

Journeys in Reading in Wartime: Some Australian Soldiers' Reading Experiences in the First World War

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WHY DO MEN CONTINUE TO FIGHT IN WARTIME? A RECENT BOOK BY ALEXANDER Watson investigates psychological resilience in the British and German armies during the First World War. While much has been made of men who could not cope with the pressures of war and suffered nervous collapse, he argues little study has been made of the vast majority who *were* able to endure the horrors of trench warfare (5). Watson does not look specifically at the role of the imagination or the intellect in explaining the psychological resilience of British soldiers; rather, he looks to factors such as effective battalion or regimental cohesion, religion and faith, good leadership and support from the home front. This article broadens out the frame of Watson's analysis by considering the ways in which soldiers engaged intellectually, imaginatively and creatively with the world of print. Such an approach provides deeper understandings of individual responses to war and argues for the importance of acknowledging the intellect and imagination within a strategy of endurance.

Historians of reading have recently become more concerned with questions of 'what, where, how, and why people read' (for example, Intrator 245). Finkelstein and McCleery argue that reading can be seen as a social phenomenon, with different readers in different periods and contexts deriving different meaning from their reading (25). Jonathan Rose, in his influential study of the intellectual experiences of the British working classes, states that his mission is 'to enter the

minds of ordinary readers in history, to discover what they read and how they read it' (3). This scholarship, along with the work of other scholars of reading such as Martyn Lyons and Janice Radway, has informed my approach to book history and the history of reading, an approach that aims to explore the diverse lived experiences and contexts of reading.

This article explores three quite different intellectual journeys through war to gain insight into individual encounters with reading. These stories may seem exceptional. The men discussed here were perhaps not representative members of the Australian Imperial Force (AIF): they could read and write to a high standard, for example. They kept diaries and wrote letters that demonstrate that they had active creative and intellectual lives. But it does not necessarily follow that such men were formally educated, middle-class officers. Indeed, of the three men profiled here, none were officers. Yet it is fair to say that these men have been selected because their stories provide entry into particular aspects of the intellectual and imaginative experiences of war. Documents survive that allow us into their worlds—many who served did not leave such records. Therefore we should proceed with caution in seeing these stories as representative of all (or even most) experiences of war. Nevertheless, other records—for example, the data provided by military and charity organisations, as well as many other letters and diaries—reveal that men actively engaged with reading, writing and other aspects of the life of the mind even as they faced the hardships and challenges of war and life in the military.

During the First World War, both charities and military authorities made significant efforts to provide soldiers with reading material (along with other recreational and educational amenities). Such efforts generally reflected a concern on the part of military authorities, government, and even the home front to make sure that men in uniform were both well-supported and usefully occupied. While men used these recreational and educational amenities for a variety of purposes, and often contrary to official expectations, generally such services boosted the morale of soldiers, and many soldiers made mention of using such services, including for reading, in their letters and diaries (for a fuller discussion of this see Laugesen).

Each of the stories discussed here reveal that soldiers actively pursued a life of the mind while serving in the First World War. These individual stories reveal the diverse uses to which reading could be put, beyond merely distracting men from the boredom and tedium that was the lot of the average soldier and even more so the prisoner of war. Reading could form part of their education and assist in their imagining of, and planning for, a life after the war. Reading could stimulate and shape political views and concerns. Reading could offer mental escape and connections to home. In nearly all cases, reading could lift men out of

their immediate surroundings and focus them on home and a life away from, and after, the war. In this way reading helped to provide them with something like optimism for the future.

William Slater: reading and politics

In March 1918, not long before William Slater returned to Australia to take up a seat in the Victorian state legislative assembly, he recorded in his diary: 'Some of the books we are reading afford an insight into some of the hidden causes of the war. Behind it all is the sinister evil of secret diplomacy and treaty. How can we honestly claim that it's Democracy's war?' (Slater and Widdowson diary entry 16 March 1918) For William Slater, an Australian who refused to take up arms but enlisted as a stretcher-bearer in the 10th Field Ambulance of the AIF from a sense of duty, reading was one of the intellectual occupations that helped him make sense of the war. Reading did not provide him with comfort as it did for some; reading did not tell him that death in a righteous cause was glorious; instead, reading informed his political development and convinced him of the necessity for change in the post-war world.

