

# Censorship and the Changing Society:

## Noël Coward's *Fallen Angels*

Tomoko Akai

### Abstract

This article purposes to re-examine British theatrical censorship in the 1920s by referring to the censorship of Noël Coward's controversial play, *Fallen Angels*. The study refutes the theory of a simple opposition between the state and the author and, by situating the censorship of dramatic works within a larger cultural context, discusses the fluidity and complexity of power relations between the censor and the dramatist. Drawing upon archival materials of theatrical censorship, this article examines how negotiations were conducted among those involved in the controversy on the play, and, in doing so, it argues about the complicated situations in which Coward could develop a potential for being subversive.

### I

Some of the plays Noël Coward wrote in the 1920s caused great controversy and scandal when they were performed in the West End theatres of London. *Fallen Angels*, written in 1923 and first staged at the Globe Theatre in 1925, is one example. As soon as the play opened at the Globe, the media launched an attack on it for being 'vulgar', 'disgusting' and 'shocking', and Coward himself became afflicted with 'a mass of insulting letters' from all parts of England.<sup>1</sup> In one episode, a

---

\* Received September 30, 1999. Accepted November 4, 1999.

member of the Public Morality Council, a Mrs Hornibrook, who was sitting in the stall suddenly stood up during the second act and voiced her protest against the play.<sup>2</sup>

The adulterous air and its potentially harmful effects on public morality was what caused these slanders and insults against the play in the opinion of those who opposed it. What was 'shocking' in particular was that two major characters, young married women of fine breeding, having admitted to their pre-marital love affairs, desired for intimate relations with the same man, their ex-lover, simply because they were tired of their monotonous married lives with their 'good' husbands. In our eyes, it may be difficult to understand why a play like this provoked such a serious scandal, since we seldom hear today a slanderous criticism against, for instance, a *ménage à trois* episode in a fictional work. However, from *their* viewpoint in the 1920s, the subject of the play was exceedingly immoral and degenerate, because a taboo on sexual and adulterous matters existed even in the speeches of dramatic works. We should recognise here the fact that there are great differences between moral codes of 1920s and those of today.

When surveying the social and cultural conditions under which commercial plays such as Coward's were written and performed, we can find a very interesting point concerning the *Fallen Angels* scandal. In short, it is the relation of the scandal with theatre censorship. In Britain, there was a system of theatre censorship which regulated speeches and 'stage business' (i.e. actions and gestures of stage actors and actresses) of plays according to the Theatres Act of 1843: any new theatrical text had to be sent to the Lord Chamberlain's Office in St.

James Palace to be examined *before* it was presented at any commercially based theatre in Great Britain. Until the system was abolished in 1968, the Lord Chamberlain held sole responsibility for the censorship of plays. *Fallen Angels* was one of those plays that had been examined and, *passed* the scrutiny of censorship before it was performed publicly.

What can we justifiably extrapolate from the fact that the Lord Chamberlain gave a licence to *Fallen Angels* which might cause a scandal and become an aim of slanders as an 'immoral' play? It is highly improbable that he would not have anticipated controversy, since he had considerable experience in the giving or denying licences to plays.<sup>3</sup> In addition, in the case of *Fallen Angels*, another censor had suggested to the Lord Chamberlain that the play should be banned because of its immorality.<sup>4</sup> It may be wrong to think that the Lord Chamberlain would not have anticipated what was to happen after the licensing of the play.

In this article, I would like to discuss the socio-cultural context in which Noël Coward's plays were written and performed, focussing on the *Fallen Angels* controversy in which not only the theatrical censors but also other groups of people were involved.

