



The Round Table

The Commonwealth Journal of International Affairs

ISSN: 0035-8533 (Print) 1474-029X (Online) Journal homepage: <https://www.tandfonline.com/loi/crrt20>

Dominion Cartoon Satire as Trench Culture Narratives: Complaints, Endurance and Stoicism

Jane Chapman & Dan Ellin

To cite this article: Jane Chapman & Dan Ellin (2014) Dominion Cartoon Satire as Trench Culture Narratives: Complaints, Endurance and Stoicism, *The Round Table*, 103:2, 175-192, DOI: 10.1080/00358533.2014.898500

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/00358533.2014.898500>



© 2014 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Ltd, trading as Taylor & Francis Group, on behalf of The Round Table Ltd



Published online: 04 Apr 2014.



Submit your article to this journal [↗](#)



Article views: 872



View related articles [↗](#)



View Crossmark data [↗](#)



Citing articles: 1 View citing articles [↗](#)

Dominion Cartoon Satire as Trench Culture Narratives: Complaints, Endurance and Stoicism

JANE CHAPMAN* AND DAN ELLIN**

*Lincoln University and Research Associate Wolfson College Cambridge, Cambridge, UK;

**Warwick University, Warwick, UK

ABSTRACT *Although Dominion soldiers' Great War field publications are relatively well known, the way troops created cartoon multi-panel formats in some of them has been neglected as a record of satirical social observation. Visual narrative humour provides a 'bottom-up' perspective for journalistic observations that in many cases capture the spirit of the army in terms of stoicism, buoyed by a culture of internal complaints. Troop concerns expressed in the early comic strips of Australians, Canadians, New Zealanders and British were similar. They shared a collective editorial purpose of morale boosting among the ranks through the use of everyday narratives that elevated the anti-heroism of the citizen soldier, portrayed as a transnational everyman in the service of empire. The regenerative value of disparagement humour provided a redefinition of courage as the very act of endurance on the Western Front.*

KEY WORDS: First World War, Canadian, Australian, New Zealander, trench culture, cartoons, trench newspapers, humour, courage, Western Front

Introduction

The First World War represented the peak of soldier newspaper production, thus textual expressions by soldiers in their own trench and troopship newspapers are relatively well known (Fuller, 1990; Seal, 1990, 2013a, 2013b; Kent, 1999; Nelson, 2010, 2011), but the way the men created and used cartoon multi-panel format is not. Humorous visual self-expression represents a record of satirical social observation from a 'bottom-up' perspective, with potential to contribute to the trend towards use of a wider range of sources in First World War historiography.¹

Why cartoon narratives? Today's protagonists turn to their mobile telephones for visual communication, but it is all too easy to forget that throughout the golden age of the press during the early 20th century, comic strip illustrations acted as a comparable tool for journalistic observation and comment on a regular basis. This ephemeral medium can tell us the attitudes of ordinary soldiers and aspects of collective First World War experience, concerns about daily life, complaints about officers, medical services,

Correspondence Address: Jane Chapman, Wolfson College, Barton Road, Cambridge CB3 9BB, UK. Email: jlc69@cam.ac.uk

© 2014 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Ltd, trading as Taylor & Francis Group, on behalf of The Round Table Ltd

This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>), which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

discomforts, food and drink, leave, military routines and soldiers' expectations versus emerging reality.

By the outbreak of war there were already some Dominion precedents for comic strips aimed at adults. *The International Socialist*, a Sydney-based weekly, ran a strip with a main character on its front page—'The Adventures of William Mug'—from July 1913 to September 1914.² During the war the satirical ordinary man in cartoon form was continued, not just by celebrity cartoonists at the front, such as Bruce Bairnsfather, but by the men themselves.

In troop publications, the central comic character was the citizen soldier—a volunteer recruit in the lower ranks. This was the ordinary soldier, the everyman as main actor, portrayed as a source of satire, entertainment and morale boosting. Although they were also popular, single panel cartoons have not been included in this study as it aims to explore contributions made by the neglected popular medium of multi-panel visual observation. These sequential narratives had a contribution to make towards the origins of the newspaper comic strip.³ This article explores how the interaction between the picture and textual elements in this form of communication should be construed, focusing mainly, but not exclusively, on Canadian examples from the Western Front.

Shared Experiences

The two panel cartoon format provided an ideal way of presenting quick, simple contrasting narratives of shared experiences. Longer sequential storylines could add further sophistications to the format, such as a more complicated storyline with several events, episodes, or milestones. The comic strip genre as it appears in trench publications was not usually formalised by the symmetric panel framing and regular characters that are commonplace today. Text captions and balloon dialogue were more frequent than box borders.

In terms of content, complaints were central to the genre: these began even during initial training, and were not confined to any particular Dominion nationality, or to life at the front. For example, 'Where Life is Not Monotonous', a multi-panel narrative, very cleverly uses the same visual to illustrate a range of different training situations. Thus, a visual of two officers talking in front of a squad of very bored-looking soldiers is reproduced six times with different captions that include 'Bayonet Fighting', 'Squad Drill' and 'A Tale of Adventure' (*Chevrons to Stars*, October 1917, p. 52). Figure 1a, b also tackles military routines. Troops carried up to 60 lb of kit, often on route marches during training that intended to accustom the men to marching at the front. Marches of between four to eight miles with full kit were common (Bet-El, 1990, pp. 80–81).

The 'voice' of the ordinary soldier has often been articulated in a 'top-down' literary form by the better educated among them, as letters, diaries and memoirs. Whereas this cultural voice of the officer class and war poets has been hugely influential (Fussell, 1975), more recently scholars have adopted a more 'bottom-up' approach (Morton, 1993). In addition, much of the scholarship on *mentalités* during the war centres on psychological human resilience (Watson, 2008) and emotional survival (Roper, 2009), but by and large without resort to trench publications as a source, despite the fact that publications included parodies of news stories and of advertisements, snippets of gossip, jokes, poetry, anecdotes, cartoons as well as sequential illustrative narratives. Nevertheless, this large body of material (800 editions from a variety of countries held by Cambridge University library alone, but some without cartoons) is significant

