

Layers of Un

Also by Mark Goodwin

Else
Back of A Vast
Shod

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*

Layers of Un

Mark Goodwin

Shearsman Books

First published in the United Kingdom in 2012 by
Shearsman Books, 50 Westons Hill Drive, Emersons Green
BRISTOL BS16 7DF

Shearsman Books Ltd Registered Office
30–31 St. James Place, Mangotsfield, Bristol BS16 9JB (this address not for correspondence)

www.shearsman.com

ISBN 978-1-84861-248-8

Copyright © Mark Goodwin, 2012.

The right of Mark Goodwin to be identified as the author of this work has been asserted by him in accordance with the Copyrights, Designs and Patents Act of 1988. All rights reserved.

Acknowledgements

Some of the poems selected for this collection have been published or accepted for publication by the magazines *Shadowtrain* and *Shearsman*. Thank you to the editors.

‘Sun-Fall & Tools’ was written as part of my Writing East Midlands ‘Write Here’ Leicestershire Landscape Poetry Residency, 2011. My thanks to Catherine Rogers and the WEM team. ‘Gar Den O’ Membrance’ was written as part of my Loughborough University Poetics of a Campus Residency, 2012. Thank you to the Loughborough University Development Trust for funding. And thanks to Leah Graham and Kerry Featherstone for support and collaboration on this project. Acknowledgement must also go to the following inspiring creative writing students: Chris Bates, Samuel Hardy, Sophie Hyde, Samuel Lane, Natalie Moores, Tosha Taylor.

Thank you to Ady Adams for critical and vital creative contribution during the making of ‘Wrecked Balance in Castle Zawn’, all those years ago!

Thanks to Brian Lewis for the ‘seed’ line: ‘partially eradicated staircase’.

I am lucky enough to have a meticulous proof-reader who knows my work very well. Thank you to Julia Thornley for vital critical and creative contribution, and also for rigorously testing every last tiny but apparent inconsistency in this collection.

Thank you to Tony Frazer, for the usual easy-yet-careful Shearsman way of collaborating.

Much amazed gratitude to my partner Nikki Clayton, as ever, for faithfully and encouragingly accompanying me on various kinds of journeys, and also for her splendid photo of Casteal Tioram, which is the first layer of ‘un’ on this chapbook.

Contents

Sun-Fall & Tools	7
What A Dead Man Does	15
Wrecked Balance in Castle Zawn	20
Strontium & Gold	28
Gar Den O' Membrane	30
A Casteal Tioram, A Moidart	33

For Ady

Sun-Fall & Tools, a Watermead Park, a Charnwood, a May 2011

the live man climbed
onto the top of a turf-roofed
birdhide

the birdhide's iron door was padlocked
the man sat on the roof's long-grass mattress

with its breeze-block walls
and camou'd over roof
the birdhide reminded
the man of an ordnance pillbox

he was tired
tired of many of his life's parts

for a while he stared at the swirls
& flow of duckweed & scum close
to the old gravel pit's shore

the sky held cathedral-grand clouds
spring sun lit floating seed-fluffs
& the up-down dance of gnats

a duck & her so-far-five
-surviving 'lings scottled across
the lake's sparkling membrane

swifts & martins let loose stripes of screech

he observed closely the flow of bits
across the lake's surface
the vortex curls & accelerations

then he lay down on the birdhide's turf roof
closed his eyes and instantly
the sun fell into his face like

a sudden home finding an ancient building

after another while

a while of faint red pulsations
& black fang-wing shapes
on his eyelids' insides

he gently turned his face away
from the nuclear-fusion explosion
so as not to blind himself

and he opened his eyes

small fast black alphabetic aeronauts
swifts & martins
were being utterly all they could ever be
sliding through sky above him

they were totally unaware of any alphabet
and he knew nothing of the feel
of the smack of gnats gathering
satisfyingly in the back of one's throat towards
the end of a perfectly judged swoop

(you don't either and nor do I)

then with no warning
and with no decision
the man with his eyes wide open turned
his face back towards the star

that gushes photons over Earth

no reflex action came
his eyes remained staring
into the sun for many seconds
until an orangey inkiness

heralded something unknown
with flapping banners of shredded retinas

the man could clearly hear the air
& its flyers & the lake's ripples
& the waterbirds' motions
he could feel soft hummocky turf
under him and he could smell
the soft musk of grasses at once
fresh & ancient

but he could not believe

that he was now blind
he could not believe that his body
had failed

to slide protective skin over its eyes

o

walk down to the birdhide
at the side of the old gravel pit
see the steel door painted green

kept shut

for years with a shiny padlock

notice the tufts of grass that roof the hide

but what you will not see now
is the dead man's body decomposing
on the roof

the cadaver is beyond your line of sight
the site of the deadness is secret

although already there is sweet rankness
humming fetid on the spring air

o

laid out in the sun
on the turf on a roof
of a locked-up birdhide
beside an old gravel-pit

where perhaps once
the bones of a mammoth were found

I heard hard very solid boys approach

there was the ratchet of a
bike's back-wheel-spro
-cket & the wet
haaarrk tpuuuhh

of a lad gobbing

they were below me and couldn't see
I was there listening