## II

Theatre censorship in the period between the two world wars is generally considered to have been less strict or severe than that of the pre-war period. In accordance with the major changes in world history and world view, especially with the changes in the moral idea of the general public, censorship gradually became more tolerant of the freedom of expression of playwrights, and speeches or situations of

plays which might have been excluded or banned by pre-war censors came to be easily passed without hindrance. As Richard Findlater points out in his informative book on the history of theatrical censorship in Britain, one of the main differences between pre- and post-war censorship is that 'leading dramatists' in the post-war period such as Somerset Maugham and Coward experienced 'only minor interference' from the censor.<sup>5</sup>

Why censorship became so relatively tolerant can be found in the fact that major dramatists in the inter-war period wrote rather inoffensive plays and, in doing so, attempted to avoid open confrontation with the Lord Chamberlain. Findlater summarises those situations as follows:

There was no single revolutionary influence comparable with Ibsen's in the earlier period and no one English dramatist was as dominant a rebel as Shaw had been. On the whole they [leading dramatists of the post-war period] played the game inside the censor's rules, without undue resentment.<sup>6</sup>

Roughly speaking, this period between the wars was when mutual understandings or conciliations of greater significance were formed between censors and playwrights.

However, whether the dramatists *actually* obeyed the censor's rules 'without undue resentment' is another matter in case to be examined. What Findlater points out is certainly correct in a sense that dramatists like Coward did not write such revolutionary works as Ibsen or Shaw had done some decades before, but this does not necessarily mean that

they completely adjusted themselves to the dominant culture of the time without conflict or struggles. We should remember that some plays they wrote had difficulty in being accepted and faced some aversive reactions as I stated above in the section I. I think that the relationship between censors and dramatists and the cultural conditions in which dramatic works were produced were not so simple as Findlater defines, and that, therefore, we need more detailed analysis of those questions concerning censorship in this period.

What is necessary in the first place is to survey the cultural circumstances in the inter-war period under which theatrical censorship was practiced, and the results of the survey should lead to an examination of the process through which *Fallen Angels* managed to pass the censorship.

I mentioned earlier that the moral code in the period between the wars differs a great deal from that of today, and that people's attitudes towards sexual matters in particular were conservative and restrained compared with modern concepts. Ross McKibbin, in his historical study on English cultures 1918-1951, summarises this situation as follows:

Throughout the period, English attitudes to sexual morality were reinforced by what contemporaries still called 'puritanism' – a word used to describe a specifically English culture where 'Christian' and certain social injunctions were combined to restrain sexuality within highly 'ritualistic' mores.<sup>7</sup>

As an example of this cultural puritanism, we can point to a middle-class preoccupation with moral respectability and a strong preference for modest and reserved manners. Decency or modesty was highly valued as a guiding principle in life, and there was a general tendency towards sexual repression and concealment. In the theatrical world, puritanism sometimes led to ridiculous interventions in play scripts by the Lord Chamberlain's Office and incited an ardent campaign against 'sex' plays where puritanism was carried to an extreme. A deep sensitivity to moral issues, principally the sexual mores of the society, is apparent for the period. McKibbin is quite correct in saying that 'in no other area of English life did politics, religion, morality, all that we call ideology, intersect with more friction than in attitudes to sexuality'.<sup>8</sup>

Some dramatists of that period themselves fully recognised these circumstances. For example, Somerset Maugham, one of the popular dramatists that attracted a large audience in the West End theatres in the 1910s and 1920s, makes this comment:

The English are not a sexual nation and you cannot easily persuade them that a man will sacrifice anything important for love. I do not think an English audience . . . ever really accepts the story of Antony and Cleopatra as credible. It is this difference of attitude towards sexual passion that makes foreign plays so improbable to us.<sup>9</sup>

Since Maugham was, like Coward, a dramatist who wrote plays mainly for the commercial theatre, he had to adjust his plays to the

general likings of the middle-class who formed the audience majority, and his plays could not escape censor prior to public performances. As a necessary consequence, he was forced to write what was morally inoffensive and socially acceptable in his plays, using discreet language and conventional forms.

