

## **Bion's work presented: A memoir of the future, some thoughts on its oblivion and dawn**

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### **Abstract**

Trilogy "A Memory of the Future" includes a schematic but dense summary of the theoretical contributions of Bion made to the development of psychoanalysis as well as Meg said Williams, a contribution for all of humanity. In the trilogy, in an original way, in a scene alive and fresh in a long day are dealt with themes that encapsulate several centuries of trial and assumptions, to learn psychic reality, as Freud called it. This almost original is a blend of attempts to Socrates, Diderot, Shakespeare, Goethe, the romantic European and Freud to focus on psychic reality. In the three volumes are dialogues, analogies, metaphors, parables, and citations that contain a great deal of thought of our civilization. Are the foundations, which can be regarded as invariants of humanity. These invariances in an approximate way and imperfect, are called bestiality, sublimity, death, life, absence of mind, maternity femininity, masculinity, fatherhood, the two aspects of mental functioning, the paranoid-schizoid and depressive instincts, events instincts as Oedipus. And yet compassion, remoteness and lack of sensitivity to the suffering and pain of others, cynicism, love of truth and consideration for the natural life, for what it is. The origin of Bion's thought is found in the science, art, mysticism and medicine. Readers can meet in the Trilogy, among other things, a lot of technical data examined by Bion as psychoanalytic transference, projective identification, regression, dream work, hallucinosis, thought. The trilogy can be seen as a walking stick for the blind in the adventure to get closer to his inner world, to understand the functioning of the primary process-without rational schemes, and without using a psychoanalytic jargon.

**Key-words:** oblivion, sunrise, memory of the future, the work of Bion, fictional characters

*'Though this be madness, yet there is method in 't'* (Hamlet, II, ii, 205)

### **An Invitation**

During the final years of his life (1975-1979) Bion gathered three books, *The Dream*, *The Past Presented* and *The Dawn of Oblivion* in the form of a Trilogy, which he named *A Memoir of the Future*. It presents and enlightens the whole of Bion's earlier work through dialogues between imaginary characters, who also 'talk' with themselves. This form was first experimented three years earlier (Bion, 1972). It dealt exclusively with his war experiences.

Bion's contributions always constantly conjoined achievements of an array of

outstanding philosophers, poets, mystics, psycho-analysts and mathematicians. With the Trilogy, this conjunction reaches a higher pitch. It brings the due identification of those author, either by naming them or by quoting excerpts of their writings. The Trilogy *A Memoir of the Future*'s broadly encompassing nature allows Bion to carry out more freely that which he had attempted since the beginning of his writing career during the forties. Namely, to grasp *vividly* some fundamentals that compose a journey throughout centuries of attempts to *apprehend* that which awaited a Freud to call it, 'psychic reality'. These fundamentals are non-concrete, non-sensuously apprehensible, but existing underlying the appearances. They can be seen as 'invariances' (Sylvester & Cayley, in Newman, 1956, chapter 12; Bion, 1965, p. 1) along the books. Some of them which are 'alive' in the Trilogy may be approximately labeled: bestiality, sublimity; death, life; mindlessness, mind; femininity, masculinity; the two principles of mental functioning, the positions (Klein, 1946), the instincts and their manifestations as compassion, callousness, cynicism, love to truth and concern to natural life -a in science, art, mystics, medicine, motherhood, fatherhood, Oedipus and their corresponding opposites. (Bion, circa 1960, p. 249 and 1960, p. 125).

It seems to me that the *act of reading* of the books itself is a living experience into the realm of psychic reality and unreality as they are. Bion presents various seminal psychic facts, as well as hints to the practicing analyst into a simpler form, vis-à-vis the technical terms. I tried to write an introductory book, with the believe that it would be a fairer form to make more justice to the Trilogy. With the aid of selected quotations - which seemed to me necessary to back my statements - I tried to classify some dialogues scattered all over the Trilogy according the common psycho-analytic lexicon and acknowledged psycho-analytic issues, such as transference, projective identification, regression, dream-work, hallucinosis, thinking, among others. (Sandler, 1988)

In the same sense, but in a very abridged form, the present paper purports to be an invitation. The reader unfamiliar with the Trilogy may taste the quality of these books through some quotations. Again, as in the book, they furnish hard core facts (Bion's writings) to my statements. Otherwise they may sound arbitrary, or ill-founded. Or, worse still, to the hostile reader, an exercise in eulogy.

Differently from the book, the reader will find a *précis*. The latter includes a description of the quasi-*dramatis personae* that people the writing.

The Trilogy has three companions: *The Long Week-End, vol. I and II* , and *War Memoirs*. The latter are intentionally auto-biographic, whereas the Trilogy uses autobiographical data as containers to convey scientific and psycho-analytic issues. They illuminate childhood, and war experiences, as well as the roots of some of Bion's concepts. (Sandler, 1987, 2003a) So we have a "Pentalogy".

Even though I will try to display some 'hunch-triggering' analogies, metaphors, parables, and quotations encompassing a sizable part of our civilization's knowledge,

it must be clearly stated that there is no replacement the careful reading of the books. It resembles a real analytic session, in its unrepeatable uniqueness. How many among us will use it as a blind man's stick to the adventure into the unknown, the very functioning of primary processes?

## Terms and theories

My comment on the introductory book I once wrote furnishes a starting point to this appreciation of the Trilogy. The use of terms and theories in psycho-analysis were a central issue to Bion, specially in what concerns its communicative powers and limitations. Psycho-analytic terms and theories are variously felt. Many persons, professional or lay, mistake the theories - which purport to approach some given psychic facts - with psycho-analysis proper. Some of them feel they are unduly contrived and complicated and dismiss psycho-analysis on those grounds. Some use them under a scholastic, mindless way. Some regard them as well-known, fully understood. In the end run all of them flow to the same point: they debase the theory into meaningless jargon. Until the seventies, 'Jargonese' was used as a kind of language between analysts and patients. The sense of illumination, and at the same time, the lack of real communication of really shareable stuff is the hallmark of jargon. Its high speed of its adoption is surpassed only by its even faster abandonment. No analysis, but a pseudo-intellectual collusion happens to be. I think that this state of affairs changed after the eighties, basically due to Bion and Winnicott's efforts to «colloquialize» the way one conducts a session.

I stated above that the Trilogy re-takes the analytical issues first adumbrated into non-colloquial, scientific terms. I will use the question of jargon to illustrate it. Probably inspired by two sources, Alfred North Whitehead's *Introduction to Mathematics* and Popper's *The Logic of Scientific Discovery*, he warned about attempts to fit the clinical data into known theories. It corresponds to a formalism not too dissimilar to that which mathematics dealt with successfully in the beginning of the twentieth century. It produced a formalistic approach that hoped to find known procedures to solve all mathematical problems - analysts thought they had this too, after Freud's death.

Bion's issue was to get a theory that could be at once not so concrete in its description of particular cases (lower level empirical data) **as well as** not excessively general that could slip into "*an ingenious manipulation of elements according to arbitrary rules....analyst and analysand indulge in a taste for jargon...A theoretical formulation that appears to be too concrete and yet too abstract requires to be generalized in such a way that its realizations are more easily detected, without the attendant weakness, most often seen in mathematics, as appearing to be an arbitrary manipulation of symbols*". (Bion, 1962, p. 77).

From there Bion tackled with the issue of the lack of generalizing theories that could encompass particular cases, thus avoiding a plethora of theories that unwittingly

address the same underlying configurations was discussed, again in non-colloquial terminology. (Bion, 1963, p.1-2).

Two years later he deepened the investigation into *ad hoc* theorizing in terms of the theory of transformations and invariances. The analyst who resorts to *ad hoc* theorizing becomes mesmerized by the transformations and loses sight of, or never perceives, the invariances. There is a fear of the unknown, which is conducive to a contradictory simultaneity of *a priori* and *ad hoc* theorizing (Bion, 1965, p. 4, 84, 96).

Years later, Bion tried to communicate the same issue through a metaphor, that of face-value of old coins, which disappear through continuous use.(Bion, 1976). He suspected that psycho-analytic concepts could be used as '*vast paramnesia to fill the void of our ignorance*' (Bion, 1976, 1977 a, b, c).

Apparently to his chagrin, his own theories proved not to be 'jargon-proof' (Bion, 1977, p. 229 - see full quotation below; also, 1978, p. 374-7)

Finally, he abandons the scientific and epistemological media, to adopt an unexpected.- at least to analysts - method in order to communicate the same issue. He resorts to a widely known character: 'Sherlock Holmes'.

*'SHERLOCK...You heard that fellow Bion? Nobody has ever heard of him or of psycho-analysis. He thinks it is real, but that his colleagues are engaged in an activity which is a more or less ingenious manipulation of symbols. There is something in what he says. There is a failure to understand that any definition must deny a previous truth as as carry an unsaturated component'* (Bion, 1975, p. 92).

### **Late or latest?**

'Late Bion' is an increasingly popular verbal formulation. Nevertheless, 'late' also means dead. It's well known that in some influential quarters Bion's contributions since *Elements of Psycho-analysis* and specially after *Transformations* are subjected to serious objections.

Bion's influence reminds that of Freud: a comparatively tiny number of persons who feel they profit from it exert a disproportionate influence in the encircling macro-milieu. In Freud's case, the whole culture. In Bion's case, the psycho-analytic culture.

