
Bion
Revisited

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Bion Revisited

The Bion essay is a debt due a writer whose influence on me has been strong. I discovered Bion while I was working in Vermont. I had become so much absorbed by the intricacies of enabling people to come into self-study groups that I hadn't given much thought to what we would do when they got there. I thought to do a variation on Bettelheim's work with parents. I wasn't prepared for what I encountered—the groups who talked only to one another; the groups who didn't show up; the groups that arrived for the first meeting, never to come back. One evening I was sitting in a schoolhouse; it was below zero outside and nearly below freezing in. It was the first meeting of this particular group. I told myself comfortably that these people were communicating with me by not showing up. I sensed I must stay there the scheduled hour and a half, that someone would know—perhaps via a drive by or by seeing the lights on, or by asking me or having someone who was in speaking range of me ask me whether I had or not—and that by staying I would communicate something in return. All the same I was cold and lonely and my faith in this idea of “they” and “the group” was wearing thin. I had been by this time to have a consultation with Bettelheim, also with Roy Menninger, who had worked with groups made up of teachers, but they talked of individuals learning from one another in much the same way group psychotherapists feel the experience to be for the individuals in the group. I felt a bit paranoid—a man quite possibly suffering from delusions of reference (not to say grandeur)—when describing to them my experiences of the community or the group as if these were motivated entities that had designs on me.

When, shortly after that evening, I stopped into the Goddard College library, to thaw out as much emotionally as physically, and I leafed through the slim volume of *Experiences in Groups* that had shortly before arrived, I knew I had found a fellow sojourner. I could recognize in the communities and groups just the dynamic patterning Bion found and described in the British soldiers and airmen and the habitues of the Tavistock clinic he worked with. I would like to say the book was a revelation to me: the perceptions he made, as compared with the ones I was using, were as a telescope to the naked eye. But I must also say that his insights seemed commonplace. This, I was to discover, was a manifestation of Bion's genius for working closely to the data.

I read what he wrote as the books came out, and as my own experiences in conducting analyses permitted me increasing access to the material on which his own inferences were founded, I continued to feel that what he wrote was at once obvious and revelatory. More to the point, however, I found that a relative few in the United States (and I suspected also elsewhere, as well) found Bion comprehensible. The best way I could express my gratitude for his contributions to my own thought and work, was, I felt, to try to increase his accessibility. I was much gratified when some years later I was to meet some of Bion's analysts, supervisees, and colleagues to hear that they thought I had “caught” him for them as well.

Bion left the public and private person in ambiguous relation to one another. It would be a fair characterization of my work thus far to say it tries to fathom that relational matrix, though this has by no means been a conscious effort.

PREFACE

Here is W. R. Bion writing:

In a sunny room I showed my father a vase of some yellow flowers for him to admire the skill with which I had

arranged them.

'Yes', he said, 'very good.'

'But do look Daddy.'

'I am; it's lovely.'

Still I was not satisfied. 'It's very pretty, isn't it?'

'Yes,' he said, 'it is.'

'I'm not lying Daddy. I did it all myself.'

That stopped him in his tracks. He was upset.

'Why did you say that?'

'What Daddy?'

'I never expected you to be lying.'

'Well I wasn't', I replied becoming afraid that Arf Arfer would appear. Arf Arfer was very frightening. Sometimes when I heard grown-ups talking they would indulge in bursts of meaningless laughter. 'Arf! Arf. Arf.' they would go. This would happen especially when my sister or I spoke. We would watch them seriously, wide-eyed. Then we would go into another room and practice. Arf, arf, arf.... [But] Arf arf [who art in Heb'n] was related though distantly to Jesus... Geesus loves me this I know, for the Bible tells me so. I felt Geesus had the right idea, but I had no faith in his power to deal with Arf Arfer. Nor did I feel sure of God whose attribute seemed to be that he gave his only 'only forgotten'son to redeem our sins. [1982, pp. 12-13]

The child becomes the man and yet the same muddle somehow persists. Recommended for the V.C., "I might with equal relevance have been recommended for a court martial. It depended on the direction one took when one ran away." And this is Bion:

I went into this question thoroughly—and others like 'Is golden syrup really gold?'—with my mother and later with my father, but without being really satisfied by either. I concluded that my mother didn't really know; though she tried very hard, she seemed as puzzled as I was. It was more complicated with my father; he would start but seemed to tire when I did not understand the explanation. The climax came when I asked my question about golden syrup for the 'hundredth time'. He was very angry. 'Wow!' said my sister appreciatively. [1982, pp. 9-10]

My mother's attitude was certainly more loving—genuinely loving—than my father's; hers was not an attitude at all; his was. She loved us; he loved his image of us. She knew she had two nasty brats and could tolerate that fact; my father bitterly resented the menace of any reality which imperiled his fiction. [1982, p. 28]

And this:

Freud talks about a 'paramnesia' as being an invention which is intended to fill the space where a fact ought to be. But is one right to assume that a paramnesia is an activity which is peculiar only to patients and to pathological existence? I think psychoanalysis could be a way of blocking the gap of our ignorance about ourselves, although my impression is that it is more. We can produce a fine structure of theory in the hope that it will block up the hole forever so that we shall never need to learn anything more about ourselves either as people or organizations... I suggest somebody... should, instead of writing a book called 'The Interpretation of Dreams', write a book called 'The Interpretation of Facts', translating them into dream language—not just as a perverse exercise, but in order to get a two-way traffic.[1980, pp. 30-31]

And this:

In this book my intention has been to be truthful. It is an exalted ambition; after many years of experience I know the most I can claim is to be 'relatively' truthful. Without attempting any definition of terms, I leave it to be understood that by truth I mean 'aesthetic' truth and 'psychoanalytic' truth. This last I consider to be a 'grade' of scientific truth. In other terms, I hope to achieve, in part and as a whole, the formulation of phenomena as close as possible to noumena.[1982, p. 8]

But—(quoting Dr. Johnson) and yet:

Whether to see life as it is will give us much consolation, know not; but the consolation which is drawn from truth, if any there be, is solid and durable; that which is derived from or must be, like its original, fallacious and fugitive. [1970, p. 7]

Vladimir Nabokov (1983) takes up this point in respect to that grandest of illusionists, Don Quixote:

Don Quixote... is the maker of his own glory, the only begetter of these marvels; and within his soul he carries the most dread enemy of the visionary; the snake of doubt, the coiled consciousness that his quest is an illusionism.

