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'Teens and Tudors: The Pedagogy of Royal Studies'

Nadia Thérèse van Pelt

University of Southampton

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Teens and Tudors: the pedagogy of royal studies*

Nadia Thérèse van Pelt

Abstract: This article describes the outreach project Teens and Tudors: Performing Heywood's Play of the Weather in the Classroom Context, undertaken from February to May 2014, involving the University of Southampton, ICLON at the University of Leiden, and Sorghvliet Gymnasium in The Hague. The aim of this project was to investigate whether the performance space of the Tudor Great Hall can be 're-created' in the classroom, as a tool for teaching secondary school pupils about the socio-political context of the Tudor court, through 1530s drama. In doing so, the project has aimed to explore the pedagogy of royal studies today, through a medium that had a distinct, albeit a different, pedagogical value at its original time of performance.

This article describes the outreach project *Teens and Tudors: Performing Heywood's Play of the Weather in the Classroom Context*, undertaken from February to May 2014, at Sorghvliet Gymnasium in The Hague, with the support of the University of Southampton and ICLON at the University of Leiden. Its aim was to investigate whether the performance space of the Tudor Great Hall can be 're-created' in the classroom, as a tool for teaching secondary school pupils about the socio-political context of the Tudor court, through 1530s drama.[1] In so doing, the project has explored the pedagogy of royal studies today, through a medium that had a distinct, albeit a different, pedagogical value at its original time of performance.

The fifteenth and sixteenth centuries saw a flourishing of plays with schooling or pedagogy as their theme, such as, amongst others, *Lucidus and Dubius* (mid-fifteenth century), *Occupation and Idleness* (mid-fifteenth century), *Nice Wanton* (1547-53),[2] John Redford's *The Play of Wit and Science* (1539), John Phillip's *Patient and Meek Grissill* (1558-61),[3] Thomas Ingelend's *The Disobedient Child* (1559-70),[4] and George Gascoigne's *The Glass of Government* (1575).[5] These plays were performed by schoolboys at the royal court, under the guidance

I am grateful to the teachers at Sorghvliet Gymnasium in The Hague: Sjouk Vellenga, Rachel Mathieson and Anja Lindaart, for allowing me to work with their students. I would of course like to extend my thanks to the 5th form pupils themselves for their active participation in my project. Those students who have given permission for their first names to appear in print, are quoted as such below; other students are quoted as 'anonymous'.

This outreach project developed out of a chapter of my PhD thesis. For a full discussion of the spectator management tactics of John Heywood and John Bale at the Tudor court, see: Nadia Thérèse van Pelt, 'Play-making on the Edge of Reality: Managing Spectator Risk in Early English Drama' (Doctoral thesis, University of Southampton, 2014).

[1] For this project, I have worked with three groups of Dutch school pupils for whom English is not their first language.

[2] [Nice Wanton] *A preaty interlude called, Nice Wanton* (London: John King, 1560), *Early English Books Online* [accessed 24 January 2013]. Digital facsimile of the original in British Library.

[3] John Phillip, *The commodye of pacient and meek Grissill*, (London: Thomas Colwell, 1565).

[4] Thomas Ingelend, [The Disobedient Child] *A pretie and mery new enterlude: called the Disobedient child* (London: 1570), *Early English Books Online* [accessed 31 July 2014]. Digital facsimile of the original in Henry E. Huntington Library and Art Gallery.

[5] George Gascoigne, *The glasse of gouernement* (London: Henry Middleton, 1575), *Early English Books Online* [accessed 31 July 2014]. Digital facsimile of the original in Henry E. Huntington Library and Art Gallery.

of their schoolmasters or choirmasters, and sought to instruct both the young actors and the audience members in the ways of virtuous living and learning. Schoolboys also performed reinventions of shortened Roman or Greek comedies, such as *Jully and Julian* (1547-53)[6] and *The Bugbears* (1563-66), as well as interludes that, beneath the surface of comedy, had a more directly political message, such as *Jack Juggler* (1553-58),[7] which took a critical stance towards transubstantiation. Richard Edwards' *Damon and Pithias* (1564-68)[8] combines the themes of education, friendship and kingship and tyranny, and thus unites politics and pedagogy.[9]

The key play for *Teens and Tudors* is John Heywood's *Play of the Weather* (1532-33), which, not unlike Edwards' play, offers up a 'mirror for princes', and presents the court with advice on how a good king should rule, through the 'harmless' stage play of children. At Shrovetide 1532 or Easter 1533 King Henry VIII may or may not have been present at a performance of this play, in which Jupiter, king of the Gods, is described as 'making of a new moon' (l. 795), that is to say, a new marriage.[10] The play's Vice character observes that 'your old moons be so far tasted, that all the goodness of them is wasted' (l. 796-797). The audience of the play would have taken this as a clear reference to Katherine of Aragon's miscarriages, and as the Vice later exclaims 'by Saint Anne' (l. 812), spectators would have been invited to think about Anne Boleyn, the 'new moon', who is referred to as an attractive new match and a promise of fertility: 'This new moon shall make a thing spring more in this while / Then a old moon shall while a man may go a mile' (ll. 808-809).