Bion's work also reminds that of Freud in other aspects. Both suggest the feasibility, and effectiveness of an 'unconscious-', or 'Id-bound psycho-analysis'. Improvements in ego-functions would equal to improvements of symptoms. Analytic experience shows that they are natural, automatic, and unavoidable when deeper strata are dealt with. '*Beauty is more than skin deep*', observed Keats.

Both Freud and Bion continuously emphasized what characterize proper psycho-analysis, or 'real analysis' --- to use a phrase first coined by Bion (Freud, 1914, Bion,

1974):

"*ROBIN I thought psycho-analysis was all sex.*

"*P.A. ....As psycho-analytic theories are about, or purport to be about, human beings, you would feel they should resemble real life, real people....*" (AMF, II, 303).

'*P.A. Mystery is real life; real life is the concern of real analysis. Jargon passes for psycho-analysis, as sound is substituted for music, verbal facility for literature and poetry, trompe d'oeil representations for painting.*' (Bion, 1977, 307)

How to discern analysis from anything else? One may compare the quotations above with earlier ones, which relied heavily in technical, rather than colloquial language. For example:

"*The peculiarity of a psycho-analytic session, that aspect of it which establishes that it is a psycho-analysis and could be nothing else, lies in the use by the analyst of all material to illuminate a K-relationship...The patient communicates information that has significance by virtue of criteria of his own. The analyst is restricted to interpretations that are an expression of a K relationship with the patient. They must not be expressions of L or H*" (Bion, 1963, p. 70)? [K is a quasi-mathematical sign meaning, knowledge; L and H, love and hate].

More specifically, both Freud and Bion emphasized some necessities: (i) do not be fooled by external, manifest appearances. (ii) to abandon some habits of thinking, namely: 1. formal logic; 2. causality; 3. teleological answers; 4. forced memory; 5. contrived understanding; 6. an enemy of intuition: the allegiance to desire, under the aegis of the principle of pleasure/displeasure. Bion was fond of the idiom '*La réponse est le malheur de la question*', by Blanchot -- suggested by Dr. André Green.

*A Memoir of the Future* contains much that was delivered during his conferences in verbal form, mainly in Brazil, Italy and Argentina during the late sixties and the seventies, until his death in 1979.

"*In the practice of psycho-analysis it is difficult to stick to the rules. For one thing, I do not know what the rules of psycho-analysis are. There are plenty of people who will say "Don't you know the theories of psycho-analysis?" and I could say, "No I don't, although I have read them over and over again. I now feel that I only have the time to read the very, very best psycho-analytic theories - if only I knew what they were". However, that is what I would try to limit myself to. The practice of real psycho-analysis is a very tough job indeed. It is not the kind of thing which should be chosen as a nice, easy comfortable way of life. Theories are easily read and talked about; practice of psycho-analysis is another matter.*" (Bion, 1973, p. 114); or, "...*technical term gets worn away and turns into a kind of worn out coin which has lost its value. We should keep these things in good working conditions.*" (Bion, 1974, p. p. 87)

*A Memoir of the Future* is, in my view, a whirlwind of negatives, paradoxes, and antitheses in the pursuit of underlying psychic truth -- 'won from the void and formless infinite', to quote a favourite Bion's line from Milton (Bion, 1965, p. 151).

With the Trilogy, Bion had furnished a void and formless infinite at the reader's disposal. The latter has a chance to 'win' something or some no-thing from the frustration of not understudying them, and giving meaning to them according to his or her own experience.

Is it a reading more near to the reality of a psycho-analytic experience than Bion (or perhaps other known writers) was hitherto able to do? Possibly, for it shares with psycho-analysis proper its ethos as an adventure into the unknown (Freud's *unbewußt*, not-known, un-conscious).

### **A memoir...of the future? *A Slave of the Passions***

*Right from the start the book's paradoxical title challenges the reader's proneness to resort to rational thinking, if it exists.*

The Trilogy calls to be intuitively perceived, rather than understood in the extent that it provides an experience of reading which embodies mind and life's outstanding features. This experiences may be named: irresolvable paradoxes, disconnection, causeless love and hate, sudden loss of hardly won meanings that proves to be disorders of perception linked to age and experience, doubts, disquiet, phases of not-understanding, and persecution. Briefly, one may experiment those aspects typical of the paranoid-schizoid position as one proceeds the reading.

Conversely, one may experiment, respectively, evolving meanings throughout the life, the sense of being found or have finding whatever it is in truth. One acquires sudden moments of a *sense of truth* as Bion puts it, that is, that the object that is loved and the object that is hated are the same and one object; or a *sense of reality*, as Isaiah Berlin puts it (Bion, 1961b, p. 119; Berlin, 1996). This is possible if one can try not to resolve paradoxes, but rather to find a synthesis between the opposite poles. Then one can find that love and hate are different sides of the same unknown coin. Moreover, that both spring from internal unexpected, unknown parts of the mind, rather than from external causes.

One may tolerate doubts; this transforms disquiet into serenity; one lessens persecution and acquire a clearer sight of due guilty in whatever it is. One may find *real* constellations and connections of relationships between intervening factors and functions, making comparisons with that which one already had in one's mind. That is, one can experiment a movement toward the depressive position. Analogous to a Beethoven symphony, the serenity is suddenly replaced, in the next page, to a renewed disquiet of the first set of sensations. The writing characterizes the living tandem movement between the paranoid-schizoid and depressive positions.

Bion tried to show that the psychotic personality (Bion, 1957, 1962, 1965) clothed

itself with a neurotic appearance. Rationality has nothing to do with the functioning of the unconscious. Rationality is typical of secondary processes which leads to rationalization, with the help of Ernest Jones. Rationalization was to remain an unclassified concept, not gaining the status of a mechanism of defense (Freud 1900; 1911; 1915a,b; 1920, Jones, 1937). Its links with the unconscious were emphasized. Bion studied as perhaps no other author the vicissitudes of cognitive processes. They are linked to the prevalence of psychotic- read, traits under the sway of the principle of pleasure / displeasure (Freud, 1910). Which breeds psychotic features.

*'ROBIN The whole of psycho-analytic theory seems to be vitiated...by favouring only those phenomena which appear to conform to classical logic, the sort of logic with which we are already familiar.*

*PAUL Timidity is a fact of our nature. We cling to anything which gives us the chance of saying «Thus far and no further». Any discovery is followed by a closure. The remainder of our thoughts and endeavours is devoted to consolidating the system to prevent the intrusion of yet another thought. Even any roughness of our system that might facilitate the lodgment of the germ of another idea is smoothed and polished (1977, p.265)*

Dreams offer a good challenge to rationalization. During the day, dream activity remain unseen, unless one pays attention to free associations. Both have a kinship with hallucinations, such as their appeal to visual manifestations. Due to hallucinosis (presence of delusion and hallucination in a personality otherwise conserved) hallucinations also remain unseen, passing for normal. Thought and linguistic disturbances are disguised by rationality. Nevertheless, what remains and govern things is the *underlying*, albeit unconscious and unseen, prevalence of psychosis. This *underlying* - that is, not given directly to the senses, demanding to be intuited - is decisive. Clothed with the overt appearance of rationality, it was perceived by Hume's refutation of pure reason, later expanded by Kant (Hume, 1748; Kant, 1781, 1783). Hume's discovery is implicit in Freud's description of free associations e dream work. It was brought to the awareness of psychoanalysts by Bion: *reason is the slave of passions*. It is *psycho-logically* necessary, but has nothing to do with truth. (Bion, 1965, p. 73). This theoretical formulation is put into a living practical way throughout the book.

Truth is a term that here in this text, after Freud, Klein and Bion, is understood as internal truth (the truth about oneself) and the external world, ranging from the quantum micro-environment to the great universe. Summing up: the non-rational title embodies centuries of development of human knowledge. Non-rational facts is not to be confused with irrationality.

Reason, being slave of the passions, has some functions. In psychic terms it brushes truth aside, especially unwanted truths. Its aftermath can be seen with the aid of a paraphrases of a well-known ditto usually attributed to Abraham Lincoln: one may

deceive oneself about unimportant things during a sizable span of time; one may deceive oneself about important things during a very short span of time; but one cannot deceive oneself about important things on during a sizable span of time.

The term, *ratio*, is drawn from mathematics. There it means, to extract roots. The mathematician felt he knew the barest elemental truth of numbers. Nevertheless, the realm of numbers was expanded by infinite, irrational, and imaginary numbers; Euclidean logic was expanded by Riemann, Lobatchevsky and Da Costa's non Euclidean and para-consistent illogical logic, respectively; Descartes' causality was shown to be false by Hume (1748) and Kant (1781); Newtonian physics was amended by relativistic and quantum contributions. Just like psycho-analysis, which displayed the timelessness and non-rationality of the unconscious, all of them got beyond the senses and beyond rationality.

Rationality, being a reassuring weapon, is ever surfacing again, as the positivist movement, which believes in predictions and linear causal chains, easily shows. One cannot glimpse truth and life *as it is, facts as they are* -- to quote two Bion's favourites, Sir Francis Bacon and Dr Samuel Johnson.