Generally speaking, the plays written by the leading dramatists of this period are conventional in style and conservative in language. In other words, they are strictly restrained within the traditional and socially accepted popular form of the time of a 'well-made play' which maintained a three-act structure. These characteristics that dramatists commonly shared are closely related to social preferences for respectability and cultural repressions that governed English sexuality for the period. As Sean O'Connor points out, dramatists of this period wrote plays in decent or modest ways in order to conceal, or make obscure, what was unacceptable to society.<sup>10</sup>

Although moral repressions were not so intense as they had been in the Victorian era, we should note that such puritanical attitudes were still prevalent among the English nation in the inter-war period. However, we should also bear in mind that the traditional attitudes to morality were gradually challenged by new emergent ways of thinking, and that people's attitudes towards theatre were changing accordingly. A good example is the *Fallen Angels* controversy that raised a question as to whether the subject of the play itself was immoral or not. In other words, while it is clear that people's attitudes were highly conservative as a whole, we should not disregard the variety of opinions concerning public morality that existed.

Furthermore, I want to emphasise that the changing attitudes of the general public was one of the main concerns of the theatrical censors, partly because the censors' interventions of that time concentrated more on the question of morality than on political or religious matters. As I mentioned earlier, theatre censorship was enforced according to the Theatres Act of 1843, which defines the extent of the Lord Chamberlain's authority over performing arts. However, this act does not give any detailed instruction as to what kind of plays should be banned. It simply says that the Lord Chamberlain can give a licence to a play if he considers it to be suitable for the preservation of 'good manners', 'decorum' or 'the public peace'.<sup>11</sup> These three terms were all that he could depend upon when he made a decision, and the remainder was completely entrusted to his judgement. Therefore, the Lord Chamberlain paid attention to the current ideas on morality as one of his main guides to examining plays. This point is well expressed in the following remark by Lady Cromer, whose husband acted as the Lord Chamberlain from 1922 to 1938:

It was obvious that the British public was divided mainly into two factions — on the one side the conventionally minded; on the other a more advanced freethinking school. Between these two the Censor, whoever he might be, had to try to steer his own course as a man of the world who with judgment recognised the transition phase in the development of modern ideas through which we were then passing.<sup>12</sup>



G. S. Street, a censor of the time, made a similar remark in an article for *Fortnightly Review* in 1925:

In these circumstances of division in the public mind the right course for the censorship, as I understand it, is to hold a really enlightened balance, extending freedom where, to the best of its intelligence, it judges freedom to be right, but guarding this freedom, by its own careful discrimination, from being drowned in a deluge of protest.<sup>13</sup>

Street wrote this article for the purpose of clarifying misunderstandings to censors, defending them against criticisms. We may notice that the very fact that Street published this article elaborates the situation the censors of the time faced. That public opinions were divided into two factions implies that the censors were put in an awkward dilemma of whether either to be stricter or more tolerant, and that no matter what stance they adopted, they could never escape condemnation from either faction. In fact, theatre censorship often became an object of harsh criticisms.<sup>14</sup> The opinion of those who favoured a conventional or conservative attitude was especially 'very powerful and insistent and capable of extremely articulate pressure' as Street explains.<sup>15</sup> Let us remember that cultural puritanism still predominant over England strongly restrained dramatists from expressing what they wished to do. Whenever the censorship was considered to be too generous to playwrights, the censors were received with violent protests, becoming the butt of criticism in the press. The attacks from those who demanded

stricter censorship was so persistent and, at the same time, the criticisms against censorship for ridiculous and petty interventions in play scripts were so incessant that Street was obliged to declare that they were steering 'the middle course' in the public opinion.

