

Constance Stadler

**Renting "Becket"**

- I. I do not go to wakes.  
Viewing the inflated, porcine  
    loved one  
Mumbling somethings  
to the black ones  
somethings hideously insufficient  
    and never, really, true  
Taking it all in --  
the gnarled, the sobbing,  
the natty suited corpse

The ritual of concretizing  
the dead as supreme vulgarization.

There are many who do not  
    go to wakes.

But Ritual -- rote, automatic  
    purgative  
that is something else, again  
something eminently needed  
and pathetically human.

    In those moments  
of hung time  
having fallen, once again,  
into the vortex of sense  
    and soul  
of incredulity, of blackness  
of tears, of remorse

of daily life impaled on  
the spit of humanity  
I seek solace  
I rent "Becket."

- II. I was ten years old  
the first time I saw the  
vast screen filled with  
crimson titles blazing  
on simulated golden silk  
set to strident  
trumpeted heraldry

An announcement  
An invitation.

A tale of two friends,  
one man, a curtmantled bruise,  
pursuing approval at the teat  
of defeated superiority  
one man, having nothing  
to pursue, save hollowed  
imperial seductions.

A collaborator par excellence  
who falls hopelessly

in love

with the "Honour of God."

- III. I was so lost.  
I returned to the apartment  
off Tremont Avenue now  
on the prowl.  
Now, hunting down "honour."

And each day, at dusk, my mother  
came slowly home  
Crossing of countless miles of  
restaurant tiles, swollen  
and seared.

And every night,  
vomiting her agony she  
took me to her bed,  
for warmth.  
My father came for me each Sunday  
a sober, dazzling vision that  
was gone by Monday -- dissolve to black  
a bilious heap.

Maturation arrives  
I live many lives  
The apple...  
so close to the tree

Post-pubic crusade  
Where was MY "honour"?  
Where was MY cause, my  
Reason to be?  
It was all so beautiful  
by the lee.  
And yet, the melicerous  
King Henry's taunt  
lingered

'How does one seek honour  
and live as a collaborator?'

Flash forward  
Date:2008

IV. Epilogue:

Dear God  
to this day  
I cannot pray  
Nor do I 'honour' you

dear god.  
...y'almost had me  
That

was a good one  
oh, 'thy' aim is true

Dear God  
ifonlyifonlyifonlyifonly  
If only...

I had a fucking clue.



## morning near Cape May

There is a Hopper print  
in a rental house  
near Cape May.

Strangely  
it replicates  
the very place  
in which it resides.

Soft sun  
on a sun-blached  
deck of non-description.  
Neither invite, nor rebuff  
just there.

And so I walk through tidal pools at five AM.  
The vast expanse of the Atlantic does not  
assail, then.  
And no ships appear on the horizon  
With promise of rich spice adventure  
and other illusions.

Sandpipers skittle dance to quivers of froth.  
Droplet parapets of yore are pregnably dissolved.  
And communities of hours are a knee-bend away.

sand crabs prowl most fruitfully  
grand minnow ballabile  
mermaid slippers immodestly saunter  
an urchin begs for solitude

my moveable molluscan feast...  
ah Dave, there's your starfish!

Everything bears this imprint of impermanence.  
Each footfall carried away in murmur of foam.

And like every child I scour  
the shore for the special ones ~

mother-of-pearl teasing  
the perfect black fan  
a tangerine surprise.

When the brine is washed off  
You will lose your patina.  
But now you are perfect.  
Full ripened dead seashells  
    Not a shard in the lot.

It is time for black coffee  
and the chattings of morning.

I walk past the Hopper  
cupping my wealth  
    a breeze kiss on bare leg  
    it will be warmer today.

... frémissement un coeur, qu'on afflige...

Time

Distance

The remarkable capacity of the human mind to eradicate

what is most dear

will never separate us.

You cup my chin.

My left hand bends softly around your exquisite neck

as it has done

Since that very first time...

Fingertips dig deep into your hollows of response

Caressing without mercy

The fibers of my whirlwind wand lay firmly on

your belly.

Tense, taut, quivering in expectation

The aching gyre

Your liquid sonorous sobs

We are one again.

We begin.

Tear, tug, jerk,

whimper

*scordatura*

*arco, arco, détaché, collé*

*portato, tenuto,*

*legatissimo,*

*legatissimo*

*legatissimo*

The moans of Saint-Saëns shatter

the darkened linden trees

at the feet of entombed lovers

undulating in their shrouds...

screaming

at the voracious insatiability

of renewal

of our union.

Laughing

at the helpless penetration of my

*peau de chagrin.*

And,

as ever

whenever

I lie you down.

'like a monstrance

*(Mon ostensor)*

your memory

*(Ton souvenir)*'

steeps a muted body

sheaths its mottled soul.