*A Memoir of the Future* shelters no rationality, demands no understanding, and gives little chance to desire. What does it mean? Those who had tried to irritably extract a meaning through rationality rather than from confronting live experiences of usually have been giving up the attempt to read the Trilogy. Few ask the question: does it means something?

### **Descriptions. *Dialoguing***

The dialogical, quasi-theatrical form adopted was successfully used before by philosophers, such as Socrates; by philosophers-writers, notably Diderot, and Goethe; by epistemologists, such as Lakatos (1963). Bion tested this form in 1972, as a working through of his war experiences. It remained unpublished until 1997.

Unfortunately I cannot spare the reader of an awkward term in order to abridge Bion's choice. I think that Bion performs a linguistic theatrical-Socratic elaboration endowed with Shakespearian-Diderotian-Goethian-Carrollian overtones.

Does the Trilogy's dialogic form reflect the purest psycho-analytic method? Freud stated that during a psycho-analysis nothing happens other than a talk - two people converse as freely as possible; the 'talking cure' proved to be more 'talk' than 'cure' (Freud, 1938 a,b,c).

In construing dream-like, freely associative dialogues Bion offers to the reader a chance of dialogue with the books. Also, the reader can observe Bion's internal dialogue and profit from it having an internal dialogue with himself.

*Theatre of Reality: Figments of Imagination and Concrete 'facts'*

*A Memoir of the Future* closely resembles this a theatrical presentation, which it is not. It can be confused with theatre due to its use of characters.

Let us examine them in detail. 'They' are paradoxically unknown, new, and at the same time known, run-of-the-mill personalities. Which can be found anywhere and everywhere, as anyone's old friends, foes or acquaintances.

Paradoxically, even if I state that *A Memoir of the Future* is not theatre-in-itself, it is also true that it has some similarities of *content* with the so-called 'Theatre of the Absurd'. The classification - as any classification - entails a contradiction so typical of the attempts to know, namely, it expresses a prohibition to knowledge (Thorner, 1981). Aren't we more near truth if we state that Ionesco, Arrabal, Ibsen, and Beckett, authors of a 'Theatre of Reality'? Bion's text approaches the absurdity of life in ways similar to those author's. The seemingly novel is a way to show that the more 'social' that anything sounds to be (that is, a slave of the establishment) it is shared hallucinosis. Is this a great contribution of Bion to psycho-analysis and to mankind, namely, the discovery of psychosis in the everyday life as composing any establishment's kingpin.

He had already written extensively about this in *Experience in Groups* (1961a) and *Transformations* (for example, p. 129). Now Bion gives the reader an opportunity to *live* this.

### *The Characters*

Some characters were borrowed from 'mental health enhancing' sources, such as Conan Doyle's work, Milton and Wordsworth poetry. Some of them come from interests shareable with any human being. For example, dinosaurs of bygone eras, who sunk under their own weight: We will return to them later.

It would be a mistake, in my opinion, to find a judgmental value in the construction of the characters. They are, quite simply, real. Any reader with a penchant to self-criticism and concern to truth - that is, any reader with analytic experience - will see himself or herself 'reproduced' in the tribulations of the various characters.

'**Alice**' is the first character to be introduced, with more than a passing resemblance with Carroll's creation. She 'lives' in a kind of idealized wonderland as a typical woman from the upper gentry: 'intelligent and blonde', she functions as Roland's pseudo-wife and mistress of the second character to appear:

'**Rosemary**' composes with Alice the first appearances-deceiving scene. **Alice's** world is pure hallucinosis, as her first verbal intercourse with their maid. She would be a candidate to a 'Theatre of the Absurd' character. 'She' brings implicitly a question: does factuality vouch reality? Conversely, does reality dispense with factuality? My answer to these questions - other people can have other views - are, 'No'; and 'up to a point', respectively.

One cannot dispense with Factuality. There is no introjected breast without a concrete one. Facts are partially apprehended by the sensory apparatus. The latter are a harbor to any stimulus. Bion coins the terms, 'ultra-sensuous' and 'infra-sensuous' (Bion, 1975, p. 56,69, 127, 138-9; 1977, p. 233). (One only hopes that they could be not subjected to debasement into jargon)

After an inspiration from Shelley's comment on Shakespeare, Bion warns:

*'Falstaff, a known artifact, is more 'real' in Shakespeare's verbal formulations, than countless millions of people who are dim, invisible, lifeless, unreal, whose births, deaths - alas, even marriages - we are called upon to believe in, though certification of their existence is vouched for by the said official certification....Many people are so lifeless that I could stare in silent admission that I did not believe the evidence of my senses' (Bion, 1975, p. 5)*

It seems that the first experience Bion had with lifeless people in shared hallucinosis passing for 'normal' was when he was a young, albeit perceptive decorated tank commander of W.W.I, with the rank of Captain. The very rank and decorations had the bitter taste of undue glory. When going to London on leave from the front, he was subjected to nightlife, feeling deep distress (*War Memoirs*, 1921-72, p. 153). The issue presents itself again and again. To quote just one example more:

*'P.A. Figments of imagination are often more powerful than many real things; men and women are not so powerful as the idealized figures other men as women have about them' (Bion, 1977, p. 120).*

'**Roland**' and his friend '**Robin**' share with Alice some hallucinated features. They are at the same time infantile *and* grown-ups, a type often found. They display paradoxical features, like real persons. Both 'are' simultaneously educated and rude, cowards and reckless, mildly able to think in what concerns to concrete matters and much more prone to act-out with no thinking at all between the impulse and action.

'**Rosemary**' is a daughter of a whore who belatedly discovers herself as a strong willed and physically strong person. She derives those features from a hard lower classes life and suffering. Rosemary proves to 'be' hellishly smart. She is the ablest character in what concerns to perceive what real life is all about, in displaying much less mindlessness than the other characters. Sometime she is able to dream, whereas in Alice, Rosemary and Tom, the dream is always nightmarishly hallucinated. Rosemary has, as any person, her weaknesses - including a thirst for domination that will lead her to marry someone she does not love.

'Bestiality incarnate' is presented as a quite real fact, manifested in various characters such as 'Tom', 'Man', 'Du', 'Devil', 'Moriarty'.

'**Tom**' is the first of this lot to be introduced: a lustful lout who works in menial jobs at Roland's farm.

'**Man**' is as mysteriously unpredictable character as only men manage to be. Significantly, Bion gives him the name of 'Man'. He impersonates a kind of cloudy, contemptful, callous, objective, aloof post-Nazi military commander. At first he seems to be the devil incarnate. He is not - because two other characters, named Du (in volume I) and thereafter simply Devil (in volume III) will take care of this duty, as 'Man' fades out. He develops as the true boss of the 'stage', imposing his will under many guises, including gunpoint.

'Man' has many manly features. He is potent and competent in some situations. He marries with the woman he had chosen, who 'is' the strongest character in the book. He seems to be very perceptive of reality as it is. Nevertheless, in the end run, he proves to be capable of living in hallucination as anyone else. See the scene of his contrived 'marriage' with 'Rosemary', vol.. II.

(Bion, 1977, p. 390 and fol.) Most of the time he profits from other people's hallucinations.

A great deal of sophisticated psycho-analytical postures, and keen epistemological and social comments are put into Man's 'mouth', specially in vol. I. 'Man' features the darkness of authoritarianism, omnipotence and lust. He is helped by police forces, and pseudo-physicians. They are skilled in inflicting unnecessary pain. In volume II 'Man' enlists in his hosts the services of another seminal character:

'**Priest**', who mixes deep theologic knowledge, wisdom, with callousness, lack of scruples, and opportunism. 'Priest' is at first named '**Paul**' but soon the more general denomination emerges and lasts until the end.

Other characters are a an astronomer called '**Edmund**', a **Boy**, an **Old Woman**, a **Small Mo**, a **Big Bro**, a **Big Sister**, a **Small Bro**, a certain **Half Awake**, a **Schoolboy**, an **Apparition**.

'**Arf-arfer**', an infantile alliteration of 'Our Father' mixes God and Devil. In the Jewish-Christian-Muslim tradition, it is less awe-inspiring that fear-impinging. It is one of the main characters of volume I but fades out in volume II and III. If my hypotheses that volume III is the most mature book of the Trilogy, Arf-arfer seems to represent a necessity more often found in immature persons, who look for an all-answering and answerable entity.

**Doctor**, who 'is' a physician, **Voice**, **Somites**, **Forty-seven**, and **Twenty-two** as well as other ages appear in volume III, as matured hindsight of a whole life made of doubts, limitations, mistakes, and changes Even **PS** and **D** are characters, as a kind of homage to the realness and usefulness of Klein's discoveries. **Ghosts** of old comrades-in-arms of W.W. I also obtrude, filling the author with guilt for having survived: Ghosts of Tonks, Arthur, O'Connor, Stokes. Even the author 'died' in some extent, so a Ghost of P.A. also appears. In *The Long Week End* he says that his mother could not call him, 'Dear', anymore, until her death, since he returned from

the warfare; also, he felt himself as a sulky, callous and heartless husband and father toward his first wife, and first daughter.

Borrowing from Bion's quasi-mathematical sign that represents the interplay of PS and D, first introduced in *Elements of Psycho-analysis*, (p. 3) one may say that 'BionóMyselfóPA' is a triple character that represents the author in three guises.

