

A Model of Reading Practice in the Australian Labour Movement During the First Half of the 20th Century

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This paper aims to contribute to the growing field of scholarship that examines reading within the labour movement. However, unlike earlier contributions, which have focused on *what* is read rather than *how* it is read; on the nineteenth rather than twentieth century; or on specific individuals rather than common actions, the analysis presented here examines the dominant, distinctive form of reading that developed within the Australian labour movement during the first half of the twentieth century.¹ This reading practice is contrasted with an ideal type of bourgeois reading, as a means of illuminating what is particular and historically significant in the practices of working-class readers.

The perils of this intellectual method are obvious – a possible lack of engagement with difference, a schematization of discrete individual experience, a sometimes ahistorical search for long-standing practices. However, there are also intellectual rewards that justify such risks. Firstly, by focusing on the ‘how’ rather than the ‘what’ of reading in the labour movement, it becomes possible to explore neglected aspects of working-class culture – to focus on the intellectual activities of those not normally dubbed ‘intellectuals’; to chart how working-life influences cultural life; and to gain a firmer grip on the dynamics that have shaped the circulation of particular texts.

Secondly, the study of reading practice within the labour movement feeds into wider intellectual questions and debates. The intensive comparison of bourgeois and working-class reading sheds light on what is distinctive about these particular cultural worlds. It helps us grasp their points of division and difference. As a result, it promises to enrich a number of recent quests to chart the existence of a specific ‘working-class public sphere’. Thus far, such quests have focused on the existence of particular forms of political language, or else have remained rather abstract and unsatisfactory.² By fastening on to a concrete practice such as reading, the singular, particular nature of public debate within the labour movement may also emerge into clearer focus.

It is in this exploratory, comparative sense that the following model is presented.

Reading practice as an ideal type

<i>Labour movement practice</i>	<i>Bourgeois practice</i>
Difficult, repetitive, reverential	Effortless, detached
Public/collective	Private/individual
Class-specific texts	Universal texts
Useful, practical	Aimless, abstract
Implying action	Self-sufficient
Masculine	Feminine
Political	Moral

Within the labour movement, reading was understood and experienced as a *difficult, repetitive* and *reverential* act. Given that the day of a worker was “almost fully taken up by toil and sleep”, and that many members of the labour movement lacked formal education, the act of reading inevitably reflected this.³ When books were discussed within the labour press, the struggle to understand arguments and the ubiquity of misunderstandings

was openly admitted.⁴ For correspondents to labour movement journals, “Academic writers demand academic readers”, and writing for the “masses” rather than the educated few was required.⁵ Easily read, affordable literature was frequently demanded⁶ – that is, literature that made matters “plain” without a “large amount of reading”.⁷ Texts that were subdivided into sections and littered with subheadings were praised, as were well-illustrated books that communicated their messages easily and simply.⁸ The shape of labour movement journals themselves reflected this. As Bruce Scates has noted, the labour press contained a mixture of news and literature; commentary and gossip; humour and polemic; writing and illustration that appealed to workers and reflected the fragmented, interrupted nature of reading in working-class households.⁹

However, if the time available for reading was invariably limited, fragmented and bone-tired, the act of reading itself was often a slow, repetitive process. Books were often read more than once – returned to so that they might be better understood, might inspire the faint-hearted, or might be inwardly digested.¹⁰ When new books examined vexing questions, readers were urged to immerse themselves in the text with due diligence. Bob Ross’s advice concerning a new work in 1920 was typical: “the work is one to study, and cannot prove utility unless time is spent with it.”¹¹

These readers were, indeed, reverential in their treatment of the text.¹² Those who were able to call upon quotations in their own writing and speaking were applauded, as this, it was argued, “implies knowledge of what is being read”.¹³ When difficulties or arguments erupted, readers were advised to return to the original text.¹⁴ This reverence was particularly strong in the case of Marxist works. Marxism was frequently read as an unproblematic truth.¹⁵ Criticisms of Marxism were parried by the claim that Marx had been misread.¹⁶ Quotations from Marxist works were liberally used to support political positions.¹⁷ Certainly, the institutional strength of the Communist Party helped to reproduce this attitude to Marxism within the labour movement. However, it stemmed equally from an attitude to the text formed through struggle, repetition, respect for learning, and hard-fought understanding. As early as July 1920, the reverence for Marxism among members of the Australian labour movement was being mocked by “Ame Perdue” in a witty parody:

My Bible is “Capital” – vols. I., II., and III.
– wherein are all the Laws and the Prophets
– also Profits.
Ye shall read this, study it, digest it,
argue
over it – but never doubt it.¹⁸

Clearly, within the labour movement the act of reading came to reflect both the physical stresses of working-class life, the paucity of formal educational opportunities, and the importance of political insitutions. As a result, reading was a difficult, repetitive and often reverential act. This set workers apart from the bourgeois reader, who suffered neither the physical tiredness nor the dearth of educational avenues. Where the worker struggled for comprehension, the bourgeois reader experienced an ease of understanding.¹⁹ Where the worker sought to recapture the ‘truth’ of the text through repeated effort, the bourgeois reader possessed an

awareness of a multiplicity of cultural references.²⁰ Where the worker sought to earnestly engage with a text, the bourgeois reader possessed a detached playfulness, and insouciant disregard for its 'real' meaning and purpose.²¹