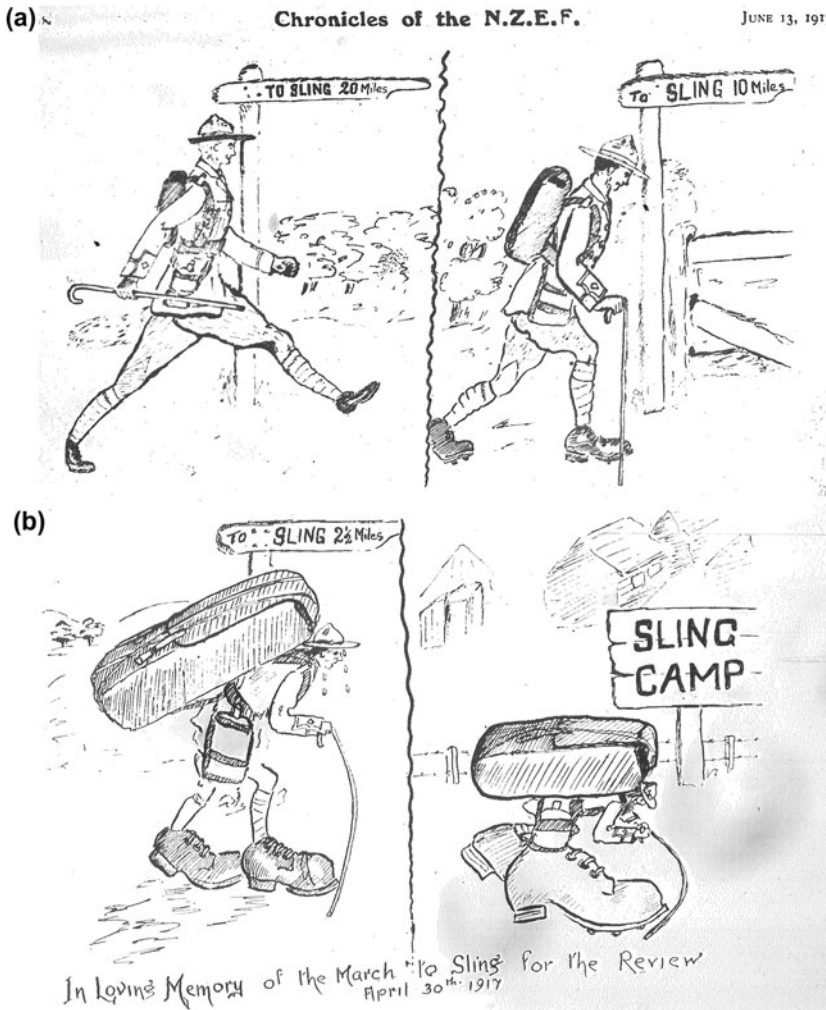


Figure 1 a, b. Sling, the Salisbury Plain camp where reinforcements were trained and casualties rehabilitated (*Chronicles of the NZEF*, 1917, vol. 2, no. 5, pp. 180–181).

because it represents an increase in the number of participant voices using an accessible form of publishing.⁴

Some troop publications were supported officially and printed on the Western Front, either on abandoned French presses (as with *The Wipers Times*) or sent for printing to Paris or London. Official journals tended to have higher standards of production and more illustrative material, although this was not always the case, especially if the smaller, more makeshift publications, such as the Australian *Ca Ne Fait Rien* from the Western Front, could boast a talented caricaturist (Chapman and Ellin, 2012). However, there were usually more and better produced sequential cartoons in newspapers with greater resources, such as the Canadian *Listening Post*.

Many were produced, written and conceived by lower ranks for their peers, that is, by, with and for citizen soldiers. Scholars have recognised that journalism has traditionally also provided a service to, by and for ‘imagined communities’ (Anderson, 1991; Allan and Thorsen, 2009; Chapman and Nuttall, 2011). Yet citizens’ journalism has not generally been historicised, overlooking previous precedents such as trench publications.

Cartoons as Imagined Communities of Identity

Using humorous content, soldiers’ illustrative narratives drew on their own oral culture of songs, anecdotes and gossip to consolidate and communicate their own specific collective morality and outlook. Recruits, by definition, were positioned in a new community that needed to express an identity, and they used collective communication to cement cohesion. Trench publications were influenced by oral culture, with slang, humour, songs and music hall performance all acting as badges of identity, but also as a means of uniting otherwise disparate Empire nationalities (Ashworth, 1980, p. 48; Cook, 2009, p. 238; 2013, p. 344).

In fact, the language and in-jokes may well have been incomprehensible to those on the home front who read them (Seal, 2013b, p. 14). For example, a special edition of the Australian *The Yandoo* was entitled: ‘Chatty Number: Printed in a Fritz Dugout’ (Australian War Memorial, 1918, 1 September 1917, folder 5, vol. 3, part 4). As a running joke, the ‘R and R’ story of a night out in town that was featured as a front page in July 1918 with a heading ‘Issued in No Man’s Land’ (Australian War Memorial, 1918, folder 10, vol. 111, part 11) depicted a routine referred to as ‘Tummy and Tub’. ‘Tub’ shows the men’s communal bathing, a big bath before they go out. One of the nine nude bathers in the middle of the huge water barrel asks ‘Who says I’m chatty?’ The reader can only understand the illustration with the shared knowledge that lice were known as ‘chats’. ‘Tummy’ shows a French peasant woman who has rustled up the usual menu for soldiers, egg and chips. An Australian soldier sits at her table, happily brandishing a knife and fork. Her speech balloon asks ‘Good Oh, Eh Monsieur?!’. He replies ‘Oofs and chips. Tray bon madarm’. Again, ‘franglais’ language formed part of daily conversation on the Western Front.

Similar knowledge is required to appreciate the humour of Figure 2. It refers to a shell known as a rum jar because of its likeness to the gallon SRD (Special Red Demerara) jars used to transport the rum ration (Cook, 2000, p. 7). The wordplay centres on ‘S. R. D.’ or ‘seldom reaches destination’ for rum, as opposed to the shell, which ‘seldom fails to reach its destination’.