'Bion' is the less important and more despised of them. The character, Bion, can be seen as a false self, in Winnicott's sense (Winnicott, 1935-58). 'Bion' and 'Capt. Bion' are the younger author's 'parts'. One may gather from reading '*The Long-Week-End*' and '*War Memoirs*', that 'Bion' springs from a Jewish-Christian idealism, and goodwill. 'Bion' was plagued by a tragic mix of delayed patriotism and self-intoxication with pseudo-fame, as he puts it in the first page of volume III.

'Myself' is the growing, matured product of something or someone that is socially known by the name of 'Bion'.

'P.A.' (from Psycho-Analyst) is a professional psycho-analyst. One may safely state it is a synthesis of Bion and Myself - as shown in volume I, p. 130. It is the more serene character of the whole book, displaying Bion's '*reverence and awe*' to psycho-analysis P.A. It is a most uninvolved being. It is undoubtedly a technical hint to an analyst at work, who should exercise a discipline on memory, desire, and understanding. He is less prey of projective identifications.

Pressing technical issues about the goals, limits, misunderstandings, and uses that are real lights to the practicing psycho-analyst. His exposé of transference is singularly simple and clear (Bion, 1977, p. 250).

One may hypothesize that the author is also composed by Priest, Man, Robin, Alice, Rosemary, Roland, that is, all characters of the book. Internal reflections, scientific and psycho-analytic thinking appear in the guise of talks between those characters. They can be seen as the author's part objects, too. As an artistic or scientific work, the author's experience is just a conveyor of universal invariances of psychic reality. Specially in volume III, the characters mirror not just a maturing Bion, trying to learn from experience, but any maturing human being.

It does not matter the 'secular' 'Wilfred R. Bion'. Who, after all, is dead now. This man mattered to his family and patients and to himself. His written work *may* matter to practicing psycho-analysts. In a certain point, he writes his name as 'rbidefilnorw', in order to think about social conventions, which are arbitrary, misleading, falsely definitive. In contrast; What *part of England and Shakespeare was it that forged the England that is eternal and will be forever England?*' (Bion, 1975, p. 43) Invariances, the transcendent truthful numinous realm that characterizes something as something and nothing else, or someone as himself and no one else, pervade the three books. We will return to it below.

‘**Sherlock Holmes**’ is a borrowed character, highly respectful to the original. ‘He’ displays the ‘Falstaff argument’ as advanced before, being a real-fictional character famous worldwide despite never enjoying (or suffering) concrete existence. Sherlock ‘is’ accompanied by his faithful, sometimes foolhardy **Dr. Watson**. Bion borrows them paying homage to something that enhanced his mental health in difficult times. They illustrate reality, hallucinosis, thought processes and give a hint to the analyst in a plot where Bion himself is criticized and shown in what concerns to some paranoid features.

In a certain part of the book, the character ‘Bion’ is infatuated with his secular titles, pretensions to immortality and self-importance. He and accuses Watson of being unreal. Watson strikes back, fulminating the doctor’s arguments and displaying the ‘himself’ is more known worldwide whereas Bion and psycho-analysis are not. Sherlock blames is not entirely in agreement with this way of dealing with him, he hope’s Watson was not too rough. To which Watson answers: ‘*Real people have to be treated roughly if the universe of discourse is to made safe form imaginary people. If you remember, this problem cropped up before with real numbers. Quite impossible for the simplest mathematical problem even to be formulated till negative numbers destroyed the tyranny of being confined in the restricted space of addition - just more real numbers*’ (1975, p. 92). Later, Bion calls psycho-analysts as ‘*gasbags*’ (1977, p. 343).

Since Freud, analysts are used to be seen as cold, rough, or rude, or dispassionate, or even crazed - since Freud. It is specially acute when they elicit the underlying, latent truths out from humdrum phrases of the patients. With this apparent roughness, an intuitive quantum leap is possible: psycho-analysis itself during the session. In a poetical formulation, *I must be cruel, only to be kind* (Hamlet, III, iv, 179).

A relatively unknown and minor Conan Doyle’s creation, Mycroft Holmes, Sherlock’s older brother also appears. And the indefectible Moriarty, as a kind of Devil incarnate. Through them Bion depicts acting - out with Dr. Watson; pure thought devoid of action, with Mycroft; and a blend of both, a man that inserts thought between the impulse and action, Sherlock himself.

Armed with an outline of the characters, we may attempt an encompassing approach to the three books.

### **A Précis. *The Dream***

Volume I encompasses a great deal of post-Klein psycho-analysis; the insertion of psycho-analysis in the scientific field, with statements of the limitations of the more known simplistic ‘scientific tenets derived from positivism, and some hints at modern Physics. It deals heavily with institutional issues. The the threading link of all these issues is an artificially constructed dream. It interests to the epistemologists so much as it interests the psycho-analyst. I suppose that, when discovered, the trilogy and this

book in particular will impact philosophy in a way that would remind Freud's impact one century ago.

It seems to be a way that human being has to display and paradoxically *not* display to him(her) self his(her) inner psychic reality, pain, fear and aggression (for example, 1975, p. 41, 161), truths and lies, and to continuously work through the movements from lies to truth and its obverse.

### *The Past Presented*

Volume II follows on developing a more serene, mature, and scientifically minded talk. It includes forefront Mathematics, such as Intuitionism, and an abridged form of the theory of numbers. Also, it includes some parallels between psycho-analysis and mathematics, through a history of the latter. The relative serenity and educated talk is suddenly replaced by renewed cloudy and persecutory until then underlying situations, that surface.

The dream and nightmare construed in volume I is replaced by hallucinosis, hallucination, socially shared hallucinosis, delusion, Evil, and finally death. Which turns to be false, too. (The case of Roland and Man's pistol made of a chocolate bar)

Volume II is realistically bitter on the reality of poverty, and dwells on the limitations of human being. These issues are at work constantly in an analytic session. It seems that there is an unavailability of violence, in reading these two volumes. The sophisticated epistemological bent and a great deal of hints to the analyst. Seminal analytic tenets, such as Transference, Oedipus, PS and D, are continuously evolved. Is a possible aftermath of a Dream an analytic session. Being the case, volume II is an analytic session.

'The Past Presented', furnishes further hints about the intentions and nature of the trilogy together with a host of technical hints to the practicing psycho-analyst.

### *The Dawn of Oblivion*

The third volume's title brings a quasi-poetical formulation: 'The Dawn of Oblivion'. Or the way one deals with one's fear, guilt, reasonless aggression, primary envy and primary narcissism, and glimpses of truth. This book is a *finale* - more serene and mature. It is more integrated and integrative if compared with volumes I and II. It works through many of the issues introduced in the two previous volumes. A big difference is that it concedes place to a less weak or foolhardy woman. The Woman itself appears. This book can be seen as containing isles of PS suffering, more restrained. Is it the wisdom of Old Age?

Priest 'returns' enriched. It gives to the practicing analyst renewed opportunities to scrutinize the interference of religious features in his (her) daily practice and theorization. In the two first volumes the opposition between P.A. and Priest, albeit

not destructive, is more markedly mutually suspicious. In volume III, the interchange is more that of a kind of a good humoured, mutually collaborative counterpoint. The 'music' that springs from their talk is a re-assessment of psycho-analysis and the mystic theologic tradition. They display the possibility of a more reliable scientific vertex in some self-entitled - and socially viewed as - religious people, than in some self-entitled, and socially seen psycho-analysts. Or, in other terms, it can exist a more religiously bigoted posture in some self-entitled, and socially seen psycho-analysts than in declared religious-minded people. The obverse is true: when theologians claim to be truthful they are bigoted. This metaphor serves to many purposes. One of them is a serious social critic toward priesthood and bigotry, as different from theology and the mystic tradition. It also serves to illustrate a point raised in *Transformations* and *Attention and Interpretation*. If compared with these earlier attempts, the continuous questioning assumes a new form. It is more 'practical' due to the dialogical form. It seems to be less assertive or self-assured than it was, at least in what refers to some reader's reactions. In a certain extension the questioning of our practice is presented in such a way that it disburdens the reader of the impact of a direct clash. The bumping is between the imaginary characters, rather than between Bion, the author, and the reader in what concerns to the possibilities of the mystics and of analysts in the pursuit of truth.

He renews his worried with the appearance of 'bionians' who were (and are) closing, saturating, debasing, «jargon-fying» his work, suffoking it under a '*heavy tomb of adoration*'. The saturation seeps in an overt propaganda of a de-saturating credo - being credos, the realm of secular religions. In this sense his macro-social critic increasingly leans more to the micro-social cosmos of the psycho-analytic movement.

### **Stating some iusses into known technical terms. *Catastrophic change***

This term was introduced in *Transformations* as a resistance to change and to perceive an underlying reality (Bion, 1965, p. ). It seems that this is another concept vivified in, and by the Trilogy. The deceiving appearances of socially accepted hypocrisy, with bourgeois overtones, is presented. A kind of violent, murderous revolution happens to be - a revolution intended to keep things unchanged, under the guise of change. The ambience is an invasion of an English farm (owned by Roland) by an army of Nazi-like personalities - which are more competent than the 'Boche'.. There 'is' an unmitigated and complete defeat of England, that despite follows on being 'eternally' itself.