Secondly, the practice of reading within the labour movement and the bourgeoisie may be contrasted on the basis of its social nature. For the bourgeoisie, reading was an *individual* and a *private* act. It invoked solitary pleasures, personal rewards. The literary form most closely associated with the bourgeoisie, the novel, is the most personal of literary forms. Growing out of the letters and diaries that circulated among the European bourgeoisie during the eighteenth century, it expressed the subjectivity nurtured within the bourgeois patriarchal family. This was a subjectivity capable of 'purely human' relations, searching for self-knowledge, capable of love and empathy, seeking identification with characters. Its readers were individuals within the intimate sphere of the family.²² This emphasis on the individual, private nature of reading persists today. For contemporary defenders of literature, the rewards of the text are invariably personal:

He (sic) (the reader) will become an interpreter in his own right; he will be able to read the experience for himself; he will confront the final text face to face: and its meaning will be his interpretation.²³

In contrast, the practice of reading cultivated within the labour movement was *collective* and *public*. If all 'traditional' readers were more performative than readers today,²⁴ then this was especially so for working-class readers. New books were praised for their qualities when read aloud.²⁵ Labour newspapers were discussed at sites of everyday interaction²⁶ or at workplaces themselves.²⁷ Indeed, correspondents sometimes relayed their enjoyment of such performances. 'G.W.M.' of Bundaberg informed *Ross's Monthly* of such pleasures:

I find and take a great delight in reading little pieces out of the magazine aloud to my fellow-slaves in the railway yard when the chance offers.²⁸

As the labour movement developed a range of formal organisations, so collective reading also took on formal, institutionalised dimensions. Educational institutions, such as the Victorian Labor College and the Workers' Educational Association provided forums for workers to discuss and share the act of reading.²⁹ This took its most developed form with the Left Book Club (LBC) movement. At its peak in 1939, the Club claimed 4,500 Australian members,³⁰ and stimulated a collective reading practice with scores of local discussion groups, public meetings, summer schools, and healthy group newsletters.³¹ A collective diary kept by the Leichardt-Rozelle group expresses the collective, public form that reading took within the LBC. Meetings were fortnightly and provided occasions for "special readings"; books like Strachey's *What Are We To Do?* provoked ongoing discussion, and this text was even adopted as the "policy-book of the Group" – a sign of membership that all participants were expected to read and possess. Public meetings were held that provided opportunities for lectures and films; other groups in the local area were encouraged to form; and members even participated in a demonstration together.³²

Reading within the labour movement was a collective act in other ways. Most obviously, it involved the sharing of reading material. Of course, this action was famously rendered in Henry Lawson's short story, 'Remailed', an account of how newspapers were mailed and remailed to mates working elsewhere, adorned with annotations and crosses, references to past arguments, shared jokes and comrades.³³ However, this collective practice survived and flourished among workers still living within the same communities. Books and newspapers were passed on in workplaces, in working-class organisations, and at sites of working-class

interaction, such as the Domain in Sydney.³⁴ Newspapers and journals explicitly encouraged their own circulation – "pass me on", they advised readers.³⁵ This was a distinctive working-class practice, one that distinguished such readers from their middle-class counterparts.³⁶

Reading of this sort expressed a sense of collective camaraderie and fellowship. A sense of community among readers was often invoked in labour movement publications. Readers were friends, comrades, an army, not individuals in disinterested contemplation.³⁷ The ties linking readers and writers within the labour press were strong. Readers frequently received individual responses to their letters, and their contributions were openly welcomed.³⁸ Books reviewed on the pages of labour newspapers could be obtained from the newspaper's office, or else via elaborate mail services.³⁹ Readers could provide each other assistance in finding verses from scraps of lines and other clues.⁴⁰ They were also expected to behave as a collectivity, to support labour movement publications financially,⁴¹ to recruit other readers,⁴² and to approach their own unions or labour leagues to make contributions.⁴³ Reading expressed collectivity rather than autonomy; unity rather than isolation. At its most developed, the unity of readers would extend to the political battlefield, where the working class would win the struggle to change society. This emphasis on the collectivity of readers made the reading practiced within the labour movement historically distinctive.