David Kent (1999, p. 8) points out that ‘In a sense the field publications became the corporate diaries of tens of thousands of servicemen. These publications allowed them to recall and share experiences among themselves while also, in many cases, transmitting that experience to the people at home’. The *Listening Post*, for example, was sent home, along with other publications that included British journals—evidence that Canadians saw themselves as part of the British army. The last post-war editions of the newspaper were more like souvenir publications. This publication of the 7th Infantry Battalion, British Columbia Regiment, was published twice monthly (‘Huns permitting’) and was available from a military tailor in London’s Strand, the canteens of most Canadian units and army, and YMCA canteens in Canadian areas. The editorial team

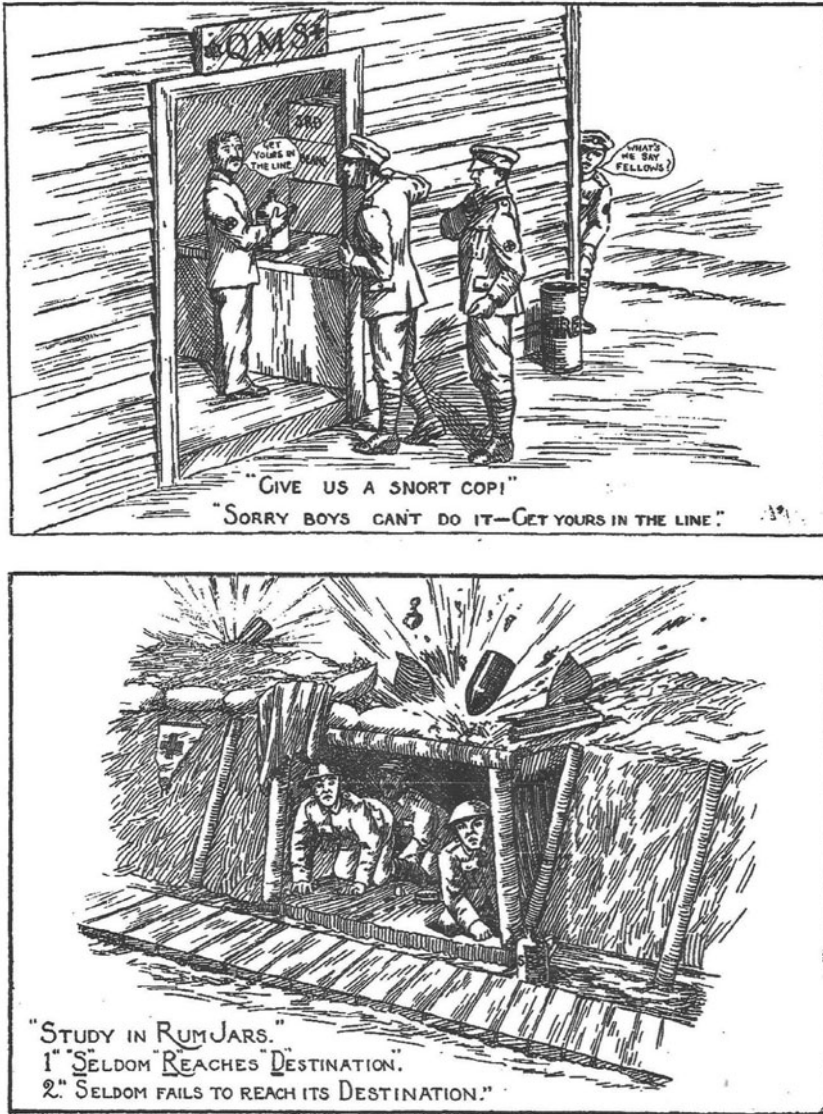


Figure 2. 'Rum Jar', *In and Out*, 1918, vol. 1 p. 18.

consisted of editors Captain W. F. Orr, Major D. Philpot and Major A. C. Nation. The news editor was a private, J. W. Campbell (later sergeant). In terms of its production style, it fell midway between the more modest publications and the semi-professional journals (Seal, 2013b, pp. 26–28).

This article's sample of approximately 100 mainly Canadian multi-panel cartoons provides a sense of personal agency, manifesting a desire for control over their environment in order to encourage endurance and perseverance as a moral code. This, it will be argued, can be interpreted as a new definition of courage and loyalty. Feelings of

geographic isolation prompted some Dominion troops to produce a record for friends and family back home, a motivation that was particularly relevant in the case of troopship publications on the return journey to Australia.⁵ Despite the fact that Canadians were generally the most prolific producers of the Empire, especially on the Western Front, the authors found only two Canadian troopship examples. This is probably a reflection of their shorter sea voyage. There were differences in multi-panel cartoons between outgoing and returning journals, especially in how the Germans were depicted. Keshen (1996, p. 148) observes that the attitudes of trainees and combatants grew progressively more distant from those who remained in Canada, asserting a direct correlation between the levels of satirical content in Canadian trench journals and proximity to the Front (see Figure 3).

Certainly, on the home front cartoons focused more on heroism, jingoistic rhetoric and talk of glory,⁶ although this remained prominent in papers printed for fresh recruits (Keshen, 1996, p. 135). By contrast, soldiers developed an ironic anti-heroism through their humour, epitomised by seasoned old soldiers, malingerers, and characters such as Bainsfather's 'Old Bill', who always seemed to know the tricks for survival. Anti-heroism found its iconic representation in multi-panel narratives about the range of uses for the bayonet (other than the obvious, for killing). It could be used as a toasting fork, a hook or a corkscrew, for instance (*Chronicles of the NZEF*, 30 January 1918, vol. 3, no. 36).

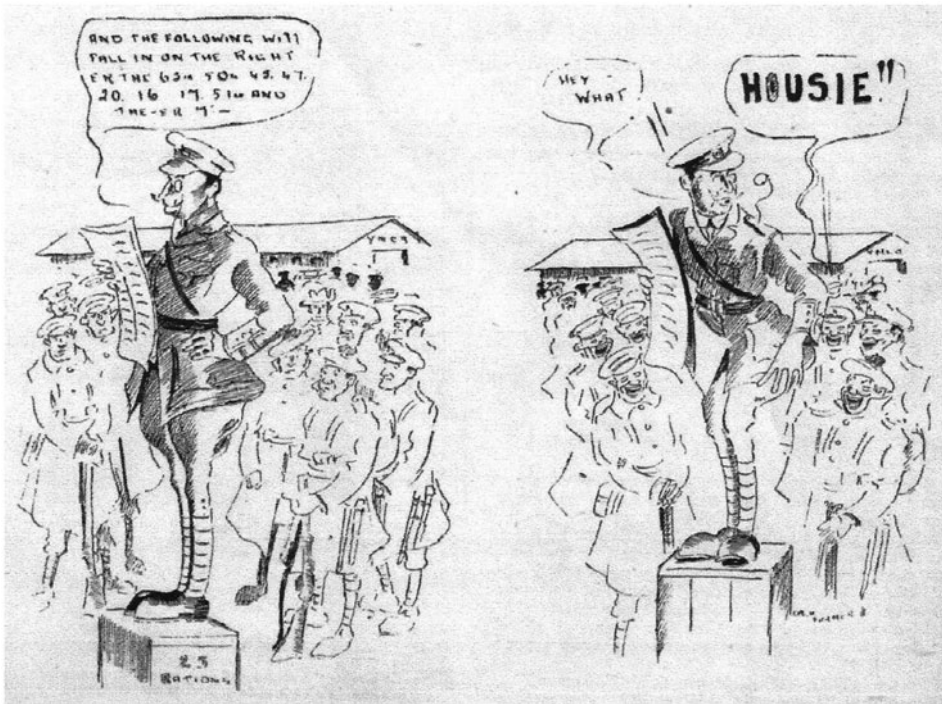


Figure 3. 'Housie', *Listening Post*, March 1919, vol. 33—a reference to the infamous bingo call.

