Adolescent States of Mind Recalled in Bion's 'The Long Weekend'

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Abstract

This research examines W. R. Bion's autobiography 'The Long Weekend: Part of a Life (1897 - 1919)' in which he tells the story of what happened to him during his childhood, adolescence, and young adulthood including an account of those around him and what was happening to them, especially in their relationships with him. A very painful upbringing is portrayed; one that is full of emotional deprivations. The nature of memory and the autobiographical method, including the text as a partial and selective account of his schooldays, is considered and viewed as having the potential to arrive at intimate truths given the condition of interior observation is met. Psychoanalytic conceptualizations of the adolescent states of mind that Bion recalls are made using a reverie-informed approach and drawing on contemporary psychoanalytic writing to add a further perspective to the one he chose to provide. What is presented is a personal reading of the pre/adolescent states of mind Bion describes at his Hertfordshire boarding school. The social-contextual aspects of Bion's situation who was also a child of his time are also considered and viewed as providing the clues to the emotional atmosphere he grew up in. The focus is on the impact of this atmosphere on his interior states. A further argument is presented that Bion's descriptions of his pre/adolescent states of mind have unique value to the understanding of wider experiences of adolescent development, both in his time and as it is relevant to adolescent development today, especially in its more deprived instances such as with child psychotherapists' experiences. Research findings reveal the ubiquitous nature of adolescent bullying, the importance for boys to have access to helpful male figures to identify with, the dangers of socio-political censoring of adolescent boys' sexuality and the impact of anxiety and deprivation on their capacities to relate. They also contribute to biographical understandings of the child Bion.

Keywords: Bion, autobiography, memory, adolescent states of mind, intimate truths

Declaration

This submission is my own work and the ideas and written work of others have been fully identified and referenced throughout. The word length for the main body of the thesis is 61326 words. Issues pertaining to confidentiality and research ethics have been comprehensively assessed and considered. This study did not require UREC approval as it is a secondary research analysis of material already in the public domain.

Contents

Abbreviations

The full title of W. R. Bion's 'The Long Weekend: Part of a Life (1897- 1919)' is frequently abbreviated to 'Weekend'. Similarly, his work 'All My Sins Remembered: Another Part of a Life' is shortened to 'Sins'. These abbreviations follow the precedent set by Meg Harris Williams in her book 'Bion's Dream: A Reading of the Autobiographies' (2010).

'Auto/biography' is used to denote the terms 'autobiography' and 'biography' at the same time. 'Prep school' is used throughout as an abbreviation of 'preparatory school'. 'Pre/adolescent' contains the terms 'pre-adolescent' and 'adolescent' at once. Lastly, the common acronyms WWI and WWII are used to abbreviate World War One and World War Two respectively.

Acknowledgements

Introduction

Scope and intended contribution of the project

In this thesis, I explore the nature of adolescent states of mind recalled in Bion's autobiography about his childhood, 'The Long Weekend' (1982a). My emphases are his early to mid-adolescent years spent at boarding school in England, rather than his experiences as a young soldier in WWI that form the large part of the work. How Bion's states of mind are revealed via the autobiographical method and how they relate to contemporary psychoanalytic theories on adolescence are of central interest. I also consider his work's unique contribution to understanding the lives of neglected school-aged adolescents, and indeed adults who suffered neglect during their adolescent years.

My own interest in the project is as follows. First, nearing the end of my clinical training, I felt a demand within myself to further my theoretical knowledge on the adolescent process. I had been training in a specialist NHS psychotherapy service for adolescents and young adults and was often, and rightly, given much to think about by my patients. I found myself wanting to build resources to understand the complex processes of this developmental stage. Establishing a research project within which psychoanalytic models of understanding could be studied- in breadth, depth and with sensitivity- provided me with such an opportunity.

As I begin to think back on the project I have undertaken and why, I realize that I was grappling with internal pressures that included felt requirements to orientate myself adequately and rather rapidly within a service in which patients' experiences are aptly described as *"the hour of the stranger"* (Lawrence, 1923, p.102) as Margot Waddell (2018, p. 31) points out - an interesting institutional countertransference. Adolescents increasingly provoke much anxiety, disturbance, and calls for concern in the public sphere and invariably, although less widely acknowledged, privately within oneself. Adolescence is an important topic that requires continuing attention and debate. It is necessary to think in the current socio-political climate, why, to choose just one example, rates of deliberate self-harm (Morgan et al, 2017) and A&E attendance (NHS Digital, 2017) for this population are increasing whilst, simultaneously, there are reductions in resources provided to

specialist NHS CAMHS (Association of Child Psychotherapists, 2018)[1]. These reductions include those in respect to expertise and experience (including psychoanalytic expertise) and, consequently, in the quality and range of interventions available to youngsters. I have many thoughts on the contributory factors here[2]. However, I think it essential to include the shame and disavowal of our own private struggles with adolescence, something we can all feel, and how this has become enacted at a socio-political level and maintained at a service level in the current climate.

Pubertal development triggers a monumental new phase in growing up with tectonic emotional and physical shifts, and seismic changes in relationships. O'Shaughnessy describes puberty as a call towards the new and for independence away from *"the huddle of the family"* (2018, xvii) that contradictorily *"reawakens the earliest needs and sexual strivings"* (*ibid.*). At the same time, it is a period that can provide fresh, new opportunities for exploration and learning, as well as creativity and enjoyment. It is supposed to be turbulent, even for the adolescent who had the most optimal early experiences and whose environment is adequate to support the developmental stage's challenges and demands. It will likely be a further difficult and even more disturbing time for the child who has suffered adverse childhood events. However, for those who spend their adolescent years in sub-optimal settings and have had psychically disruptive early experiences – often including abuse and neglect – the outcomes can be devastating. The inevitable solutions seem to be ones where early defences are hardened, defences that were adaptive at the time but prevent the establishment of helpful relationships in the present. As a result, having a good chance of working out and working through a sense of themselves in the adult world becomes slim. Fortunately, as I shall discuss in the course of this thesis, opportunities for finding a sense of selfhood are not fixed during the adolescent years. Adolescence is a state of mind that we all have and move in and out of; hopefully realizing this as we become older and more able to move beyond

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[1] The government's most recent green paper on mental health, *Transforming Children and Young People's Mental Health Provision* (2017), omitted to include increased provision of highly skilled core professionals within specialist CAMHS.

[2] See also David Bell's commentary *Mental Illness and its Treatment Today* that describes the harmful neoliberal context affecting views of mental illness (2014) and Maria Papadima's paper *Rethinking Self-Harm* (2019) for a view on the contemporary self-harm discourse.

it. Working through our own unique states of mind as they were in adolescence, and continue with us into adulthood, is possible, and may even be a lifetime's work if we can find the relationships and setting in which to 'learn from experience'- to use Bion's term (1962). I view it as a rich and sustaining area to work in and study despite the difficulties and effort required in the emotional and academic processes of coming to know it, especially during its rougher, bruising and sometimes downright dark moments.

Second, I was drawn to the artist and psychoanalytic author Meg Harris Williams's observation (2012) that autobiography has important resonances with psychoanalysis. She notes how Bion described psychoanalysis as a means of introducing the patient to himself and states that 'psychoanalytic autobiography', a term I scrutinize in my chapter on the autobiographical method, is another of those means (p. 398). I found myself being interested in the ways adolescent patients tended to tell their stories in the clinic or sometimes could not. In my own personal analysis – a core component of all psychoanalytic clinical trainings – I was involved in working out something of my own autobiography, beginning to understand my own growing up and adolescence and its impact on me in the present—a continuing process.

Third, and crucially for my project's genesis, at the time of developing my proposal, I was studying Bion's major theoretical contributions to psychoanalysis in more depth for the first time. Whilst I am still developing my understanding of these concepts, I already find them indispensable to understanding clinical material as well as relationships outside of the consulting room. Whilst studying Bion I found myself interested in getting to know the man through his autobiographies and biographies. I first read 'Weekend' during what felt like a long, and somewhat lonely holiday break between lectures and analysis whilst going through a loss of my own – the break-up of a relationship. The reader will understand why I do not go further into that set of personal details in this thesis, but I wish to convey it involved beginning to piece together my own sense of self in the new circumstances I found myself in. Given this, it may also help the reader understand why, whilst painful and demanding reading, I found the company of 'Weekend' difficult to put down.

I also found that the personal states of mind Bion describes in 'Weekend' seemed to have pervasive resonances familiar to me in a more general sense from work with patients I saw in the clinic. These included states of extreme persecution, depression, destructive narcissism, internal impoverishment, difficulty playing, shame, and absolute hatred of infantile needs for dependency, amongst others. I became interested in exploring whether 'Weekend' might shed further light on these challenging clinical issues.

I am still unsure whether knowing something about Bion 'the man' is necessary to understand his theories. However, I lean towards thinking it may be and that his theories are certainly enriched by it. Such knowledge has certainly increased meaning for myself as I develop my understandings of them. To my surprise, I do not yet know of any colleagues from my training cohort[3] who have read 'Weekend' in full. Whilst I wholeheartedly encourage its study, it is interesting to think why it is not more frequently pursued by junior child psychotherapists at present, almost forty years after its publication. Partly his theoretical writings are pithy and challenging to read, just like his autobiographical writing style.

Additionally, Bion's story of his pre/adolescent years is one of quite staggering suffering. Following his bewildering early years in India with his *"completely cracked"* parents (Bion, 1985, p. 88), although he did have an ayah who he loved very much, he was sent to a dire boarding school in England where he was neglected, particularly at the prep school. It is only by stark chance, although extremely fortuitously for psychoanalysis and beyond, that he was not killed on the battlefields of Amiens, France, during WWI. How he then became able to articulate his own experiences is equally remarkable, as I attempt to draw out in the biographical commentary in this 'Introduction'.

My view is that a fuller understanding of the aspects of his life that make up 'the man' vitalize his constructs. Take, for example, as Brown (2012), Souter (2009), Roper (2012) and Szykierski (2012) also point out, considerations of his own traumatic roots on his container-contained theory (1963) where unbearable anxieties are attended to, transformed in alpha function and accumulate meaning. His second

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[3] My training cohort qualified in 2018.

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wife, Francesca Bion, who after he died devoted her life to publicizing his work wrote two decades after his death how,

> Before studying the work of original thinkers in the field of human behaviour and the human mind, it is surely valuable to know what influences and experiences contributed to their personalities, especially as seen through their own eyes. (1995, p. 91)

I have indeed found it of great value, both personally and professionally, although rarely an easy companion over the past few years' work on this project. Bion's accounts of his schooldays in 'Weekend' are agonizing and make for extremely painful reading. I want my thesis on 'Weekend' to be read with an acknowledgement of my own appreciation for its existence and how it came into being.

There is a plethora of writing about Bion. Many authors grapple with his theoretical contributions to psychoanalysis and their applications to clinical work. Relatively few have taken 'Weekend' as their primary focus, although several authors reference it, tending to relate the work to his theoretical concepts. The late James Grotstein wrote how those who do champion his autobiographical works see them as his greatest gift to psychoanalysis (2011).

Harris Williams has published her own uniquely personal 'readings' of 'Weekend', its sequel 'All My Sins Remembered' (1985) and his fictional trilogy 'A Memoir of the Future' comprising 'The Dream' (1975), 'The Past Presented' (1977a) and 'The Dawn of Oblivion' (1979), which she sees as key to his self-analysis and the finest examples of his teaching method (Harris Williams, 1983 and 2010).

Bléandonu's short chapter, 'The Naked Truth, or The Autobiography' (1994, pp. 265 -271), in his biography 'Wilfred Bion: His Life and Works, 1897-1979' notes how 'Weekend' was written by Bion the eighty-year-old and how his eight years of analysis gave him *"time to reflect on, and to integrate, his adolescent emotions"* (p. 268).

Waddell has made several important and specific contributions to readings of Bion's 'Weekend' and her deep understanding of Bion is a thread that runs throughout her published work. First, there is her comprehensive literary review (1984) published shortly after the posthumous publication of 'Weekend' in 1982. Second, she makes use of specific excerpts of the text from 'Weekend' to explore the nature of 'meaning' and 'meaninglessness' in the line of post-Kleinian thought (2013). She notes how 'meaning' for Bion found an internal position.

> For the generation of this kind of meaning to begin, one has to posit that an interactive process must be occurring, at least some of the time, whereby an infant, or a person of whatever age, may be enabled to engage with, and begin to make sense of, the emotional, indeed passionate, experiences that impinge upon him or her. This model of the mind is one of a thinking and learning apparatus for coming to know oneself as truthfully as possible through the capacity to learn from experience. Such a capacity begins when the earliest and most basic meaningless elements of physical and emotional experience ... are transformed by the receptive inner capacities of the other. (Waddell, 2013, pp. 13-14)

Waddell recalls how Bion's mother did not know what to do with him when as a young child, he asked lots of questions in desperate attempts to *"allay his confusion and persecutory terror"* (p. 14). Hurt by his mother, who said she was *"busy"* when he continued to ask her, he took his frustrations out on his sister, boxing her on the ears, and in turn got handed to his father, who beat him (Bion, 1982a, pp. 14-15). It is, writes Waddell,

> Small wonder, perhaps that meaning became the heart of the matter for his life's work. This was precisely what Bion had so desperately needed in his childhood. (2013, p. 18)

Third, her chapters on bullying (Waddell, 2002 and 2018) draw directly from an understanding of Bion's own raw descriptions of painful experiences of bullying upon his arrival at the prep school (Bion, 1982a, pp. 43- 44) as I come to explore further myself in this thesis.

Michael Roper's fascinating paper 'Beyond Containing' (2012) considers, via examination of a range of Bion's life writing, how and why memories of WWI seem to shift and accumulate meaning over time and their relation to the clinical theories he developed forty years later. Roper includes a discussion of 'Weekend', which contains his final descriptions of WWI in the light of his earlier 'War Memoirs' (1997), diary-like accounts written between 1917 and 1919 that were originally intended for his parents to read[4]. He argues that Bion's memories towards the end of his life came to closely fit his clinical ideas and, perhaps crucially, his own painful and life-long struggle with articulating his traumatic experiences in WWI. For example, Roper notes that Bion's 1919 account of the battlefield in Amiens conveys a picture of a young officer trying to act in what he feels are his men's best interests. However, his reassurance cannot conceal the catastrophic nature of one fatally injured

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[4] Bléandonu reports that Bion lost his original diary entries and decided to re-write them after the war (1994).

soldier's wound, Sweeting. In his 1958 account, 'Amiens', Bion seems to shift emphasis in order to sharpen the failed aspects of containment as Sweeting calling out for his mother as he dies is further impressed on the reader. Bion's developing understanding from work with psychotics at the time, especially the role of failed early experiences of maternal containment, was becoming more evident to him in the late 1950s. It was not until 'Weekend' that Roper feels Bion was both able and compelled to bring psychoanalysis and his experiences of WWI into a relationship. Roper emphasizes Francesca Bion's role, who provided a secure home life for Bion from the 1950s. He notes how her empathy and attentiveness to domestic tasks that Bion lacked early on also *"made it possible to bring the war to life"* (Roper, 2012, p. 129).

More recently, Robert Ehrlich (2017) has fired several criticisms at *Weekend.* He argues that Bion makes *"insufficient use of his own theoretical observations regarding the potential severity of the superego"* (p. 660) and does not consider his own propensity to condemn himself that he feels was sustained over his lifetime. He says, *"Bion is trying to understand the nature of his terror, and it is possible that at times he becomes moralistic because that is more emotionally tolerable than engaging in further exploration of his unbearable anxiety"* (p. 661). As I will come to describe in this thesis, I tend to disagree and think Bion is acutely aware of the matter of unbearableness and that there are other ways of explaining the self-derogatory remarks he makes at times in 'Weekend'. He was in an 'emotional mess' at school, and arguably his personal difficulties with women later attest to the long-lasting impact of this. However, he knows it as 'the writer' and how his life changed with the love and loyal companionship of Francesca. Bion's understanding as he writes, of the nature and impact of the evangelical, religious morality of the age on him can also be detected. I view the essence of 'Weekend' as an outstanding attempt to convey states of mind, recalled as near and as stripped-back as he could get to how they were, only possible given his lifetime's work devoted, but also being helped, to understand himself and others.

My own thesis seeks to explore Bion's states of mind through the special lenses of contemporary psychoanalytic understandings of the adolescent process and the autobiographical method. I am not aware this approach to examine

'Weekend' has been taken before. Therefore, I hope this project makes some contribution of value, if only small, to the expanding library shelves (now online) full of writings on Bion's output.   It is not my intention to analyze Bion 'the man' but to understand, and from the particular viewpoint I have chosen to take here, the states of mind he is writing about as he recalled them.

Contextual information on Bion and 'Weekend':
Bion 'the man'

Gerard Bléandonu's biography of Bion (1994), Rudi Vermote's biographical sections in *Reading Bion* (2019) that contain interesting anecdotes from his London and Los Angeles colleagues, Francesca Bion's personal account of her husband's life, 'The Days of Our Years' (1995), and Robin Anderson's 'Introductory Notes on Wilfred Bion' (1997) are the sources for the bulk of the biographical detail provided here.   It is worth mentioning that Michael Roper's paper (2012), as mentioned earlier provides moving biographical details on Bion's relationship with Francesca.   My intention here is to give a brief overview of Bion as described by others whilst referencing his autobiographical works for additional detail.   However, the above texts should be consulted for further information.

Wilfred Ruprecht Bion was born into an empire family in Muttra, Northwest India, nearing the end of the Victorian era, 1897.   His paternal grandfather was *"some sort of missionary in India"* (Bion, 1985, p. 88).   However, he knew little of his mother's family, the Kemps, except that they were *"probably missionary or 'off' missionary in the sense that builders and decorators talk about 'off' white when they mean cream coloured"* (*ibid.*).   His father worked as an irrigation engineer.   He had one sister three years his junior he disliked.   During his early years, as was common in empire days with children from British families in India, he was looked after by a much-loved ayah[5].   He was an inquisitive child, interested in the world around him yet frequently describes himself as a 'brat'.   His relationship with his parents was fraught.   Recalling his infancy in India, he writes in 'Weekend' how his mother's lap could be *"warm and comfortable"* then suddenly *"cold and frightening"* (1982a, p.

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[5] The importance of his ayah to Bion is clear from the first sentence in *Weekend* – *"Our ayah was a wizened little woman … We were very fond of her"* (1982a, p. 13).

13). She was probably depressed as well as unpredictable. His father struggled with his anger and frustration. Although he tried to be *"patient"* (p. 15) with the young Bion he was prone to fits of rage that terrified his son, turning him *"bottom up"* and giving him a *"good beating"* (*ibid.*), as previously mentioned.

At the young age of eight, he travelled by boat to England to attend prep school at Bishop's Stortford College in Hertfordshire, never to see his ayah again – one of the most significant events of his life. His years there were utterly miserable. He felt bereft in a strange land with its completely different climate, and bullying and neglect were rife in the school. Although not clear from 'Weekend', Francesca Bion notes that he did not see his mother again for three years and at first did not recognize her (1995, p. 91). His days in the senior school, where he stayed until 1915, just before his eighteenth birthday, were somewhat more bearable. However, he seemed to manage things by joining the *"enemy"* (p. 92) and signing up to some of the destructive cultural norms of the age. Francesca Bion recalls him saying his *"large size, physical strength and athletic ability"* (*ibid.*) are what saved him. He was good at rugby and swimming. Bion describes how he developed an *"exo-skeletonous sheath"* (Bion, 1982a, p. 61), a false way of operating which he termed 'the lie' – a term I define in my 'Conclusion' -, rather than an 'endoskeleton', or, a healthy set of internal resources in touch with reality.

In 1916 he joined the Royal Tank Regiment during the third year of WWI. He was posted to France where he remained in active service until the end of the war. Shockingly, he was the only member of his regiment to survive. He describes the devastating and traumatic impact of this on him as akin to dying himself on the battlefield – *"then I think he died. Or perhaps it was only me"* (1982a, p. 281). He kept diaries originally intended for his parents, whom he could not bear to write to. They were published posthumously by Francesca Bion as 'War Memoirs'. He was awarded the Distinguished Service Order and Légion D'Honneur but felt profoundly guilty and critical of himself. His first daughter, the late Parthenope Bion Talamo, notes how the bitterness and loneliness he suffered were *"to some small extent ameliorated by the contrasting experiences of deep comradeship and real affection"* (1997, p. 309) and that, contrary to his own sense of self at the time, he was in fact

"capable of caring for his men" with his more scathing comments *"reserved for those officers and staff who were not" (ibid.)*.

Following the war, he read History at Queen's College, Oxford where he and other returning war veterans were a few years older and, as Francesca Bion notes, in *"disturbed states of mind"* (1995, p. 92) due to the impact of the recent fighting. However, he enjoyed his time there, captained the water polo team and played rugby for the Oxford Harlequins. He is said to have regretted not studying philosophy. His tutors were apparently disappointed he did not receive First Class Honours, putting this down to the *"strain of recent fighting"* (*ibid.*). After graduation, he returned to his old school in Hertfordshire, where he taught for two years despite his previous miserable experience there. One explanation for this may be that by the time he left to join the army, Bion had been at the school for ten years, longer than his eight years in India. However, he did not enjoy teaching, leaving the school abruptly when accused by a student's mother of making advances towards her son – unsubstantiated claims (Vermote, 2019, p. 38).

He went on to study medicine at University College London where he spent six years. He was impressed there by the outstanding brain surgeon, Wilfred Trotter, a school friend of Ernest Jones (a man who had met Freud several times) who wrote 'Instincts of the Herd in Peace and War' (1916), an important influence on Bion's developing interest in group theory. Following qualification as a medic, he spent seven years studying psychotherapy at the Tavistock Clinic - an experience he regarded in hindsight as having *"very doubtful benefit"* (Bion, F., 1995, p.93). However, he did treat the poet and playwright, Samuel Beckett, an experience that likely influenced them both (Miller and Souter, 2013). He also undertook a personal psychotherapy of his own, referring to his therapist anonymously in 'Sins' as Mr. FiP (Feel-it-in-the-Past) due to their disappointing propensity to suggest some traumatic past event was being 'repressed' whenever there was an unpleasant occurrence in the present (Bléandonu, 1994, p. 41). In later life, Bion came to view the 'here and now' as what really matters. Having met Trotter, his real interest was in training as a psychoanalyst. In 1938 at the age of forty-one, he began a training analysis with John Rickman that was then interrupted by WWII. Michael Rustin (personal

communication) points out, Rickman's impression as a psychoanalyst on Bion must have been deeply significant, given that he returned to psychoanalysis after the war.

Bion worked in a number of medical facilities as a psychiatrist during WWII and experimented with new approaches to the treatment of traumatized soldiers, including one of the earliest group therapy projects, the short-lived Northfield Experiment[6].   Early on in this war he married the actress, Betty Jardine, who, tragically, died following the birth of their only child, Parthenope, in 1945.   He returned from his posting to London, where he wanted to care for his daughter. Despite having no clear income to depend on initially, the next five years were extraordinarily productive – he went back to the Tavistock Clinic, entered into a training analysis with Melanie Klein, set up a private clinic in Harley Street and began his significant writing output.   He qualified as a psychoanalyst in 1950 at the age of fifty-three.

He met Francesca Bion at the Tavistock Clinic in 1951, a trained singer and also widowed.   He married her within a few months and had two further children, Nicola and Julian.   This was also a highly productive period.   Such was his output; it was seven years before he and Francesca had the opportunity to go on holiday together after they married.   They lived in a large house in Croydon, Surrey, where Bion had been raising Parthenope, eventually also buying a cottage on the North Norfolk coast in the 1960s where they enjoyed spending time together as a family. His work focus moved away from his group endeavours towards individual analyses. All the while, he continued to write about his experiences in one form or another.   He began analyzing patients with psychoses, learning how they *"disassembled their ability to know reality as a defence against unbearable emotional truths in their lives"* (Brown, 2012, p.1191) and, consequently, he began to become interested in early experiences of failed containment.

He wrote his four main theoretical books in the 1960s, arising from his work with psychotic patients: 'Learning from Experience' (1962), 'Elements of Psychoanalysis' (1963), 'Transformations' (1965), and 'Attention and Interpretation' (1970) (which was written in London but not published until he had left for Los Angeles).   Due to his absorption in psychoanalysis, his group papers, written

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[6] For a description, see Malcolm Pine's book, *Bion and group psychotherapy* (1985).

between 1952 and 1957, were published only in 1961 as 'Experiences in Groups'. His collection of papers written from his first practice of analysis in the 1950s were published as 'Second Thoughts' in 1967. He was also a highly active and distinguished member of the post-Kleinian group in London. He became director of the London Clinic of Psychoanalysis from 1956 to 1962, President of the British Psychoanalytic Society from 1962 to 1965 and the chairman of several other committees. Francesca Bion states he never sought out these positions; rather they were thrust upon him, and he felt angry when meetings overran as he wanted to be home to read to his children (1995, p. 97).

He became a celebrated figure, although grew tired of his elevated status in London's psychoanalytic community. Following a visit to California in 1967 upon the invitation of a small group of analysts interested in Melanie Klein's work (James Grotstein, Bernard Bail and Bernard Brandchaft), he uprooted to live in Los Angeles in 1968, leaving his London colleagues baffled. There are various speculations as to why Bion may have upped and moved with his wife, Francesca, especially given his youngest children were still teenagers. It involved leaving them behind in boarding schools - see particularly Vermote (2019, p. 136). He continued to be productive in LA, and a group of influential analysts formed there, including Albert Mason and Susan Isaacs from London. He stayed for eleven years whilst also lecturing widely around the world, including in South America, New York and back at the Tavistock, Italy and Paris[7]. However, in LA itself, he did not become a member of the psychoanalytic society, which had its own problems. Working there was not easy, and Vermote notes that the envious attacks he and other British analysts were recipients of even threatened their continued practice at times due the litigious climate (pp. 136 -137).

Bion also began to write material of a different kind, namely his 'Cogitations' (1982b) - informal notes about his work that reveal in detail how his ideas and theories unfolded - as well as his autobiographical works. His fictional autobiographies that comprise 'The Memoir' were published before his death. Bion was proud of this work, although they remain little understood. He intentionally

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[7] Many of these seminars were published posthumously by Francesca Bion, and some of his Los Angeles seminars and supervisions have been published by Aguayo and Malin (2013).

experimented with new forms, albeit O'Shaughnessy (2005) has criticized 'The Memoir' for becoming *"less disciplined, … mixing and blurring categories of discourse, embracing contradictions, and sliding between ideas rather than linking them"* (p. 216). She notes that others see them as the culmination of his work, bringing his theories together, including Grotstein (1981). His two autobiographies, 'Weekend' (which details his first twenty-one years) and 'Sins' (which takes him up to fifty-years-old when Betty Jardine died leaving him to care for Parthenope), were not published until after his death. Francesca Bion included deeply personal letters (love letters to her and those to his children) as 'The Other Side of Genius' with the publication of 'Sins'*.* She wanted to give a more balanced impression of Bion as a warm and generous family man to counter a view of his self-loathing and bitterness that can be interpreted from the autobiographies.

Noticing they were seeing less of their family, the Bions returned to live in the UK, choosing to settle in Oxford in 1979 where Oliver Lyth, Isabel Menzies, Donald Meltzer and Marth Harris were practising. Bion died aged eighty-two, unexpectedly, from the rapid development of leukaemia within two months following his arrival. He did not know he was dying. Although aware he had limited time left given his age, he was still making plans. The Bions had kept a flat in California to return to from time to time, and he was arranging a trip to India, his first since he was eight years old, to lecture in Bombay in the January of 1980. He is said to have told his friend Albert Mason, upon receipt of his diagnosis, that *"life is full of surprises, most of them unpleasant"* (Vermote, 2019, p.139) in what had become his characteristically direct but dry-humoured way, never shying away from the painful truth.

The scope of 'Weekend'

'Weekend' is divided into three parts: 'India'*,* 'England' and 'War'. 'India' details his early childhood in his country of birth and contains an account of the complexities of his early family relationships as well as with his ayah. 'England' describes events from the moment his mother drops him off at his Hertfordshire boarding school at the young age of eight, which he found traumatic. He recalls his adolescent years up to the point when he leaves the main school, and in 1916 signs up successfully, but only on the second attempt with the help of his father, to fight in WWI. Finally, 'War'

describes his immense suffering as a young tank commander in France, where he was the only member of his tank regiment to survive.

Whilst on one level it reads as a description of colonial India, the miserable experience of public boarding school in England, and a graphic depiction of life in the trenches of France during WWI; it also reads as a unique account of the internal world of Bion the adolescent, i.e., his states of mind, with the characters making up the internal theatre - the group within the individual - as Harris Williams points out (2010). Bion writes in the preface to 'Weekend' how he does not seek to portray external events but himself.

> Anyone can 'know' which school, regiment, colleagues, friends I write about. In all but the most superficial sense they would be wrong. I write about 'me'. I do so deliberately because I am aware that that is what I should do anyhow. I am also more likely to approximate my ambition if I write about the person I know better than anyone else – myself. (1982a, p. 9)

'Weekend' also vividly depicts Bion's personal struggle as a child and adolescent; how he is trapped in a wasteland where fulfilling relationships do not become established and, internally, emotional contact with his objects is not made, resulting in huge problems with relating. 'The Long Weekend' is the term used by social historians to refer to the period between WWI and WWII in Great Britain (see especially, Graves and Hodge, 1940 and Tinniswood, 2016). Bion would have been aware of this. However, my own reading of the title, 'The Long Weekend', is of the difficulty in keeping thinking going for an analysand over a weekend break, a time when he cannot depend on his external analyst. This is a time when, during the course of an unfinished analysis, helpful internal objects are not yet robustly established in order for a satisfactory self-analysis to proceed – an idea I return to in my 'Conclusion'.

The cultural context within which the events of 'Weekend' take place is vitally important as it provides clues to the emotional atmosphere of the age. The Edwardian era, 1901-1910, is often considered to extend up to the outbreak of WWI. It followed Queen Victoria's death in 1901 and the increasingly bloody and controversial Boer War (1899-1902), which had begun to divide opinion as to the merits of empire-mentality wars – requiring four hundred thousand troops. King Edward VII was a member of the fashionable elite, unlike his mother, Victoria, who removed herself from all social events. The American author, Samuel Hynes, is

attributed to describing the age famously, and outrageously given the context, as a *"leisurely time when women wore picture hats and did not vote, when the rich were not ashamed to live conspicuously, and the sun never really set on the British flag"*. Beneath Hynes's statement lies the darker story of an age where great inequality continued to reign.   Class-laden structures maintained the divide between the elite and the labour of the poor serving them.   Chillingly, it is still sometimes referred to as a time when there was 'a place for everyone and where everyone knew their place'.

Under Victoria, 1837-1901, Britain had seen the rapid expansion of cities at the expense of rural life.   The British became devoted to material gain, the upper classes were often callous towards the poor whilst priding themselves on their abolition of the slave trade.   Values of personal improvement and the industrial work ethic took hold (often at the expense of established rural communities).   This had an important impact on spiritual life in the more general sense with the emergence of Victorian morality.   One of the questions that troubled the Victorians was the relationship between religion and science.   For example, before the Victorian age, Mary Shelley's 'Frankenstein' (1816) expressed fears that science might lead mankind astray.   Monsters might be produced revealing that man, like Frankenstein, did not have a soul but was purely material, something which would challenge their Christian god's existence.   This may be one reason why religion and a particular form of evangelism in Victorian empire days saw a resurgence.   However, the deliberately posthumous publication of Darwin's 'The Origin of the Species' (1859) - he feared for his life - further catalyzed the disturbance (Moss, 2018).

One peculiar impact was in attitudes towards sex.   Gaythorne-Hardy (1977) notes the *"revival of sexual sin in Victorian times"* as a result of evangelical religion steeped in more ancient history[8] (p. 88).   The drive to material wealth, right up until 1914 and even afterwards, meant that men married later and later in order, their fathers insisting, for wives to be kept in the manner to which they were *"accustomed"* (*ibid.*).   An array of novels pictured the sexually frustrated man in love but unable to

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[8] Bion makes a passing reference to the gods in the caves of Elephantine that show explicit sexual organs; the Edwardians were trying to help preserve them. He also mentions the biblical story of Onan. Onan's death is attributed as punishment for being unwilling to father a child and, subsequently, the term 'onanism' has come to refer to masturbation.

afford marriage. The literature and plays, including old classics, were censored and cleansed of *"naughtiness"* (*ibid.*). A number of sexual diseases were quite *"literally invented"* (*ibid.*) with the intention of preventing pre-marital sexual relations. Abortion was illegal but remained the most common form of contraception.

Masturbation was the specific yet unnamed sin in Dean Frederick Farrar's now heavily criticized children's morality tale, 'Eric, or Little by Little' (1858)[9]. It typified the cultural panic of the age where masturbation was canvassed as leading to an early death and insanity.   Gaythorne-Hardy notes that public schools, where boys were kept segregated from girls, epitomized the *"conflict between instinct and these confused and desperate forces of repression"* (1977, p.89). Eric, a boy sent to public boarding school, is characterized as having inherent goodness but must also learn to avoid temptation. However, he goes seriously off-piste. Beginning with skipping homework and 'succumbing' to schoolboy popularity, he slides further into dangerous activity with cheating, drinking, running away and *"the unnamable activity that is the real core of the book's sermon"* (Roberts, 2013). He dies shortly after hearing his delinquent behaviour has led to his mother's death, seeing the error of his ways at the end of the tale.

Masturbation and same-sex activity with segregated boys are, of course, as common as they are inevitable, both now and then. However, the authorities were increasingly concerned about extreme neglect, abuse, cruelty and the impoverished conditions in public schools of the age. The Public Schools Act 1868 sought to reform and regulate seven leading English public boys' schools. It was felt boys needed to know what masturbation and same-sex relations were to prevent their occurrence. At the same time, talking to them about it was felt to increase its likelihood as well as the consequences the Victorians attached to it in fantasy. Hence, Farrar's solution in the morality tale was to put masturbation front and centre but not name it (Roberts, *ibid.*).

Following the Public Schools Act, there was increasing access to education under William Gladstone's new Liberal government with the Elementary Education Act 1870 - a figure of his time who is perhaps now known as much for his corruption

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[9] Roberts (2013) notes it is *"at least as much about the pain of bereavement as it is about sex and the dangers of masturbation"*. Stories of child death were common in 18th and 19th century literature; with child mortality dates much higher than they are today.

as his more progressive acts. All children aged five to thirteen were to have *"the same start in life"* (Hattersley, 2004, p. 243).   Universal education, not just for the privileged few, was felt to make for a stronger empire. Industrialists feared Britain's competitive status in world trade without an effective education system.   The Elementary Act came off the back of the Reform Act 1867 under the previous Conservative government that gave the urban male working classes the right to vote for the first time but led to the Conservatives' loss in the 1868 general election. There were various objections to universal education.   It was feared educating the labouring classes would encourage them to 'think' and that they may think of their lives as dissatisfying, which could encourage revolt (Gillard, 2011).   Simultaneously, religious establishments were funded by public money; the churches educated the poor and did not want to lose their sway on the youth.

It was still common in Edwardian times, with India part of the British Empire, to send children from British families to school in England. Whilst ayahs were often relied on heavily by wealthier families to look after their small children, their maltreatment was, sadly, prevalent. They were thought not to have a positive influence on children as they grew older. Conditions in India could be harsh, and children's health and moral education was thought to suffer if they stayed there too long. Children, often as young as seven, made the journey to England, sometimes never seeing their ayahs again (Robinson, 2017). The contemporary historian Siva Thangarajah notes, shockingly, that whilst ayahs were often charged with looking after the children of British families during their sea voyages from colonial India to Britain,

> … no formal contracts or promise of voyages back to their home countries were made, which meant that once here, their services were no longer necessary. So the ayahs would simply be dismissed: effectively abandoned in a country foreign to them, with no employment or place to stay.   The issue of abandoned ayahs in London became so prolific that the missionary charity, London City Mission, opened a shelter for them to stay while more work or journeys home were negotiated in the meantime. (2020)

Joy Schaverien (2015), who coins the term 'boarding school syndrome' highlights how children from the British Empire who travelled to boarding school in England incurred the traumatic loss of their primary attachment figures, most often ayahs who spoke to the child in their mother tongue. English was reserved for more

formal conversations meaning the child often found the sole immersion in the English language strange, as well as the matters of the new culture and climate. She emphasizes how this is *in addition* to the traumatic losses of their families and the whole environments to which they were accustomed (pp. 152-153). Children were sent to the 'home' of their parents - *"but it was not the home to children raised in exotic climates ... . This merely added to their sense of dislocation" (*p.26). Opportunities for mourning *"the people and places they so profoundly missed"* (p. 154) were practically non-existent, and these children were *"essentially homeless for a significant part of their childhood"* (*ibid.*), something that had *"lifelong effects"* (p. 157). The fear of diseases in tropical climates played a significant role in sending children home, and the cost, distance and dangers in making long journeys meant some would not see their children for many years (p. 154). Children in these painful circumstances had little option but to protect themselves through withdrawal from emotional situations (p. 160). The emotional sense of exile invariably continued into adult life, with many never able to make meaningful contact again with their parents (p. 163). The psychoanalyst Francis Grier comments how these boys were treated when they arrived in England, left, most of the time, in the company of other boarding children. He notes that *"even well-meaning, affectionate and concerned adults would still be the "wrong" ones, from the child's perspective and that is the same with a genuinely concerned older boy … [He] would still be "the wrong boy", so his efforts at succour would typically be rebuffed"* (Grier, 2013, p. 150). In the main section of this thesis, I look at Bion's descriptions of being severely bullied. Whilst some sympathy from another boy was available when he first arrived at the school, he could not manage to accept it.