William Slater was born in May 1890 in the small Victorian town of Wangaratta. His mother, abandoned by Slater's father, raised William and his siblings, but the family barely scraped by once they moved to Melbourne, where Slater grew up. He left school early, but found a haven in the Try Society, an organisation set up to rescue boys from the streets (Landells 5, 7). For Slater, as a young boy living in poverty, the Try Society offered opportunities for learning and improvement that he embraced. The Try Society had an impressive library collection that enjoyed pride of place in the Society's rooms. While there is no evidence remaining that Slater read those books, family members note that as a young man he spent many of his evenings in the Prahran Municipal Library reading. Books and words played a formative role in Slater's early life. So did politics.

In the years preceding the First World War, Slater began to develop an interest in radical politics, attending Socialist meetings and night classes to further educate himself. He also pursued study of the law, much of this education aided by the use of the Prahran library (Cannon). Slater opposed the war when it began, but as it continued into 1916, he came to believe that he needed to contribute in some way. He headed overseas as a stretcher-bearer with the 10th Field Ambulance in the middle of 1916, and served with the AIF on the Western Front. While in England and France he kept diaries and wrote letters home to Dan McNamara, a Victorian Labor politician and assistant secretary of the Australian Labor Party (Cook). These letters and diaries offer insight into the war experiences of Slater and the further evolution of his political consciousness during these years.

For Slater, England offered him a vision of all that was wrong with capitalist nations, and it was from this political position that he opposed conscription in Australia. He saw conscription as seeking 'to lay the foundation stones of the very military caste and tyranny against which it is wielding all its strength' (Slater Papers, Slater to McNamara letter 1 October 1916). Slater believed conscription in Britain had 'destroyed in one fell stroke many centuries' work in the cause of Liberty and freedom of conscience' (Slater Papers, Slater to McNamara letter 1 October 1916). Reading material about conscription circulated among the soldiers. Slater noted in one letter to Dan McNamara that pamphlets pushing for conscription were circulating through camp and were even to be seen 'pasted on the walls of each of the huts' (Slater Papers, Slater to McNamara letter 2 December 1917). He doubted this effort was 'cutting much ice', 'as far as I can gather the views of the majority of fellows in this camp (and they have all been across to France) are distinctly hostile to conscription'. Nevertheless, he fumed, 'it makes one's blood boil when one sees the lying statements that are being circulated in order to induce an affirmative vote'.

Slater's diaries began in France in 1917. The diary entries, written in two leather-bound pocket diaries, are brief but reflect Slater's ongoing intellectual and political engagement, stimulated through reading, educational activities and the experience of war itself. Slater was a regular reader of newspapers, but unlike many of his fellow soldiers who read mainstream newspapers from England and home, he had sent to him from Australia copies of radical political papers, including the *Ballarat Echo* and *The Worker*. Of *The Worker* he noted that the views expressed therein 'coincide with mine and how different they are from the views of the jingoistic war-mongering press'. He further reflected in the same diary entry, 'I still have many arguments as to the real causes of this war on which I am keeping an open mind' (Slater and Widdowson diary entry 27 April 1917). For Slater, such newspapers offered a view of events and the world that he could trust. He was scornful of the mainstream press. Writing in 1917 after being wounded, he argued that '[o]ur papers have lied to us from the beginning [and] they are doing it today' (Slater Papers, Slater to McNamara letter 2 October 1917).

Slater's experiences suggest that soldiers were not always passive consumers of war news, and his views reflect a more general cynicism about the news that other soldiers shared. Slater used his reading to reinforce his questioning of the standard views of the war. His firsthand experience of the war and travelling to Britain served to convince him of the need for fundamental change in societies such as Britain and Australia. Slater's reading thus consisted largely of a diet of non-fiction works, many of which were concerned with current affairs, and which reinforced his world-view. While on leave in London, he obtained a

number of books and pamphlets: George Lansbury's *Your Share in Poverty* (probably a pamphlet, undated), R.L. Outhwaite's *Land or Revolution* (1917), and H.N. Brailsford's *A League of Nations* (1917) (Slater and Widdowson Diary entry 4 January 1918). He also read William Morris' *News from Nowhere—a Utopian Sketch* (1890) (Slater and Widdowson diary entry 15 October 1917). The books by Outhwaite and Brailsford were both very new when Slater read them, suggesting his interest in contemporary political thought. Outhwaite's book argued for land nationalisation through the introduction of a single-tax system; Brailsford was a well-known left-wing journalist. The book by William Morris was a classic of utopian socialism.