Once on the Western Front troops joked about each other and those ‘back home’. Figure 4 provides an example of infantry satire about the cavalry, although both are Canadian. The Germans were not demonised: troops felt that the Germans shared the horror of trench warfare. This resulted in what Ashworth (1980, p. 135) refers to as ‘live and let live’, a mentality that ‘was accompanied both by an increase in sentiments of linking among antagonists and a decrease in sentiments of enmity’. This point is supported by Eksteins (1989, pp. 232, 230, 229), who argues that soldiers could feel more disdain for civilians at home than for the enemy, because the ‘spiritual bond’ developed by men in the trenches led all nationalities to agree ‘that the war experience, the experience of the “real war” in the trenches, marked men off from the rest of society’. This view is supported by Seal (2013a, p. 178): ‘It was not uncommon to find references in trench journals to the feeling that Allied soldiers had more in common with their “enemies” suffering the same thing in German trenches than they did with their own military, press, and home front. Regardless of nationality, soldiers on active duty came to identify with the insular community of the trenches’.

Humour for Survival

As a form of social observation, narrative humour relies on recognition of absurdity and incongruity in familiar situations. Humour in multi-panel trench cartoons offers an insight into the general culture, self-image and preoccupations of the troops, by showing and not simply telling; implied criticism is combined with some visual exaggeration as satire, cynicism and shared experience. The comic strip format proved ideal for a snapshot story revealing absurdities through the interaction of dialogue and captions as narrative, and sequential drawings. These were typically based on the difference between civilian perceptions of warfare (influenced by propaganda and censorship) and the reality of experience. A significant number of cartoons reinforced trench culture by presenting affectionate jokes about the naïve misconceptions of new recruits, who needed to learn the slang as well as the outlook.⁷ In cartoons the recruit corrected by the seasoned ‘old soldier’ provided a reality break which often highlighted a grumbling or anti-authoritarian message. In Figure 6, a new recruit thinks a machine gun is a

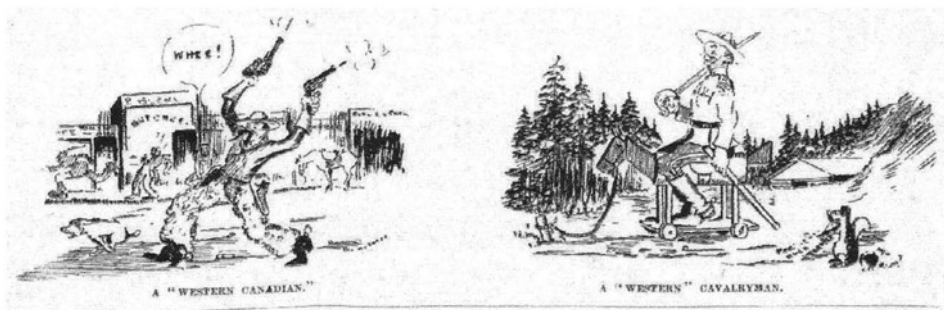


Figure 4. ‘Western Canadians’, *Listening Post*, August 1917, vol. 27—both the cavalry and the home front are ‘other-ed’.

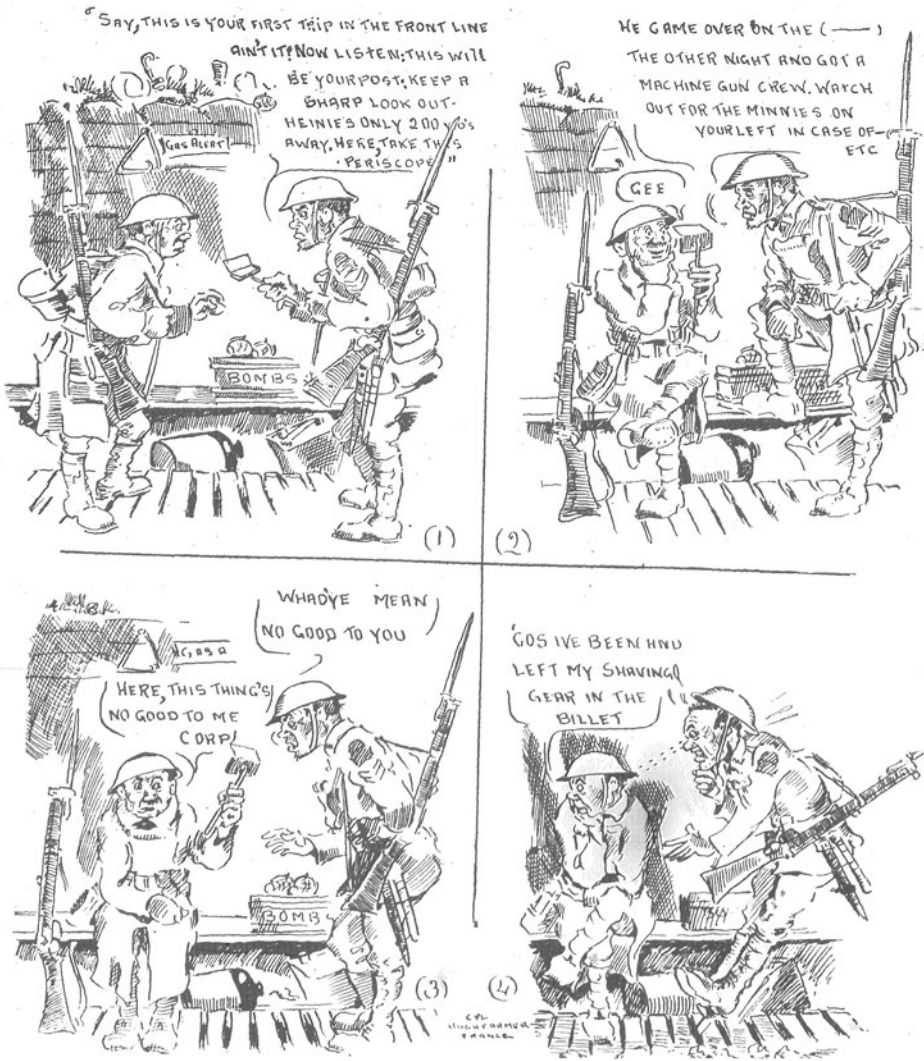


Figure 5. *Listening Post*, April 1918, vol. 30, p. 19.