Schaverien also notes that there were those children who enjoyed boarding, particularly those who first boarded at the older age of thirteen or over, with those starting over sixteen enjoying the social aspects (2015, p. 4). Problematically, sometimes adversity at public school also got looked back upon by survivors as preparing men for the hardships of life. Similarly, those who tended to enjoy boarding school were often those from complex families (Renton, 2015). However, Schaverien states,

> It is evident that for some men, despite the beatings they suffered as boys, there is a strong allegiance to their schools. (2015, p. 180)

Indeed, in Bion's case, he went back to teach at his school as a young man. Teachers could also be excellent and make the difference to children's boarding school experiences and their later interests (*ibid.*). Boarding schools sometimes came to be felt as more 'home' than the children's original family homes, given the amount of time they spent there.

The circumstances within which Bion wrote his autobiography are also important. Whilst Bléandonu notes, *"Bion informs us that he did not choose the autobiographical genre but had found himself led to it by the very nature of his psychoanalytic work"* (1994, p. 266), it is clear he became interested in the form, and that this was his focus in the later years of his life. Harris Williams notes his style is *"a hybrid drawn from 'Goodbye to All That', 'Lord of the Flies', and '1984'"* (2010, p. 1). It is a mixture of the boarding school and war survivor genre (Graves, 1929), comment on the inherent destructiveness of mankind and warning about the dangers of mob mentality (Golding, 1954), and the origins of surveillance culture already woven into the fabric of society (Orwell, 1949). It was also written when the trauma memoir's popularity was becoming a cultural phenomenon as the recognition of PTSD was becoming more widely accepted, securing its classification as a mental illness in 1980 in the 'Diagnostic Statistical Manual' (Luckhurst, 2013).

Bion's boarding school

I have taken Bion's pre/adolescent years at his Hertfordshire prep school*,* those chapters comprising 'Part 2: England', as the focus for my analysis in this thesis and wish now to give an overview.

In chapters 1-5 (1982a, pp. 43 – 63) Bion recalls *"that appalling period of my life"* (p. 59) commencing when he is left in the playground by his mother at the prep school shortly after his arrival in England that also involved the 'unspeakable' (p. 43) loss of his much-loved ayah, whose own fate is unclear in the book. He proceeds to recount how his creativity becomes entirely stunted; thrown too early and without adequate resources, inside or out, to proceed with the task of adolescence. It was too painful for him to know about his terrible homesickness, and he describes how 'the lie' takes hold (pp. 44-45); the beginnings of an 'exo-skeleton'.

Even the sympathy of another boy is unwanted (p. 44) as it reveals the fragility of his soft, shell-like exterior that proceeds to harden. Bion spends time in his

dormitory sobbing under the bedcovers at night. He invariably bursts into tears when a matron inspects him on Sundays before church, criticizing his incapacity to look neat and tidy when he has been playing a favourite, imaginary game (being an engine and making steam by kicking up dust that gets on his shoes). She reprimands him, *"You crying? A great big boy like you! Playing trains were you?"* (p. 47). As Bion recalls these episodes, he notes that he still feels *"ashamed"*, seventy years later, of how *"utterly miserable"* (*ibid.*) he was then, such was its acuity.

He notes the prevalent culture of the time with his references to Farrar's then-popular morality tales, which he had begun to read. 'Eric, or Little by Little' and 'The World of School' are tales in which, it seemed, all *"the boys died off like flies"* (p. 47). Bion references these works in *Weekend* to communicate how dire things were at the prep school and also the anxieties he had as a child about dying. Eric, like Bion, was a boy from a British family in colonial India sent to boarding school in England who, despite being descended from nobility, is slowly beaten down by being punished erroneously for wrongdoings and bullied (something Farrar isn't able to attend to), before, as previously stated, starting to go off the rails by drinking, smoking and cheating. Bion notes how, as a child, he *"could not know that religion was being born"* (*ibid.*) - he is talking about his own mind. He describes how he was caught up in a *"web of undirected menace"* (p. 59) - a tangled mess of punitive external doctrines, religion and morality, that made him feel bad about his needs and dependencies.

'Web of undirected menace' is Bion's term in 'Weekend', used to describe a pre-Freudian state where psychoanalytic understanding is entirely unavailable, resulting in a destructive society and set of relationships, where any given person caught in the web can suffer its harmful effects. It is also sometimes used as a way to avoid the possible pitfall of attributing blame and seeing those with responsibilities for looking after children in their more complex personhood, despite their faults.

When Freddie Sexton, a bright fellow student with a keen sense of the ridiculous, dies from *"undiagnosed appendicitis"* he fears it is for mocking god - *"I haven't done anything; really I haven't"* (p. 55). Bion liked it when Freddie used to walk down the dormitory aisles accidentally-on-purposely stepping on the other boys' bare feet as they obediently said their evening time prayers. Tellingly, Bion states

how at Eric's school *"the mortality rate should have attracted attention of authority"* (*ibid.*), now aware as the writer of the harm it had on his developing child's mind.

Bion introduces various other characters and themes. He describes how Sundays were so painful as after church services, whilst a *"dinner of roast beef and Yorkshire pudding"* (p. 48) followed that he rather liked, the students then collected in the gymnasium where they picked up their tuck boxes, the contents reminding them of home.   When he next sees his mother, which Francesca Bion notes was three years later (1995, p.91), although the timing is unclear from the text, he rejects her gift of a Lyle's Golden syrup tin with tuck in, which leaves her baffled. Whilst this prompts her to ask if he is unhappy there, Bion denies that he has any difficulties. As a child, he recognizes that a different answer would not likely have been understood, but it is the writer who recognizes it also starts to fuel his omnipotence.

He, and the other boys, had to go on a dreaded walk every Sunday with the tragic figure of Hirst, the headmaster, who made *"the sense of brooding disaster ... real"* (Bion, 1982a, p.55) for them. If they did not keep up, they would have to begin the week by doing squares, meaning there was no possibility for a fresh start, and the perpetual misery of school life was doomed to be repeated over and again. Bion managed the event by becoming lost in a fantasy world where he imagined he owned a beautiful little railway and was the engine driver. It made the walks somewhat more bearable, but it was also a place where contact with reality got lost.

Hirst, ironically, although Bion does not attribute blame to any of the school's neglectful figures, feeling they were all caught up in the web of undirected menace, cautions the boys about poisoning the mind of another when a boy from the main school is expelled. Bion cannot grasp Hirst's metaphor. Feeling a boy's food has literally been poisoned, the line between phantasy and reality not holding due to the failed containment, he is left utterly terrified (pp. 57-58). He notes how bedtime was *"more safe"* (p. 50) even than the walk during which, as noted, he immersed himself in fantasy play, as he could begin masturbating. This spills out into class where a *"gentle"* master notices and tells him *"don't do that, or you will have to be sent away"* (*ibid.*)*.* Bion believes the boy who was expelled must have been masturbating (it is more likely he was involved in same-sex activity with a younger child) as well as this being the reason why Hirst's wife was not present at the school - tragically, she was

probably in a mental asylum. Confusions are never cleared up, problems never resolved, people are only sent packing, and 'the lie' (in which relationships hold no value) tightens its grip on Bion. Small wonder he saw his *"freedom"* (p. 61) from such purgatory existing only in the main school, away from the miseries of the prep school, and that he writes how *"wiggling"* (p. 50) - his tongue-in-cheek word to avoid saying masturbation - was *"the only redeeming thing"* (p. 59) in his and the other boys' lives.

'Wiggling' is a term used frequently by Bion in 'Weekend' in place of masturbation, also emphasizing the infantile aspect. At the same time, it is Bion's joke and protest against the complex, yet toxic, culture that prevailed in segregated boys' Edwardian boarding schools, epitomized in Farrar's 'Eric or, Little by Little' (1858). 'Eric' was a popular boys' morality tale of the age, where masturbation was deliberately not named yet at the same time canvassed falsely, and with religious backing, as leading to death and insanity in a lousy attempt to protect boys from sexual abuses that were rife in public schools. The misguided belief was that if masturbation was not named, boys would not then engage with it or in sexual acts with each other. Inevitably, such an approach censored and stifled their adolescent sexual development in harmful ways.

The character of Willy Bevan, an orphan at the school who could often be found in fervent prayer, represents the orphaned part of Bion who is caught in a religious grasp. Bion shouts *"You're only an orphan!"* (p.56), and without at all realizing it would hit such a target, he locates the sorest spot for all the boys - painful feelings of being left at the school by their parents. The exposure of their collective pain has to be defended against. The bullish characters of Morgan and Pickett are introduced who lead a gang of children up to 'the mountain'[10], the name the boys have for their school cricket field, where they beat Bion with stumps leaving him bruised (pp. 56-57).

The ironically named figure of Miss Good, a matron at the school who makes him feel sexually excited and want to wiggle, is blind to the bullying in the prep school (p. 61) as well as the group of boys' sore distress and homesickness (p. 53). Bion

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[10] As a sidenote, it strikes me that the term the boys chose for their cricket field references the biblical story of Moses; the mountain is where he goes to sacrifice his defenseless child before he is stopped.

loves music, as does his mother, but Miss Good does not understand there is meaning behind his request to sing a favourite hymn, 'Summer Suns' (pp. 53-54), that reminds him of his homeland and belonging as a son to someone. Indeed, nor can she see violence in plain view, thinking the boys are *"playing happily"* (p. 61) in the playground when Morgan is bullying them and when one day the other boys fight back with *"fists"*, *"shrieking"* and *"yelling"* (p. 62).   This leaves Bion feeling unsure how Morgan is found out, but he is sent to the main school early for being *"too big a bully"* (p. 62).

Chapters 6-11 (pp. 64 -88) describe Bion's stays during school holidays with the families of two friends from the prep school – Heaton Rhodes and John Dudley Hamilton. The figure of Miss Whybrow is also introduced. She is judging a school horticultural contest and unashamedly declares Dudley's *"scarecrow's nest"* of *"monumental non-horticulturality"* (p. 64) the winner over Heaton's *"beautiful garden, spick and span"* (*ibid.*) in order to obtain a ride in the Hamiltons' Leon Bollet – the only parents at the school who had a car. I think that Bion uses Miss Whybrow's character to portray how he felt undeserving to receive invites of his own to his friends' homes. Bion gives the impression that he is not particularly interested in the quality of his friendships, stating *"we were on what passed for friendly terms"* (*ibid.*), but does note the generosity of the families for inviting him to stay for *"occasional – I now think most generously frequent – holidays"* (p. 65). He particularly notes the importance of the boys' mothers, Mrs. Hamilton and Mrs. Rhodes, to him, who *"in their own different ways, helped to make my last year at the prep school one in which I began to break through what I see in retrospect to have been an intolerable exo-skeleton of misery"* (p. 66).

The Rhodes family live at Archer Hall and are from generations of Yorkshire farming.   Heaton introduces him to Prince – a gigantic shire-horse who represents the climate of phallic masculinity prevalent on the farm – but also Heaton's sister, Kathleen, who he fancies, admiring her *"courage"* (p. 69).   He observes the entrenched way that father and son rather cruelly tease each other, exemplified by the Curley the Cow episode where Heaton's father sets them the impossible task of separating a recently calved mother from her offspring. There are harder facts over in a nearby village, Munden, where Cousin Bob does not allow them onto the farm.

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A farmhand has blown his brains out with a gun, and *"the mess had not been cleared up"* (p. 72), the event leaving the boys troubled but with seemingly no one to notice. He recalls Christmases at Archer Hall, the tradition of collecting mistletoe and greenery, gorging on food, and how generously frequently he was invited there at this time of year, also represented by the Rhodes's social custom of handing out toys to the village children (pp. 75-78).   He writes that he looks back on the kindness through *"a romantic haze"* as *"the abiding impression is one of an austere and ruthless life"* (p. 78) and the harshness of farming in winter.

Bion also alludes to some of the sociological issues around - the increasing industrialization of farming - by juxtaposing the Rhodes's manual methods for working the land with those of the Hamiltons.   They use more modern farming methods and favour higher class culture.   The intense competition between these different ways of life is expressed by Heaton, who, when Bion is dropped at Archer Hall by the Hamiltons, frowns upon the leaking oil coming from their prized Leon Bollet, saying it 'stinks' (p. 67). Mr. Hamilton has a pianola, and the hierarchy of the social class system is transmitted to him by Dudley's ailing paternal grandmother. She is kept alive by an oxygen tank and says 'laylock' instead of 'lilac' and 'yaller' instead of 'yellow', leaving Bion, who has not heard these higher-class words before, wondering why she says it wrong (pp. 79-80). As writer, he looks back on his time with the Hamiltons, recalling summer under their magnificent cedar tree, the family typifying *"luxury, warmth, and almost sybaritic pleasure"* (p. 88). However, he notes Mrs. Hamilton never encouraged any idea of rights to these things.   He spends time playing in the garden with Dudley and his younger brothers, Stewart and Colin; the boys are frequently cruel to Colin, the youngest.   Their games are distinctly destructive. They smear lime on twigs to catch birds, having read about it in a boys' magazine 'Chums' and use the gardener's flower pots to catch the cat then break the pots and watch him run - their 'otter hunts' (pp. 80-81). They also play toy soldier wars, lighting firecrackers in toy cannons and nearly setting fire to the attic (pp. 83-84). Using the gardener's bamboo canes they construct an aeroplane to launch from the roof, with them attached. Fortunately, they are prevented at the last minute by the adults who appear and tell them they might have killed themselves. Instead, the boys begin to dig an enormous hole in the orchard, complete with 'ovens', that Mr.

Hamilton covers over without conversation as it doubles as being able to kill someone by accident being big enough to hold three of the boys (pp. 84-86). Bion notes how he duels and wrestles with Dudley with *"a growing sense of pointlessness"* (p. 87) after the occasion one bedtime when Dudley suddenly discards his towel and straddles Bion, challenging him to a tussle. Sadly, they do not really stay friends once in the main school. Bion writes how, when he was a child, *"I did not know the meaning of what I saw"* (p. 88) but at the same time describes as the writer this important period as his education *"not in the timetable"* (*ibid.*). It was a period he was exposed to the ups and downs and ins and outs of family life, with its ways of relating and not-relating, the Hertfordshire landscape and culture.

Finally, chapters 12 - 17 (pp. 89-118) describe Bion's struggles with his increasingly visible pubescent development in the main school. Chapter 12 begins with him describing feelings of shame and humiliation, seeing himself as an incapable fag to two admired sixth formers, a new Morgan (i.e. not the bully from the prep school) and Nickalls, and how his nickname became *"swizz-milka"* given his voice had become *"deep and uncontrolled"* (p.89). He describes how sex at the school was *"A PROBLEM"* (p. 106, his emphasis), the attitude taken towards it being *"Non-conformist Wholesome"* (p. 90), which suggests there were generally no perverse aspects at play and also some sense that the school did not entirely conform to often punitive moral attitudes of the day. Bion moves from using the term 'wiggling' to naming masturbation twice within the section (p. 106).

He discusses various masters' attitudes towards sex. First, there is the rather weird Tidmarsh who initiates *"cosy talks"* (p. 91) with the boys seeking their confessions, asking *"have you ever had troubles?"* (p. 90), coming across as a bit of a creep. Second, there is the position taken by Mellows which is to turn a blind eye and not to talk about sex at all. Third, that of Bobby Sutton who retains some awareness of the boys' physical and sexual development but diverts them towards other things such as gardening, playing gramophone records and looking at books (p. 91). Finally, the headmaster goes to all lengths to avoid using bad language. He cannot seem to get caught out by the boys, substituting *"fuck"* (p. 107) for *"drat"* (p. 94) when his lesson is interrupted by a traction engine putting down gravel outside. However, they take to mocking his portrait for looking like he straining with a stool

on the toilet (*ibid.*). Bion conveys this way how he is interested in masculine identities. He seems to want something more ordinary but cannot find figures to identify with in a helpful way.

Bion describes religion as providing him with a *"soft mental down"* (p. 95) and contributing to a character where *"bits of shell"* (i*bid.*) continued to adhere to him rather than the development of a *"spine"* (*ibid.*) or endoskeleton, i.e., inner helpful resources that retain the awareness of internal and external realities. He notes the attempts by sixth formers in the school, good athletes, to try to solve feelings of frustration and guilt with prayer meetings before cricket matches (pp. 96-97), something he rejects. Despite religion, with its *"blue skies and dark"* (p. 99) that he found both threatening and exciting, Bion describes entering into a phase of *"relative calm"* (*ibid.*) at the main school.

A new type of bully, more perverse than Morgan and Pickett from the prep school, emerges with the character of H. N. Brown. H. N. bullies 'Bilge' Brown in sadistic and sexualized displays of cruelty, tying Bilge in a crucifix formation by the wrists to the wire fence and horizontally by the rungs of the ladder in the gymnasium, inviting the attention of the other boys (pp. 100-101). Bion follows his recollections of these deeply troubling enactments by noting how he observes as the writer, he was free as a child to express the wrongdoings of others but failed to see the activities of his own. He goes on to describe impulsively putting a noose around his peer, Greene's neck (p. 102) and mocking a new boy, Maynard, for his thick glasses and short-sightedness (pp. 103-104).   He comments how overt bullying in the main school was rare. However, there was a *"cruelty embedded in the school system"* (p. 107) not possible to detect with the *"tentative groping methods available"* (*ibid.*) at the time in those *"pre-Freudian days"*[11] (p. 106). As a child, he found it hard to see his own difficulties. As writer, he talks about staff, students and parents all being caught in a *"web which we did not see even as we struggled to free ourselves"* (p. 107) that led to a desperate state of affairs where, *"Boys talked in their sleep, they sobbed, they cried out. In the morning, as likely as, they knew nothing about it"* (p. 104).

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[11] Whilst Freud had begun publishing his early works at this time they were not yet well known.

Bion describes physical games as substitution rather than sublimation which was not yet a Freudian term. I think he makes this distinction as the writer, one who is well aware what sublimations are, to highlight the absence of thought available to him in his childhood environment. He enjoys swimming, water polo and rugby, but never cricket (p. 108) – perhaps unsurprisingly given his early experience being beaten with stumps on the cricket field (although he does not make the link explicit). As well as enjoying games, he sees them as keeping his *"ghastly sexual impulses from obtruding"* (p. 108). He notes a problem with the prevalent attitudes of the day and how some viewed religion a harmless substitute for sex, not *"a stopper that could dam back the noxious matter till it stank"* burying the growth of a personality until it turned cancerous (p. 108).

In a key event of the school run (p. 109-111) where Bion beats his rival in a cross-country race, the drama is bound up with his interest in Colman, who teaches classics. Master Colman is not like the other men Bion encounters. He is described as having a complex personality and physical body - he is an injured sportsman – and generously takes the boys on trips. He is also prone to crippling headaches. He favours his rival in the run leaving Bion unable to allow himself to feel wanted by Colman, despite the generosity he is the recipient of (pp. 111-115). He moves towards other competitive rivalries with a boy called Laurie Lawn, whilst staying at Thompson's, a neighbouring headmaster, in his final summer at the school. This time he competes for a woman, Mrs. Thompson, who favours Laurie. The message is that Bion's own internal deprivations have calcified and prevent him from making contact with his objects, a hugely troubling situation (pp. 116-117).

When it is finally time to leave the school, Bion goes to say goodbye to a master, Bobby Sutton.

> I was miserable, and angry at being miserable. I said something rude and hostile about being glad to leave. I then burst into tears - to my surprise and embarrassment, and I suppose to his. Bobby was not a sentimental man and I expect it was as well for both of us that I immediately removed myself, collected my traps from the School House and went to the station. (p. 118)

'England' ends with Bion arriving at Liverpool Street Station in London, having left the school and about to meet his mother and father before attempting to sign up as a soldier and fight in WWI. He seems to realize as an adolescent that things are

entirely unresolved, that he has not learned anything, as he catches himself saying, *"Thank God, thank God! And then I thought, for what?"* (*ibid*.).

Autobiography

For Bion, by no means uniquely for an intellectual figure in the public domain, there exists both broad biographical writing (Anzieu, 1989, Bleandonu, 1994, Bridger, 1985, Conci, 2011, Lyth, 1980 and Vermote, 2019) and an autobiography which is in two parts – 'The Long Weekend' (Bion, 1982a) and 'All My Sins Remembered' (Bion, 1985). As described, the autobiographies cover the first forty-eight years of his life only and were written many years later, in his late-seventies/early-eighties, whilst living in Los Angeles. Both were published posthumously by his second wife, Francesca Bion, who also published some of her own experiences of him (1981, 1995 and 2000). Additionally, as mentioned, Bion wrote various personal correspondence, including letters to his family, again published posthumously by Francesca as 'The Other Side of Genius' (Bion, 1985), as well as diary entries documenting experiences in WWI - his 'War Memoirs' (1997) -, which were intended for his parents as he found it too difficult to write letters to them from the front. I have already mentioned there is a vast array of writing that examines his theories and contribution to psychoanalysis and continues to grow over forty years after his death.

Considerations as to what makes a successful autobiography, what the writer is seeking to do, as well as the nature of remembering, are explored from the field of psychoanalysis by Harris Williams (2012). She notes, of particular interest to the child psychotherapist, George Gusdorf's observation that the process of writing an autobiography *"requires a man to take a distance with regard to himself, in order to reconstitute himself in the focus of his special unity and identity across time"* (1980, p. 35). Thomas Larson's interest in the voice of the child in an autobiography is also relevant. He writes how, *"To hear the voice of the child is to trust the tale and the teller"* (2007, p. 48). Harris Williams notes analogies with autobiography to the psychoanalytic process, including how, *"Autobiographers characteristically observe their present activity of remembering at the same time as their past life in memory"* (2012, p. 399). She is particularly interested in interior observation and descriptions of the essence of a personality over time.

I explore the term 'psychoanalytic autobiography' in my chapter on memory. However, I wish to note here how Bion is not unique as a psychoanalyst in the line of development since Klein to have written an autobiography. Meg Harris Williams points out that Freud (1925) wrote *"a literal autobiography but found it uninteresting, and said his real autobiography was to be found in [his 1900 work] 'The Interpretation of Dreams'"* (Harris Williams, 2012, p. 400). Klein also wrote a brief literal autobiography (1959 [2016]) although she does talk about the relation to her family, how circumstances affected her feelings and, therefore, her sense of selfhood. She is well-known to have included her own dream, anonymously as Mrs. A, in her paper 'Mourning and its Relation to Manic Depressive States' (1940); her own response to her son's tragic death in a climbing accident, aged twenty-seven. Before Bion, there was an interest in writing about unconscious life in autobiographies, but he makes a special contribution to the genre[12]. Bion's work is very different to Freud's and Klein's since he writes almost entirely from the perspective of describing internal situations, as Harris Williams previously notes (2012).

Some child psychotherapists have been interested in writing about their lives. More recently, Lydia Tischler (2018) and Tara Pepper Goldsmith (2018) provide first-person accounts of refugee childhoods in short journal articles. Tischler, a childhood survivor of Auschwitz, writes in a *"broken-fluent fluent-broken thread that echoes the mental recounting of children who have experienced multiple traumas across the years of their development"* (Russell and Sutton, 2018, p. 299). Pepper Goldsmith writes about the 'echoes' of her mother's refugee childhood that resound throughout her own upbringing; how they *"seeped into and coloured nearly every aspect of my life"* (2018, p. 325). She notes how for the first seventeen years of her life her *"conscious and unconscious experience filled with the repetition of the unprocessed and traumatic experiences of others"* and that she spent the next twenty years – an *"immense task"* - *"swimming around the iceberg; trying to probe its shape and explore its effects on the currents of water around it"* (*ibid.*). There is also Judith Edwards's fictional autobiography, 'Pieces of Molly' (2014), that describes her

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[12] Harris Williams (2012) notes how Muir states, *"No autobiography can confine itself to conscious life … sleep is a mode of experience, and dreams are part of reality"* (Muir, 1980, p. 49).

recovery from early trauma, which, given its larger-scale form, is more clearly in the line of Bion.

The sociologist and adult psychotherapist, Gail Lewis, in my view presents the most helpful and innovative recent contribution to the genre, written over three decades after Bion's 'Weekend'. Lewis writes not only about her father but also, movingly, *to* her father whom she is seeking, inside and out, in her paper 'Where Might I Find You? Objects and Internal Space for the Father'[13] (2012). Her white British mother and black Jamaican father separated in London when she was fifteen-years-old following a turbulent relationship that included domestic abuse. She did not know where her father, absent for many years, was at the time of writing but, upon its completion, discovered he had recently died in Jamaica.   She writes how her own post-Kleinian identity achieved from her process of psychic development over many years enabled her to reach a more solid and complex father object that she calls *"dad–Roy–daddy(?)"* (p. 139). She uses this term to recall her father to mind. It also acknowledges feelings that she understands are influenced by societal constructs, including racism, rather than simply being one of blame and abandonment. She notes her aim in the paper is to,

> … explore the ways these objects were doubly inscribed as artefacts of the social world in which the dynamics of race and diaspora were prevalent and encapsulated the internal world of oedipal and generational dynamics. They were the mechanism through which I conjured a man I knew as my father both as an internal object and as an embodied and sentient being in the external world. (Lewis, 2012, p. 138)

Lewis's paper is both arresting and deeply moving, and the articulation she manages is the result of a lifetime's work. Additionally, she writes about matters of race and difference, and considers how social/collective memory affects a life (terms I describe further in my chapter on memory).

Approach to the task

Given that my thesis focuses on published literature rather than on clinical case material - although I note Harris Williams view that psychoanalytic autobiography is analogous to psychoanalysis -, I explored aspects of literary analysis.   Terry Eagleton comments on the interpretation of literary writing, noting how writing

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[13] Gail Lewis has also written an earlier paper about her mother (2009).

described as 'literary' is *"not tied to a specific context"* (2014, p. 117).   He gives an example that a poem *"can still be meaningful outside of its original context and may alter its meaning as it moves from one place or time to another"* (*ibid.*).   He argues that works of literature (of which I view Bion's 'Weekend' as one) *"are inherently open ended, which is one reason why they can be subject to a whole range of interpretations"* (p.118).   Eagleton also asks, *"What is it that makes a work of literature good, bad or indifferent?"* (p.175), noting originality, depth of insight, truth-to-life, universal appeal, moral complexity, verbal inventiveness, imaginative vision, amongst other things (*ibid.*).   My view is that Bion's work is valuable as a work of literature as it is a unique autobiography both within the genre and psychoanalysis, one that describes states of mind as well as communicating his theories.   It is important as a historical record of WWI but also of the lives of pre/adolescent boys from British families growing up in boarding schools in England during the Edwardian era.

I think of 'Weekend' as having the form of a 'case study' of development, with the author, almost a lifetime later in the writing, as its subject.   The value of case studies as a genre, as with child psychotherapy clinical case studies, has been written about by Michael Rustin (2009), who notes it has been *"very productive in generating new knowledge"* (p. 43) in the psychoanalytic field.   They permit generalization by example and analogy from particulars, rather than by generalizing by theory and deduction, which Bion does much of in his psychoanalytic writing, full of theories.   Such descriptive 'case based' writing can deeply illuminate instances and cases similar in various different respects to their own, which I touch on in this thesis using some relevant examples of public school literature.   However, space does not permit a comparison study.

Initially, I was interested in Annie Roger's methodology, 'An Interpretive Poetics of Languages of the Unsayable' methodology (Rogers, Casey, Ekert et al, 1999) for analyzing text as it offers a systematic way of interrogating narratives via accumulative readings in order to discover layers of meaning.   It was developed in the context of longitudinal research on childhood and is conducive to revealing children's own perceptions of their life experiences.   It is particularly suited to research that is interested in how experience is constructed and conveyed.   It is a

method used mostly to analyze transcripts of interviews with children about their lives but has been trialed in researching diaries and other life writing. The interpretive poetics methodology initially appeared somewhat suited to my project, given my research questions. For example, I thought that observing woven and torn signifiers and the relational dance in the text (two different registers for interpreting sequences of text) would likely point to moments where defences against mental pain of various kinds were at risk of getting in the way of the facts.

However, following multiple readings of the text within the initial phase of my project, I found myself arriving at several main themes I wanted to explore and understand using a more reflexive methodology. These were bullying, masculinity, sexuality, and groups/maternal absences. Initially, I envisaged the latter theme, groups/maternal absences, as two separate chapters. However, I came to the view they were inextricably linked due to their interrelatedness, and I decided not to separate them. Once I had written about this final theme, I realized I had described different ways of relating, and so I changed the heading of my chapter to accurately reflect my findings. Therefore, thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006) seemed more suited to my project, one of the most common forms of analysis within qualitative research that emphasizes the identification, analysis and the interpretation of patterns of meaning (or themes) within qualitative data using a stepped framework. It is an umbrella term under which reflexive approaches are one such spoke (Langdridge and Hagger-Johnson, 2009; Hayes, 2000).

I began to approach investigating each of my themes in turn by further re-readings of the chapters in 'England', before paying attention to shorter extracts where each theme was in the foreground, re-reading these extracts several times and drawing on both my own emotional responses to the text (influenced and understood by my own continuing analysis) and contemporary psychoanalytic theory on adolescent development to understand them. At times I re-read 'Part 1: India', where Bion details his earlier childhood, to develop additional perspectives, or origins, on the states he communicates in 'England'.

I was struck how the approach I have taken is similar to the child psychotherapist, Joshua Holmes, whose reflexive methodology, the reverie research method (2018a and 2018b), I came across during the course of my project. Holmes

researches interview material and clinical case reports in published psychoanalytic/psychotherapeutic journals whereby articles are read, and then attention is paid to clinical extracts, which are re-read multiple times. He then makes free-associative notes of his emotional responses, noting potential thematic similarities across different texts. Once all articles are read, he revisits earlier notes and refines emerging themes. He applies alpha function to understand his responses. Themes are then presented with extracts of text and an accompanying reflexive discussion (2018b).

I provide a description of what I finally did at the end of the next chapter, 'Memory and the Complexities of the Autobiographical Method'.

Map of the work

I start my exploration with a theoretical chapter on memory, in which I note its inherent difficulties, two antinomies that I call 'magpie' and 'minefield' – that is to say how memories tend to pluck out only the shiny bits and omit the rest, and other complexities that might put the scientific researcher off exploring the realms of autobiographical data due to issues of reliability. I ask whether these difficulties make it off-limits to investigate or whether the subjective nature of memory provides 'routes to intimate truths' that capture the essence of human experience and relationships. I consider the following: how information is organized; critiques of subjectivity; the term 'psychoanalytic autobiography'; matters relating to the audience and elements of 'performativity' that are employed to relay stories; flawed conceptions of a public/private divide; the nature of social/collective memory; issues of remembering and reconstruction; the 'survivor' genre and writings about adverse childhood experiences; ethical considerations; and, matters in relation to readings of autobiographies (of which this thesis is one).

My first main theme is 'The Prevalence of Bullying'. I describe Bion's adverse experiences upon arrival at the prep school when his mother leaves him, and a group of boys begin to interrogate him, asking him in which school house he belongs, 'A' or 'B'. It is a matter he knows nothing about but offers a guess for which he is immediately reprimanded. His forced answer concealing both his and the other boys' vulnerabilities and feelings of abandonment. It becomes the template for 'the

lie', where feelings of smallness are disavowed, even when some sensitivity is available to him from another boy. The bullying becomes physical as his time in the prep school continues, and the group of boys led by two main bullies, Morgan and Pickett, beat Bion with cricket stumps for calling out that another boy is *"only an orphan"* (p. 56). It seems the memory is so frightening to the writer that the event is minimized by Bion, who says he *"did not come to any harm other than a few bruises"* (p. 57). Within the chapter, I begin to trace how Bion writes in a way that shows an awareness of his own capacities to inflict cruelty as a child - impulsively putting a noose around his peer's neck (p. 102) and mocking a short-sighted boy for his appearance (pp. 103 -104) - that did not make sense to him at the time given it was difficult for him to think of himself as a boy with some difficulties.

My second chapter, 'Problematic Masculine Identifications', traces Bion's exposure to different versions of damaged and damaging masculinities during his schooldays that, building on his experiences as a young child with his father, prevent him from being able to identify with a more helpful masculine construct, and only serve to fortify his 'exo-skeletonous sheath'. I consider the tragic and unintegrated figure of Hirst, the headmaster; Mr. Rhodes and Mr. Hamilton who take him into their families during school holidays but only offer false ideals of manhood; and the contrasting masters that are Colman, the classics teacher, who seems to have something more genuine and rare to offer the young Bion, and Thompson, the headmaster of a neighbouring school, who is portrayed with the worst form of phallic masculinity belonging to the colonial age that Bion also rejects outright.

Third, I explore sexuality, a chapter I call 'Half-Dead Boys: Sexuality and Censorship'. I found it difficult to write this chapter initially, perhaps in part due to the complex and often abstract way that Bion writes about his sexual development. However, I found it made more sense as I became increasingly aware of the impact of morality and religion on the adolescent Bion, epitomized by Farrar's 'Eric'. I note Bion's reliance on masturbation as a young child and then consider the impact of pubertal development and the main school's approach to sex in a segregated boys' school in Edwardian England on him.

My final theme is 'Problems with Relating'. In this chapter, I attempt to draw into focus how the interactions he has with his peers are impacted, not only by

difficult external circumstances, but a destructive internal constellation, or ganging, which Bion calls 'the lie'. I consider the influence of these internal gang mechanisms on him and how they function to take charge, preventing him feeling helpless but, ultimately, result in a catastrophic scenario where he rejects all relationships, where destructiveness and sadism pervade in his play, even when there is the provision of some warmth and nourishment from his friends' mothers, Mrs. Rhodes and Mrs. Hamilton.

Lastly, in my 'Conclusion' I return to evaluate what I set out to do in this project, to investigate the adolescent states of mind that Bion recalls in 'Weekend'. I consider how far I got and how I went about it. I present my main findings from the four themes I investigate, now as a set of conclusions, as far as I think it is possible to read into the material. I trace the methodological issues that the autobiographical method raises in general, how the nature of memory and remembering requires consideration when interpreting the text and how the text is written. I give an overview of the issues there appear to have been for Bion when writing his work, as far as it is possible to speculate, and for myself with my reading of the material. I provide a brief reflexive example of how I came to understand some of my own identifications with the work in order to give the reader of this thesis a flavour of how I endeavoured throughout to understand this personal process given it is part of my research methodology. I also opt to include this example to demonstrate my awareness that without there being a process of attempting to understand one's own identifications to a subject matter, any reading of an autobiography risks resulting in questionable findings. I then consider how adolescent the states I have taken to explore are, or whether they are more infantile in nature. Finally, I reflect on what I think my project contributes to child psychotherapy, a profession that maintains close links to the mainstream British psychoanalytic tradition, and I propose some areas for future research.

Memory and the Complexities of the Autobiographical Method:
Magpie and Minefield, or Route to Intimate Truths?

Introduction to memory

In this chapter, I examine the nature of autobiography as a subgenre of life writing. The autobiographical method has inherent problems with individualism/subjectivity that I call 'magpie' and 'minefield' yet can also provide valuable perspectives, or 'routes to intimate truths', when researching lives and lived experience. Questions such as why, when and for whom the writer writes, i.e. the work's audience that may be intended or not, are essential to consider. Additionally, complications in how representations of the self to the public are made, particularly where authors are famous figures, require special attention, given this may interfere with reliability of the text. I present the term psychoanalytic autobiography, which I propose takes into account the pitfalls of the method, and explore what characterizes this special form from other autobiographical writing.

Issues of reconstruction and the nature of memory are inescapable when considering the genre. The human mind, the apparatus for recalling past events and articulating memories in the present, tends to distort truth in various ways given the emotional nature of the topic. Time is also a major factor as memories can develop or lose meaning after the event, as noted in my 'Introduction' with Bion's memories of WWI that can be seen to shift and accumulate meaning in relation to the clinical theories he developed forty years later (Roper, 2012). However, rather than rendering the form obsolete, these emotional aspects can add extra significance to the field of study as, when considered, they can generate fascinating insights into writings about the self and readings of them. Furthermore, and frequently, different people can have different recollections of events that sometimes seem at odds with the other. At first confusing, these differing accounts can also be understood as holding aspects of wider, collective/social truths. There may also be incentives for some individuals or groups, usually at the expense of others, for specific memories and truths to remain hidden from the public eye by means of repression, disseminating propaganda/fake news, or otherwise.

The 'survivor' genre is a subgenre of autobiographical writing that describes memories of neglect and abuse, often those belonging to childhood. It requires especially careful further thought given the devastating impact on the mind that adverse early experiences can have and the emotional effort and refined setting required to process undigested experiences, proto-memories or what Freud called 'allusions' (1917). Imbalances of power prevalent when children suffer in society begin to shift and threaten the accepted social narratives when they are challenged. A variety of reactions and responses can be observed, helpful and unhelpful, when child victims' hidden views are brought into public consciousness. Publication within this genre is, therefore, a powerful political act.

Given the above contexts, ethical considerations are necessary to think about when considering the methodology. These include, how much the researcher can traverse the divide between subjectivity and their requirements to remain objective – a divide that comes under increasing pressure when findings are proposed, or inferences made. Issues of consent also need to be acknowledged. Readings of autobiographies, of which the analysis contained within this thesis is one, require reflection given the researcher who explores another's autobiography will have his/her own identifications with the subject matter and author that affect how material is perceived.

Autobiography within life story research

Autobiography itself is simply defined in the Oxford English Dictionary as, *"an account of a person's life written by that person"* (2017). It is a literary subgenre within life writing. The sociologist and researcher, as well as my director of studies, Barbara Harrison notes that a broad view can be taken of what constitutes life story research in her editor's introduction to a four-volume collection on life story research (2009, xxiii). It encompasses both biography and autobiography - writing about another person or oneself - and can take different forms, including, letters, emails and other correspondence, interviews, diary entries, blogs and multimedia. She notes how *"The use of life stories in social science research takes as a starting point that story-telling and self-presentation is something which occurs as part of everyday social practices in any case"* (xxxi). There is something very ordinary/day-to-day

about the form, and life stories can be viewed as an inherent part of human relationships.