Therefore, the book begins as a novel. It uses abrupt situations pervaded of projective identification, sudden changes from PS to D and their obverse. Childhood and war memoirs, infantile lack of comprehension, a dreamy state, implying in loss of ego boundaries compose the novel. Precocious doubts arouse: the English farm is not it anymore; who's the invader? The characters do not know, the reader does not know either. Have them family names? Perhaps, but it vanishes. Who is the mistress? Who

is the maid? Much like what happens in any household, in fact. Their relationship displays the reversed perspective continuously, with Rosemary dominating physically and mentally her former landlady. Roland finds himself under gunfire. He discovers Robin hidden in a pitiful pigeon cote. He is deluding himself that this ridiculous shelter could protect him forever. *War Memoirs* illuminates the origin of this metaphor. It was one of his riskier moments in life. Prey of ineffable fear, he took a kind of paranoid-catatonic posture, resulting in stupor under gunfire in W.W.I. He states that he survived for sheer luck (Bion, 1921-72, p. 94).

Bion stated an analyst needs a few theories provided he knows them well (Bion, 1962, p. 42; 1963, p.2). None of his quotations, both from analysts and thinkers, is in the usual standardized scientific presentation (which he defended before: Bion, 1962, p. 38). He quotes comparatively few analysts in this work: Freud, Klein, Money-Kyrle, André Green (twice, in volume III). He mentions Elliott Jaques and Hanna Segal in connection with Melanie Klein's surprise and opposition to people who called themselves 'kleinians' (1977, pp. 259 and 360), as well as a compliment to James Strachey due to his outstanding achievement with the translation of Freud. In contrast, the transcendent generators of 'idées-mères' are extensively quoted: Socrates, Plato, Pythagoras, Milton, Shakespeare, Leonardo, Ruskin, Locke, Hume, Pascal, Poincaré, Bacon, Meister Erkhart, Saint John of the Cross, Isaac Luria, Joyce, Pound, Carroll, Heisenberg, Einstein, Wordsworth, Keats, Shelley, Ruskin, Browning, Hopkins, Rimbaud, Joyce...

### **Transformation in 'O', unconscious and transcendence. *Language of Achievement***

*P.A.: Indeed, Melanie Klein discovered that primitive, infantile omnipotence was characterized by fantasies of splitting off undesired features and then evacuating them.*

*ROLAND: I am sure you don't mean that children **think** like that?*

*P.A.: It would be inaccurate and misleading to say so. That is why Melanie Klein called them «omnipotent phantasies». But although I found her verbalizations illuminating, with the passage of time and further investigations which her discoveries made possible, her formulations become debased and became inadequate. These primitive elements of thought are difficult to represent by any verbal formulation, because we have to rely on language which was elaborated later for other purposes. When I tried to employ meaningless terms - alpha and beta were typical - I found that «concepts without intuition which are empty and intuitions without concepts which are blind» rapidly became 'black holes into which turbulence had seeped and empty concepts flooded with riotous meaning.*

*ROBIN: Really - do you blame us if we don't know what you are talking about?*

*P.A.: No. I am not surprised at your protest; in extenuation have found that if I say what I mean it is not English; if I write English it does not say what I mean.*

*PAUL: Theologians are blamed for being incapable of being religious - you are as bad as we are!*

*P.A.: Probably for the same reason. Ultimate Truth is ineffable'. (Bion, 1977, p. 229)*

Is the *Memoir* the written formulation that approximates itself more to psycho-analysis than any written formulation released before it and until now? I think so. According to Bion, it does not qualify to a status higher than a '*fictitious account of psycho-analysis*', that is, a '*talk about psycho-analysis*', (for example: Bion, 1975, p. 8, 132, 201; and especially 1977, p. 303). The same issue was hinted earlier in *Learning from Experience and Transformations*. It is a central issue in Bion's work, to be discerned from '*psycho-analysis proper*'

It seems to me that the *Memoir* is a written vindication of that which Bion had called the '*Language of Achievement*' (1970, Introduction, p. 2). Bion felt it was doomed to failure due to its sense-based media (words). The statements about its failure are made by Bion (just to quote illustrative parts among many: 1975, p. 45; and 1979, 429). In other words, there is no replacement to personal analysis.

The Trilogy implicitly brings the whole of Bion's earlier *theoretical formulations*. Nevertheless, it brushes aside a great deal of their verbal formulations. Does it encircle more successfully those *same* issues? Namely, (i) psychic reality, (ii) truth and the scientific approach in psycho-analysis, (iii) human mental development and involution, (iv) disturbances of perception, Oedipus, dreams and the inception of the principle of reality. For example, one may see a practical replacement to the very concept of 'language of achievement' in vol. 1, p. 191. It seems that just one concept, that of 'transformations', remains in an explicit form, 1975, p. 20, PP.80-2).

### *The numinous realm*

Bion called the ultimately unknowable, but intuitable realm of the unconscious/conscious system, the stuff that the noumena are made of, 'O'. (Which may be read, zero, origin, or whatever meaning one attributes to the sign 'O'). In short, Bion, more usually than not, attributes it to describe the numinous realm.

The phrase, 'universal, transcendent ethos of the unconscious' merits attention. It relies heavily on terms derived from philosophy - which are more often than not, alien to the psycho-analytic lexicon. For *transcendent* I mean the realm of the ultimate truth, the noumena. It is unknowable in its entirety, albeit it can be transiently glimpsed and intuited. Its 'emanations' and effects (the phenomena) are amenable to be sensed. Psycho-analysis, together with science, is a method that can approach it, together with the mystic tradition (Jewish and Christian Cabala: Scholem, 1941; Yates, 1979). Freud, in the end of his life, linked it specifically to the Id, in what concerns to the mystic tradition (Freud, 1939d); he had hinted this before (1915a,b, 1918, 1919, 1920).

In what concerns to the mystic tradition, I would like to make clear that I make a sharp distinction between it and what I call mysticism. The former has to do with theology and above all, those theologians who were abhorred by the religious establishments they stemmed from. The latter has to do with some goals of the religious establishments.

That which is transcendent is underlying, unconscious, timeless. It is the very foundation and typical of mankind, regardless nationality, race, culture. It has inextricable, unknowable links with biology, making for the instincts in Freud's sense. Ultimately unknowable, it was earlier approached by the so-called German Romantics (such as Hamann, circa 1755, Hegel, circa 1817, Goethe, 1832). Those statements are the dry conclusion of a long research stemmed *wholly* from my reading and teaching of *A Memoir of the Future*, which enlightened to me the very roots of Freud's work in Plato, Kant, Goethe and Hegel (Sandler, 1997, 2000a,b, 2001a, 2002, 2003b). I hope the reader can figure out what is that. Any practicing analyst who glimpsed his own unconscious and his patient's unconscious deals with it everyday. It is embedded in Bion's *Transformations, Attention and Interpretation*, and above all, *A Memoir of the Future*. I try to make it explicit and describe its origins. Putting in other words: the ultimately unknowable unconscious (*unbewußt*, not known). The 'true psychic reality' (Freud, 1900, p. 613) is the timeless store of the transcendent noumena that characterize the human species.

One can see by oneself if Bion was able - as I think he was - to put into printed form some formulations that present (beyond representation) some foundations of psycho-analysis, which are essentials of human nature. I quote, for example, the dream processes, in a novel way (see p. 35, 44, and specially 53, and 115, Vol. 1). Does it convey in a hitherto unheard form the universal, transcendent ethos of the unconscious? Bion thought that mystics were more successful than mathematicians in approaching this domain. (Bion, 1965, p. 147). He also trusts poets, specially Milton, Shakespeare, Hopkins and British romantics such as Wordsworth, Shelley, and Keats. Was he hinting at an internal intuitive mystic that inhabits any human being?

Poets and mystics did not have psycho-analytic intentions, whose specificity is Freud's embodiment of the Enlightenment's medical project. Psycho-analysis deals with *individual* human suffering, development.

Right from the start of the very introduction to *A Memoir of the Future* (p. 6) Bion states the psycho-analysts may '*wish to confront what they believe to be 'facts', as near to the noumena as the human animal is likely to get*'. As a matter of consequence, psycho-analysis is also a method to near the noumena as the human animal is likely to get. Paraphrasing Bion: the Trilogy is intended and may be taken and applied with all seriousness in the practice of psycho-analysis by those who wish to near psycho-analysis as the human animal is likely to get.

In what concerns to its timelessness and universality I think that the Trilogy not only derives from, but it in the same league of the contributions of authors such as Socrates, Plato, Dante, Shakespeare, Goethe, Nietzsche, Freud, Einstein and Klein. Differently from these authors, this appreciation does not imply that the Trilogy, albeit displaying unmistakable personal creativity, has artistic or literary value for its own sake. What is implied is that it is as powerful as many literary and musical works in what concerns to approximates to truth. They seem to be scientifically artistic and artistically scientific. They demand an intuitive and empirically minded reader.