As the end of the war neared, Slater was seeking out books with ideas for post-war reconstruction (Slater and Widdowson diary entry 4 January 1918). In March 1918 he noted in his diary that he was 'reading quite a lot and have perused some good stuff'. This 'good stuff' included William Paul's *The State, its Origins and Function* (1918), which he believed 'excellently reviews the class struggle down through history, analysing its aggravated nature today'. The book prompted him to muse: 'How can our ideals be the more speedily attained—evolutionarily or revolutionarily?' (Slater and Widdowson diary entry 15 March 1918)

Slater had good reason to be up-to-date and well-informed in political thought. In December 1917, while Slater was serving in France, he was elected to the Victorian state parliament as Labor Member for the Legislative Council in the seat of Dundas, a shire west of Melbourne. Around the time he received the cable asking if he would contest the seat, Slater was wounded while in Messines in Flanders—he received a shrapnel wound in the leg (Slater Papers, Slater to McNamara letter 2 October 1917). Slater headed back to Australia in early 1918, having been declared medically unfit. He was discharged from service on 17 May that year (Cannon).

Slater's political views were sharpened by the war. His journey had seen him through his reading explore issues that impassioned him. These experiences informed an active political and legal career in the years following 1918. He campaigned for issues such as workers' compensation and, perhaps appropriately for someone for whom books meant so much, the creation and funding of public libraries in Victoria. Through the 1920s and 1930s, Slater served at various times as solicitor-general, attorney-general and minister of agriculture in various Victorian Labor governments. In May of 1940, he was made speaker of the Legislative Assembly and in 1942 was named by John Curtin as Australia's first Minister to the Soviet Union (Cannon). He died in 1960.

Douglas Grant: reading in captivity

Compared to the other two men examined in this article, Douglas Grant's personal traces are fewer. He did not keep a diary and only a few of his letters to the Red Cross can be traced. However, Grant's story provides us with a way into the experiences of Australian Prisoners of War and their experiences of print, as well as being the story of one of a small number of Indigenous Australians to serve in the First World War.

Douglas Grant was born around 1885 in Queensland; he was taken into the care of Europeans after his parents were killed in 1887 and sent to the parents of one of the men who took him, Robert Grant. They lived in Lithgow, New South Wales. The Grants adopted the little boy who they named Douglas. In 1897, he won first prize in a drawing competition to celebrate Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee, with his drawing of a bust of Queen Victoria (Coulthard-Clark 76). As a young man, Grant worked in Sydney as a draughtsman for an engineering company, and just before the war, he left to work as a woolclasser on a rural property. He enlisted in January 1916, and was assigned as a private to the 34th Battalion. As he was about to be sent overseas, he was prevented from leaving the country by the Aborigines Protection Board (Aborigines were officially barred from serving) (Clark, 24). He enlisted again, and in August 1916 was sent to France where he joined the 13th Battalion. During the first battle of Bullecourt, France, in April 1917, Grant was wounded and taken prisoner by the Germans. Grant spent the rest of the war as a Prisoner of War. He was first held in a camp at Wittenberg, and was later transferred to Wünsdorf, near Berlin. As Christopher Coulthard-Clark writes: 'he became an object of curiosity to German doctors, scientists and anthropologists—the sculptor Rudolf Markoeser modelled his bust in ebony—and was given comparative freedom' (Coulthard-Clark 76-7).

During the First World War, about 3, 850 Australian men were taken prisoner by the Germans while fighting on the Western Front between April 1916 and November 1918. Conditions varied from camp to camp, but in some cases were very poor. By the end of the war, some 9% of these men had died in captivity (Australian War Memorial 10). One immediate problem for these men once they had been taken captive was boredom. They were no longer soldiers in the sense that their basic function—that of fighting—was no longer available to them. As Adrian Gilbert observes of men taken prisoner in Europe in the Second World War, many felt depression, frustration, and even guilt after capture (42). How to meaningfully occupy their time became an important issue in their overall psychological well-being.