Quixote hears a servant girl sing:

The inward hint, the veiled suspicion that Dulcinea may not exist at all is now brought to light by contrast with a real melody... and after listening to the song in the garden, he bangs the window shut and now even more gloomy than before, "as if," says Cervantes, "some dire misfortune had befallen him," he goes back to bed. [Nabokov 1983].

INTRODUCTION

Through the good offices of his widow, Francesca, the last but two of Bion's sixteen books has reached the public domain in 1985. The occasion seems one to mark, in Bion's own tradition, with a "re-visit." It was a tradition he began with his first (and still perhaps most widely known) book, *Experiences in Groups*, to which he contributed a "re-view," and resumed with his collection of papers on thought and thinking with his "second

thoughts”—in which, true to form, not only does he revise his previous meditations, but he also presents his thoughts on the experience and process of one rereading his own writing.

Bion was a gnarled and quirky writer, not, as the passages I have quoted indicate, because he could not help but be, but because, as I hope they also indicate, he was obsessed with truth. If we allow that by art, Donald Barthelme means what Bion means by “aesthetic truth,” the following might describe Bion’s quandary and quest:

Art is not difficult because it wishes to be difficult, rather because it wishes to be art. However much the writer might long to be, in his work simple, honest, straightforward, these virtues are no longer available to him. He discovers that in being simple, honest, straightforward, nothing much happens: he speaks the unspeakable, whereas we are looking for the as-yet-unspeakable, the as-yet-unspoken... the not knowing is not simple, because it is hedged about with prohibitions, roads that may not be taken. The more serious the artist, the more problems he takes into account, the more considerations limit his possible initiatives. [*N. Y. Times*, Feb. 18, 1982]

Bion’s work will stand or fall on its own. It has been summarized, given in precis form, and made more accessible by among others Grinberg and associates (1975), Meltzer (1978a,b), and the various contributors to Grotstein’s *Memorial* (1983). My purpose here is neither to add to these works nor take away from them. Rather I wish, by seizing the strand I have already put forth, to track through the labyrinth and try to show the thrust and moment of Bion’s work as a whole. In particular I shall make the point that as one so concerned with the truth, Bion needed to refine and re-refine psychoanalysis as both theory and method, as one might grind and polish a lens or tune and retune a receiving device to see and hear the mysteries: “I went into this question thoroughly”—and others like, “Is golden syrup really gold?... (Later he was to ask Melanie Klein how the infant knows the “Good Breast” is good.) Of his own writing, Bion says:

...the reader must disregard what I say until the O [read, truth or falsity] of the experience of reading has evolved to a point where the actual events of reading issue in *his* interpretation of the experiences. Too great a regard for what I have written obstructs [this] process [*italics mine*]. [1970, p. 28]

Accordingly, I am less concerned here to try to present what Bion said than what, overall, he meant and even more than meant, tried to do.

THE MAN

Bion was born in India in 1897. At eight he went to school in England, as was customary for the children of civil servants under the Raj. At school he enjoyed “wriggling” (his form of masturbation—of pelvis against the floor), being a steam engine of a railroad train, and hymns. Later he liked hymns and poetry, rugby, and swimming.

At 18 he completed Public School and went into the tank corps in time to fight a series of desperately losing and perilous battles against the Germans in France. He was recommended for the Victoria Cross and was awarded the DSO. After the war he read history at Oxford and then studied medicine at University College in London. There he won the Gold Medal in Surgery, assisting Wilfred Trotter, whose book *Instincts of the Herd in Peace and War* was to set Bion to thinking.

He became a psychiatrist, married, fathered a child, but lost his wife to complications arising from the birth of that daughter. He was analyzed first by John Rickman (with whom he was later to work while both were at the Northfield Hospital, the site of the first of the group papers) and then at war's end by Melanie Klein (1948-1953).

My analysis pursued what I am inclined to think was a normal course; I railed a variety of preoccupations; worries about the child, the household, financial anxieties—particularly how I was to find money for such psycho-analytic fees *and* provide a home and care for the baby. Mrs. Klein remained unmoved and unmoving... I was assiduous in my psycho-analytic sessions. When I was given an interpretation I used very occasionally to feel it was correct; more usually I thought it was nonsense but hardly worth arguing about since I did not regard the interpretation as much more than an expression of Mrs. Klein's opinion that was unsupported by evidence. The interpretation that I ignored or did not understand or made no response to, later seemed to have been correct. But I did not see why I regarded them as any more correct than I had thought they were when I refuted or ignored them.... As time passed I became more reconciled to the fact that not even she could be a substitute for my own senses, interpretations of what my senses told me, choices between contradictories. [1985a, pp. 67-68]

He qualified as a psychoanalyst, ultimately becoming (during 1962-65) president of the British Psychoanalytical Society. In 1968, by now remarried (to Francesca) and the father of two more children, he moved to Los Angeles where he became a training analyst and teacher. He returned to England in 1979, dying in Oxford and leaving behind him... well, that is what we shall attempt now to see.

I am: Therefore I question. It is the answer—the 'yes, I know'—that is the disease which kills. It is the Tree of Knowledge which kills. Conversely, it is not the successful building of the Tower of Babel, but the failure that gives life, initiates and nourishes the energy to live, to grow, to flourish. The songs the Sirens sing and have always sung is that the arrival at the inn—not the journey—is the reward, the prize, the cure. [1985a, p. 52].

So he had, really, to start all over again and learn psychoanalysis from scratch.²

CONCEPTS

As an article of faith—later termed “O”—he took it that there was an experience and an experiencer. This was akin to the Kantian noumenon, and the question of its evolution into a phenomenon. The experience, given the

limits of human evolution, can never quite be apprehended: It can, however, be approximated. Every approximation, though, is partial, depending on the eye and intent of the beholder. The phenomenon is “ ‘Won from the void and formless infinite’ ” (Bion quoting Milton) differently by the poet, the mystic, the scientist or the psychoanalyst. A single event in a psychoanalytic session is a phenomenon which is different for a psychoanalyst bent on cure, from that of an analyst needing fees, from that of an analyst needing to learn something. Other fields of investigation have benefitted mightily from developments in instrumentation and technology. What is the psychoanalytic instrument? In a letter to Lou Andreas-Salome Freud writes of a need “artificially to blind oneself” the better to see. Bion, of course, quotes this approvingly, though he will also demur at “seeing” as too sensuous a metaphor for psychoanalytic activity. He throws out all of the elements of psychoanalysis and starts all over with L, H, and K: Love, Hate, and Knowledge. These are the building blocks for his Tower of Babel. Indeed, as will soon emerge, he is really rather more interested in K than in the other two (L and H), because though he will assign the emotions or passions full weight in influencing what one can know—*bear, suffer* to know—it is ultimately one’s relationship to one’s own knowing that will occupy him increasingly.