Topical, daring and political, *The Play of the Weather* jokes about the king's relationship with Anne Boleyn, her pregnancy, the nature of kingship, and the royal supremacy. Heywood, staging the play, was both a courtier and a schoolmaster, and a notably conservative Catholic in favour of religious moderation at a court that was moving towards a break from Rome.[11] With his bawdy jokes and coarse language, Heywood's strategy appears to be to present drama that used entertaining action and an apparently innocuous theme to counsel religious caution in the face of prevailing pressures for reformation. Furthermore, as a schoolmaster Heywood could use his pupils as instruments through which to 'educate' his audience, relying on the indulgent eyes and ears of the adult spectators, if any of the ideas expressed were considered slightly out of turn, or on the border of what

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[6] *Jully and Julian*, ed. F.P. Wilson, Malone Society (London: Oxford University Press, 1955).

[7] [Jack Juggler] *A new enterlued for chyldren to playe, named Iacke Iugeler both wytte, and very playsent* (London: William Copland, 1565), *Early English Books Online* [accessed 31 July 2014]. Digital facsimile of the original in Henry E. Huntington Library and Art Gallery.

[8] [Damon and Pithias] *The excellent comedie of two the moste faithfullest freendes, Damon and Pithias Newly imprinted, as the same was shewed before the Queenes Maiestie, by the Children of her Graces Chappell, except the prologue that is somewhat altered for the proper vse of them that hereafter shall haue occasion to plaie it, either in priuate, or open audience* (London: William Williamson, 1571), *Early English Books Online* [accessed 31 July 2014]. Digital facsimile of the original in Henry E. Huntington Library and Art Gallery.

[9] See Darryll Grantley, *English Dramatic Interludes, 1300-1580* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

[10] John Heywood, *The Play of the Wether* (London: Rastell, 1533), *Early English Books Online*. [Accessed 12 November 2012]. I have also consulted the modern editions in Richard Axton and Peter Happé eds., *The Plays of John Heywood* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1991), 184-215; and in Greg Walker ed., *Medieval Drama: An Anthology* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000), 213-234. Axton and Happé's edition of Heywood's plays locates the play around Shrovetide 1533. See Axton and Happé, 'Introduction', *The Plays of John Heywood* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1991), xiv. Walker times it just after that, at Easter 1533: see Greg Walker, *Writing Under Tyranny: English Literature and the Henrician Reformation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 105.

[11] Walker, *Writing Under Tyranny*, 100. See also Greg Walker, 'Folly', *Cultural Reformations: Medieval and Renaissance in Literary History*, ed. Brian Cummings and James Simpson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 321-341, 328.

was socially and politically permissible.

Christmastide and Shrovetide were the principal times during which school drama was typically performed.[12] It is likely that Heywood's piece of Tudor court drama was also performed during high season, that is, Christmas time, as times such as these inspired drama of spiritual and moral instruction.[13] Lords and patrons would host banquets in their great halls, and enjoyed a festive atmosphere of revelry. Historiographical consensus is that *The Play of the Weather* was performed in a great hall or dining setting, possibly in one of the royal palaces.[14] With a performance time of about an hour and a half, interludes were relatively short.[15] Sometimes interludes were designed around the serving of meals and were therefore divided into different parts.[16] What distinguishes Tudor household drama from outdoor devotional drama is that the spectators of the former had not necessarily come to the venue in order to see the performance, whereas for the latter spectators purposefully travelled long distances. That is to say that actors, performing in the great hall, had to do their best to engage the spectators, and to claim the great hall as a performance space, as Merry Report can be seen to do on his first entering the room:

> [to a torch-bearer] Brother, hold up your torch a little higher
> Now I beseech you my lord, look on me first,
> I trust your lordship shall not find me the worst (ll. 98-100).

In some respects, as I explained to the Fifth Form students with whom I conducted this project, great hall acting is very much like teaching a class: one has to work with the space that is available, engage the onlookers, and get one's didactic message across. The difference, of course, is that the teen-actors performing for Henry VIII found themselves in the potentially very dangerous situation of telling a king what to do.