The British and Dominion charities played an important role in providing some amenities to imprisoned troops. A British Prisoner of War book fund was

established which provided educational works to all British and Empire soldiers, and the Australian Branch of the Red Cross also took up a role in providing books, as well as food and clothing parcels, to Australian prisoners. In praising the work of the British Prisoner of War Book Fund, the *London Times* noted: 'prisoners cannot live by bread alone, and not even a pot of margarine or a thrilling story by X or Y can fill the void. They want food for the mind as well as for the stomach and the imagination, and, unless their minds are to decay, they must have it ...' (cited in Koch 18).

The size of POW camp libraries varied considerably. Many camps were poorly stocked, and for many prisoners, any sort of reading material was hard to come by. G.W. Boyce, writing his memoir of captivity published just after the war, noted: 'We hardly knew what to do to amuse ourselves, we were not allowed to read any English papers, and our parcels were always searched for stray letters' (Boyce 18). He makes no note of any library. In many instances, only officers were given access to amenities such as libraries. Captain A.E. Dent, in his memoirs, noted that the library in his POW camp was the 'property of the officers'. Charles Mills, rank unknown but an officer, also made this observation. Writing to the Red Cross in January 1917, he noted that officers had numerous amenities, books were in good supply and 'each nationality has its own library cupboard' (Chomley Papers, Mills to Coghill letter 5 January 1917).

For Douglas Grant, who was a private, other lines of division were encountered as an Indigenous Australian. As a person with a different skin colour to many of his fellow prisoners, he was given charge of non-European prisoners. He worked with the Red Cross to provide these men with comforts, including books. The men under his care included Indian merchant seamen, who did not receive the support of many charitable organisations, and he was particularly concerned to make sure these men received books, among other provisions (Adam-Smith 57).

Grant was one of many correspondents of Mary Chomley, an Australian woman living in London who ran the Australian Red Cross office there and who provided many Australian prisoners with much-needed provisions that saw them through their captivity (Anderson 44-6; Chomley Papers). In some of the many letters sent to her by the POWs, we can glimpse the importance of not only the provisions sent but the human contact and sense of support provided by Chomley and the other women of the Red Cross. Private John Colin Elliott expressed to Chomley his frustration at captivity: 'Do you think this war will ever finish. We are like a lot of parrots here, closed up in a wired barn yard, we should be good whistlers when we get home' (Chomley Papers, Elliott to Chomley n.d.).

The letters to Chomley reveal the POWs' hunger for reading material. Soldiers wrote requesting technical books, dictionaries and fiction. Private Roy Browne,

for example, asked for books on motor mechanics, writing that 'these books are not merely to give amusement but are essential to a successful career when I return to civilian life and [I] wish to take advantage of the present time to profit by study, [in] the absence of intimate contact' (Chomley Papers, letter 18 January 1918). Private Roland Carter, imprisoned in Lossen in Germany, was less interested in study and keener to indulge in some of his favourite novels. He requested some books by writers H. Rider Haggard and E. Philip Oppenheim (Chomley Papers, letter 29 January 1918).

Douglas Grant also wrote to Mary Chomley. In a letter in May 1918, Grant requested volumes by Australian poets Henry Lawson and Adam Lindsay Gordon. He also asked that if these were not available, perhaps he could have some of the 'Wayback novels' (a series of now largely forgotten Australian novels such as *The Waybacks: in town and at home* (1902) by Henry Fletcher). To Grant, such books were 'something in which to pass away a few leisure moments which are generally filled with that longing for Home Sweet Home far across the sea, and to read of it in prose verse or story would help to overcome that longing' (Chomley Papers, letter 5 May 1918). Many of the Australian POWs requested books by Australian authors: Sergeant R.J. Camden asked for Banjo Paterson's *The Man From Snowy River and Other Verses* (1895) and books by popular Australian author Steele Rudd; Private D. Greenlees commented extensively on Australian literature in his letter to the Red Cross asking for a copy of Marcus Clarke's *For the Term of His Natural Life* (1874), which he had already read once, but wished to read again (Chomley Papers, letter n.d.; letter August 1918). Requests for Australian literature often went unfulfilled, however, due to the difficulty of finding Australian material in any great volume in England.

Douglas Grant also told Chomley about his Indigenous heritage in his letters to her: 'Perhaps Madam you are not aware that I am a native of Australia, adopted in infancy and educated by my foster Parents whose honoured names I bear, imbued me with the feelings and spirit of love of Home, Honour and Patriotism'. In a letter concerning Grant's whereabouts, Chomley commented on his indigeneity: 'We are very much interested to hear that he is a real Australian, so we must try and take special care of him on that account' (Grant Papers, letter Chomley to Evans 4 July 1916).

