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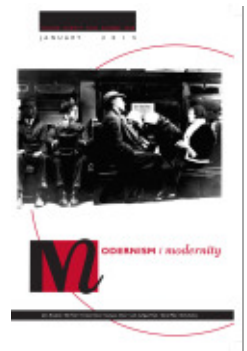
The Follies of War: Cross-Dressing and Popular Theatre on the British Front Lines, 1914-18

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The Follies of War: Cross-Dressing and Popular Theatre on the British Front Lines, 1914–18

David A. Boxwell

Social Drama Queens

Pity the drag queens who perform for unreceptive audiences. Two cases from World War I are worth recalling from the pages of the London tabloid *The News of the World*; both illustrate the gender disruption associated with modern warfare. The popular weekly newspaper took note of some “strange antics” occurring in June 1918. Victor Wilson, who, as the headline announced, “IN FEMALE ATTIRE / MASQUERADED AS GIRL TO HAVE FUN WITH SOLDIERS,” created enough of a sensation to merit a short report in the paper, but his local impact in the Edinburgh area must have been even more sensational. Wilson went looking for love in all the wrong places. But on one particular outing, he was oblivious to the fact that while a soldier on his own might have been susceptible to a pick-up, propositioning two or more soldiers in a group would almost certainly invite a homophobic response. Here is the report in full:

The strange antics of Victor Wilson, a Dundalk Labour Exchange official, who is alleged to have been in the habit of masquerading as a young woman, with the object of having fun with soldiers, resulted in his appearance yesterday before the local magistrates. Although the accused was dressed in ladies’ garments, and wore a hat and veil, and attempted to attract the khaki-clad lads, 3 of the latter deposed that, becoming suspicious, they informed the local constabulary. P[olice] C[onstable] Quinn then assumed military uniform, and going to Castletown Railway Bridge, kept the defendant under observation, eventually entering into conversation

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with the supposed “lady” who, becoming uneasy at the turn of events, tried to bolt. Quinn blew his whistle, and the 3 soldiers aided him in arresting Wilson, who was alleged to have offered 5 s[hillings] to let him off. After other evidence the accused was returned for trial at Louth Assizes, bail being allowed.¹

Wilson’s entrapment by the police and military gives some indication of the anxiety about transgressive male sex/gender identity and behavior which the pressures of war might exert on secure notions of masculinist and patriarchal culture. His transvestite forays into cross-class homosexual encounters ended in his apprehension and exposure at the hands of the authorities and the objects of his desire, working-class soldiers in uniform. Such would have been the fate of many men whose outlaw desires were stimulated by the enticing spectacle of massed male, uniformed flesh during the Great War.

Wilson’s masquerade was, however, not as wholly dysphoric as another case trumpeted in the tabloid approximately two weeks later (18 June 1918). Readers were treated to the pitiful spectacle of “THE EFFEMINATE SOLDIER / DESERTER WHO LOVES TO WEAR BEAUTIFUL DRESSES.” Without implicating Frederick Wright as a homosexual, *The News of the World* informed its titillated readers that he appeared in court in women’s attire at Highgate, London and was charged, on remand,

as an idle and disorderly person found in female attire, and further with being an absentee from the Royal Fusiliers. [The] Accused, after first denying that he was a man, admitted that he had masqueraded under the name of Kathleen Woodhouse and had adopted the disguise to escape from the Army. He said that he disliked soldiers and soldiering; in fact, everything manly. He added that he wished he had been born a woman, as he loved wearing beautiful dresses.²

The News of the World reported that this spectacular case of gender dysphoria had previously attempted suicide, been rejected by his family “because of his effeminate ways,” and was remanded “to await an escort” back to his regiment. The judge gruffly remarked, according to the report, “that he did not suppose he would be of much use in the Army. In the meantime the police might put him into proper garb. ‘I should not send him to the Army in this condition’” (ibid.).

Ironically, Wright’s garb was not necessarily improper: had fate more fortuitously intervened, he could have been of much use to the British fighting forces as one of a corps of drag artists performing in camp and shipboard theatricals that were officially sponsored by the military during the Great War.³ His failed flight from masculinity, male bonding, and militarism stands as a poignant attempt to desert from precisely what the civilian Wilson found so dangerously alluring in male homosocial arrangements in wartime. Yet these dissenters from sex/gender norms, however disastrous their performances in drag, were two of countless actors in a social drama spotlit, with blinding intensity, by the pressures of World War I, which was the first significant war following the establishment of the male homosexual as a separate class of being. This drama was what Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick called the “chronic, now endemic crisis of

homo/heterosexual definition, indicatively male, dating from the end of the nineteenth century.”⁴ If we cast this crisis in metaphorically theatrical terms, the homo/hetero schism in male identity and relations had become a phenomenon by the time of the Great War.

As anthropologist Victor Turner has theorized at length, the defining sense that culture is theatrical is heightened by the “social dramas” that constantly emerge, even traumatically erupt, from the surface of social life.⁵ Social dramas expose the subcutaneous levels of the social structure and both activate and reveal a culture’s conflictual relations and associations based on such determinant factors as gender, class, division of labor, race, ethnicity, and so forth. Turner limns the social drama as consisting of four phases: breach (the forcing of antagonisms into the open); recognition of crisis; redress; and resolution/conclusion (*RT*, 10). The problematic breach in male homosociality manifests itself as a crisis during the Great War which, in Turner’s conceptualization of the social drama, is redressed by the kind of machinery that attempts to “seal up punctures in the social fabric” (*ibid.*). Forms of redress intended to resolve or forestall conflict may either take juridical or ritual means (like the theatre) that have a “therapeutic” intention.

Wilson’s frantic evasion of arrest and his hysterical bribery attempts, and Wright’s melodramatic suicide attempt and outrageous cross-dressed appearance in court, inspire me to consider them as exemplary, but fatally misdirected (or undirected), drama queens in the social drama being played out in World War I. What they lacked was the proper stage upon which to conduct the kind of transgressive behavior punitively redressed by the unflattering glare of juridical and mass media spotlights on the home front. The irony, I will demonstrate, is that certain cultural apparatuses during the Great War did not merely facilitate the connotative articulation of polymorphously perverse desires, but actually put riotous cross-dressing onto stages close to the front lines. Indeed, the unprecedented spectacle of innumerable soldiers and sailors cavorting in frocks became a system of popular cultural production institutionally fabricated, and even necessitated, by the rupture of the homosocial continuum in 1914.

