Born and brought up in Birmingham, John Goodby has lived since his late teens in Yorkshire, Ireland, and Wales, where he currently lectures in English literature at Swansea University. He has written extensively on Irish, Welsh and English poetry, and his own poetry has appeared in *Angel Exhaust, Stand* and *Poetry Review*, among other journals. His poetry translations include Heine's *Germany: A Winter's Tale* (Smokestack, 2005) and, with Tom Cheesman, Adel Guémar’s *State of Emergency* (Arc, 2007). He is the artistic director of the Boiled String poetry performance troupe and co-organiser with Lyndon Davies of the annual Hay-on-Wye Poetry Jamboree.
Also by John Goodby

Poetry
A Birmingham Yank
uncaged sea
Wine Night White

Translations
Heinrich Heine: A Winter’s Tale
Soléïman Adel Guémar: State of Emergency
(with Tom Cheesman)

Criticism
Irish poetry since 1950: from stillness into history
Dylan Thomas: New Casebook (with Chris Wigginton)
Illennium

John Goodby

Shearsman Books
Exeter
Illennium
For Steve Vine
But [s/he] risks what former lovers risk whenever the Beloved is present, in fact or in word: deepest possibilities for shame, for sense of loss renewed, for humiliation and mockery.
—Thomas Pynchon, *Gravity’s Rainbow*

Shame knowledge may allow researchers to make visible what is usually invisible, the actual state of any relationship where dialogue is available.
—Thomas J. Scheff, ‘Shame as the Master Emotion of Everyday Life’

A young girl, who was blown out to sea on a set of inflatable teeth, was rescued by a man on an inflatable lobster. A coastguard spokesman commented: ‘This sort of thing is all too common these days.’
—*The Times*, 1998
I

Whitehead is gone and the New Steady Statesman is kaput
whose theory I loved as a child.
As ghosts of beard & belly, they went bang.
Could this never have not-been? He felt
as if he would dearly like to smack this unpredictable
America, as a carp accomplishes the size of its pool—
Now sure pandemonium hits the square fan.
So? Cut up’s corny; but that’s what I am
While plagiarism is required. Cut up I mean
Progress implies it. That succumbs
the raining spectacle (out in South-West Wales)
a naff dialectic—& even if you’re right you’re wrong—
yet ‘Formidable, affable, durable’ lovely
hubristic summery self-summary just months before he died
The vodka jelly arrived without you at the party. Pity. It was blue! Though I would retaliate—a sonnet one more than a baker’s dozen undesigning gifts on your supernal grinning candour, (Yeah. Eye-candy, you smoking dog!) The Westbourne Concealed in rotten smoaks In *Frenzy*, blondes wearing antique underwear are vividly hidden, self-referentially strangled in it. Zephyrs, Zodiacs & Avengers cruise London streets in sunlight, a *tsunami* of booze & sparklers. Was I 13 then? Her long hair glossed the crown of the settee Nigel is harping on about Kubrick’s *Eyes Wide Shut* and she is not watching Zodiacs hear her make water, in darkness, in the rafters of the house.
He sees through me as if I was America
were our faces at the centre of it, side to smiling side!
Stan, Chris, Donna, Sarah, Ivan (about to
urghh) Dear Louisiana: from the salt-stinging estuary
it is 2:17 p.m., Laugharne, steps down from the Boathouse—
24 August 1998. Sunday grey sea-smirr, the usual
but not the Greenways. You & me (still
a screwdriver the key to the tŷ bach door
hand-helped, up the hill—antique underwear
Avengers cruise London streets in sunlight
to respect the trust involved in a relationship—
So days after (angry June dawns) would see me
inside & out Drenched in the not as yet ‘that’
which grew a culture of his death under glass.
IV

You may well inform me of sweet damaged Dave’s grave
declaration in Mozart’s. He loved you
to unfold from your grin-creased filtrum Not quite understanding why! But why you might beard
on behalf of younger beards gives me no pause for thought
Call me Jude the Obtuse, but I drink
I might wind up in his attic shape
proffer abashed ‘The Harbor Dawn’ &
have to be helped up, the hill—antique, Fruit
that’s less soft, but one apiece (4) as transgressive–yet-dependent. Song unconfessional.
To be close is close enough this weather
glows jonquil jodhpur majolica Badajoz—Chopped
V

Ideologically-emitted smiles all round
at the launch of *Yank* In The Stick & Carrot
fleeing Kosovans and burning tanks. Confusing
speed with bacon pulverizes
poetic articulation eye-candy
The spin isn’t wooden, it’s plywooden—
O, let not her eyes speak of the Ideal any longer
of Harry H. Corbett’s ‘You *dirty*
slack shape waved like the sea—
‘hi clare, how can i take mad john seriously
(hardly dared notice noticing you *Eyes Wide Shut*
for fear of a cloud of shame markers …
motes dancing in the warm & sunny Queens
shafts for your soft lips to open them for me Mumbles
VI

ARSE

(after Rimbaud)

The Real too prickly, I’d moor the old oyster-grey
Vulvo atop white Hawthorn—my character sliding
towards her attic. A great, slate-plumaged bird, fretting
on the fire-trap ceiling, wings trailing in gloom.
Or standing at the baldachin bearing its gewgaws
(not to mention the masterpiece of her body!), a bear
with violet gums & sable-o’er-silvered fur. Eyes
sparbelling from the gold-whorled Kilner jars
ranged alongalong the console. And swift
dissolve—phew!—to shadow and fierce aquarium.
So days after (angry June dawns) would see me
back in the this-side clover, a donkey now,
braying grievances—in time for those suburban
Sabines to arrive & fling their arms around my neck.
VII

It smells of cellar, your new address, & joss. Christ. I’ll come on Friday, anyway, hopefully armed with doughnuts.’

Hi Anjou: It is 6.13 p.m., Abertawe Mean Term Time, hurrying past the superhuman cries of the sea to change a red lightbulb for a pearl. Hola, La Jolla: ‘Writing an email is like making love to a beautiful woman’ & every day you write the unpickupable From Eire to Modernity. I couldn’t undo it. Never. Not with so much to prove, to unfold from your grin-creased filtrum cycle-sprints, shamelessness, showers! The heart an organ for pulling out the stops
VIII

Remembering an entire day of coffee breaks breaks the heart
On a bike from Schmoo’s
‘Love is a babe’, quotes Miami Vine ‘affable’ lovely
(of Chris’s christening!) Bernard mouths ‘Sausages’,
The ambush of young days Dusk’s
grape-purple amphitheatre rears up
sweating, blanching, blinking, tremor of the hand
absentmindedness and malaprops None
of that! Raw tales, too, of damnéd Mozart’s—
Pedro a Gents blowjob carrot-sick
violet gums & Shyness: the dazed
sensation, dryness of the mouth, terseness of
Subjects had ‘emotional reactions to their emotions’.