At the end of the war, Grant was repatriated to England, and in April 1919 sent home to Australia. He returned to his job in Sydney, but only stayed there a few years before moving back to Lithgow where he had lived with the Grant family. In Lithgow, Grant ran a show on a local radio station addressing the concerns of returned soldiers, and after returning to Sydney in the 1930s, worked as a clerk at Callan Park Mental Asylum. Why he went to work in this nineteenth century institution is unknown, but the asylum had been used during the war years as a

convalescent hospital for shell-shocked soldiers, and might well have continued to house some veterans with psychiatric problems well into the post-war period. Grant may have felt a desire to particularly help such patients, or simply have felt empathy with those who suffered from mental illnesses.

In February 1929, Grant published a protest in the Sydney magazine *Sunday Pictorial* that highlighted the prejudice experienced by Aborigines. Calling on the respect due him as a veteran of the First World War, Grant provided a lengthy protest on the treatment of Aborigines (5). Grant's later years, after the end of the Second World War, were spent in a Salvation Army hostel and he developed an alcohol problem (Coulthard-Clark 76-7). The war had clearly shown Grant how he was considered by society: prevented from leaving Australia without permission simply because he was an Aborigine; becoming a focus of scientific curiosity for the Germans when captured while serving on the Western Front; returning to Australia to face ongoing racial discrimination as an Aborigine, and his education and status as a veteran overlooked. How much other racism Grant encountered we do not know. Grant's desire for Australian reading material while a prisoner reflected his desire to engage intellectually, as well as to connect to home—and in this he was like many of his fellow POWs who sought what comfort they could find in reading during captivity.

Albert Coates: education and reading

Albert Coates served in both world wars. In the First World War, he served first as a medical orderly and then as a linguist with the intelligence staff of the AIF. In the Second World War, as a Lieutenant Colonel with the Australian Army Medical Corps, he was captured after the fall of Singapore and spent the war trying to keep men alive while prisoners of the Japanese. The First World War was a formative experience for Coates in which education and books played an important role. His journey through war tells us much about the importance of education—not just formally through talks conducted by the YMCA or the AIF Education Scheme which was instituted in 1918 to help prepare soldiers for post-war occupations, but through the personal desire for knowledge and self-improvement.

Albert Ernest Coates was born in 1895 in Victoria, the eldest of seven children. His parents were not well-off, but they valued education (Webb 452). While Albert's formal education ended early, his father encouraged a love of reading and literature (Coates and Rosenthal 5). When he was fourteen, Coates was apprenticed as a bookbinder at the Ballarat Litho and Printing Company, which enabled him to dip into books that came into the factory for binding (Coates and Rosenthal 7). His talents and desire for education were recognised and nurtured through his church, with his Methodist minister assisting his study. Coates's

success in studies enabled him to win a job in the Postal Department—a position that allowed him to prepare to study medicine (Coates and Rosenthal 11-12). Before he could embark on this path to fulfilling his aspiration of becoming a doctor, the war began and he enlisted immediately. Not tall enough for duties as a soldier, Coates became a medical orderly and was sent first to Egypt and Gallipoli with the 7th Battalion. In March 1916, his battalion was sent to France and the Western Front (Webb 453).

Like many other soldiers, Coates found religion and religious reading an important solace. He was raised as an evangelical Methodist, and reading the Bible provided invaluable comfort through the war. When travelling on the SS *Honarata* heading to war, he wrote home that the Bible provided some value 'where there is so little that is elevating' (Coates Letter 14 November 1914). In a more general way, his religious beliefs informed other reading choices. While serving, Coates read a novel entitled *Richard Bruce* which he described in his diary as '[a] splendid story of Chicago life among Christian young men' (Coates Diary entry 29 November 1914). In such reading, he was not exceptional. Many soldiers turned to the Bible and spiritual reading to both maintain their faith under challenging circumstances, and perhaps to make sense of the war.