Did Bion succeed in putting into words the flux of the unconscious, of the psychic functioning? Undoubtedly he puts into words the paradoxes of psychic reality and life itself. They are composed by irresolvable opposites and their respective syntheses. The latter does not mean rational resolution, but rather an evolving into the unknown, the creative, the new. Did he succeeds in presenting us hate, love, Oedipus, the living conflict between the principle of pleasure/displeasure and the principle of reality, as well as the living interchange between the paranoid-schizoid and depressive positions in a less theoretical form? It is up to the prospective reader to decide for him(her)self.

Those psycho-analytic formulations of the 'transcendent noumena' of human condition have been challenging analysts throughout time, especially if they lack the scientific grasp -- meaning, try to achieve generalizations that are powerful enough to encompass individual cases. (Bacon, 1620, 1625a,b; Hempel, 1962, 1966)

Many tried and try do understand Oedipus, the two principles, the two positions, the instincts. There is nothing to be understood here, as there is nothing to be understood in the paradox of matter and energy as first described by Einstein. They simply are - as they are. They demand to be experienced and intuited. 'Come, give us a taste of your quality' (Hamlet, II, ii, 408).

The 'Pentalogy' seem to me to present all of this without resorting to the theoretical formulations that were debased into labels, jargon, and lost much of their power to many audiences. The terms ceased to express common sense and turned to be common places.

Is my supposition that Bion gives the reader an opportunity of the *very experience* of the interchange between the paranoid-schizoid and depressive positions, in its evolving transience, *as the reader proceeds in the task of reading*? If it is, this feature cannot be overstressed. Does it account for the precocious oblivion and in some parts of the world, abhorrence, it was and is subjected?

The forms chosen are utterly personal. They correspond to the author's real life experiences. I suppose that all great works in psycho-analysis are stemmed from the author's personal experiences which were worked through in the very process of theory making. Freud discovered Oedipus in this way; ditto, for Klein and envy. They were able to work through these experiences, perhaps during the actual act of writing.

They then achieve, paradoxically, a kind of universality. The latter allows, as a scientific discovery, to be recognized by any reader, who may identify his own experiences with the author's attempts to communicate them. I think that the great work of art is that which communicates underlying invariances of the human life through personal forms. I think that the Trilogy is successful in doing this. Instead of photographs of fire, the fire itself is in the writing. It can be 'seen' and 'sensed' by the psycho-analytically experienced reader. Bion, as Freud, preferred that the readers of their works counted with solid psycho-analytic experience. Which translates into personal analysis foremost, and analyzing people as a matter of consequence.

Bion submits the reader of a sensuously apprehensible bombardment whose hallmark is surprise, and novelty. There appear infancy memories in a dream-like description; military experiences in actual warfare; medical and psycho-analytical formation; psychiatric experience; the loss of a wife, of friends and finally the relative the serenity stemmed from finding a real wife. All of this comes, as in a real mind, coupled and uncoupled, intertwined and split.

This work reminds the reader of a reported dream, *as it is being dreamt*. This form of writing that Bion found or created can be seen as his alpha-function and the reader's alpha-function having an opportunity to exercise themselves. That is, Bion bombards the reader with multifarious, chance-driven, sensuously apprehensible free associations in the purest sense of this word. He continuously transforms, expands, contracts these elements that give place to new elements, useful to think. The reader must recall his own life experiences to follow this peculiar path. Then - and only then - the reader find himself in a position to use those elements to think, to dream, to store or recall from his own dream-like memories or knowledge. Bion does not use the label, 'reverie', as he used in *Learning from Experience*. He *does* it in the book.

*A Memoir of the Future* seems to me a passionate act of love to truth and concern to life, free from socially convened right from the start.

## Reactions

'.....you may be accused of insanity. Should I then be though and resilient enough to be regarded and treated as insane while being sane? If so, it is not surprising that psycho-analysts are almost as a function of being analysts, supposed to qualify for being insane and called such. It is part of the price they have to pay for being psycho-analysts' (Bion, 1975, p. 113)

## *A Bumpy Publishing Path*

An editor alone became interested in publishing the two first volumes during Bion's lifetime: Dr. Jayme Salomão. He then ran (and still runs) a respected publishing house in Brazil, Imago. His previous editions were just translations into the Portuguese language; an endeavour he pioneered worldwide, since 1966. In 1974 he tried his hand in publishing Bion's books *in English*, with *Bion's Brazilian Lectures*.

A considerable risk indeed, with difficulties that proved to be insurmountable during those pre-computer days. In the case of the Trilogy it was initially in the *English* language for the sheer lack of a suitable, or willing translator during those times. As far as I know, Dr. Bion was glad in seeing those off-beat books published at all.

A troubled path awaited the books, right from the start. Proof-correcting was a nightmarish task; each correction was followed by a new crop of fresh misprints -- which stubbornly remained despite strenuous efforts to correct them. The binding, quite an achievement to an underdeveloped third world country was seen as shoddy to people from richer countries. These formal drawbacks, conjoined with its novel content, and problems of distribution resulted in dismal sales. The third volume was to be published posthumously in Scotland, by Clunie Press.

The Trilogy, and especially volume III, was the first product of Mrs. Francesca Bion's lovingly dedicated effort to make public his late husband's still unpublished work - an activity she maintains to our days. She already was a skilled copy-editor of Bion's earlier books. Later on she reunited the three volumes into one, and re-issued them in a revamped version (after an idea of another Brazilian editor). In the ensuing years, Mrs. Bion was to release six new books containing previously unpublished data.

### *Outrage and Dismissal: Roots of Oblivion*

Bion's dialogic method was met with bewilderment. He already had observed that a book with no explicit comments on issues such as transference and Oedipus is ill received by the psycho-analytic establishment - what to say of a psycho-analytic book construed with dialogues? (See above, on the 'talking cure') .

The reader will find that explanations of Bion's intentions pervade the books. The explanations are present right from the start. It is not feasible to reproduce them exhaustively within the limits of this paper. The reader may confer for himself in volume I, for example, pp. 4, 5, 98, 110, 119, 132, 139, 175 and 180; or volume III, p.430). How many did detect those explicit explanations? Does the reader would prefer them gathered just in the beginning? One may ask if the 'real life feature' of the books would not be irremediably damaged if Bion had chosen more 'definite', well-known forms. Is real life, logically ordered according grammar, taxonomy or any other rules?

Nevertheless, the explanations are there, following the moments of apparent disarray. Despite them, until now, the establishment reacted badly against the books. Is there any factor other than the one already noticed by Freud, namely, the scarcity of readers vis-a-vis the plethora of unread critics?

Are those books, ahead of its own time? Goethe, who 170 years earlier adopted a similar dialogical style, and touched many of the same issues, was adamant in locking Faust's second part from public eyes. His will dictated that it was to be released 50 years after his death. His final seconds of life were spent with a plea: '*More light!*'

This reaction encircled Bion's contributions at least since 1961. The chairman of the panel at the IPAC held at Edinburgh is said of having thrown away with such a violent contempt the manuscript of Bion's paper on thinking, that the sheets scattered all over the table. Some hit the floor. Adding insult to injury, he is quoted of responsible of an enraged exclamation: «*This is not psycho-analysis anymore*». The same source states that Bion's reaction was to rise, gather the sheets together and going out calmly, to take a seat in the audience. It was reputed as a surprising fact, taking in account his corpulent complexion (Bicudo, 1996).

I was personally surprised When looking for someone that could help me in the study of the Trilogy, back in 1988, and trying to share my interest about it, I looked for a well-known, prestigious 'kleinian' practitioner with a past marked by progressive postures, who then claimed and was socially acknowledged to be a Bion scholar. I was surprised in being answered exactly this: this person's view was that the Trilogy was not a psycho-analytic writing. This person's name shall remain unquoted, for my intent is to illustrate a state of affairs, rather than to criticize personalities.

I would dispense with the still widespread, at hand, answer that I often hear. The reasons to the dismissal are to be found in the books themselves. They are, according some, bad written, unintelligible, crazed, and frolics of old-age. I suppose that to believe in such kind of explanation is a denial of psycho-analysis itself. For it attributes *external* causes to one's emotions and behaviour, rather than to look for them intrapsychically, in the reader's mind. Is projective identification the main bearing of such a belief, that is, did the harsh critic tries to put outside, something that is internal - namely, the painful difficulties in following on a real-life thread?

One must divest oneself of 'Cartesian' habits of mind to dive into an apparent maze. The neo-nazi (in the extent that nazism can be new) invasion of England coupled with a multitude of characters, thinking, quotations whose authors remain unnamed seems to many unbearable. Did Bion think that any schooled reader would recognize them? Or did he invite the reader to look for the unknown quotation's origins? The second alternative, if one bears on Mrs.. Bion's comments about his posture (Francesca Bion, 1981) seems more probable.

Does *A Memoir of the Future* raises in a logarithmic scale a kind of reaction already felt before with Klein's work? It was deemed as unintelligible - for it demands analytic experience and intuition before the unknown to be read. Freud was seen as an imagination-ridden, lascivious crazed writer. Anyway, Freud's was largely 'understood'. He was a very gifted writer who won a literature award, the Goethe Prize. Is it intelligibility just its drawback? According to Bion, people understand it, but remain deaf and blind to that which it conveys. The Trilogy definitively cannot be grasped by the rational powers of mind.