A third means of differentiating labour movement from bourgeois reading is its orientation to the text. For bourgeois readers, the text was an entity that could be understood and appraised on a universal basis. Great books aspired to universal beauty and expressed universal truth. This is an attitude, of course, that underpinned the development of literature within the academy.⁴⁴

In stark comparison, readers within the labour movement constantly emphasised the specific, *classed* nature of texts. Workers regarded many of the books produced under capitalism with suspicion. They were 'dope', mass hypnotism, part of a plot to maintain ignorance and superstition.⁴⁵ In opposition to the lies of capitalistic literature, readers in the labour movement sought *working-class* reading matter. Rather than access to the "storehouse of knowledge and culture", readers sought knowledge of "the means of obtaining the socialist objective"; rather than universal knowledge, they sought knowledge from a "working class viewpoint".⁴⁶ Authors were praised because they were "mentally incapable of recognising any virtue in the ruling class".⁴⁷ Indeed, reading and perception were persistently depicted as class-specific processes – a depiction that contrasts with both the practice of bourgeois readers and the postmodern critique of class as an invariably universalist, and therefore authoritarian metanarrative.⁴⁸

Fourthly, reading in the labour movement can be distinguished on the basis of its *useful, practical* orientation. This was so in a number of senses. Firstly, there was an emphasis on practical, applied texts. Autodidacts generally read non-fiction, and this was especially so for the autodidacts of the Australian labour movement.⁴⁹ Libraries created by the labour movement, such as the 'Trades and Industrial Hall and Literary Institute Association of Sydney', were generally dominated by technical, self-help books that provided guidance for tradespeople. Indeed, the category of technical textbooks (approximately 35% of all books), far outweighed other categories, including fiction (approx. 2%); poetry (approx. 4%); and philosophy (2%).⁵⁰ Equally, self-help books for those aiming to improve their grammar, elocution, and public-speaking were among the most popular offered by labour movement book services.⁵¹

More broadly, there was a frequent emphasis on books that increased the knowledge and efficiency of labour's political struggle. The archetype here is the voluminous literature written and read in the aftermath of the Russian Revolution.

As early as July 1920, Bob Ross was recommending nine individual pamphlets on the subject for readers of *Ross's Monthly*, and the "enormous multiplication" of such texts was noted in subsequent years.⁵² These were works that were read with a passionate intensity and purpose. Indeed, labour movement literature was often depicted as vital for intellectual and political sustenance. Books were frequently described as "mental food", as "meaty", or as "stuffed with meat".⁵³ Sometimes the metaphors were mechanical rather than organic. For example, the Left Book Club saw its role as the provision of knowledge that would "immensely increase" the "efficiency" of political struggle.⁵⁴ Whatever the niceties of its precise description, the knowledge sought by 'workers who read' was engaged with practical questions.

Indeed, the reading practice evident here was a million miles away from the disinterested reader of the bourgeoisie. Fake and "futile" learning was a favourite target of the labour movement. The aim of reading was emphatically not the collection of "Latin quotations" or "jaw-breakers" that would allow workers to appear "an 'intellectual'".⁵⁵ Knowledge that led to "bookworm obscurity" or "verbal panaceas that get everywhere – and end up nowhere" was equally rejected. This was understood as middle-class knowledge – the work of "profound philosophers", "professors of economics" and "sociological students".⁵⁶ In contrast to such reading, members of the labour movement expressed an antipathy for knowledge that did not have practical consequences. As "Ame Perdue" put it directly:

Above and beyond all idealistic and abstract words and phrases is the Goal that they lead to. Man frets and worries out his little existence over infinitesimal details of these abstractions and never reaches the Goal. He goes a roundabout way and dies before he gets there.⁵⁷

Within the labour movement, reading and theorizing needed to lead to *action*. When books were of high quality, it was up to the reader to "use and store" them.⁵⁸ Sometimes workers related occasions when specific texts had provided the tools for a successful argument or local campaign. For example, one Western Australian member of the LBC used the knowledge garnered from one of Lloyd Ross's articles to oppose the formation of a local district military unit during 1939.⁵⁹ On other occasions, the emphasis on the integration of reading and action was more abstract but no less complete. Books were frequently described as "intellectual ammunition" for the struggle at hand,⁶⁰ or else as "ammunition and inspiration" for current campaigns.⁶¹ While for the bourgeoisie reading was a self-sufficient, pleasurable and discrete act, for the organised working-class, reading in and of itself was not enough. Even organisations set up as purveyors of literature emphasised the connection between reading and action. The newsletter of the Left Book Club, *Australian Left News*, was open about its activist concerns:

...the (Left Book) Club must be an active body – in short, it and its members must take action of one kind or another to achieve its ends.⁶²

However, within the labour movement, reading was also understood as an action in a number of less obvious senses. Firstly, the process itself was represented as an active, sometimes physical action. Many workers kept scrapbooks of important or useful articles – an active practice that involved both selection and physical manipulation of the text.⁶³ Secondly, reading within the labour movement presupposed that there was 'labour movement literature' – sympathetic writing that expressed and uplifted the working class. As a result, the act of reading inevitably crossed over with attempts to foster that literature, to build up the cultural resources of workers, and to financially and practically support labour movement publishers.⁶⁴ Thirdly, it needs to be remembered that many working-class texts faced censorship, suppression and other restrictions. As a result, reading was quite literally an *action*

with distinctly political implications. It involved subterfuge, law-breaking, legal challenges, and claim-making.⁶⁵

More generally, reading within the labour movement typically involved the making of connections between the text and the world. Scholars such as Michael Denning have suggested that "allegorical reading" was dominant amongst the working class of the United States.⁶⁶ Reading a work as an allegory involves "revealing elements outside the text itself",⁶⁷ relating the text to the world in a direct manner. Thought of in these terms, allegorical reading is an active practice. The dominance of this mode of allegorical reading within the Australian labour movement is illustrated by the vast number of socialist fables and explicit political allegories,⁶⁸ by the emphasis on 'reading below' capitalist texts,⁶⁹ and by the equal emphasis on books as guides or purveyors of 'lessons' for Australian workers.⁷⁰ As a result, the practice of reading that developed within the labour movement both implied action outside the text and directly embodied an active mental and physical engagement with the text.

