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## Also by John Goodby

### Poetry

*A Birmingham Yank*

*uncaged sea*

*Wine Night White*

### Translations

Heinrich Heine: *A Winter's Tale*

Solëiman Adel Guémar: *State of Emergency*

(with Tom Cheesman)

### Criticism

*Irish poetry since 1950: from stillness into history*

*Dylan Thomas: New Casebook* (with Chris Wigginton)

# **Ilennium**

**John Goodby**

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#### Acknowledgements

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where some of these poems originally appeared.

*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

## II

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 stranged 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.

### III

*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 *tÿ 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  
Sodium orange. Old Joy-Whose-Hand-Is-Ever-At-His-Hips  
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—pew!—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'.