

# The Slip

SAMPLER

Also by Simon Perril

POETRY

Hearing is Itself Suddenly a Kind of Singing

A Clutch of Odes

Nitrate

Newton's Splinter

Archilochus on the Moon \*

Beneath \*

In the final year of my 40s \*

CRITICISM

The Salt Companion to John James

Tending the Vortex: The Works of Brian Catling

SAMPLER

*An asterisk denotes a Shearsman title.*

Simon Perril

THE SLIP  
SAMPLER

Shearsman Books

First published in the United Kingdom in 2020 by  
Shearsman Books Ltd  
PO Box 4239  
Swindon  
SN3 9FN

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

[www.shearsman.com](http://www.shearsman.com)

ISBN 978-1-84861-721-6

Copyright © Simon Perril, 2020  
All rights reserved

The right of Simon Perril to be identified as the author of this work  
has been asserted by him in accordance with Section 77 of the  
Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988.

SAMPLER

THE SLIP

SAMPLER

SAMPLER

1.

night breathes caulk  
exhales

I remember the ripple  
of sails

their snap  
as the wind broke

behind us  
the asses back

of Paros  
– or was it Thasos?

Where poke  
the bones of home?

SAMPLER

2.

Hermes, sheep-thief be praised;  
he says look upon the day  
as a scabbed knee  
to be picked upon

some scaly fruit  
the body blooms  
in friction 'gainst  
this world's serrated edge.

Zeus' blade  
is laid across the firmament;  
and he slices  
at our permanence

so we bake  
served  
in the dog days

SAMPLER



3.

hail the potter  
who lays liquid trays  
under midday glare  
that they may adopt weight

who finds there  
the rudiments of shape  
woven from water  
and silt cake.

May we, similarly,  
hear with our hands  
the sound of the shape  
held in clay  
as we wedge at the edges of form  
and throw it  
into the felting dark

4.

I walk the standing water  
that pools in the agora

it wets my ankles  
gathers as I leak

I feel it lap  
in the civic cracks

of morning mouths.  
These inopportune fountains

spout

SAMPLER

5.

being once a man  
I can speak of it  
as water runs away  
from source.

I'll pause  
in the speaking  
for the course  
is 'cross inhospitable ground;

and the sounds I'll make  
shall take us some distance  
in understanding  
the persistent labour  
of breathing

SAMPLER

6.

I sit in the said  
being force-fed Thasian pickle

by he who kept counsel  
in Hera's precinct

with Dame Harangue  
confected a sour paste

such thick marinate  
of Parian iambs

served me stone, sent me  
and my family

to beds  
of cool marble

SAMPLER

7.

The oracle plotted us  
a path in riddle  
replete with animal guide

‘take,’ shook the Pythia, ‘a beast  
in your midst; one might  
use its stealth.’

There are a wealth of tracks  
can’t be landed  
with the ingenuity of traps;

there are some acts,  
slow to unfurl,  
that outlive their maps

SAMPLER

8.

dead people's things  
few know  
how keenly they sing

yet I'll hear them  
at the ends  
of both my daughters

notes left  
in surrounding air.  
My thought

turns to bedsheets  
hung corner  
to corner

SAMPLER

9.

Telesicles, of all knots  
Omphalos  
binds us tight.  
You recall, old friend,  
the air drum-tight  
at the world's navel

our descent  
towards the grey  
sea-spray of olives  
at Amphissa;

how we were walled  
by the Shining Cliffs  
my knees  
hobbled like a crane's.

Let us take, you said,  
the weight off our feet  
by the Castalian spring  
regain your wolf-steps.

We did so,  
and pressed on,  
met the Kourai  
at Delphi.

Friend, you bought me  
a gift there, outside  
the temple of Apollo;

a fine jug  
of black-traced glaze

On one side Dolon  
the trick-wolf tricked  
on the other  
Theseus joined freed slaves  
a-twist in geranos.

Old friend, may I turn this yarn  
back into its ball;  
recall we sailed  
at Delphic request  
a bristling ship and supped  
elsewhere.

We supped elsewhere.

SAMPLER