This matter of knowing begins with his first published paper on the Northfield experiment. He is the psychiatrist in charge of a flight wing in a hospital to which men who broke down in service are sent. They have reason not to want to recover, for recovery means a return to active duty; but many feel that their failure to recover lies in the uselessness of their treatment. Of course, the men support each other in this view: It is a group position. Bion, however, is used to command; in his tank corps, he learned that only men convinced will act with conviction. He needs to convince these men that the fault lies not in the stars but in them. He knows he cannot argue this, for that merely pits omnipotence of thought against omnipotence of thought. He must *display* this. Accordingly he makes his rounds taking several men with him and at each stop asks what is at fault and what needs to be remedied. And then, one by one, he organizes the men to provide the remedies—until at one and the same time all that is needed (including dancing partners) is in place and all the rationalizations exposed as such. The only remaining impediment is the twenty percent of the men who still lounge about, serving the eighty percent as—precisely—the remaining impediment. But this Bion interprets: There is always twenty percent, everywhere; the eighty percent are (secretly, unconsciously) using them as leaders of the resistance. (Later Bion will show to his small groups how absentees or late-comers are encouraged and rewarded—for example by being waited for or filled in on what they “missed”—as instruments in his so-called pairing and fight—flight groups.)

Now the men are persuaded to look at their own functioning as a group and investigate the tensions within, a

task with which Rickman and Bion assist in the more familiar psychiatric role. On his return to civilian life, Bion will “take” groups at the Tavistock, further to study the way others condition what any one person knows. K in a group is a public phenomenon and different from K alone or K when one is part of a couple.

With this realization there is nothing for it but for Bion to move from a study of groups to a study of individuals, keeping his epistemologic questions intact. His basic elements were: the formation of knowledge (of an experience), the destruction of knowledge—leaving an amnesia—the creation of false knowledge—the paramnesia—and the reconstruction of knowledge from the paramnesia back to what was so.

The kinds of explanatory systems Bion gravitated to emphasized “nature” at some expense to “nurture.” That is, the lights that compose themselves on the retina already are interpreted by the brain as something more than light beams of different frequencies. We see a cat, not lights. We will need someone to tell us that the cat we see is a cat, but even when they tell us, we will organize that and other percept-words into concepts and sentences. Indeed, as Bion was soon to propose, the very clutter of these percepts, this furniture of thoughts, requires one to start thinking. Thinking comes about because unthought thoughts are too much for one to endure. Thinking links thoughts, and the linking (however, in fact, it is done) is thought by the thinker to be done in elementary ways, which is to say, to the imaginative child, alimentary ways, or organ language, as Freud called it.

So here is a something—what it is you and I may call a breast, but the infant knows only as a something. It exists because it has shape, smell, warmth, taste—substance: The senses working in common (Bion’s definition of common sense) tell the infant so. But it also stimulates pain (let us say) where the infant expects pleasure. For critics of this line of thought the key word is “expects”—*expects*?! Well, in the same way the baby distinguishes sights, smells, directions (as in the rooting reflex), the baby distinguishes pleasure from pain, good from bad, present from absent. In Kantian terms there are anticipatory categories to which experience approximates (or does not) and, as surely as light particles on the retina are construed as images, so is raw experience more generally construed into categoric experiences. Indeed, from this point of view, the problem is not the slowness of learning, but what to do about the surplus of experience.

Bion was rather impressed with this realization. His view of man is of a creature struggling to defend against the *anschluss* of experience. Many of the examples he uses to meditate on in his writing deal with this theme: The man who cannot abide the Philharmonic because the clarinetist is sharp; the man whose pallor remains unchanged

but complains of blushing; the patient who cannot attend a violin recital because of a distaste for watching a person on stage masturbating in public. Perhaps the main wish-fulfilling thing about dreams, he was to write, is being able to wake up from them

Consciousness, then, is an achieved state based on thought which is itself developed to free one from domination by the demand quality of sense impressions. Thinking, in its essence, involves verbs that organize and arrange the Augean litter of dream furniture, or beta-elements, which are experienced as things-in-themselves and cannot be thought with or about, or even dreamed.

These beta-elements can, therefore, only be acted upon as things are: They are to be broken up and thrown out; or, with some luck, sent out for detoxicating and refining. Or, if the urgency and frustration is not too great, they can be experienced long enough to evolve from raw sense data and emotion into alpha-elements capable of being thought with and about—or of being repressed.

The first fate involves evacuation. The beta-elements are projected into whatever container is available, there to haunt or counterattack or to be transformed by someone else's alpha functioning—or “reverie,” as Bion calls it. That capacity for reverie is the mother's psychic nourishing of the baby's mind, and plays as important a function in Bion's psychoanalytic world as physical nurturance. The capacity of another to intuit and imagine one's state of mind gives life to the mind and restores life to minds gone dead.

In any case, what is urgent is that the mind can get free of the things-in-themselves one way or the other—to be able to fall asleep, if awake too long, or to awaken, if asleep too long: To find consciousness or unconsciousness. These are, in effect, all one for Bion: The main thing is surcease. One has to know that the violinist is not merely masturbating *and* one has to know that *he* isn't up there simply playing the violin. The analogies have to coexist. And they have to be separate.

There is no game of tennis without a net. The net divides the court into containers and makes possible the nature of the interchange. But the “holes” in the net are as much part of it as the cords. And that there is no net is as important as that there is a net. One is dealing both with a barrier to and an opportunity for contact: Two way traffic. In the presence of the barrier, beta-elements can become alpha and dreamt or thought, but should the concept become divorced from the sense impressions, then there is only knowledge without substance and experience without thought. Sophisticated thought, such as the scientific method, is too sophisticated to encompass the human

experience. On the other hand there is a sense in which human beings can, by virtue of a vast denial of their differences, be compared with rats and pigeons and a scientific psychology be set out for us based on the analogy. But the analogy is a primitive one, and the resulting science can be as suspect as any other delusion.