> The idea that individual lives and lived experience has a major contribution to make to the understanding of the social world is not a particularly new one. (*ibid.*, xxiii)

Life stories are how we communicate our experiences to one another. Yet, at the same time, they have a vitalizing quality with the capacity to generate and contribute towards new insights into the very nature of relationships and the experience of individuals in them. As such, life writing remains a genre that continues to be of great interest.

Organizing information

Virginia Woolf is purported to have said, *"My God, how does one write a biography?"* (1938), conveying overwhelming feelings when faced with the task of conceptualizing a whole life within a book. Within auto/biography experience tends to be *"narratively and dialogically organized"* (Cosslett, Lury and Summerfield, 2000, p. 3), and a person's life is understood with reference to *"the historical structures in which the milieu of their everyday life [sic.] are organized"* (Wright Mills, 1959, p. 175). The way one chooses to tell a story, chronologically or otherwise, and how dialogues are communicated are of interest themselves (Lee, 2009). Stories exist within a time and place as well as over times and places. Auto/biographical writing is necessarily selective as auto/biography, by its very nature, will always be a condensed version of a life. These matters give rise to variations in literary form. Writing can focus on a particular aspect of a life or limited themes; a good example is Robin Anderson's paper 'Moving on From the Suburbs' (2009) that focuses solely on his development as a psychoanalyst. At the other end of the spectrum sits the Norwegian author, Karl Ove Knausgård, with his large-scale six-volume work, 'My Struggle' (2009-2011). He deliberately attempted to write less stylistically, uninhibitedly and plainly about his life for the project. The first few volumes were enormously popular, and their publication created a media frenzy with members of the press attempting to track down, largely non-anonymized, relatives, mentioned in the work. These events influenced his writing in the final volumes, which incorporate his reflections upon becoming a famous public figure, its impact on him and those around him. The aspects of a life that are included and those that are omitted require

careful examination as these matters can affect the reliability of the work and pose ethical dilemmas, as was the case with Knausgård.

Subjectivity and selectivity

When theorizing lives and lived experience, Harrison (2009) notes,

> There has been some criticism levelled at life story approaches in the social sciences for what has been viewed as an excessive individualism, not recognizing that it is in understanding how individuals construct meaning that then provides us with knowledge of how social reality is itself constructed. (xxxii)

Subjectivity is an inevitable and important aspect to our lives and in making sense of our experiences. Similarly, Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson state,

> Understanding the constitutive processes of autobiographical subjectivity and the components of any particular autobiographical act – those occasions, sites, autobiographical "I"s, others, addresses, structuring modes of self-inquiry, patterns of employment, media, and audiences – in turn complicate and enrich the way we understand the stories we read and the way we tell stories about ourselves. (2001, p.163)

Given the dual role of subject and author, autobiography may be especially critiqued within life writing for being overly subjective at the expense of recognizing how it aids the articulation of meaningful experiences.

As stated, autobiography is necessarily selective. However, it can also be criticized for not portraying an accurate picture. 'Warts and all' auto/biography (Lee, 2009), writing that pays attention to the less than pleasant aspects of the self/other that are also inherent parts of the human condition, has been of interest since James Boswell published his infamous biography of Samuel Johnson (1791). Despite their peculiar and rather dubious relationship as biographer and subject, Boswell portrays a grotesque and *"highly socialized, gossipy, backbiting, and rivalrous literary world"* (Lee, 2009, p.44). This opened the way for 'the rest' (the non-shiny bits) to be included in the form more widely, without having to adhere to Saint Augustine's early moral prototype for an auto/biography, 'Confessions' (397-400), where 'sins' have to be repented, rather than be understood.

When writing this chapter, I came to use the terms 'magpie' and 'minefield' to describe an unhelpful, polarized position where all value in the autobiographical method is discounted but can also be pitfalls that authors wittingly or unwittingly fall into in consciously or unconsciously defensive ways.

'Magpie' is a term I use to describe the point of view, that can easily become an unhelpful belief, that memory only goes for the shiny bits and omits the rest. The term reflects the mythology surrounding the bird, how they take to lining their nests with shiny objects, that has led to many tales over the centuries that they steal jewellery and other riches. Magpie is sometimes used as a nickname for thief. My sense is that allegations of magpie against the validity of autobiographical texts are most likely to occur where there are perceived or actual dangers with authenticity. Ironically, the thief can be viewed as the person who makes the allegation against the memory's validity. The term may be particularly applicable to the survivor genre where stories may not be believed and where socio-political forces continue to come together to maintain the crime of a robbed childhood. I elaborate on this when I discuss writings about adverse childhood experiences.

'Minefield' is a term I use in this thesis to describe a position that tends to be adopted by writers sceptical of autobiographies but may also be maintained by socio-political forces, where the method is seen as too fraught to be able to retain any relationship to objectivity whatsoever, thus preventing any meaningful ventures into the territory. This may be where the writer's own emotional difficulties obscure the revelation of more truthful facts and, resultantly, only limited details are provided, and information pertaining to the complexity of feelings and relationships is avoided. There may be socio-political incentives that perpetuate resistances to exploring such terrain and in bringing non-dominant narratives into wider view[14].

In terms of maintaining a credible relation to objectivity, Harrison notes how the roots of auto/biography in oral history did not exclude important contextual factors and "*retained a concern with historical and social contexts*" (2009, xxxiii). Additionally, she states how auto/biography that keeps an interest in contextual factors can provide correctives to "*structures, institutions, and processes at the societal and global level*" (*ibid.*); another matter that has significant ramifications for the survivor subgenre as I come to consider. My view is that subjective writing that retains an awareness of objectivity and the environment, where valued as research

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[14] After I had written this chapter, I came across Judith Edwards paper 'Ripples in Mental Space Caused by Dark Matters and Twisted Tales' (2013). She uses the terms internal and external saboteurs to denote the pitfalls of the method - a different way of thinking about issues of magpie and minefield.

material itself, offers a route towards 'intimate truths', i.e., new understandings and discoveries in the domain of lived experiences.

Psychoanalytic autobiography

Before psychoanalytic autobiography, psychoanalytic biography garnered many fans but also critics. Freud's study on Leonardo can be thought of as the first 'psychoanalytic biography' (1910) and a new subgenre. Whilst John Mack (1980) notes a growing affinity between psychoanalysis and biography, Martin Bergmann (1973) comments on its limits, mainly how *"It deals with the rules of inference that lead from the material assembled to the conclusions reached"* (p. 847); or in other words, how one reads a life. Joseph Lichtenberg also cautions how, after Freud, biography is considered *"enriched by (or contaminated) by explicit information (or misinformation) about the realm of unconscious motivation"* (1978, p. 397). Questions as to how far it is possible to know what really went on using the techniques of free association and transference reactions to descriptions of events are raised (Bergmann*, 1973)*.

The American psychoanalyst, Theodor Reik, coined the term 'psychoanalytic autobiography' in his book 'Fragment of a Great Confession: A Psychoanalytic Autobiography' (1949). Its title is derived from Goethe's autobiography, as Maud Ellman (2016) also points out, where the author proposes that all of his works are *"fragments of a great confession"* (Goethe, 1987, p. 214). In Ellman's amusing chapter 'Psychoanalysis and Autobiography' (2016) she notes how the poet and playwright W. H. Auden poked fun at misconceptions of psychoanalysis in the 1930s where *"to the man in the street, the cure for all ills is (a) indiscriminate sexual intercourse, (b) autobiography"* (Auden, 1935, p. 69). Ellman observes how autobiography has flourished in the age of psychoanalysis, with Freud's modernist contemporaries Joyce, Proust, Mann, Musil and Svevo all having a stab at the genre using different literary forms. For example, Italo Zvevo presents his novel 'Zeno's Conscience' (1923) as diary entries according to themes rather than following a chronological order (although at the end of the novel, these entries are presented 'in time' and day-by-day during the period of WWI). It sees the protagonist's psychoanalyst encouraging him to write his life story to get to the root of his smoking addiction, a joke that all analyses work along the lines of revealing unconscious

sexual desires, and then publishes the confession out of revenge when the patient abandons the analysis (Ellman, 2016, p. 313) leading Zvevo to proclaim the work is full of lies. Ellman notes,

> Both psychoanalysis and fiction depend on a willing suspension of disbelief. And perhaps this is the therapeutic benefit that both provide: an oasis of uncertainty amidst hard facts and univocal ideologies. (*ibid.*, p. 326)

Meg Harris Williams, an advocate of the term, defines psychoanalytic autobiography as something distinct from simply an autobiographical narrative of external events. She argues that the process of writing an autobiography is analogous to self-analysis and comments how Bion defined psychoanalysis as 'a means of introducing the patient to himself', stating that psychoanalytic autobiography is another of those means (2012, p. 398). She proposes that true psychoanalytic autobiography involves a 'reflecting back' on oneself and others, crucially, through empathy and that, *"Precisely because of this sense of personal discovery, such a work inspires the reader to know better not just the writer, but themselves"* (p. 399). It is,

> ... writing that interests itself in the essence of a personality over a period of time, using time itself as a structural coordinate, and using the vivid depiction of external events, people and places, as its medium or means to an end – namely, that of interior observation. (p. 398)

The role of invention and imagination is seen as pointing to *"some psychic truth"* (p. 401) as *"psychoanalytic autobiography is in the service of imagination: even if it may appear to be 'all lies'"* (*ibid.*). Within this vein, as mentioned in my Introduction, she points out that Freud's seminal early text 'The Interpretation of Dreams' (1900), a creative product of his own self-analysis in which his own dreams are used as material, can be thought of as more truly psychoanalytically autobiographical than his 1925 autobiography that is quite literal in form (Harris Williams, 2012, p. 400). I warm to Harris William's view where psychoanalytic autobiography is seen as *"a mode of remaking the self – not omnipotently but through exploratory self-analysis, frequently following the familiar pattern of loss and recovery"* (*ibid.*).

Harris Williams also notes Bion's own take on what can be thought of as a psychoanalytic autobiography, found in 'Taming Wild Thoughts [II]' (1977b). He says,

> The reason why we concern ourselves with things that are remembered, with our past history, is not because of what it was - although that might be quite important in its own right - but because of the mark it has left on you or me or us now. (*ibid.*, p. 185)

Similarly to psychoanalytic biography, the subgenre has come in for some criticism with Ian Parker (2009) preferring the term 'psychoanalytic narrative'. Parker says, *"I write about psychoanalysis as a form of narrative in a way that locates me inside it that externalizes it rather than treating it as something inside me"* (Parker, 2009, p. 14) - a different way of thinking to Kleinian psychoanalysis of which he is a critic. He cautions treating psychoanalysis simply as a form of truth and calls for a disentanglement of the threads when using a psychoanalytic method of narrative as psychoanalysis is already woven into Western culture.

Issues of audience and 'performativity'

Who an autobiography is written for and how the author characterizes, to certain degrees, his/her states are important questions. The audience may be intended or not, specific or general, sympathetic, ambivalent or downright hostile. The intended audience may or may not be reached, a factor that can also change; for example, if a letter to a friend is intercepted or lost or an email stays in an outbox by mistake and is then delivered a few weeks later. They can be specific or, at other times, more general, a lay or scholarly audience. This influences how texts are written as well as how they are perceived.

The authorial act itself can be thought of as requiring certain types of 'performativity' (Smith, 1998) in order to communicate content as, for example, Kate Douglas describes,

> ... in autobiographies of childhood certain narrative identities are taken up (such as the universal subject or traumatic childhood survivor), distinctive narratives and voices are employed (such as the naïve child or the nostalgic child), and particular themes and promotional strategies recur (such as the innocent child). A performance of authorship is demanded from autobiographers … as a means of authenticating their narrative. For instance, the author of a traumatic childhood must write and speak in interviews as a survivor who is at once a creative adult, a unique individual, and a representative individual who is able to bring his or her child self back to life in ways that will be productive beyond the individual. (2010, p.83)

How the drama is dramatized and what literary methods are employed to do this may be in the service of taking a reader towards or away from an emotional event. How feeling states are communicated or avoided are of central importance.

The US novelist, Margaret Atwood, writes in the preface to the republication (32 years later) of, arguably, her most famous work, 'The Handmaid's Tale' (1985), that there are two reading audiences for Offred's (the main protagonist's) account of her experiences under the repressive and misogynistic Gileadean regime. Under their rule, women of poorer backgrounds are assigned as Handmaids to bear children for the rich elite who have trouble conceiving in a totalitarian regime where rates of conception are dangerously low. The book ends at an unspecified time in the future where the Republic of Gilead has fallen, and a male academic, Dr. Piexoto, explains that the novel just read is a transcript of a tape recording Offred had kept (and hidden) as a record of her experience. The two intended audiences are, therefore,

> … the one at the end of the book, at an academic conference in the future, who are free to read but not always as empathetic as one might wish; and the individual reader of the book at any given time … . (Attwood, 2017, p. 23)

Dr. Piexoto appears to attribute value to Offred's experience but declares to the audience at the academic conference that it would be more valuable to read an account by the Commander of Gilead. This disappointing response conveys how, in an era where citizens are now in theory free to hold different views and live non-enslaved lives, a misogynistic hierarchy where elite men hold onto power still exerts its influence.

An audience will not always be able to 'hear', and may not even be the target audience, yet the fact that an experience outside of the dominant narrative exists can often be seen as the start of progress, slow as it is. Atwood states it is the latter audience - *"the individual reader of the book at any given time"* - who are *"the 'real' reader, the Dear Reader for whom every writer writes" (ibid.)*. This is the place where lived experience truly can be gotten to know by the other; however, it may challenge them. It could be said that there are always two potential audiences, two different audience states of mind – one receptive and one not so. The audience best hoped for is one where a capacity to know about suffering and also the reader's own

capacity to inflict harm can be held in mind. It is a state where empathy is more potent than hate.

Flawed conceptions of a public/private divide

Storytelling in everyday social practice *"may be both private or public (perhaps more often semi-public) in nature"* (Harrison, 2009, xxxi). The sociologist and researcher, E. Stina Lyon, considers the role of the public sphere in attempting to construct a private sense of oneself, which she feels ultimately fails, in her fascinating study, 'Biographical constructions of a working woman: The changing faces of Alva Myrdal' (2000).

Alva Myrdal, 1902-1986, was a Swedish sociologist, diplomat, politician, and leading figure of the disarmament movement who won the Nobel prize in 1982 and made an essential contribution to changing conceptions of the modern woman. Lyon writes:

> With her husband Gunnar, she drew up blueprints for a woman-friendly welfare state that continue to be of relevance to contemporary debates about women's dual roles in the public and private spheres. She herself was a working wife and mother of three children with a home publicly hailed for its efficient modernity. In retrospect, her domestic performance as wife and mother, as well as her public writings on women and family welfare policy, have been subject to critical re-evaluation, a debate to which biographical material presented by each of her three children contributed. (2000, p. 407)

Her son Jan's autobiographical writings on his childhood (Myrdal, J., 1982) caused a 'literary sensation' (Lyon, 2000, p. 418) when released because of his stark descriptions of his mother's coldness and rejection of her rural familial ties that did not tally with the model of motherhood and domesticity she tried to promote in the public eye. Lyon notes how Jan presents his mother's world as *"full of masks and convenient lies to keep up appearances of order and success"* (p. 419). He is critical of the impact of his mother's *"commitment to a life of professional fame and upward social mobility"* (p. 420).

However, Alva's eldest daughter, Sissela, presents her mother in contrasting light as a *"path-breaking pioneer with a powerful vision of emancipated womanhood"* (Lyon, *ibid.*) in her biography of her mother (Bok, S. 1987). Lyon wonders whether Jan's comparative frame of reference is of an idealized, old-fashioned form of motherhood, whereas Sissela's is, contrastingly, of a powerful, feminist form of

womanhood (2000, p. 421). Sissela appears to view the impact of her mother's lifestyle as having value but at cost to her own upbringing, given her mother was often away. However, in reaction, she adopts the view that this circumstance fostered her own independence, given she learned to make her own decisions as a teenager (p. 422).

Meanwhile, Alva's youngest child, Kaj (Fölster, K., 1992), shares her sister Sissela's admiration for their mother's struggle for women's emancipation but, apparently, not much else. As the youngest child, she struggled with delayed speech and the ability to express herself in a family full already with arguments, ideas and intellectual debates. Kaj views her mother's 'womanly weakness' as the incessant wish she had to do good to all which prevented her from confronting the demanding and sometimes aggressive qualities of her son, Jan, and husband, Gunner (Lyon, 2000, p.423); qualities which Kaj then seems to internalize, finding herself unable to express her own anger towards her mother throughout her life (p. 425).

Lyon comments how these contrasting auto/biographies demonstrate, amongst other things, that *"judgments about the contribution of women continue to be framed by conceptions of the duality of their place in the public and private domains"* (p. 407). The sociologist, Mary Evans, notes how unresolved family dramas impact *"on individuals, and consequently on intellectual life and social ideas"* (1993). Difficulties in the private sphere may not be resolved by exploits in more public life, although conscious or unconscious attempts to do just that may often be at play. Lyon concludes her paper, noting that, for Alva Myrdal, attempts to *"order the world through writing and participation in public life"* were limited and ultimately painful and disappointing to her (2000, p. 426).

Collective/social memory

It is interesting to think with Alva Myrdal's case that Lyon (*ibid.*) researched how the collective and contrasting auto/biographies of her children, when read together, may get nearer to describing the woman she actually was. The term 'collective memory' refers to the knowledge and information present in a social group, as well as their communal memories, that have important connections to the group's identity. It is subject to dynamic socio-political forces, as Harrison states.

> Memories are considered not just to be personal, but products of social, cultural, and political positioning, and in this context some memories are of things to which we personally were not witnesses, but which nevertheless we are obliged to incorporate into our own sense of who we are, since we are hearers of the stories and narratives around them. (2009, xxxv)

The environment always has a relationship with, and therefore impact on, the individual.

Autobiography has the power to introduce hitherto repressed or unknown experiences into social consciousness and wider collective narratives. Barry Godfrey and Jane Richardson (2009) explore what happens when memories are unsettling or disturbing to the group and how individual and collective feelings of loss can be understood. They note how,

> ... the theoretical position of life-narratives have mainly focused on the dialectic between the memories held by an individual, and the wider societal structures of social memory that are variously held and employed by disparate groups. (p. 323)

Godfrey and Richardson (*ibid.*) consider what is added to the understanding of collective memories from methodological considerations arising from transcriptions and archived oral histories. In the 'meanings of violence' project (research conducted by Godfrey), 1980s transcriptions of oral histories given by English, Australian and New Zealand adults on their childhoods in the late Victorian and Edwardian era (1880-1920) were examined. Focusing on one particular transcription included in the research project, that of an adult known as Millie, they note how she talks about surviving an accident in Sydney Harbour as a child in which both her parents drowned. They notice how the violent separation from her parents described by Millie seems to act as a metaphor for a wider collective struggle in Australian society at that time. The metaphor is an 'abandoned Australia' with its uncertain future in relation to the rest of the world alongside Millie's uncertain future in Australian children's homes. They quote the Australian cultural sociologist, Peter Pierce (1999), who argues that *"the lost child narrative is a defining and familiar element for Australian readers of their larger, proto-national story"* (cited in Godfrey and Richardson, 2009, p. 330). Pierce sees this phenomenon as *"an emotional response to the sense of freedom and also abandonment that Australians felt at the gradual separation from 'the mother country' [Britain]"* (*ibid.*). This socio-political process was started by the establishment of the Federation in 1901 and *"helped on its way by the periodic perceived rejection of Australia by Britain"* (*ibid.*). It involved,

over time, the massacre of young Australian men in Gallipoli, abandonment to the threat of Japan by Churchill in WWII and immigration restrictions placed upon Australian visitors when Britain joined the European Economic Community. He argues that the constant written warnings about children wandering off into the bush in the Victorian and Edwardian period and the disproportionate fear of this actually happening demonstrated the Anglo-Australian fear of the country swallowing them up (*ibid.*).

David Reift observes some problems with the notion of collective memory, noting how strong cultural emphases on historic events, often wrongs against a particular group of people, tend to prevail. He distinguishes between memories of people who were actually alive during the events in question, and the people who only knew about them from culture and media (2016).

The Israeli historian, Guy Beiner, who writes particularly about Irish history, also critiques what he says is the non-reflexive use of the adjective 'collective' in many studies on memory, preferring to promote the term 'social memory' (2007). Social memory emphasizes how human beings are above all social beings, and individuals live in a world where experiences exist within relationships. He proposes certain 'sins' in the field of memory studies, amongst which he includes the sin of 'crudity' - a failure to apply adequate intellectual rigour. He writes in an online article,

> The problem is with crude conceptions of collectivity which assume a homogeneity that is rarely, if ever, present, and maintain that, since memory is constructed, it is entirely subject to the manipulations of those invested in its maintenance, denying that there can be limits to the malleability of memory or to the extent to which artificial constructions of memory can be inculcated. In practice, the constitution of a completely collective memory is at best an aspiration of politicians, which is never entirely fulfilled and is always subject to contestations. (Biener, 2017)

Remembering and reconstructing

In a popular online article, 'The Trouble with Autobiography', the US novelist and travel writer, Paul Theroux, begins his piece with a short 500-or-so words account of his life, noting: his birth order amongst his siblings; the name, whereabouts and a suggestion of feelings of affinity towards the town he grew up in; the professions of his parents; a brief note on his ancestry; and, finally, the preferred company he chose to keep within his wider family as a child. He then makes an apparently conscious

decision to stop, feeling he could not and would not wish to continue with any further efforts at the genre himself. It is as brief an autobiography as is it boring. However, he goes on to provide some explanation for his rather desiccated work, citing the faults he finds with the autobiographical method in general.

> I think I would find it impossible to write an autobiography without invoking the traits I seem to deplore in … [the literature] – exaggeration, embroidery, reticence, invention, heroics, mythomania, compulsive revisionism, and all the rest that are so valuable to fiction. (Theroux, 2011)

My own view, shared with many of the other authors I have come across whilst researching this chapter, is that these very distortions Theroux seems afraid of are the *"human basics"* (Mercer, 2008, p. 64) that makes autobiography such a pithy and interesting a field of study. The source of material in an autobiography is memory, and the lens used to look at it is the human mind. Psychoanalysis views memory very much as an emotional matter. Emotions will cause some memories to be overvalued or denied just as, *"Anxiety, guilt and pain lead to defences,"* (*ibid.*) and, *"Pleasure and excitement can be sought at the expense of reality,"* (*ibid.)* as it is according to Freud's two principles of mental functioning (1911).

Theroux provides the reader a clue as to the reason he stops short of writing his own true autobiography.   He notes how Charles Dickens abandoned writing his memoir aged thirty-five *"overcome with memories of his deprivations"* (Theroux, 2011*)* but went on to fictionalize events in his book 'David Copperfield' (1850). Theroux implies this way, poignantly, that his own deprivations and sensitivities feel too painful to write about (an aspect to 'minefield').

Time is always and inextricably bound up with the act of remembering. The time between the event and the act of recording it can vary enormously, giving rise to questions about the accuracy of recalled events because of how meanings shift and develop alongside an individual's identity.   Memories always need to be considered in two time zones; i.e., when the remembered event occurred and the meaning to the individual and/or group in the present.

As I struggled to write this chapter, Margot Waddell, wrote to me after I delayed a supervision that she 'looked forward to memory' (personal communication). This got me thinking about the pace memories arrive in the context of an analysis and the emotional effort involved in staying with uncertainty until

material arrives, leading to new thoughts, understandings and discoveries. Persecutory anxiety associated with waiting for meaning can lead to pain and frustration and associated attempts to evade it. But when they do arrive, memories have potential to foster intimate new understandings of experiences of the past and the ways they colour the present.

Of course, Bion wrote famously that the psychoanalyst must eschew both memory and desire in his/her sessions (1970). In a recent article in the 'Journal of Child Psychotherapy', Yaakov Roitman, comments on aspects of the therapist's memory and capacity for reverie in clinical work, noting Bion's advice which aimed at maintaining *"the therapist's ability to be present and receptive to the patient"* (Roitman, 2019, p. 108).   Roitman cites another of Bion's views that memory should be treated as a pliable construct,

> ... open to a process of accepting what is new and unknown to oneself, which requires a willingness to tolerate ambiguity and not knowing, viewing oneself from multiple perspectives, being capable of 'negative capability' (Bion, 1970). (Roitman, 2019, p.110)

He says this requires the therapist to be,

> ... receptive to new understandings of his own personal history … . That history/memory (a story), which had been felt to be a complete and known chronicle of a past experience, becomes a new and more complex psychic event for the therapist … . (*ibid.*, p111)

Psychic transformation occurs in a person when the therapist is able to think about a new experience with love (Bion, 1962, 1970 and Ogden, 1994, 1997). On the contrary, hate denudes the possibility of understanding and meaning making. Where no one has been sufficiently present emotionally to help the infant bear his experiences at the time they occur, they remain as proto-memories or 'allusions' (Freud, 1900, p427). The analyst is called upon where the patient may have had an ambivalent attachment to the object to help him transform these proto-memories into dream-like memories (Roitman, 2019, pp.112-113).

Writing about adverse childhood experiences

Bell Hooks, a black American author, social activist, and professor, writes how, to start with, telling the story of her traumatic childhood was intimately connected with a wish *"to kill the self I was without really having to die"* (2009, p.125). The process took years but then a new emotional event - having an affair with a young black man

- and unpicking its emotional meaning reminded her of forgotten memories that developed new meanings in the present. It was important her lover was black. She recalls one evening whilst dancing and being embraced by her lover who was smoking, something she would usually avoid, that her Uncle Pete, who smoked and drank, used to embrace her tightly as a child, which she did not like. A memory she is not entirely convinced occurred then suddenly surfaced - her father stopping to repair the car whilst it sat on the train tracks.

Nonetheless, the quality of the material that comes to mind is frightening to her. These two memories led to a sudden flow of further memories about her childhood that enabled her to write her autobiography, which is also intrinsically about the rapid disintegration of black folk experience caused by capitalism and upwards social mobility (p. 128). She feels that the longing she experienced to tell her story was *"symbolically a gesture of longing to recover the past in such a way that one experiences both a sense of reunion and a sense of release"* (*ibid.*), and that writing it enabled her to look at the past from a different perspective (p. 129), something so vital and potent that it helped put back together *"the bits and pieces of my heart,"* providing a narrative that made her feel *"whole again"* (*ibid.*).

There is power with the autobiographical process whereby parts of the self, lost through adversity, can be recovered and, therefore, there is the possibility that difficulties do not go on to dictate the future. Rather, memory can be seen as a route to intimate truths. However, putting the bits and pieces back together is invariably a painful process that always takes time.

There are complex issues inherent in autobiographies about traumatic childhoods. Kate Douglas points out how the survivor subgenre requires *"readers to witness the difficulties, even traumas, of being a child of a particular historical time and place"* (2010, p.19). It is invaluable for understanding the experiences and social conditions of children in the times they grew up in as they are often omitted by more dominant social constructs. Autobiographical writings about the neglect, physical, sexual and emotional abuse of children bring to light relationships within society that threaten dominant discourses to do with how children are treated. Bion's *Weekend* is most well-known outside of psychoanalysis for its value as a WWI document, especially the battle at Amiens. It is interesting to consider why it may not be so

well-known for being an important document of how children from British families in India suffered at boarding schools in Edwardian England. Janet Walker has intimated how public trauma (e.g., war trauma) may feel more acceptable than individual trauma such as child abuse (2003), and this may provide one explanation. It is an oft-forgotten fact that whilst the official age in Britain for joining the army at the time of WWI was eighteen, men who fought in the trenches were frequently very young.

Katharine Hodgkin and Susannah Radstone state,

> … to contest the past is also, of course, to pose questions about the present, and what the past means in the present. Our understanding of the past has strategic, political and ethical consequences. Contests over the meaning of the past are also contests over the meaning of the present and over ways of taking the past forward … . (2003, p. 1)

Autobiographical writing about child abuse is, therefore, frequently a powerful socio-political act.

Stories can also be extremely painful and disturbing to read. However, Godfrey and Richardson note how the survivor genre is not just about loss but contains *"rich layered stories of progress, heroism, levity, grief, trauma and comedy"* (2009, p. 332). Despite this, the survivor genre comes in for particularly hostile accusations of 'made up memories' and falsehoods. Walker draws on Frisch (1990), who thinks the issue of survivor accounts in contemporary society *"has come to seem a threat, even the threat to the authority of traditional political culture"* (Walker, 2003, p. 115). Noting that there are individual, collective and imaginary components to history, Walker also states,

> Certainly not all claims of memory are true. But at the same time, not all false details signify pure invention. Fallible memory components can attest to as well as belie the existence of traumatic events. (*ibid.*)

We know from child psychotherapy that the stories of children who tell tales often contain important emotional truths that require attention and understanding. Lies attempt to protect from painful truths, and there is work to reintroduce individual memory to the sphere of rational history that involves *"acknowledging the different relations of each term to the real historic event but allowing them to be mutually corroborative"* (p.116).

Ethical considerations

James Grotstein (2011) said that the psychoanalyst who publishes an autobiography could be seen as crossing a *"veritable Rubicon"* of self-disclosure (p. 463). Indeed, he wondered if he would ever have gone into analysis with Bion had he read 'Weekend' (Grotstein, 2007). However, Bion's autobiographies were only published posthumously and not available to any patients in analysis with him, only after his death.

Writing on ethical considerations, Kate Douglas notes how an autobiography about childhood suffering offers the author a way *"to address the abuse, disclose intimate details from the past and declare oneself a survivor"* (2010, p. 131). However, in declaring oneself a survivor or victim, someone else is positioned as the perpetrator and, in writings about child abuse, this is invariably the parent or guardian (pp. 131-132). Therefore, ethical considerations include what the author's responsibilities are to those whose lives are used as *"material"* (p. 132). Writers within the childhood survivor genre tend to have various aims that may include working through disrupted processes of individuation from parents.

One intended aim in writing a survivor autobiography may be to align the child self to the adult self in an *"unapologetic battle"* (p. 138) against parents or guardians. Douglas poses the question as to whether this should mean that *"ethics flies out the window"* (*ibid.*). It is important to consider what is enacted when abusive adult figures have *"no right of reply"* (*ibid.*). It can be thought of as communicative of the child's experience when they had 'no right of protection'. Douglas questions what is happening when writers present themselves as *"authorial heroes"* (p. 139). She considers whether the child who needed an adult advocate, in instances where parents did not provide this function, now has this provided by the adult author (*ibid.*). She also considers writers who present themselves as something of a professional victim (*ibid.*), exploiting their own unfortunate situation in a manner where parents are only *"demonized"* (p. 141). How parents are represented is key. She writes,

> ... an adult autobiographer who retrospectively writes about his or her parent necessarily contextualizes his or her parent's life within his or her own adult life – within his or her own values and morals. The parent's life experiences are thus decontextualized and reinterpreted years on by a child (now adult) who might (at best) remember only particular aspects of his

or her experiences with the parent, and whose perceptions have since become infused by an assortment of inescapable cultural memories. (Douglas, 2010, p. 145)

Authors may write from a position of power or perceived authority, and the parents may now become vulnerable subjects themselves (p. 147).

Ethical considerations include whether the parents have a *"right to be represented in a more complex manner"* (p. 148) and whether authors *"have a responsibility to their parents to try to understand them as part of the autobiographical project"* (*ibid.*). Writers tend to use the autobiographical form *"to exercise their agency denied to them as a child, to purge trauma and to direct anger toward the perpetrators of their abuse, and to transfer their childhood shame onto the perpetrator parent"* (*ibid.*). Where authors do not show forgiveness, this may function *"to silence the perpetrator and to position the child, and thus the author, as "right" and as having the primary right to speak"* (*ibid.*). Writers who have some empathy for their parents seem to address tensions with more *"complex representations of abuse, parenting, and social inequality"* (p. 149). In contemporary autobiography, there appears an unwritten rule that *"trauma texts should demonstrate some overt consciousness of ethics, and of the autobiography as relational"* (*ibid.*). This tends to be possible where the inherent subjectivity of narratives and an awareness that memory fragments are acknowledged (*ibid.*).

There is a trend in many contemporary autobiographies to place value on forgiveness, and Douglas has also asked whether forgiveness should perhaps become valued over bitterness (p. 146). Gail Lewis's gripping autobiographical paper about her lost father, 'Where Might I Find You?' (2012), that I mention in my 'Introduction' notes how forgiveness was one way forward for herself. She writes, in the first person to her father.

> You see, I do want to change that narrative of 'I never had a father', and to do that I need not just to dig deep and evoke all the ways I did – sometimes – have a father, but to forgive you in some way. And to forgive you means I must try to understand you a little and reassemble you into an integrated whole in which the good and the bad parts of you become aligned into one whole, ordinary human being, ordinarily good and ordinarily bad (Segal, 1973). And, if I am to create the depth inside me to really see you as a whole person, to integrate your good and bad parts, then I have to face the way that I unconsciously hated and attacked you in my child-, teenage-, and maybe even adult-mind. (Lewis, 2012, p. 145)

However, she steers clear of evangelizing forgiveness as the answer for all. There is the sense that for the child, forgiveness should not be a requirement, but for the child-in-adult it may be helpful to consider; a challenging task where abuses have been high.

Further ethical considerations include the *"status of 'descriptions' vis a vis the events they purport to describe"* (Harrison and Lyon, 2009, p.163) given *"description is necessarily a gloss which constructs a point of view on this actuality"* (Stanley, 1990, p.625). How much the researcher can traverse the divide between subjectivity and requirements to remain objective is crucial. This is a divide which can come under pressure, especially when findings begin to be proposed or inferences made. Harrison and Lyon, drawing on Anne Williams (1990), note the tensions between the autobiographer's status, both participant and observer and how such separations are used to think about lived experiences (Harrison and Lyon, 2009, p. 163).   They remark how *"the line between subjective morality and a researcher's own professional code of ethics"* might come under pressure of collapse *"in the sense of ethics becoming a taken-for-granted feature of research, or an irresolvable dilemma in which personal morality takes precedent, especially as the subjectivity of the researcher becomes merged with the subjectivities of the participants"* (pp. 167 - 168).

Issues of consent are interesting here given, as Harrison and Lyon also note that, for the purpose of autobiography, where data is as perceived and experienced by the research subject herself/himself *"the consent of others might defeat this very purpose"* (p. 168). However, they go on to note this raises questions as to whether, in such accounts, others can *"have their rights ignored in order to maintain the integrity of the individual account and its personal perspective"* (*ibid.*) and ask whether we can defend *"both its credibility and our political and ethical responsibilities in doing so"* (*ibid.*).

Readings of autobiographies

Writings about extreme experiences, perhaps especially those to do with childhood adversity, set in motion a conflict. This conflict is essentially whether to look away, which is to put the book down or, to engage with the emotional task of witnessing

real suffering (Miller and Tougaw, 2002). Readers may be professional or recreational, and those who take to publishing their readings have helped this further subgenre grow. Autobiographies are looked to in order to gain perspective. Individual testimonies are seen as a means of understanding or translating social events, whether at a national, international or more community-based level (Gilmore, 2001). Douglas notes that witnessing trauma has potentially adverse effects on the second person witness (Douglas, 2010, p. 153) when the reader can either become positively affected or traumatized themselves.

I define 'a reading of an autobiography' as a form of research that examines an autobiographical text. It can be said to be a literary subgenre of its own. Using a reflexive methodology, or interpretation, findings are proposed about the primary source. Readings of an autobiography typically value subjectivity whilst maintaining an awareness that the reading could only be written by the present author and therefore is not the only way of interpreting events.

Some of the common pitfalls with readings of autobiography include *"delusions of possessing one's subject"* as Harris Williams puts it (2010, xvi) and assuming a position of 'orthodoxy' – judgment and evaluation – that can easily be maintained when the subject has cultural and academic respectability. In Bion's case, various authors have examined his writings about his youth, but not all of them make explicit the position from which they write. Harris Williams does however, state her own position as a 'reader' and the personal meanings the works have accumulated for her.

> … I have continued a personal search, begun thirty years ago, for living pieces of wisdom ever ready to be fanned into a flame. I want to write about Bion in a way that could only be written by myself, though I hope the picture may overlap with those of other readers. If we take what Bion says seriously, this is the way he would himself wish to be "remembered". (Harris Williams, 2010, xvi)

There are ethics involved in reading autobiographies too. Kate Douglas notes how readers of autobiographies by childhood survivors of neglect and abuse are often placed in difficult binds (2010). To challenge the narrative can be viewed as lacking empathy *"and risk inflicting further shame on the [already traumatized] subject"* (p. 144). Douglas asks whether these factors should make criticisms of the subgenre off-limits, noting that the very spirit of testimony is *"writing back to resist*

enforced silences and to assert previously marginalized narratives" (*ibid*.). She feels that *"In turn, testimony should invite informed debate on itself"* (*ibid*.). Responses to reading about a child's life tend to privilege empathy and sympathy (p. 168). Readers may find the narratives novel and learn from them or find relationality (*ibid*.). They may also feel *"ethically bound to particular modes of witness – to approaching the text in ways that demonstrate their intellectual and emotional commitment, and even gratitude, in receiving this narrative"* (p. 169). Criticisms tend to be around *"questioning the veracity of the story"* (*ibid*.). However, attention also needs to be paid by the readership to *"issues of craft (the ways in which stories of childhood are told) and ethics (the explicit efforts made by authors to attend to the ethics of autobiographical storytelling)"* (*ibid.*) in order to learn more about what stories of childhood survival convey.