As will be evident from this article, *Teens and Tudors* is heavily indebted to *Staging the Henrician Court*, an interdisciplinary project led by Professor Thomas Betteridge and Professor Greg Walker between 2008 and 2010.[17] This project staged a production of Heywood's *The Play of the Weather* at the Great Hall at Hampton Court Palace. The performance element of the research project added an extra level of understanding to the research, as it provided new insights into ways in which Heywood's *Play of the Weather* transformed the Great Hall space, and to what extent Henrician court drama created courtly space.[18] *Teens and Tudors* gratefully made use of the *Staging the Henrician Court* website, which contains many valuable clips, articles, and a discussion forum, as additional teaching aids. *Teens and Tudors* seeks to contribute to projects such as *Staging the Henrician Court*

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[12] Ursula Potter, 'Pedagogy and Parenting in English Drama, 1560-1610' (Doctoral thesis, University of Sydney, 2001), 2.

[13] Greg Walker, 'Politics and Place in Tudor Household Drama', *Theta*, vol. 4 (1998), 213-242, 230.

[14] See for example Greg Walker, *Plays of Persuasion: Drama and Politics and the Court of Henry VIII* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 135; Peter Happé, 'Henry VIII in the Interludes', Henry VIII and his Afterlives: *Literature, Politics and Art*, ed. Mark Rankin and others (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 15-33, 23. See also Thomas Betteridge and Greg Walker, 'Performance as Research: Staging John Heywood's Play of the Weather at Hampton Court Palace', *Medieval English Theatre*, vol. 27 (2007), 86-104, 87.

[15] Richard Axton (ed). 'Introduction', *Three Rastell Plays* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1979), 2.

[16] Graham Parry, 'Entertainments at Court', *A New History of Early English Drama*, eds. John D. Cox and David Scott Kastan (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), 195-211, 196.

[17] *Staging the Henrician Court: Bringing Early Modern Drama to Life*, 31 July 2014: http://stagingthehenriciancourt.brookes.ac.uk/index.html

[18] *Staging the Henrician Court*, http://stagingthehenriciancourt.brookes.ac.uk/index.html

and other research performances or staged readings of early English drama, by investigating how we can use this information to create an exciting outreach/teaching tool for secondary schools, and to answer the question as to whether one can actually 'experience' the Tudor court in the classroom context. As the context to any performance is crucial, one may wonder how much of the connection to the political dynamics of the 1530s one would lose if the staged reading of the play were not performed inside a great hall. Furthermore, in terms of the actors' ages, one might consider what meanings the play would gain if it were to be performed by teenagers in the same age category as the original boy-actors rather than by adults. The following discussion gives a critical account of the methods and process of this experiment, the students' feedback on their learning experience, and implications for the pedagogy of royal studies in outreach projects.

Aims and Method

Taking the *Play of the Weather* as the project's main source, *Teens and Tudors* sought to do two things. Firstly, to turn twenty-first-century secondary school pupils into actor-researchers who were to reconstruct the workings of the play's 'pedagogy' — or its advice about kingship — through their acquired knowledge of the Tudor performance context, and performance experiments carried out in class. Interdisciplinary in nature, the project introduced the pupils to a case study of the religion and politics at court in the 1530s, and sought to broaden the pupils' grasp of the English language through the reading of the play in the original language. Furthermore, the research experience and critical thinking skills gained through the project were designed to benefit the students when making the transition from school to university in a year's time.

The second element of the programme was to experiment with the 'pedagogy' of royal studies within the secondary school context. Where Higher Education is moving towards interdisciplinary collaborations, this has not yet become a trend in secondary school and college education, which offers English and History as separate subjects, separating literature and the contexts in which it was written and, in the case of music and drama, performed. In English lessons, the context of books and plays are addressed, and sometimes pupils perform a play for an audience of teachers and parents, but such classes do not normally place students in a physical circumstance that urges them to know exactly what is meant and implied in the text. To achieve this kind of close reading, *Teens and Tudors* built upon Total Physical Response Theory (TPR), a teaching method that has its theoretical basis outside 'mainstream applied linguistics'.[19] Rodgers defines it as 'a language teaching method built around the coordination of speech and action; it attempts to teach language through physical (motor) activity'.[20] Language-learning purposes aside, TPR can also be employed for lessons in literature and history. The *Teens and Tudors* series of workshops sought to explore whether having students perform the play in a space resembling the hierarchical and political layout of the Tudor court, and asking them where they would position themselves in the space while reading the play's text, would encourage their thinking about the socio-political implications of the text in relation to the Tudor

[19] J.J. Asher, 'The Total Physical Response Approach to Second Language Learning', *The Modern Language Journal* vol. 53, issue 1 (1969), 3–17; T.S. Rodgers, *Approaches and Methods in Language Teaching*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 3rd edn, 2014), 277–288, B. Salim, *A Companion to Teaching of English* (New Delhi: Atlantic, 2001), 87.
[20] Rodgers, *Approaches and Methods*, 277.