In this regard, it is useful to recall Freud's remark at the end of his discussion of the Schreber case concerning how closely his own theoretical constructions could be said to resemble Schreber's (Freud 1911, p. 79). Concerning causality, for example: "The theory of causality is only valid in the domain of morality and only morality can *cause* anything. Meaning has no influence outside the psyche and causes nothing." The emphasis on developmental hierarchies in so much of psychoanalytic writing may be an example of this: a theory devised to measure goodness and badness and to prescribe punishment.

Bion was also mindful of this in a way that led from what I have been describing to his famous and infamous grid.³ In it, on two axes, he attempted to formulate thought in terms both of its genesis and the uses to which it was being put. This latter axis reflected his view that projective identification—the way we have of putting ourselves in the other person's shoes—was not just one of those omnipotent phantasies of Mrs. Klein's. Rather he felt it (quite literally felt it) to be an activity of one person upon the other. Mental activity was not merely mentation (ideation, phantasy, thinking, etc.) but activity designed to affect whoever and whatever was on the other side of the contact barrier. From this perspective it was inevitable that Bion would feel the influence of projective identification to operate as strongly as the transference as a factor in the psychoanalytic situation.

From the start, as I have tried to show, Bion felt there was no such thing as nothing. Kantian as he was, he was prepared to learn from his patients that where there was nothing there was actually a no-thing, the presence of an absence, an empty category, the outline in two dimensions of where the three-dimensional breast was supposed to be, but dreadfully was not—or was, dreadfully, not. Indeed, so horrible is this presence that it can only be removed by minus-K, by not knowing. Projection or repression, one would think. But these leave spaces:

If it is true that the human being, like nature, abhors a vacuum, cannot tolerate empty space, then he will try to fill it by finding something that will go into that space presented by his ignorance. The intolerance of frustration, the dislike of being ignorant, the dislike of having a space which is not filled can stimulate a precocious and premature desire to fill the space. One should therefore always consider that our theories, including the whole of psychoanalysis, psychiatry and medicine, are a kind of space-filling elaboration... indistinguishable from a paramnesia. [1978, p. 3]

Now not anything can fill the space an amnesia represents. The paramnesia (or delusion) must be tailored to

fit; seemingly seamlessly, the fiction must seem real.

This is the basic position of Bionian man: When an unendurable frustration occurs and one can change neither one's nature nor that of those about one, one can only change what one experiences of one's experience by obliterating the knowledge of the experience, and the knowledge that one obliterated it, by substituting false knowledge in its place. Thus transformed and transfigured, fictive experience makes one oblivious that truth once lived where falseness reigns.

In Bion's own words, the patient:

[Experiences pain but not suffering. They may be suffering in the eyes of the analyst because the analyst can and indeed must suffer. The patient may say he suffers but this is only because he does not know what suffering is and mistakes feeling pain for suffering it... The intensity of the patient's pain contributes to his fear of suffering pain.

Suffering pain involves respect for the fact of pain, his own or another's. This respect he does not have and therefore he has no respect for any procedure, such as psychoanalysis, which is concerned with the existence of pain.

Frustration and intense pain are equated.

Pain is sexualized: it is therefore inflicted or accepted but is not suffered—except in the view of the analyst or other observer...

...The patient feels the pain of an absence of fulfilment of his desires. The absent fulfilment is experienced as a 'no-thing'. The emotion aroused by the 'no-thing' is felt as indistinguishable from the 'no thing'. The emotion is replaced by a 'no-emotion'. In practice this can mean no feeling at all, [amnesia] or an emotion such as rage... that is, an emotion of which the fundamental function is denial of another emotion, [paramnesia]... [Such emotion is essentially] 'no-emotion' [and] is "analogous to 'past' or 'future' or representing the 'place where the present used to be' before all time was annihilated.

The 'place' where time was (or a feeling was or a 'no-thing' of any kind was) is then similarly annihilated. There is thus created a domain of the non-existent... 'Non-existence' immediately becomes an object that is immensely hostile and filled with murderous envy toward the quality or function of existence where it is to be found... 'space' becomes terrifying or terror itself. [1970, pp. 19-20]

Of course the cornerstone to this portrayal is the concept of suffering:

There are patients whose contact with reality presents the most difficulty when the reality is their own mental state. For example a baby discovers his hand; it might as well have discovered its stomach-ache, or its feeling of dread or anxiety, or mental pain. In most ordinary personalities this is true but people exist who are so intolerant of pain (or in whom pain or frustration is so intolerable) that they feel the pain but will not suffer which is to say, endure and sustain it and so cannot be said to discover it... The patient who will not suffer pain fails to 'suffer' pleasure and this denies the patient the encouragement he might otherwise receive from accidental or intrinsic

relief. [1970, p. 9]

The “no-thing” and their derivatives are beta-elements and so remain because the intolerance the individual has for them is such as to keep them apart from conjoining with realizations that permit the patient to symbolize (remember, name, think) the experience “even if the name is no more than a grunt or a yell.”

Freud saw most of this, of course, as have others. But Freud’s interests were divided.⁴ He was as, if not more, interested in the transformations done historically—and so in reconstruction—as in those, as it were, done within the ontologic moment. He had a developmental theory concerning infantile sexuality to demonstrate: Herr K.’s erection was (unhappily) more prepossessing than Dora’s relation to her probing analyst (Freud 1905). Bion’s view is different:

To the analytic observer, the material must appear as a number of discrete particles, unrelated and incoherent. The coherence that these facts have in the patient’s mind is not relevant to the analyst’s problem. His problem—I describe it in stages—is to ignore that coherence so that he is confronted by the incoherence and experiences incomprehension of what is presented to him.... This state must endure until a new comprehension emerges. [1980, p. 12]

The alpha-function—roughly, thinking—perceives relationships, not simply objects. Relationships are in their own way as painful as the presence or absence of objects or events and the fidelity with which these correspond with the various “pre-s” that Bion takes these to be: pre-conception, pre-moition and the like, those anticipations (or hopes)⁵ concerning how reality should be. Relations are the verbs that link objects and inspire such feelings as envy and jealousy. Attacks on these links re-produce elements (nouns) no longer in relation to one another: this re-production, hewn and split out from a relationship, is preferred to the other, non-hyphenated, reproduction, which is the fruit of a relationship. Thus the transformations intended to achieve the relief first from frustration (the presence of the absence), then from envy (what is absent is otherwise possessed) and finally from jealousy (it is possessed by another in a relationship) produces two possible catastrophes. The first is familiar to us from Freud. It is the reexcitation of longings under the sway of the transference. The second is the catastrophe of one man’s fiction encountering another man’s truth—particularly of omnipotent phantasy meeting an open mind.