Generally speaking, the word 'censorship' would remind us of the simple opposition between the repressive power of state and the passively controlled author, but thinking about censorship within a larger context reveals more complicated relationship between the state and author. It is not intended here that the censors in the inter-war period were so tolerant that they took the side of dramatists. Censorship is basically a system that regulates free speech in arts, and in fact some kinds of plays were actually banned or severely modified for the reason that they treated problematic subjects that were thought to have harmful influences on the general public. Plays that belonged particularly to what we call the art theatre, or the uncommercial theatre, suffered a great deal from frequent interventions of censorship. The art theatre dramatists who dealt with serious social problems in their plays experienced the repressive power of censorship which was strictly enforced.<sup>16</sup> The key point, therefore, in considering Coward's plays in relation to censorship must be that he pursued his career in the world of commercial theatre rather than the contrasting art theatre, where dramatists seem to have adjusted their plays to the general preferences of the audience and to the censor's canon of decency.

### III

The Lord Chamberlain who worked as a theatrical censor during the period when Coward wrote his early works including *Fallen Angels* was the second Earl of Cromer, who, according to John Johnston, had 'a deep love and knowledge of the theatre' and had 'comparatively little trouble with authors or management' of the West End theatres while he was enforcing his duties as a censor.<sup>17</sup> He was much appreciated by the West End theatrical world since he afforded the opportunity as often as possible to converse with authors and producers.<sup>18</sup> *Fallen Angels* is a play text that Lord Cromer examined with understanding and gave a licence after having reached an agreement with the producer about cuts and changes in the text. In this section, I will examine how *Fallen Angels* obtained a licence under the circumstances where moral repression was intense, and how Lord Cromer responded to the tireless criticisms against the play's licence.

The plays Coward wrote in the 1920s were a frequent source of trouble to the censors because his plays were dubious in some ways, while not appearing to be overtly offensive. As I stated in the previous section, his plays were conventional in form and decent in language as a whole, but some of them were often considered by censors to be shocking or disgusting to certain sections of the audience. His plays caused much debate among the members of the Advisory Board in the Lord Chamberlain's Office at times, and it took a long time for the Lord Chamberlain to reach a final conclusion as to whether he should issue a licence or not.<sup>19</sup>

One of the reasons why Coward's plays were considered dubious is that they were basically restrained in style, with characters' emotions or desires being tied up in repression. His plays do not reveal the characters' minds explicitly but only hint at them subtly in ingenious ways: some of his amusing speeches have *double entendre*, and understatement often makes his plays highly suggestive, which might have caused embarrassment in the audience. Therefore, the censors found it difficult to catch the author's exact meaning, and it often occurred that opinions of the censors were completely divided among themselves.

*Fallen Angels* was one of those plays that drew the direct attention of the Examiner (Reader) of Plays, the first person to read the text submitted for licence. G. S. Street, the Examiner, concluded his Reader's Report of 27 March 1925 with the remark that the play was 'NOT recommended for Licence'. Although he admitted that 'there is not much amiss in the actual dialogue' and 'no adultery happens in the play', he was opposed to the dubiousness of the play in its entirety, saying that 'the whole atmosphere of lightness' in the connection of adultery 'would cause too great a scandal'.<sup>20</sup> In short, what Street questioned was not the concrete detail but the atmosphere of the whole play, and, therefore, he recommended banning the play for the reason that there was no room for amendment in the text.

The Lord Chamberlain, on the other hand, displayed a sympathetic attitude towards the play and commented on 5 April that 'a farce of this sort does not rouse any very strong feelings of antagonism in me'. It is true that he admitted its immorality, but he thought at the same time the

play had 'the redeeming feature of being light and unreal and humourous'.<sup>21</sup> In other words, he considered that the play's offensiveness was greatly mitigated by its utter unreality and farcical style.<sup>22</sup> Therefore, Lord Cromer decided to grant a licence to it, although on condition that some amendments to the dialogues be made. He marked 'cut' and 'alter' etc. on the passages in the manuscript text with a blue pencil, providing explanations to the markings as follows:

The object of these amendments ... is to *tone down* the atmosphere of offensiveness which some people will anyhow feel in a play of this sort. ... It is not so much that I object to the actual words, ... but their absence will help to render the atmosphere of the play less objectionable to some people who disapprove of quite unnecessary frankness of expression among women. [my italics]<sup>23</sup>