woodpecker. In Figure 5, a new soldier thinks a mirror is for shaving rather than looking into no-man's-land. This example contains two examples of rudimentary comic strip style that are not found in today's more developed formats: in panel 3, the first speech balloon is positioned lower than the second, defying present-day conventions of reading from left to right and from top to bottom; in panel 4, dots indicating eye line are used to ensure that readers appreciate that the experienced soldier is looking directly at the trainee. Figures 6 and 8 (see later) use the same technique, almost as if the artist feels the need to emphasise the relatively new (for adults) format he is using.



Figure 6. *Listening Post*, July 1918, vol. 31, p. 11.

The self-mocking humour of anti-hero stories was an aspect of soldiers' culture that can be misinterpreted as evidence of disloyalty. Interestingly, in works by the popular artist Hugh Farmer in the *Listening Post* (circulation 20,000 by 1917; Cook, 2008, p. 174), Canadians were depicted as larger than other troops, while still manifesting the anti-hero audience appeal of Bairnsfather's more physically feeble characters. In cartoon

humour the anti-hero is allowed to admit fear, fatigue, ‘leadswinging’ (malingering) and/or a search for ‘Blighty wounds’ (severe enough to be sent back to England); in fact, such an admission is part of the culture. ‘While cheating one’s mates, brawling, or malingering were serious military charges, these deviant actions appeared to be condoned in the cultural products, and seemingly accepted by the led and the leaders as good for morale’ (Cook, 2008, p. 190).

Satire acted as a vent for grievances, thus officers often turned a blind eye to criticism of them in publications (compulsory if complaints were anonymous). They recognised that without this particular psychological escape valve, insubordination was likely at the front and there could even be a possibility of mutiny (Keshen, 1996, p. 135). This pragmatic approach is compatible with the ideas of theorists such as Mikhail Bakhtin (1984, chapter 1), who discusses the use of laughter in response to official seriousness. The regenerative value of humour that he signals is evidenced by illustrative narratives that frequently centred on complaints about everyday life: humour kept men going, against all the odds.⁸

The act of disparagement in soldiers’ cartoons and early comic strips is likely to have had a cathartic effect as a substitute for more direct protest, thereby preventing internal conflict by providing a voice and a language that helped soldiers to make sense of their new, and painful, environment. Humour theory identifies this process as ‘disparagement humour’: ‘Disparagement humor refers to remarks that (are intended to) elicit amusement through the denigration, derogation, or belittlement of a given target (e.g., individuals, social groups, political ideologies, material possessions) ... Because humor communicates that its message is to be interpreted in a non-serious manner, disparagement humor can uniquely denigrate its target while stifling challenge or criticism’ (Ferguson and Ford, 2008, pp. 283–284).

Trench publications could offer a ‘sounding-board in the uncertainties of front line or near front line existence’ (Seal, 1990, p. 30) and alert officers to potential discontents. Humour held the potential to undermine the power of officers and to ‘reassert the masculine independence of the rank-and-file soldier’ (Wise, 2007, p. 241), even if cartoons tended to avoid more fundamental questions such as the justice of participation in the conflict. According to Mulkay (1988), the eventual serious content of humorous discourse can always be denied in the event of the speaker finding his/her assertions to be socially unacceptable. In other words, the retractability of humour allows for subaltern challenge, even facilitating embarrassing or aggressive interactions or the negotiation of dangerous topics such as death, which tended to be referred to via euphemisms such as ‘becoming a landlord’ (Seal, 2013b, p. 169). The ‘paradigm of everyday courage that soldiers both respected in others and attempted to cultivate in themselves’ demonstrates a ‘defiant rejection of victimhood’ (Madigan, 2013, p. 97). This approach amounts to a partial reshaping of identity, in contrast to images of war on the home front: it was a symbolic rebellion in cultural expression, articulated in communications. Soldiers rarely challenged orders more directly.

National versus Empire Identity

A total of 620,000 Canadians enlisted between 1914 and 1918, primarily civilian soldiers who signed up for King and country.⁹ Among the first contingent of 33,000 men,

more than 70% were British born, and of those on the Western Front more generally, 50% were born in Britain. Most saw themselves as both British and Canadian (Cook, 2008, p. 172; 2013, p. 327). Although linguistic differences can emerge from the colloquialism in dialogue (also a characteristic of comic strips), in Australian slang such as ‘cobbers’, ‘dinkum’ and ‘bonzer’, themes tended to be common to more than one nationality and front, with uniforms and backdrops changing, and differing geographical features acting as a variable.¹⁰ Cook (2013, p. 344) points out that although many Canadians believed they had their own national slang, in fact it was empire-wide shared language. Similarly, most of the complaints about officers, commonly expressed through humour, seem to be common to the various nationalities of the Allied side.¹¹

In some cases, the same topics appear in prisoner of war and internment camp cartoons, such as Changi in the Second World War (National Library of Singapore, 1942). In fact, repetition of themes could become an ongoing joke, the appreciation of which acted as a bond between men. Common topics included the mismatch between the reality of wartime life and the image held by the folks back home, cultural differences of local populations in battlefield countries, perceptions of officer weaknesses, and discomforts and bad food (Table 1).

Food and drink, so essential for physical and mental well-being, was a favourite. Both British and French armies operated similar rations and calorific value, but in practice most complaints emanated from supply problems that rendered ration scales meaningless, thus bully beef and hard biscuits became the target of much humour, also reflected in the fact that in 1917 the War Cabinet received reports that food was one of the main causes of troop discontent (The National Archives, 12 September 1917, War Cabinet Minute 231, CAB 23/4). Figure 7 focuses on the contrast between food and drink while Australian men were in ‘Blighty’, as opposed to sustenance among the bleak destruction of the front, whereas the Canadian Figure 8 concentrates on the desperate ruses that may be devised in order to cadge a drink.

