

Helen Freshwater, 'Tracing the intangible: censorship, performance, and the archive'

Performance is often defined by and through its ephemerality; the fact that it is a temporal art form and so cannot be effectively captured or contained with an archive. But growing number of theatre scholars (such as Diana Taylor and Rebecca Schneider) are encouraging us to reassess our attachment to this belief, and to reflect upon ways in which performance may remain outside of the traditional archive. Schneider, for example, asks us to consider whether archives can be corporeal as well as textual: held in the body as well as the document.

Not all archives of performance are founded upon the notion that performance disappears, however. One that does not is the Lord Chamberlain's Plays and correspondence archive (currently held at the British Library) which contains records of the British theatre censorship system (which lasted until 1968).

Its contents are generated and justified by a powerful belief in performance remains: in this case, fear of theatre's influence upon its audience. This is this most clearly illustrated through analysis of the Lord Chamberlain's response to the representation of homosexuality on stage. For example, the documents that record the treatment that John Osborne's play, *A Patriot For Me* (received when it was submitted for licensing in 1964) include clear statements about theatre's alarmingly transformative potential, as well as revealing the casual homophobia of the period.

Far from being a marginal, or a neglected concept, I would suggest that the conviction that performance circulates long after its initial realisation is foundational to all projects of censorship which concentrate upon the performing arts.