For Coates, however, it was learning and knowledge that figured most prominently in his experiences of reading through the war years. He had studied French and German as a youth, and his skill in languages later earned him a position as a linguist with intelligence staff. His diaries and letters reflect his desire to acquire new languages, as he records learning a small amount of Arabic while in Egypt, and some Flemish while in Belgium (Diary entry 19 October 1915, i). In a letter home written from Egypt, he commented that Arabic could be 'very useful for conversing with the natives ... and they have a great deal more respect for one who speaks a little of their own tongue' (Letter 19 October 1915). He noted reading many books in French during his time there, including a copy of the New Testament and Thomas a Kempis' *Imitations of Christ* (Diary entry August 1917). In 1917, he was reading in German. He wrote home: 'I wish I had my old German books from home. However, reading matter in this language is fairly plentiful and I amuse myself and spend my time very profitably in studying recent German newspapers, books, etc.' (Diary entry 27 July 1917).

Alongside languages, Coates' other great interest was science. As well as reading Darwin's *Origin of Species*, he studied physics and chemistry textbooks. Coates asked his aunt living in Britain to send him a copy of Alexander Smith's *Introduction to Inorganic Chemistry* 'as I intend to read up my chemistry and get a little experience in dispensing' (Letter 26 February 1916). On receiving it, he wrote in his diary: 'My book from England turns up. It is about the size of a family bible, but still I can well afford to do without a shirt to carry it. It is the best book

on inorganic Chemistry I have yet seen' (Diary entry 27 April 1916). Coates was perhaps somewhat unusual in his willingness to sacrifice comfort and a clean shirt in order to carry a heavy textbook about with him. However, his desire to better himself and continue to pursue his study was less exceptional.

For many men, the decision to study was motivated by a desire to better cope in their unusual surroundings—for example, learning some words in a local language or knowing more about an area—but also allowed them to focus on their post-war life. For Coates, study connected him to civilian life and his desire to become a doctor. Writing home in 1917, Coates reflected on how, after three years in the army, 'one is saturated with things military, one thinks and acts in military fashion and after all one's mind, body and soul is militarised so to speak' (Diary entry 3 November 1917). Yet Coates's diary entries and letters suggest a man who continued to keep a space in his life for his own interests and aspirations. Writing again only a couple of weeks later, he told his family that if anyone was to enter his room in his billet they would 'probably think the dressing table a second-hand book stall' (Letter 11 November 1917). He reflected on whether his post-war career might see him make use of his language skills, and he continued to pursue his religious reading.

In 1918, Coates returned to Australia. After arriving back in Melbourne, he enrolled at the University of Melbourne, while returning to his public service job during the day. With some financial support from the Repatriation Department, he was able to keep up his study and have enough money for the textbooks and instruments he needed to become a doctor (Coates and Rosenthal 26-7). Coates achieved his dream and became a successful surgeon (Webb 454). Coates is perhaps best remembered today as one of a number of doctors taken prisoner by the Japanese army after the fall of Singapore. He helped to keep alive many men, and was considered as a hero by many. After the war ended, Coates helped to document and supply information about war crimes perpetrated by the Japanese, and later testified at the International War Crimes Trial (Coates and Rosenthal 151, 163).

The three stories told here are both exceptional and unexceptional examples of the wartime reading experiences of soldiers. While each of these men were perhaps not typical of many soldiers in certain respects—Slater's radical politics, Grant's indigeneity, Coates's exceptional dedication to study—each reflect more general features of reading in the context of war. Many men engaged with politics and non-fiction in their reading, as well as reading fiction for diversion; many prisoners of war and soldiers read to connect to home and Australia; many soldiers saw study as a way of preparing themselves for life after the war and as a means of self-improvement.

Reading was an activity that held diverse meanings and value for Australian soldiers, as scholarship has shown is true of reading in many other contexts. The traces of wartime reading allows us a fascinating insight into the individual reading experiences of a group of men at a certain period of time, and reconstructing such experiences provides an important contribution to the history of reading. The story of individual readers can illuminate broader understandings of the history of reading, and the important role that books have played in many lives. Reading is perhaps only a small part of individual lives and experiences, but as the three stories told in this essay suggest, it can be vital.

Finally, understanding the role of reading and print in the particular context of wartime is important. It not only suggests the importance of reading and print within a strategy of endurance for soldiers, but in considering reading within institutional and organisational settings it has ongoing relevance. The psychological and social impact of print and reading practices is clear, and uncovering the history of these practices remains a significant task of the book historian.

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