Bion's 'The Long Weekend' in context

In terms of understanding 'Weekend' in relation to the varied literature reviewed and discussed in this chapter, it is important to point out that Bion experimented with various auto/biographical styles. There is also 'A Memoir of the Future' to take note of, in which a highly experimental and poetic style of writing is adopted to attempt to make sense of his experiences. Third, there are his main psychoanalytic texts ('Experiences in Groups', 'Learning from Experience', 'Elements of Psychoanalysis', 'Transformations', 'Attention and Interpretation', and *'Second Thoughts'*) that include case study examples of his practice as a psychoanalyst.

'Weekend' is selective in that it is not a complete account of the author's life to date. Instead, it is a memoir of a specific period of Bion's life, written towards the very end of it. It is quite deliberately 'Part of a Life' that focuses on his childhood, adolescence and young adulthood and how his development was severely stunted as opposed to fostered.

It makes virtually no *explicit* use of the psychoanalytic ideas in which field Bion remains one of the most original and important figures. It is also noted that Bion's own psychoanalytic work did not focus on child or adolescent states but rather on theories about the impact of the earliest mother-infant relationships and work with psychotic states in adults. However, compared to 'Sins: Another Part of a Life' his

childhood has more of a look in than the later areas of his life he wrote about, seeming to emphasize its importance to him at the end of his life when considered from this vertex. It is also striking in that it does not seek to show the writer in a good or redeeming light. The aim is for the unvarnished truth; although, this is a psychoanalytic purpose.

Regarding what kind of memoir Bion's book is, Michael Rustin (personal communication) mentions it is different from earlier writings, which may seem in some ways similar – e.g, WWI memoirs such as Graves's, published in 1929, and earlier recollections of male boarding school life. The difference is that the 1920s and 1930s war memoirs were written for those who had been through WWI or endured its effects. Public school memoirs were also meant for contemporaries - to bring the realization of how cruel these places could be at that time up to the surface, and to effect change.   However, Bion's book was written long afterwards and published at a different time and for a different generation. This makes one think that it was written because he needed to write it, not for those who knew the situations he was writing about in their own lives.

Therefore, one is led to ask about its motivation, or what kind of 'performance' it is. The work gives an account of deep traumas that Bion found he needed to explore and communicate to those who knew his work, as well as those who would come to know and develop his thinking after his death.   It is possible to speculate that Bion was always troubled by the idea that his prominent and often idealized position in the British Psychoanalytical Society was a false one, and *Weekend* seeks to describe the painful reality of its origins.   One biographical anecdote that supports the view Bion was uncomfortable with himself as a revered psychoanalyst is from Francesca Bion. She recalls how he used to come out of his study and exclaim, *"I must be a bloody genius!"* following a flash of inspiration and understanding about his work with psychotic states in adults before he would retract to say he had merely come up with the blindingly obvious (1995, p. 96). As the psychoanalyst and child psychotherapist Edna O'Shaughnessy puts it, *"Bion's writings are not sacred texts. They are open to criticism …"* (2005, p. 221). *Weekend* does not describe a heroic recovery from these traumas but instead leaves the reader to bear them in all their

painfulness. Furthermore, one is not given any explicit clues as to how he recovered to the extent that he did.

I think what is revealed in 'Weekend', and in the fact of writing it so late in life, may explain why there is such a gap between Bion's public and private selves, making one see that his oracular public self was perhaps something of a defence, and his theorizations a quite abstract way of dealing with extreme experiences. He seems to be saying, *"Here are aspects of my life that need to be recognized,"* without seeking any credit for this.

James Grotstein's comment (2007) I mentioned in this chapter, that he would not have entered into an analysis with Bion if he had known all this, does seem to show from an important admirer of the man how 'unknown' Bion's private self was, even to some of those relatively close to him.

A lot of the interest in 'Weekend' to date has been socio-historical - as a powerful testimony of its time. However, in my main chapters, I make a case for it as highly relevant and uniquely valuable as descriptions of childhood and adolescent deprivations, both external and internal ones, that provide helpful insights on adolescent states of mind for the contemporary child psychotherapist.

A personal reading of 'Weekend'

To orientate the reader to the remainder of this thesis, I now describe the method I used to analyze Bion's text. I aimed to see what I could learn from it about adolescence, both in the particular socio-historical context it describes and in a more generalizable way aimed at understanding the states of mind encountered in clinical work with pre/adolescent patients.

In my 'Introduction', I gave an account of the process of working out the method. I described how through multiple close readings of the section 'England' I decided to focus on four key themes (bullying, masculinity, sexuality and relating). I chose what interested me but also what I felt baffled by and, therefore, thought I needed to explore to gain a further grasp of the text.   I could have chosen other key themes to examine in-depth such as omnipotence, destructive narcissism and religion. Whilst these aspects are acknowledged in the thesis, space did not permit me to include them as key themes in themselves. My main section is a thematic

analysis in the broadest sense of the term only, in that the analysis is organized under key themes, rather than adhering to Braun and Clarke's stepped framework (2006).

I take especially from the methodological survey on memory and autobiography, the issue of life writing, not only to describe meaning but as generating and contributing to new insights being very important. I called this 'route to intimate truths' - new understandings and discoveries in the domain of lived experiences. The approach that best describes what the reader of this thesis will now encounter - what I actually did - is a personal reading of 'Weekend' centrally focused on deepening the meaning of the text.

First, whilst examining the work, I used my own subjectivity, especially free associations and sometimes memories that came to mind, to further my understanding of what I encountered. I applied alpha function to these, occasionally disturbing, subjective experiences to test and illuminate my findings. I give a specific example of the type of reflexive work I was engaged in with the inclusion of a personal reflection in my 'Conclusion'. This details how, when studying the theme of masculinity, I felt disturbed by a picture on the cover of a relevant socio-historical text, which then led to a personal memory to do with masculinity in the domestic spaces of my own youth, that clarified my thinking and added a further layer of meaning to my reading. As detailed in my 'Introduction', I am struck that this kind of reverie-informed approach is similar to the reverie research method described by Joshua Holmes (2018a and 2018b), who makes use of the researcher's subjective states as important material in itself when studying interview transcripts and psychoanalytic case studies. However, I am not aware he has applied this way of working to auto/biography.

Second, my reading is eclectic as it is informed by psychoanalytic writing on pre/adolescence and psychoanalytic concepts of interior development. It also attempts to acknowledge the socio-historical context of Bion's childhood using a small number of carefully selected relevant texts by social-historians and from literature.

Third, it draws on Bion's text in the section 'India' to make sense developmentally of the states of mind he describes during his pre/adolescence.

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Fourth, my reading attempts to hold in mind the differences and important points of distinction between Bion 'the child', 'the adult', 'the psychoanalyst', 'the writer' and 'the character' of Bion in 'Weekend'.

Finally, it is important to note that my method inevitably brings a post-Bionian perspective to the famous psychoanalyst's work. There are points in the text where I think Bion intended to lead the reader to begin to draw conclusions. At other times, understandings seem more hidden in the work. Where I have made use of contemporary psychoanalytic theory on adolescence, I bring an additional perspective to bear.

The Prevalence of Bullying at Bion's School

Introduction to bullying

In this, the first of my main chapters, I explore the prevalence of bullying that Bion describes was present at his Hertfordshire school. I give an overview of the ways bullying can be conceptualized, including how child psychotherapists have thought about the topic, and note its prevalence in boarding schools during the Edwardian era. I then explore the impact of bullying behaviour in 'England', a thread that spans his entire ten years at the school. However, it is most acutely felt upon his arrival from India at the point of separation from his mother.

From the moment he is left at the prep school he finds himself at the mercy of the other boys who quiz him in a manner akin to a frightening military interrogation (Bion, 1982a, pp. 43 - 44). Bion soon discovers the dangers of standing out too much. He draws into focus feelings of abandonment all the boys hold when he shouts, "*He's only an orphan!*" about Willy Bevan, an actual orphan, and he suffers the consequences as the boys beat him with cricket stumps (pp. 56 - 57). Desperate to encounter feelings of belonging in his new surroundings, he makes a concerted effort to gain attention for being good at something, playing trains, that is also attacked, and he starts getting teased for *"swanking"* and showing off too much (p. 57). He finds that, despite their removal (pp. 62 - 63 and 99), the two main bullies at the prep school, Morgan and Pickett, are merely an *"underlying pattern"* (p. 100) for the wider world. They are replaced in the main school by another, more insidious figure, H. N. Browne, whose disturbance is more perverse and more bound up with a disturbed adolescent process (pp. 100 - 101). It is not until towards the end of his schooling, at the outbreak of WWI, that Bion's own propensities to inflict cruelty on others are revealed.   He is shocked to realize with the unexpected event of losing momentary access to his own physical strength that a short-sighted new boy, Maynard, who, to Bion's surprise, fights back, hates him for his own bullish behaviour (pp. 103 - 104). It begins to be recognized that every child has the propensity to be a bully, something that Bion is not excluded from.

Margot Waddell points out previously that in 'India'*,* with the earlier description of his father giving him a *"good beating"* (Bion, 1982a, p.15), the text cuts out at the

very point the physical chastisement occurs, conveying how as a young child he *"had to split off any conscious or even physical awareness of the beating as it actually happened"* (Waddell, 2013, p. 17) given it was so terrifying. In my chapter, I note how, similarly, when writing about the bullying that occurs at his prep school, such was its traumatic impact that the eighty-year-old writer expresses it remains difficult to know about the *"dreadful storms to which we were subject"* (Bion, 1982a, p. 63). He tends to end discussions abruptly with interjections of self-loathing, for example, with self-derogatory remarks such as calling himself a *"brat"* (*ibid.*), or by playing down events just moments after alerting the reader to how terrifying they were.

In 'Weekend', bullying behaviour is seen to serve as a 'defensive form of distancing' (Crawford, 1997) from unwanted infantile states that the pre/adolescent boys and their school staff all have, leading to a ghastly, *"web of undirected menace"* (p. 59 and 107) situation everyone is tangled in. These complexities mean that during the complex drama of his schooldays, at times, Bion is a victim and at others a perpetrator, meanwhile always caught up in the bystanding environment of the school that belongs to the prevalent culture and attitudes of the day. None of the boys are helped to learn from events and the staff group fails to recognize that it has a problem.

Perspectives on bullying

Bullying can be thought of as sitting on a spectrum from being able to harness primitive aggression for good at one end through to bullying and harassment, then physical and sexual violence, and, tragically, even homicide at the other end (Crawford, 1997). Children will always experience some upsetting events in school, and these things vary in severity and impact. Additionally, most children admit to having bullied a weaker peer at some point during their school lives (Youell, 2006). The late psychotherapist Neil Crawford notes that it is important to consider a danger when thinking about bullying, that it *"almost makes tame the monstrous actions that occasionally take place ... . It almost sanitizes the monster ..."* (1997, p. 221). Whilst it is ubiquitous, it also needs to be remembered that the more common, everyday occurrences of bullying can cause serious misery for those at the receiving end. It

is necessary for the authority figures in the environments that bullying events occur to put their minds around things and attend, thoughtfully, to what is going on.

Psychoanalytic theories of bullying involve the consideration of three aspects - victim, perpetrator and bystander. It is misguided to think of victim and perpetrator roles simply as one person being harmed by the other without considering what conscious and unconscious factors may be maintaining the relationship.   The bystander position is a state where the environment has stopped functioning, and helpful intervention is not offered to those who need it. There is a passive onlooker (or onlookers) - this may also be an institution - who watches something disturbing happening but stays on the sidelines and does not intervene even when help is required (Anti-Bullying Alliance, 2020). Given the consequences that can follow, such as serious and organized institutional abuses, the bystander position is what I think Bion is describing rather accurately when he uses the term 'web of undirected menace'. The impact of the 'web of menace' environment on Bion's development is catastrophic. It is a cruel state of being that ensnares both the bully and the victim and one in which no help is available for either.

Neil Crawford, writing more specifically about workplace bullying, states how, *"In a nutshell, bullying is a symptom of organizational dysfunction"* (1997, p. 221); one where an organizational conflict has seeped, with varying degrees of pressure, up to the surface and begun to spill out (*ibid.*). He notes that it is more likely to occur in organizations that have hierarchical structures *"where the power differential is handled without humanity"* (p. 223) and *"where everyday life is concerned with defensive distancing from the infantile"* (*ibid.*). These ideas are helpful when thinking about boarding school environments, as I now go on to describe, where adults have responsibilities for looking after children separated from their families. Crawford also notes how organizations that can take responsibility for *"the management of the primitive, particularly aggression"* (*ibid.*) are most likely to succeed when individuals within organizations are *"expected to have responsibility for the management of oneself in one's role in relation to others"* (p. 224). In the case of school bullying, grown-ups need to be able to take responsibility for the infantile aspects of themselves and to help the children they care for with the task of development; to help them develop the resources to learn to do the same, including to negotiate

painful feelings associated with separations and an awareness of their own propensities to inflict harm.

Bullies and boarding schools

Joy Schaverien observes the difference between the day school and public school child simply: the day school child goes home at the end of the day whereas the public school child does not (2015, p. 8). She considers what the quality of this refuge away from the potential bully and system may be. She asks, 'does the child go home to parents who can attend to and help think about difficulties arising between peers and/or child and teacher, and advocate with the school/other parents on the child's behalf (*ibid.*)'? Or, 'is the child met with parents who reinforce difficulties, perhaps even cruelly (*ibid.*)'? There is no ordinary coming and going from the huddle of family life for some boarding school children and, therefore, there can be problems with managing painful separations. Without the refuge of home life, the public school child is hugely reliant on the individual school's capacity for care.

Gaythorne-Hardy starkly describes the grim prevalence of actual physical and sexual violence, severe cruelty and even child deaths that occurred in English boarding schools during Victorian times (and onwards) in his book, 'The Old School Tie' (1977). Historically, there has been public outcry at the state of English boarding schools. As I stated in my 'Introduction', the government had to intervene with legislation in 1868 with the Public Schools Act. In Bion's case, during the Edwardian era, the school's capacity to notice things was sparse, his teachers had *"no idea"* (Bion, 1982a, p.63) about the bullying behaviour going on under their noses. Although he notes that more overt bullying was dealt with, this seems contradicted at times by some of the brazen displays of cruelty he describes taking place out in the open, in full view of the school house, such as with the H. N. Browne episodes (pp. 100 - 101).

The children in William Golding's seminal novel, 'Lord of the Flies' (1954), whose stark murderousness takes hold, are also public-school boys. Golding describes, and highly controversially at the time, the children's capacity to inflict harm within a particular circumstance. There are no teaching staff available and no ways

home off the island where their parents would be accessible for help (although likely to varying degrees given the internal landscapes of some of the children described). The late child psychotherapist, Hamish Canham, pointed out that the children in Golding's novel lose access to parents on the outside and their parental function on the inside (2002, pp. 92-93). They become trapped in that state as well as being stuck on the island with no way home. A psychoanalytic perspective will always need to consider the internal constellations that contribute to bullying behaviour.

Iain MacRury and Michael Rustin (2013) provide some commentary on the prevalent culture of the English boarding schools of Bion's time in the Doctor Who episodes 'Human Nature' and 'The Family of Blood', written by Paul Cornell (first broadcast by the BBC in 2007). These episodes, set in 1913 during the run-up to WWI *"evoke the mentalities of an earlier English society, on the eve of a period of catastrophic destructiveness"* (MacRury and Rustin, *ibid.*, p. 39). They describe *"the emotions mobilized by war and the anticipation of war"* (*ibid.*) as particularly the *"vicious kind of collective violence, and the perversion of family ties, in the furtherance of hatred and conflict"* (p. 40). One function of bullying, where a gang has started to form, as seen with Golding's children, is as *"a perverse substitute for a family"* (p. 54) which occurs in the absence of family loyalties being available. Hatred and destructiveness are valued over love and relating due to unbearable feelings of anxiety and helplessness that children's minds cannot manage without help.

Of course, boarding schools can exist in much healthier states. Margaret Rustin and Michael Rustin point out in their review of J.K. Rowling's 'Harry Potter' books that there are many progressive aspects to boarding school life at the fictional Hogwart's school. Hogwarts is a place where *"most of whose teachers and traditions value the life of the mind and imagination"* (2001, p. 268). It is also a refuge for the protagonist, Harry, who is abused at his aunt and uncle's home.

Child psychotherapists' contributions to theory

As well as Canham (2002), a few other child psychotherapists, notably Margot Waddell (2002 and 2018) and Biddy Youell (2006), have written on the theme. However, bullying remains a curiously under-explored area in the child psychotherapy literature given its continuing prevalence and the abundance of

bullying behaviour that takes place online, but often out of sight of grown-ups, on social media today.

Whilst I explore further the difficulties for Bion and his peers in forming healthy groupings in my chapter 'Problems with Relating', some consideration of group and gang theory is helpful to think about now as I consider the current theme. Canham made an important distinction between group states of mind and *"ganging"* (2002). He noted that group states of mind correspond to the depressive position (Klein, 1940 and 1945) where learning is possible and individuals can bear the more needy, infantile aspects of the personality (Canham, 2002, pp. 85-87). 'Ganging' is associated with the more destructive parts of the self that *"take hostage what they feel to be those other parts that would expose them to feelings of neediness, littleness and ignorance … by imposing a reign of terror on these other parts"* (p. 87). Essentially, gang members, whilst together they present with the illusion of invulnerability, have joined forces to try and rid themselves of unbearable feelings of vulnerability and helplessness by projecting them into a victim or victims.

Waddell considers the relationship between internal matters belonging to both victim and perpetrator. Invariably, both require support. While internal capacities to withstand destructive forces from inside and out are important, she also pays attention to a third factor, the surroundings (that may or may not be bystanding), and the complex ways this can foster or temper the bullying relationship (2002 and 2018).

Youell (2006) notes that *"the cliché about there being a coward inside every bully"* (p. 121) is accurate. In psychoanalytic theory *"the perceived threat comes as much from within the individual as from the external world"* (*ibid.*). She states,

> If after an episode of bullying behaviour, the individual is able to get back in touch with good external objects and associated depressive functioning, he will be able to think about his own culpability and to feel some remorse. If this is not possible, the bully is indeed in a terrifying world, one in which his hostile projections lodge in objects which then become all the more toxic and threatening, as the fear of retaliation increases. When bullying becomes entrenched, the bully has to redouble his efforts to make sure there is no chink in his armour. Part of this is likely to be to surround himself with a gang … . (*ibid.*)

To take Youell's ideas further, it is necessary to think what is happening when the role of victim becomes entrenched. What is it that keeps the victim in this position? I will come to explore the nature of Bion's frightened passivity in this chapter as I consider this to be one significant contributing factor.

Youell also broadens the discussion about deprivation in the internal world and its influence on bullying behaviour. She makes links to deprivations in the external world and the destructive forces of envy, noting that whilst poverty does not breed envy in itself, *"where internal deprivations ... meets external deprivation, there is fertile ground for envy and hatred"* (p.124). She notes, *"If there is a secure internal structure based on experiences of containment and having been helped to negotiate separation, the materially impoverished individual is unlikely to be consumed by envy of his richer neighbour"* (*ibid.*). However, envy can be provoked in a society where disparity is rife, where the rich and poor live side by side, for example *"when the impoverished individual is constantly brought up against the affluence of others"* (*ibid.*). Resultant systems tend to be ones where bullying is prevalent. It is important to note, in the Edwardian age, as I also mentioned in my 'Introduction' (and it is again nowadays), gross wealth often sat alongside extreme poverty.

Bullying at adolescence

Whilst bullying behaviour is, of course, no stranger to all stages of life; it takes on a new dimension at the stage of adolescence when the child begins to acquire the physical capabilities to cause not only emotional harm but also serious physical injury or even death. These anxieties are always threatening to break through up to the surface in Bion's account of his schooldays - see for example his fear that a boy has been killed when he misinterprets Hirst's 'poisoning the mind' metaphor, worrying a boy has put poison in someone's food (1982a, pp. 57-57), that follows his friend Freddie Sexton's actual sudden death (p.51).

Waddell focuses on some distinctly adolescent areas of the psyche that need to be considered when thinking about bullies. First, how pubertal development causes a re-stirring of early internal vulnerabilities that must be renegotiated. Infantile dependencies are juxtaposed awkwardly with physically developing bodies at this juncture, leading to feelings of exposure and inadequacy. The developing adolescent desires to rid the self of unwanted parts that remind him/her of his/her inexperience and needs for dependencies and looks for a target (or convenient victim) in which to put them (2018, p. 94). Second, pressures towards group conformity on the one hand and individuation on the other create an internal conflict.

Anxieties about the identity of the self in relation to the group frequently arouse intolerance of difference, which may manifest itself as an intolerance of either the self and/or the other (*ibid.*). Human decency can all too easily be left behind at this developmental stage in favour of mob mentality 'ego bolstering', which is always at the expense of others (*ibid.*).

No adolescent goes untouched by bullying but may be less adversely affected by its reach depending on the availability of helpful inner resources and those available in the surroundings. Not having been projected into too much by adult figures unable to contain their own aggressivity, experiences of being helped to work through difficulties as they arise and to get back on track when errors of judgement are made, as well as growing up in an environment where the constancies of love, tolerance and understanding are valued are all key to staying along the course of a healthy trajectory. The child who is helped to develop healthy internal equipment during adolescence is much more likely to be able to negotiate difficulties as they arise in the future and not become stuck in a bullying or victim position in adulthood.

An early experience of bullying

It is interesting to note Bion's early experience of school in India. Aged four, his first day at Woodstock school has similarities to the traumatic start at his Hertfordshire prep school, drawing into focus the need for all children to have support around the transition from home to school life. On this occasion, he is taken to school by his ayah, who leaves him with a lunch box with one of his favourite foods inside - guava cheese - but not, it would appear from his descriptions, the resources he needs to help him negotiate new relationships. Bion recalls,

> There was a group of three children with whom my ayah left me. The largest one, who wore glasses, appeared to be unhappy; to defend herself against the other two she was repeating a ritualistic monotone,
> "Sticks and stones may break my bones,
> But words – they cannot hurt me."
> She seemed peculiarly miserable but staunchly repeated the rhyme while the other two – boys I think – butted her, pushed her and mocked her. They did not tire and only stopped when a bell was rung, whereupon they, dragging me with them – "Come on!" – rushed into a large room of shrieking boys and girls.

"Here, you!" said the nearest one to me, "Do you want a box on the ears?" A box of any sort, thinking of my little lunch box with its guava cheese nestling inside, was attractive.

"Yes", I said. Whereupon he clouted my head. Shocked, I let out a yell of dismay.

By this time a grown man was trying to restore order by hitting about freely with a ruler at any brat within ruler reach.

"You!" he said, seeing me, "What are you crying about?"

"He hit me!" I wailed.

"Well we don't want any cry-babies! And don't tell tales."

"Sneak! Sneak!" loudly whispered one or two near to me. The master's attention, distracted by his attempts to get within ruler's reach of another yelling ruffian, went back to restoring order. I sobbed quietly, hoping no one would notice me in the prevailing tempest. Nor did they. My little box had gone. I didn't care because the room was becoming relatively quiet and I had no wish to ruffle the surface." (Bion, 1982a, pp. 25-26)

Bion uses elements of 'performativity' here to characterize himself as a naïve little boy, overwhelmed on his first day at school, leading him to feel very confused. Not only is he hurt, and the bullying is not attended to by the master in authority but, in the midst of it all, he loses the precious box his ayah has prepared for him. He conveys feeling terrified as if he has no access to a good object on the inside when the lunchbox is lost. To what extent an object existed on the outside that could help him negotiate difficulties is also unclear. His joke about the 'box on the ears' is ironic and a way he leads the reader towards penetrating meaning. It seems to portray his way as both writer and child that he holds himself together within a very painful circumstance.

He forgets how he comes to be walking back home with his ayah at the end of his difficult first day. Then, on the way home, he sees two schoolgirls playing a game *"putting their faces close together and sticking out their tongues, not in derision but excited and pleased. They would lick each other's tongues, burst out in excited laughter and then repeat the game"* (p.26). Whilst Bion is fascinated by the girls' play, he writes that his ayah is shocked – this was not an activity for the *"ruling classes"* (*ibid.*). Consequently, he is pulled away quickly without a word. He is unable to see how the game ends, but also, crucially, he conveys that he is not helped with the utterly confused state he is left in following his upsetting start to school. Even his much-loved ayah seems unable to put words to things - she appears shocked by how children can behave - and at home, he feels too ashamed to ask his parents any questions on the matter, his previous attempts at being

curious having been rebuffed, sometimes violently by his father. It is communicated that within these circumstances, Bion unwittingly adopts a passive position, one in which he cannot seem to defend himself or receive the help he needs.

The sight of a small, abandoned boy

Following this earlier event, having made the journey to England to continue his education, Bion writes, poignantly, about the major separation at eight-years-old from his mother, who leaves him at the prep school. All at once, his whole universe changes and everything familiar to him is gone: his family, ayah and India. Understandably, this disturbs him significantly. In his writing, he communicates a sense of being left, aged eight, with nothing at all to manage the transition, only portraying abandonment. He describes a *"dry-eyed"* (p. 43) goodbye as he helplessly watches his mother's hat on the other side of the hedge go bobbing up, down and away from him until it is gone (*ibid.*). No sense of physical and emotional containment such as being held affectionately in his mother's arms, looked kindly in the face, or spoken to with words of assurance is given, but also no sense of any anger is described. The picture of his mother's hat drifting off, which also conceals the top of her mind, conveys Bion's fears that he has been left to drift helplessly away from her with no access to family or familiarity remaining. Shockingly, no substitute caregivers, such as teaching staff, seem present in her place at the point of such a huge separation.

Bion describes being immediately confronted by a group of new peers who quickly turn into a gang-like assemblage as they cruelly begin to quiz him in the manner of a military interrogation. He portrays the situation as if it is one where he has crash-landed on Golding's island drama with no access to parents, within or without, available. In an often-quoted part of the text, he writes,

> Numbed, stupefied, I found myself staring into a bright, alert face.
> "Which are you - A or B?" it said. Other faces had gathered.
> "A", I said hurriedly in response to the urgency I felt in their curiosity.
> "You're *not*! You jolly well say 'B'. You know nothing about it!"
> "B," I said obediently.
> "You dirty little liar!" said the first one. Appealing passionately to the rest, "He just said he was A. Didn't he?" That I had to admit.

> "You can't go back on that," said the advocate of B. "You must stay B or you'll be a beastly little turn-coat; and a liar anyway. We don't want him. Do we chaps?" The crowd had grown to formidable proportions, say, six or seven. "No," they shouted. (p. 44)

He conveys how, in the absence of adults to enforce prohibitions and contain the boys' anxieties, alongside the boys' inability to tolerate the situation they have in common with Bion - being separated from their mothers-, he is bullied. Waddell points out how,

> The sight of an 8-year-old boy standing alone in the playground, having just said goodbye to his mother ... must have elicited in every small member of the pack of Bion's new contemporaries similarly painful feelings - if they could have allowed themselves to experience them. (2018, p. 111)

Bion stands for the dependent small boy whose mother has abandoned him without sufficient external support, and at a young age without the necessary internal resources to manage. He lacks the equipment he needs inside and out to manage his pain, rage and anger, feelings which seem entirely split-off, and he is unable to link up and connect with others. As 'the writer' he recalls he was the youngest of the boys in the prep school when he arrived and the smallest child physically at that stage. He implies that, combined with his newness and visible feelings of disorientation and distress having just arrived from India, this made him a convenient target for the other boys to rid themselves of their own painful feelings.

> At the end of the day, Bion goes under the bedsheets and begins to sob,
> "What's the matter?" asked one of the three boys who shared the dormitory with me.
> "I don't know," I wailed. He seemed sympathetic. He considered the matter for a moment. "Are you homesick?"
> "Yes." At once I realized what an awful thing I had done. "No, B," I hurriedly said. He got into bed. This time the day *was* over. (Bion, 1982a, p. 44)

For the second time since his arrival - the first being when a boy attempted to come to his aide during the earlier interrogation saying *"don't mind them"* but got dismissed (*ibid.*) – a sympathetic figure does, in fact, exist in his new surroundings. Bion's new roommate attempts to empathize with his state, even naming his experience rather accurately as homesickness. However, Bion conveys feeling so persecuted and threatened internally that he could not take in a helpful word, thus finding no consolation in the gesture. The eighty-year-old Bion describes the way he turns from saying *"Yes,"* to, *"No, B"* (*ibid.*) as a young child as the beginnings of a 'lie' that starts

to grip onto him (p. 44-45). During the chapters in 'England', he details how he becomes good at this lie and develops a loyalty to it in the absence of his family structures, as I explore further in my chapter 'Problems with Relating'.   Bion's observations as both child and writer lead the reader to understand that 'the lie' offers a way of triumphing over intensely painful feelings associated with separation. However, losing contact with his more vulnerable and dependent states also means he loses access to helpful, friendly objects such as the kindly boy who asks him how he is, which is, in his impoverished new circumstances, what is available to him.

Attacked with cricket stumps

Soon after his arrival at the prep school, Bion is with the other boys and finds himself on the receiving end of a physical attack (pp. 56-57). He is assaulted with cricket stumps up on *"the mountain"* (p. 56), the boys' name for their playing field, primarily used to play cricket. Once again, the boys' behaviour deteriorates, this time with two main bullies coming to the fore to lead them - Morgan and Pickett. Bion's crime is to shout out, loudly, how Willy Bevan, a religious young boy, often in fervent prayer, is an orphan, provoking a vicious response.

> One day I tried saying it out loud. "You're only an orphan!" I shouted at him. For a moment I thought I had solved it; Willy flopped suddenly and became religious - but with his eyes open, unlike saying your prayers when you shut your eyes or pretended. His friend Pickett was there and he, as he proclaimed, heard me say it. I had meant him to - that is why I had shouted. (*ibid.*)

Willy is an actual orphan but represents the concrete abandonment all the boys feel. Bion notes how *"Everyone said it with a hushed voice"* (*ibid.*), conveying the communal experience they cannot seem to help each other with but instead seek to distance themselves from. He has not yet developed a capacity to know how he feels or, for that matter, had his experiences transformed, let alone think. He states, *"I had another twelve years to go before I would even have a chance to learn"* (*ibid.*, p.43), wishing to emphasize that learning from experience was not possible during his schooldays. Given his homesickness, one way of thinking about the shout is as an attempt to call out to *someone* in the hope a container will find him. The shout's amplified quality conveys how loud these things are in his mind, too burdensome and too much to bear, and how in need he is.

Unfortunately for Bion, Pickett moves in swiftly to dim the spotlight Bion has shone unwittingly on their collective sore spot. He notes,

> In less time than it takes to write the whole pack were onto me - then stopped and watched ... . "Let's chase him," said Pickett. "No, not now. Wait till we get him on the mountain," said Morgan, "We can use stumps then." It was agreed; even Bevan was recovering at the suggestion. We all cheered up - in the prevailing optimism even I began to feel better. Bevan, who had been overcome by religion, though still mournful, became as exalted by 'stumps' as he had been hurled into religion by 'orphan'. When I tried to join the prevailing gleeful anticipation I was given a cold reception. "Look at the little swine," said Pickett, "He's not a bit sorry for what he's done." It was rather frightening ... . I modified my rapture. The mountain was our cricket field ... . By the time we got there the prevalent air of cheerfulness seemed to have dissipated the former mood till Pickett and Morgan said, "Come on now chaps! Let him have it!" Six of them took a stump each, and with shouts of, "Run! You swine!" they started after me. I ran. (pp. 56-57)

The boys, who have been whipped up into a gang by Pickett that offers them protection from feelings of abandonment by their parents, sacrifice Bion's wellbeing to mirror the violence they feel done to them by their abandoning parents. They also savagely desert their parents on the inside. Curiously, Bion describes how even he, for a moment, is carried along by the excitement the boys feel at the idea of ridding themselves of their painful feelings by attacking him, again conveying his confused and vulnerable state. However, he then realizes the danger he is in as the smallest boy physically in the school and that he has no choice but to run. The narrative then cuts out, and he is quick to state he came to no more harm than bruises, immediately downplaying the event after describing its sheer terror. This repeated pattern in his writing implies how he had to split off consciousness and physical awareness of the bullying events as they happened to him. One possible meaning of the stumps is the mother's missing arms that would usually hold the infant but are felt by all the boys to have been removed, a situation he feels is pervasive, even when he is in a situation where some help is available.

Almost famous and loved

Bion comments that a craze for playing trains dominated the communal play in the prep school with boys clustered in two groups, reminiscent of school houses A and B, named after the main railway lines - Great Northern and the local service, Great

Eastern. He had retained an enthusiasm for playing trains, a game of his own, since early childhood when he pretended to be a steam engine by kicking up dust with his feet - this despite being reprimanded by his mother as a young child in India for getting dust on his shoes (p. 37), and also when he arrived at the new school by his matron (p.47). His relationship to trains is complex. His father brought him an expensive electric trainset in India that broke down immediately. Their Indian bearer put ghee on it in an attempt to fix it, rendering it further useless, which led to his father losing his temper - the episode portraying the disconnect between father and child and juxtaposing the new, modern electric trains of the age with the old steam engines that Bion preferred (pp. 18 and 21-22). Then, at the prep school, he survives dreaded Sunday walks with the headmaster by losing himself in an imaginary world playing engines (p. 49). He is thus delighted to find that other boys at the prep school take to playing a train game as it is something he is well-practised at and seems to promise a way up from the bottom of the pile.

> At once it was discovered that I had outstanding gifts as a locomotive. Unwarned by unhappy experience with my shoes I was carried away by being suddenly 'wanted' by both teams. The glory, never achieved before or since, went to my head. I was picked for his railway by Morgan the head of one team, the other head being Pickett. Lost to the world I emerged from the hitherto well-preserved anonymity of the Walk game. Before I had realized it I was almost at once recognized by Pickett - who pointed it out to Morgan, who hardly needed to be prompted - to be "swanking" and "showing off". Gone was my glory. It was as bad as shouting "Orphan" at Willy Bevan. Not wanting to be chased by stumps I returned to my private world. (p.61)

Bion characterizes himself as a lonely child who is desperate to be included by the boys. His enthusiasm for playing trains provides him with an opportunity to gain acceptance, but also - he seems to hope - some admiration from his peers. However, the way he protrudes, being good at the game, then rubs the other boys up the wrong way as it jeopardizes their status quo, threatening to shift the balance of power. Morgan and Pickett's solution is to pull rank and start to humiliate him. Bion recalls the episode was tantalizing as he was *"almost famous and loved"* (*ibid.*). However, the message is that, ultimately, he was left to retreat and play on his own and that relationships with others remained unavailable to him.

Fresh from the frightening memory of being beaten with stumps, he is also rendered passive. This is a prevalent theme in 'England' as he often remains in a

victim position, is seen to go along with things, or simply gives up. It is interesting to think why he does not stand up for himself and tell the bullies where to go. It is possible to deduce from Bion's descriptions there are several contributing factors. First, his small physical size at the time, as previously noted, and with Morgan and Pickett described as being *"big and powerfully built"* (*ibid.*), are likely to have evoked fears they could do actual physical damage. Bion notes how, additionally, they were *"stupid and nasty"* (*ibid.*) and had *"chosen to be famous"* (*ibid.*), which increased the risk, and this way he emphasizes the actual danger he was in of being beaten again. Second, there are his experiences of the bystanding surroundings at the school, where previous incidents went unnoticed and unattended, as well as the impact of the early experience at his Woodstock school I have described. A third important factor is his parents being caught up in and unable to swim against the prevailing currents where children from British families got left at boarding school from young ages. He does not call out to his mother when she leaves him at the school – with helpless feelings of passivity conveyed in Bion's description of his mother's hat *"bobbing up and down"* and away from him (p. 43). Voicing anger would presumably have threatened the idealized version of his mother he wished to preserve in his frightening new circumstances. In a later episode when she comes to visit him - the length of time passing since dropping him off at the school being unclear from the text - Bion also seems to recognize it is futile to protest to her, that it is not at all likely to change her actions. This time, his mother has come with a gift for him, a Lyle's Golden Syrup tin filled with tuck that sorely reminds him of India. He refuses to accept it and declines to speak out about the bullying he is subject to even when she asks him if he is unhappy at the school (p. 54). The passivity arises when he cannot speak out, but it is because he believes, and possibly correctly on this occasion, that no one is available to his distress.

Turning on the bullies

Towards the end of his time at the prep school Bion describes being taken aback when, as a group, the boys' feelings spill over and they find themselves turning on the two main bullies, Morgan and Pickett.

> It surprised them and us when suddenly one day ten or twelve of us attacked the two.
> Shrieking and yelling we threw ourselves on them. I do not remember myself as in any way

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prominent although I had now been at the school for three years and could hardly be excused on the grounds of insignificance. Fists were used; the mass of us in an uncoordinated, yelling horde piled ourselves on top of Morgan. I do not know where Pickett had got to. Then as suddenly as the riot started, it stopped. I remember feeling frightened, frightened of what Morgan would do to me - I could not imagine 'us' having anything done to us. Then it became clear to me that we were frightened - Morgan too. There was a sudden hush, no shouting, just dusting ourselves down. (p. 62)

The boys' collective feelings, frightened by what occurs, having lost control in the incident of the riot, also gain the attention of the school's authorities this time. Bion notes that he thinks Hirst came in (*ibid.*) to stop things but that he cannot quite remember given his overwhelmed state in those days. As an eighty-year-old writer, it is the boys' sudden awareness of their own capabilities for physical aggression that Bion seems to want to highlight as the most important thing, given the adults' inability to recognize what was brewing beforehand. As the boys lose control of their feelings and act out with their bodies in the fight, Bion notes how Morgan lost the control he exerted up until then as the top dog in the prep school amidst Pickett's rather mysterious and silent exit. He continues the narrative saying that if Hirst had asked him to say what happened he would have said *"nothing"* (p. 62). Bion 'the writer' now conveys his understanding that his child self assumed a passive role to protect him from knowing about his own anger which was all too threatening to him. As a child he seemed to have to abandon himself to a situation that he could only maintain was one in which he had only been left by others.