A sixth means of contrasting bourgeois and labour movement reading is through attention to its gendered nature. During the eighteenth century, a new form of reading emerged that was linked to rise of the novel among the European bourgeoisie. This was a reading practice based upon "sympathetic identification and even dreamy self-forgetting", and it was conventionally linked with women.⁷¹ This, in-turn, helped to establish reading as a 'feminine' act – one that implied that male readers were feeble and slothful; incapable or unwilling to participate in a healthy, manly, outdoor life.⁷²

Of course, this conventional linkage of bourgeois women with "dreamy" fiction-reading is inaccurate in a number of ways. It fails to engage with the actual reading practice of women. It overlooks the interest of women in public and historical matters, as it does the constant attempts by male practitioners to present literature as a 'masculine' field from the eighteenth to the twentieth centuries.⁷³ However, if the association between reading and femininity was not complete, it remains true that male members of the labour movement were almost fanatically intent on establishing reading as a *masculine*, virile act.

The metaphors to describe reading within the labour movement were often aggressively masculine. *Ross's Monthly* was described by its editor as "meat for strong men".⁷⁴ Readers were "seed-sowers".⁷⁵ Reading and understanding was an act that promised to "save one's manhood".⁷⁶ Havelock Ellis was praised as a "monumental" writer on the subject of sex, who "opened out fresh and startling avenues of inquiry", and about whom R.S. Ross became "almost violently interested".⁷⁷ One correspondent to the journal even lauded the magazine as "written with a red-hot poker dipped in razor-soup".⁷⁸ Set alongside the emphasis on reading as practical, engaged, active and collective, this constructed reading within the labour movement as an emphatically masculine act.

Such a representation of reading reached its zenith in the widely-popular writings of Jack London. London's heroes in the novels *Martin Eden* and *The Iron Heel* provided models for many working-class autodidacts.⁷⁹ They struggled to master culture, and to retain their commitment to working-class politics. They were also manly, bullish fellows. Indeed, as Tom Tunnecliffe noted of one of London's heroes:

There is a certain uncouthness about these strong men...the rippling muscles and silky skin loom large, even in the educated and underfed Martin Eden, and the long midnight vigils, and 20 hours of labour at a typewriter, seem to have little effect in softening his muscles.⁸⁰

This made London's characters unconvincing, Tunnecliffe argued.⁸¹ However, it also made them useful symbols of a kind of 'hyper-masculine' male reader, symbols that therefore

protected male autodidacts from charges of 'sissiness' or femininity.

Tied to the masculine nature of reading within the labour movement was its seventh distinguishing feature – its persistently political ambit. For the bourgeoisie, reading was traditionally apprehended within a moral framework. Since the eighteenth century, there had arisen a fear that novels in particular would corrupt the morals of inexperienced female-readers, and thereby make them unfit wives.⁸² As a result, male members of the cultural and political establishment had attempted to control the act of reading, providing detailed commentaries,⁸³ restricting and policing women's access to libraries,⁸⁴ and reverting to the censorship of undesirable and threatening texts.⁸⁵

However, if the labour movement shared an appreciation of the power of reading, it celebrated rather than recoiled from such power. The mobilising, transformative power of the text was to be welcomed. This was not a moral, corrupting threat, it was a vitally important resource in the cause of mass political conversion. Of course, the act of conversion to the movement was much celebrated in socialist autobiography at the turn of the century,⁸⁶ and reading was central to this process.⁸⁷ Furthermore, once active within the movement, labour intellectuals continually promoted the power of reading to draw others to true understanding and commitment. It could be "instrumental" in drawing others "from darkness into light".⁸⁸ Indeed, "stimulated by a few books", the mind of a previously "thoughtless and apathetic" person could be "seized by many new ideas", and thereby brought towards conscious political activity.⁸⁹ Such faith in the positive power of the text may seem naive to the more jaded contemporary eye. It expressed not only the strength of ideological purpose, but the struggle for understanding and illumination that identified many self-educated workers. For example, J. Morse's plea for the widespread circulation of a 1916 article by Jack Cade connected a deep faith in its power with an openly expressed sense of reading as a slow, repetitive, reverential act:

It would be a grand thing if it could be distributed throughout the whole Commonwealth to every household, everywhere, where it would be observed and read by all and sundry. If you could only get the people outside your own circle to read, mark, learn and inwardly digest the truths enunciated in that article, it ought to do an immense amount of good.⁹⁰

At its best, this political conception of reading suggested a wide, democratic attitude to texts. This is evident in the labour movement's opposition to censorship, and in the frequently overlooked democracy and pluralism of many labour movement publications.⁹¹ Although these standards were not always attained, the orientation to the text was consistently political rather than moral, and in this the labour movement represented a distinctive form of reading, decisively different from bourgeois reading practice.

