

Straits

SAMPLER

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

POETRY

*Sleepers of Beulah*, Sinclair-Stevenson, London 1991

*Ostraca*, Anvil Press Poetry, London 2000

*The Maltese Dreambook*, Anvil Press Poetry, London 2008

*To These Dark Steps*, Anvil Press Poetry, London 2012

*Coming Forth By Day*, Carcanet, Manchester 2014

*Errant*, Carcanet, Manchester 2018

PROSE

*Hezekiah's Tunnel*, Isis Editions 1997

ESSAYS

*The Desert Twisted Edge, Journeys in the Levant*,  
University of Chicago Press, Chicago 2013

Gabriel Levin

Straits

SAMPLE

Shearsman Books

First published in the United Kingdom in 2027 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)

EU AUTHORISED REPRESENTATIVE:

Lightning Source France

1 Av. Johannes Gutenberg, 78310 Maurepas, France

Email: [compliance@lightningsource.fr](mailto:compliance@lightningsource.fr)

ISBN 978-1-83738-055-8

Copyright © Gabriel Levin, 2027

The right of Gabriel Levin 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

# Contents

Beached 4

Straits 19

Harbor 33

*Notes* 51

SAMPLE

SAMPLER

*It was a series of shots against the light*

Theo Angelopoulos

SAMPLE

SAMPLER

BEACHED

SAMPLE

SAMPLER

*...he also invented the long vowels and the  
double consonants and the third note on the lyre*

Suda

These strokes of (black?)  
penmanship: punctured gaps concealing time  
and again  
the established  
rules:  
Pare down, blessed children  
the broken, middle clause  
(he, it)  
caught up with...

\*

Oh jagged shores of papyri archipelagoes  
braceleted in slow-rising mists, with your bights and inlet  
blanks and riptide gashes, and the longhand

of your mewling, wide-circling sea fowl.

What is it that gets stored in the heart of all the mangled words  
forming and – no sooner formed –

dissolving in the air?

\*

Who then has taken  
the floor

in this overnight voyage

buried in  
the fibers

for all appearances fabulous

or to the contrary  
real?

Its cut-off line  
endings

and telltale brackets

bearing the  
burden

\*

Weary of the turmoil  
of clashing blows, of the undying

battle-cry  
boring into your ears

of alliances and misalliances

your unerring arm  
no longer fit to brandish the long ash spear  
of yours

with its worn, patina-streaked  
bronze tip

a lifetime now the freeze-frame stares back  
at you  
won't release you  
from its grip:

*Once, raging Ares soaked his barbed arrowheads  
in the breasts of these men, splattered  
in blood, and instead of the spear gored, dust covers  
their cairns, lifeless in place of living*

Wary of the ease in which gravestone commissions  
keep coming your way

*I'm out of here*, you announce  
to all concerned

\*

Imagine then tripping over yourself  
into the pop-up scenery

a quayside garland crushed  
underfoot

mock ornamental  
plants

at the last beachfront  
resort

and there's no mistaking the pleated  
folds

of the densely wooded  
slopes

for the long sought-after site

of reenactment  
Melicertes

I'm right behind you

\*

Taking by the hand  
the stylishly

coifed young  
bloom

knees quaking  
your thirst  
slaked

in a field of crown  
daisies

— Tell me again  
who has plaited the freshly  
picked wreath

of semblances  
(yours is a young vine-twigg)

reclining, weaving, singing

unwrinkled

brow

plying a fluent

tongue

\*

Another epic mule ride

launched into

the hinterland oak

hickory olive and

the sedulous almond

marshal the muse

side saddle feet

dangling a snag-

toothed watch tower

ensnared in steel

scaffolding for 'repairs'

ever-hooded Byzance

of the chronically

mournful eyes child

swaddled in auriferous  
bands She Who

Shows The Way  
the pair of

them in smoky  
light *Ayia Marina*

\*

These stalwart, pure  
products

of local workshops

chipped gray molds gray limestone  
potter's wheel

who stood or danced  
and shaded their eyes gazing out at the sea  
from the promontory

sporting long skirts  
and short jackets bulky garlands  
hanging from burnt terra  
cotta necks

hands set firmly

at their waist crooked  
elbows

admit it: you too are *ancient*

and seeking the attention  
of your mealy-mouthed over-  
sized antecedents  
won't do

\*

Oh my soul  
I am unable to be your faithful  
attendant, I grieved glorious justice  
the instant I saw from thighs my salad days over  
glistening ivory now black speckled  
and from snowcaps to behold  
but shame holds me back hubris  
entered into high ranging (mountains?)  
with (countless)  
leaves...

Leftover little  
bitty wings quiver in sprung  
gossamer  
the word is made  
in the image of the thing