court. This type of close reading thus relies on the students' moving their bodies through the classroom, and likening this classroom to a map layout of the Tudor court projected on a whiteboard. TPR as a teaching tool turns students into actors and spectators, and shares features with studies of cognitive mapping,[21] as well as with the visual effects and the affect of medieval and early modern drama performed for educational or devotional purposes.[22]

A ground-breaking work that has applied phenomenological and cognitive theories to a dramatic context that was saturated with an interest in the affective in relation to doctrine is Jill Stevenson's work on the affective responses of audiences to the York plays, the discussion at times extending to royal entries and other processions.[23] She observes that through conceptual blending, spectators to medieval cycle plays were capable of appreciating the biblical story while at the same time picking up on contemporary allusions, taking in the surroundings of the city, and recognizing guild associations. Stevenson says that 'throughout each pageant, spectators navigated these multiple visual layers, while also engaging them all simultaneously as entertainment and devotion'.[24] The moments when spectators mentally fused their own physical environment (for example the City of York) with the biblical event, so that they experienced the Crucifixion as if it happened in the here and now of the streets of York, are what Stevenson calls 'living in the blend'.[25]

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[21] Recent studies in cognitive science follow the footsteps of cognitive linguists Lakoff and Johnson's theory on embodied perceptual systems, which proposes that perception is structured by the interaction of the human body and brain; and phenomenological philosophy such as that of Maurice Merleau-Ponty, which places the body firmly into the discourse on the perception of the senses and people's consciousness of the world around them: the so-called 'being-in-the-world'. Fauconnier and Turner offer Conceptual Blending Theory (CBT) which argues that everyday life actions such as speaking and thinking involve the construction of 'mental spaces', packets of information that help us understand language, for example grammar or metaphor. Conceptual blending occurs when information from two or more different mental spaces is projected into a 'blended space'. A second concept in cognitive science is 'mirror neuron' theory, which argues for a neurological replication in the brains of spectators, when observing or executing actions, and which study investigates the capacity of humans to experience affect: what Gallese calls the 'neural underpinnings of embodied simulation', which lies at the basis of people's ability to identify with others and to feel empathy. See George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Philosophy in the Flesh: the Embodied Mind and its Challenge to Western Thought* (New York: Basic Books, 1999); Lakoff and Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By* (London and Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003); Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. Colin Smith (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1962); Gilles Fauconnier and Mark Turner, *The Way We Think: Conceptual Blending and the Mind's Hidden Complexities* (New York: Basic Books, 2003), 18; Gilles Fauconnier and Mark Turner, 'Conceptual Blending, Form and Meaning', *Recherches en Communication: Sémiotique Cognitive*, vol. 19 (2003), 57-86, 59; Amy Cook, 'Interplay: The Method and Potential of a Cognitive Scientific Approach to Theatre', *Theatre Journal*, vol. 59 (2007), 579-594, 581; Vittorio Gallese, 'Intentional Attunement: Mirror Neurons and the Neural Underpinnings of Interpersonal Relations', *Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association*, vol. 55 (2007), 131-176. See also Martin L. Hoffman, 'Empathy and Prosocial Behavior', *Handbook of Emotions*, eds. Michael Lewis *et al.* (London: Guilford Press, 3rd edn, 2008), 440-455, 441.

[22] For example, it has been observed that affective spirituality acquired great popularity in the thirteenth century. Jane Chance, 'Cognitive Alterities: From Cultural Studies to Neuroscience and Back Again', *Postmedieval*, vol. 3 (2012), 247-262, 251. For a study on how moral qualities were attributed to how the world was perceived through the senses in the late Middle Ages, see Chris M. Woolgar, *The Senses in Late Medieval England* (London: Yale University Press, 2006).

[23] Jill Stevenson, *Performance, Cognitive Theory and Devotional Culture: Sensual Piety in Late Medieval York* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010); Jill Stevenson, 'Embodied Enchantments: Cognitive Theory and the York Mystery Plays', *The York Mystery Plays: Performance in the City*, ed. Margaret Rogerson (York: York Medieval Press, 2011), 91-102.

[24] Stevenson, *Performance, Cognitive Theory and Devotional Culture*, 77.