Are some of the reactions linked to Bion's warnings? Bion already had warned many times that psycho-analysts were occupying themselves too much with rational

meanings, causes and effects. In doing so, they had lost the ethos of psycho-analysis. It became a disordered looking for *ad hoc* theories, both intra-sessionally and in 'scientific' meetings. They furnished too much of too much formulations that unwittingly addressed the same underlying facts and psychic structures - which remained unseen (A fact noticed by Bion before; 1965, 4, 84, 96).

The formulations and their authors remained lost in the darkness of ignorance while believing to own absolute truth. The formulations were duly clothed, sometimes skillfully, by psycho-analytic jargon. Is this jargon, the '*learned lumber*' of the '*bookful blockhead*', to quote Alexander Pope? Sir Thomas Beecham, a most gifted conductor is quoted to state that a musicologist is one who knows music, but cannot hear it. Or, in Bion's own terms, which I think is in the wake of Popper, probably less sarcastic than Beecham's, but by no means less serious, '*the erudite can see that a description is by Freud, or Melanie Klein, but remain blind to the thing described. Freud said infants were sexual; this was denied or reburied.*'. This phrase makes a seminal part of the very introduction of the trilogy (1975, p. 5).

The Pope-Beecham-Bion posture may be dismissed in some quarters with the derisive epithet, '*These are mere British empiricists*'. They forget that sound empiric foundations gave birth to psycho-analysis and were the sole basis of Freud's developments. Practitioners with hermeneutic of philosophical formation tend to blur the limits of psycho-analysis with philosophy and literature. Freud's rebuking of André Breton is duly forgotten.

Is my supposition advanced above, namely, that Bion gives the reader the opportunity of the *very experience* of the interchange between the paranoid-schizoid and depressive positions, in its evolving transience, *as the reader proceeds in the task of reading* valid? If so, this feature of the books cannot be overstressed. Does it account for the precocious oblivion and in some parts of the world, abhorrence, that the Trilogy was, and is subjected?

In volume II, Bion raises the tone: '*His Satanic Jargonieur took offence; on some pretence that psycho-analytic jargon was being eroded by eruptions of clarity...*'. He hints at his own receipt that explains the form he choose to the whole trilogy: '*.....I was compelled to seek asylum in fiction. Disguised as fiction, the truth occasionally slipped through*' (1977, 302). Is not it that is the foundations of dreams themselves?

Or, as it occurs many times, he compacts both postures into a single one:

'*ROSEMARY Too old - deafened by years of jargon. Blinded by facts and concepts and psycho-analysis. I had a friend who was a marvelous cook until she took a cookery course. After that she couldn't even boil an egg!*' (Bion, 1977, p. 310)'

The reader's disposition to entertain second thoughts about his acquired habits of mind, feelings of superiority and authority determines if he or she is able to stand this

kind of criticism. Many feel the criticism itself as a display of arrogance. Is projective identification at work here?

### *Aftermath of the dismissal*

The fact that remains, and only grew destructively, is that the whole psychic-analytic movement risked and despite Bion's warnings still risk to be '*...a tale/ Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing*' (MacBeth, V, v, 26). Is that, rather than just changing social conditions, the true origin of the so-called 'crisis' that analysts all over the world complain about? Statements such as that one quoted above, about the realness of Falstaff, '*a known artifact*' may outrage those who are not used to practice self-criticism. According T.S.Elliott, this latter produces poetry.

One must not restrict oneself to 'mortal sight', to quote again one of Bion's favourite quotations, from the poets Milton and Wordsworth (Smith, 1921). This is the realm of psycho-analysis, light-years beyond ideas of mental health and disease and judgmental values with their attending positivist explanatory schemata. Memoirs of the future which are cast from the past presented is the ever-present *evolving* stuff of any psycho-analytic session, if one allows it to evolve, to become, to exist as it is. Perhaps a synonym could be, 'present'. Bion puts it succinctly: '*The practical point is - no further investigation of psycho-analysis, but the psyche it betrays. **That** needs to be investigated through the medium of **mental** patterns; **that** which is indicated is **not** a symptom; **that** is not a case of the symptom; **that** is not a disease or **anything** subordinate. psycho-analysis itself is just a stripe on the coat of the tiger. Ultimately it may meet the Tiger - The Thing Itself - O*' (1975, p. 112)

Are those books' criticisms to the psycho-analytic establishment grudges? Or are them a loving, hard act of someone who wrote a memoir of the future and for the future? Did he saw the future casting its shadow just like a light that comes from behind? Was he trying to save the nowadays seemingly sinking ship of the psycho-analytic establishment?

### *The establishment: wars among analysts*

Is Bion's criticism of «-ians» and «-ists» of any guise one of the still unrecognized sources of abhorrence against the Trilogy?

As an example, let us return to the fictitious characters Adolph Tyrannosaurus and Albert Stegosaurus. He compares the 'wars among psycho-analysts' as he calls them, with the wars between Germans and Britons, mainly W.W.I and II. The name Adolph is evidently drawn from Hitler and the name Albert, from Queen Victoria's husband. The reference is to the British Empire, a modern-day Stegosaurus, and the German murderous Dictator, a Tyrannosaurus re-incarnate. Significantly, the Hollenzolerns and the Windsors were relatives, as one may see that the warring self-entitled 'freudians', 'kleinians', 'bionians', 'junguians', 'kohutians', 'winnicottians' (their names are legion).

The criticism follows on with Klein's bewilderment and disagreement that people could call themselves, 'kleinians'. The same occurred with Freud, according Jones (1953-56). One may also consult *Cogitations*, pp.379. There can be no 'bionians'; he stimulated no followers, apostles, ministers, heirs. Parthenope Bion Talamo, who unfortunately left us so early, came to the point of writing a paper entitled, 'Why we cannot call ourselves bionians'.

Whiffs of small acceptance are creeping. My attempts are an expression of this phenomenon. I first translated the Trilogy to my native tongue. Then I wrote about it in papers and books. They were published mainly in Brazil. More recently, some papers in which I have been quoting extensively parts of were finally accepted to be delivered at IPACs and published worldwide (Sandler, 1987, 2001b, 2001c, 2003a). My efforts included to give courses on it in the local psycho-analytic institute (since 1988) and in a post-graduate training at the local state university (1998), also unheard of before in Brazil or abroad. These attempts met with reactions that echo that which occurred with the trilogy itself. They were regarded within a spectrum that ranges from undue or crazed to enticing .

I think I share, albeit in an incomparably small scale, for I suppose that my work lacks creativity, the fate of Bion's unenviable status as a darned author. That is, those who met with strong, sometimes murderous resistance during their lifetime. Their work was extensively dislodged into the future generations, just like Socrates, Colombo, Schubert, van Gogh, Rimbaud, Wilde, and Tchaikovsky. Their name are legion. Even Bach had to wait for a Mendelsohn to rescue his work 150 years later. Very few recognized Bach's value, such as Mozart and Beethoven. Who were among the small lot that met with acknowledgement during their lifetime. The caring professions are not socially valued; the truth-speakers are safely hurled as memoirs to the future.

*'Are we...prepared to tell our children, and our children's children, what price they would pay if they served their fellows?'* (Bion, 1979, p. 508).

*'We are all scandalized by bigotry. We are none of us bigot-generators; that is, we none of us admit being the spring from whom bigotry flows. As a result we do not recognize those of our offspring of whose characters we disapprove'* (Bion, 1977, p. 228).

In this sense Bion was successful in not creating followers or disciples. But now he is dead, and cannot obstacle this. Even the Trilogy's form is being copied. The self-empowered scholastic, apostolic followers, apostles and authorities of Freud, Klein, Bion, etc. seem to be unaware of Kant's warning: *'Shall God protect me from my friends, because from my enemies I know how to protect myself'*. Who will protect psycho-analysis from the psycho-analytical establishment?

I am reminded of a good-humoured, sensitive, sharp, and deep observer of human

truth: Machado de Assis. His enlightened, truthful prose puts him as the most complete and important Brazilian writer ever, in the same league of the greatest writers of all times. As any great literary work, his books call for a dialoging reader. One of his books is named 'Braz Cubas' Posthumous Memoirs'. It is history of a deceased man (named Braz Cubas) who writes his memoirs...There are many similarities with the Trilogy, especially in what regards the serious humour.

Meg Harris Williams puts it succinctly: 'A Memoir of the Future' is Bion's most important legacy to mankind. I add: yet to be discovered. It is the paradoxical compacted novel form to synthesize *and* expand all his earlier work. It is an advanced post of more than eighty years of life and more than forty years of practicing psycho-analysis. In this sense, it is a 'practical' lesson of his earlier theoretical forms of writing. He was free from pseudo-scientific, established fetters.

My first attempt was to make a book review. Up to 1981 there was any. It was accepted for publication in Brazil. As it is well known, Brazilians were among the first to precociously accept and use Bion's contributions. My next step was to perpetrate the first version ever to another language of those books. A considerable risk to anyone's repute: *Traduttore, traditore* goes the Italian ditto (The translator is ever a traitor).