Theatre behind the front lines during the war drew both euphoric and dysphoric sustenance from the tortuous and highly-panicked slippage between prescribed identification and proscribed desire in homosocial arrangements. The theatrical stage was the site where the pleasures and anxieties of same-sex relations could be made manifest, embodied and enacted as public spectacle for the gaze of those experiencing the crisis of male-male relations. In Turner’s terms, theatre, as a ritual mode of redress, is a cultural mechanism by which a viewer is able to confront, comprehend, and respond to this crisis. “By means of such genres as theatre . . . performances are presented which probe a community’s weakness,” as a means of resolving the conflicts which underscore the social drama represented on stage (*RT*, 11). Behind the curtain-as-veil, aberrant male-male desires could be staged in an effort to “solve” the crisis of male bonding spotlighted by the war’s impact.

In this essay I investigate how the crisis of male-male bonds during the war was given “redress” in theatrical terms via the ubiquity of cross-dressing in the spirit of

4 carnivalesque and camp. Most striking about the phenomenon of officially sanctioned transvestism during the war is the degree to which it was an expression, however problematic, of crossing the homo/hetero divide. Cross-dressing by soldiers on stage demonstrates how a theatrical form can make sense of the crisis being enacted. I argue that the glorious—but hugely problematic—excess of male cross-dressing in mass troop entertainments flirted with the possibility of repairing schisms in the homosocial continuum in ways that were wholly untenable in the aftermath of the war. The discursive production of homosexuality in modern British culture was, to a significant degree, dependent on the theatrical performance of “perverse” desires, identities, and styles by bodies on stage. Popular musical comedy performed by soldiers and sailors had the potential both to challenge and to confirm the “logic” of normative heterosexuality within male social arrangements. Cross-dressing on stage ritualistically desublimated and resublimated the array of inhibitive repressions structuring male bonding during the war. How audiences reacted to this challenge to what was otherwise sublimated and repressed, and how it took on a kind of cultural imperative, are my subjects.

Soldiers in Frocks

The 22nd Divisional Theatre’s presentation of Oscar Straus’s operetta *The Chocolate Soldier* in the summer of 1918, just behind the front lines in eastern France, necessitated the enactment of a range of women’s parts by soldiers in the 22nd. All the female roles were assumed by men, including the pretty “rival” Mascha, played by Second Lieutenant T. F. Sampson of the Cheshire Regiment, and the ingenue Nadina, played by Private T. Wardle, also of the R.A.M.C. The program for the production lists the names of the male chorus members who were required to sing as “Officers, Soldiers, Peasants and Bridesmaids, etc.” The synopsis on the back page of the program suggests that the performance required men to enact convincing desire for other men (in drag) in an elaborate comic plot reveling in mistaken identities, concealed bodies, and feigned “flirtations” that “yielded affection.” Throughout, the hero Bumerli’s “youthful mien and carriage” is admired by the “women” in the plot: Nadina, her cousin Mascha, and her mother Aurelia. The program note concludes: “The sentiment of ‘The Chocolate Soldier’ is evolved by the love affairs of Bumerli and Nadina, Mascha and Alexis.”⁶

Remarkably, the 22nd’s elaborate staging of gender-transitivity in the midst of the carnage of trench warfare was quite unexceptional. British theatre during the Great War bears out Marjorie Garber’s contention that cross-dressing does not merely inhabit the margins, but also “the very heart of public, institutional, and mainstream structures.”⁷ As Garber surmises,

Whatever the specific semiotic relationship between military uniforms and erotic fantasies of sartorial gender, the history of cross-dressing within the armed services attests to a complicated interplay of forces, including male bonding, acknowledged and unacknowledged homosexual identity, carnivalized power relations, the erotics of same-sex communities, and the apparent safety afforded by theatrical representation. [VI, 55–6]

The open predilection for, and appreciation of, cross-dressing by the British during World War I was not, therefore, just a subversive or “secret” form of transgressive “release.” Rather, it was also a seemingly mandated form of ludic experimentation that was structured by the crisis of the homo/hetero binary within homosocial formations. The cross-dressed entertainments permitted the creation of a quasi-utopian space where the traumatic undercurrents of this social drama could receive at least partial salutary psychic and cultural propitiation, however much it was expressed in misogynist, racist, and homophobic terms. In other words, it is possible to argue that if the male homosocial continuum was wholly unmarked by rupture, the spectacle of cross-dressed soldiers in a theatrical site would not (need to) exist. Certainly, World War I was marked by an unprecedented efflorescence of cross-dressing in institutionalized military “performance.”⁸

Military-social historian J. G. Fuller has established that at least eighty percent of the divisions that served in the active war theatres (western and eastern fronts) sustained an established theatrical subunit. This was most often referred to, in suitably carnivalesque terms, as the “concert party,” made up of enlisted men and their junior officers, many of whom had theatrical and entertainment backgrounds before conscription, enlistment, or commissioning.⁹ By the end of 1917, division and battalion concert parties were “practically universal” (*TM*, 96). That this institutionalization of theatre became so rapidly entrenched suggests that hegemonic forces tolerated, if not encouraged, the outbreak of carnival. An extensive culture of popular theatrical performance served as a vital component in the formation of esprit de corps. There was little attempt made to censor content and “officer attendance, and often participation, gave their implicit sanction to the proceedings” (*TM*, 102). Despite the fact that much satire was directed at the officers, they “accepted the comic strictures offered from the stage; they did not stand on their dignity; they were ‘alright’ at bottom, simply men doing their job” (*ibid.*). The concert parties enabled officers and the other ranks to foster esprit de corps, a carefully circumscribed release of class tensions permissible in the hazardous proximity to the front lines.