[25] Stevenson, 'Embodied Enchantments', 97. The idea that York and Jerusalem share the same ground in the

This changed the spectator from a theatrical onlooker into being a witness to an important biblical moment.[26]

In terms of TPR in the classroom context, I do not imagine that the students would for a second forget that they are students in a classroom performing a staged reading of a play. However, by explaining the context and layout of the Tudor court, and positioning seats in such a way that the students who are not speaking position themselves in the same way as spectators at the Tudor court would have done—men on one side of the room, women on the other, some sitting close to where the king would have sat, others closer to the 'kitchen' — it is possible that conceptual blending in the students' brains would allow for a certain — if only minimal — level of 'living in the blend'. Stevenson argues that:

> Performance spectatorship entails the meaningful interaction with a 'false' world that we perceive and experience, in part, as an actuality. 'Living in the blend' of a play has the potential to impact a spectator in such a powerful way that it may influence future activity and meaning construction in the real world.[27]

The TPR would then facilitate students to remember the lesson in which they performed the staged reading in more detail, and the physical space of the layout would serve to remind them at all times of the politics of court performance and spectatorship. Because this project was very much a case study, I planned to ask students whether or not they had 'experienced' the Tudor performance space in the classroom. Although I had my reservations as to whether this was even possible, the question was to encourage the students' metacognitive strategies, urging them think about their learning process, and how they had achieved their learning outcomes. This would then indirectly give me feedback about the 'teachability' of the project at secondary school level.

Where the *content* of the workshops was about educating pupils about 'educating' a Tudor court through drama, and the *form* of the workshops was inspired by TPR and cognitive theory explaining early English construction of meaning through drama, the *approach* was to use problem-based learning, setting the students the following 'problems' to consider:

1. What difference would it make if the character of Merry Report, the principal play-maker and 'ring-master' figure in the play (which was probably originally played by the author, Heywood), were performed by a teacher or a student? And in 1533?
2. Gender roles: how funny are the female characters when they are performed by a boy actor? And when they are performed by a girl actor? Why?
3. Can *performance space* be 'experienced' in the classroom or not?

Having already referred to Question 3, it remains to be said that Question 1 was designed to encourage the students affective strategies, and their capacity to relate to the Tudor teen actors who originally performed the play. Furthermore, it was meant to set the students thinking about what Merry Report says and how he interacts with his audience. Question 2 sought to get the students experimenting with scenes, and, in relation to the

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York *Entry into Jerusalem* (*c.* 1463-1477) so that they become the same world in which the spectator watches, incorporated in the dramatic and ritual action, has also been discussed in Pamela M. King, 'Seeing and Hearing: Looking and Listening', *Early Theatre,* vol. 3, issue 1 (2000), 155-166, 164; Theodore K. Lerud, *Memory, Images, and the English Corpus Christi Drama* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 102; Martin Stevens, 'The Intertextuality of Late Medieval Art and Drama', *New Literary History*, vol. 22, issue 2 (1991), 317-337, 332.

[26] Stevenson, *Performance, Cognitive Theory and Devotional Culture*, 125.

[27] Stevenson, 'Embodied Enchantments', 101.

Gentlewoman and the 'leaky moon' passage, to make them think about the politics of sex and gender at court.

Process

I undertook this project with three groups of fifth form students, one group with 26, one with 27, and one with 28 pupils, their ages ranging between 16–18.[28] None of these students were native speakers of English, but as they were used to having English as the 'classroom language',[29] they welcomed the challenge of being introduced to Heywood's English, with its many new words. One issue that did arise was that when preparing the programme, I had not considered Early English spelling inconsistencies. Some students found it problematic that words and names were spelled in different ways throughout the text, and when I explained why that was, they expressed dissatisfaction and confusion. I should have made a point of this at the beginning of the programme, when handing out the play-texts.

Before starting the first lesson in the workshop series, I had moved all the desks to the back of the classroom, leaving only chairs, which I placed in a semi-circle. This was to create an open space, which the students themselves were to transform into a workspace in which they could investigate the Tudor court. At the beginning of the first lesson I tested the students' previous knowledge of the Tudors and the Tudor court, by asking them to discuss what they knew about it in groups of three, and after five minutes, to feed this information back to the group. It turned out that many of the girls had heard of or watched episodes from the TV series *The Tudors* featuring Jonathan Rhys Meyers,[30] or had seen Shekhar Kapur's *Elizabeth: The Golden Age*.[31] Two or three girls had also read Philippa Gregory's *The Other Boleyn Girl*.[32] Most boys claimed never to have heard of the Tudors. After testing the students' knowledge, I introduced the project with a lecture-type presentation, introducing concepts such as 'estates satire'[33] and 'the politics of drama'[34], as well as the main characters in the play, and the figures of importance at the Tudor court.

Teens and Tudors, by virtue of being performed in the classroom context, does not take as its starting point the actual great hall of the Tudor court, but transforms the classroom into this space through the use of a layout corresponding to that of the Great Hall. When showing a picture of the outline of a Tudor great hall on the beamer, I asked all students to stand up, and to form two rows of chairs on one side of the classroom, and

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[28] These students study at what is in the Netherlands known as 'Gymnasium'-level, a six year programme including the subjects of Latin and Greek, which prepares students for a university education.