He communicates the inadequacy of the figures at the school responsible for the children's welfare, for example, how up until the day of the riot, Miss Good viewed the boys as *"happily and enthusiastically playing together"* (p. 61)*,* simply *"schoolboy fun"* (p. 63). His level of criticism towards the school environment fluctuates. Sometimes he conveys cold anger towards the staff for not noticing what was going on. For example, he writes that *"things haunt me still"* (*ibid.*) before brushing his feelings off with a self-loathing remark that he and the other children were simply *"brats"* (*ibid.*). He conveys how events are painful and difficult to stay with but also perhaps, as Neil Crawford notes on the theme of bullying, that the sense of self-loathing that is sometimes observed in victims serves to communicate, and perhaps perpetuate, the question *"how could this happen to me?"* (1997, p. 220). At other times, Bion ponders how figures such as Miss Good could have known any better,

asking, *"How indeed did she and poor 'Nigger'[15], living in his private hell, come to know so much?"* (Bion, 1982a, p. 63) when Morgan and Pickett are finally dealt with. He seems, understandably, confused by their reaction, given the predominant narrative of neglect in the prep school that he wishes to place in the foreground.

Following the playground fight, Morgan is sent to the main school, being *"judged 'too big' – that is, too big a bully - to remain in the prep. I heard no more of him although I did hear a little of his friend Pickett whose nastiness had a more durable quality than Morgan's"* (pp. 62 - 63). Bion states, *"What led to Morgan's investigation and promotion I do not know"* (p. 63). He communicates an unpredictable quality to the prep school environment where attendance to matters felt randomized instead of a culture of attendance and thought. He goes on to describe that neither Morgan nor Pickett change once in the main school. Indeed, and notably, no boys are helped to learn from the incident.

When Bion moves up to the main school himself, he notes that Morgan is now a *"non-entity"* (p. 99). His physical presence is diminished, as Bion is now grown and as Morgan is no longer the largest boy. Bion the eighty-year-old hypothesizes that both Morgan and Pickett found the academic and more creative aspects of main school life difficult, their surroundings having changed from the miserable atmosphere of the prep school. Both are observed to feel uncomfortable and leave before they are sixteen, with some sense a more constant and present authority than was at the prep school propels their exit. However, Bion describes, *"The question posed by their presence or absence loomed large in mind. I can see now that it repeated itself with variations many times in the course of my life"* (*ibid.*). It is not until the end of his schooldays that he catches sight of his own capabilities to inflict cruelty, as I go on to describe a little later in this chapter.

The re-emergence of bullying figures

Bion finds that the prep school bullies are replaced in the main school by the rather psychopathic figure of H. N. Browne who emerges. He writes, *"I did not recognize the underlying pattern when I became aware of H. N. Browne and 'Bilge' Browne"*

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[15] 'Nigger' is the name Bion recalls that they had for Hirst.

(p. 100), i.e. that bullying behaviour is a ubiquitous occurrence. H. N. and Bilge were two sixth formers who shared the same study.

> H. N. came of a wealthy family, though I did not know this at the time. 'Bilge' was intelligent, tiresome and, as his nickname indicated, disliked.   I knew nothing of either because both occupied exalted positions but from time to time there were certain curious emotional flurries. (*ibid.*)

He describes a rather disturbing sadomasochistic relationship between the boys that he observed.   H. N. is the more active of the two and Bilge the more passive. They invite and captivate a lot of attention from the other boys via their acts. First, a crucifixion scene is enacted that attracts forty to fifty boys *"in full view of the School House"* (*ibid.*), although familiarly, still evading the grown-ups' attention. Bion recalls a rush of adrenaline and emotion that encourages the boys to the scene on the school sports track.

> "C'mon", said an excited contemporary, "watch the fun!"
>
> "Why, what's the matter?" But he had gone and I immediately followed, unwilling to miss an exciting adventure. … H. N. had used pliers to cut holes in the wire fencing and through these holes he had, presumably with some assistance, inserted the wrists of his victim so that Bilge was held captive in the figure of a Saint Andrew's cross, his feet being similarly held at the other extremity. Having achieved his purpose H. N. had walked off leaving Bilge to be scrutinized by anyone who chose. As the wire had been repaired by H. N. he could not release himself. No one took advantage of his helpless position; he was finally released by two moderately senior but otherwise undistinguished boys. (*ibid.*)

Bion witnesses another, similar display from the start, continuing to look on, as do the other boys, when a second scene is enacted, this time in the gymnasium.

> The crowd of boys was much the same proportion but this time, since it was indoors, the chances of secrecy were greater - though owing to the number of spectators still slight. This time H. N. was tying Bilge, face downward, to the rungs of a ladder which spanned the width of the gymnasium horizontally. As far as I know the story followed the same course: H. N. walked off; Bilge was not molested after he had been secured; in time someone else released him. (*ibid.*)

He describes how he and the other boys become participants in these disturbing activities in a bystanding role. The sexualized element contained within the two scenes is clear, as H.N. and Bilge enact a sadomasochistic primal scene phantasy getting the other boys to look on in secret, without the adults being aware. There is an air of perverse excitement around with the possibility of being caught and looking on at something they feel, and possibly even know, they should not.   In essence,

the image of Bilge, tied up/tied down, is of a cruelly abandoned adolescent where sexuality, and sexual development outside of the boys' control, is extremely threatening to them.   In response to the rush of pubertal development, H.N. presents something sexual under the illusion that he can control it, and in Bilge, he discovers a seemingly willing victim.

Bion too finds himself at the receiving end of H. N.'s thuggery whilst playing water polo one morning before breakfast.

> H. N. Browne, my immediate opponent, swung his arm and hit me in the eye. … it was found that a piece of the white of my eye was hanging from the eyeball by a thread of connective tissue. (p. 102)

His injury requires a couple of stitches and an injection of cocaine in his eye. Fortunately, it does not permanently affect his sight, although, such was its seriousness, his mother visits him from where she was in London at the time and tells him naively that things are *"all right now"* (p. 103).   The event causes the headmaster to announce to the whole school that they are to be more careful in future. Bion notes how things were, in fact, far from alright as he still believed *"the same thing might have happened the very next day to yet another boy"* (*ibid.*). He describes how the culture of failing to deal with bullying behaviour at the school was on this occasion hidden under the veil of a careless sporting accident.

The sight of internal destructiveness

The character of Bion only beings to notice more of his own capacities to be destructive towards the end of his boarding school days. However, Bion the writer portrays it as evident from his time staying at the Hamilton's home where he is rather cruel to Colin, the youngest of the boys, and their cat (pp. 80 - 81), as well as with the bystanding position he takes with the other boys in the H. N. Browne episodes I have just described, and the eruption of the playground fight at the prep school. He writes as the eighty-year-old looking back, *"While expressing freely my dislike of others whom I feared and hated, it seems to me that I failed to see activities of my own"* (p. 101). Rather shockingly, Bion recalls the event of putting a rope around another boy's neck, causing him to pass out.

> Three or four of us were indulging in horseplay with a boy called Greene. I had a piece of string looped about his throat, untied and loose. I pulled the ends together and at once he lost consciousness; I let go and he recovered. (p. 102)

He is told by another boy he should not have done it as it might have killed Greene. Bion, seemingly perturbed, rather vaguely asks a master about things. However, he cannot be entirely truthful and merely reports a hypothetical situation. Not being reassured the next morning, feeling further guilty and anxious, he subsequently confesses in full to the headmaster who does reassure him but tells him that if the noose had not been loosened in thirty seconds, then Greene would have been dead (*ibid.*).

Following this incident, Bion then recalls being cruel to a new student at the main school called Maynard, who sticks out because he wears glasses. He does this despite being aware that Maynard was bullied at his previous school and having been asked, specifically, to befriend him. Being kind to someone he perceives as weaker than him is too difficult for Bion. He writes, appearing to pen matters in a way that draws out his own unpleasantness at that time.

> There was at school a boy, slightly bigger than I, who was short-sighted to an extent that compelled the use of thick lenses which gave him a noticeably owl-like appearance so that he came into the class of those whose physical defects made them helpless and vulnerable. … He was applying his short sight to trying to read; it took but a moment to snatch his book. ... To my surprise I found my wrists firmly grasped; I could not free them [despite being physically stronger than Maynard]. … I said, "Let me go." He tightened his grip. So - he could not read; I could not get loose. He said, "You thought I was too weak to hold your hands." This was a remark I could not refute. (pp.103-104)

Bion conveys how as an adolescent, he was utterly confused by these events. He also pitches himself at this point in the text as rather arrogant and as a boy who is shocked to find himself losing momentary access to his own physical strength when Maynard fights back. As an eighty-year-old he writes, *"I can now think only of a sense of disaster, past and impending, in which either my companion, or more probably I, was being shaken by sobs"* (*ibid.*), communicating too, the enormous level of pain and suffering that was beneath the surface of his actions. Nevertheless, he conveys how this 'disaster situation' was also one in which found it extremely difficult as a child to take responsibility for his own actions and internal destructiveness. In his frank, increasingly warts-and-all descriptions of his school

years, over time, there is a shift from characterizing himself (including with the use of elements of performativity in the narrative) as an abandoned eight-year-old victim stuck in a passive state to a teenager shocked to find he can be both unpleasant and cruel. This way, he conveys how he has come to see his own capabilities for bullying, despite the adversity he did suffer, through the long and painful mental hard work he engaged in over the course of his life once he discovered psychoanalysis.

Problematic Masculine Identifications

Introduction to masculinity

In this chapter, I explore the theme of masculinity in terms of difficulties in finding helpful identifications that support development along the trajectory of 'boy to man to father' (Davids, 2002 and Figlio, 2000). Identifications are an important part of adolescent development and necessary to relate in ways other than rivalry. As with all older adolescent boys at the time, Bion's own development – or lack of it - got disrupted at the end of his schooldays with the requirement to go and fight on the battlefields of WWI. Similarly, his dislocation from his father and his mother from such a young age when he moved to England to commence boarding school, was bound up with the cultural trends of the age. Colonial constructs of masculinity held sway. As previously discussed, it was not unusual for children, particularly boys, from British families to be sent from India for an education in England. It did, however, have an impact. The prevailing atmosphere at Edwardian era boarding schools was one where boys from a young age were expected to manage without their mothers, and where, as I point out in this chapter, the importance of fathers as a parenting influence with emotional, intellectual and creative attributes (Trowell, 2002, p. 5) barely got a look in.

In 'Weekend', the attainment of a helpful internal father object for Bion during his adolescence is minimal and affected by his formative years in India. His descriptions of his early relation to his father are painful, and he often felt frightened inside and out. He was perplexed by his father and longed for the approval of his sensitivities. For example, as a young child, he feels desperate for some acknowledgement from his father that a floral arrangement he makes is *"very pretty"* (Bion, 1982a, p. 16). Seeking support and encouragement, he tells his father *"I'm not lying Daddy. I did it all myself"* (*ibid.*). His father says, surprised, that *"I never expected you to be lying"* (*ibid.*), leading him to become suspicious. It can be deduced from Bion's writing that 'the lie' on this occasion is not just the phantasy that the little boy can do everything by himself but the phallic ideal of masculinity that is alluded to, where fathers are not supposed to invest in nurturing their sons' sensitivities, as I will come to discuss.

On another occasion, seeing his mother disappointed in his younger sister for calling out *"lavatory!"* (p.14) incessantly, Bion attempts to take charge of the situation and boxes her on the ears for being *"naughty"* (*ibid.*). His mother does not know what to do with him before his father steps in, firmly, saying, *"Let me have him"* (p.15). Patient and kind at first, when Bion cannot explain his actions, his father loses his temper and turns him *"bottom up"* (*ibid.*) to give him *"a good beating"* (*ibid.*). Bion is put back in his place via physical chastisement, leaving him to resolve to hate his parents for the rest of his life - *"with all my heart and all my soul for ever and ever. Amen"* (*ibid.*).

He then describes feeling frightened on a subsequent occasion when his father does not resort to beating him. He fears the appearance of another more terrifying figure in his mind, *"Arf Arfer"* (*ibid.*), who is a fantasized combination of a punitive and vengeful Christian god and the wild animals of the Indian jungle.

Bion conveys that his father, too, seemed disappointed in his own capacities to provide his son with something more adequate. For example, when the electric trainset he buys him does not work, he becomes furious when a servant renders it useless by trying to fix it with ghee. It becomes clear that Bion's father is all the time caught up in his own problematic masculine identifications that include participating in rites of passage of the age, such as the tiger hunt that is described (pp. 21-24). However, it is worth noting that the trainset would also have cost Bion's father a significant amount of money.

Bion gives an account of a variety of male figures he was exposed to whilst at boarding school – most of them also quite emotionally damaged in some way but not all of them. I consider the impact Bion suggests these men had on him in this chapter. At the same time, during his adolescent years, an almost complete sense of dislocation from his own father is conveyed both geographically and psychically. For example, his father is entirely absent in the description of being dropped off at boarding school by his mother, is never acknowledged as ever visiting him, and is only briefly mentioned during 'England' as someone who found the troubled headmaster, Hirst, rather affable (p. 55) and then in a memory of wanting his father's approval for the floral arrangement he made but it not being available (p. 45). I have wondered during my analysis of the text if Bion's father remains hated in order to

protect a more idealized version of his mother, who also left him at the school, notwithstanding the impact he had on Bion early on. Generally, Bion portrays himself as almost completely at sea and with, for the most of it, an absence of helpful male figures to look up to and identify with, leading to a problematic situation where no healthy masculine identifications are made during his school years.

On the other side of things, he arrives at the outbreak of WWI having had some exposure to a different construct of masculinity that involves thought, particularly from Colman, his classics teacher. However, it is now disrupted by the war. Colman is depicted as enabling Bion to catch sight, even if only briefly, of important matters such as the unhelpful rivalries, feelings of jealousy and envy he maintains. Feeling more nurtured, albeit rather tentatively, also seems more possible when male figures such as his friends' fathers, Mr. Rhodes and Mr. Hamilton, who have their quite serious faults but can also be generous, are backed up by the warm and generous figures of their wives, Mrs. Rhodes and Mrs. Hamilton.

Upon leaving school and heading towards the macho certainty of war, Bion recalls travelling to London to sign up as a soldier. By now, he has developed a reinforced and extremely persecuted view of himself, not having a good-enough masculinity, and calls himself *"soft"* and *"feminine"* (p. 116). This was inevitably affected by ideals of masculinity woven into the fabric of society, which were heavily influenced by imperialism. A rivalrous contact with his father in the external world resurfaces, leaving Bion feeling humiliated and inadequate, especially when he is initially rejected as a soldier (pp. 121 - 123). There is then further humiliation when he has to rely on his father's acquaintances to obtain an initial posting (pp. 125 - 128). His father seems to use religious morality as a defense against knowing about his son's distress, but also his desires to have a good masculine identification with him. Bion describes how he tried to avoid his father's "*conflagrations in which he extinguished me with a moral foam that made it impossible to breathe*" (p.127).

I will come to discuss how, upon close study*,* 'Weekend' begins to read as a rejection of the perverse ideals of masculinity associated with the age but, as Bill Schwarz argues, are also a history we are very much still living, given it can be continually hard to get a perspective on the problem (2011, p. 5).

Fathers and masculinity

There are a number of contributions to psychoanalytic theories of fatherhood and masculinity. I have found the following helpful in thinking about the problems with masculine identifications that Bion conveys in 'Weekend':

In his chapter 'Father's in the Internal World' (2002) M. Fakhry Davids points out that the father is always the second internal object. He has an important role in creating space from the intensities of the mother-infant relationship and in moving things on. Davids notes that *"the father also has a more general role during infancy as a repository for split off aspects of the infant's experience with the mother"* (p. 77). This protects the infant's good experience with her early on, what is often called 'healthy splitting', and in this situation, a father's capacity to tolerate hate is key. As the child develops, the capacity to foster the development of thought in the face of intense emotion is often associated with the paternal function (*ibid.*) and is, therefore, also an important aspect of fatherhood.

During adolescence, the boy's early oedipal development is revisited in the context of his maturing body that makes demands upon the mind. There is a resurgence in his murderous feelings towards his father, with whom he is a rival in his desires for his mother, brought on by pubertal development. Egle Laufer and Moses Laufer (1984) point out that in adolescence, phantasy feels less safe than during the latency period. This is because the adolescent's body can now do actual physical harm and has reproductive potential. Consequently, rivalries between father and son are often seen to emerge at this juncture which fathers have an essential role in helping their sons work through; a process made more difficult where fathers have not been helped to work through these things themselves. Being able to make an identification, an expression of an emotional tie, with the father, and increasingly at adolescence with other male figures, is vital in order to resolve this situation.

The psychoanalyst Karl Figlio, in his book 'Psychoanalysis, Science and Masculinity' (2000), details a boy's alignment with his father along the boy to man to father trajectory. After Frosh (1994), he notes how, in the postcolonial age, masculinity is a term that has typically meant phallic masculinity, i.e. the dominating and arrogant colonizing of a woman and nature that masks a fear of castration and

impotence (Figlio, 2000, p.4). 'Phallic masculinity' is a destructive form of masculinity that denounces all communicative aspects of masculinity and as such is both misogynistic but also, by default, anti-male as it robs boys and men of their rich and complex emotional lives. It is similar to the popular term 'toxic masculinity' but emphasizes the qualities of machismo, inflation and bigness that are aimed at humiliating ordinary infantile need and smallness. Anish Nandy points out that colonialism colonized *"minds in addition to bodies"* (1983, p. xi), including those from colonizing countries (see also Fanon, 1961).

Masculine ideals available to men in the Edwardian era were often ones where they had to be unemotional, physically strong, sexually dominant and, tragically, even violent (Jobbins, 2017). The historian, Josephine Jobbins, notes in an online article how *"Victorian public school boys were strong, stoical and athletic - ready to die for their country, but not to talk about their feelings"* (*ibid.*). These ideals can be understood in the context of the Victorian Empire where *"physical rigour was needed for men to be fit enough to fight"* (*ibid.*) and led to 'games-worshipping' in public schools, where games-playing had been made compulsory between 1860 and 1880 (*ibid.*). Emotionality and vulnerability were seen as contrary and threatening to these ideals. Jobbins notes that ideas of stoicism - having a stiff upper lip - associated with the British Empire still endure and, *"It is a widely-held notion that boys don't cry and men are often depicted as rational and unemotional"* (*ibid.*).

However, this type of phallic masculinity has begun to be challenged as it is seen as denying men of *"their complex personhood"* (Treacher, 2007, p. 285) and an ideal that is harmful to both men, women and their children.

The psychoanalyst, Marcus Johns, comments how the earliest identifications are 'cannibalistic', or based on the phantasy of concrete incorporation. The little boy who takes the father as his ideal would like to grow like him and be like him (Johns, 2002, p. 187). He writes, after Freud (1921), that,

> The normal earliest identification was seen to be modelled on an infantile feeding fantasy of devouring what was loved; the child could have the omnipotent fantasy that one could become what one desired by swallowing the rivalled loved one whole and becoming him in a cannibalistic identification with his strengths and potencies. (Johns, 2002, p. 187)

However, these identifications can only ever be temporary as they depend *"on the use of omnipotence and denial under the pressures of desire, rivalry, jealousy and*

anger" (Johns, *ibid.*, p. 188). They are not identifications based on reality and needs for dependencies within relationships.

Taking these ideas further, Figlio comments on the difference between identifications proper and mere imitations. He notes,

> To establish a male lineage, the son must identify with father. If the lineage is to produce and reinforce genital masculinity, and not pre-genital pseudo-masculinity, then the relationship between father and son must be properly an identification and not an imitation. Imitation is narcissistic and repudiates reality; identification recognizes reality. In the oedipal context, imitation repudiates father's existence and binds the son to his mother in a phantasy of fusion; identification with father frees him to relate generously and lovingly to women. … Identification refers to an internal object relationship, and not simply to an assimilation of the other to the self. (2000, p. 120)

Imitation is an illusory construct that defends against the loss of the false idea of self-creation. Introjection refers to the internalization of an object but does not distinguish between the active accomplishment of the ego through mental hard work, and passive or traumatic (forced) entry. With true identifications, however, a relationship to the object world is always maintained, and the core experience of the self is understood as being helped to be brought about by these important relationships (Figlio, *ibid.*).

Finally, a different way of thinking about things: Dana Birksted-Breen in her seminal paper, 'Phallus, Penis and Mental Space' (1996), makes an important distinction between the penis as a phallus compared with what she calls 'penis-as-link' – two very different states of mind when thinking about masculinity. The penis as a phallus represents a state of illusory wholeness, of being without need and 'beyond' the human condition. However, it is an instrument of the death drive and a highly destructive state of mind. In contrast, 'penis-as-link' has a structuring role in mental functioning and belongs to Eros. It links mother and father, masculine and feminine and marks the full Oedipal structure (pp. 127-128), allowing for creativity and mental growth.

Bion's male figures:

I now want to examine the male figures Bion was surrounded by during his school years whilst away from his father. They are: Hirst, the headmaster; his friends' fathers, Mr. Rhodes and Mr. Hamilton with whom he stayed during school holidays;

the classics teacher, Master Colman, who is not so signed up to the more prevalent ideals of masculinity around and does things differently; and Thompson, a headmaster of a neighbouring school, whom Bion characterizes as rather epitomizing the false ideals of masculinity that are in ascendance during his schooldays. Descriptions are drawn from my own psychoanalytically informed interpretations of the text made available by Bion the writer in his portrayal of events.

Hirst, the headmaster

Hirst, the headmaster of the school, is described initially as *"a taciturn, frightening man"* (Bion, 1982a, p. 49) when Bion first encounters him in the second chapter of 'England'. In Bion's mind, the headmaster is the orchestrater of the dreaded Sunday walks that he finds so hard to bear - someone who is hated and reminds him so terribly of the absence of his parents -, bringing on feelings of homesickness. However, strikingly, Hirst is referred to by the end of the section, ten years later, and also in other moments along the way when as a young boy Bion seems fleetingly in a less persecuted state of mind, as having quite different qualities too. He is described as *"my loved, unhappy, ghost-haunted failure"* (p. 116). Hirst seems to have become neither a phallic representation in Bion's mind nor a figure who can provide structuring and linking functions. Instead, I suggest there is a melancholy imitation and Hirst represents a man with features of permanent damage and the essence of tragedy.

Curiously, he is almost continually denigrated by Bion and the other boys and in quite a lively way, seeming to indicate something potentially more robust about him. Hirst is mocked in a castrating manner for having a 'small' billiards table in his living quarters. They giggle when they hear *"the weekly click"* (p. 55) of the billiard balls when the other masters, who seem to quite like Hirst - as does Bion's father -, go around to visit (*ibid.*). Behind the innuendo directed at him, which seems to exist as the boys also miss their mothers, are his tragic social circumstances. Rumour has it that Hirst's wife was institutionalized in an asylum almost immediately upon marrying him. In a rather unkind way, Hirst is ridiculed for not being in a sexual relationship with a woman and the slur is that something homosexual and/or masturbatory is going on. This is also in the context of life at a segregated boys'

school where the *"Presence of women - wives of headmasters and housemasters - could be vital"* (Hamlett, 2019, p. 79) but tends to go under-emphasized, with *"the schools' roles in distancing boys from the world of home, domesticity, femininity and women"* (*ibid.*) remaining the more dominant narrative.

Hirst also seems to be dismissed and feminized by a master who Bion comes across whilst visiting Cambridge University, who knew him as a *"downy old bird"* (Bion, 1982a, p. 95). The boys take to teasing him, saying that a portrait of Hirst hanging in the school looks like he is *"straining at stool"* (*ibid.*). Both they and the Cambridge master seem to need to fill him with rubbish from their minds. It is possible to speculate that Hirst's denigration is also partly due to a hatred and envy of his efforts at trying to maintain a work function in class. The boys appear to wish he would relax the rules and be the same as them. They protest that he cannot even say *"fuck"* (p. 94) but rather uses the term *"Oh drat"* (*ibid.*) when on a rare occasion he nearly loses his cool as a noisy traction engine lays gravel on the lane outside the school disrupting his teaching (*ibid.*). They use the occasion to rob him of a more *"noble stature"* (*ibid.*) he seems at pains to maintain rather than value his efforts at educating them. It is interesting to think whether he is denigrated, as with Bion's father, in order to protect an idealized version of a mother for the homesick boys. He seems needed as a repository for the darker aspects of themselves that they project into him.

I think that Bion the writer makes it clear that Hirst neither understands the ways the boys need him nor their use of him. He is certainly portrayed as having his blind spots and being caught up in the web of undirected menace that they all are. The prep school he runs is neglectful, and he seems to fail outright to empathize with how much suffering the boys are in. As I described in the previous chapter, he seems oblivious – as are Miss. Good and Miss. Whybrow - to the level of bullying in the prep school until the day of the riot when they finally realize something very serious is going on and to take action. Bion seems to indicate that one explanation for this is how, *"Hirst was inaccessible in his own misery which could not be eased by us"* (p. 66). The impact on him of his wife being away and his seemingly failed relationship is suggested.

However, Hirst does seem able to provide some helpful external prohibitions at times and is proportionate with his discipline. Albeit, in return, rarely are the boys generous with their appreciation of him. He tells Bion *"gently"* (p. 50) to stop masturbating in class – *"Don't do that Wilfred … Or you will have to be sent away"* (*ibid.*). He lectures the boys seemingly appropriately, warning them about *"poisoning the mind of another"* (p.57)*.* He tells them it was *"quite wrong that no one said anything to me; not a word at any time"* (*ibid.*) when a boy from the main school is expelled. He also sets consequences and docks the boys' pocket money to pay for the iron gate when they swing on it and break it (p. 63). It may be that the young Bion's fear of being cast out himself from the link between the parental couple obscures his capacity to see Hirst as more of a benign authority. However, the eighty-year-old Bion does seem to appreciate his proportionate and gentle handling of these things. He is never demonized.

On the odd occasion, when Bion seems more available, and most likely in the moments Hirst is too, he is described as 'lovable'. The image of a young Bion clutching to the leg of his trousers one evening seems included to convey something tender and playful about him. Bion announces to the other boys in the dorm, *"[Hirst] says it's to be a half holiday tomorrow!"* (p. 55) as he scrambles upstairs to bed to which the trouser leg *"gruffly"* replies, *"Oh no he didn't"* (*ibid.*). As the eighty-year-old writer, Bion conveys how the boys were curious about Hirst and seems to want to show how they had desires to identify with *someone.* They notice things like his carpet slippers and new tie (*ibid.*) and are interested in what kind of figure he is. They seem to wonder about his failed relationship with Mrs. Hirst that they do not understand in the prep school. Bion portrays himself as a child who was utterly confused and believed Mrs. Hirst must have been expelled for masturbating because this is what he feared for himself. He then notes the headmaster's sadness once he is in the main school. It is implicit in Bion's writing that, in the end, Hirst's rather unintegrated character, a 'couple-less' headmaster who cannot link thought with feeling, did not present him with a figure who could help with difficulties or support him with the development of valuable emotional resources. There seems to be an imitation portrayed where Hirst is in danger of being perceived as the same as the

child Bion - someone who is deeply unhappy and at sea with his failures to relate to others.

Mr. Rhodes and Mr. Hamilton

During school holidays, Bion sometimes stays at the family homes of two friends – Heaton Rhodes and John Dudley Hamilton. This provides him with some much needed relief from his miserable existence at the prep school and even some experiences of being nurtured, especially by their mothers - an aspect I have chosen to explore in my chapter *Problems with Relating*. The characters of these boys' fathers, Mr. Rhodes and Mr. Hamilton, are quite different to each other, although they are both in the agricultural trade. Changes to farming methods of the age, from hard manual labour to the increasing use of technology, are described, but also two different versions of masculinity. Whilst Bion notes their generosity and is nurtured by their wives, he observes them respond to their son's rivalrous feelings during adolescence in less than helpful ways.

Mr. Rhodes is a 'hard-wearing' farmer from an unforgiving Yorkshire farming background. At the Rhodes's farm, creativity is stifled by the destructive machismo prevalent in the Edwardian age with its inherent violence. Bion tends to portray this in his descriptions of the harshness of the landscape and manual farming methods that also depend on the physical strength and endurance of labouring men. In today's culture, the machismo on the Rhodes's farm could easily be described as 'toxic masculinity', a term referring to regressive cultural norms that are associated with harm to society and men themselves but at the time are canvassed erroneously as *"facts of life"* (*ibid.*, p.78).

Upon Bion's arrival there, Heaton gives him a degrading induction that involves humiliation and seems designed to *"terminate or curtail … associations and pledges previously held"* (Sweet, 1999, p.359), ones that acknowledge dependencies and vulnerabilities and especially those relating to a boy's mother. As Meg Harris Williams points out previously (2010, p.2), he immediately shows Bion the gigantic shire-horse, Prince, who represents the type of phallic masculinity submitted to on the farm that must be *"worshipped"* (Bion, 1982a, p.68) in order to gain acceptance to a perverse ideal of masculinity. Heaton then forces Bion to watch

animal slaughter in a cruel manner in front of Kathleen, whom he is fond of. He does not *"prove his masculinity"* to Kathy as he keeps his *"eyes shut"* when the pig is butchered (p.70).

It later becomes clear that Mr. Rhodes gains sadistic enjoyment from trying to get the boys to do things they have neither developed the physical strength nor farmhand knowledge to do so. Mr. Rhodes deliberately sets up Heaton to take Curly, the cow, over to his cousin Bob's field at Munden without telling Heaton that the cow has just calved, meaning it would be very difficult to separate them. The job is nigh on impossible for Heaton and Bion together, with Curly in this state, and they are given the complete runaround. Unable to manage the task, back home, Bion observes father and son in something of a professional argument with each other after the day's failed events. Neither will back down, and Mr. Rhodes' fondness for teasing his son rather cruelly wins out (pp. 70-72). A way of relating that is competitive and involves outwitting the other by whatever means possible rules. Curly the cow's refusal to be separated from her calf represents the type of dependency the farmstead's phallic ideal of masculinity seeks to sever.

There are terrible consequences to the destructive machismo prevalent on the farm. Whilst there is an experienced herdsman who is then given the job of moving Curly to another field, he is known for being a drunk and is feminized by the Rhodes, who nickname him Old Cow. It also emerges that at Cousin Bob's, tragically, a farm worker has taken a gun to his head, which affects both boys. Whilst they are protected from seeing the *"terrible mess"* (p. 73) no grown-ups seem able to look after the boys or each other in more sensitive ways. There is little room for concern about the tragedy - how a young man has taken his life - and it is dismissed later on as *"oh that"* (*ibid.*) when Bion asks about it.

Mr. Hamilton is an aspiring businessman who pursues farming of a different type; large scale and *"under glass"* (p. 75). He comes across as relatively unavailable and immersed in his own difficulties separating from a disturbed mother. He has developed a somewhat materialistic interest in culture, buying a pianola[16] and Leon Bollet - the only family at the school to own a car - but remaining a rather disillusioned man. Bion describes his pianola as a *"toy"* (p. 79) that Mr. Hamilton

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[16] A self-playing piano with programmed music recorded on perforated paper or metallic rolls.

was *"too cultured to be able to tolerate the disillusionment"* (*ibid.*) it brought him and "*ceased, almost at once, to play it*" (*ibid.*), never finding enjoyment in it. He appears a somewhat depressed man who cannot play despite having *"a lively sense of his social obligations"* (*ibid.*) and is involved in the local Boys' Brigade. Behind Mr. Hamilton is his own upper-class mother whose health is failing. She is oxygen-starved and needs a machine of her own to help her breathe, and a lack of warmth in their relationship is conveyed. She attempts to maintain a class-orientated hierarchy, preaching that it is the uneducated who say *"lilac"* not *"laylock"*, that ultimately has not made Mr. Hamilton happy (p.80). Similarly to Bion's mother, who is now absent, she has also been unable and unwilling to challenge the age's class-laden cultural norms.

Mr. Hamilton struggles with his older sons' adolescent developments, Dudley and Stewart. His youngest, Colin, has not yet reached puberty like them and is more endearing to his father for being good at billiards, one of Mr. Hamiltons' favourite games, leading to feelings of rivalry between boys. There is something difficult for Mr. Hamilton to attend to about Bion and the older boys' more destructive play at the point of adolescence: their cruelty to the cat and their brother, Colin; how they smash the gardener's pots (pp. 80 - 81) and set fire in the attic (p. 84); the way they construct an aeroplane to fly off the roof risking fatal injuries to themselves before they are stopped at the last minute (pp. 84 - 85); and digging a giant hole in the orchard big enough for a man to fall into (pp. 85 - 86). Other figures such as the cook, housemaid and gardener are left to feel concerned, angry and scared, but Mr. Hamilton seems to evade these emotions. For example, he simply orders the giant hole they have made be filled in without understanding the boys' states and talking to them about it.

Whilst Bion rejects the perverse ideals of masculinity prevalent at the Rhodes's farm, in many senses, as with Hirst, the child Bion seems to become caught up with the figure of Mr. Hamilton as someone who is unable to play, rather depressed and with a lack of warmth in the relationship with his mother. Bion 'the writer' seems to think Mr. Hamilton was without the structuring and linking functions the boys so desperately required, although, as with Mr. Rhodes, provided the background environment for the temporary and much needed respite Bion received from the prep school whilst he stayed there.

Masters Colman and Thompson

Whilst other masters, Tidmarsh, Charles Mellows and Sutton-Bobby are briefly mentioned in 'England' (pp. 90-91), particularly in relation to sexuality which is an important aspect of masculinity I discuss in my next chapter, my focus here is on Colman and Thompson, whom Bion describes he had contrasting sets of feelings about. The characters of the senior classics master, Colman, and Thompson, who is the headmaster at a nearby prep school where Bion goes to stay during his last summer at the main school, are both encountered at the very end of the section on 'England' just before Bion goes to war, and there is a further separation, this time from his boarding school which, whatever its defects, had become his home. The contrast between Colman and Thompson is stark. Colman is a progressive who has some capacities for linking, whereas Thompson is presented as a caricature of the worst type of phallic masculinity associated with the age.

Colman is an Oxford graduate who has status as a scholar. He is fond of Virgil and Homer but also *"a popular man and a fine cricketer"* (p.111). Bion describes him as *"complex"* (*ibid.*) and interesting, including his physicality - the only male figure from his school years he describes this way. He notes, *"His enthusiasm for sport was intensified as he was debarred from it by an injury reported to be due to falling from a lamp post in a boat-race night rag"* (*ibid.*). It seems left to the reader to work out that Colman is a single, childless man despite his popularity and liveliness. Colman is kind and generous but, though he likes him, does not favour Bion over the other students provoking competitive feelings. However, he seems to have some capacity to both withstand Bion's jealous feelings and get him thinking about his rivalries. Despite his injury, Colman is not portrayed with the same type of permanent emotional damage that stifles growth that the other men in the section do.

Bion notes the impact of Colman on him, including that "*It puzzled me; there was more jealousy and envy than I realised*" (*ibid.*). By this section of the text, he has developed physically and grown to be a good sportsman but becomes jealous of the friendly tussles Colman has with his main athletic rival at the school. Winning the event of the school run, and in the process beating his rival, does not provide Bion with much relief from such feelings. He takes to finishing Colman's sentences,

attempting to enter into a similar relationship he perceives his rival has with the master. My own interpretation is that he seemed to find it difficult to believe Colman had something to offer given his experiences of male figures to date. For example, Colman says,

> "What is there difficult about Latin? You have the brains; you only have to follow the rules and there are so many of them –"
>
> "that", said I finishing the sentence for him, "you cannot possibly remember them." (*ibid.*)

The eighty-year-old Bion conveys he was desperate to feel liked by Colman and it was a new experience for him to feel he could still be held in mind without needing to triumph over all his rivals for a male figure's attention.

Colman takes a group of boys to the Norfolk Broads for walks and even to his home in Peterborough, where Bion 'the child' observes Colman dislikes his deaf parents and their religious ways, seeming to find relief from them in the landscape which he knew like the back of his hand (pp. 111-113). He shares an interest with Bion in working things out at Ely Cathedral; objects, styles and their periods (p. 112). He thinks and sees things differently from the dominant masculine ideals available, working unacknowledged and against the prevailing current.   Colman is exasperated by the nation's intractable march towards war, whereas Bion, naively, holds some feelings of excitement about it (p. 115). Overall, there is a new sense of quiet nurture provided by Colman, one that begins to feed his mind, which, tragically, Bion also comes to think of as a luxury (p. 116) as the war arrives. However, it is clear the eighty-year-old Bion acknowledges and values the way Colman did things differently.

Finally, he describes Thompson (p. 116), and in doing so, uses authorial 'performativity' to convey how critical he felt as an adolescent about his own emerging masculinity. Neil Crawford notes this type of self-derision can often be found as a result of being exposed to bullying behaviour (1997), as I explored in the previous chapter. The backdrop now is the certainty of WWI, with Bion a physically developed older teenager. During his final summer at boarding school, the sixteen-year-old Bion stays with the Thompson's who run a neighbouring school. He is joined there by a boy from his own school called Laurie Lawn. A new type of rivalry emerges, this time for a woman - Mrs. Thompson - who Bion develops an adolescent crush on. However, he writes how *"she liked manly, intelligent boys like Laurie who*

won a lead over me which he never lost" (Bion, 1982a, p. 117). Such is her disposition, wedded as she is to the ideals of phallic masculinity of her husband, she says she cannot understand why Bion has not run off to join the army despite him not yet being of age.