Limitations in Scope and Self-censorship

Trench publications were a refraction not a reflection of culture in that they were primarily a source of entertainment aimed at encouraging a sense of community at unit level, or to use an officer term, an ‘*esprit de corps*’. The episodes and thoughts that

Table 1. Broad themes of cartoon content

Topics	Canadian	New Zealand	Australian
Civilian life and leave	8	4	4
Food and drink	5	2	5
Service life	17	4	9
Contrasts	2	0	10
Officers and discipline	2	0	2
Medics	2	2	2
Transport	3	3	0
Other	6	6	7
Totals	45	21	39
Total: 105 multi-panel cartoons			



HOW WE DO IT IN BLIGHTY...



AND IN FRANCE.

Figure 7. a, b. 'Blighty and France', *Aussie*, June 1918, no. 5, p. 1.



Figure 8. 'Beer mug', *Listening Post*, December 1918, vol. 32.

were visualised inevitably portray everyday situations rather than battle, death, or military observations on the progress and strategy of the war. Maybe because of the relative isolation of trench-based soldiers on the Western Front from the bigger picture of overall strategy, immediate social observation tended to provide instant narrative reactions through the interconnection of dialogue, captions and illustration, offering snapshots that reveal shared feelings and emotions as wartime experiences, but these have their limitations.

Officially backed trench journals were censored at both battalion and divisional levels, and all newspapers—including unofficial ones—were subject to self-censorship.

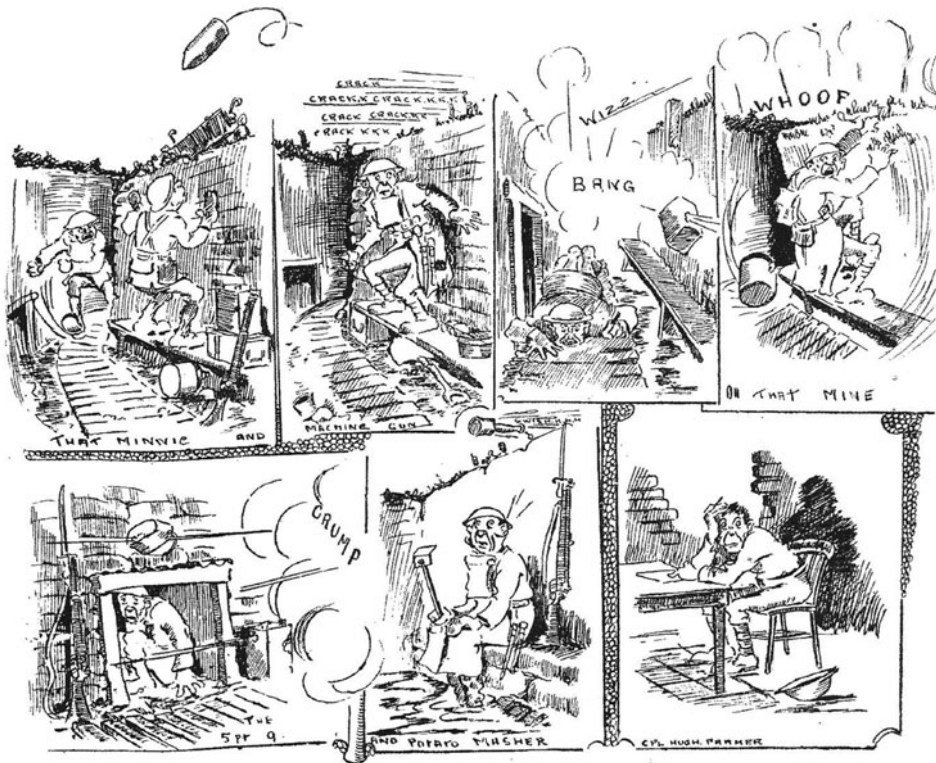
The editorial process restricted content and language. Condon (2011) asserts that New Zealand soldiers in their publications (mainly officially endorsed and carefully edited, but aimed at reflecting back to the men unit loyalty and identity) 'are identified closely with an Empire that represents strength, courage and liberation from an aggressor'. It is possible to argue that combat culture not only gave men a distinct short-term identity confined to the war years, but that this same culture also set boundaries and definitions of acceptability by readers themselves as well as the editor. Contributions were accepted not necessarily on aesthetic merits, but in order to create a voice for the shared mentality of the unit (Pegum, 2007, pp. 134–135).

Within their chosen parameters, newspapers 'attempted to use, rather than deny, the depressing discrepancies of this Great War, and compared with home front mainstream press, there was certainly more freedom of expression' (Keshen, 1996, p. 134). Illustrations were based on content themes that were common to all theatres of conflict. On the Western Front British, Dominion and French troops faced the same enemies: lice, rats, mud, cold, rain and shells. Illustrative narratives depict situations where endurance was tolerated with good humour, danger nonchalantly accepted, along with stoicism about the potential outcome. Editors had to be responsive to their readership, because they were among them and could not ignore 'their state of mind ... Censorship and self-censorship could not prevent the trench newspapers from responding little by little to the concerns, interest, grievances and hopes of their readers, and echoing them' (Audoin-Rouzeau, 1992, pp. 33–34).

In Figure 9, a soldier in his trench experiences 'that minnie', then machine gun noise and fire, followed by a 'wizz bang', then a mine, a '5 point 9', and finally a 'potato masher'. In the final panel, he sets about sending his family the news. Although he has escaped from shells, grenades and machine gun fire, when he writes home, the soldier does not know what to say. Once again, this demonstrates the break from the home front, the lack of civilian comprehension (as perceived by the troops) and self-censorship.

Newspaper reactions to medical issues exemplify the responsiveness alluded to by Audoin-Rouzeau. On the Western Front, soldiers stated that the medical corps were never seen within 500 yards of the firing line, and referred to Royal Army Medical Corps as the 'rob all my comrades brigands' (Fuller, 1990, p. 61). This is countered by publications by the medical corps themselves, who clearly saw the need to correct their image, given the fact that the regimental medical officer had the unenviable task of deciding whether a man should be sent from the firing line to the rear. This required him to differentiate between faked as opposed to real illnesses. In cases of the former, a common remedy was the 'No. 9 Pill', a laxative that became the butt of many cartoon jokes. However, any desire to 'shirk', despite the humour, was usually tempered by men's sense of duty and feelings of loyalty to their 'mates', as a collective identity that emerges in their publications.