A question arises here as to what Lord Cromer meant at this point. Street remarked that it was the general atmosphere rather than the concrete detail of the play which was to be questioned and that, therefore, there was no adequate means for amendment. Lord Cromer himself admitted that it was not the actual words that he objected to. Then, was it really possible that eliminating or modifying just several passages could 'tone down' the whole atmosphere of the play? Did he really think that he could transform the play into a socially acceptable text with some cuts and changes? A question arises as to whether we can take his words at face value.

This question is, however, taken up later, and let us now return to

the process through which *Fallen Angels* obtained a licence. Another element of tolerant inclination in Lord Cromer's attitude is apparent. He had marked 13 passages in the text with a blue pencil when he first read it, but he finally agreed to give a licence when he received a proposal from the producer that he should amend or cut only 6 passages in the text.<sup>24</sup> In addition, Lord Cromer permitted some speeches to be left which might be very offensive to conventional-minded people. One example is the following dialogue between Jane and Fred, Julia's husband, in which Jane makes a fool of chastity before marriage:

JANE: Humble and ashamed. Why? Do you expect me to believe you led a model life before marriage?

FRED: That's beside the point.

JANE: No it isn't. *If you had, Julia would never have married you at all; you'd have been too dull!*

FRED (shocked): Jane!

[my italics]

The italicised line of Jane's second speech was marked with a blue pencil along with Lord Cromer's comment of 'modify or cut'.<sup>25</sup> To this demand, Stanley Bell, the producer of *Fallen Angels*, responded as follows on 15 April:

I have had a long talk with the author with reference to the line spoken by Jane. ...The author cannot suggest any alternative for this line, and I personally cannot see anything objectionable in it,

and I would be very much obliged if the Lord Chamberlain would re-consider it and let it stand.<sup>26</sup>

It will be clear from this example that the West End theatre people were not always passively obedient to the censor's demands. Although they willingly made some compromises to the censor's demands in order to secure a licence, they never missed the opportunity to make an attempt to negotiate with the Lord Chamberlain. In this case, Lord Cromer accepted the producer's request with almost no hesitation and permitted the line to be left in the text.

How should we interpret Lord Cromer's tolerance in the light of these amendments? In order to clarify this point, let us examine how he responded to criticisms against the licence.

As soon as *Fallen Angels* opened at the Globe Theatre, some organisations began to complain to the Lord Chamberlain about the licensing of the play. On 5 May, a secretary of Camberwell, Peckham and Dulwich Free Church Council wrote the Lord Chamberlain a letter reporting that the meeting of the council had passed a resolution 'that the Lord Chamberlain be asked to revoke his license for the stage performance of the play known as "Fallen Angels"'.<sup>27</sup> On 8 May, the London Council for the Promotion of Public Morality sent him a letter saying that 'we do hope your Lordship can withdraw the same [*Fallen Angels*] as a breach of "good manners"', enclosing some newspapers' comments on the play.<sup>28</sup> In the second letter from the Public Morality Council dated 13 May, a long report was enclosed stating the reasons why the play should be withdrawn.<sup>29</sup> Also on 14 May, Lord Bishop of London, the

president of the Public Morality Council, sent a letter of complaint to the Lord Cromer saying that 'it seems to me an absolute disgrace that it [*Fallen Angels*] should be allowed in London. ... [T]his seems to me sheer unmitigated filth and nothing else'.<sup>30</sup> The LC file on *Fallen Angels* contains a number of lobbyists' letters like these, which tells us that the Lord Chamberlain had to face powerful and persistent protests from conservative-minded people.