I remember a patient who was so boring that I became fascinated with how he did it. How could this man converse with me in a way that was nearer to what I would call ‘pure boredom’ than anything I had ever experienced?

The patient keeps on talking about something which one could describe as a transference relationship, but the two things that might anchor it are missing; there is only the bit in between. It becomes a sort of ‘pure’ psychoanalysis; it is nothing but transference with nobody else in the room—and that is extraordinarily boring to

hear. You recognize after a time that you are being told something by the patient, but never a fact within sight or hearing. You know nothing about the patient; you know nothing about the patient's private life. What interpretation are you to give? In a sense you could say it is an analogy, but a pure analogy; not the two things on either side, only the link in between. Translated into biological terms: What is this? A breast? A penis? No baby? No mother? Only the thing in between? Is this 'pure' psychoanalysis; all sex, but not a relationship between people. This peculiar situation is not merely a question of semantics... this is an actual event which is taking place in front of you, a demonstration of what joins two people but with neither person present—they are both missing. What then is the link? If we don't bother about the people what is this thing in between? If it is neither a breast nor a penis, could it possibly be a vagina? Could it be a non-object? Is it possible for what we biologically call a woman to have a sexual relationship with another person. [1980, pp. 19-20]

That last question is, I suppose, the interpretation. Bion quotes Kant: "Intuition without concept is blind; concept without intuition is empty." The patient intuits that what he biologically calls a woman cannot have a sexual relationship but he cannot say it because he has no longer a conception that he feels that way; he knows what it feels like to him, but of what it is that feels like what it does, he has no idea. Even were he to talk of what he thinks women experience, the intuition would be missing; there would only be the concept. "You have to notice," Bion says, "that it is an empty phrase, it is a concept; it is only verbal..... by the time people learn the concepts for what they intuit, they have forgotten what they wanted to say. If we can draw attention to this fact, then possibly the concept and the intuition could be married."

It is not with this patient, but with another that Bion felt the need of moving his own chair (he used a reclining rocking chair, I seem to recall) in order to get the view from a different angle (1980, p. 82).

Welcome the introduction into training of Baby Observation. I think it would be all the better for an injection of the good humor of the "Holmesian" technique. The baby [read, patient] should be observed with till the enthusiasm of Holmes on the track of a desperate criminal. [1966, p. 576]

We need to be wide open to what is going on in the session (this is what I think Freud means by 'free-floating attention'). The unobserved, incomprehensible, inaudible, ineffable part of the session is the material from which will come the future interpretation that you give in so many weeks or months or years time. The immediate interpretation was settled some time ago—one does not know when. We must concern ourselves not with what the patient is 'like', but with what the patient is 'becoming' during the session, and we must be able to stand the pressure of watching that process. [1975b, p. 96]

I am progressing toward Bion in the consulting room. By way of preface this should be said: Having already "taken" groups, Bion was prepared to take on those persons who were beginning increasingly to be considered fit subjects for psychoanalysis—young children and schizophrenics. All of us learn most of what we know from our patients,⁶ particularly those who oblige us to learn more of ourselves; and as these new beings were coming into the consulting room they required of their analysts to stretch and develop. Some psychotherapists have done this by

way of an inventive elaboration of technique. Others, like Bion, felt technique—that is, interpretation based on intuition—would serve. What had to stretch was mind—intuition; the receiving apparatus. Plainly when one works with people who, to survive, have had to arrogate mind over mattering, and thereby to become incurious and even stupid, interpretations that are unable to point to—“display”!—the evidence are experienced (perhaps accurately) by the patient as arrogance meeting arrogance. Grotstein (1983) remarks of Bion’s analysis of him:

One has at first the idea of a Da Vinci working on the restoration of one’s shabby structure until the idea gradually develops that the shabby structure is but the current ruin of an edifice worthy of a Da Vinci; *moreover he was building it with the mortar and bricks of one’s own productions* (my italics), [p. 34]

One might say to a patient, “Quite probably you felt—oh, *so* scared, to discover she didn’t have a penis. But shortly, I think, you came to ridicule her, as you do these days, so to allay the power of the fright.” If the patient can get a glimmer of his three-or-four-year-old self-contemplating mother or little Susie and come, via the reconstruction, to remember all of this—then can the intuition and concept marry. The child remembers his forgotten self and the adult in the consulting room “remembers” his currently frightened self—and a good deal of reexperiencing, current and retrospective, can take place. But such re-constructions never lose the status of rumor for some patients, and, for the analyst nevertheless to make them, compounds the patient’s wish to regard most matters as rumor. For these patients the datum must be in the experiential moment—or, more accurately, astonishingly *not* in the experiential moment, where one would expect it to be. Then the task is to find out where it has gone and what has replaced it.

In mathematics, calculations can be made without the presence of the objects about which calculation is necessary, but in psychoanalytic practice it is essential for the psychoanalyst to be able to demonstrate as he formulates. [1970, p. 1]... The patient should be shown the evidence on which the interpretation is based; if the evidence is scattered sparsely over a period of years of acting out, the problem of interpretation assumes serious proportions, because the medium in which the patient is effecting his transformation is not predominantly conversational English, but acting out. [p. 14]. [However] the pre [or non-] verbal matter the psychoanalyst must discuss is certain to be an illustration of the difficulty in communication he himself is experiencing. [p. 15]

In other words, attention is necessarily drawn to the medium of communication itself. The medium is the message, the massage, and so the datum to be contemplated.⁷

Bion, like Freud, builds his theories on selective attention. Freud started with this binary—either-or, not yes-no—concept in *Studies in Hysteria*: or, rather, at his request, Breuer did so. But no sooner did Freud become fully engaged with the wish, then pleasure, then libido theory, attention became “attention cathexis” and ultimately “cathexis,” and attention, per se, was lost as a psychoanalytic concept. Yet, of course, that is what all the so-called

mechanisms of defense are based on—including those like splitting, introjection, projection and projective identification—which make up Melanie Klein’s vocabulary and to which Bion has given a coherent psychology. The keystone of selective attention is that attention is paid *somewhere*, idly or resolutely, and one has to pay attention to where it should not be in order to put it where one wants it: To repress, one has to remember what to forget.⁸

Bion’s contribution to the subject is primarily in his book *Attention and Interpretation*, although, in common with Freud, the subject of attention, once it is heralded, is then treated by Bion only implicitly. What he was to try to show in that book was how attention must be paid.