For the Canadian Field Ambulance, the contrast depicted by Sergeant T. W. Whitefoot in *Now and Then* was the 'fiction' of fast, efficient stretcher bearers in a clear battlefield tending one or two wounded men on the field, whereas 'fact' involved carrying a heavy soldier on a stretcher through knee-high mud to a derelict-looking medical post, sweating, with a speech caption that says 'censored' (Cambridge University Library, 1918, WRA540, Reel 1.). Humour allowed for the communication of truth.



Those hair breadth escapes we were to relate in that next letter home invariably end up in the bald language of the J.P.C.— I am quite well, etc.

Figure 9. *Listening Post*, April 1918, vol. 30, p. 15.

Both editors and readers despised home front propaganda and the mainstream press as pedlars of unrealistic jingoism and heroism, yet by exercising their own editorial values—itsself an attempt to gain control over their disastrous surroundings—they were simultaneously selective about content and tone, favouring contributions that encouraged entertainment and boosted morale. Trench journals presented issues and topics as ‘disarmingly humourised and shorn of their more demotic dimension’ (Seal, 2013b, p. 190).

Nevertheless, multi-panel cartoons still had a sharp edge: probably the most devastating comment on the subject of war followed by peace was entitled ‘The Profiteer’ (National Library of Australia (NLA), *Aussie*, 15 June 1920). The first panel is captioned ‘France 1918’ and shows a war-weary soldier walking through mud, burdened with kit and surrounded by desolation in a barren landscape. In the second panel, the landscape is also barren and desolate, but it is hot and sunny, and captioned ‘Aussie, 1920’. The same man is now a hobo burdened with a backpack of bedding and a billy-can in his hand, this time sweating, but otherwise in an identical pose.

Conclusion

This article has sought to demonstrate how Canadian and Dominion use of humour aimed to encourage a collective identity and a specific culture of warfare, experienced by the ‘everyman’ anti-hero as pragmatic survival. Clearly newspapers at the time would not have survived if they did not articulate content that was more generally acceptable to their main readership of the lower ranks in a largely volunteer, citizens’ force.

The regenerative value of ‘disparagement humour’ in the context of illustrative narratives by Canadian and Dominion soldiers meant that a new kind of courage was re-imagined. Trench publications provided an insight not only into morale, but also into the code of perseverance that helps account for Dominion long-term loyalty during what has been called the ‘Great War of Endurance’ (Hynes, 1998, p. 73). Sarcasm in drawings should not be confused with rebellion, for men were still prepared to play the game: as scholars such as Fuller have noted, desertion and mutiny were rare—indeed, his enquiry seeks to establish how far the existence of soldier publications (but not specifically their cartoons) helped to avoid these eventualities.

Multi-panel cartoons, however, were no panacea—they have their limitations as a representational source, but one of their strengths is that they demonstrate an attempt to use humour as a form of control over the environment. This served to enhance morale, encourage endurance and facilitate survival. Historians are generally agreed that Allied morale, defined by Bond (2002, pp. 2, 14) in terms of attitudes, cohesion and combat effectiveness of groups, held up, ‘although brittle at times’. Given the Canadian reputation for bravery,¹² military expertise and concomitant prolific ‘trench’ publishing, these findings are probably the clearest example of Great War satire that encouraged, in the extremely dire circumstances of the Western Front, endurance and persistence, qualities that amounted to loyalty.

Acknowledgements

Reproduction of images with thanks to Cambridge University Library and the Canadian War Museum Military History Research Centre.

Funding

This work was supported by the Arts and Humanities Council (AHRC) collaborative research grant ‘Comics and the World Wars, a Cultural Record’, 2011–15 [grant number AH/I022120/1].

Notes

1. For more on First World War historiography, see Bond (2002).
2. For more on Australian multi-panel trench cartoons, see Chapman and Ellin (2012).
3. For more on this point, see Chapman *et al.* (forthcoming).
4. The only other event in modern history that prompted a similar self-publishing explosion was the French Revolution, when the number of publications mushroomed to 2,000 from only one official journal during the *Ancien Régime* (Chapman, 2005, pp. 15–22; 2008, pp. 131–132). Fuller (1990) selected 107 for the study of text (not illustrations) from Britain and the many Dominions, concentrating on 61 that were uniquely produced by and aimed at the infantry. The French had 400 trench publications, but only 200

- have survived (Audoin-Rouzeau, 1986, p. 7). Nelson (2010, p. 175) argues that owing to larger print runs and professional distribution, the Germans had by far the largest number, with 1.1 million editions distributed per month on the Western Front, and even more on the Eastern Front. He correctly notes that the most prolific of the allies, the Australian and Canadians, were, like the Germans on the Eastern Front, far from home (Nelson, 2011, p. 53, note 127).
5. There are approximately 70 Australian troopship newspapers (Kent, 1999, p. 11), in fact almost every boat had one. Overall, a total of about 200 Australian journal editions have survived. Condon (2011) takes a sample of 41 New Zealander trench publications.
 6. In terms of mainstream cartoons, there was a difference between those artists who had been to the front and those who had not. Hiley (2007) also maintains that the majority of early British home front cartoons poked fun at the Germans while European artists demonised them.
 7. Trench journals regularly published dictionaries of slang for this educative purpose. See the *Listening Post*, 10 August 1917, with a list for the new Americans.
 8. See also Obrdlik (1942), Freud (1905) and Le Naour (2001).
 9. Approximately 60,000 died and a further 170,000 were wounded or maimed (Cook, 2000, p. 19).
 10. Wise (2007, pp. 237–238) notes that a single panel cartoon produced by the British soldier-cartoonist Bruce Bairnsfather was reproduced to depict an Australian soldier at Gallipoli by changing the uniform and the backdrop—everything else remained the same.
 11. For German trench publications, the most numerous, but frequently officially backed, see Nelson (2010, 2011).
 12. Well-known episodes of bravery include: the initial experience of chlorine gas by the First Canadian Division at First Ypres, 1915; ‘one of the war’s slickest set-piece attacks’ (Holmes, 2004, p. 52) by four divisions fighting side by side for the first time at Vimy Ridge; and the capture of 400 men and nearly 100 machine guns in one day by the Canadian Cavalry Division in 1916 (Holmes, 2004, p. 445).