However, in spite of these incessant complaints, Lord Cromer never yielded to their pressure and remained constant to his own principle. In answering to the protests of the lobbyists, Lord Cromer gave some reasons, politely but self-confidently, why he had licensed the play. For example, he wrote to the Lord Bishop of London as follows:

I should mention that when the Play was under consideration it was held to be within the realm of farce. It was only after considerable modifications had been introduced into the script and that strict injunctions had been given as to the "business" of production that a Licence was granted.<sup>31</sup>

As is evident from this letter, one of the reasons Lord Cromer gave was that *Fallen Angels* was not a serious play but a farcical comedy. In the British theatrical censorship, there was a tendency since 19th century 'to censor the serious responsible treatment of a subject' and 'license a frivolous comedy scraping thoughtlessly over the same ground',<sup>32</sup> although this tendency was strongly criticised by serious dramatists. In other words, they maintained a form of unspoken rule that censors



could pass a play so long as its subject was treated comically. Therefore, Lord Cromer could defend himself from protests by claiming that the play was within the category of farce. Another reason for licensing the play was that he had already made considerable modifications to the text. He meant that he did not neglect his obligations as a censor when he examined the play. What is noteworthy is that he referred only to the *fact* that the text was amended and did not make any mention of how effective the amendments were.

Let us summarise the main points of what we have examined. Although he had stated that the purpose of the amendments was to tone down the offensive atmosphere of the play, Lord Cromer could not succeed at all in doing so, and contrary to what he had stated, the play caused a great scandal and invited one criticism after another from moralists and journalists. However, we may be wrong if we say that he made a mistake in his judgment. We should rather say that he *did* anticipate from the start that the play would cause some troubles. He knew that it would not be able to escape from harsh criticisms from conservative people. That was why he ordered the producer to amend the play as a precautionary measure against the lobbyists. Whether or not he could really tone down the play's atmosphere did not matter, but what was important was developing an elaborate justification for the granting of the licence. That *Fallen Angels* was to prove a farcical comedy and that the text had already been modified provided Lord Cromer with a good cause to grant the licence, or perhaps it would be more accurate to say that these two reasons served him as a convenient *pretext* upon which he could defend himself from lobbyists' criticisms.

Such a strategy was needed in order to maintain his stance as a censor steering the middle course between differing public opinions, and, in doing so, he protected the West End commercial theatres from extreme puritanical attacks.

#### IV

As soon as it opened at the Globe Theatre on 21 April 1925, *Fallen Angels* drew the attention of critics and became the object of a heated controversy. While a few critics denied its offensiveness and warmly praised it as a clever play with brilliant dialogues,<sup>33</sup> the majority of the critics attacked it with harsh epithets like 'shocking', 'disgusting' and 'degenerate'. Since he had already become a great celebrity as a young dramatist, it was quite natural that Coward provided a central topic for the media. In addition, since an issue of immorality was what made a journal sell well, it is understandable that critics intentionally exaggerated the immoral aspect of the play. As A. B. Walkley pointed out in defending *Fallen Angels*, such a topic pleased the editors of the press because they knew that 'moral indignation' was 'one of the most profitable lines to exploit next to the craze for cricket in the summer and football in the winter'.<sup>34</sup> However, 'the shock-horror reaction of the press ... ensured box office queues overnight', and the play ran for several months.<sup>35</sup> In other words, the media that fiercely criticised the play drew a large number of audiences to the theatre and contributed enormously to the commercial success of the play. Eventually, *Fallen Angels* was to attain a wide circulation among the English populace.

How did the audience react to this scandalous play? Probably, some

of them were literally 'shocked' or 'disgusted' at the play's performance, but, according to a report written in anger by a member of the Public Morality Council, 'a large section of the audience greeted these sexual allusions with bursts of laughter and appeared to be openly amused at suggestions of unchastity'.<sup>36</sup> Even among those who enjoyed the play, reactions may have varied from one another: some may have thought that it was a mere frivolous light comedy with shallow-minded characters; more may have favoured the female characters' fashionable life style and their modern way of thinking; and others may have thought that the play treated serious aspects of life.