Cumulatively, this analysis suggests that the 'how' of reading is just as significant as the 'what' of reading. Intellectual life within the labour movement may not only have engaged with particular, distinctive texts and philosophies, it may also have operated on the basis of a distinctive logic. Further specifying the practices of working-class cultural and political life – practices like speaking, organising, writing, and so on, therefore emerges as an important intellectual quest, one that will help to establish the nature and existence of a working-class public sphere in Australian history.

Endnotes

- 1 An early attempt to focus on reading matter rather than methods is: L.F. Crisp, "Remember the Literature, Comrades!" Labour Party Reading Then and Now', *Labour History*, pp. 31-3. Larry Peterson, 'The Intellectual World of the IWW', *History*

Workshop Journal, 22, Autumn 1986, pp. 153-172 focuses on reading matter, and takes an individual as its unit of analysis. Martyn Lyons and Lucy Taksa, *Australian Readers Remember: an oral history of reading 1890-1930*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1992, provides an excellent account of cross-class reading, that uses oral history methods to focus on the experience of individuals. Bruce Scates, *A New Australia: Citizenship, Radicalism and the First Republic*, Cambridge University Press, Melbourne, 1997, in an insightful analysis, focuses on reading matter and reading practice in the late 19th century.

- 2 The idea of a specific working-class public sphere grows out of recent criticisms of Habermas's historical analysis of the bourgeois public sphere. For such criticisms, see C. Calhoun (ed.), *Habermas and the Public Sphere*, MIT Press, Massachusetts and London, 1992. A recent, unsatisfactory analysis of the working-class public sphere that focuses on political language is: K. Tucker Jr., *French Revolutionary Syndicalism and the Public Sphere*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1996.
- 3 The shadow cast by work over reading is noted in an appraisal of *Ross's Monthly* by the 'Railways' Union Gazette' of Melbourne. The appraisal is reprinted in *Ross's Monthly*, 1 (3), February 1st 1916, p. 20.
- 4 For example, see: Tom Tunnecliffe, 'Among the Books', *Ross's Monthly*, 4 (44), July 19th 1919, p. 25; Tom Tunnecliffe, 'Among the Books', *Ross's Monthly*, 2 (16), March 24th 1917, p. 14.
- 5 W.R. Morgan, 'The Policy of "Ross's"', *Ross's Monthly*, 4 (42), May 12th 1919, p. 15.
- 6 F. Sutherland, 'On Propaganda/Lessons for the Plebs', *Common Cause*, November 17th 1922, p. 10.
- 7 Jas Henderson, 'The Picture Book of Evolution', *Ross's Monthly*, 3 (29), April 13th 1918, p. 22.
- 8 Praise for picture books is in: Jas Henderson, 'The Picture Book of Evolution'. For a recommendation on the value of sections/subheadings, see advertisement for 'Three "Specials"', *Ross's Monthly*, 3 (35), October 1st 1918, p. 19.
- 9 Bruce Scates, *A New Australia*, p. 59-60.
- 10 Tom Tunnecliffe suggests rereading for greater understanding in: 'Among the Books', *Ross's Monthly*, 2 (16), March 24th 1917, p. 14; and for inspiration in 'Among the Books', *Ross's Monthly*, 2 (17), April 21st 1917, p. 13. The need to return to a work so that it may be inwardly digested is in *Ross's Monthly*, 1 (3), February 1st 1916, p. 20.
- 11 R.S. Ross, 'Basic Wages and Productivity', *Ross's Monthly*, 6 (61), December 4th 1920, p. 13.
- 12 This point is made by Stuart Macintyre in relation to autodidacts in Britain in his *A Proletarian Science: Marxism in Britain, 1917-1933*, Lawrence and Wishart, 1986, p. 71.
- 13 See the Notes on Presentations at the Victorian Labor College by Ted Tripp in *Ted Tripp Papers*, Ballieu Library, University of Melbourne. The Box is entitled: Lecture and Study Notes, and is not catalogued, but the quote is from an appraisal of a student, Clyde Balter.
- 14 "Radix", 'Marx and Modern Thought', *Ross's Monthly*, 6 (72), November 12th 1921, p. 11.
- 15 See Stuart Macintyre, *A Proletarian Science*, p. 71; Sean Scalmer, 'Marxist Ideology inside the Communist Party of Australia 1942-1956', *Journal of Political Ideologies*, 3 (1), 1998, pp. 45-61.
- 16 See defences: J.E. 'New Era Economics', *Ross's Monthly*, 6 (67), June 4th 1921, p. 11; "Radix", 'Marx and Modern Thought: University Lecturer on the Materialist Conception', *Ross's Monthly*, 6 (70), September 3rd 1921, p. 5.