Mr. Thompson has a boat that Bion describes with a jibe as *"an untidy, dirty, dilapidated old yawl which he kept tied up at a mooring in the river Deben"* (p. 116). He spends that summer sailing on the Norfolk broads and out at sea with the other boys staying there. Thompson is epitomized as an "*unpredictable, bad-tempered tyrant … . He hated boys who were soft, loutish, half-alive, half-dead – a perfect description of me … . Manly boys, morally clean boys, did not make a fuss about dirt"* (*ibid.*). Bion describes how*, "Part of the pretension of manliness was to turn up for the day without any food – being indifferent to hardship and food was manly. In my soft way, nurtured on the luxuries of Colman's boat on the Broads, I thought – but did not say – that it was not manly, merely incompetent"* (*ibid.*). The eighty-year-old writer is highly critical of the unplanned and insensitive way of operating that Thompson represents. He has long since rejected the false ideals of masculinity that were dominant at the time but also portrays how, as an adolescent, he had gained some experience or prototype by then for a different way of being, provided by Colman. This was something hard for him to hold onto at the time as he has not yet had enough of it. These matters are complex as the episode at the Thompsons is also used by Bion the writer to portray his own severe problems with relating as an adolescent that I describe further in my chapter 'Problems with Relating'. However, the overarching impression given is that, as a boy, he was starved of the figures he needed to develop healthy masculine identifications.

'Half-dead boys': Sexuality and Censorship

"undetectable, undetected landmine[s]" (Bion, 1982a, p. 92)

Introduction to sexuality

Bion's sexual development was frightening to him. Sexual states of mind are pervasive in 'England', and he describes how sex was in no uncertain terms a *"PROBLEM"* (1982a, p. 106, his emphasis]. The chapters in 'England' where Bion mentions sex most clearly (especially chapters 4 and 5, p. 55-65, that detail his sexualized behaviour in the prep school; and chapters 11-12, pp. 87-93, and chapter 15, pp. 106-108, that describe his pubertal development in the main school) are some of the most taxing in the entire section. This is because whilst sex is put front and centre, at the same time, it receives a peculiar kind of censorship that is bound up with both public school culture and the pre/adolescent Bion's own struggles. For example, Bion writes how *"One house in particular was notorious for … what?"* (p. 92). Matters are communicated in a restricted/ambiguous yet spilling out way, and it is a key theme in 'England' warranting further exploration. Rudi Vermote comments how, overall, Bion did not write much about sexuality in his general writing output (2019, p.10). However, my view is that the chapters mentioned above do convey a valuable contribution to understanding sexual states of mind in general, particularly where feelings of childhood despair result in sexualized behaviour and where adolescent sexual development is stifled.

Bion's writing often takes a rather joking attitude, with elements of 'hammed-up' performativity. He pretends to adhere to the stringent moral and religious attitudes towards sex of the day where even naming masturbation, despite its inevitability in adolescence, not least at a segregated public boys' school, was considered a dangerous venture for reasons I will discuss. However, despite the fun he pokes at things, the painfully starved lack of creativity in the school is conveyed through descriptions of boys who are only *"half-alive"* as they are *"half-dead"* (p. 116). Bion does not mince his words describing his entrapment in the school environment where there was an *"absolute hatred and loathing of sexuality"* (p. 87). He needed serious help with these matters but, within the above context, the quality

of support he received at the school was minimal and rather dubious, with none of the masters able to approach the subject in straightforward ways. Teaching about sex and relationships was not *"in the prospectus"* (p. 93) as it is nowadays. As with all adolescents, his sexual development also put him in competition with his parents - I think in Bion's case, in touch with an anxiety that he could do away with them, exacerbated by his prior feelings of neglect and abandonment when left at the school. The impact on Bion was longstanding and arresting. He considered himself sexually immature as an adult and wrote in 'Sins' how, shortly after the war, he fell in love with a young woman who promptly ditched him for someone else. Seeing the couple, by coincidence, at the beach one day, he felt humiliated and had violent fantasies about shooting and causing them permanent damage (1985, pp. 29-30).

Sexual development during adolescence

The development of a body that is sexually, as well as violently, capable brings with it a torrent of anxieties that are inescapable at adolescence. Foremost amongst these anxieties is the re-emergence of the Oedipal dilemmas of infancy that, after a period of relative calm during the latency period, must be re-negotiated. Alongside this, a new relation to parental figures with increasing physical and mental separation begins. Change is experienced as disturbing as it comes with its losses, but there are also new creative possibilities. Various diversions can be employed to avoid the mental pain these processes involve. For example, there may be an omnipotent race forwards towards maturity, which is always pseudo, and a wish to leave all dependent feelings behind as they are associated with infantile parts of the self. Meltzer (1973) notes the adolescent is struggling with the question, *"Whose body is it?"* (p. 53). He writes how *"they cannot distinguish with certainty their adolescent state from the infantile delusions-of-adulthood induced by masturbation with attendant projective identification into internal objects"* (*ibid*.), capturing the dilemma. A healthier adolescent process involves harnessing increased potency for creative purposes whilst finding ways to tolerate feelings of smallness. Monumental blips and setbacks in this task may be painfully felt and frequent but are an ordinary part of all adolescents' developments. How these knocks are responded to both internally and externally, have an important bearing on whether there can be some

learning from experience and continued emotional development along the way. Steiner notes how seeing and being seen, with associated feelings on a spectrum from embarrassment to shame, can be particularly acute at this stage (2011 and 2015). In psychoanalytic terms, a limit to one's own omnipotence must be acknowledged, which involves a growing awareness of a need to access a more experienced mind. Given the intensities and fragilities involved in the adolescent process, help with confused feelings is also frequently required, i.e., distinguishing between infantile sexuality and the new realities that come with a physically developed body. When re-establishing a relation to adolescence's specific realities becomes stuck then we are in the quarry of an 'adolescent breakdown' (Laufer and Laufer, 1984).

In Kleinian (1945) and post-Kleinian theory, see for example O'Shaughnessy (1964), paranoid schizoid fears of total expulsion from the mother exist in psychic life from early on. In time, and with experiences of a mother coming back, these lead to more depressive realizations and resultant phantasies as to who a mother is with, as well as the development of a relationship to a third, i.e., father, and having a sense of being conceived of despite the parents own separate relationship (Figlio, 2000). The attainment of a mature sexual position in adult life involves the development during adolescence of a generative and capable self that is less wholly dependent on others - less ruled by infantile sexuality - but also in touch with continuing needs and dependencies.

In the Oedipal myth, it is worth noting how desires for the mother and fear of retribution from a father exist alongside primitive fears of total abandonment and being left to die. Oedipus is removed from his mother, Jocasta, and murderously abandoned by his father, Lauis. As a young man he leaves his adoptive parents, King Polybus and Queen Merope, of his own accord for fear of what he might do to them as a physically developed being (Graves, 1955). Hamish Canham particularly noted this often-forgotten aspect to the myth and how the story shows *"the struggle that parents have to manage their violent and sexual feelings towards their children"* (2003, p. 107). This parental struggle can be particularly acute at the point of adolescence when maturing bodies are visible. There is also the earlier perspective that younger children stir up infantile emotions in the couple they experience as

threatening (p. 108). In this respect, he notes how *"the experience of Oedipus has much in common with that of many children and adolescents unable to live with their parents"* (p. 117) - i.e., children growing up in the care system. This may go some way to explaining how institutions can also respond to adolescents in unhelpful ways as feelings get stirred up in staff groups.

Sexualized behaviour

Bion relied on masturbation from early childhood, first describing discovering *"the pleasure … by lying on my stomach on the floor and wriggling"* (1982a, p. 30) and noting his sister could not do the same. It drew a peculiarly confused response from his parents whose expressions were *"frozen"* (*ibid.*), yet they picked him up and kissed him (*ibid.*). He felt guilty as if *"bits of the Bible"* (*ibid.*) were stuck to him *"like fluff"* (*ibid.*) he could not get off himself, yet also giggles although his parents do not (p. 31). He later substitutes the term *"wiggling"* (p.50) for masturbation in the prep school, and his behaviour spills out quickly from the semi-private arena of his dormitory bed to the more public forum of the classroom where his inhibitions are lost, such is his immersion in the activity. He says his behaviour *"could hardly have been more anonymous than the Indian bear's progress through the forest"* (*ibid.*). As I mentioned in the previous chapter, Hirst tells him, *"Don't do that Wilfred ... or you will have to be sent away"* (*ibid.*), which Bion certainly experiences as traumatic despite Hirst's gentle tone. He recalls the other boys staring *"in stony innocence"* (*ibid.*) as if none of them were at it in private. He fears expulsion and further abandonment, already feeling outcast, utterly helpless and without agency, his mother having left him at the prep school. Similarly, he feels expelled from his father's mind, who, as noted in the previous chapter, barely appears in the text in 'England'. In 'India', Bion feared his father's red-faced anger (p. 17) and was afraid he would turn into a terrifying and vengeful *"Arf Arfer"* (*ibid.*). When Hirst threatens him with expulsion, it connects with these past events in the present moment, leaving him frightened and confused.

There is further deterioration as Bion goes on to confuse an expression 'poison-of-the-mind' with 'poison-of-the-food' (pp. 57-58) when Hirst lectures the boys one day, imploring them to speak up to adults if there are further incidents of

bullying between the boys that has led, on this occasion, to an older boy actually being expelled. Bion's confused state of mind, fearing total abandonment, is characterized by a failure to understand the symbolic nature of what Hirst says. He thinks a boy has been poisoned and died. It is not until he is in the main school that Bion works out an older boy has been expelled for sexual behaviour with a younger child (p. 90). At the time, he asks another boy what Hirst means and who it is that has died, only to be told, *"I'll tell you later"* (p. 58) before thinking the boy must have been expelled for wiggling. Bion then resolves to give up wiggling himself but notes it was not that easy as *"it did not and would not give me up"* (*ibid.*). He thinks his wiggling is bad, that it will lead to the further loss of needed dependencies and being expelled himself. Early on, he writes,

> I had no luck at all. *I* might resolve to have nothing to do with wiggling, but wiggling did not return the compliment. What was more I felt so much better - even so morally better - after wiggling, and far more able to withstand temptation. I almost entered into lavish contracts with the Almighty to leave my 'widdler' alone. I sometimes wondered if Saint Paul was speaking metaphorically about his 'thorn in the flesh'; my 'widdler' was permanently stuck into my flesh. (p. 60)

With the painful difficulties and fears involved in the adolescent process for Bion, which his pre-pubescent development begins to provoke in the prep school, sex becomes one more source of his pain. By the time he moves up to the main school he writes, *"I had reduced my sexual life to perfunctory prayers of the "Oh God, save me from self-abuse" type"* (*ibid.*, p. 92). At the same time, it is also *"the only redeeming thing"* (p.59) whilst it leaves him feeling extremely guilty as he calls himself *"a bad boy, a dirty little wiggling horrid boy"* (*ibid.*).

'Half-dead boys'
It is perhaps not so curious then that Bion describes feeling nothing when one night, unexpectedly, as he is lying in bed with his pyjamas on, his friend Dudley Hamilton *"suddenly discarded the towel he had round his waist and jumped astride me as if challenging me to wrestle"* (p. 87). The sudden discard of Dudley's towel conveys the emotional quality of the sudden and unpredictable physical changes the boys are going through that are precursory to further developments associated with puberty they experience in the main school. The 'not quite', quasi-wrestling, is

communicative of the questions all pre-pubescent children have about how sexually developed beings get together.

Ordinary sexual explorations between boys in segregated public boarding school were as common as they were inevitable. Robert Graves, who went to Charterhouse School in the Edwardian era, wrote in his autobiography, 'Goodbye to All That', that sexual intimacy was *"almost always between boys of the same age who were not in love, and used each other as convenient sex-instruments. … the atmosphere was always heavy with romance of a conventional early-Victorian type"* (1929, p. 39). Graves's Charterhouse headmaster is reported to have said to other heads, *"My boys are amorous, but seldom erotic"* (*ibid.*). Graves, like Bion, was terribly unhappy at public school, calling it a *"fundamental evil"* (p. 36) and writing to his father at one point requesting his withdrawal. Along these lines Gaythorne-Hardy notes how for some, given how miserable things felt, romantic sexual encounters were *"the only happy moments"* the boys knew (1977, p. 161). Sadly, within this climate there were also boundary violations from older boys and masters towards younger boys. Graves notes how the atmosphere was "*complicated by cynicism and foulness"* (1929, p. 39), and Gaythorne-Hardy writes how the fear of sexual advances from older boys often kept the age groups distinctly apart (1977, p. 166).

These are issues Bion does not particularly take up in his account of prep school life, although he does observe more when describing the *"gigantic sexual pressure-cooker"* (Bion, 1982a, p. 90) of the main school. With the early episode of Dudley challenging Bion to wrestle him, having got on top of him, Dudley says, *"Now how do you feel?"* (p. 87). Bion recalls, *"I felt nothing physically; mentally a sense of boredom and anti-climax, which soon communicated itself to Dudley who, after a few futile attempts to provoke a struggle, got off"* (*ibid.*). Bion thought his first analyst, when relaying the event to him, neither believed he could have felt 'nothing' nor understood *"the horrible and painful nature of frustration, its powerful contribution, with fear and guilt, to an absolute loathing of sexuality in any shape or form"* (*ibid.*). He describes a state of mind where sexuality and creativity are entirely stifled. Tragically, Bion notes, as he and Dudley begin to duel and wrestle in other forms, there is also the loss of their friendship. He writes, *"The only overt and unmistakable*

emotional experience was when futility flared into mutual dislike, or more correctly, hate" (pp. 87-88).

Pubertal development

When not in school and spending time at the Rhodes's farm, Bion develops a crush on Heaton's sister, Kathleen. He describes Kathy as a *"pretty girl, tall and slender. She spoke straight; she was fiery tempered"* (p. 88). He even admits to feeling sexually excited by Miss. Good in the prep school who gave him the *"wiggling feeling"* (p. 52). Later, during his last summer in the main school whilst sailing boats out on the North Norfolk coast, he develops a schoolboy crush on Mrs. Thompson who was *"beautiful"* (p. 117) but wore *"smart, frightening clothes"* (*ibid.*). However, with Kathy, his feelings seem to stem from a genuine desire to connect with someone. He is attracted to her fiery passion, being able to see the truth in things and even speak out against prevaling norms of the time. For example, she puts aside any family obligations that demand she tolerate a Mr. Philson who attends their local parish church at Standon, given he *"gabbles away"* (p. 74) spouting utter nonsense like an *"like an old cockatoo!"* (*ibid.*), despite it ruffling her parents' feathers.

Bion is particularly sensitive about his still-developing pubescent body when he first enters the main school. He notes *"anxiety at being a new boy again"* (p. 89) before going on to describe a context where he is physically less developed than the two sixth formers, the *"athletic"* (*ibid.*) Morgan (not Morgan the bully from the prep school) and his study mate Nickalls, he is chosen to be fag to. Bion quickly struggles with his duties as fag to make tea and toast, tend the fire and keep their supplies replenished. He feels incapable and often has to borrow a tin of Swiss Milk, what they called their tins of condensed or evaporated milk, from others when he has forgotten to stock up on things. This borrowing from others conveys his feeling of being ill-equipped in his pubescent body, and he notes how, *"My voice had become deep and somewhat uncontrolled. I became famous for saying "Have you any Swizz-milka?" in somewhat stereotyped and mournful tones"* (*ibid.*). He struggles to rid himself of this tag throughout his time at the main school, particularly wanting to lose the 'milka' part as it is a source of humiliation - likely felt to be connected with an infant needing its milk rather than a capable young adult. As seen previously, he

serves a function for the group of boys - the repository for unwanted parts of the self - who are all going through the ordinary struggles involved in the transition from boy to young adulthood and, in reality, develop at variable rates.

Sports as *"substitution"*

Alongside these more embarrassing memories, Bion recalls developing during puberty into an intensely competitive adolescent but also, in actuality, acquiring good physical prowess. He excels at sports - rugby, water polo and swimming - which he immerses himself in and wins the event of the school run (pp. 109 - 111). He calls his sporting endeavours *"substitution"* (p. 108) rather than *"Sublimation"* (*ibid.*) which was not yet a Freudian term noting how *"Games were substituted for sex"* (*ibid.*). He also seems to want the reader (he writes for an audience who are well aware of the Freudian term) to resist thinking these could really be sublimations given the environment's harmful effect on the boys' sexual development he wishes to emphasize.

Gaythorne-Hardy notes, *"Games tired you out"* (1977, p. 155) and *"exhaustion became an end in itself since exhaustion stops sex"* (*ibid.*). Difficulties with thinking about sexuality in boys segregated boarding schools led to headmasters at the time promoting physical exertion, such as the headmaster of United Services College proclaiming, *"My prophylactic against certain unclean microbes was to send the boys to bed dead tired"* (*ibid.*).

Bion writes that games kept his *"ghastly sexual impulses from obtruding"* (1982a, p. 108), and he notes the general practice at the time of *"preserving a fit body for the habitation of a supposedly healthy mind"* (*ibid.*). However, he writes with anger how, in reality, moral attitudes of the day *"buried the growth of the personality till it turned cancerous"* (*ibid.*). He ended up feeling that sexual impulses were *"noxious matter"* and the harmful atmosphere of the time was used, along with religion (see the sports and prayer meetings), as *"a stopper … to dam back the noxious matter till it stank"* (*ibid.*). Meg Harris Williams notes previously how religion at Bion's school functions as a *"regulator of sexual desires"* (2010, p. 11) in 'England'. Prayer meetings led by Price and Jones before cricket matches, *"asking God for a clean heart"* (Bion, 1982a, p. 96), were one way to contain the *"sexual*

orchestra" (p. 106). However, Bion sees them as rather wet and does not persist in attending after a brief experiment attending one of them.

The event of the school run (pp. 109 -111) is also bound up with competition for admiration from Colman who favours Bion's rival in the race. Colman, who I described in my chapter *Problematic Masculine Identifications*, was himself an injured sportsman said to have fallen *"from a lamp post in a boat-race night rag"* though still admired for his cricket skills (p. 111). Meg Harris Williams points out that Bion is jealous, envious and *"terrified"* (2010, p. 11) of his rival's emotional learning and connection with Colman. She says:

> The sinister nature of the run as he describes it, and his terror of his opponent, figures his own endeavour to keep down, win against, any activity which gets too close to emotional involvement; he runs not for the sake of the run, but in order to prove his self-mastery by fulfilling the category of "winning". (*ibid.*)

Despite this, Bion *"enjoyed"* (Bion, 1982a, p. 108) his sports, becoming proficient at them - everything except cricket which is, perhaps, unsurprising given his adverse experience of being beaten with stumps on *"the Mountain"* (pp. 56 - 57). Sporting activities were a useful and much-needed space at the time, given his circumstances, to put competitive feelings he was struggling with. At the same time, they did not help forge a more developed relation to himself and others or foster creativity and collaboration or otherwise. He also describes them as an important space away from the intrusion of others that provided him with some needed relief.

Main school attitudes to sex

As noted in my introduction, masturbation was the specific yet 'unnameable' sin in Farrar's now much-berated morality tale, 'Eric, or Little by Little' (1858). As Adam Roberts notes in an online essay, few books have been so *"reviled and excoriated"* (2013) as Farrar's 'Eric'.

> It has consistently earned such critical judgments as 'mawkishly false' (Vivian Ogilve), 'a preposterous book' (John Rowe Townshend), 'the sort of story Dr Arnold would have written if he'd taken to drink' (Hugh Kingsmill), 'terrible warnings, soaked in nauseously cloying piety' (Roger Lancelyn Green), 'the only book I ever wanted to lose' (Eric Ambler), 'the nightmare emanation of some morbid, introverted brain' (Edward C. Mack), 'one of the most idiotic books of the nineteenth-century' (Benny Green). The undoubted immortality of *Eric* is, then, as one historian has put it, 'an immortality of derision.' (Roberts, 2013)

Rudyard Kipling makes fun of it in his book 'Stalky & Co.' (1899), which takes a more worldly outlook to adolescent boys growing up in British boarding schools. 'Eric' epitomized the cultural panic of the age in the 1850s-1860s, where, at its worst, masturbation got canvassed as an activity that led to insanity and death. Dean Frederick Farrar sermonized,

> May every schoolboy who reads this page be warned by the waving of their wasted hands, from that burning marle of passion where they found nothing but shame and ruin, polluted affections, and an early grave. (Farrar, 1858)

Farrar does not use the word masturbation, let alone mention same-sex desire, as naming sexual activity was feared to encourage it in segregated public boys' schools. However, as a 'morally upstanding' and religious figure of the time, Farrar felt it was his duty to warn boys about the dangers of sexual activity in public schools where abuses were rife and subject of a national scandal. Putting sex front, left, right and centre on the agenda without explicitly naming it was his attempt at a solution.

Segregation is an important matter and something that had further ramifications for adolescent boys at the time (as well as the women who looked after them) who, as older adolescents/young men, went to fight in WWI. Bion references this in 'England', fast-forwarding time in the text, describing how a disturbed young soldier in his battalion distresses one of the few females they were in contact with, a matron, by saying *"fuck"* again and again (1982a, p. 107). Segregation is a running theme in 'England' with the boys sequestered from their mothers from a young age. Hirst's wife, rumoured to be away in the asylum (in Bion's mind for masturbating too much), and other masters such as Colman did not appear to have sexual relationships. No one seems able to use their potency for creative purposes (although Colman does have a mind).

Bion writes, *"We did not use the term 'masturbation', and were too 'refined' to use others available to 'rough' boys"* (p.106); the only time in 'England' he names the activity face-on. He prefers the term 'wiggling', which he uses as the eighty-year-old writer as a joke within the context of Farrar's 'that which must not be named'. Bion writes:

> In those pre-Freudian days sex, nurtured and cosseted and titillated by the segregation of boys in public schools, was a PROBLEM. At considerable expense of mental pain, money and time, this problem was then all set for solution. The machinery for its solution was by a happy coincidence, the same as that used for its creation - religion and law - so that I never

thought that religion had any other function than the regulation of my and other people's sexual activities. My increasing development ran parallel with increasing loathing and hatred of sex and religion and rules - all equally fatuous. It did not occur to me that there might be something wrong with a creator who created sex and did not allow you to exercise it till some unspecified date in the distant future, or that there was something wrong with sex and its rules. (*ibid.*)

Bion the writer does not stop short of stating the harmful impact of works like Farrar's on boys' emotional and sexual development that he sees as, tragically, contributing to their *"dying embers of sexuality"* (*ibid.*). He writes, *"Dean Farrar contributed to my suspicion of God, and my suspicion of God - "I haven't done anything; really I haven't" - gave ghastly reality to Eric's school in which the mortality should have attracted the attention of authority"* (p. 55). Similarly, *"Eric was part of the misery at school - not a good story about it"* (p. 104).

Within this context, the masters' attitudes towards sex in the main school were varied. Bion describes the approach in the school towards sex as *"Nonconformist Wholesome"* (p. 90), although it was not always considered *"a fit subject for description"* (*ibid.*). He writes,

This result was achieved, first and foremost, by keeping the school intact as a kind of gigantic sexual pressure-cooker always gently simmering away under the watchful eye of two or three masters of unimpeachable integrity and vigilance. (*ibid.*)

Boys were recruited to form a network of *"honourable spying"* (*ibid.*) designed to detect *"any escape of steam from any part of the cauldron and to report it at once to the appropriate authority"* (*ibid.*). In an atmosphere of surveillance, all sexual matters were to be reported. Bion notes that *"One house in particular was notorious for … what?"* (p. 92) (as I referenced in the introduction to this chapter), the lack of description conveying an atmosphere where things could not be talked about frankly.

He discusses various masters' approaches towards sexual matters when, to his surprise, Bion himself comes under suspicion for his sexual behaviour, this time as a developing adolescent. The music master, Tidmarsh, *"a terrifying disciplinarian"* (p. 90), gave *"cosy chats"* (*ibid.*) over a *"wonderful tea of buns, cakes, toasted scones, jam"* (*ibid.*). However, these talks were also designed to gain confessions,

although somewhat *"sympathetically"* (p. 91)[17]. Tidmarsh catches Bion off-guard once when, *"all alone"* (p.90), he asks, *"have you ever had troubles?"* (*ibid.*). Bion replies at once, *"No,"* (*ibid.*) although after a week finds the guilt all too much and asks to see Tidmarsh again and is quizzed in a peculiar manner.

> I owned up. He was very nice about it. Did I know of any other boys? This time I did not have to lie. "No", I said. Perhaps if I had it wouldn't have been so unbearable. Did it go on forever? How long did it go on? For a year or so; then it became less. I did not dare ask him how long it was before one became insane, as I felt I had pretty well exhausted my ration by this time. I thought that if I could last out the next two years I would probably have escaped. I resolved to keep a careful watch for insanity - those first awful symptoms! ... I avoided any more cosy talks; the reassurance wore off. (p. 91)

In continuing form, Bion does not name his masturbatory activity and goes on to describe his developing hatred of religion as both *"ineffectual"* (*ibid.*) and *"an obstacle to sexual pleasures"* (*ibid.*). He writes of the pain of how matters were attended to that kept his *"isolation ... unbroken"* (*ibid.*) and did not offer relief by showing him *"how general this plague must have been to us all"* (*ibid.*).

It turns out that the rather weird Tidmarsh, who Bion notes cannot swim for pleasure like the boys - rather floats in the swimming pool *"scientifically, lying with his arms stretched out, his legs stretched out, his toes peeping above the surface, the Body Beautiful itself, lying there in the middle, hairy, healthy, Holy"* (p. 92) - suddenly disappears from the school under mysterious circumstances. Bion quips, *"Poor man … Sacked? Resigned"* (*ibid.*)? He is removed, along with his sister, after years of service.

Other masters, such as Charles Mellows, react by keeping a fierce and tight rein on any hint of sex talk. Bion writes, *"Just as one felt that the time had come for a slightly soulful, faintly devlish invitation to purely platonic intimacy, he would rise up hissing through his teeth, shifting rapidly from one foot to another"* (p. 91). Another master, known as Sutton-Bobby, seems more helpful and ordinary. He *"behaved as one man talking to another; sex or other intimacies could be discussed, if anyone wanted to, in privacy"* (*ibid.*). However, he encourages other pursuits - *"In the meantime there were books to talk about, begonias to look at - he was a keen*

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[17] Gaythorne-Hardy notes, *"More and more as the 20th century progresses, kindly masters, not necessarily homosexual at all, respond sympathetically to (usually by ignoring) the desperate attempts of their pupils to come to terms with a sexually intolerable situation."* (1977, p. 164)

gardener - gramaphone records to play" (*ibid.*). Sutton-Bobby's ordinariness in these matters must have been a breath of fresh air for the boys compared to the approach of the other masters.

However, ultimately, sexual development, when bodily sensations also make high demands on the mind, is 'not on the agenda' at the school. Bion writes, poking fun at himself, how, *"In the intervals between bothering about sex, cosy sex, very rare and exciting capital SEX of the 'poison-in-the-food' variety, I played games and did work of the kind that is usually mentioned in the prospectus"* (*ibid.*, p. 93)**.** He describes sexual states of mind that do not propagate his creativity but cause further pain and exacerbate feelings of abandonment and find no resolution.   It is implicit in his account that earlier difficulties not being helped with feelings of frustration or to distinguish infantile sexuality also weigh in with a damaging impact on his adolescent sexual development. However powerful these resultant mental states are, strikingly, there remain glimpses where he retains a desire to see and observe the truth and is still alive this way.

Mary Brady observes with adolescent patients how a persistent absence of passion constitutes a psychic retreat from the developmental turbulence (2017, p. 55). One can imagine how such a state might have got propelled by the boarding school atmosphere of Bion's time, when he describes himself as only *"half-alive"* and *"half-dead"* (1982, p. 116). It is important to remember; it was not only Bion who was frightened of his sexual development but the culture and age that feared it.

Problems with Relating

Introduction to relating

Despite being surrounded by other boys during his pre/adolescent years whilst at his Hertfordshire boarding school, Bion's descriptions of himself are, overwhelmingly, of an extremely unhappy and lonely child who struggles to forge ordinary dependencies with his peer group and to make relationships. As previously discussed, his feelings of misery and loneliness are in the context of pain and despair at being separated from his family group at the age of eight, including his ayah, to attend prep school in England. In this present chapter, I explore further the grip of internal gang dynamics that Bion describes takes hold of him and consider how it is strengthened by destructive external experiences and deprivations that prevent him from forging healthier relationships during his schooldays.

The child character in the book does not think he could be angry at his mother for leaving him at the prep school. Bion notes when recalling his early years in India that she was an *"abandoned"* woman (1982a, p.19) by which Bion implies she lacked her own care, support and protection. This is the closest he gets to saying she was depressed, intimating that he always felt segregated from her to some extent, despite feeling close to her, at times, as a younger child, although things could also feel unpredictable. His ambivalent attachment to his mother is mirrored by the neglectful school environment during his pre/adolescent years and I explore here how these factors contribute to Bion's outright rejection of relating by the end of 'England' and his own abandonment to *"lying"* (p. 16 & pp. 44-45). Via revisiting some material, I consider the format of 'the lie' which is in reaction to painful truths and the difficult reality of his situation. I explore how and why a healthier part of him is seduced by its propaganda.

Bion's experiences with his peers (they also feel persecuted by infantile fears of not belonging and the absence of their mothers) serve to heighten his feelings of terror and abandonment, especially in the initial period at the prep school. In this chapter, I particularly attempt to draw out the nature of some of his peer relationships which I think Bion makes available to the reader in his text with unstated insight. I examine why no creative groupings become established, even when he stays over

at his friends' homes during holiday breaks and there is both respite from his miserable experiences at the school and the provision of some care from his friends' mothers, Mrs. Rhodes and Mrs. Hamilton. I consider to what extent his portraits of Mrs. Rhodes and Mrs. Hamilton are superficial, and how the only relation that seems to bring real relief to him is Heaton's sister, Kathy, with her courage and ability to talk frankly about how things are and to voice truths, even when it is a risky business to do so. Initially, I wondered if my examination of the text in this chapter would lead me to conclude that the presence of these respite mother figures allows for the development of healthy peer relationships. However, I found this not to be the case as my analysis progressed.

In my previous chapter 'Problematic Masculine Identifications', I described the devastating kind of machismo prevalent at his friend Heaton Rhodes's farm. I focus here on the incredibly destructive play that occurs at his other friend, John Dudley Hamilton's home, where the boys' games pervade with sadism, boredom, and even suicidality. I referred to these games before but now explore them in more detail and through the lens of ganging. I discuss, as Meg Harris Williams argues previously, whether the boys' games at the Hamilton's home play out phantasized attacks on the mother's body and raids on her *"secret hideout"* (2010, p.12). I also make use of psychoanalytic theory on internal gangings, including Donald Meltzer's concept of a claustrum (1992) - a claustrophobic space inside the internal mother -, to attempt to understand further the constellation Bion is referring to when he talks about 'the lie'.   I propose that these games need to be thought about in terms of pre/pubescent boys struggling with the emotional consequences of their growing bodies.

Following that, I further explore Bion's descriptions of being fag to two sixth formers once he joins the main school (Bion, 1982a, pp. 89-90). I mentioned fagging in my chapter on sexuality but wish to bring into focus here how it is a hierarchical form of relationship occurring during adolescence, a developmental stage when dependencies start to shift and change due to realities, including their physical development, that are outside of their control. I also consider how it was canvassed as offering an opportunity for boys in segregated public schools to belong, something that Bion rejects outright.

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Finally, during his last summer break before he leaves the school, I discuss how the grip of the lie closes further in on Bion as he falls for Mrs. Thompson who, it is apparent, is actually *"frightening"* (p.117). He rejects investing in any relationships with the other boys staying at the Thompsons, choosing not to work together with them or engage in comradery as they sail out at sea and on the Norfolk Broads (pp. 116-117). Rather, I observe how he attempts to manage his hated needs for dependencies that being part of a group exposes to him, in a contemptuous manner, by telling himself he prefers to be alone - a disaster situation - and, worse still, that it is possible to live that way. He can only seem to bear to find the time to relate to others in mindless activities such as smoking a pipe with his rival for Mrs. Thompson, Laurie Lawn. The world of peer-group relationships is lost to him at the developmental stage when it is vital to develop them.

Group life in adolescence

Whilst some of Bion's experiences were emotionally extreme and a grimy product of his time, in psychoanalytic theory, more ordinary separations from the immediate family group are usual and, indeed, important during adolescent development. At this juncture, peer groups form a necessary and, what can be a, vitalizing mezzanine structure on the way to young adulthood from which to experience Lawrence's *"hour of the stranger"* (1923, p.102). This is the hour where unfamiliar feelings are encountered, as turbulent emotional development occurs alongside *"destabilizing"* (Tabbia, 2017, p.95) physical upheaval and change. With a peer group, there is *"safety-in-numbers"* (Waddell, 2018, p.79) to experience these puzzling new states that are not simply uncontrollable hormonal surges. They are the emotional responses to increasing separation from parents and developing physical capabilities for which internal resources have not yet been established.

Drawing on Bion's own terminology (1982a), Margot Waddell describes the importance of such groupings; how they have a *"positive exo-skeletal function"* as they hold turbulence together whilst an endoskeleton or *"internal backbone"* is built (2018, p. 79*)*. How successfully an adolescent negotiates processes of separation from the family group at this stage is influenced by the availability of thoughtful authority figures in the external such as a mother, father, teacher or otherwise, as

well as the quality of internal resources established earlier in childhood (Canham, 2002, p.100). It will also, uniquely in adolescence, given the new weight peers acquire, be affected more and more by the prevalent state of mind of one's peer group. These factors are largely outside the individual's control, although there is an interplay and sometimes a choice to be made. The adolescent can decide which peer group she/he wishes to hang out with (although it may be the options are limited).

The structure of group life, when there is 'safety-in-numbers', can help protect all members of the group from *"fears of isolation"* that accompany the *"confusion"* of *"new and bewildering feelings that can frequently accost the young teenager with a sense of being unlike the others"* (Waddell, 2018, p. 79*)*. For example, the child psychotherapist and psychoanalyst, Gianna Williams, describes eloquently the way her struggling seventeen-year-old patient, Julia, becomes available to healthy peer relationships that recognize her sensitivities, when she allows them to act as a link to support the to and fro movement – her shifting adolescent dependencies – between her peer and family groups, as and when she needs one or the other (1997, pp.51-54). Julia avoids succumbing to the grip of a gang-like structure by allowing her friend, John, to take her safely to and from a party, acting as a, *"caring older brother who [also] takes seriously Julia's mother's request to look after her"* (p. 54).

The addictive grip of 'ganging'

The alternative to group life and creative groupings is 'ganging', a distinction I described in my chapter 'The Prevalence of Bullying'. The resurgence of infantile fears fueled by the 'hour of the stranger' is one critical factor in the proliferation of gangs at this stage of development.

Psychoanalytic theory understands ganging as the expression of a destructive internal situation. Gianna Williams (*ibid.*) describes the tyrannical quality of these internal gangings, noting, after Rosenfeld, how the members of the internal gang include a dictatorial gang *"leader"* (Rosenfeld, 1971, p.174) who cracks a whip (Williams, 1997, p.52) whenever vulnerabilities are sensed. This gang leader's function is always to pull rank when other internal figures become momentarily more open to allowing relationships - for example, when healthy contacts are made that

acknowledge ordinary dependencies amidst the emotional and physical upheaval of the developmental stage. Problematically, these dynamics also have the quality of an *"addiction"* (Joseph, 1982, p.451) with their ever-tightening grip on the personality. Williams notes that you cannot leave the mafia by simply stating, *"I am frightened, I want to get away"* (1997, p. 56). John Steiner describes how it is, in fact, a healthier part of the personality that colludes in being taken over by a narcissistic gang and that it is *"misleading"* to assume that only an *"innocent"* part of the self is caught up with the malevolent organization (1982, pp. 242-243).

Williams (1997, pp. 54-59) details the early stages of treatment of another patient, a sixteen-year-old boy, Pekka, who is bound up in cruel, sadomasochistic relationships with boyfriends and girlfriends. She notes that his attempts to sustain relationships have been abandoned and he has begun to take refuge in a narcissistic structure. Pekka is helped during the course of psychoanalytic treatment to release himself from the grip of the gang which gets replaced by *"painful reactions to separation and feelings of despair about reparation being impossible"* (p. 61). Williams notes how, in Pekka's case, the genesis of the gang's formation is in response to the pain of bearing depressive anxieties that feel too much - anxieties which she hypothesizes did not find sufficient containment in his early childhood (pp. 61-62).

The impact of anxiety and deprivation

Hamish Canham writes about the impact of early deprivations and failed early experiences of containment. He was particularly known for his work with children in care. In my earlier chapter on bullying, I mention how, with the example of Golding's novel, 'Lord of the Flies', Canham notes that deterioration to ganging occurs in the absence of parental figures (2002*, p.92)*. He says, *"Anxiety is often experienced as a threat and the need to identify someone to blame for this feeling can be extremely powerful"* (p. 100). The boys are drawn into the gang state by Jack, the gang leader, who cannot bear to know about his feelings of vulnerability - feelings all the boys are flooded with when they crash-land onto an island with no adult survivors. Canham observes that the only two boys who make any significant reference to their families have an ability *"to keep alive a sense of helpful, loving parental figures that sustains*

[them]" (p.93) - namely, Piggy with his insight who represents thinking and keeping thought alive (but is killed off) and Ralph who struggles with both the lure of the gang and his wish to keep on thinking.