The concert party became a preeminent homosocial ritual affirmed in the discourse of military regulation. A 1917 pamphlet issued by the General Staff took note of organized “evening entertainments” as a way of improving morale.¹⁰ In May 1918, *Hints on Training*, issued by the XVIII Corps, positively recommended the establishment of regular divisional theatre (*TM*, 109). Theatre supplemented organized competitive athletics and games as a recreational method of building “true soldierly spirit.”¹¹ A bottom-up cultural dynamic, concert parties had first evolved early in the war in YMCA huts, or spontaneously in the open among soldiers at rest or awaiting troop movement. “Once the idea took hold,” however, “authorities put considerable effort into supporting it. Numbers of troupes were usually exempted from all but light duties, becoming full-time entertainers” (*TM*, 95). Designated battalion entertainment funds supplemented a nominal admission charge, and considerable assets were spent on relatively elaborate costuming and set design, as many photographs of troupes reveal. Indeed, the war was an incessant “show”; Fuller notes that “no period of rest or reserve was

6 without its ad hoc concerts, at which soldiers would perform, singing, reciting, conjuring, doing comedy, or ventriloquy" (*TM*, 99). Thus the British experienced the war in self-consciously performative terms, as Paul Fussell points out.¹² He does not, however, mention the startling frequency with which military men appeared in drag. Such appearances were the eruptive manifestation of a matrix of theatrical and sexually dissident subcultures that had been evolving for centuries, but which, for the first time on a mass scale, emerged as a preeminent form of theatre produced by and for men in homosocial formations.¹³

That drag was a potentially transgressive form of theatrical presentation during the war did not go unnoticed by *Punch*. The working classes at theatrical play were depicted in situations that at least suggested the idea of homosexual acts performed by men in masquerade who dressed up to play out heteronormative romantic situations. The best articulation of this is "Mabel's" pop-eyed panic in the cartoon published in the 22 May 1918 issue (fig. 1). The idea that cross-dressing could encompass the performance of erotic "acts" between men was the source of much anxiety-laden humor that was conveniently displaced onto the working classes, stereotypically represented as phobic and buffoonish grotesques. In a 21 June 1916 *Punch* cartoon (fig. 2), Edwin Morrow expresses anxiety about the transformation of sex and gender norms in terms of transvestism and perverse gestures, stances, and costuming. Focused on the "posing" cross-dressed soldier who has "degenerated" from an ideally masculine and ramrod-stiff Victorian avatar, this cartoon simultaneously revels in and denounces the carnivalesque spirit. The cartoonist attempts to recuperate for heterosexual norms the transformative degeneration of "John" into "Jack" by indicating that the series of photographic souvenirs has been exchanged between Jack and his sweetheart "Susie" (formerly "Susannah"), herself the distaff version of gender/sex inversion in masculine uniform.¹⁴ Morrow's transformations absolve the cross-dressers of any taint of same-sex perversion, as Jack and Susie have each become the heterosexually desired Other to the heterosexual self. But his anxiety betrays itself at another level. Ever protective of a conservative vision of Britain, he uses the "startling contrast" of sex/gender *bouleversement* to demonstrate how thoroughly vulgar the modern war is compared to more noble and formal nineteenth-century heterosexual romantic gestures. Traditional standards of decorum and gender "style" (apparent in the photos' settings) are under siege, and *Punch* uses comedy to stave off reactionary fears about debased forms of popular culture that perform a terrifying restylization of bodies in wartime. Foremost among these debased cultural practices is theatre, with its tenacious traditions of sexual deviance, cross-dressing, and ribald comedy.

That men cross-dressed to entertain other men in the midst of war was the source of some discomfiture to the arbiters of British culture. *Punch* assured its readers that drag did not necessarily connote homosexual desire or identity (however much it prompted acceptable expressions of panic among working-class performers like "Mabel"). But such reassurance was itself governed by the connotative association between homosexuality and cross-dressing that had been established in the popular imagination by the outbreak of World War I. This association could be mined for hu-



▲
Fig. 1. Mabel's pop-eyed panic, *Punch* (1918).

mor. Thus the 22nd's presentation of *The Chocolate Soldier* was half-mockingly, half-nervously performed, as the program announced, "With Apologies." Similarly, division Pierrot Troupe leeringly risked queering itself in the program for its Christmas 1915 all-male pantomime, *Babes in the W* (*Censored*), when it explained that in Act IV, "all sorts of scenes are seen in this scene—except for the obscene—which is kept for the Dressing Room." The pun on "scene" depends, necessarily, on the audience's ability, or willingness, to fantasize about the nature of the perversion energizing the performance and the comedy.

Dragging Up the Home Front

Even outside of theatrical environments, the case of Victor Wilson was typical in establishing the convergence of transivities of gender performance and (homo)sexual desires in terms of costuming, gestures, and acts. The retributive and surveillant forces of the police and mass media successfully converged in another "GRAVE SCANDAL." "MAN'S ALLEGED MASQUERADE AS ANOTHER MAN'S WIFE," was the headline of *The Illustrated Police News* of 20 July 1916. The story recounted the "well-deserved punishment" of two years at hard labor for Robert Couthard, alias "Jennie Gray," the lover of James Blake, alias "James Gray." This perverse travesty of the heteronormative marriage ritual was the "cover," as the tabloid put it, for these out-laws in leading their



▲
Fig. 2. From John to Jack, Susannah to Susie, *Punch* (1916).

immoral life and permitting the house off Lime Street [in Liverpool], which they occupied as Mr. and Mrs. James Gray, to be used for immoral traffic.

Detectives Alexander and Lanty deposed they watched the house occupied by [Couthard and Blake] from May 30 to June 8. Couthard, whose clever make-up caused both the officers to believe that he was a woman, took numerous men to the house. When the house was raided on June 8, and the arrests effected, a considerable sum of money was seized,

from theft and blackmail, it is implied.¹⁵ The case of Gray and Gray was an especial outrage to the forces of law and order. Couthard's criminal and quite successful ("clever") "masquerade" was inspired not simply to lure unsuspecting men to a homosexual fleecing, but also by the transgressive pleasures of exploiting undecidability through appearance ("make-up") and costume. There was no question by 1916 that cross-dressing signified sexual outlawry, which was especially threatening to Alexander and Lanty. Taking over a week to decipher Couthard's "act," the police seem to have had difficulty marking the differences between an alluring woman and a male homosexual; he must have exercised a destabilizing impact on the surveillant gaze of officialdom. *The Illustrated Police News* recited the (unnamed) judge's stern lecture to the defendant: "I think it is a great calamity that a man like you should be allowed to be at large. Had I the power I would take great care that you should not be at large again; but unfortunately I have not that power."¹⁶ The judge asseverated that, thirty years after the Labouchère Amendment criminalized homosexuality, the cross-dressed homosexual's appearance was enough to signify otherwise unarticulable acts of gross indecency that merited the maximum punishment of two years at hard labor. Couthard was thus imprisoned (however "insufficiently") not simply for crimes against another person, but for advertising his perversions so ostentatiously—yet so very undecidably—in the performance of petty crimes.