- 17 For example, see: G.B. 'Is Fascism Inevitable?', *Australian Left News*, 1 (3), January 1939, p. 16; P. Morgan Thomas, 'Is Haldane a "War Monger"?', *Australian Left News*, 1 (6), April-May 1939, p. 8; C.W. Baker, 'Marx, Lenin and the Social Revolution', *Ross's Monthly*, 5 (55), June 12th 1920, p. 16.
- 18 Ame Perdue, 'Karl Almighty Marx', *Ross's Monthly*, 5 (56), July 10th 1922, p. 9.
- 19 For reading as class-based, see: Peter Freebody, 'Social Class and Reading', *Discourse*, 12 (2), April 1992, p. 68-84.
- 20 This reflects the distinction between the restricted and elaborated code in working-class and middle-class language-use. See: B. Bernstein, *The Class, Codes, and Control, Volume 3*, Routledge Kegan Paul, London, 1975.
- 21 This attitude on the part of the bourgeoisie may be equated with the 'pure gaze' that Pierre Bourdieu discusses in *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1984, Ch. 1, 5.
- 22 This is discussed in J. Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, Polity Press, Cambridge, 1989, p. 47-50.
- 23 This view is from a contemporary Professor of Literature: H. Levin, 'The Crisis of Interpretation', in J. Engell and D. Perkins (eds), *Teaching Literature: What is Needed Now*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1987, p. 47.
- 24 Martyn Lyons and Lucy Taksa, *Australian Readers Remember*, p. 189.
- 25 This was suggested of H.E. Boote's 'A Fool's Talk' - 'The Editor', 'Boote's Big Book', *Ross's Monthly*, 2 (22), September 22nd, 1917, p. 14.
- 26 Martyn Lyons and Lucy Taksa, *Australian Readers Remember*, p. 75-6.
- 27 This is noted of Cuban workers in Albert Manguel, *A History of Reading*, HarperCollins, London, 1996, p. 111-115.
- 28 G.W.M., 'Readers' Opinions of "Ross's"', *Ross's Monthly*, 1 (6), May 15th 1916, p. 9.
- 29 For example, see the account of reading and discussion in a South Melbourne ALP Class of the Victorian Labor College - W.S. Brown and H.L. Brook, 'Report of the Board of Management', *The Victorian Labor College in 1930*, Annual Conference, Trades Hall, Melbourne, February 7th 1931, p. 5-6.
- 30 'On to Ten Thousand', *Australian Left News*, 1 (5), March 1939, p. 5.
- 31 The newsletter of the Australian members of the club, *Australian Left News*, ran for 7 issues from November 1938 to June 1939. It contained a monthly discussion and listing of discussion groups. For an account of a typical public performance, see the participation of the LBC in Sydney May Day events - 'Australian Group News', *Australian Left News*, 1 (7), June 1939, p. 12; for a report on a summer school, see 'An L.B.C. Summer School', *Australian Left News*, 1 (2), December 1938, p. 7-8.
- 32 'A Group Diary', *Australian Left News* 1 (5), March 1939, p. 4-5.
- 33 Henry Lawson, 'Remailed', *Prose Works of Henry Lawson*, Angus and Robertson, Sydney, 1979, p. 58-61.
- 34 On workplaces and the Domain, see: M. Lyons and L. Taksa, *Australian Readers Remember*, p. 151-2. On the exchange of books in organisations, see the discussion of the Coogee Labor League and the Broken Hill LBC in: 'Australian Groups Month by Month', *Australian Left News*, 1 (1), November 1938, p. 13. For accounts of this process in England see: Jack Jones, 'A Liverpool Socialist Education', *History Workshop Journal*, 18, Autumn 1984, p. 94-5.
- 35 Bruce Scates, *A New Australia*, p. 62; the advice is in *Ross's Monthly*, 1 (9), August 19th 1916, p. 3.
- 36 Martyn Lyons and Lucy Taksa, *Australian Readers Remember*, p. 125.