Canham (p. 100) also emphasizes the role of internal perceptions. Who children think they are with is rarely an accurate picture of real external figures. It is more often a seriously skewed version as perceptions are coloured by phantasy. However, where children feel the presence of figures in authority *"maintain a thoughtful and considerate attitude towards all those for whom they have responsibility [this] inclines people towards grouping rather than ganging"* (*ibid.*). Who anxious groups of children feel they are in the presence of, or away from, is, therefore, key to understanding how they respond in situations.

Ganging is seen as more likely to occur where there are various deprivations. External deprivations have an impact on the internal. Canham wrote,

> Deprivation often means a deficit in opportunities for the introjection of helpful
> and benign internal figures. When deprivation is coupled with abuse it often
> leads … to a defensive internal manoeuvre designed to distance the ego from
> the pain of what it has been through." (pp. 100-101)

This 'double deprivation' (Williams, 1997) for neglected children, where external deprivations lead to internal ones, may mean that children who have suffered abuse and neglect are more likely to incline towards ganging in stressful situations than their peers. This is because access to good authority figures on the inside may be less available to them

Abandonment to a lie: the *other mother*

Donald Meltzer conceptualized 'the claustrum' (1992) in which he details the geography of different phantasized spaces inside the body of the maternal object that are intruded into in moments when despair leads to an impulse to obliterate the awareness of helplessness and vulnerability. These spaces are head/breast, genital and rectal. On the inside, the good qualities that exist on the outside, and in the world of relatedness, are no longer present. In the head/breast compartment, the helpful qualities of the mind and breast get distorted as *"arrogance, self-serving indulgence, lavish display[s] of pseudo-generosity, and a know-it-all interest in status and possession"* (Sorensen, 2017, p. 178). Feelings associated with being separate

cannot be tolerated. The genital compartment canvases sex as *"entertainment verging on perversity"* and, *"There is a constant fear of treachery and abuse"* but also *"a total absence of mystery and creativity"* (*ibid.*). The rectal compartment is a phantasized space of the most extreme omnipotence where rank and lies reign. Survival at all other costs is the only thing of value but comes with a constant, nagging dread of being cast out for a reckoning with a phantasized, sadistic paternal object felt to rule the world (pp. 178 - 179).

The claustral phantasy is defensive and used when ordinary containing processes have not been available early on. It is also addictive despite its vulgarity. Intrusive projective identification is accompanied by secret masturbatory phantasies that propel entry into the object in a damaging way. There may be short-term relief in taking up residence in the maternal object this way, but there is the risk of long-term enslavement to tyranny (pp. 176 - 179) and the losses of ever knowing a separate existence and getting to develop a mind of one's own.

Pamela Sorensen (2017) points out how claustral phenomena can be observed in the popular children's novella 'Coraline' by Neil Gaiman (2002). 'Coraline' is the story of a prepubescent girl who is very angry with her parents following a move to a new home. She is cross that her mother is busy with the work she does with her father, a seed catalogue business, and not available to help settle her in. Feeling that there is nothing good on offer from her mother, Coraline starts exploring the rather arid landscape away from her home. Late at night, *"when dreams conspire to reveal emotional truth"* (Sorensen, 2017, p. 180), she is led to discover a door, an opening to another world - *"the claustral world of the other mother where … [she] is treated as the special child she longs to be"* (*ibid.*) and offered everything she could possibly want, including a bottomless supply of delicious foods. *"There is only one hitch. In exchange for being the idealized and spoiled daughter of the 'other mother and father' she must agree to allow them to replace her eyes with buttons"* (*ibid.*). Buttons cannot see and, in a world where the sight of reality is unavailable, there can be *"no authentic connection between two people, which necessarily includes ambivalence, both love and hate, only the flat acquiescence to the lie of idealization"* (*ibid.*). At first hesitant, Coraline is tempted by this lie and begins to spiral further down the chute into a *"delusional world of the other mother"*

(*ibid.*) where phantasies begin to *"rev up"* the *"manic conviction"* of being *"in possession and command"* (*ibid.*) of all the treasures of the mother's body. *"Her projections become so powerful that they threaten to wipe out her memory of being loved as she is"* by her real parents (p. 181). She also rejects the potential friendship on offer from a new peer in her neighbourhood, Whybie, in a dismissive way and arrogant way, despite the possibilities it holds for companionship and comradery. Notwithstanding her dangerous escapades into the world of the *other mother*, in Coraline's case she *"begins to look again for her real, though imperfect parents"* (*ibid.*) as it becomes clear to her that things are not what they profess to be in the delusionary world. Ultimately, she is able to tolerate her parents' unavailability for a time, which one can hypothesize may be due to the good enough experiences of containment she is likely to have received early on.

Interlude: **Bion's early family group**

Bion's early development was disturbed, as I discussed in my chapter 'Sexuality and Censorship'. I include a fuller description here that details the quality of relationships in his early, and now absent, family group, as I wish to emphasize his early foundations' fragility.

His sister, Edna, younger by three years, was his father's favourite, with Bion closer to his mother. He loved his mother, although he states at the very beginning of the book that he was *"perhaps more fond of [his ayah] than of our parents"* (1982a, p. 13) – a circumstance that led him to feel conflicted. Indeed, he immediately retracts this initial musing by stating, *"On second thoughts, perhaps not"* (*ibid.).*

He describes his mother as *"a little frightening"* - a word he is often found to use about women in 'Weekend' - and *"peculiar"* (*ibid.).* He recalls, *"it felt queer if she picked me up and put me on her lap, warm safe and comfortable. Then suddenly cold and frightening …"* (*ibid.*). His mother seemed *"puzzled"* by him too, as well as confused by his constant questions and pronounced curiosity as a young child, which his father would *"tire"* of easily (p. 14). Neither parent was able to *"satisfy"* his inquisitive mind (p. 13). Despite his love for his mother - he associates her with fertile green hills - he ultimately recoils from her for abandoning him to the cultural norms of the time (leaving him at boarding school in England) and being unable to

hold firm in relation to truth (p. 19). For example, whilst travelling to England by boat, on the way to his new life at Public School, Bion notices her understandably wavering state and asks her, *"Moth-er! You aren't sad are you?"* to which she replies, brushing things off, *"Well, why should I be sad?"* (p. 28). She is neither able to acknowledge her own state nor help Bion with his. She cannot put words to the impending separation or recognize the vastness of its emotional impact.

Whilst his mother was able at times to say, *"I don't know what to do with the boy,"* his father was even less able to sign up to emotional truth (*ibid.*, p. 15*)*. He could look *"fiercely"* at the young Bion and *"burst"* into stormy rages that involved physical chastisement (*ibid.*). As I mentioned twice before, once, he invited Bion *"kindly and patiently on his lap"* to offer him the opportunity to explain why he had hurt his sister before quickly becoming frustrated and turning him *"bottom up"* to give him *"a good beating"* (*ibid.).*

Bion the child is nonetheless interested in his father's sexuality, noting how his eyes would be *"fixed at his watch chain swaying at his waistcoat"* (p. 17). The eighty-year-old writer also suggests a rather dazzling quality to his father's sexuality when his father buys him an electric train for his birthday (p. 18), as I detailed in previous chapters. Furthermore, the child Bion does seem to desire that his parents link up in his mind asking his father whether *"Electric City"* is *"Green like the other one"* (*ibid.*) although, sadly, his father rebukes him for talking nonsense. Harris Williams points out previously how Bion is not helped to push childhood fantasy through to thought with such dismissals (2010, p. 7).

There is some sense, as Harris Williams also notes, that his parents wish him to develop along the lines of his father's sexuality by buying him the train (p. 8). His father was a relatively *"higher paid"* engineer and noted *"fine shot"* who hunted *"Big Game"* (Bion, 1982a, p. 21). However, Bion seems a disappointment to him when his father sees his own leanings are towards the Indian bearer who smears ghee on the train when it breaks, setting it down in the hot sun to fix it (p. 22) as well as to his much-loved ayah. Bion's narrative implies that his difficulties forming healthy groupings once he arrives in England are inextricably coloured by his parents' rejection of his character early on, which is different to theirs as he is his own unique being.

Multiple deprivations

These early deprivations had a lasting impact on Bion and it is in this emotional state that he makes the voyage from India to England. Upsettingly, staff at Bion's boarding school – the authority figures he needs to rely on in his parents' and ayah's absence - are neglectful and caught up in a *"web of undirected menace"* (Bion, 1982a, p.59). His first experiences with peers are traumatic although there is also some provision available to him from staff, peers and, notably, his friends' parents at other times.

At the prep school, Bion and his peers are required just to get on with it despite what we now understand as adolescents' ordinary needs for parental figures to be actively involved in their emotional development. The movement between peer and family groups seen in the case of Williams's patient, Julia, is not possible within such a climate. This process is also complicated by boarding school mentality, and the differences between the child who goes home to parents at the end of the day compared to the boarder (Schaverien, 2015).

There is a further deprivation, this time on the inside, as Bion describes becoming good at lying. 'The lie' is the powerful unconscious propaganda he falls prey to that persuades him to retreat into an *"exo-skeletonous sheath"* (Bion, 1982a, p. 61). It is a narcissistic structure – one where relationships are entirely rejected and there is no solidarity or potential for safety-in-numbers with peers. This exo-skeletonous form professes to shield him from the pain and despair of traumatic situations that occur. There is an absence of the mezzanine structure provided by peers that can be so helpful during adolescence. Ultimately, 'the lie' deprives him of experiencing more run of the mill depressive anxieties involved in any ordinary adolescent process, and it stunts his development.

The beginning of 'the lie'

I discussed the eight-year-old Bion's arrival at the prep school in my chapter 'The Prevalence of Bullying', when I explored the interplay and impact on him of victim-perpetrator-bystander dynamics and traced how his own stark capacities to inflict cruelty on others began to protrude. I revisit this initial event here in order to consider how it affects his capabilities to relate with the other boys.

To remind the reader, when left at the school by his mother, Bion is interrogated by a gang of boys that pulls tightly together to defend against the painful aspect of themselves that Bion represents and they cannot bear to know about - how they have all been left by their mothers (*ibid.*, pp. 43 -44). Bion is stripped by the other students of any capacity to make an informed choice as to where he might belong in his new surroundings as he is given no reference to what A and B are - two school houses. He is accused of being a liar when he is forced to make a guess. They do not allow Bion to experience any sense or potential to belong in the school, only terrorize him, when, in fact, any house system is supposed to exist to foster belonging (p. 44). His peers, were they more group minded in this encounter, could have offered him some sense of welcome and belonging amongst themselves too.

What happens next is telling of a rather different situation that exists with his peers, when the gang dissipates. Perhaps as it is bedtime, but also a less exposed circumstance, the young boys momentarily permit themselves to be more in touch with their ordinary need for their mothers, their needs to be comforted and put safely to bed. There is at least one boy able to access internal objects who care, i.e., good internal parents.   This boy is even able to allow a thought that Bion might miss his mother - a wholly different situation to the earlier gang state of mind where thought was too threatening. Bion is able to tell the kindly boy, momentarily, that he is indeed feeling terribly homesick (*ibid.*).

In this present chapter, I wish to point out the whip that can be heard to crack in his own mind when the kindly boy asks him if he is homesick. There is an internal gang leader that pulls rank immediately, refusing to allow Bion any vulnerability, and he changes his mind hurriedly, saying, *"No, B"* (*ibid.*). Second, Bion is very identified with his *"abandoned"* (p. 19) and abandoning mother, bound up like her in a web of undirected menace he cannot disentangle himself from. He writes,

> I learned to treasure that blessed hour when I could get into bed, pull the bedclothes over my head and weep. As my powers of deception grew I learned to weep silently till at last I became more like my mother who was *not* laughing, and was *not* crying. (p. 44)

This is what Bion rightly calls the beginnings of 'the lie' that starts to close in on him. With the lie, access to good internal objects on the inside, and in consequence on the outside too (the contact he could have had with the kindly boy), is quenched.

Not only has he been left by his mother, but, in turn, he also abandons her on the inside.

Between respite and denigration

As I have described in previous chapters, Bion's stays with his friends' families over the school holidays provide him with some respite from the pain and hardship at the prep school. These stays make his life more bearable as he receives some warmth and care from his friends' two mothers, Mrs. Rhodes and Mrs. Hamilton, his *"spring to my prep school winter"* (p. 66), who are also generous in looking after him. Within these circumstances, one might expect Bion and his friends to incline more towards grouping. However, Bion seems only to communicate a felt sense of obligation within these friendships. The relationships he strikes with his Heaton Rhodes, John Dudley Hamilton and their siblings are observed to contain a lack of creativity and, concerningly, destructive themes quickly begin to emerge. It is important to consider why.

I discussed Bion's arrival at the Rhodes's farm and the perverse induction he receives from the *"hard-bitten"* (p. 64) Heaton in my earlier chapter. The activities that Heaton and Bion engage in, mostly in their duo of two but sometimes alongside the oldest girls, Kathleen, Faith, Mercy (there are also five *"lesser"* siblings *"too numerous to be bothered with"* (p. 68)] do not really feel possible to call play. Rather, and as described in my chapter *Problematic Masculine Identifications,* Bion is impelled by Heaton to admire the gigantic shire-horse, Prince (*ibid.*), to watch a pig be slaughtered (pp. 69-70), and he is set up to fail as he seeks to help out in the episode of Curly the cow (pp. 70-71). As well as the harmful type of masculinity that is canvassed at the Rhodes's, the 'hour of the stranger' is projected into the landscape and livestock which contain frightening depictions of violence and sexuality. The chance to experience an adolescence is almost entirely quashed by the farmstead's bruising macho culture.

In striking contrast to this, Bion describes the figure of Mrs. Rhodes as *"plump and motherly with great dignity and capacity for affection" (*p. 68) and that she has *"genuine concern for others"* (p. 78) with a sense of social responsibilities. She plays the harmonium in church in an amusing manner – *"not a smooth performer"* (p. 75)

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– that keeps singers holding their notes whilst she searches for the next one. This connects with Bion's fond memories of his own mother, who also plays the instrument, the moments he felt comfortable as a younger child on her lap in India.

The boys gorge furiously on Mrs. Rhodes's food as they arrive back from the prep school. They communicate their starved states to her, and she proclaims how she can tell Bion has arrived before she sees him by the state of the larder (p. 69). However, at Christmas time both boys communicate their unsatiated needs in more unpleasant ways by significantly overeating before a main Christmas meal with friends and relatives of the Rhodes's, making themselves *"very ill"* (p. 77). They relieve themselves in the lavatories which they try to keep hidden from her, the episode giving Bion a *"sense of impending death"* that makes him wish for his actual mother (*ibid.*).

Alongside this, Mrs. Rhodes also is described as not to be reckoned with. Heaton's desire to separate from his younger self is notable in the way he dismisses his younger brothers and sisters contemptuously, as well as in his rejection of his mother's authority that is helpfully tempered by her. Bion writes that she *"could not be so easily dismissed even by Heaton"* (p. 68). However, for himself, the process of separation is more difficult being away from his parents. Mrs. Rhodes asks after Bion's parents, who he says he has *"forgotten"*. The eighty-year-old writer understands the reality was that *"thinking of them was inseparable from homesickness"* (*ibid.*). It is interesting to note how, at this point in the text, Bion describes his mother and sister, who have returned to India, as a *"nuisance"* (*ibid.*) and merely the cumbersome source of having to write a letter once a week. He seems to insert this memory to convey how he cannot separate from his family in an ordinary way as he feels dutiful and anxious about his wish to be free of them. Whilst Mrs. Rhodes maintains her authority, it is difficult for Bion to feel he can engage more fully with her whilst in her care - it is temporary only - and he clearly resents her asking after his parents, it being too painful.

Bion also notes Mrs. Rhodes has a *"frightening"* (p. 74) quality - the term he uses to describe his earliest memories of his mother. He is puzzled by her too, noting how *"the tender feelings which I expected between mother and child took no form that I could recognize in her contact either with her sons or her daughters"* (p.

88). Something does not feel quite right. Whilst Mrs. Rhodes asks after his mother; she does not appear to possess an ability to talk in a frank or sympathetic manner about his situation (or, for that matter, challenge the phallic form of masculinity widespread on the farm), something that would be against the prevailing culture. Mrs. Rhodes, despite her good qualities, seems caught in the pervasive duality that Bion encounters in his world.

On the other hand, Heaton's sister, Kathy, has life-injecting qualities, as mentioned previously. She is able to see the truth coupled with near reckless courage to voice it, for which she is sequestered. However, her existence provides Bion with enormous relief and a prototype for conceptualizing events more accurately. He notes Kathy's *"flushed face and sparkling eyes I could understand"* and how she spoke *"straight"* (p. 88). For example, and as described in the previous chapter, Kathleen has the courage to question the family's tradition of making a begrudged and dutiful journey every Sunday to the parish church where a Mr. Philson is a *"fool"* who *"gabbers away ... like an old cockatoo!,"* (p. 74) for which she is *"denounced"* (*ibid.*) by Mrs. Rhodes and sent to her bedroom for the rest of the day. Kathy is the only character who Bion clearly seems to want to relate to, although he feels he lacks the courage to do so. He believes she is out of his reach and is too humiliated by what he feels is his inadequate state. She is also a rare encounter during his recollections in the section 'England'.

At Archer Hall, where the Hamiltons live, Bion becomes more involved with the malevolent organization, joining Dudley and his younger brothers, Stewart and Colin, in destructive games that are at times sadistic and cruel, and, alarmingly, increasingly dangerous. Bion says aptly, commenting on their lack of creativity, that *"we did not, or could not, play"* (*ibid.*, p.85). During their activities, it is invariably the youngest and most helpless boy, Colin, who suffers the most. Mrs. Hamilton is described as always having a *"sparkle and smile in her eye"* (p. 82). He seems fond of her and experiences a feeling of relief in her presence. However, her enthusiasm for Bion begins to run dry as events at Archer Hall unfold, largely due to the boys' behaviour, and Bion begins to feel burdensome - she already has three sons of her own.

The boys spend a lot of time in the garden using the gardener's flower pots to lure the cat underneath, make it agitated, and then smash and chase it around the garden. They call this cruel game their *"otter hunts"* (p. 80), a reference to Kenneth Grahame's 'The Wind in the Willows' (1908). The game degenerates further with attempts to catch Colin the same way as the cat, coming to an end only when the gardener complains about his misused pots rather than the potential harm to poor Colin. Another activity is to smear twigs with lime with the intent of catching a bird, something they read about in a popular boys' magazine of the time called 'Chums'. One day, to their surprise, they have success with the instructions, catching a bird and proceeding to kill it, cook it and eat the poor thing, pronouncing the meal both *"revolting"* and *"delicious"* (Bion, 1982a, p. 81). There are hints that Mr. and Mrs. Hamilton and their staff are aware of these more unpleasant activities, yet there is no sense that the children's games are ever understood as a communication of their states of minds or that they receive help with their destructiveness.

Without external prohibition and understanding, the boys' games become progressively more troubling. They buy toy brass cannons which they stuff with firecrackers and magazines before lighting them in the attic, almost setting the house on fire. They are discovered by the cook and *"scared housemaid"* (p. 84) who seems much more in touch with the boys' disturbance. Colin, whose matches they use, is called a *"dirty little sneak"* for nearly giving the game away, shouting *"my matches!"* (*ibid.*) and Mrs. Hamilton only now seems to show *"the first signs of her declining sense of humour"* (*ibid.*). In a near-suicidal act, the boys then secretly construct an aeroplane from the gardener's bamboo canes with a view to launching it off the roof. Colin, who has become suspicious and 'non-compliant' declines to be the crash test dummy this time, leaving Dudley, Stewart and Bion to attempt to fly it themselves. However, they are caught last minute for being up on the roof and, fortunately, prevented from doing so. The grown-ups, who up until now have failed to spot the boys' escalating destructiveness, finally appear seriously concerned, and Mrs. Hamilton explains that their activity could have killed or badly injured the three of them (pp. 84 - 85).

The event elicits feelings of closeness between Mrs. Hamilton and her sons, worried she could have lost them, but only leads Bion to feel more homesick, burdensome and a liability (p. 85). He seems to feel rejected by Mrs. Hamilton but unable to communicate his wish to be consoled like Dudley. He recalls how at least Mrs. Rhodes had been upset when Freddie Sexton, the boy in his dormitory, died (*ibid.*), conveying how outside of the grown-ups minds he feels.

Although recognized as serious, the dangerous aeroplane game seems to be brushed aside in the manner of "*oh, that!*" (p. 73) when a young farmhand killed himself up at Munden near the Rhodes's farm. There is a failure to understand the boys' destructiveness and desperate need for containment. This leads the boys, increasingly bored and frustrated, to dig a cubicle hole in the grounds' orchard, big enough for four (although they kick Colin out), with a small fireplace in one wall and roof over the top, which they call their 'house'. Mr. Hamilton, who comes to look at their work, then orders it to be filled in by staff on the farm without discussion as it doubles as a mantrap for workers in the orchard (pp. 85 - 86). There remains neither any frank conversation from adults about the boys' states nor understanding of their need for instruction and supervision. Feeling increasingly bored, Bion wastes around and smokes cigarettes with Dudley, mindlessly and in secret, in the adjacent field.

Meg Harris Williams previously interprets the boys' play here as acting out *"the theme of destruction of the mother's body or raiding its secret hideout"* (2010, p.12) – an intrusive mode of entry into the object. It is my view that the increasingly physical games the boys pursue as they enter adolescence also provides a clue to the things they are struggling with. Their games could have seriously injured their developing bodies. Their exploits seem to include attempts to rid themselves of their infantile bodies by smashing out of them and convey phantasies they could catch a man's body by ensnaring and incorporating it. Attempts to evade the pains of adolescence and being seen by adults in the pre/pubescent bodies they actually have are unacknowledged. Their activities are also a precursor to awkward experiences of being seen, developing at different rates as boys do, in the main school.

Whilst Bion the writer clearly wishes to note he felt some much-needed respite on the farm. However, how much he thinks he was actually helped by the figures of Mrs. Rhodes and Mrs. Hamilton remains unclear. Bion, full of deprivation, conveys he inhabited a claustral state as a child, losing touch with important realities. He describes finding it very difficult to forge healthy friendships with the boys and to play creatively, although the other boys seem to struggle with this too. Notably, just like his mother, there are no descriptions of these female figures' faces. How much he was actually able to see them for the figures they were as a child is not entirely clear from the text, although he felt grateful for their respite.

Fagging: power-based relationship or opportunity to belong?

As discussed in my chapter on sexuality, Bion is fag to two older boys when he joins the senior school – an *"athletic"* sixth former called Morgan and his *"brainy"* study mate, Nickalls (p. 89). 'Fagging' was a public school practice established during the days of British Empire and still a common occurrence in the Edwardian era. Jane Hamlett notes how *"schools … worked to create a specifically masculine form of domesticity"* (2019, p. 79) with the fagging system, in a situation where boys were distanced *"from the world of home, domesticity, femininity and women"* (*ibid.*). It involved the personal servitude of a younger child to older boys that mirrored the class-laden practice of having servants. Boys performed *"mundane domestic tasks ... often imagined in terms of the chivalric service ideal" (ibid.)*. It was established on the premise that the older boys should maintain order but also protect and ensure the happiness of their young 'fags'. It did not start to phase out until well after WWII and, like other hierarchical relationships, was often prone to abuses, including sexual abuse (see for example, Gathorne-Hardy, 1977), although not always. Fagging has some similarities to the more contemporary practice of 'hazing' in the United states, which Lauren Dundes points out is rife for segregated adolescent boys' projected attempts to enslave a female[18] (2002).

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[18] Somewhat similar to 'fagging', 'hazing' is a practice in the United States where new college students get perversely inducted into a 'fraternity', invariably through highly sexualized and humiliating initiations involving infantilization and feminization that they are forced to endure. The practice has now been banned in many states. With hazing the focus professes to be more on gaining acceptance into a 'brotherhood' run by the older students.

Fagging raises issues of belonging and possession, including who belongs to whom. It perpetuated the destructive mentality of Empire days when Britain felt it had a right, even duty, to conquer and rule over other countries. Given its practice involved younger boys who were more clearly pre/pubescent, it is also interesting to think whether its conception sought to control unbearable feelings. The 'hour of the stranger' associated with pubertal development must still have been palpable for the older boys. It is questionable whether it had the potential to offer a helpful sense of belonging and looking after in the particular and, at times, peculiarly difficult environment of segregated boys' schools.

Bion notes his more overt *"symptoms of puberty"* and the *"pains of adolescence"* (1982a, p. 89) as he becomes fag to Morgan and Nickalls. He eschews any interest in gaining acceptance in contrast to his friend, Heaton, who he feels has the *"push and drive"* to become a *"capable fag"* (*ibid.*) and therefore finds belonging. Feelings of shame and embarrassment associated with pubertal development that I described in the previous chapter leave him feeling entirely unlike Morgan who he sees as *"alert and efficient"* (*ibid.*). He struggles with his duties and ends up getting sacked after two terms by his pair. However, he seems to seek this out, rejecting any opportunity for belonging, despite recognizing that being fag *"had its privileges"* (*ibid.*) and advantages which Heaton seems to thrive on. Worse still, he has begun to believe he prefers being on his own.

Sailing away from the group

The eighty-year-old Bion observes his equipment was 'bankrupt' (p. 115) nearing the end of the section 'England'*.* Looking back, he realizes he had all but divorced himself from the world of relationships by that time.

With his experiences sailing with other boys, whilst staying on the Norfolk Broads during his final summer at school, a treacherous solution to his self-contempt and hated needs for dependencies that being part of a group exposes is concretized - a situation where he triumphs over difficulties with relating by telling himself he *prefers* to be alone (pp. 116 - 117). This also masks his emerging false belief that it is possible to live a life without relationships and dependencies. It occurs whilst in the care of the emotionally hardened neighbouring school master, Thompson, and

his wife, Mrs. Thompson, who Bion develops an adolescent crush on, as mentioned in my chapter 'Problematic Masculine Identifications'. She is described as *"frightening"* (*ibid.*, p. 117), yet he finds her seductive, even though she seems to want to encourage the possibility of his running off to join the army. Indeed, she says she cannot understand why a *"great big boy"* like him has not done so already (*ibid.*). 'The lie' has completely taken hold of him by now, and his conduct is powerfully weighted towards not relating and not fitting in with his peers.

Time with the Thompsons is spent boating on the river Debden and out at sea. He feels hated by Master Thompson, who canvasses perverse ideals of masculinity that leave Bion feeling *"soft"* and *"feminine"* (*ibid.*). Bion writes how he actually *"liked being up at bow working the foresheet while icy cold seas broke over them" (ibid.*), in common with the other boys who liked the adventure. However, he is *"determined … not be in debt to that hateful old fool"* and tells himself he likes it *"because nobody was there except myself alone"* (*ibid.).* He cannot seem to risk being in debt to a couple that provides some opportunity to experience relationships and experience adventure, using his hatred of their fault lines and imperfections as a reason not to relate. He probably presents himself as rude and unpleasant.

Bion cannot manage ordinary competitive rivalries for Mrs. Thompson, present with Laurie Lawn, who is staying over for the holidays and is favoured for being *"manly and scruffy"* (*ibid.*). However, he also recalls how he and Laurie *"put aside" (ibid.*) their school caps on their last day, replacing them with sailing caps, and under cover of some bushes smoke *"two brand new pipes ... admitting … [it was] better than fiddling around and doing nothing in particular"* (*ibid.*). Following a moment of contact, Bion feels compelled to move away by taking a stroll and Laurie, *"damn him, agreed with alacrity and offered, almost insisted, on coming with me. It was the last straw; war, pipes, Grand Fleet, Mrs. Thompson – they could all be at the bottom of the sea for all I cared"* (*ibid.*). Devastatingly, at the end of his schooldays, he cannot tolerate the possibility of developing a relationship. He has become enslaved to 'the lie', catalyzed by the prevalent attitudes (and actions) at the time, leaving him with no access to any version of a softer, receptive mother, only the hard rear.

Conclusion

Initial aims of the thesis revisited and developmental trajectory

When I began this project, I planned to inquire, "*What has Bion's 'The Long Weekend' to contribute to the child psychotherapist's understanding of adolescent states of mind?*" I wondered if, by examining the text in the section 'England' methodically, I would learn more about the nature of disturbed adolescent states of mind, something I was interested in exploring because of the clinical work I was engaged in at the time and, subsequently, retained my interest. I was attracted to Meg Harris Williams's idea (2012) that psychoanalysis (or self-analysis, particularly the type that is enabled after a sufficient period in analysis) has analogies to autobiography (p. 398). I thought it likely, given Bion's credibility and standing in the field of psychoanalysis, that my chosen text would provide me with a reliable research source. I also envisaged that the project would offer me an opportunity to develop my knowledge of existing psychoanalytic theories on adolescence. I imagined I would need to draw on these understandings in order to help me think about the material I had chosen to explore.

I began the analysis phase of my research by undertaking multiple readings of 'Weekend'. I focused especially on the section 'England' that describes Bion's difficult experiences at his Hertfordshire boarding school, where he stayed for ten years and developed, physically, from a small, pre-pubescent eight-year-old to an older teenager with a distinctive athleticism. I arrived at several main themes: 'bullying', 'masculinity', 'sexuality', and 'groups/maternal absence'. As stated in my 'Introduction', I initially envisaged the last theme as two separate chapters but came to see them as inextricably linked after further re-readings of the text. My focus for this fourth theme then began to sharpen around the quality of relationships Bion had with peers, especially those during his stays at friends' homes over holiday periods that I thought seemed affected by the presence of warmer, maternal figures – Mrs. Rhodes and Mrs. Hamilton (who, Meg Harris Williams, 2010, noted, were kinds of foster-mothers to him). Therefore, I amended this last theme's name to 'relating'. I then started to group extracts of the text in 'England' within these four main themes ('bullying', 'masculinity', 'sexuality', and 'relating') to see what forms and patterns

emerged. I started to come to some tentative understandings of the text using a reverie-informed approach that, as stated in my 'Introduction', I discovered was similar to Joshua Holmes's reverie research method (2018a and 2018b).

A further layer to my reading was to consider the different 'Bions' found in the work, i.e., Bion the child, the writer, the psychoanalyst and the man. I paid attention in my main chapters to the places in the text where I felt the character of Bion was being portrayed, with 'performativity' to convey the understandings of the eighty-year-old psychoanalyst and writer, and the occasions where the observations and experiences he had as a child were presented, as stated in my 'Introduction', as near and as stripped-back to how they were at the time.   My sense is that he may have been held together by his observations as a child and it is his psychoanalytic autobiography of his childhood that enables him to penetrate their meaning.

As mentioned in my chapter on memory, my reverie informed approach raises the issue of using psychoanalytic concepts to read a text written by a famous psychoanalyst. I have approached Bion's descriptions of pre/adolescent states of mind in a similar way to his own psychoanalytic autobiographical method, but also bring a contemporary psychoanalytic lens with recent understandings of the adolescent process (as I now go on to mention). The view I have taken with this thesis is that there is continued learning available in 'Weekend' that can contribute to the process of remembering and reflecting on it, deepening layers of understanding and even drawing out new ones, as I go on to summarize in my findings.

Alongside the initial work described above, I began to explore specific psychoanalytic literature associated with my themes. This followed a more general exploration of contemporary psychoanalytic understandings of adolescence (Anastasopoulos, Waddell and Lignos,1999; Anderson, Hurst, Marques et al, 2012; Anderson and Dartington, 1998; Copley, 1993; Harris Williams, 2011; Lemma, 2012; and Waddell, 2018). I found the late Neil Crawford's writing about workplace bullying (1997), where he notes there is a defensive distancing from the infantile with bullying behaviour, particularly helped inform Bion's descriptions of bullying at his school. I began to read about the development of masculine identifications in writings by M. Fakhry Davids (2002), Karl Figlio (2000), Marcus Johns (2002) and Dana Birksted-

Breen (1996). Those texts started to focus my investigations on the theme of masculinity. I revisited the Oedipal myth (Robert Graves's 1955 version that Hamish Canham, 2003, recommends) in my explorations on sexuality. I also noted John Steiner's observations (2011 and 2015) on feelings of shame and embarrassment, seeing and being seen, that are surely particularly acute during adolescence[19]. I drew upon Hamish Canham's writing (2003) regarding unresolved issues for parents that impinge upon their capacity to help their adolescent children negotiate the developmental stage. Canham's differentiation between groupings and gangings (2002) and, later, Donald Meltzer's concept of the claustrum (1992) helped shed particular light on the difficulties Bion has in achieving healthy peer group relationships during his adolescence and also in understanding the internal constellation of 'the lie' that grips onto him over the course of the section. My understanding of this constellation was informed by Steiner's observation (1982) that a healthy part of the personality colludes in being taken over by a narcissistic gang, allowing itself to be seduced, as well as Gianna Williams's writing (1997) about gang-like states in adolescence.

I researched general issues to do with autobiographies. In 'Memory and the Complexities of the Autobiographical Method', I traced how there are inherent problems due to individualism/subjectivity that have been criticized for interfering with the reliability of texts. Autobiographies are necessarily selective and always a condensed version of a life. When considering the nature of remembering and reconstruction, I chose to use the terms 'magpie' and 'minefield' to describe some of the pitfalls and anxieties associated with the method. I used 'magpie' to describe a gravitational pull with memory towards picking out the shiny bits whilst omitting the rest, given that the human mind tends to distort information to cope with feelings of anxiety, guilt and mental pain. 'Minefield' describes an anxious point of view that it is too dangerous to make explorations into the realm of the past using memory because it interferes with the facts and renders findings inaccurate. At the same time, there can be incentives for those with positions of authority and in power for

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[19] John Steiner (2015) writes how *"embarrassment … demands instant relief from the agony of being seen"* (p. 1589). He uses the example of Charlotte Brontë's, *Jane Eyre*, when the protagonist observes an older adolescent girl at her school look like she wished the ground would open up and swallow her when she is sent, in punishment, to stand in the middle of the classroom in full view.

narratives to remain hidden. Publications within the survivor subgenre are, therefore, often powerful socio-political acts. I discovered that advocates of autobiographies tend to argue that issues of subjectivity are both inevitable and valuable given subjectivity is a core component of human lives and how we make sense of lived experience. I presented the view that memory can be seen as a 'route to intimate truth'. The process of putting the fractured *"bits and pieces"* (Hooks, 2009, p. 129) of a heart - or parts of the self that have been lost through adversity - back together via interior observation has the power to alter the course of a trajectory, allowing for new possibilities, where difficulties do not go on to dictate futures. The process of interior observation is invariably painful and takes time. I noted how autobiographies that are interested in matters of internal truth tend to be termed psychoanalytic autobiographies. Given the above, I also changed my research title to better reflect my emerging findings (and to include the nature of memory) to 'Adolescent states of mind recalled in Bion's The Long Weekend'.

As I progressed with the project, I asked some more specific questions about my main themes:

In 'The Prevalence of Bullying', I started to contemplate what kind of things the children who bullied Bion on his arrival in England were seeking to evade. Then, I inquired what may have prevented him from standing up for himself, given I observed he often remained in and/or maintained a very passive position. I noticed a shift in Bion's descriptions of himself from an abandoned child victim to behaving unpleasantly towards other children himself. This captured my interest, and I then started to investigate what factors enabled him to catch sight of his own bullish behaviour.

With 'Problematic Masculine Identifications', I aimed to investigate whether there were any helpful male figures available to him in his father's absence. I was struck by the harsh masculine attitude in the text. As my research into issues with memory progressed, I found that notions of collective/social memory were helpful to draw upon. These ideas enabled me to inquire what factors contributed to the ideals of masculinity presented to Bion as a young adolescent boy. Explorations within collective/social memory also encompassed how much the men in Bion's school

years saw themselves as having a parenting role and what kinds of preoccupations they had.

'Sexuality and Censorship' was a difficult chapter to know how best to approach at first. I started tracing descriptions of his masturbatory behaviour as a young child. I then attempted to understand to what extent these earlier behaviours exacerbated the difficulties he had with the adolescent realities of a sexually developing body. My investigation of the theme was helped by my research on the contextual factors I explored in my 'Introduction', particularly the prevalent attitudes towards sex during the Victorian and Edwardian eras. I noticed Bion's frequent mention of Farrar's 'Eric' (1858) in the text. This work that is now widely considered to epitomize the harmful religious and moral way that the Victorians used to approach the problem of sex in segregated boys' schools. I began to enquire to what extent Bion's writing about sexuality could be understood within this context via explorations of the attitudes his school masters took towards these matters. This chapter and the previous chapter on masculinity bring into focus the challenge of attending to both interior states and the social context in my reading of 'Weekend'. My view is that the social context helps understand the emotional atmosphere Bion grew up in that contributed to internalizations. In the preface to his book, Bion states, *"I write about me"* and that the work *"is about the relationships of one man and not about the people, communities, groups whose names are mentioned"* (p. 9). Whilst his aim is subjective and to do with *"psychoanalytic truth"* (*ibid.*) much more than historical fact, I found that to arrive at an understanding of the states of mind he describes, it was important not just to consider the interior but also the interplay with the socio-emotional environment he grew up in.

Finally, in 'Problems with Relating', I set out to examine the quality of his peer relationships at adolescence which involved understanding what he meant by his term 'the lie'. How much the quasi foster-mother figures of Mrs. Rhodes and Mrs. Hamilton enabled Bion to form healthy groupings with his peers in the absence of his mother and ayah was debated. As my findings emerged, I considered to what extent, despite their generosity and Bion's fondness of them, these figures were indeed able to help him in the service of his development. I also examined Bion's difficulties with belonging and their relation to more hierarchical forms of

relationships and power differentials of the day, such as were mixed up with the fagging system in English boarding schools. The extent to which deprivation and anxiety contributed to the internal constellation of 'the lie', that tightened its grip on Bion over the course of the section 'England' affecting his capacity to relate was discussed.

