local experimental energy of 1950s Los Angeles to the much larger history of American literary translation during the Cold War.

Poems and Translations

Stage I | Los Angeles poems and translations, 1956–59

The securely recovered poetry sequence from Daniels's Los Angeles years.

A Prophecy

After Mikhail 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.

First published in *The Colorado Review*, vol. 1, no. 1, Winter 1956–57, p. 49; reprinted in *Poetry*
Los Angeles I. London: Villiers Publications, 1958, p. 37.

The Sail

After Mikhail 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!

First published in *The Literary Review*, vol. 1, no. 1, Autumn 1957, p. 71; reprinted in *Poetry Los Angeles* I. London: Villiers Publications, 1958, pp. 37–38.

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.

First published in *The Fiddlehead*, Fall 1957, p. 3; reprinted in *Poetry Los Angeles* I. London: Villiers Publications, 1958, p. 38.

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.

First published in *Poetry Broadside*, vol. 1, no. 2, Summer 1957, pp. 7 ff.; reprinted in *Poetry Los Angeles* I. London: Villiers Publications, 1958, pp. 38–39.

A Federal Poet

Beloit Poetry Journal
Spring 1956

*(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.

First published in *The Beloit Poetry Journal*, vol. 6, no. 3, Spring 1956, p. 5; reprinted in *Poetry* Los Angeles I. London: Villiers Publications, 1958, p. 39. The anthology misprints the epigraph year as 1985; the periodical and archive establish 1956.

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.

First published in A Houyhnhnm's Scrapbook, no. 3, July 1957; reprinted in Poetry Los Angeles I. London: Villiers Publications, 1958, p. 40. "Envoi" is retained as the poem's concluding subsection.

Later Verse

Stage II | Satire after Los Angeles, 1965

A later poem continuing Daniels's dialogue between translation, fable, and literary satire.

The Crow and the Fox

High in a treetop, Miss Marianne Crow
Was perched with a book in her beak.
Reynard Fontaine, from far, far down below—
From Hades, in fact—rose to speak:

‘Hé! bonjour, Madame du Corbeau!
What’s that book in your mouth? Ah! Your new poems—no?
Well, they’d better be better this time,
Or I’ll speak to my friend Guggenheim;
What you did to my Fables, Miss Crow, was a crime!’

Hearing this, our poor Miss and/or Madam, half-dead
With fright, threw back her head
And cawed—dropping the book (which, however, she’d read).

Said Reynard (not stooping to read it), ‘I’m so
Sorry, my dear, but that book ends your chances
Of sitting on Sappho’s right hand Down Below:
It’s full of those bad rhymes like branches: fragrances.’

‘But how, without reading it—?’ ‘How could I tell?
Your new volume, though thin, made a thud when it fell.’

Author’s Note: Earlier drafts of this poem, as a kind of object lesson for Miss Moore, were fitted closely to the contours of La Fontaine’s French. The decision, however, to use Miss M’s clumsy feminine rhyme, entailed a break in the pattern, through which gap other heresies then infiltrated. Yet a good deal that is doctrinally sound remains, as amateurs of La Fontaine’s fables will recognize.

First published in *Trace*, no. 58, 1965, p. 281.

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Book and journal titles are italicized throughout.

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“Guy Daniels.” Alma Books, translator profile.

Colophon

Publication and production notes

This critical reading edition was edited by Brian Kim Stefans for The Text-Tech Papers, Los Angeles, in 2026, as part of *Extremes and Moderations: Early Southern California Poetry*. The poems were reset from the source pages named in the editorial notes and datasheet. The book was composed in EB Garamond on a cream field at 6 × 9 inches. The cover uses original abstract artwork prepared for this edition.