- 37 See 'Instead of an Editorial', *Ross's Monthly*, 1 (1), December 1st 1915, p. 16; 'The Editorial "I"', *Ross's Monthly*, 5 (56), July 10th 1920, p. 14.
- 38 R.S. Ross, 'To the Fellowship', *Ross's Monthly*, 1 (10), September 23rd 1916, p. 14.
- 39 Norman Lilley, 'Page Twenty-One', *The Worker*, January 6th 1910, p. 21; 'This Issue', *Ross's Monthly* 2 (16), March 24th 1917, p. 17.
- 40 Norman Lilley, 'Page Twenty-One', *The Worker*, January 6th 1910, p. 21.
- 41 For example, see 'Ross's Reflections: Just a Few to Go on With', *Ross's Monthly*, 1 (1), December 1st 1915, p. 3.
- 42 See 'Once More, Ourselves', *Ross's Monthly*, 1 (7), June 24th 1916, p. 16.
- 43 R.S. Ross, 'Rouse Ye, Militants of Labor!', *Ross's Monthly*, 1 (2), January 1st 1916, p. 13.
- 44 On the links between imperialism and the quest for literature that expressed universal qualities, see: Edward W. Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, Vintage, London, 1994. On the history of English in the universities, see: Terry Eagleton, *Literary Theory: an introduction*, Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1983, Ch. 2.
- 45 For example, R.S. Ross, 'The Church and the Press', *Ross's Monthly*, 12 (21), August 18th 1917, p. 13; Tom Tunnecliffe, 'Frank Anstey's "Red Europe"', *Ross's Monthly*, 4 (47), October 11th 1919, p. 10.
- 46 These oppositions are from: R.C. Clark and May Brodney, 'Report of the Board of Management', *The Victorian Labor College*, 21st Annual Conference, Trades Hall, Melbourne, February 5th 1938, p. 3; E.G. Hart, 'Report of the Board of Management', *The Victorian Labor College in 1928*, 12th Annual Conference, Trades Hall, Melbourne, January 19th 1929, p. 4.
- 47 Tom Tunnecliffe, 'Frank Anstey's "Red Europe"', *Ross's Monthly*, 4 (47), October 11th 1919, p. 10.
- 48 For a critique of such postmodern 'doxa', see: Terry Eagleton, *The Illusions of Postmodernism*, Blackwell, Oxford, 1996.
- 49 The appeals of non-fiction are noted in: Martyn Lyons and Lucy Taksa, *Australian Readers Remember*, p. 102.
- 50 Trades and Industrial Hall and Literary Institute Association of Sydney Ltd., *Library Catalogue*, Angus and Robertson, Sydney, 1914.
- 51 This is reflected in the large number of advertisements for such books in *Ross's Monthly*, e.g. 1 (3), February 1st 1916, p. 21.
- 52 'Democracy and Bolshevism', *Ross's Monthly*, 5 (56), July 10th 1920, p. 3; John L. Glascock, 'The Philosophy of Bolshevism', *Ross's Monthly*, 7 (74), January 21st 1922, p. 12.
- 53 'D.C.', 'Readers Opinions of "Ross's"', *Ross's Monthly*, 1 (5), April 1st 1916, p. 8; Tom Tunnecliffe, 'Among the Books', *Ross's Monthly*, 5 (49), December 13th 1919, p. 16; 'Printer's Ink', *Ross's Monthly*, 5 (56), July 10th 1920, p. 7.
- 54 'Left Book Club', *Australian Left News*, 2, December 1938, p. 3.
- 55 Editorial, 'Independent Working-Class Education', *Ross's Monthly*, 7 (80), June 3rd 1922, p. 8.
- 56 'Ame Perdue', 'A Plea for the Practical', *Ross's Monthly*, 3 (35), October 1st 1918, p. 9. This conflicts with the view that male reading is abstract, while women's reading is concrete - see Pamela L. Caughie, 'Women Reading/Reading Women', *Papers on Language and Literature*, 24 (3), Summer 1988, p. 331.
- 57 'Ame Perdue', 'Dogs and Men', *Ross's Monthly*, 2 (13), December 16th 1916, p. 29. For more on the meaning of being 'practical' within the labour movement, see S. Scalmer, 'Being Practical in Early and Contemporary Labor Politics', *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, 43 (3), 1997, pp. 301-11.