His counsel was simply for the analyst to eschew memory and desire. For obvious reasons, this has also become (in-) famous. But as has by now perhaps become equally obvious, this position was the logical extension of Bion’s attempt to refine psychoanalysis of its dross—to polish the psychoanalytic instrument of intuition.

It is wise for the analyst to assume that people do not spend time and money on analysis unless they are disturbed—no matter how smooth, straightforward and apparently simple the view they present for the analyst’s inspection. [1980, p. 32]

What do you see when the patient comes into your room? Usually a mature individual, articulate and much like anybody else: The patient sees much the same thing. He has heard this psychoanalytic jargon, so naturally he assumes that the analyst does not mean what he says. But the analyst has to be aware that the patient *does* mean what he says, although he may say it very softly indeed. We should not allow ourselves to be too dominated by the noise the patient makes—‘When I was coming here I saw an accident in the street... That is perfectly true, but the noisy way the spectacle can be described makes it difficult to hear the “forgotten” but... nonetheless active experience which has been re-awaken by the immediate stimulus of the accident. [1980, p. 35]

This is part of Bion’s continuing meditation on meaning. The fictive transformation is such that what the patient is able to say his problem is about is not what it is about; what it is about, he cannot say (any more, if he ever could). People use that part of the spectrum of experience where the pain ain’t. Only by listening past where the patient is can one begin to discern what Bion calls the “constant conjunctions,” the let A be represented by B and B by C set of transpositions that yield the patient’s ciphering and encoding system.

The problem, then, is to see beyond the surface and to “hear the forgotten” amidst the noise and find one’s way to the unconjoined conjunctions that at once hide from and await discovery.

PRACTICE

The *instrument* for doing this is the analyst's capacity to live in the absolute present. Patients don't. They are in the past or in the future, for time, like space, is a medium in which contact with self and other can be evaded or equivocated. The analyst, as Bion has been saying in the passages I have been quoting, must be where the patient isn't—otherwise he is redundant.⁹ The past, so important to Freudian psychoanalysis—as the source of trauma, fixation, the infantile neurosis, the point of regression or fixation, the plot for the drama of the transference—is for Bion relevant only in so far as it is not the past; it is present, for it never *got* past: What is repressed cannot be forgotten. And since it is present, its pastness is irrelevant. The main thing is to allow the past to be “presented” (a complex pun of Bion's).

An experience is *of* something, but paramnesically, the patient can only know *about* it. What he knows about the experience is to the experience what an analogy is to its likeness. An example Bion uses is: “As the breast is to the baby's mouth the surgeon's knife is to the X” (1970, p. 5). There is a double relationship here: The one connects the nouns, knife-body and breast-mouth; the other links (analogically) scalpel and breast and body and mouth. And of course the verbs that are implied in the hyphens.

If one substitutes abstractions for the nouns, one reaches, as Bion sees it, ♂ and ♀. These symbols are, of course, expressions of gender, but Bion, more abstractly still, uses them even more generically to express contents and container or contained and container. Thus scalpel is to body as breast is to mouth as ♂ is ♀ and contained is to container—and as penis is to vagina and male to female and thoughts to mind. Somewhere in everything there is something *about* the relationship between contents and container, of which experience consists.

“Last night I dreamt about...” says the patient; it is his approximation of *of*. From this the analyst must intuit what the experience might have been of if it hadn't had to be about: “The coherence that these facts have in the patient's mind is not relevant to the analyst's problem...” (1980, p. 15). His problem is to see how the “particles” actually cohere in the oneness of things.

Interpretation tries to communicate what the patient's experience is of, having to do with the relations between container and contained. What is the relationship between breast and mouth that makes it at once like (analogic to) and unlike (not homologous with) scalpel and body? For that matter, what is taking place in the communication to the analyst, as between ♂ and ♀ and, inevitably what is taking place, as between ♂ and ♀ in the analyst's

communication of an interpretation to the patient? Bion's own metaphor of the tennis net, earlier referred to, is apposite here. This rather microscopic series of questions have a more macroscopic counterpart: Is the analysis being done an analysis or is it *like* an analysis: Are there an analyst and a patient in the room or two people behaving as if they were analyst and patient? Is the analysis about the patient becoming more like a normal person or becoming able to be more himself? To what uses are the communications being put? The same interpretation, say "the scalpel is to your body as a breast is to the mouth", can be given with different purposes in mind (for example to give information or, alternatively, to prevent surgery). These purposes are the relationship between ♂ and ♀. Is an interpretation a relationship of K(nowledge)—K(an effort to ward off knowledge) or of L(ove) or H(ate)? One senses that for Bion the motivation for giving an interpretation is a matter of great, even profound, importance, and at the same time a source of much information:

Sometimes the function of speech is to communicate experience to another; sometimes it is to miscommunicate. Sometimes the object is to achieve access to, and permit access from, a good spirit; conversely to deny access to a bad spirit. [1970, p. 1]

Now in what medium will matters of moment be re-presented? As any of us knows who feel tired at the end of a day, the medium is the analyst. The patient is going to work upon our capacity to attend because, feeling what he doesn't know won't hurt him, his ability not to know depends on his keeping us from knowing. And among the ways he will divert us from the existential present is to get us attending to the past or the future—even to getting us wishing for the end of the session.

This is not primarily in the domain of countertransference. The transferences that take place have to do with the exterior configurations of the people involved. If one thinks of that figure-ground plate of two faces in profile, which also constitute a single vase, the relations of analyst and patient will at one and the same time be transferenceal, using the libidinal attributes, and identificatory, using the container or vessel attributes. One may wish for the end of a session because the patient frustrates a lusty wish. Or one may wish for its end because, in doing so, the patient has succeeded in establishing an impedence in one's self that makes one impatient of the present and its contents. We are warned by Freud to attend to our transference to the patient. Now Bion comes along and tells us only by wanting nothing—not even the end of the session, indeed, not even the patient's well-being—can we properly attend.

His metaphor concerns saturation; he wants a *tabula rasa*. If the 10:00 patient is one we know to be a married

man in his thirties, we know too much, for how are we to attend the 4-year-old girl who has just walked in. Some days, and for parts of every day, the 30-year-old man is just a rumor. If the analyst is not saturated with knowledge—if he does not know anything nor want anything—he becomes the vacuum which the patient cannot stand and has perforce to fill.