My main aim throughout has been to present a personal reading of Bion's pre/adolescent life and, in doing so, to see what it contributes to understandings of contemporary psychoanalytic theory on adolescence. However, my findings may also be of biographical interest given they bring out understanding of the child Bion.

Research findings:

Bullying

In my investigation of bullying behaviour, I noticed, as stated, a shifting pattern over the course of the section 'England'*. At first, Bion is encountered as an abandoned child, left by his mother at the prep school where everything is unfamiliar to him. He is victimized and cruelly interrogated by the other boys. Their behaviour degenerates further into physical bullying, and he is beaten with stumps by his new peers up on the cricket pitch, which they call their 'mountain'. Bion then shades descriptions of himself in a different light that have increasingly darker tones. He begins to describe situations where he behaves unpleasantly towards others: being cruel to his friend's younger brother, Colin; recklessly putting a noose around the neck of his peer, Greene; and behaving thoroughly unkindly towards a new boy, Maynard, at the main school.

I have at times wondered during this project whether Bion found himself employing a certain type of autobiographical 'performativity' (Douglas, 2010) to communicate these shifts. Kate Douglas (*ibid.*) notes how there is often an unspoken criterion within the survivor subgenre whereby in order to declare oneself a survivor, first one has to declare oneself a victim. However, Bion's autobiography is radical in the sense that, rather than move towards portraying himself as an authorial hero (he outright rejects this and describes feeling fraudulent when awarded the Distinguished Service Order and the Croix de Chevalier of the Légion d'honneur), he declares himself a survivor by acknowledging his own propensities

to be destructive. Ultimately, he also champions psychoanalysis this way with the movement away from a child who needs to rid himself of his unwanted parts towards an adolescent who has caught sight of his own internal capacities to be destructive and then, finally, an author who is well-known for his maturity in the public sphere. There is no collapse in the divide between public and private domains this way; rather they are brought into a relationship with each other. The celebrated public figure becomes intimately known via the personal world of his youth - 'warts and all'.

I agreed with Margot Waddell (2018) that the likely reason he was bullied at the point his mother left him was because he evoked in his new peers the helpless feelings of abandonment that they all felt but could not tolerate. I followed how his peers could be seen to attempt to rid themselves of their feelings into Bion, aided by the gang-like state they fell into that pulled rank and refused to allow any feelings of vulnerability amidst its crew. I proposed that this defensive distancing from the infantile (Crawford, 1997) got mirrored by the staff group who had *"no idea"* (Bion, 1982a, p. 63) about the boys' behaviour, despite it taking place right beneath their noses. They were unable to acknowledge the infantile aspects of themselves leading to the 'web of undirected menace', a neglectful situation that entailed enormous suffering for the young Bion.

He often found he remained in a passive position in the prep school - victimized, teased, and unable to stand up for himself. I began to hypothesize what various factors kept him in this position. First, his small physical size, being the youngest and smallest at the prep school when he arrived, with the larger boys throwing their weight around and 'choosing to be nasty', was significant. Second, there were the bystanding surroundings at the school with its neglectful culture that neither noticed things had gone awry nor provided the boys with the help they needed to learn to make sense of things. At the same time, he rejected the help and sympathy offered to him by some of his peers. Third, I wondered about the impact of his parents, who were bound up with the cultural norms of the time. This included British families in India sending their children to boarding school in England from a young age. For example, his mother denied she had feelings about the separation even when asked directly by Bion. I considered whether voicing any anger, protesting or resisting may have threatened a more idealized version of his mother

he felt he needed to protect in order to manage the painful separation – a situation he was not helped to mourn. This led to a 'disaster situation' where all sense of agency felt lost to him.

I also found in this chapter, similarly to Waddell (2013), who noticed that at the point Bion recalled his chastisement by his father he had to split off both his emotional and physical awareness of the beating given it was so terrifying, that the text cut out when he recalled being attacked with cricket stumps at the prep school. Bion wrote how it was still hard to know about the *"dreadful storms"* (Bion, 1982a, p. 63) to which he and the other boys had been subject to. Consciously or unconsciously, I found he employed a literary technique whereby he ended discussions abruptly and just moments after alerting the reader to the terror of recalled events. This also conveyed the limits of the human mind and how it deals with trauma. Events got dismissed, with their terror played down, before the terrorizing was, sadly, without the external support he needed, observed to move inside. Painfully, Bion begins to make self-derogatory remarks about himself, for example calling himself a brat, effectively demonstrating this movement inside. He then described returning to playing train games on his own, conveying how he immersed himself in a powerful and understandable imaginary world as a coping strategy, a situation where the world of relationships was lost to him.

Masculinity

In my exploration of Bion's masculine development, it became apparent that helpful identifications were not always available to him. I traced his early years as a young child growing up in India with his father, who was presented as prone to fits of rage, unable to sustain much patience with Bion, and bound up with colonial ideals of masculinity - epitomized by the event of the tiger hunt.

I considered Bion's impressions of the men he was surrounded by at his boarding school. With Hirst, the headmaster, I noticed how he had difficulty piecing together the man's complex personhood that comprised many different parts; how his varied qualities got conveyed in the text. These included: Hirst's missing relationship with his wife (who was rumoured to be in a mental institution), his work function that the boys attempted to resist, his neglectfulness, but also his gentler

side, their curiosity and fondness of him, and their wishes to identify with him. The boys' denigration of their headmaster seemed in part some attempt to protect idealized versions of mothers for themselves, and with Bion I proposed that a melancholy imitation with Hirst got going. He called him *"my loved, unhappy, ghost-haunted failure"* (Bion, 1982a, p. 116).

As I became further aware of the aspects of collective/social memory woven into the material, i.e., the impact of imperialism in generating and sustaining the destructive macho attitudes of the day, I began to feel that Bion used the characters of Mr. Rhodes and Thompson - the headmaster of a neighbouring school - to convey the infiltration of colonial ideals into the domestic space. I noticed how, tragically, these ideals became internalized and that, by the end of his schooldays, Bion's view of himself was as *"soft"* and *"feminine"* (*ibid.*) – this despite growing into a young man with athletic prowess.

Finally, I noticed how Bion was interested in Colman, who seemed the only male figure able to offer him an opportunity for some healthy identification, despite having his own struggles (he sometimes left the classroom with sudden-onset, crippling headaches). Crucially, he was able to help Bion catch sight of his rivalries and not collude with them. Colman was interested in thought and mapping things out and was an important prototype for Bion – a vital counterpoint to the perverse ideals of masculinity that infiltrated his experiences. Bion wrote about Colman, *"though it was many years later before I had an idea of the extent of his benevolence, I could feel and be sustained by it"* (p. 115). Sadly, Bion came to view those experiences as something of a luxury in the run-up to the war, *"on the eve of a period of catastrophic destructiveness"* (MacRury and Rustin, 2013, p. 39).

One limitation of my findings with this chapter is that alternative views of Bion's men were not available to me. It would be interesting by way of further research to look at published accounts of teachers by other men from Bion's generation. The reader will recall from my chapter on memory how E. Stina Lyon (2000) found that three children, even from the same family, can have very different experiences of an individual (as was the case with Alva Myrdal's children). It is possible to understand how Bion perceived these men but other children's

experiences of these figures would be needed to understand further if the text portrays accurate descriptions of the men themselves.

Sexuality

I found Bion's descriptions of sex and sexuality almost entirely confusing at first as he presented them in a restricted/ambiguous yet spilling out way. Over the course of the project, I realized that the eighty-year-old's writing approach might have been an attempt to convey his own utterly confused states of mind as a young boy.

As I traced Bion's reliance on masturbatory behaviour as a young boy, I came across the early situation of his parents who giggled at him when they first noticed it - an unhelpful response. They were neither able to recognize something was wrong nor set appropriate prohibitions. This led to an internal situation where a lack of prohibitions became established, and he took to masturbating in class at the prep school, leading to fears of expulsion and a depressing state where he was frightened by his own sexuality. Bion's descriptions of his sexualized behaviour are some of the most agonizing in the entire section of 'England'. I found he began to rely increasingly on masturbation as his main source of relief. External help was not forthcoming, and this reliance grew ever stronger as he struggled to manage unbearably painful feelings and states of despair.

I also made sense of Bion's baffling descriptions of sex in the main school, where sex was put front and centre yet afforded a peculiar kind of censorship, through my developing understanding of the way that boys' sexuality in segregated boarding schools was viewed and dealt with at that time. The attitudes towards boys' sexuality are referenced in the text by Bion who read Farrar's 'Eric' as a child. I found authorities felt that boys needed to be aware of the dangers of sexual abuses that were the cause of a national scandal in Victorian times. However, pitifully, even talking about sex was felt to increase its likelihood between boys. The cultural solution, epitomized by Farrar's work, was to talk about dangers without naming what they were and even propose that masturbation led to insanity and death, an approach that attracted moral and religious backing. Sadly, it also contributed to the harmful effects of denying boys' sexuality. Bion wrote how he worried that *"the devil entered into us"* (1982, p. 87) and became extremely persecuted by his

sexuality. He is never angrier as the eighty-year-old writer than when he states how forces colluded to 'dam up the noxious matter' and stifle the growth of his personality.

Within this context, I then traced his masters' attitudes towards sex in the main school; masters who I found had their own problems and rarely spoke in straightforward ways that mirrored his parents' early response and those of the age. I noted that whilst sports were used as 'substitution' and provided him with some relief - Francesca Bion wrote that rugby and swimming saved him (2014) - this also matched a common solution to the problem where games were aimed at tiring boys out so they became 'too tired' for sex. The impact on Bion of this stifling of creativity was severe. In 'Sins' he talks about finding relationships with women very difficult as a young man. He was, however, interested in women who could speak the truth, and he found Kathy Rhodes's ability to do just that restorative. She was a much-needed breath of fresh air to him, although in thin company, and he felt he lacked the courage himself to relate to her.

Relating

Finally, I explored the nature of 'the lie' and found how it prevented him from making relationships. 'The lie' is the term that Bion uses in 'Weekend' to refer to the internal gang-like constellation that is brought into being with his traumatic arrival at the prep school (pp. 44 – 45), and that closes its grip on him over the course of his schooldays resulting in a disastrous situation where he cannot make contact with his objects. Its origins can be traced back to his childhood in 'India' on page 16, where his parents, particularly his father, fail to help him with his more ordinary infantile omnipotence. Indeed, he is beaten. 'The lie' is omnipotent and canvasses the destructive and narcissistic propaganda, or fake news, that no good can be found in relationships and that the individual can manage without them, serving to protect the individual from feelings of shame, humiliation, helplessness and vulnerability. It offers a way of triumphing over intensely painful feelings of separation and despair and contributes to Bion's rejection of attempts by his peers to sympathize with him when he arrives at the prep school and is bullied; a situation I found to be repeated in different permutations and combinations throughout the section 'England'. It can be

understood as an impact of anxiety and deprivation that fortifies the death instinct rather than propagating life and creativity.

I also came to understand that despite the relief from the misery of the prep school provided by Mrs. Rhodes and Mrs. Hamilton, ultimately, their presence did not help Bion develop healthy peer relationships. In fact, he engaged in increasingly destructive play whilst at the Hamilton's, and Mrs. Rhodes's character did not seem able to challenge the destructive machismo prevalent on their farm. I suggested the warmth and generosity he received from these women was vital yet also had its limitations as, in the end, they were unable to help him in the way he needed. I looked at the structures that proclaimed to offer some sense of belonging in the main school, such as the fagging system that he was not able to opt in to. I found this to be a more general pattern, whereby he was unable to make use of what was available to him in his emotionally impoverished circumstances and found it difficult to maintain a relationship to something that had imperfections and/or limitations, i.e., to 'live with the enemy'. 'The enemy', including 'joining the enemy', is Bion's terminology to describe the grievance situation he lives in during 'Weekend' where relationships do not get going. It is of course not only a reference to the mind but also the battlefields of WWI. It is distinct and different to the term 'living with the enemy' which is more reality-based and relational as it acknowledges an individual's internal deficits rather than seeing feelings of hatred only in the other.

I came across the troubling idea that with the destructive internal constellation he described, a healthy part of the personality allowed itself to be seduced by the lure of the gang. I observed him becoming good at this lie as his *"powers of deception grew"* (Bion, 1982a, p. 44) until he became more like his mother who was *"not crying"* (*ibid.*) - a reference to the eight-year-old asking his mother if she was sad about their impending separation on their voyage to England from India. I also noticed the way he seemed to intrude into the internal mother (Meltzer, 1992) out of despair with the increasingly destructive games he played with the Hamilton boys. I found that anxiety and deprivation were major contributory factors to the tightening grip of 'the lie' on him and traced how these factors began to move inside – a 'double deprivation' (Williams, 1997). Finally, at the end of the section, I observed how he rejected the possibility of relating to other boys at the Thompson's as, by then, 'the

lie' had completely taken hold; how the separation from his mother, both in his mind and in his deprived circumstances, catalyzed a slow but nuclear divorce from relationships.

Methodological issues:

Remembering and reconstruction

There is evidence in the text that Bion seemed interested and engaged with issues of the autobiographical method. He spent his life's work, once he discovered psychoanalysis, interested in 'time travelling' in one way or another. Before he worked on the autobiographies, he wrote about the nature of memory in his paper 'Notes on Memory and Desire' (1967) stating, *"Memory is always misleading as a record of fact since it is distorted by the influence of unconscious forces"* (p. 205). He famously advocated for the abandonment of memory and desire (1965) in order to focus one's attention on the 'here and now' of the live interaction.

However, rather than reject the validity of memory entirely, in his preface to 'Weekend' his solution is to advocate for an awareness of the limitations of the autobiographical method. He writes that his intention with the work is to be truthful but that *"the most I can claim is to be 'relatively' truthful"* (1982a, p. 9). He also makes a comment on the limits of remembering and reconstruction nearing the end of 'Weekend' and on his efforts at recalling his childhood states:

> Conjecture must now take the place of the facts which I was too inexperienced to observe when they were there to observe. I did not have the ability to recognize that I was in a state of inner turmoil in an external world of emotional upheaval. (p. 302)

He seems to want to post a warning about the limits of interpretation. The text is 'conjecture' not 'fact', although his objective to put something truthful forward still stands. There is a live struggle in the work this way, between the recollections of his states of mind and his awareness of the limits to the method.

As he sets out his aim - to recall his inner states -, he acknowledges that it would be impossible to write about these things without some reference to the external. He says,

> Anyone can 'know' which school, regiment, colleagues, friends I write about. I write about 'me'. I do so deliberately because I am aware that this is what I should do anyhow. I am also more likely to approximate to my ambition if I write about the person I know better than anyone

else – myself. The book, therefore, is about the relationships of one man and not about the people, communities, groups whose names are mentioned. (p. 9)

He cautions on reading too much into the people and school he writes about, although he seeks to validate his descriptions as depictions of his own states of mind, which is the value of subjectivity. Whilst his inside states are privileged in the work over external points of view or comparisons, he does not deny there is also an important external reality, but that is not his centre of attention. Whilst the focus then is as a psychoanalytic autobiography, he comes to the conclusion that omitting the external coordinates would leave the reader struggling with *"meaningless manipulations"* (*ibid.*) of jargon.

Organizing information/literary form

'Weekend' is selective in terms of it being 'part of a life' that traces a narrative from young infant in India to pre/adolescent at boarding school in England to tank commander in WWI. His second autobiography 'Sins: Another Part of a Life' was left unfinished at his death, ending at the point his wife, Betty, died in childbirth. He did not go on to describe his development as a person once he commenced analysis with Melanie Klein and met his second wife, Francesca.

As stated in my 'Introduction' and 'Memory and the Complexities of the Autobiographical Method', it is of note that Bion experimented with the other literary forms before 'Weekend' and 'Sins' with 'A Memoir of the Future'. The trilogy traverses past, present and future time zones. It intentionally juxtaposes both 'thought through' experiences as well as primitive, raw and unprocessed states with the intention of conveying something reflective of the human condition. In 'Weekend', sometimes he is found to group information into themes that temporarily remove him from an exclusively chronological narrative. For example, the five chapters describing his respite at the Rhodes's and Hamilton's homes are grouped together and intersect his experiences at the prep school with those at the main school. The temporary interruption of the chronological form seems representative of the temporary relief from his suffering and the freedom that his pubescent development and life at the main school brought him. Furthermore, the quantity of time that passes between events is not always made explicitly clear. For example, the length of time that passes between seeing his mother, as well as her

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location/whereabouts in relation to the school - whether she was in India or London - is distinctively hazy (I am only aware from Francesca Bion's biographical source, 1995, that it was three years before he saw his mother again after she first left him at the prep school). However, I think that my observation is unlikely to be the result of a deliberate literary device, although something 'unsayable' (Rogers, Casey, Ekert et al, 1999) – perhaps even beyond words – seems to be communicated by his narrative this way. My view is that, reading between the lines, what is expressed are the agonizing waits between his mother's visits and how his feelings of abandonment led him to feel uncertain as to where she was in his mind. I think this reading of the state of mind he conveys is firmly with the text (as opposed to reading against it) and implicit but requires the reader's further reflection and processing in order to penetrate it.

Intentions and ethics

It is not possible to occupy a position of certainty as to what Bion intended with this work. I have already mentioned in this 'Conclusion' that he focused exclusively on the mind to construct his identity, championing the psychoanalytic method this way. He was already a celebrated psychoanalyst when he wrote the autobiographies but now brought the personal way he constructed his sense of self into public view. My sense is very much of a generous contribution to psychoanalysis that helps understand where his theories come from, how they grew from personal reflexive work as well as work with his patients. He presents the way he made sense of and found understanding for his life; how he started to think and learn from fairly terrible and painful experiences of his youth. Whether there may also have been an intention to provide encouragement not to give up in the face of such staggering suffering cannot be clear, although awareness of his achievements in later life makes 'Weekend' a hopeful testament to the potential of transformative experiences. Similarly, despite his clear criticisms of the way children were treated in boarding schools during the Edwardian era and the destructive attitudes towards masculinity

and sexuality of the age, it is unclear whether he had conscious socio-political aims to bring these matters to the attention of a wider public audience.

It would appear that Bion was aware of ethical issues. As stated, he seemed to want to warn the reader in the preface to 'Weekend' that they should not read too much into the external names and places he wrote about (1982a, p. 9). At the same time, in the work itself, he does not stop short of criticizing shortcomings, for example, the neglectful culture of the prep school and the destructive machismo canvassed by Thompson. However, I think his foremost intention is to convey the harmful attitudes of the age that people and institutions were caught up in and how these impacted on him, rather than blame individuals. His way of depersonalizing events is often through the use of the term 'web of undirected menace', a motif that is repeated. He stops short of attributing blame to any one individual and writes how psychoanalytic methods that contain the prospect of disentanglement from the web were not available at that time.

Similarly, he seems careful not to demonize his parents despite their faults - often a common pitfall of the survivor subgenre. He writes about his mother, how he felt warm on her lap but also how she could be suddenly cold and frightening (p. 13); how his father tried to be patient but was prone to fits of rage (p. 15). He conveys something of both their complexity and his ambivalent attachment to them this way. Notably, he does not preach forgiveness, rather, he seems to advocate a position that sees things for how they were. It is an interest in the truth, however hard that may be, that is promoted.

As James Grotstein previously notes, Bion also appears to consider his patients. He waited until the end of his life to write the work, and it is likely he arranged for its posthumous publication by Francesca Bion. As Grotstein (2007) states, it would have been potentially daunting to enter into an analysis with him knowing the extent of his personal experiences.

Issues interpreting the text

I have commented on the issues of subjectivity and memory with the autobiographical method that make my findings in this 'Conclusion' tentative. In my reading of the autobiography, I have taken interpretative tools to the text in an

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attempt to come to some further understanding of the states of mind Bion wrote about. Phillppe Lejuene (1989), a French professor and essayist known for his interest in autobiography, sought to circumvent some of the problems based on the limits of interpreting autobiographical text. He saw analyzing autobiography as a mode of reading, although far from reductive, and understood the relationship between autobiographer and reader as an 'autobiographical pact' or formal agreement of limitations (cited in McCooey, 2017, p. 277). My findings do not seek to avoid the difficulties, and I do not believe them to be reductive, but rather they aim at acknowledging both limitations and validity.

Bion's account of his schooldays is also, and necessarily, a selective one. It tells the story of states of mind that are in the context of a fairly terrible upbringing, and it is the impact of this he seeks to convey. However, it needs to be remembered that 'Weekend', and especially the chapters comprising 'India' and 'England', recount only fragmentary episodes of his schooldays. This does not diminish the value of what he wrote as an autobiographical case study, but interpretations need to be understood in the context of their being about aspects of an experience of development only.

Asides from the above matters, one further major difficulty when analyzing the text has been, as Kate Douglas (2010) notes, how the survivor subgenre asks readers to be prepared to witness childhood traumas. I have been aware of a conflict whilst going about this project between looking away and bearing witness to the misery of his schooldays and even the potential of the work to traumatize. The project required my witnessing over a prolonged period of work on this thesis the descriptions of one boy's enduring suffering during his ten years at boarding school. It was indeed hard going at times but rewarded by an increasing appreciation of the richness of the autobiographical method (that takes into account the intriguing nature of memory) as well as an expanded understanding of the man and his writing output. My findings include some important personal meanings that developed alongside my reading as I now go onto provide a commentary on. I was also increasingly

struck by the magnitude of his creative achievements in later life as I came to look closely at his difficult beginnings.

Reflexive commentary

My reading of the section 'England' in Bion's autobiography considers my own reflexive process that, as stated, has also formed part of my research methodology. A number of personal meanings of the work developed as the project progressed and as I began to understand more about the conscious and unconscious reasons that had gravitated me towards its undertaking. It surprised me at times what found its way up to the surface – sometimes welcomed and sometimes unwelcomed thoughts – and, as I went about developing the project, I had to consider both these matters. I have chosen not to make all these things explicit to the reader in the interests of my own privacy. However, I hope that the reader understands I have examined them rigorously as part of the process of this project in a way that I feel has been enough to avoid, as much as may be possible, the pitfall of over-identification with my subject matter. That said, I do, however, wish to give the reader an indication of the type of work I was engaged in throughout the project through the use of one example that I do not feel invades my privacy or puts any undue strain on the various people I am in contact with.

Whilst I was researching the topic of masculinity, I began to think about my Indian paternal grandfather. I do not remember him, only some anecdotes I grew up with from family members, as he died when I was a young infant. I do know that around the time of partition, when the British Raj ended, that he made the journey from India to Europe in his twenties, where he married my Dutch grandmother before settling in England. Aware of this personal connection to Bion but unsure what to make of it, I then found myself nearing the end of the project feeling distinctly unsettled by the cover page of Bill Schwarz's 'Memories of Empire' (2011). The cover photo depicts a young, white British couple during the British Raj posing in a jungle clearing behind a Bengal tiger. I noticed I had associations to a domestic cat before I realized that the animal in the photograph had been hunted dead. What I was looking at was their kill laid out in front of them. The following morning, I then recalled the Indian tiger skin draped, distinctly casually, over the bannister of my

grandmother's staircase that she had kept there long after my grandfather's death. The memory enabled me to connect with the way colonial constructs of masculinity had infiltrated my own domestic space whilst growing up, in a silently destructive way. At that point, I felt it made sense why I had been interested to undertake an exploration of masculine constructs and identifications as part of my project. At the same time, this personal reflexive event also helped me consider the collective/social memories woven into Bion's recollections.

How adolescent are these states of mind?

One of my initial aims was to investigate the adolescent states of mind that Bion recalled. I now want to return to comment on the extent to which I have actually found these states to be adolescent; how much I have felt there to be a feeling of fluidity to his identity, *"the feeling of the centre of gravity, of the sense of identity shifting and shifting wildly"* (Astor, 1988, p. 67); and how much I thought he was able to manage increasing separations.

As stated, for Bion, I found his adolescence to be severely disrupted. The narrative describes him remaining very stuck and with little movement forward. He wrote about states of mind that did not develop, although they did fluctuate to some degree because of his pubescent development. Indeed, he stated at the very beginning of the section 'England' when he arrived at the prep school that he could not learn and *"had another twelve years to go before I would even have a chance to learn"* (Bion, 1982a, p. 43). He indicated the climate was not right for development, full of deprivation and anxiety as it was, and without adequate figures to help move him on. He did find some important relief and sense of selfhood in his much-loved games - rugby and swimming. He was also exposed to some helpful figures in the form of Colman, whilst Mrs. Rhodes and Mrs. Hamilton were warm and generous to him, as I have already indicated. These figures provided him with some helpful prototypes for relating, but it was not until later in life that he began to find the people he needed and could make use of - especially, but not exclusively, John Rickman, Melanie Klein and Francesca Bion. Fortunately, as I mentioned in my 'Introduction' and wish to emphasize again here, opportunities for finding a sense of selfhood are

not fixed during adolescence. Nevertheless, Bion's difficult pre/adolescent years reveal some interesting findings about adolescent states of mind.

I have already mentioned the difficulties several of the male figures Bion encountered had in attending to adolescent rivalries and destructiveness, as well as the denial of adolescent sexuality in the school. I want now to notice some other 'specifically adolescent' findings.

First, with my theme of bullying, I found it was when the boys were on the cusp of adolescence that their feelings spilt over, and they felt able, albeit spontaneously, to risk fighting back against the prep school bullies, Morgan and Pickett. The eighty-year-old Bion drew attention to how the event shocked them. I suggested the shock included the sudden emergence of their own newfound physical capabilities. At this point, the adults finally came in and attended to the bullying behaviour going on by removing Morgan from the prep school up into the main school where he was no longer the biggest child and no longer able to wreak such havoc. In some senses, this way, adolescence was a more hopeful place for Bion than his pre-pubescent years at the prep school as the adults seemed more able to attend to visible difficulties, although infantile needs continued to go unattended.

Second, at the main school, I noted how the boys got drawn into a bystander role witnessing H. N. Browne's sadomasochistic enactments with Bilge Browne that I suggested had an infantile quality akin to a child looking on with both excitement and horror at a primal scene situation, but in secret and without the adults really being aware. I thought that the boys had some awareness that their behaviour was forbidden and, therefore, did not abuse Bilge in the humiliating positions H.N. left him in. However, they also did not call for grown-up help, and I suggested that Bion's recollections of these events conveyed feelings of a cruelly abandoned adolescent where uncontrollable sexual development was perceived as extremely threatening. I also noted his descriptions of the boys' rushes of emotion associated with their pubertal development. These were presented under the illusion of control by H. N. when in fact, what remained after the fuss died down was the sight of a vulnerable infant-like Bilge caught up in a masochistic situation he was left with no control over and no access to grown-up help. I consider this to be an especially adolescent state

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of mind, one where infantile fears of abandonment by adults, being left to fend alone, are re-stirred during pubertal development.

Third, and crucially, it seemed to me that catching sight of internal destructiveness was aided by physical development with fears that the boys could do actual physical damage. For example, in the event where Bion was shocked to learn he could have killed Greene by putting the noose around his neck and when he lost momentary access to his physical strength as Maynard fought back.

Finally, I want to draw into focus how I noticed with my theme of relating, that the impact of anxiety and deprivation on Bion seemed to erode the possibility for him to form the important mezzanine structures (Waddell, 2018) that peer groups provide in the service of movement between home and adult life. I particularly noted Bion and the Hamilton boys' increasingly physical and risk-taking games at the point of adolescence, a way of being together that did not lead to continued development. I suggested these games could be thought about as attempts to evade the pains of adolescence and unconscious attempts to be noticed by the adults in the adolescent bodies they were struggling with that, disappointingly, went unacknowledged.

The project's contribution to child psychotherapy

The section 'England' in Bion's major autobiography 'The Long Weekend' is a unique description of disrupted adolescent development. I found the work contributes to thinking about important aspects of childhood development such as an understanding of bullying, and difficulties with masculine identifications, sexuality and relating. Particularly, I discovered it to be an example of the impact that anxiety and deprivation have in contributing to childhood states of despair and how this can prevent individuals from making contact with themselves and others, preventing the development of a healthy sense of identity. The narrative traces a process of destructive internalizations. In Bion's case, the states he recalled are important records in themselves of one boy's lived experiences that accumulated and found meaning for him over the course of his lifetime. The internal formation of 'the lie' that is in response to his suffering also strikes me as an important theoretical contribution in itself. I also note that post-Bionian thinkers have found themselves furthering these ideas, such as Meltzer, who conceptualized the claustrum (1992). 'The lie'

enables an understanding of adolescent states of mind in the here and now from someone who wrote about them then.

There is another contribution I think this project makes that I have come to from my explorations of the autobiographical method. This is an understanding of the way in which people are selective in terms of what they are prepared or able to see in themselves. Bion notes that he caught sight of internal destructiveness, which was an important moment in itself, although he could not make use of his insight as a teenager. Learning to live with these parts of the self, or 'living with the enemy' as Bion explores in the 'Memoir', is a further complicated matter. One possible meaning of 'the lie' (as opposed to 'the truth') is how the mind is invariably up to something, how there is always a selection process going on, always the impact of anxiety, guilt and mental pain. What children or grown-ups are prepared and able to live with, or take back into themselves, requires an acknowledgement of painful limitations and the provision of generous external support.

There are also the personal reasons Bion had for needing to write the work at nearly eighty-years-old. Bion's own project with 'Weekend' seems to have been to do deep mental work on aspects of himself, and experiences, which he needed to process. These included considerable self-hatred and shame, and also hatred of what was done to him. Such aspects might have been part of what he explored in his analyses and began to deal with, and with 'Weekend' he furthered, perhaps to give him peace and to bring about some late integration for him.

I have researched how the mind distorts events (although this does not render memories invalid) and that memories are not fixed over time but accumulate meanings. It strikes me that this has important implications for clinical work, given that child psychotherapy technique draws on the use of memory all the time. Children in psychotherapy frequently recall the events that have happened to them. Therapists rely on written records to talk about their work in supervision that have been made from memory. I believe that the field memory studies, including the autobiographical method, has an important contribution to make to child psychotherapy and note that these matters are of current interest. For example, Miriam Creaser's research (2019) demonstrates how *"a grounded theory*

comparison of process notes and audio recordings provides greater insight into the processes present during the session than either record on its own" (p. 170).

In terms of further research, I would be interested in exploring other life writings to see how the impact of colonialism and post-colonialism impacts on boys' masculine identities by making some comparisons to Bion's work. I would also be interested in exploring how sexuality is denied, or otherwise, in present-day schools and institutions that have responsibilities for looking after children. Given Bion's own remarkable achievements were also in the context of his support from Francesca, it would also be fascinating to examine further auto/biographical writing in relation to her and to consider what factors enabled such a creative coupling. It strikes me that despite the many writings about Bion, there is nothing remotely resembling an intimate account of Bion's entire life, or indeed of his subsequent development. One does not gather much of an idea of how he came to progress in later life as he did from 'Weekend'; for example, what it was that enabled him to successfully develop through medical school, how he managed to raise a child successfully after the tragedy of his first wife's death, and how he came to be a leading figure in psychoanalysis.

Finally, I want to end my project with a further comment on Bion's title 'The Long Weekend'. I think that one likely meaning of a 'long weekend state' is what a struggle it is to remain knowing about feeling lost and frightened, and keeping thinking going during the course of an analysis, between the Friday and Monday sessions. It was, the reader may recall, during a difficult holiday break I happened to pick up Bion's 'Weekend' myself and subsequently found it hard to put down. I am continually struck with the enormously long period of Bion's life, which involved staggering suffering, before he found someone - including people to identify with and help him develop. For myself, I am at a stage at the end of this project that I feel ready to put the book down for now. Although, I fully expect the research I have undertaken to provide important axes from which new thoughts can follow in the future. Perhaps I have caught sight of my own autobiography?

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Glossary

A reading of an autobiography is a form of research that examines an autobiographical text.   It can be said to be a literary subgenre of its own. Using a reflexive methodology, or interpretation, findings are proposed about the primary source. Readings of an autobiography typically value subjectivity whilst maintaining an awareness that the reading could only be written by the present author and therefore is not the only way of interpreting events.

Collective memory refers to the knowledge and information shared by a social group, as well as their communal memories, that are also importantly connected with the group's identity. The term has been criticized by David Reift (2016), amongst others, who notes how strong cultural emphases on historic events, often wrongs against a particular group of people, tend to prevail.

Endoskeleton is a term used by Bion in 'Weekend' to describe the successful growth of an individual where healthy resources have developed on the inside (i.e. internal capabilities for thought), which he sometimes refers to as a spine*.* It is the opposite of 'exoskeleton'.

Exoskeleton, sometimes referred to as 'bits of shell' adhering to a body or a 'Curzon-like sheath' in 'Weekend', is a further term used by Bion as the opposite of 'endoskeleton'. It is where internal resources have failed to develop, and thought is not possible.   In its place a defensive exterior has formed that may have been adaptive at an earlier point in time but is now maladaptive in the sense that it prevents the growth of an individual.

Fagging was a public school practice established during the days of British Empire, and still a common occurrence in the Edwardian era, and an attempt to re-create a form of domesticity for boys who were away from the world of home. It involved the personal servitude of a younger child to older boys that mirrored the class-laden practice of having servants. It was established with the premise that the older boys should maintain order but also protect and ensure the happiness of their young 'fags'.   It did not start to phase out until well after WWII and, like other hierarchical relationships, it was often prone to abuses, including sexual abuse, although not always.

Magpie is a term I use in this thesis to describe the point of view, that can easily become an unhelpful belief, that memory only goes for the shiny bits and omits the rest. The term reflects the mythology surrounding the bird, how they take to lining their nests with shiny objects, that has led to many tales over the centuries that they steal jewellery and other riches. Magpie is sometimes used as a nickname for thief. My sense is that allegations of magpie against the validity of autobiographical texts are most likely to occur where there are perceived or actual dangers with authenticity. Ironically, the thief can be viewed as the person who makes the allegation against the memory's validity. The term may be particularly applicable to the survivor genre where stories may not be believed and where socio-political forces continue to come together to maintain the crime of a robbed childhood.

Minefield is a term I use in this thesis to describe a position that tends to be adopted by writers sceptical of autobiographies, but may also be maintained by socio-political forces, where the method is seen as too fraught to be able to retain any relationship to objectivity whatsoever, thus preventing any meaningful ventures into the territory. This may be where the writer's own emotional difficulties obscure the revelation of more truthful facts and, resultantly, only limited details are provided and information pertaining to the complexity of feelings and relationships is avoided. There may be socio-political incentives that perpetuate resistances to exploring such terrain and in bringing non-dominant narratives into wider view.

Phallic masculinity is a destructive form of masculinity that denounces all communicative aspects of masculinity and as such is both misogynistic but also, by default, anti-male as it robs boys and men of their rich and complex emotional lives. It is similar to the popular term 'toxic masculinity' but emphasizes the qualities of machismo, inflation and bigness that are aimed at humiliating ordinary infantile need and smallness.

Psychoanalytic autobiography is a special subgenre of autobiography interested in matters of truth and derived from processes of interior observation that may be more possible after a satisfactory period of psychoanalysis.

Social memory is a term that is favoured over 'collective memory' by the Israeli historian Guy Beiner (2007) given the non-reflexive use of the adjective 'collective'

in many studies on memory. The term 'social memory' emphasizes how human beings are, above all, social beings, and individuals live in a world where experiences exist within relationships.

The enemy, including 'joining the enemy', is Bion's terminology to describe the grievance situation he lives in during 'Weekend' where relationships do not get going. It is of course not only a reference to the mind but also the battlefields of WWI. It is distinct and different to the term 'living with the enemy' which is more reality-based and relational as it acknowledges an individual's internal deficits rather than seeing feelings of hatred only in the other.

The lie is the term that Bion uses in 'Weekend' to refer to the internal gang-like constellation that is brought into being with his traumatic arrival at the prep school (pp. 44 – 45) and that closes its grip on him over the course of his schooldays resulting in a disastrous situation where he cannot make contact with his objects. Its origins can be traced back to his childhood in India on page 16 where his parents, particularly his father, fail to help him with his more ordinary infantile omnipotence. Indeed, he is beaten. The lie is omnipotent and canvasses the destructive and narcissistic propaganda, or fake news, that no good can be found in relationships and that the individual can manage without them, serving to protect the individual from feelings of shame, humiliation, helplessness and vulnerability. It can be understood as an impact of anxiety and deprivation that fortifies the death instinct rather than propagating life and creativity.

The survivor subgenre is a literary subgenre of autobiography that describes memories of neglect and abuse, often those belonging to childhood, written by the adult survivor of the adverse experience.

Web of undirected menace is Bion's term in 'Weekend' used to describe a pre-Freudian state where psychoanalytic understanding is entirely unavailable, resulting in a destructive society and set of relationships, where any given person caught in the web can suffer its harmful effects. It is sometimes used as a way to avoid the possible pitfall of blame attribution and seeing those with responsibilities for looking after children in their more complex personhood, despite their faults.

Wiggling is a term used frequently by Bion in 'Weekend' in place of masturbation, also emphasizing the infantile aspect. At the same time, it is Bion's joke and protest

against the complex, yet toxic, culture that prevailed in segregated boys' Edwardian boarding schools, epitomized in Farrar's 'Eric or, Little by Little' (1858). 'Eric' was a popular boys' morality tale of the age, where masturbation was deliberately not named yet at the same time canvassed falsely, and with religious backing, as leading to death and insanity in a lousy attempt to protect boys from sexual abuses that were rife in public schools. The misguided belief was that if masturbation was not named, boys would not then engage with it or in sexual acts with each other. Inevitably, such an approach censored and stifled their adolescent sexual development in harmful ways.