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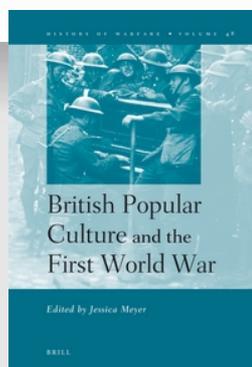
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A War Unimagined: Food And The Rank And File Soldier Of The First World War



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Overview

Chapter Summary

The literary legacy of the First World War has tended to ignore the mass of writing produced by its rank and file soldiers. Their writing skills and limited reflexivity did not, in general, sit easily with the tragic world of disillusionment portrayed in their letters and diaries. This chapter proposes that whilst the rankers' writing rarely explored explicit emotional states, it did not lack an emotional dimension. This was expressed through the rituals and practices that surrounded the acquisition and consumption of food, in particular the sharing of food. The soldiers' efforts to share supplies were of nutritional consequence because army rations were often insufficiently apportioned, but they also had an emotional significance; the men's letters and diaries indicate the psychological bonds forged by, the giving and receiving of food.

Keywords: army rations; emotion; front-line soldiers; First World War; food; rankers' writing



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