Within a specifically theatrical field of signification, too, the indelible, if not always acknowledged, connotations between gender-bending and sexual perversity were drawn before and during the Great War. For example, the volcanically sensational trial of Noel Pemberton Billing in June 1918 forced into the open the "secret" of perversions at the heart of such private theatrical performances as Maud Allan's impersonation of Wilde's *Salomé*.¹⁷ Pemberton Billing insisted that any participant in theatre outside the official censorship restrictions imposed by the Lord Chamberlain's Office was ipso facto a pervert, vicariously reveling in criminal sexual practices "enacted" (however symbolically) by performers on stage, or "instigated" by directions from the text.¹⁸ In his opening remarks at the trial, Pemberton Billing announced that

I shall have to bring evidence that in many other cases pantomime is used by people who lack courage, or who are not sufficiently debased to take the risk of the crimes [of sodomy and gross indecency] in real life, and I shall have to satisfy the jury that in this case the passion for the head of John the Baptist is a clear case of this practice.¹⁹

In this paranoiac scene, theatre was only surrogate homosexuality. Pemberton Billing's performance theory was ultimately persuasive to the jury precisely because it exploited the never fully spoken acknowledgment that theatre was the appalling sanctuary of

10 homosexuality. This association had been culturally ingrained and discursively reproduced since at least the sixteenth century, and reinforced “interrelated traditions by which the homosexual came to be characterized as effeminate and the actor ranked as homosexual.”²⁰

In the period closer to the Great War, the discursive construction of homosexual identity was predicated on such an association between theatre, cross-dressing, and illicit male-male erotic pleasure.²¹ The Boulton-Park scandal of 1871 definitively linked homosexuality, the world of the theatre, and transvestism.²² This link was reconfirmed at the Wilde trial a quarter-century later, when it was revealed that many of the male prostitutes with whom Wilde consorted had cross-dressing predilections and subsisted on the fringes of the West End theatre world. John Watson Preston, a leading light of the London homosexual demimonde in the late nineteenth century, “held openly transvestite parties, one of which was raided by the police.”²³ This raid precipitated the arrest of Alfred Taylor, one of Wilde’s cicerones in the subculture. At the trial, the police deposed that women’s clothes, a wig, and a brooch were found in Taylor’s rooms after his arrest, all of which were held to be incriminating evidence of his perverted tendencies.²⁴

The delineation of the homosexual as a “separate species” at the end of the nineteenth century depends on the scrutiny of the well-established effeminate cross-dressers at the center of a theatrical and bohemian homosexual metropolitan demimonde in Anglo-American culture.²⁵ Before Boulton and Park’s scandalous performances came to light, two men together, in conventional male clothing, would not have aroused any suspicion about their sexual orientation or preferences. Cross-dressing signaled to the medical and legal communities a new type of male sexual being. “In the early stages of concept formation about homosexuals,” Moe Meyer shows, “acts of cross-dressing became, at times, the only distinguishing feature with which to identify homosexuals; consequently, many scientists believed that transvestites constituted the entire social subgroup” (“UW,” 76). And pointing to the conclusions reached by George Chauncey’s analysis of homosexuality in the American navy during World War I, he argues that “it was not sexual activity that labeled a man homosexual but his choice and use of particular signifying gestures of social role enactment” (“UW,” 77). As Marjorie Garber demonstrates, “the history of transvestism and the history of homosexuality constantly intersect and intertwine, both willingly and unwillingly. They cannot simply be disentangled” (VI, 131). Thus, cross-dressing did not necessarily guarantee itself as a signifying practice of homosexuality; but certainly, by the time of the Great War, it could not be divorced from connotations of sexual perversity and aberrant desires.

Out with a Baby Boy Scout

In the connotative realm male military drag performances take on their most acute significance and the full implications of homosexuality manifest themselves within a dominant, militarist, and heterosexist culture that forbids any open display of male-male erotic desire. D. A. Miller has explored the signifying potential of “the shadow

kingdom of connotation” for the representation of proscribed desires in a given dramatic context.²⁶ He asserts that connotation is the dominant signifying practice of homophobic cultures, which insistently suppress or negate overt representation. Either as intended by the producer or received by the audience, connotation can exercise an uncontrollable force, for it “has the advantage of constructing an essentially insubstantial homosexuality,” with “the corresponding inconvenience,” for heteronormativity, “of tending to raise the ghost all over the place” (“AR,” 125).

By 1914 female impersonation both neutralized and energized the possibility of male homosexuality as a threat within authorized forms of male homosocial desire. This dual power derives from the connotative possibilities of drag that instigated a project of quasi confirmation by refusing to delegitimize theatre’s and drag’s suspect traditions. This refusal was itself a source of entertainment. The troupe aboard *H.M.S. Calliope*, for example, included the song “So Pretty a Gentleman Need Never Want a Lady” in its revue *One Damned Thing After Another* (1917), a flirtatious and highly suggestive gesture acknowledging the desirability of men in uniform and the superfluity of heterosexual courtship rituals in all-male environments. The multiple *entendre* of such military theatricality, stemming from its music hall roots, provided both the traditions and formal structure to elaborate riotous connotation around the slippages between sex, gender, and sexual orientation. The program for *Babes in the W (Censored)* informed audiences that the ingenue, Marian Machree, was “Necessary in the show for the Prince to carry on with. Compree?” Of course, this is an effort to affirm heterosexual romance; but because the romance is enacted by two soldiers it severely disrupts the “heterosexual matrix,” to use Judith Butler’s term.²⁷

The ever-present possibility that drag has ludic potentialities depends on the dynamics involved in staging and reception. Because drag was situated in both a longstanding tradition of carnivalesque entertainments and in a more recent one of sub-cultural homosexual formations, male transvestic theatre performances during the Great War operated in—and incited—a complex circuit of encoding and decoding. In turn they expanded the range of desiring gazes and proliferated scopophilic pleasures. Drag could be transferred to the front lines because its subversive potential (enabling gay subcultural forms to flourish within and exploit homosocial arrangements) went hand in hand with its conservative and misogynistic ability to shore up normative arrangements of sex, gender, and sexuality in an acutely homophobic context. Because so much material originally performed by women was recontextualized from contemporary music halls, revues, and operettas on the home front, and staged in all-male theatrical locations on the front lines, the process of resiting and reciting this material affirmed the slippage and connotation upon which drag capitalized. For example, “Miss” P. R. Morgan, a male member of the Royal Navy’s *Timbertown Follies* traveling revue, was a hit with his performance of the popular song “I’ll Make a Man of You,” first performed by a female singer in *The Passing Show* at the London Hippodrome in the autumn of 1914.²⁸ A jingoistic but naughtily suggestive appeal to women to use their sexual wiles to shame men into enlisting, the verse praises feminine powers of persuasion:

12 I teach the tenderfoot to face the powder
 That adds an added lustre to my skin,
 And I show the raw recruit how to give a chaste salute,
 So when I'm presenting arms he's falling in.
 It makes you almost proud to be a woman
 When you make a strapping soldier of a kid.