I want to stress an on-going question. By 'on-going' I mean that it has no permanent answer; it is always open... why has this patient who has come to you for three years... three weeks, three sessions come again today? You may have an idea why he came yesterday, but that is not today.... (1980, p. 32)

Many of us will wonder which, like the purple cow, is worse: seeing such an analyst or being one! Bion is vaguely apologetic: He does not recommend to any of us to try to be such analysts unless we have reached the “depressive position” and can (I add) tolerate our hatred for such rigor. All the same, many of us do something like what he espouses simply because, after a while, we have discovered and disclosed everything we know about a patient and have run out: and yet the patient is still attending and still communicating and, oddly, seems almost grateful that we have run out of the sort of thing we have been saying month after month. It’s as if: Now, perhaps, we can begin? Patients, too, stress the “on-going question.”

Bion is not ahistorical; history will come back into things as it becomes inevitable. Among his examples is a patient whose occasional reiteration of what sounded like “ice cream” came over time to be “I scream”. The past, horribly alive, had become the past presented.

The occupation of patient and analyst, then, needs to be what the two of them can know together because both are present and both are *necessary*.¹⁰ Anything else is something else, since it is prior to or outside of the session. This goes for both. Not all of the patient’s history is in the existential moment, but the history that is important to the patient is in any given moment—and it is likely to be so important as not to be wasted on words: “We must listen not so much to the meaning of what the patient communicates but to the use to which it is being put.” Every moment of every session is a communication. Every communication needs interpretation. Every interpretation needs to be based on the analyst’s experience, not of psychoanalytic writing, not of patients, not of this patient yesterday or even today, but of himself and his experience in the instant. The interpretation, in short, is a response to the patient’s activation of experience in the analyst—in his hope for and fear of a meeting of minds.

The interpretation arises when the analyst:

feels he is being manipulated so as to be playing a part no matter how difficult to recognize in somebody else’s

phantasy—or he would do so were it not for what in recollection I can only call a temporary loss of insight, a sense of experiencing strong feelings, and at the same time a belief that their existence is quite adequately justified by the objective situation without recourse to recondite explanation of their causation. [1961, p. 116]

To this Bion added the idea that interpretations are given when obvious and remarkable—obvious to both analyst and patient but remarkable only in that the patient is not seeing the matter for himself. Bion, however, in an example of his early work, does not yet attain this precept:

Patient. I cannot find any interesting food.

Analyst. You feel it has all been eaten up.

Patient. I do not feel able to buy any new clothes and my socks are a mass of holes.

Analyst. By picking out a tiny piece of skin yesterday you injured yourself so badly you cannot even buy clothes; you are empty and have nothing to buy them with.

Patient. Although they are full of holes, they constrict my foot.

Analyst. Not only did you tear off your own penis but also mine. So today there is no interesting food—only a hole. [1967, p. 28]

Though Bion in the paper on schizophrenia, from which this is an excerpt, makes a case for the interpretation being correct, the interplay between Bion and his patient sounds “duly”—as in “I duly interpreted this to him.” This dutifulness extends to the content, which sounds capital ‘K’-leinian, of the sort about which Bion was later to note that Klein, in latter days, was as concerned to teach Klein as to analyze Bion (1980, p. 37). In any case the reach from the catechistic line of interpretation to that marked by “negative capability” is as long as and rather akin to the reach from the child who (speaking of the flower arrangement) says, “I did it all myself” to the adult in his late seventies who writes of his intention to be truthful, “It is an exalted intention.”

Suppose I played a game like ‘fathers and mothers’ [or ‘House’ as we call it] that could be described as a ‘conscious fantasy’ at some stage. Then suppose I became so frustrated because I could not be father or mother that I forgot it. I could say that the fantasy which was once conscious had become unconscious. Today when I *am* one of the parents I may again be unwilling to know anything about this unconscious fantasy, for what is the use of knowing about ‘fathers and mothers’ when I am either too young to be one or too old to do anything about it now. I may say I don’t want to have anything to do with these psychoanalysts. I do not want to be reminded of these fantasies. The answer to that might be ‘I don’t object to that’ except that that ‘unconscious fantasy’ of yours, as you call it, is horribly alive; it may be obscured but active and powerful [so much so that] it may generate envy, hatred and jealousy of the father or mother who can make anything from babies to ideas. If so he may be unable, even philosophically, to form symbols or synthesize analytic concepts. There is no chance of making progress because there is no way of generating thoughts. [1974, pp. 55-56]

The little boy of “Arf Arf” had, one feels, almost necessarily to “father” a psychoanalyst who could understand about “fathers and mothers” truth, and the formulation of ideas and books.

BION ON BION

Among those books not yet touched upon in this essay was the trilogy he was to call *A Memoir of the Future*. Like two later volumes—*The Long Week-End* and *All My Sins Remembered*—it is an autobiographical work. But unlike those which were written of and from the depressive position, in which events and people, including the self are tolerated as a whole in wholesome relationships, *Memoir* is written from the paranoid-schizoid position, in which splits of every sort (temporal, spatial, and schismatic) occur—and are, in the end, healed. It is necessarily a life of the mind—but of a mind that does not start at birth, thus one in which somites and gametes and four-year-olds and Bion all talk with equal relevance and passion. Their goal, one feels, is an at-one-ment, but it will not be easily realized. Volume Three introduces what Bion felt his particular quality of attention opened to him, as the following passage will indicate:

P.A. [Psychoanalyst] I have had patients who are on bad terms with whatever they feel they have become; they are on bad terms with human beings who remind them of themselves. One of the difficulties of psychoanalyzing such patients is that they do not want to be reminded of ‘ordinary’ behavior—theirs or anyone else’s.

Alice [another character in the book] Has this anything to do with real life?

P.A. It has a great deal to do with real life. Amongst the many and frequent dangers of psychoanalysis none is more dangerous than the experience of the coming together of the pre-natal and the post-natal personalities. It can easily be appreciated that the danger is associated with anything whatever—psychoanalysis, music, painting, mathematics—which could remind these two personalities of their continued and continuing ‘contact’ with each other in the same body and mind.

Roland [another character] You make it sound most dramatic.

P.A. It would require a drama of Shakespearean quality to portray the reality.... Why didn’t Bion go on with groups?

Bion I had more pressing problems which could adequately be dealt with only by psychoanalysis—or something better; particularly the problem P.A. had been discussing, of the relationship of the highly equipped fetus with its own and its parents’ parental qualities.