- 58 R.S. Ross, 'Dale's "Industrial History of Broken Hill"', *Ross's Monthly*, 3 (30), May 18th 1918, p. 7.
- 59 This is related in 'Australian Groups News', *Australian Left News*, 1 (6), April-May 1939, p. 13.
- 60 "M.M.B.", 'Towards a New Left Outlook', *Australian Left News*, 1 (5), March 1939, p. 4.
- 61 This is how R.S. Ross saw 'A History of Freedom of Thought' in the context of the 'Free Speech' campaign of wartime - 'At the Last Moment', *Ross's Monthly*, 1 (2), January 1st 1916, p. 16.
- 62 Editorial, 'Practical Ideals for L.B.C. Members', *Australian Left News*, 1 (3), January 1939, p. 2.
- 63 For a reference to R.S. Ross's scrapbooking, see his 'Havelock Ellis and Prohibition', *Ross's Monthly*, 5 (56), July 10th 1920, p. 17. For more on the process, see: M. Lyons and L. Taksa, *Australian Readers Remember*, p.
- 64 For example, this argument was used to garner support for Ross's Cooperative publishing house. See *Ross's Monthly*, 6 (61), December 4th 1920, p. 3.
- 65 For accounts of how this shaped *Ross's Monthly*, see: 'At the Throat of "Ross's"', *Ross's Monthly*, 1 (3), February 1st 1916; 'Blasphemy', *Ross's Monthly*, 1 (4), March 1st 1916, pp. 4-8.
- 66 Michael Denning, 'Cheap Stories: Notes on Popular Fiction and Working-Class Culture in Nineteenth Century America', *History Workshop Journal*, 22, Autumn 1986, p. 12.
- 67 Albert Manguel, *A History of Reading*, p. 86.
- 68 For example, see: "Ame Perdue", 'Rotten Rungs', *Ross's Monthly*, 2 (17), 21st April 1917, pp. 26-7; W.S. Cathcart, 'The Ugly Bolshevik Ducklings: A Modern Fable', *Ross's Monthly*, 6 (64), March 5th 1921, p. 12.
- 69 "The Gadfly", 'Parthian Pars.', *Ross's Monthly*, 6 (66), May 7th 1921, p. 8.
- 70 On lessons: "L.R.M.", 'Upton Sinclair's New Industrial Novel', *Ross's Monthly*, 5 (57), August 7th 1920, pp. 22-3; on handbook: Tom Tunnecliffe, 'Frank Anstey's "Red Europe"', *Ross's Monthly*, 4 (47), October 11th 1919, p. 10.
- 71 Mark Sallier Phillips, 'If Mrs Mure be not sorry for poor King Charles': History, the Novel, and the Sentimental Reader', *History Workshop Journal*, 43, Spring 1997, p. 114, 119. See also William Ray, 'Reading Women: Cultural Authority, Gender and the Novel. The Case of Rousseau', *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 27 (3), Spring 1994, pp. 421-447.
- 72 Albert Manguel, *A History of Reading*, p. 296; M. Lyons and L. Taksa, *Australian Readers Remember*, p. 163.
- 73 On the problem of overstating the gendered nature of reading and its relationship to spheres, see: Abigail A. Van Slyck, 'The Lady and the Library Loafer: Gender and Public Space in Victorian America', *Winterthur Portfolio*, 31 (4), Winter 1996, p. 222. On the 'public'/non-fiction interests of women, see Mark Saller Phillips, 'If Mrs Mure', p. 118. On attempts to construct literature as male in the 18th century, see: Nancy K. Miller, 'Men's Reading, Women's Writing: Gender and the Rise of the Novel', *Yale French Studies*, 75, 1988, p. 44. On the specific case of Wyndham Lewis and the modernist quest to create literature as masculine, see: Bonnie Kime Scott, *Refiguring Modernism, Volume One: The Women of 1928*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington and Indianapolis, 1995, Chapter 6.
- 74 'Ourselves', *Ross's Monthly*, 1 (5), April 1st 1916, p. 16.
- 75 'The Editorial "I."', *Ross's Monthly*, 5 (56), July 10th 1920, p. 14.
- 76 'The Editorial "I."', *Ross's Monthly*, 5 (52-3), March-April 1920, p. 12.
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- 78 W. Francis Ahern, 'An American on "Ross's"', *Ross's Monthly*, 1 (6), May 15th 1916, p. 28.
- 79 Larry Peterson, 'The Intellectual World of the IWW: An American Workers' Library in the First Half of the Twentieth Century', *History Workshop Journal*, 22, Autumn 1986, p. 161.
- 80 Tom Tunnecliffe, 'Among the Books', *Ross's Monthly*, 2 (18), May 19th 1917, p. 15.
- 81 Tom Tunnecliffe, 'Among the Books', *Ross's Monthly*, 2 (18), May 19th 1917, p. 15.
- 82 William Ray, 'Reading Women: Cultural Authority, Gender, and the Novel', p. 423.
- 83 Mark Sallier Phillips, 'If Mrs Mure be not sorry for poor King Charles', p. 120.
- 84 Abigail A. Van Slyck, 'The Lady and the Library Loafer', p. 225.
- 85 For example, for an account of the censoring of modernist literature with lesbian themes, see: Bonnie Kime Scott, *Refiguring Modernism, Volume One: The Women of 1928*, Chapter 12.
- 86 Stephen Yeo, 'A New Life: The Religion of Socialism in Britain, 1883-1896', *History Workshop Journal*, 4, Autumn 1977, p. 10-11.
- 87 Bob Ross relates his conversion to the cause after reading William Lane in his 'The Late "Billy" Lane', *Ross's Monthly*, 2 (22), September 22nd 1917, p. 9.
- 88 A. Walter, 'Readers' Opinions of "Ross's"', *Ross's Monthly*, 1 (7), June 24th 1916, p. 9.
- 89 M.M.B., "...And Against Fascism", *Australian Left News*, 1 (6), April-May 1939, p. 4.
- 90 J. Morse, 'From a Reader', *Ross's Monthly*, 2 (13), December 16th 1916, p. 13.
- 91 *Ross's Monthly* facilitated open discussion and conflict within its pages, even when the editor differed. For example: 'The Editorial "I."', *Ross's Monthly*, 2 (24), November 10th 1917, p. 12-13; Tom Tunnecliffe, 'Among the Books', *Ross's Monthly*, 4 (46), September 13th 1919, pp. 18-19. This is also true of the L.B.C.: M.M.B., '....And Against Fascism", p. 4-5.