But the idea of a sexually aggressive woman recruiting and “initiating” new soldiers for the military would certainly have taken on additional valences when performed by a man for the delectation of other men. For the queer comedic possibilities of Morgan’s performance at the front lines could only have had cultural relevance against a backdrop of spotlighted cross-dressing homosexuals like Victor Wilson, who had a fetishistic and promiscuous yen for men in uniform. Here is the song’s refrain:

On Sunday I walk out with a soldier.
 On Monday I'm taken by a tar,
 On Tuesday I'm out with a baby Boy Scout,
 On Wednesday a Hussar,
 On Thursday I gang out wi' a Scottie,
 On Friday the Captain of the Crew.
 But on Saturday I'm willing, if you'll only take a shilling,
 To make a man of any one of you.²⁹

At one level, the requirement for soldiers in drag to perform as public spectacle in homosocial formations was a seemingly unquestioned—and rather unexceptional—extension of *esprit de corps*. But while the spectacle of a soldier in drag functioned according to the “safety valve” model of cathartic ritual, the form and content of the drag performer’s “act,” strongly dependent as it was on multiple *entendre*, close physical contact with other men (both in and out of drag), and the illusion of eroticized, idealized, and objectified femininity, disrupted the boundaries that contained the act as a necessary release in an all-male environment. A spectator’s desiring and approving gaze on a soldier in drag was not simply a matter of pleasure in a “surrogate” woman; rather, his gaze was directed at an effeminate-acting man in drag, a fellow soldier in his own military organization. Not a woman, but another soldier here enacted the unstable role of desired and desirable “woman.” Indeed, as Fuller notes, many soldiers preferred watching men in drag to “real” female performers, many of whom were able to tour the front lines, but were not respected since they were outsiders to the homosocial formation (*TM*, 106).

Military theatrical cross-dressing was, therefore, a perfect instantiation of connotation—the practice, as Miller puts it, in which “insinuations could be at once developed and denied, where . . . one couldn’t be sure whether homosexuality was being meant at all, but on the chance that it was, one also learned, along with codes that might be conveying it, the silence necessary to keep about their deployment” (“AR,” 125). Early modern gay popular culture found its surprisingly secure refuge on stage in the Great War. Records of wartime courts martial made it clear that officially-sanctioned paramilitary

theatricals were thickly populated by “perfectly charming and very affectionate” cross-dressing gay men.³⁰ The rich connotative possibilities of drag enabled the spectator to decode what was seen and heard on stage according to what Garber calls an “erotics” of interpretation (experienced individually and as part of a collective audience) that may be both enjoyable and anxiety-ridden while remaining never fully cognate within a homophobic interpretive economy (VI, 158).

There’s Nothing Like a Dame

The ambiguities that marked cross-dressing on the military stage arose from varying stylistic traditions that had already evolved in the history of female impersonation by 1914. Put simply, drag took two divergent forms, mimicry and mimesis, which governed the interpretive decoding of the act.³¹ Mimicry was most visibly embodied in the pantomime “dame” tradition, a comedic effort to render the female form in its most hypercarnivalized manner: the grotesque, oversized, and voracious body of the raddled, “ugly” woman presented on stage out of a misogynistic animus. There was no attempt to eroticize the impersonated female body in this tradition. Indeed, there was no effort made to “pretend” that this was an idealized female body being impersonated. In the grotesque-burlesque strain of female impersonation there was never an attempt to convey a plausible illusion of the sex being “aped.” A perennial component of Victorian and Edwardian British music hall, pantomime, and farce, the burlesque mimicry of the dame tradition pervaded the military camp and shipboard revues during the war. *Cinderella*, a pantomime staged by “The Workshops Entertainers” of the Royal Army Medical Corps in December 1916, permitted at least three men to cross-dress as the Fairy Godmother and the Ugly Sisters (the title role of *Cinderella* was taken by one Lance Corporal Kay and played in the mimetic tradition). Donning the dame’s grotesque persona was, in effect, a “safe” (de-eroticized) form of cross-dressing theatricality, in which desire for the impersonator was drained away by the gynophobic comedic motive of restoring sex and gender norms. As Laurence Senelick points out, the dame tradition in British theatre allowed female impersonation but “offered minimal threat to standard gender identities” (“BGT,” 80). There was no sexual allure intended by the cross-dresser participating in this tradition, only mockery of the dame’s deluded fantasies that “she” was sexually alluring to other men on stage or in the audience. The tradition was maintained because, as a late nineteenth-century commentator remarked, “a man in female garb is apt to appear awkward and ungainly,” and fatally “unsexed.”³²

But another tradition of female impersonation was well established by the time of the Great War, one in which sexual appeal was very much foregrounded. The desire for mimesis in female impersonation was a strenuous, but illusionistic, effort to align the body of the female impersonator as closely as possible to the body of an erotically alluring woman. Lance Corporal Kay as *Cinderella* would have had to adhere to this tradition in order to offset the three dames in the pantomime who provide necessary comic relief. The photographs of the diminutive and attractive Kay in the Workshops

- 14 Entertainers' program depict an ideal recruit for the part. Thus the Prince's and the Page's songful declarations of adoration and fidelity ("If You Were the Only Girl in the World" and "They Didn't Believe Me") were not intended as mockery, but had ripe connotative possibility.

Kay's mimetic portrayal of Cinderella exemplified what Senelick refers to as "glamour drag." Glamour drag differs from the grotesque mimicry of the dame tradition in its insistence on representing ("imitating") idealized femininity as closely as possible.³³ Senelick traces the tradition of mimesis to the 1860s, when a burgeoning homosexual subculture first gained notoriety and public visibility in the Boulton-Park scandal. In the glamour drag tradition that had evolved in the last third of the nineteenth century, "homosexual men as well as heterosexual transvestites could experiment with gender shuffling in a context that won them approbation and indulgence; the audience could savor sexually provocative behavior because it had been neutralized by the transvestism" ("BGT," 93). While Senelick may be correct in allowing for drag's neutralizing possibilities, it would be incorrect to deny the concomitant possibility that glamour drag can inspire an eroticized and identificatory response on the part of the viewer. The glamorous drag artist or female impersonator did not exaggerate disparities between male and female bodies, but rather attempted to minimize them. Glamour drag became ubiquitous for the first time behind the front lines during the Great War. And if anything, the special circumstances of mass homosocial formations in that context threw into sharp relief the wildly unpredictable potential of drag for articulating male-male desires across the entire continuum of homosocial desire.

