Articulation

This poem is a musing on the thought of Heraclitus. The central opposition I reflect from Heraclitus’ fragments is sleep and wakefulness. This opposition is encountered throughout the fragments as the opposition between life and death, vision and darkness, and wisdom and ignorance.

For Heraclitus, philosophy is wakefulness. Thus, this poem is also a musing on philosophy. Wisdom attends to logos, which holds always, governs everything, and is common to all who attend to it. However, “most people live as if they had their own private understanding.”1 Again, “For the waking there is one common world, but when asleep each person turns away to a private one.”2

A moment’s reflection will verify the value of Heraclitus’ claim. At some level, language allows for commonality. You, as the reader, and I, as the writer, share in these words. Language allows us to identify things, to identify commonalities in the universal flux. But, for Heraclitus, logos is also divine. Properly speaking, the logos is neither objective nor subjective, it is simply common. Outside of the logos there is no knowledge, no wisdom, no permanence; there is only forgetfulness and ignorance.

However, Heraclitus says, “Though at variance with itself, it agrees with itself.”3 This is among the most puzzling of Heraclitus’ ideas. How do sleep and wakefulness agree? In the fragments, as in life, sleep falls into wakefulness,

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2 22B89.
3 22B51.
wakefulness into sleep. Where does one cross over into the other? What really holds the two apart? Where is the line between philosophy and pure, simple mindlessness? The poem can only ask these questions.

The poem entrusts this task of thinking to the myth of Narcissus.

**Elegy to Narcissus**

I awoke when the broad-fingered oak, falling, touched upon me.
When it hit, the note it sounded was the dawn,
And through all our roots roared the birthing chord.

The low cloud, called from the expanse, echoed three
“Jetzt komme feuer”
  And from our branches the dew was gone.
Twixt the trunks, with iron-flame, the sun-chariot we called our lord.

  In the stillness
    Low was the secret borne
  How the darkness
    Soon had us forsworn
  And in the silence
    Mellow the mists retreat
  So we may hear the cadence
    Echo the mourning dove suite

Not without reason is it from the east that wakefulness is kindled.
Unhappy Euros accompanies the sun, and when he overturns the vessel
The dryads offer sacrifices, for the forest must have sunlight.

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1 In Greek mythology, a notoriously handsome hunter, who died upon seeing his own reflection. The name Narcissus seems to be related to the Greek word for numbness. Survived by the nymph Echo, who was rather taken with him. By some accounts, from the blood of Narcissus grew the flower of that name.

2 “Now comes fire.”

3 The East Wind; often bringer of rain.
In the heat it is easy to give in to sleep, and be Narche’s kindred,
But there is need for us in the woods to awaken him whom amidst the leaves is nestled,
Because if he lingers long, on toes of silence, long-eared Ampelos will stop up his sight.

...觉醒，我点燃了瞌睡者；我告诉他要醒来。
沉睡，他触摸到死，然后召唤他们入睡。
因为在这祥和的树林中，伸展着死者的遗迹。

雷电从天空中回响：“死是醒来的人所见，醒是入睡的人所见”
“醒着而死, 睡中而醒” 和召唤甜美的 Kraneia 流泪，
从神圣的溪流中流淌，必须跟随。

在河里
　　法律被揭示
　　时钟
　　我们被隐藏
　　从深汁中
　　供你供奉的圣殿
　　谁从刺骨的黑暗中
　　提醒我们且已醒来

沉睡，以沉默的翅膀，落在我的眼睛上。
当我抵达了说由这些翅膀说的开阔地
在哪里这样的枝条是腐烂，臃肿，如其眼睛发出不透明的光。

而且，以缓慢的沉默之舌，他们向我低语
他们说的在人生中最好，即意识到是睡觉，我

7 Sleep.
8 The vine；friend to Dionysus and mocker of the Moon.
9 Perhaps, “What we see when awake is death, what we see asleep is sleep.”
10 The Dryad of the Dogwood.
Close my ears that I might hear, and from them run in shadows,
   And with me run the ghosts
      For it had been not long since
      Dawn that they by lean
      Boreas\textsuperscript{11} were spirited away
And I came up far north to hard Pindus\textsuperscript{12} yaw
At the dripping mouth of old Achelous\textsuperscript{13}
   Whose waters they say began
      At the tears I saw of
      Sleepless Niobe\textsuperscript{14} my
      Reflection in silver pools
And I showed the day’s silken water wash upon me
   And I surrender to sweet sleep
      And whenever they ask me
      “Was aber jener thuet”
      To the silent ear she echoes
      “Weis niemand”\textsuperscript{15}

Yet, when we sink our roots into the supple soil of such words,
   Then blooms forth this gallant flower
      Whose petals mark out dreams;
      Whose tendrils venture toward the Sun.

\textsuperscript{11} The North Wind; snatcher of Oreithyia.
\textsuperscript{12} A mountain in Northern Greece.
\textsuperscript{13} A Greek river.
\textsuperscript{14} A Greek divinity who, robbed of her children, was turned to stone and continues to weep unceasingly. By some accounts the source of the Achelous, though this would make little sense geographically.
\textsuperscript{15} Together, “But what that one will do nobody knows.”