[29] Vivian Cook, 'Using the First Language in the Classroom', *The Canadian Modern Language Review*, vol. 57, issue 3 (2001), 402-423.

[30] *The Tudors*, dir. by Michael Hirst. Working Title Television, 2007-2010.

[31] *Elizabeth: The Golden Age*, dir. by Shekhar Kapur. Universal Pictures, 2007.

[32] Philippa Gregory, *The Other Boleyn Girl* (London: Harper, 2001).

[33] A type of satirical literature which surveys the different social groups and orders in society and mocks them. This type of literature was especially popular in the fourteenth century, and can be found in the works of, among others, John Gower and Geoffrey Chaucer. It also features the late medieval morality plays, and Tudor interludes.

[34] Drama as a didactic medium had the potential to persuade their audiences, for example about political matters. The relationship and interaction between drama and politics have in recent years been studied in Greg Walker, *Plays of Persuasion: Drama and Politics and the Court of Henry VIII* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991) and Greg Walker, *Writing Under Tyranny: English Literature and the Henrician Reformation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

two rows of chairs on the other side. The seats faced the middle of the room. I instructed the boys to take their places on one side, and the girls on the other side. This gendered division of the spectators alerted the students to a situation in which the 'rules' of their participation were to change. The immediate response from the students in all three groups was a 'them' versus 'us' attitude towards the other gender in the room, which was interesting, because the *Play of the Weather* does at times seek to create such an atmosphere when gendered jokes unite the male audience or the female audience.

Using the picture of the Tudor Great Hall, I explained that the teacher's desk was to stand for the dais end of the hall where the king would have sat, and we placed a chair in front of the wall, on the other side of the room, facing the desk, in order to represent the screens end of the great hall, where a prop throne would have sat in the original performance. It was explained to the students that hierarchy determined how closely spectators would have sat to the king, and that those closest to the kitchens were more like 'poor relatives'. During the project I would ask different students to take up their place on the desk to represent the gaze of the royal spectator, and I would project an image of Henry VIII onto the whiteboard behind them. Different students also 'performed' Jupiter, who remains silent for a great part of the play, but whose presence at the other end of the 'hall' is essential, especially in the small and cramped space of the classroom in which the 'real king' and the 'play king' appear to be even closer to each other. As the play was read out by the students, the larger parts such as Merry Report alternated.

As homework, I asked the students to consider where characters would have entered the stage, where they would have uttered their lines, and how they would have stood in relation to where the king would have sat. For example, when Merry Report says:

> Now, good my lord god, Our Lady be with ye!
> Friends, a fellowship, let me go by ye!
> Thinke ye I may stand thrusting among you there?
> Nay by God, I must thrust about other gear (ll. 175-178).

Or when the Gentlewoman, on entering, expresses her confusion on where to enter the room:

> Now good God, what folly is this!
> What should I do where so much people is?
> I know not how to pass in the god now (ll. 766-768).

During the reading of such lines in class, I would ask students *why* they were standing where they were, and we would talk about why they made the decisions they made, as a type of close reading. During the workshops the students tried the scenes with the Gentlewoman and the Launder: first performed by girls, later by boys. For the Gentlewoman there was not so much of a difference in the performance, as both boy and girl actors failed to play up to the sexual puns in the scene. The performance of the Launder, however, marked a great difference between the scenes performed by boys and girls. The girls tried to make the Launder sound 'old', and a boy performing her used a theatrical high-pitched voice with a Cockney accent, which made everyone laugh, especially the following lines:

> Why, have ye always kissed her behind?
> In faith good enough if it be your mind.
> And if your appetite serve you so to do,
> Byr Lady, I would ye had kissed mine arse too! (ll. 868-871).

As Betteridge and Walker observe in the discussion of their project, differences in performance did not depend on the actual gender of the actors, but on how the gender of the

character was portrayed.[35] In fact, in *Teens and Tudors*, the most convincing performance of Merry Report was by a seventeen-year old girl, who was not afraid to say crude words, and who knowingly raised her eyebrows when making jokes about the Gentlewoman.

The politics of the Tudor court were a constant topic of discussion. The students soon realized that the types of weather that the petitioners ask for in the play refer to varied political opinions. Jupiter, after having heard most of his subjects – and having had summarised accounts of the wishes of those subjects not deemed worthy to address the King of the Gods – offers to 'remedy' the debate:

> Such debate as from above ye have heard,
> such debate beneath among yourselves ye see
> As long as heads from temperature be deferred,
> So long the bodies in distemperance be.
> This perceive ye all, but none can help save we.
> But as we there have made peace concordantly,
> So will we here now give you remedy (II. 1132-1138).