Over the Top Performances

The panicked, vehement tone adopted by John Brophy and Eric Partridge in their lexicon, *Songs and Slang of the British Soldier* (1931), gives us grounds for suspicion of their denial of a homoerotic charge inhering in the spectacle of glamour drag. Defining "leg-show" as the general term for "vaudeville entertainment," the doughty lexicographers assert, "Probably no other generation will ever be able to guess at all the excitement and pleasurable atmosphere of naughtiness generated between 1914 and 1918 by the word legs."³⁴ They hastily assure us that the term refers to "female legs, of course; the other sort were not considered" (*ibid.*). Their unconvincing postwar recuperation of wartime entertainments flies in the face of the sheer enormity of cross-dressed theatrical performance during the war.

Recorded responses to the frequent sight of male body parts (both clothed and unveiled) attest to the effectiveness of the mimetic power of male glamour drag during the war. A typical response to mimetic impersonation of idealized femininity was Major R. S. Cockburn's appraisal of "Kitty O'Hara" in the 55th Divisional Theatre Company revue *Thumbs*. Cockburn wrote to his brother that "Kitty O'Hara—a young girl of infinite charm and beauty, was prettier than most girls whom you see on the London stage. It was impossible to think of her as anything else but a delightful flapper."³⁵ But he recovers his credulity, recognizing the reality of O'Hara's masculine body: "She

was really an ordinary, simple Canadian lad of some twenty years who had been ‘over the top’ nine times” (ibid.). Lieutenant G. Harvard Thomas, in training at the 3rd Army Infantry School in January, 1918, informed his parents about the division’s Christmas pantomime, *Dick Whittington*: “It was far and away the best I have seen out here. The boy who took the part of the girl acted so well that it was very difficult to believe it was actually a man” (qtd. in *IW*, 155). Closer to the front, the Gaiety Theatre players of the 26th Division presented a repeat season of their version of *Robinson Crusoe* as their Christmas 1917 pantomime to appreciative Army audiences in Macedonia. The theatre program quotes from a review of the previous years’ performances, suggesting a very willing desire both to suspend disbelief and to delight actively in the proliferation of gender and sex misalignments, which connote transgressive sexuality:

In addition to a brilliant male chorus, there is a “beauty chorus,” whose dancing is again a credit to Sergt. Drury. The title-role is played by P[rivate] Peter Upcher in the accepted principal boy style, and as Susan, Lance-Corpl. Billie Blowey uses a remarkable soprano voice to advantage.³⁶

The dizzying spectacle of Upcher playing a rugged male character (*Crusoe*) in conventional pantomime terms (as a young woman) romancing a man portraying a young woman (*Blowey*) properly allowed for all kinds of polymorphous desire and erotically-charged decodings to flourish. The “principal boy” in British pantomime is a “breeches role” enacted by a young woman, which would suggest that Upcher’s audiences would have had ample opportunity to objectify his/her legs.

Obviously carrying on its own successful tradition of glamor drag, the following year the Gaiety Theatre mounted a new production of a revue entitled *Delightful*, an Orientalist extravaganza set in “Baghdad,” in which the ladies of the harem were played by seminaked men; by men, moreover, who were crossing the boundaries of both sex and race, and drawing on the minstrel tradition that informs British popular theatre. The revue staged a carnivalesque scene in another same-sex erotic space: the harem. The program informs us that “the Harem favorite, Louana Lou” was played by Private W. Abbott, whose “Eastern Dance” was “arranged by Private J. Davies.”³⁷ The chorus members were required to portray both “Soldiers and Ladies of the Harem” (ibid.). (Presumably eunuchs were beyond the pale.) It is possible to surmise that female impersonation in this company, at least, was not completely dependent on the dame tradition. In order for the harem scene to work, the emphasis would most likely have been on glamor, particularly during the choreographed dance numbers. *Delightful* staged a T. E. Lawrentian fantasy of the sexual availability of the oriental Other, here simultaneously male and female.

Fuller correctly argues that the appeal of soldiers in drag “shows the intensity of the desire to believe,” which sustains the power of mimesis; but he errs in insisting that such a desire was fully comprehensible only in heterosexual terms. In his view, drag flourished to provide a heterosexually-affirming fantasmatic substitute in the absence of the opposite sex in wartime. Eric Hiscock’s memoir *The Bells of Hell* (1967) seconds

16 this explanation by observing that “judging from the way [the men] sat and goggled at the drag on stage it was obvious that they were indulging in delightful fantasies that brought them substantial memories of the girls they had left behind them in London, Manchester, Glasgow, wherever.”³⁸

Yet the complex dynamics of men objectifying other men as women does not occur completely within a heterosexual matrix. Soldiers in frocks were not, as Hiscock and Fuller suggest, simply mimetically-reproduced surrogates for the women they left behind. As Kate Davy perceptively observes, “Female impersonation, while it certainly says something about women, is primarily about men, addressed to men, and for men.”³⁹ Operating within circuits of male homosocial desire, the fetishization of cross-dressed male bodies drew upon differing dynamics of identification than the objectification of female bodies would have necessitated. At the very least, the successful performance and reception of hyperfemininity in glamor drag exceeded the erotic allure contained in—and expressed by—the body of a “mere” woman. A more revealing, but wonderfully ambivalent, explanation for the mass-acceptance of drag was made by H. C. Owen in his memoir *Salonica and After* (1919): “it all seems to show that English beauty is essentially masculine.”⁴⁰ He may well have intended to define female beauty in masculine terms, to suggest that British women were at their most beautiful when they most looked like men. The slippage that inheres in the statement effectively eradicates women’s existence: male beauty not only exists, but cannot be conceived of in anything other than “masculine” terms. Thus there was an ineradicable trace of homoeroticism at the heart of drag during the Great War.

Nonetheless most conventional responses to the spectacle emphasize the verisimilitude possible in drag. There was an unshakable belief that men could successfully fulfil the act of embodying the other sex (in some kind of one-to-one correspondence) that indicates a hunger for the carnivalesque and redressive capabilities of cross-dressing as an outlet for frustrated heterosexual desires.