If it is true, as I wrote above, that these books embody the universal language of the unconscious, the failures of a translation are partially balanced by the reader's analytic experience. Otherwise, no one could claim to be an analyst with the exception those which are German-speaking people. Using Bion's model from mathematics: provided the translator grasp and conserve the invariances of the originals in psycho-analysis, which by their turn are invariances of mankind, knowing no race, nationality and culture, linguistic limitations turn into epiphenomena. The term 'trans-creation', proposed by the brothers Campos (Augusto and Haroldo), two Brazilian poets who doubles as translators, seems to be more adequate. I looked for all people in Brazil who had personal experience with Bion - he had died in 1979. With a sole exception, a British national, nobody did read the books here. The single reader I mention discussed it with me during some months, but his interest and knowledge on these books faded out soon - being re-awakened after my translation attempt and a push from Mrs. Bion, who knew him.

Bion's use of the English language, and some of the issues approached seemed beyond the Brazilian readers' reading capabilities. I was becoming increasingly bewildered by those reactions. As my own experience in the English language, psychiatry, medicine, psycho-analysis, and life did not differ so much from that of those colleagues, there was something intriguing in their response. Those experiences obtruded spontaneously as I carried on the reading. Sometimes they overhang in an explosive, multifarious way, seemingly ignited by the writing way.

My next step was to look for distinguished British analysts with a history of forefront

views in psycho-analysis. Some of them were acknowledged by Bion in his books, be it in the text or opening notes. I supposed they were keen on Bion's work. Moreover, they nourished this idea. I did this in flesh and by letter.

With the sole exception of one, who quoted a small line from the Trilogy when he delivered a tribute to Bion just after he died, all of the lot retorted against the Trilogy. Their answers ranged from dismissal to loathing. They could not say, as some among the Brazilians said, 'I cannot manage to read those books'. In 1988, one of them wrote me a letter stating that the Trilogy had nothing to do with psycho-analysis. Other one declared, 'it's just the frolics of an old man'. As late as 2002, one stated publicly that Bion was a 'deteriorated man', 'gaga' since the time he wrote *Transformations*. What to say about the Trilogy? I keep the letters and recording of those comments. My intention in quoting this real fact, which collided with my own impression, is solely to gauge the objections, beared on facts. The illustration is not to be taken as a libelous criticism against those colleagues. I think that they simply displayed some of their human limitations, and merit compassion. During this time, I looked for the help of the local British Council, who put at my disposal an employee, Consuelo Colinvaux, who helped me a lot - for she had lived in the UK during more than ten years, and the BC had a military attaché who was keen in military slang that is the books. Their reaction was of amazement and discovery. Ditto, for a local professor of Russian at the University, Boris Schnaiderman. He was a seasoned translator, had a degree in Philosophy, and gifted writer. The same occurred with my consult to the Campos brothers. One of them, Augusto, had made Portuguese versions of Lewis Carroll and James Joyce -- including Finnegans Wake. By the way, the Trilogy seemed to me very similar to the latter, in some respects. All these incoherent reactions were linked to my considerable distress, for I was worried that no analysts, but knowledgeable persons with humanist formation became interested in the books. Very interested, in fact. I was reminded of the reaction of the medical milieu against Freud's work.

With the idea of giving up the attempt to follow on conversing with someone about the books I was reminded that Bion dedicated all of his earlier publications to his wife. So I decided to look for her. A first result of her generous collaboration was the translation itself, a world's first. Mrs.. Bion had misgivings about the feasibility of translating the books, but supported the project. I found in her the most knowledgeable person I had ever met in Bion's work. She put at my disposal the seriousness and knowledge of a scholar. I am not able to be grateful enough to her - we exchanged around 50 letters; she illuminated more than 300 doubts I submitted her.

The Brazilian version of vol. I was readied in the dawn of 1982; vol. II in 1983, vol. III in 1985. Due to a conjunction - which I feel as perverse - of at least two factor, the publication was delayed. Both were of a political nature; one in the macro and one in the micro-dimension. Politic factors in Brazil determined that people had to

endure a yearly adjusted inflation rate that climbed from 500% to 3000% (it reached 5000% a few years later). Micro-socially, the local psycho-analytical movement turned rabidly against the work of Bion after his death. It seemed to me, at least partially, a natural reaction following the overwhelming enthusiasm which had many features of religious idealization and bigotry, that had occurred before. There were attempts to erect new idols (all of them frustrated). The volume I came to light only in 1989, published by Editora Martins Fontes. Again, low sales and inflation resulted in their giving up the project. Volumes II and III had to wait until 1996, when Imago Editora had improved their cash flow and decided to take over the project.

A knowledgeable, experienced analyst, a British national living in the US, Dr Albert Mason, is famed both by his good humoured verve and due to a close friendship with Bion and his family. When he became acquainted with my translations, which he could not read, he stared at me and said: 'Could you please translate it into English too?'.

During twelve years (from 1975 to 1988) the Trilogy remained unquoted in the international literature. My difficulty in accepting, and understand this precocious oblivion was such that I decided to write that book I described earlier, as a primer. I wished it could serve as an invitation to the reading of the books. I had the displeasure to see my book selling more than the translation itself. I had to conclude that I failed in inviting people to read the Trilogy as I pretended. An initial interest abroad by two known publishers receded. One of them made the already known objections to the Trilogy. Another one argued that Bion's books did not sell well, specially the Trilogy, so there seemed to be little commercial sense in publishing an introduction to it.

After more 10 years from that date, that is, 1998, a few scattered mentions appeared in the literature, as for example Meg Harris Williams (1983), and Parthenope Bion Talamo's report in an official panel on Bion organized by Dr León Grinberg, at the IPAC San Francisco (1995). Only now, after more than a quarter of century, more belated mentions are heard of. A second introductory book was written in Italy in 2004; also in Argentina. Significantly, all of them were published in Latin languages.

### *Teaching Bion's Work with the help of the Trilogy*

In my classes to a post-graduate course in the local University, from 1998 to now I *begin* my teaching of Bion with the Trilogy. In making correlation and pinpointing where such and such issue is in this and that previous work, surprising results in what concerns to an earlier, firmer grasp of Bion's earlier concepts occurred. We use a group reading where each pupil performs the role of each character.

### **Finish or beginning?**

I cannot convey the help this Trilogy had provided, and still provides me - foremost in my work with patients. Also, it provided me a way to organize my knowledge on

epistemology. It provided me a kind of informal course on non-academic realizations in philosophy, as well as the links between analysis and other scientific disciplines such as biology, physics, and mathematics, as well as both in philosophy of mathematics, and of science. One may read the chapters beginning at pages 127 and 138, Vol. I, to glance these issues.

Also, in what concerns to theory, it is the main source of inspiration to a series of books I wrote in Portuguese. It is named *A Apreensão da Realidade Psíquica* (The Apprehension of Psychic Reality) - seven volumes already release by Imago Editora, Rio de Janeiro, from 1997 to 2003) that deals with the roots of Freud, Klein and Bion's work in the history of Western thinking as well as their contribution to solve old philisophical coundruns.

Few psycho-analytic books had helped me so much in order to apprehend psychic reality as it is. Through faithfully following its own advice, it contains '*no further investigation of psycho-analysis*' but rather, it helps the reader to elicit by himself and sometimes in himself, '*the psyche it betrays*'. We may finish this paper with two excerpts that may prove revealing (the reader must be reminded that the sign 'O' below stands for the noumena):

*'PA ....«What is truth? said jesting Pilatos»; Bacon himself did not wait for an answer because he knew he might be killed if he did. Physical death is a hard price to pay - especially for those of us who, from training and observation believe in the obliteration of the body. I believe also in the obliteration of one's respect for the truth; it is not simply by physical methods - alcohol, for example -- that one can destroy one's capacity for discerning or proclaiming the Truth.*

*PRIEST I believe in moral, religious death. Truth can be poisoned; it ca be allowed to die of neglect or be poisoned by seductions, cowardice too often repeated. But Truth is robust; 'facts' cannot be killed even if we do not know what they are. The fragile human respect for the truth cannot be as easily disposed of as often appears.*

*PA I hope you are right. I cannot, however, say that my knowledge of myself or others provides me food for hope. Religion itself gives evidence of the great force of power, bigotry, ignorance; and psycho-analysis is shot through with error and defects of us humans who try to practice it' (Bion, 1979, p. 499).*

*'MYSELF.....I have suggested a «trick» by which one could manipulate things which have no meaning by the use of sounds like «a» and «b». These are sounds analogous, as Kant said, to «thoughts without concepts», but the principle, or a reality approximating to it, is also extensible to words in common use. The realizations which approximate to words such as «memory» and «desire» are opaque. The «thing-in-itself», impregnated with the opacity, itself becomes opaque; the O, of which «memory» and «desire» is the verbal counterpart, is opaque. I suggest this quality of opacity inheres in many O's and their verbal counterparts, and the*

*phenomena which it is usually supposed to express. If, by experiment, we discovered the verbal forms, we could also discover the thoughts to which the observation applied specifically. Thus we achieve a situation in which these could be used deliberately to obscure specific thoughts.*

*BION Is there anything new in this? You must often have heard, as I have, people say they don't know what you are talking about and that you are being deliberately obscure.*

*MYSE They are flattering me! I am suggesting an aim, an ambition, which, if I could achieve, would enable me to be deliberately and **precisely** obscure; in which I could use certain words which could activate precisely and instantaneously, in the mind of the listener, a thought or train of thought that came between him and the thoughts and ideas already accessible and available to him.*

*ROSEMARY Oh, my God! (Bion, 1975, p. 190)*

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