Through the voice of Jupiter, Heywood presents his ideal of kingship: temperance, moderation, and a society in which in all are being heard, but in which the king decides to serve the desires of all his subjects by leaving things much as they are already:

> All to serve at once, and one destroy another
> Or else to serve one and destroy all the rest:
> Nuther will we do the one nor the other,
> But serve as many or as few as we think best.
> And where, or what time, to serve most or least,
> The direction of that doubtless shall stand
> Perpetually in the power of our hand (II. 1997-1203).

Using theatre as a starting point, the students were able to discuss the political implications of the different types of weather addressed in this play, as metaphors for religious progress and tradition.

Student feedback and conclusions

At the end of the project I requested that the students fill in a form which asked them to answer the research questions, or to indicate why such a question could not be answered. Almost half of the students filled in and handed in their question form.[36] With regard to the question what difference it would make if Merry Report were performed by a teenager or a student, responses varied. One student made a particularly insightful point about Merry Report, saying that if this character were to be played by a teacher, he would differ from the other actors by means of his age and perhaps size (exactly what would have happened if the tall Heywood had played it), whereas if the character were to be performed by a student actor, he would only stand out through what he says. Another student remarked that Merry Report uses rather coarse language, and that she believed that students would never have been allowed to say things such as 'such a railing whore' (l. 937) in front of a respectable audience (Laurine). Another concern was that perhaps a child or teen actor would not understand all the sexual jokes that Merry makes (Anonymous). Some

[35] Walker and Betteridge, 'Performance as Research', 94.
[36] Many students wanted to keep their forms, and did not hand them over.

students therefore suggested that Merry Report had best be performed by a teacher, who could use language which would sound strange when uttered by a child (Rosanne, Jannieke). Other students, however, said that it would be better to have the part performed by a student, because a child-actor would be taken less seriously, which would help soften some of the critical remarks that Merry Report makes in the direction of the king, thus making the performance less dangerous (Judith, Mabel, Anouk). In addition to the political advantage of having a teen-actor perform the part, some students also believed the part to be funnier and more 'clownish' when performed by a teenager (Femke, Victorine). Some students argued that one clear advantage of having a child perform Merry Report would be that, if some spectators happened to be offended by the play, the child-actor could simply say that they were not in charge and that they had not written the play, whereas a teacher performing the same part could not have made the same claim (Juriaan, Olivier).

When asking the students whether it would have been more comical to have the female characters performed by a girl or a boy actor, and why, one student noted that when the female characters were performed by a boy, the jokes immediately gained a more sexual undertone (Nina). It was also noted that the class were more attentive to the performance when a boy played a female part in a humorous way with a high pitched voice, than when a girl performed that part in a more naturalistic way (Marie-Claire). One student remarked that the boys' performance of the female roles was 'hilarious', especially in sentences like 'In no creature more beauty than in me is' (l. 820) (Laurine). Another student noted that 'It would be funniest if all the characters (male and female) were played by the opposite gender,' (Oisín) hereby also indicating the success of the girl actor impersonating Merry Report, a performance that did not have so much to do with vocal cross-dressing, as with excellent timing skills and a certain dramatic bravura. Interestingly, some of the more coarse jokes were misunderstood by the students. When in line 770 the Gentlewoman asks: 'I pray you, let me in at the back side', some students missed the rude sexual undertone of this remark and commented that this was said because at the time, women were not equal to men, and therefore would have had to use the back entrance of the room rather than the front entrance (Krijn). Another student – perhaps distrustful of male chefs – contributed: 'the backside is the kitchen. It would be strange if a man came in 'at the backside' (Koen).

As for whether the performance space of the Tudor court can be 'experienced' in the classroom, some students were more positive about this than others. Some had a mixed feeling about the experience: 'It actually worked in the classroom because we had a Jupiter and a 'real king' at both sides of the 'tables', but it was a bit of a shame that there was not enough space' (Anonymous). Another student remarked: 'Yes, however, it is hard to experience the way the play was performed because there are a lot less people in a classroom than in the performance space then'.[37] It was also pointed out that in a classroom one does not have a specific hierarchy between the students, so that this 'higher-class' and 'lower-class' seating was a completely new experience (Hannah). One student said it depended on the class' powers of imagination: 'You have to try hard to imagine that you're in the play, in 1533, and surrounded by a king, Jupiter, and 'high-placed'

[37] A similar comment has been made about *Staging the Henrician Court* by Professor Ros King (University of Southampton), who observed that there would have been more people in a Tudor Great Hall when a play was performed, than was represented in the 2007 project. Walker and Betteridge, 'Performance as Research', 96.

individuals' (Sammy); another said it depended on the arrangement of the room's layout (Rosanne). Some students were outright positive that they had experienced the Tudor dramatic space. For example, 'Yes, in the classroom you can see how crowded the Tudor court was. For example at the end of the play, when all the characters are 'on stage', the performance space in the classroom was also really full/crowded' (Femke); 'When you read the play sitting and standing in the right positions, you can really feel what the performance looked like back then' (Victorine); 'Yes, by seating the girls and boys across from each other like at court, and by placing students where the King and Jupiter (would have) sat, gives a good impression of the Tudor court' (Marie-Claire); 'I think it can, because you don't need a lot of space and the characters don't have to use objects, the only thing they do is speak' (Hubert).