Drag had more radical potential than this, however. In reality, the spectacle does not involve the simple suspension of disbelief that the “woman” is actually a man. Rather, a simultaneous and coterminous process of avowal and disavowal never loses sight of the fact that the female impersonator is always-also a man, never not-just a woman. As Mark Simpson notes, drag is always a pretense, “an ecstasy of surfaces” that focuses intense scopophilic attention to an “assumed” female body in order to distract attention away from its male reality.⁴¹ A man watching another man in drag must, at some level, self-reassuringly avow that the “woman” has a penis. But this act of speculation threatens to put the male spectator beyond the boundaries of the heterosexual matrix.

Moreover, in a military environment like that of the Great War, drag satisfies the psychic demands for a defense against war’s potential unmanning of the male body. This potential unmanning fosters the kind of castration anxiety that makes men extraordinarily receptive to the ritual possibility of defending themselves against the loss of “manhood” through the fetishistic opportunities afforded by drag.⁴² The transvestite permits the spectator and the performer to “play” at giving up the phallus in order

to recover (the illusion of having) the phallus. Thus there is always a simultaneous acknowledgment that what the man in drag has pretended to surrender is always really there. In a fundamental way, a psychic and social dynamic of same-sex identification exists between the performer and the spectator in the homosocial realm of theatrical cross-dressing. The drag performance activating incoherent desires in wartime environments cannot fully or predictably recuperate the act for heterosexual surrogacy. The inchoate nature of the signifying processes coupled with anxiety-laden psychic forms of spectator-performer identification ultimately helped to seal the ruptures between homosexuality and heterosexuality as well as those between desire and identification.

Carnivalizing Homosocial Desire

So far I have argued for the utopian possibilities of the social drama and delighted in the spectacle of an endorsed homosocial ritual that was so very patently—but also tantalizingly, elusively—constituted by elements of “perversion.” It is possible to regard the polymorphously perverse performativity of much military theatre during the Great War in the way that Richard Dyer conceives of modern popular entertainment. However much implicated in commercial and politically conservative imperatives, popular theatrical forms like music hall, revue, pantomime, operetta, and historical pageant did not unproblematically reproduce the dominant heterosexual matrix in which male homosocial desire was supposed to operate. Rather, cross-dressing provided, according to the logic of redress in the social drama, a “solution” to the crises inhering in a ruptured homosocial continuum. Dyer sees entertainment as both escape and wish fulfillment, two fundamentally utopian motivations that express a culture’s sense that “things could be better, that something other than what it is can be imagined, and may be realized.”⁴³ If there was, at some level, a yearning to repair the schisms in the continuum that had been discursively produced by the time of the Great War, British men in military formations established a space in which to escape from confining definitions and proscribed desires. Dyer notes that entertainment does not prescribe a “model” of a utopian world; “Rather utopianism is contained in the feelings it embodies” (*OE*, 18). Entertainment, he asserts, “presents, head-on as it were, what utopia would feel like rather than how it would be organized. It thus works at the level of sensibility” (*ibid.*).

I want to contend (to second Dyer) that the proliferation of soldiers and sailors in frocks hardly provided a model of a homo-utopian world in which the homosocial continuum was restored to some pristine state, a mythic realm of Theban bands and unashamed soldier-lovers. This would have been, by 1914, utterly unsustainable. Yet the expression, through drag, of a male homosocial community less marked by anxiety about the troubling intimacy of male-male desires and identifications must have answered to the felt inadequacies of a homophobic society that legally enforced same-sex social arrangements. As Dyer puts it, “to be effective the utopian sensibility has to take off from the real experiences of the audience. Yet to do this, to draw attention to the gap between what is and what could be, is, ideologically speaking, playing with

18 fire” (*OE*, 25–6). There is no question that the spectacle of soldiers in frocks flirted with dangerous and submerged desires and anxieties that it only insufficiently clarified and purged. Yet the cathartic and abreactive staging of transvestic expressions of same-sex desire, drawing on the subcultural forces that were otherwise alien to bourgeois, militarist, and heterosexist institutions, permitted the appearance of marked ambiguity and the emergence of liminal spaces between breaks in the homo/hetero divide. Those unfortunates excluded from the therapeutic performance, like “THE EFFEMINATE SOLDIER,” Frederick Wright, the “DESERTER WHO LOVES TO WEAR BEAUTIFUL DRESSES,” were pitiful victims of an otherwise wholly destructive social drama. That Wright and Victor Wilson had the misfortune to cavort on an unsanctioned “stage” to a hostile “audience” does not give us cause to posit a completely dysphoric vision of the cultural processes of maintaining homosexual panic within the terms of homosocial desire. After all, the transgressive and disruptive could still be tantalizingly glimpsed out in the limelight on other, safer stages, however much those stages may have been constructed on risky foundations. Yet this sanctioned disorder served all the more to restore the boundaries that provided for the necessary exclusion of transgressive forces in the formation of social and sexual identity in post-war British society. This social drama of the homo/hetero divide would go on to have a very long and successful run.

Notes

1. *The News of the World*, 2 June 1918, C3.

2. *The News of the World*, 18 June 1918, C6.

3. Drag was pervasive in popular British culture at large during the Great War (as it seems to be, perdurably); moreover, within theatrical locales, cross-dressed women were a vital part of dominant forms of popular culture: viz. the 22 July 1917 theatre page of the weekly [London] *Sunday Pictorial*, which announced: “A Male Impersonation: Next week’s first night will be *What a Catch!* at the Duke of York’s. Mr. Lupino Lane will play principal male, though he may find a keen rival in Miss Ruby Miller, who will be seen in masculine attire” (B11). However, the gender upheavals denoted by cross-dressing would have taken on additional significance in the context of the mass spectacle of women in military uniform during the war.

4. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 1.

5. Victor Turner, *From Ritual to Theatre: The Human Seriousness of Play* (New York: Performing Arts Journal Publications, 1982); Hereafter abbreviated *RT*.

6. Details about this front line theatrical production, as well as the others that follow, are gleaned from printed programs (often with accompanying photographs, illustrations, music, and lyrics) in the collections of the Theatre-Ephemera archives of the Department of Documents, Imperial War Museum, London.

7. Marjorie Garber, *Vested Interests: Cross-Dressing and Cultural Anxiety* (New York: Harper Collins, 1993), 52; hereafter abbreviated *VI*.

8. The greatest cinematic representation of drag’s power to disrupt is a scene in Jean Renoir’s *La Grande Illusion* (1937), in which a cross-dressed soldier at a P. O. W. camp rehearsal awes the men around him by transforming into a beautiful “woman.”

9. J. G. Fuller, *Troop Morale and Popular Culture in the British and Dominion Armies, 1914–1918* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 188; hereafter abbreviated *TM*.