If we turn again to the theatre censorship in the inter-war period and consider the censorship of the commercial theatre in comparison with that of the art theatre, a point of interest develops. Steve Nicholson, in his essay that examines some European plays which were banned by the Lord Chamberlain's Office in the 1920s such as Strindberg's *Miss Julie* and Pirandello's *Six Characters in Search of an Author*, makes an observation as follows:

A closer examination suggests that what particularly upset the censors was the fact that female characters were shown not simply as the objects and victims of male desire, but as active initiators. ... [A]ny notion that a woman might experience a drive which was sexually motivated ... seems to have been quite literally unbelievable.<sup>37</sup>

In other words, one of the reasons why the censors severely intervened those 'serious' plays was that they considered the female sexual auton-

omy embodied in the plays to be dangerous to the society. What is of particular interest is the similarity that can be said to occur in *Fallen Angels*, where the female characters vaguely claim equality with men in sexual matters. One of the members of the Public Morality Council strongly stressed this point:

The most serious aspect is brought to a head in Act III. This is a teaching of a single moral standard for men and women (instead of the present double one) but the standard is to be a lower one, and, presuming that most men are unchaste before marriage, unchastity in single women is to be condoned.<sup>38</sup>

In this short study, this subject cannot be discussed in full detail due to a lack of space, but, in short, it might be said that *Fallen Angels* displays similarities with plays devoted to serious topics and engenders a great potential for 'danger' that might have been strictly censored by the Lord Chamberlain.

However, *Fallen Angels* differed from these in that it had its farcical style and that its flippancy disguised or obscured contemporary social issues such as women's struggles against the conventional modes of a traditional society. Owing to this disguise, or to its dubiousness, the play managed to obtain a licence, and, by causing much controversy, had a strong impact to the society. Shocking people itself, no doubt, is of great significance, and that audiences may have perceived a serious undercurrent within the play is of further relevance. Therefore, it is left to say that the text of *Fallen Angels* was an active *agent* having a

potential for being subversive, rather than a passively regulated text.

## Notes

- 1 Noël Coward, 'Present Indicative', *Noël Coward: Autobiography* (1937; London: Mandarin, 1992) 145.
- 2 Sheridan Morley, Introduction, *Coward Plays: One*, by Noël Coward (London: Methuen, 1994) xiii.
- 3 The annual average number of plays submitted for censorship to the Lord Chamberlain's Office over the period between 1900 and 1968 was approximately 800. See John Johnston, *The Lord Chamberlain's Blue Pencil* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1990) 278.
- 4 G. S. Street, Reader's Report, 27 March 1925, ts., Lord Chamberlain's Plays Correspondence file (hereafter cited as LC file) on *Fallen Angels*, British Library, London. This collection, housed in the British Library, consists of the correspondence and papers relating to the licensing of stage plays by the Lord Chamberlain.
- 5 Richard Findlater, *Banned!: a Review of Theatrical Censorship in Britain* (London: MacGibbon & Kee, 1967) 127.
- 6 Findlater, 127.
- 7 Ross McKibbin, *Classes and Cultures: England 1918-1951* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998) 327.
- 8 McKibbin, 330.
- 9 W. Somerset Maugham, Preface, *The Collected Plays of W. Somerset Maugham*, vol. 2 (1931; London: William Heinemann, 1952) xii.
- 10 Sean O'Connor, *Straight Acting: Popular Gay Drama from Wilde to Rattigan* (London: Cassell, 1998) 11. O'Connor's observation is full of pertinent suggestions and comments on this point, although he discusses the dramatists from an aspect of homosexuality.
- 11 The terms of the Theatres Act of 1843 are quoted in Frank Fowell and Frank Palmer, *Censorship in England* (1913; New York: Benjamin Blom, 1969) 372-374.
- 12 Ruby Cromer, *Such were These Years* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1939) 41.

