A TALE OF SOUNDS

Cecilia Taiana.

A tale of sounds,
bhā- … da
mere being of life, unwinds
just before my eyes, my skin, my heart,
an omen to my art,
a new-born singularity to the world.

in visible form arose
the sweetest dream that labor knows
to hold and not foreclose

receptively waiting
in eager readiness,
holding
going-on-being,

pugnacious and rapacious scene
my tissue-aliveness to thrust, bite, suck and grasp –
what other nakedness remains sight unseen?
is in my beginning my end?

Your devotion – not in silence, but restraint
a gentle clasp in poet's guise,
no-pay-back complaint
wooing our eyes with ties

A tale of sounds,

bhā-, … da-, …
the thunder said rain will abound
love at first sight fleshed out,
giving me cause to appear,
the nascent ground to sprout

after long fetal night
crosses over
to the blinding light,
an urgent turmoil plucked in descent,
the cave yields about to descend,
a revolution to amend,

involuntary mouth-to-nipple
tropism. Tell me
why the elephants' low-range sounds
are now nowhere to be found,
tell me
about my past uterine
intuitions' sounds.

Led by Thee to exile, blazing
out the realms of contemplation,
initiate me to the life of things,
flesh of the world, imagination

An extra-ordinary inviting sight,
plural and singular, we a couple,
[the intensest of rendezvous]
from we to I, you my sprite,
dwelling of the highest candle,

sheltering me from drowning agitation
in this newborn sea of excitations.

Going-on-being.
Ongoing-beings.
Being's-goings-on

Cecilia Taiana.

A Few Words About the Poem

I believe that a poet is one who has profoundly understood the epigrammatic thought of Heraclitus in reference to Logos (speech/discourse as meaning) in his first sentence of the surviving fragments: "From this Logos that we have here, which always is, people show themselves uncomprehending and without understanding, both before they have heard it and also after they have heard it for the first time." He continues: "Though this word is true evermore, yet men are as unable to understand it when they hear it for the first time as before they have heard it at all" (Heraclitus Fragments quoted by Gadamer, 1989).

One thing can be said: our default position is one of not listening. This Logos, which always is, is hard to hear, and listening is an acquired receptivity to Logos. The poet understands this and attempts to make Logos speak in such a manner that it disturbs the habitual reception and creates a more propitious seed.

How the word becomes flesh and how the flesh becomes word is a preoccupation shared by the poet and the analyst. Our imperviousness is a major problem that we have attempted to

overcome many times in many different ways. For the word to become flesh, this imperviousness must be traversed, allowing the transit to take place, letting words through.

The poet helps this transit by the poetic device of *enjambment,* the continuation of a sentence without a pause beyond the end of a line, couplet, or stanza. In the form of incomplete syntax at the end of a line, the poem at times disregards or disrupts normal, familiar syntax and turns the line so that a logical phrase is interrupted. The meaning of the line runs over from one poetic line to the next, without terminal punctuation, creating a sense of urgency and rising emotion. Lines without enjambment are end-stopped.

To increase the immediacy of the experience of the *we* in mother-infant, some of my poem's lines create enjambments, a sort of *we* in the poem's lines themselves. This poetic device embodies the enjambment present in the mother-infant, a primordial *we* that we all experienced as we entered the world. The enjambments are a poetic attempt to illuminate the prereflective nature of our protomental *we.* We share this pre-individual in poetry, whereas in psychoanalysis, we place it in the birth of the infant's mind.

This poetic device is complementary to Winnicott's remark "I have never seen an infant," since most of the time, a line of poetry that's enjambed will not make complete sense until the reader finishes the clause or sentence on the following line or lines. We could metaphorically say that the good enough mother rhythmically introduces a sense of punctuation as the infant grows into a toddler and beyond. The end-stopped nature of the line is the equivalent of the "terrible two's" protestation of the capitalized paternal NO.

The way the poem is constructed models the desired mother-infant *going on being* in unison; it formulates the foundational structures of intimate time. The end-stopped line in a poem brings punctuation that delineates the before and after – a break of continuity – while

enjambment is analogous to a transitional space as an "intermediate area of experience" (Winnicott, 1953/1971, p. 2). For Winnicott, this relation is also a space of *illusion* and *imagination,* both important and helpful co-workers along the developmental path, already operating prenatally via the mother's imaginings of the baby. Throughout pregnancy, the infant in the mother's mind and body also brings into being an imaginatively undifferentiated unit.