One student who agreed with the others on the importance of layout explained further that by placing the characters such as the Ranger, Jupiter, etc. in the right space, determining where they should stand or sit when saying their lines, the performance space could 'easily be experienced in the classroom'. However, he pointed out that it is lucky that there are no fighting scenes in the play, because there would have been no space for it in the crowded classroom (Justus). Another student noted that on the occasions that she sat closer to the space where it was indicated that the kitchens were to be imagined, she felt 'less important than the ones who are sitting next to the king' (Noemi). One student simply said: 'we tried it, and I *did* experience it' (Koen). For the students who thought that they had experienced the Tudor court space, the TPR worked probably in the same way as the 'living in the blend' Stevenson describes occurred for spectators and participants in late medieval and early modern dramatic activity: the students remained aware of their own context in which the play was performed (classroom), but accepted the rules and 'contract' of the new context (Tudor court), just as early English spectators could blend the medieval city of York with the mystery plays' Jerusalem. In the case of the *Play of the Weather*, the potential blend between a fictional court and the real court of the spectators would have been easier to achieve.

Some students thought that the Tudor court could not be experienced in the classroom due to a different atmosphere. These remarks showed how much they had learned about the socio-political context in which *The Play of the Weather* intervened: 'The classroom doesn't hold the same tension as the court in the sixteenth-century, with the king present' (Albert, Rebecca). Another student wrote: 'saying things about politics was very dangerous at that time, and therefore the playwright uses all kinds of metaphors to criticise Henry VIII, the marriage issue, and his becoming the Head of the Church of England. This danger was not experienced in the classroom' (Anonymous). A more visually oriented student complained that it could not be experienced because she was missing costumes from the 1530s. These would have made it more 'real" (Alexandra). Someone also remarked that a less naturalistic element to the staged reading in class was that 'in 1533 there would not have been female performers' (Sammy).

'Divorced, beheaded, died, divorced, beheaded, survived'. History lessons about the Tudors, particularly about Henry VIII, have a tendency to use abstract notions about a court, scheming under the rulership of a tyrant who did not hesitate to execute his wives. With *Teens and Tudors*, I sought to make available to the students the political game that a schoolmaster-courtier and his pupils could play, and the political ideas they could ventilate at this very court under the very gaze of the king. The project turned out to be 'teachable' at secondary school level, as an educational tool to encourage close reading, debating, and to train students to think critically about what plays in the court context try to achieve:

how they promoted ideals of kingship, and offered (tactful) criticism. One student remarked about the workshops that 'where politicians are always theatrical, theatre is always very political' (Femke). For these workshops, I selected the *Play of the Weather* due to its accessibility. However, outreach projects introducing Tudor studies, or, more broadly, medieval and early modern royal studies, could make use of TPR to acquaint students with events such as royal entries, coronations, and even political trials. Visualising a trial such as, for example, Anne Boleyn's, and seeking to understand the ceremony underlying such events can be an important tool for engaging secondary school students in otherwise potentially confusing sequences of political events.

Whether or not the students as a group responded emotionally to the performance experience, their comments show that arranging the classroom space so as to spatially match the layout of the Tudor court set students to thinking about the social implications of the space, the political implications of the space to do with looking, responding to politically charged jokes, and the presence of the king as a dangerous spectator. Having the students play with the space created an atmosphere that did not hold the political tension of the Tudor court, but that still differed from the normal class-room atmosphere, and which had a new set of rules. One of these was that there is often no 'right or wrong answer', only experimenting, close reading, and discussions that could bring us closer to the possibilities of the drama. The fruitful result of this was a number of interesting class discussions about gender performance, politics, and court gossip. As for having attempted to make Tudor intrigue something which students could relate to, by having them consider the political actions of boy-actors of about their own age, one student remarked that the original actors' ages had not necessarily been the factor that caused the groups to relate to the project. He understood that schoolboys at a young age performed political drama in front of Henry VIII, but pointed out to me that twenty-first-century participants face different responsibilities at a different age: 'We are still giggly teenagers' (Edo).

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