Roland The fetus’s parental quality! That sounds wonderful.

Bion I was afraid it would rouse someone’s contempt. The cracking of thorns under a pot is more serious when it becomes... the marriage of divorced elements.

Roland... I think you have an inflated view of your importance.

Bion I regret I give such an impression. I should be less than sincere if I said you are only a source of innocent merriment. There are times when I find your supposedly sane and balanced outlook, your fascinating sense of humor difficult to tolerate.¹¹

Alice I don't wish to take sides, but Peace! You English fools.¹²

But it is not merely Bion's wish to take matters back to where he believes—entirely seriously—they began that seems to have motivated the books. There are, I think, two other intentions. One is in keeping with his feeling that the “O,” the original or ultimate truth (Plato is here) is incomprehensible to any one approach—be it that of psychoanalyst, poet, politician, or philosopher (see anon)—but that whatever the status of the noumenon, the phenomenon lives within the personality—such as it is—of the beholder. In the end, were Bion to be true to his idea of truth, he had to provide an interior view—a view of Bion the experienter. At first, as young men do, he shirked that, feeling that the precision of abstractions, even mathematic approximations, devoid of a “penumbra of associations” (hence the L, H, K, Alpha, Beta, etc.) could make experience sufficiently distilled as to free it from the coloration of personality, group, history, and culture. Even at the end, in his introduction to *The Long Week-End*, he wistfully expresses the wish that he had abstractions at hand in which to encompass his life. But by then he knew he hadn't, and there was only the next best thing to give us: the “artificer” himself.

Given Bion on Bion, one can go back to the earlier works and understand them as efforts, one after the other, to understand the two most mysterious yet essential features of psychoanalysis: The paradox of a mind deceiving itself and the process of intuition by which a second mind can realize what the first no longer can. Someone wrote that if all the variables between the throw of the dice and their eventual position could be identified and measured, there would be no such thing as chance. Bion, one feels, would have been interested.

I make a distinction between 'existence', to be or not to be (Shakespeare, as usual, says it better than any one else has been able to say it) and 'essence', the what-ever-it-is that makes existence worth existing. That is what no one can tell you, and what every philosopher, painter, musician, artist, poet and mere person has to find out for himself... That's what your patients, however ill, well, wealthy, poor, clever, have to find out. They can't be shown, but you may give them a chance to see or find out. [letter to one of his children, 1956]

It would be helpful if it could be recognized that all these various disciplines—music, painting, psycho-analysis and so on ad infinitum—are indeed engaged on the same search for truth. Talking as we are here, we can split it up as I have just done; it is very useful for purposes of verbal communication. If all we wanted to do was to communicate verbally that would be fine. We could stop there; we could say, if it can't be verbalized, out with it! Get rid of music; get rid of painting. But if you are tolerant then you have to see the possibility that the painter can make progress which is not for somebody who is capable of talking only one kind of language. The fundamental problem is, how soon can human beings reconcile themselves to the fact that the truth matters? We can believe whatever we please, but that doesn't mean that the universe is going to suit itself to our particular

beliefs or our particular capacities. It is we who have to do something about that; we have to alter to a point where we can comprehend the universe in which we live. The trouble is that supposing we reach that point our feelings of fear or terror might be so great that we couldn't stand it. So the search for truth can be limited both by our lack of intelligence or wisdom, and by our emotional inheritance. The fear of knowing the truth can be so powerful that the doses of truth are lethal.

Thus, finally:

The conditions (i.e. for interpretations) are complete when the analyst feels aware of resistance in himself—not counter-transference—but resistance to the response he anticipates from the analysand if he gives the interpretation. [1970, p. 168]

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Notes

- ¹ See Chapter 3, “The *Seelsorger* in Rural Vermont.”
- ² At a guess, he terminated his analysis with Mrs. Klein also to preserve his self-analysis.
- ³ I am inclined to regard the grid as a system for notation that, like an armature, enabled Bion further to construct his formulations. As with his taxonomy of groups into dependent, fight-flight and pairing, the grid categories are more useful for what they call attention to than in what they contain. Bion, himself, remarked, “As soon I had gotten the grid out of my system I realized how inadequate it is.”
- ⁴ Freud’s metapsychologic discussion of the “Wolfman” is probably his most searching discussion of this point of view (Freud 1918).

5 For an elaboration of this conjunction between anticipation and hope, see Boris 1976.

6 This is at once obvious and not. Meltzer makes the point by redirecting our attention to Freud's first patients, and what by force of will and necessity they obliged him to learn. Of course, we are all indebted to those of our patients who oblige us to get to know them (Meltzer 1978a).

7 For a discussion of this phenomenon in groups, see Boris 1967.

8 For an elaboration of this, there is in my own *Passions of the Mind* (1993) an extended essay on selective attention and the paradox of self deception.

9 Intellectual Bion is, if not before, now revealed as, if not more so, ontologic and existential as any one writing. I suspect he would have come to this in any case, but as a young man (at Oxford) he gained a therapist (analyst?) who would ask him: "Feel it in the past, feel it in the past."

10 One of the paradoxes of our field is that, despite our entreaties, the trainee listens more to us, his supervisor, than to his patient, and, what is worse, confides his best interpretations to us. Hosannah to the day when patient and analyst are alone! For an extended discussion of the theory of interpretation in psychoanalysis, see Boris 1986.

11 Of his wish to write *Memoir*, Bion—in an as yet unpublished epilogue—continues this theme: "All my life I have been imprisoned, frustrated, dogged by common-sense, reason, memories, desires and—greatest bug-bear of all—understanding and being understood. This is an attempt to express my rebellion, to say 'Good-bye' to all that." But there is another purpose—expressed in the Prologue. "There may be modes of thinking to which no known realization has so far been found to approximate. Hallucinosis, hypochondriasis and other mental 'diseases' may have logic, a grammar and a corresponding realization, none of which has so far been discovered. They may be difficult to discover because they are obscured by a 'memory', or a 'desire', or an 'understanding' to which they are supposed—wrongly—to approximate" (*A Memoir of the Future* 1990, Karnac Press).

12 *The Long Week-End* is the "peace" for which Alice calls. It needs no preface such as that given to *The Dawn of Oblivion*:

Q. Is this [Vol. III] as bad?

A. Worse.

Q. How interesting: I must get it.

A. I said "worse."

Q. That's what made me want it—I don't see how it could be.