

ERICA MERAZ

So As To Taste Sleep

Having had, in a dream, a conversation with the poet
listening to the songs of birds,

Hear what is said by these sacred oracles mingled with mud—

it is not a
small affair to have to break
two vessels

we discover a world which even the
moon does not see
we can talk with the stars
presence

which
makes the sea speak
makes a straight ray appear broken

a thick veil
remedies
the eye
images of things which are becoming
burst out

always ready to
speak, even when they have nothing to say
a bird a bone an inflamed
flower

fires which traverse space
deliver them

up to the gaze
gravity does not hinder them

circles around perception
precede memory
connected with the spheres

we fly
and yet we are asleep
out of the center and wholly in the center
we descend without descending a double dream
unbends
how to
preserve it?

it is no easy work to make our own
impressions pass into the soul of another

but exact truth has wandered
through these stones

it is still the poet who is speaking
the future

let us
stop so as to taste sleep

ABOUT THE POEM

“So As To Taste Sleep” was created from *On Dreams* by Synesios of Cyrene (c. 370-413), translated by Isaac Myer in 1888. About the poem and the process of composing it, Erica Meraz writes:

In his essay, which details the mantic quality of dreams and their use as personal oracles, Synesios suggests that the distinct languages of animals can be clearly understood within dreams. This proposal inspired me to harvest words and phrases from his text as if they were messages spoken by birds in my sleep. I was also encouraged by a remark Synesios makes on the relationship between the terms *soul*, *intellect*, *absolute*, and *contingent*: “We will invert the order of the terms. We will join the first to the third, the second to the fourth: the proportions will still remain true, as knowledge demonstrates to us.” I adopted his instruction as an attitude with which to approach the text as a whole, inverting, shuffling, and marrying his words as they spoke to each other. I retained the linear placement of the words as they appear in Myer’s translation with the hope of imbuing the poem with the off-kilter air peculiar to dreams.

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