References

- Allan, S. and Thorsen, E. (Eds.) (2009) *Citizen Journalism: Global Perspectives*. New York: Peter Lang.
- Anderson, B. (1991) *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, revised edn. New York: Verso.
- Ashworth, T. (1980) *Trench Warfare 1914–18: The Live and Let Live System*. London and Basingstoke: The Macmillan Press.
- Audouin-Rouzeau, S. (1986) *1914–1918, Les Combattants des Tranchées*. Paris: A. Colin.
- Audouin-Rouzeau, S. (1992) *National Sentiment and Trench Journalism in France during the First World War*, trans. H. McPhail. Providence, RI: Berg.
- Australian War Memorial (1915–42) Troopships and unit serials, 1915–42, folders 5, 7, 8, 10, 11, 13, 71, 73, 102, 119, 178.
- Bakhtin, M. (1984) *Rabelais and His World*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Bet-El, I. R. (1990) *Scripts: The Lost Legions of the Great War*. Stroud: Sutton Publishing.
- Bond, B. (2002) *The Unquiet Western Front: Britain’s Role in Literature and History*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Cambridge University Library (1918) *War Reserve Collection*, WRA–WRE, part 2 trench journals, personal narratives and reminiscences, Reels 1–15.
- Chapman, J. L. (2005) *Comparative Media History: 1789 to the Present*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Chapman, J. (2008) Republican citizenship, ethics and the French revolutionary press 1789–92, in R. Keeble (Ed.), *Communication Ethics Now*. Troubadour: Leicester, pp. 131–141.
- Chapman, J. L. and Ellin, D. (2012) Multi-panel comic narratives in Australian First World war trench publications as citizen journalism, *Australian Journal of Communication*, 39(3), 1–22.
- Chapman, J. L., Hoyles, A., Kerr, A. and Sherif, A. (forthcoming) *Comics and the World Wars: A Cultural Record*. Basingstoke: Palgrave.
- Chapman, J. L. and Nuttall, N. (2011) *Journalism Today: A Themed History*. Malden, MA: Blackwell-Wiley.
- Condon, J. (2011) ‘Mainly about us’: identity and marginality in the troop magazines and newspapers of the New Zealand expeditionary force, 1914–19, *NZLIMJ*, 52(3), www.linaza.org.nz/lianza-publications/nzlimj, accessed 11 July 2013.

- Cook, T. (2000) More a medicine than a beverage: 'demon rum' and the Canadian trench soldier of the First World War, *Canadian Military History*, 9(1), 7–22.
- Cook, T. (2008) Anti-heroes of the Canadian expeditionary force, *Journal of the Canadian Historical Association*, 19(1), 171–193.
- Cook, T. (2009) The singing war: Canadian soldiers' songs of the Great War, *American Review of Canadian Studies*, 39(3), 224–241.
- Cook, T. (2013) Fighting words: Canadian soldiers' slang and swearing in the Great War, *War in History*, 20(3), 323–344.
- Eksteins, M. (1989) *Rites of Spring: The Great War and the Birth of the Modern Age*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company.
- Ferguson, M. A. and Ford, T. E. (2008) Disparagement humor: a theoretical and empirical review of psychoanalytic, superiority, and social identity theories, *Humor: International Journal of Humor Research*, 21(3), 283–312.
- Freud, S. (1905) *The Joke and its Relation to the Unconscious*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1966.
- Fuller, J. G. (1990) *Troop Morale and Popular Culture in the British and Dominion Armies 1914–1918*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Fussell, P. (1975) *The Great War and Modern Memory*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Hiley, N. (2007) A new and vital morale factor: cartoon book publishing during the First World War, in M. Hammond and S. Towheed (Eds.), *Publishing in the First World War*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 148–177.
- Holmes, R. (2004) *Tommy: The British Soldier on the Western Front, 1914–18*. London: Harper Collins.
- Hynes, S. (1998) *The Soldiers' Tale: Bearing Witness to Modern War*. London: Pimlico Press.
- Kent, D. A. (1999) *From Trench and Troopship: The Newspapers and Magazines of the AIF 1914–1918*. Alexandria, NSW: Hale and Iremonger.
- Keshen, J. A. (1996) *Propaganda and Censorship during Canada's Great War*. Edmonton: University of Alberta Press.
- Le Naour, J.-Y. (2001) Laughter and tears in the Great War: the need for laughter, the guilt of humour, *Journal of European Studies*, XXXI, 265–275.
- Madigan, E. (2013) 'Sticking to a hateful task': resilience, humour, and British understandings of combatant courage, 1914–18, *War in History*, 20(1), 76–98.
- Morton, D. (1993) *When Your Number's Up: The Canadian Soldier in the First World War*. Toronto: Random House of Canada.
- Mulkay, M. (1988) *On Humour: Its Nature and Its Place in Modern Society*. London: Polity Press.
- National Library of Australia (NLA) RNB world war one series, *The Aussie*, 1918–1937.
- National Library of Singapore (1942) Bed bugs. William Haxworth Exhibition: Images of Internment.
- Nelson, R. L. (2010) Soldier newspapers: a useful source in the social and cultural history of the First World War and beyond, *War in History*, 17(2), 167–191.
- Nelson, R. L. (2011) *German Soldier Newspapers of the First World War*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Obrdlik, A. J. (1942) Gallows humour: a sociological phenomenon, *American Journal of Sociology*, 47, 709–712.
- Pegum, J. (2007) British army trench journals and a geography of identity, in M. Hammond and S. Towheed (Eds.), *Publishing in the First World War*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 129–147.
- Roper, M. (2009) *The Secret Battle: Emotional Survival in the Great War*. ManchesterNH: Manchester University Press.
- Seal, G. (1990) Written in the trenches: trench newspapers of the First World War, *Journal of Australian War Memorial*, 16, 30–38.
- Seal, G. (2013a) 'We're here because we're here': trench culture of the Great War, *Folklore*, 124(2), 178–199.
- Seal, G. (2013b) *The Soldiers' Press: Trench Journals in the First World War*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- The National Archives (1917) *War Cabinet and Cabinet Minutes, 1914–1918*.
- Watson, A. (2008) *Enduring the Great War: Combat, Morale and Collapse in the German and British Armies, 1914–1918*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Wise, N. (2007) Fighting a different enemy: social protests against authority in the Australian imperial force during World War I, in M. Hart and D. Bos (Eds.), *Humour and Social Protest*, *International Review of Social History*, supplement 15, pp. 225–242.