10. General Staff, *Instructions for the Training of Platoons for Offensive Actions* (1917), 12, Imperial War Museum Archives, London.

11. *Ibid.*, 11.
12. See Paul Fussell, "Theatre of War," in *The Great War and Modern Memory* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1975), 191–230.
13. For the concurrent efflorescence of drag in the American military during World War I, see George Chauncey, "Christian Brotherhood or Sexual Perversion? Homosexual Identities and the Construction of Sexual Boundaries in the World War I Era," in *Hidden from History*, ed. Martin Duberman, Martha Vicinus, and George Chauncey (New York: NAL, 1990), 294–317. Also see Allan Bérubé, *Coming Out Under Fire: The History of Gay Men and Women in World War Two* (New York: NAL, 1991), 75–7.
14. The most extensive literary analysis of the gender upheaval that resulted from the spectacle of women in drag or military uniform in the period is found in Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar's chapters entitled "Soldier's Heart: Literary Men, Literary Women, and the Great War," and "Cross-Dressing and Re-Dressing: Transvestism as Metaphor," in *No Man's Land: The Place of the Woman Writer in the Twentieth Century*, vol. 2 (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1989).
15. *The Illustrated Police News*, 6 July 1916, A4.
16. *The Illustrated Police News*, 20 July 1916, A2.
17. For a full account of this significant event emblemizing wartime hysteria see Philip Hoare, *Wilde's Last Stand: Decadence, Conspiracy, and the First World War* (London: Duckworth, 1997).
18. For more on the implications and history of official attempts to police British theatre by the Lord Chamberlain's Office (abolished only as recently as 1968), see Nicolas de Jongh, *Not in Front of the Audience: Homosexuality on Stage* (New York: Routledge, 1991); hereafter abbreviated *NFA*.
19. Qtd. in *The News of the World*, 2 June 1918, C3.
20. *NFA*, 7. The Puritans, in particular, had expressed their enmity to the theatrical in terms of deviant sexuality; Phillip Stubbes, in *Anatomic of Abuses* (1583) fulminated against the playhouse as the resort of sodomites: "Everyone brings another homeward of their way, very friendly, and in their secret conclaves covertly they play the Sodomite or worse" (qtd. in *NFA*, 8). William Prynne, in a 1632 denunciation of the theatre, asserted that "the putting on of women's array (especially to act a lascivious, amorous lovesick play upon stage) must needs be sinful, yea abominable; because it not only excites many adulterous filthy lusts, both in the actors and spectators . . . but likewise instigates them to self-pollution and that unnatural Sodomitical sin of uncleanness." Qtd. in Peter Ackroyd, *Dressing Up: Transvestitism and Drag: The History of an Obsession* (London, Thames and Hudson, 1979), 94.
21. See Laurence Senelick, "Boys and Girls Together: Subcultural Origins of Glamour Drag and Male Impersonation," in *Crossing the Stage: Controversies on Cross-Dressing*, ed. Lesley Ferris (New York: Routledge, 1993), 80–95; hereafter abbreviated "BGT."
22. See "BGT," 86, and Jeffrey Weeks, *Sex, Politics, and Society: The Regulation of Sexuality since 1800* (London: Longman, 1989), 111.
23. Jeffrey Weeks, "Inverts, Perverts, and Mary-Annes: Male Prostitution and the Regulation of Homosexuality in England in the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries," in *Hidden from History*, 208.
24. Ed Cohen, *Talk on the Wilde Side* (New York: Routledge, 1993), 179. Also see Alan Sinfield, *The Wilde Century: Effeminacy, Oscar Wilde, and the Queer Moment* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 109.
25. See Moe Meyer, "Unveiling the Word: Science and Narrative in Transsexual Striptease," in *Gender in Performance: The Presentation of Difference in the Performing Arts*, ed. Laurence Senelick (Hanover, N.H.: University Press of New England, 1992), 68–85; hereafter abbreviated "UW."
26. D. A. Miller, "Anal Rope," in *Inside/Out*, ed. Diana Fuss (New York: Routledge, 1991), 125; hereafter abbreviated "AR."
27. Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble* (New York: Routledge, 1990), 151.
28. According to its own program, *Strand Magazine* (October 1915) trumpeted *The Passing Show* as "that phenomenally successful revue" (438).
29. The deathless words to "I'll Make a Man of You" were by Arthur Wimperis, the music by Herman Finck.

30. War Office, "Records of wartime court martials" (1917), 83/24, Public Records Office, London.
31. The useful distinction between glamor and burlesque drag is drawn by Senelick ("BGT," 80–2).
32. Qtd. in "BGT," 81.
33. The theatre archives of the Imperial War Museum reveal that some especially convincing "glamour drag" soldier-divas created a kind of star system and entire productions were built around these "stars." For example, one lavishly illustrated *Play Pictorial* from the war years featured "The Crumps," an unnamed division's concert party. Their production of "On the Staff" starred one Private Purkiss, who in scene after scene is the focus of attraction; e.g. the scene entitled, "The Arrival of a Lady Upsets the Major." Judging by the photographs Purkiss was astonishingly effective.
34. *Songs and Slang of the British Soldier*, ed. John Brophy and Eric Partridge (London: Scholartis Press, 1931), 136.
35. Qtd. in Malcolm Brown, *Tommy Goes to War* (London: Dent, 1978), 133.
36. Gaiety Theatre, *Robinson Crusoe* program, Imperial War Museum.
37. Gaiety Theatre, *Delightful* program, Imperial War Museum.
38. Qtd. in *TM*, 105.
39. Kate Davy, "Fe/Male Impersonation: The Discourse of Camp," in *The Politics and Poetics of Camp*, ed. Moe Meyer (New York: Routledge, 1994), 133.
40. Qtd. in *TM*, 106.
41. Mark Simpson, *Male Impersonators: Men Performing Masculinity* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 188.
42. I should emphasize that since theatrical drag seems to occur within all male homosocial milieux, castration anxiety might seem, rather strangely, to be endemic to patriarchy's self-created comfort zones. On a more serious note, the effects of "unmanning" are more immediately and literally visible in war zones, which may account for the sheer ubiquity of theatrical cross-dressing in the military at war, at least since 1914 (see Bérubé, 67–97). And as many feminist critics have pointed out (from Virginia Woolf in *Three Guineas* forward), military uniform is itself a kind of drag, a costume instantiating and subverting gender norms.
43. Richard Dyer, *Only Entertainment* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 18; hereafter abbreviated *OE*.