- 13 G. S. Street, 'The Censorship of Plays', *Fortnightly Review* 1 Sept. 1925:350.
- 14 A series of controversies on theatre censorship that had occurred in the pre-war period also affected the way the post-war censors examined plays. That theatre censorship was entirely entrusted to one person often invited criticisms concerning its partiality and arbitrariness, and at one stage in the pre-war period a heated debate arose as to whether the system of theatre censorship itself should be abolished or not. As a result, the censors in the post-war period came to pay attention to the changing moral attitudes of the general public in order to avoid criticisms against their partiality.
- 15 Street, 'The Censorship of Plays', 349.
- 16 As for the plays that Lord Cromer banned, see Findlater, 132-143, and Steve Nicholson, 'Unnecessary Plays: European Drama and the British Censor in the 1920s', *Theatre Research International* 20-1 (1995): 30-36.
- 17 Johnston, 79.
- 18 Johnston, 95-98.
- 19 G. S. Street makes a comment at the beginning of Reader's Report on *Hay Fever* that 'At last a Play from this author [Coward] to which exception cannot be taken intelligently', displaying a great sense of relief which serves as an evidence of the difficulties the censors had in examining Coward's plays. See G. S. Street, Reader's Report, 27 May 1925, ts., LC file on *Hay Fever*.
- 20 G. S. Street, Reader's Report, 27 March 1925, ts., LC file on *Fallen Angels*.
- 21 Lord Cromer, letter to G. A. C. Crichton, 5 Apr. 1925, ms., LC file on *Fallen Angels*.
- 22 For further details of this point, see Tomoko Akai, 'Kenetsu to Sosaku: Noël Coward no Shoki no Gikyoku wo Megutte (Censorship and Playwriting: Noël Coward's Early Works)' *Eibei Bungaku* (Journal of the Society of English and American Literature) of Kwansei Gakuin University, 43-2 (1999): 81-95.
- 23 Lord Cromer, 5 Apr. 1925, ms., LC file on *Fallen Angels*.
- 24 Noël Coward, *Fallen Angels*, ts., LC Plays, British Library, London. Stanley Bell, letter to G. A. C. Crichton, 15 Apr. 1925, ts., LC file on *Fallen Angels*. LC Plays are the play scripts submitted to the Lord chamberlain's Office for licensing.
- 25 Noël Coward, *Fallen Angels*, ts., LC Plays, p. 22.

- 26 Stanley Bell, letter to G. A. C. Crichton, 15 Apr. 1925, ts., LC file on *Fallen Angels*.
- 27 H. C. Thompson, letter to the Lord Chamberlain, 5 May 1925, ts., LC file on *Fallen Angels*.
- 28 Howard M. Tyrer, letter to the Lord Chamberlain, 8 May 1925, ms., LC file on *Fallen Angels*.
- 29 Howard M. Tyrer, letter to the Lord Chamberlain, 13 May 1925, ms., LC file on *Fallen Angels*.
- 30 Lord Bishop of London, letter to the Lord Chamberlain, 14 May 1925, ts., LC file on *Fallen Angels*.
- 31 Lord Cromer, letter to Lord Bishop of London, 15 May 1925, ts., LC file on *Fallen Angels*.
- 32 Fowell and Palmer, 245.
- 33 See, for example, the articles in *Punch* and *The Sketch*, quoted in Jacqui Russell. ed., *File on Coward* (London: Methuen, 1987), 24-25.
- 34 A. B. Walkley, 'Sex Plays and Noël Coward', *Vanity Fair* Nov. 1925: 96.
- 35 Morley, xii.
- 36 A report enclosed in the letter from Howard M. Tyrer to the Lord Chamberlain, 13 May 1925, LC file on *Fallen Angels*.
- 37 Nicholson, 34.
- 38 A report enclosed in the letter from Howard M. Tyrer to the Lord Chamberlain, 13 May 1925, LC file on *Fallen Angels*.