By carrying one line over to the next, a poem's enjambments have the effect of breaking up language, forcing us to slow down our reading; to stop taking language's sense-making for granted; and, in a sense, to get into the poem as a space for thought. That can be either resisted or entered into.

This *we* that we are since the "day with no yesterday" (Krauss, 2012, p. 94), the protomental system, is visualized by Bion (1950) as transcending the individual, "as one in which physical and psychological or mental are undifferentiated" (p. 7). Using Bion's discussions on groups, we could say that in a poem as in a group, there is a matrix of thought that lies within the confines of the basic group/poem as a whole, but not within the confines of the individual/poem lines. And sometimes, as a group, a poem brings about "the hatred of a process of development, of having to learn by experience at all, and lack of faith in the worth of such a kind of learning" (Bion, 1950, p. 301).

In the capacious *we* of the analytic couple as a group, at times we enjamb the continuity of the linguistic (or otherwise) presentations of the patient, creating a transitional space in which to continue thinking together. At other times, we punctuate these presentations with differentiation by exercising the basic linguistic demarcation of identity and difference. Although the voice in some of the stanzas in this poem is clearly the infant's, some could be spoken by both – or more precisely, by the mother's reverie, the infant in mother's mind.

In psychoanalysis, we often refer to the etymological root of the word *infant* that designates "deprived of speech," which is not the same as "having no sound." Lyotard defines *enfance* as a voice – not an image, but a voice (Crome & Williams, 2006), an inaudible voice, an aphonic voice. This is the call of our patients, who bring a silence into the session; if we listen and let it inhabit us, some tenuous and vague notes appear on the horizon.

As analysts, we can fall into deafness to this distant and shadowy voice. In this perspective, infancy is not only a voice but also a mode of sensitivity, a way of seeing the world and being affected by it. For Lyotard, like our protomental *we*, "*Enfance* is not found because we have never lost it, and … if it is invisible to us, it is because it lodges in us silently" (Lyotard quoted by Demoëte, 2020, p. 1).

Annotations to the Poem

1. T. S. Eliot is often referred to as a poet of quotations, suggesting a deep relationship to tradition, to the literary past. Eliot brings the dead and the living together through his use of quotations. *The Wasteland* (1963) has 435 quotations! In writing my poem, I brought the dead and the living together through the use of quotations from Eliot (lines 2 and 16), Robert Frost (line 8), Marianne Moore (line 17), and Wallace Stevens (line 45).

2. My poem takes us to the beginning of language; it observes what Eliot told us at the end of *The Waste Land*. The first two syllables are *bhā-da*. *Bhā:* the root of in-*fant* from Proto-Indo-European (PIE), meaning "to shine, to speak, tell, say"; and *Da:* from *Datta* ("give"), *Dayadhvam* ("sympathize"), *Damyata* ("control"). The sounds *bhā* and *da* speak of the beginning of language (what the thunder said).

3. Through the use of quotations, Eliot speaks of the nonlinearity of time. We find this idea stated differently in the first line of East Coker, Part II, of the *Four Quartets* (1940/1974), "In

my beginning is my end" (p.196). This account in poetics of time as nonlinear closely parallels psychoanalytic concepts such as working through (Freud), *après-coup* (Lacan), and afterwardness (Laplanche).

4. In her poem "Silence" (1924/2017), Marianne Moore reminds us that in the absence of language, we hear something other than silence: "The deepest feeling always shows itself in silence; not in silence, but restraint" (p.71). This is a place often inhabited by a good enough mother – a love that renounces the drive and brings about the work of Eros that, as Robert Frost noted in "Mowing" (1913/1969), is "the sweetest dream that labor knows" (p. 24). Finally, Wallace Stevens (1954/1997) masterfully captured in the "Final Soliloquy of the Interior Paramour" an intimate encounter with mother-imagination, as well as the inauguration of the longest of sojourns in mother's mind: "the intensest of rendezvous ... In which being there together is enough" (p.444).

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