Raven
Also by Alan Wall from Shearsman Books

Gilgamesh
Alexander Pope at Twickenham
Doctor Placebo

The Shearsman Chapbook Series, 2012

Seren Adams : Small History
Kit Fryatt : Rain Down Can
Mark Goodwin : Layers of Un
Alan Wall : Raven
Michael Zand : The Wire & other poems

hors de série
Shira Dentz : Leaf Weather
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Raven and Serpent

The raven noticed the serpent
slithering lithely up the tree’s trunk.
A beautiful garden.
One contented couple.

Raven was astounded when serpent spoke.
Now where, he wondered, did the snake learn that?
Are there summer schools these days down there?
Distance learning for winter visitors
even those descended from an unendowed urethra?

Raven’s eye shone
bright as a moon if not the sun
when serpent’s word
wormed its way down Eve’s ear
through her delicate intestines
into her untried womb.

Could I do that? raven asked.
He asked (it should be said) in silence.
Such harmonies as rule here
rule unvocalised.

Noticed for the first time
how tastily the eyes of Adam gleamed
back now from the fields at last
arms filled with red red roses
for the lovely lady.
Emblem

Raven has returned to emblem books.

Of all his second homes
emblem books and bestiaries hold his preference.

There he strolls
admires himself in mirrors of engravings
reads how he never feeds his young
until black feathered quills break through.
Meets unicorn and cockatrice
centaur narwhal and chimera
nods *en passant* to fellow corvids. Never too friendly.

Likes to read about his preference for eyeballs
either on the battlefield
or on Tower Bridge where traitors’ heads
get spiked up weekly for his delectation.

And, should he leave the nearby Tower
our kingdom falls in weeks.
Made a home for himself in the word ravenous
despite a host of weeping etymologists forbidding it.
*Pruk-pruk*, he says to all that. Mr Corvus. Mr Corvax.
Sometimes, while travelling abroad,
he’ll answer to Raben or Corbeau
or even Kangee, shape-shifting cousin
from across the seas.

Once long ago his passport said *hraefn.*
and once, when Mighty Corvid issued his command
he fed Elijah who’d been telling
dark truths to kings.
All written out with a black feathered quill
supplied by yours truly.

Wishes they didn’t portray him so often
striding over snow
things being seldom black and white like that.
Copernican

Never once doubted that the world was round while your flat-footed granddaddy Neanderthals took care they didn’t look over the edge of things and fall.

The world designed to fit exactly in each eyeball ours or yours.

Something we ponder frequently enough while chewing.