

Beneath

Simon Perril

Beneath
—*A Nekyiad*

Shearsman Books

First published in the United Kingdom in 2015 by
Shearsman Books
50 Westons Hill Drive
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BRISTOL
BS16 7DF

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

www.shearsman.com

ISBN 978-1-84861-xxx-x

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Some of these poems have appeared in *Cordite Review*.
My thanks to the editors for their interest and support.

*This one is for Elly,
who came from nowhere,
and changed everything:
thank you!*

1.

who will hold
a black ram's head
flush to the ground
over the rough cup
of a trench

open a second mouth
in its neck
to drool its red life through

and command me
drink, spout truth you
who were more shade above
in the mud-brick groves
of kitchens

than here beneath
where I run no errand
save to find

a utensil
shaped like a mouth
strung like a loom
to sing through

2.

Hermes took me down
each step
I left a deposit

Hermes took me down
each step
decreased in sound

Hermes took me down
each step
the ground forgave

Hermes took me down
each step
the flowers looked away

Hermes took me down
each step
beneath the grave

Hermes took me down
each step
a ghost note

Hermes took me down
each step I regret
he left me

3.

I do not recall
arrival
at Acheron

Charon having taken
express delivery:

one pale jar
neck stopped

4.

that first night
adrift

Lethe dyed my thoughts
white

and I wore them
anew, so fresh

they barely contained
you

5.

Father, once I saw
you throw a stone
atop a cairn

leaving the weight
in your limbs there
on that pile

I smile now
each of my arms
and legs crammed

with wet black sand;
know I carry you
my trunk

a chest of oak
washed up
on this dark shore

6.

hold your ears
stop them

for when nothing
comes in

these holes
so difficult to close

you hold
what shades hold

7.

in Hades
the one sound property

is to recall
your bodily monody

blood-thump
bone-creak

murmurs
of distant springs

8.

my sister went first
we'd a pact

that after crossing
she'd show she'd left

by gripping a weft
of unspooled wool

white-nuckle tight.
In the event she swung

and I saw the slug
of her tongue

and wept
at her outstretched palm

9.

I dreamt I bathed
at dusk
in the leathered sea

and close by me
a bee
perched on a wave-scale

I tipped it
– not from spite,
so's I might

darken those stripes:
wet bands
bobbed in my hand

10.

these hands
have dipped in the lip-mauve pocket
of slit fish

these hands
have scooped the wet gut-gems
inside

these hands
have peeled bone-fans
apart

these hands
have primed white meat
in lemon and thyme

these hands
have baked the white flakes
of flesh

what hands
performed such rites on me
so far from the sea?

11.

nightfall's quick-step
on the never-to-be-blue
hue of dawn

has torn the lining
right out
– no embers in the sky

rosy-fingers withdrawn
yet I
have somehow kept

the promise of colour
young skin holds
awaiting touch