

“We were all women”: Performing Violence and Sexuality on the Western Front, 1914-1918

In his *Magnitudes of Performance*, Richard Schechner designates two classes of performances: those where participants and spectators know a performance is going on, and those where there is ignorance or doubt regarding whether or not a performance is occurring. Discovering soldier documents from the Great War, I suggest a third class: one in which both participants and spectators know that an event is not a performance, yet who live, photograph, and narrate it as performance. Here is soldier praxis: performance's transgressive potential mobilized to create a moral and amoral solidarity. As Victor Turner articulated it "By their performances shall ye know them." My sites of research are uncensored and unpublished soldier photographs and scripts. Through thousands of images I've searched for the disruptive acting-out at the front that burlesques the atrocity of the war and the complexity of combatant sexuality. Alongside these images, soldier "trench-scripts" speak a disorderly, ranting, funny, filthy, raw "pre-tale" of soldier life. By reading photograph and text together, and both as performance, I cross borders of disciplines to troll a dissident archive whose contents are a revelation for both war historiography and the ever-expanding purview of performance.

About the Author

Annabelle Winograd is Visiting Professor in the Theater Department of Dartmouth College and has taught at The Drama School, Yale University, the Graduate Department of Performance Studies, Tisch School of the Arts, and the Theatre Department of New York University, and at the University of Tel Aviv. She is the author of *Dada and Surrealist Performance* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995--winner of the Hazen Prize for 20th Century Art Literature), and *Shakespeare on Screen* (New York: Neal/Schuman, 1991--American Library Association Award for Outstanding Reference Book of 1991, and the CHOICE: Current Reviews for Academic Libraries Outstanding Academic Books Award of 1991). Her articles have appeared in such journals as *Artforum*, *Theatre Research International*, *Theater* (Yale), *New Theatre Quarterly* and *Comparative Drama*. She has been the recipient of a major grant from the NEH to research performance documentation on video, and of grants from the Paul and Betty Winkler Foundation for Peace, Justice and Progress (Paris, France), the Marion and Jasper Whiting Foundation (Boston), and the Kramer Foundation (New York), for her continuing work on the Performing War project. Two articles are the first published materials from this research: "Spectacles and Sexualities: The *mise en scène* of the *Tirailleur Sénégalais* at the Western Front 1914-1920," in Billie Melman, ed. *Borderlines: Genders and Identities in War and Peace 1880-1930*. New York and London: Routledge, 1998, and "Ten Minutes of Anthrax": some notes on combatant performance on the Western front, 1914-1918. *Theatre* [Yale], Winter 2001.

Presentations with archival images from the *Performing War* project have been given at "Stagings of war in the twentieth century: theater and cinema," The University of Paris, Nanterre, the War Museum at *Les Invalides*, Paris, and the Cinematheque de Toulouse, Toulouse, France (January '09); Humboldt University (Gender Studies), and *Freie* University (Theater Studies), Berlin, May 2007; Bezalel School of Arts, Jerusalem, Israel, Department of Photography, April 2007; University of Ferrara and University of Bologna (at Ferrara) March, 2003; The Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles, CA, March, 2000, Beit Berl College of Art, Israel, December, 1999: the Performance Studies Conference, CUNY Graduate Center, New York, April, 1998; Columbia University, March, 1998; Brunel University, Twickenham, England, September, 1997; Harvard University, Faculty Colloquium for Literary and Cultural Studies March, 1997; MLA, Washington, D.C., December 1996; the Distinguished Calloway Lecture, New York University. December 1996, as well as at Cambridge University, England, Brown, Northwestern and the Historial de la Grande Guerre, Péronne, Somme, France.