

Night Vision: Wilfred Bion's Epistemological Poetics and the Experience of the First World War. By Dominic Angeloch. London: Karnac Books, 2025.
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The first comprehensive study of Wilfred Bion's autobiographical and literary writings: an in-depth analysis of how, throughout his life, Bion sought a narrative form for his traumatic experiences as a tank commander in the First World War, and how he developed a unique writing style aimed at generating insight and cognition. All his life, Wilfred Bion strove to find a narrative form for the traumatic experiences he went through as a tank commander in the First World War. The body of his autobiographical and literary works documents his efforts to wrest a biography of his own from the most devastating processes of world history. As a whole, it is the result of a lifelong struggle to express something unspeakable, to restore something destroyed. What emerges is something like the prehistory of the psychological catastrophe from which Bion was unable to escape until his death. As such, however, these autobiographical fragments also reflect the prehistory of the historical catastrophe under whose spell the world still stands today. This book is the first comprehensive study of Bion's autobiographical and literary writings. Drawing on the concepts of experience and thinking developed in his theoretical and clinical works, with which they are genetically linked, it discusses Bion's strategies of writing and cognition, and for the first time systematically places a hitherto unexplored part of his work in the context of his entire oeuvre. Following the chronological thread of his life, from childhood in India through youth in England to his experience of the First World War in France and Belgium, the book traces how Bion developed his unique method of writing. Detailed narrative analyses reveal the painful work of coming to terms with the war experiences which had haunted him throughout his life – a crippling trauma whose causes extended far beyond the individual and private. The book thus provides deep insights into Bion's life, his thinking, and his writing, and offers the reader a portrait of the primal catastrophe of the twentieth century and its devastating effects.