

Institution: The University of Edinburgh
Unit of Assessment: 29 English Language and Literature
Title of case study: 1. Staging the Henrician Court
<p>1. Summary of the impact</p> <p>This project—an innovative collaboration between Professor Greg Walker (University of Edinburgh) and Professor Tom Betteridge (then Oxford Brookes University), Historic Royal Palaces (HRP), and Schtanhaus Theatre Company—generated new professional practices in the display of a major heritage site, and stimuli to tourism via a research-driven staging of John Heywood’s <i>Play of the Weather</i> in Hampton Court Palace’s (HCP) Great Hall in 2009. During the open, on-site rehearsals and performance of the play HCP benefited from an increase of over 115k in visitor numbers. The project’s pioneering approach to performance-based research convinced HRP of the value of using creative means to present cultural heritage and prompted their application for Independent Research Organization status. The project was cited in the AHRC’s Annual Report and Accounts for 2010-11 as an example study of good practice in ‘Supporting the Cultural Sector’.</p>
<p>2. Underpinning research</p> <p>Walker’s (Regius Professor of Rhetoric and English Literature, UoE 2007-present) research on Tudor drama and its social and political contexts pioneered the idea that John Heywood’s <i>Play of the Weather</i> was a challengingly political play whose interventions in contemporary politics should be understood in the context of the precise moment in time and the spaces of the royal court in which it was performed.</p> <p>Walker’s research revealed that the political significance of Tudor satires such as Heywood’s <i>Weather</i> is dependent on the specific sites in which they were staged, facilitating in this case a direct satirical commentary on the events of the Reformation Parliament and Henry VIII’s divorce. In ‘Thunderbolts and Lightning’ (2007), Walker established the hypothesis that the play used the figures of Merry Report and Jupiter to offer a subversive critique (rather than wryly supportive commentary) of Henrician policy. He subsequently developed these arguments to address issues of performance in the culturally-encoded space of the Tudor Hall, key issues for the AHRC projects. Walker was CI (with Betteridge) on both HCP projects (listed below), funded by an AHRC Speculative Grant (£44k: 2007) and Research Grant (£382k: 2008-10). Walker’s research contribution came through both the published work noted below and regular contributions to the rehearsal process. His research on the play-text also directly informed the project, providing base-text and notes for the performance script.</p> <p>The insights gained from the first AHRC project (which used a small cast to perform key scenes from the play in alternative ways, addressing their potential for either subversion or promotion of Henrician royal authority through different performance styles, modes of audience interaction and uses of the performance space) informed a collaborative article published by Walker and Betteridge in 2007 (‘Performance as Research’), and the questions raised there were the basis for the renewed application to the AHRC for a full production of <i>Weather</i> at HCP in 2009-10. Walker’s article, ‘Early Tudor Drama and the Arts of Resistance’, researched and written during 2008-9, while the project was in rehearsal, developed the insights gained during rehearsals and fed into the rehearsal process to influence the final performance and website materials. Further research by all collaborators was published on the project website (http://stagingthehenriciancourt.brookes.ac.uk/).</p> <p>The project was designed to test Walker’s hypotheses through archival and practice-based research. The performances explored, inter alia, the relationship between the play and ceremonial uses of space in the Great Hall, generating new understandings of the protocols for seating, of the ways in which actors and audiences might interact, how entrances, exits, and movements around the hall might inflect existing protocols regulating access to the sovereign, etc. These were all questions of interest to the curatorial/interpretative staff of Hampton Court Palace.</p>
<p>3. References to the research</p> <p>3.1 Greg Walker (CI, in collaborative project with Prof. Thomas Betteridge (PI, Oxford Brookes),</p>

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Historic Royal Palaces and *Schtanhaus* theatre company). 'Staging the Henrician Court'. AHRC. 2008-10. £382,388. (Assessors' reports noted that 'Walker is a leading and internationally recognized scholar working on the Early Modern period. His publications, particularly on court and household drama, are seminal.' 'Walker is one of the major academics in this field, who has a global reputation based on a series of acclaimed books. More than anyone else in the last decade, he has been responsible for defining this research territory, and his work crosses over between politics and performance in a manner directly relevant to this project. He is a prolific and reliable scholar, with a reputation for finishing. More than anyone else in this team, his name ensures the rigour and intellectual quality of the proposal.')

3.2 Greg Walker (CI, in collaborative project with Prof. Thomas Betteridge (PI, Oxford Brookes)). 'Henrician Court Drama'. AHRC. 2007. £43,567. Project to perform scenes from John Heywood's *Play of the Weather* in the Great Hall of Hampton Court Palace.

3.3 Journal article. Greg Walker, 'Thunderbolts and Lightning (Very, Very Frightening?): Playing with Jupiter in Heywood's *Play of the Weather*', in J-P. Bordier and A. Lascombes, eds, *Dieu et les Dieux au Moyen Age et la Renaissance* (Brepols, 2007 for 2006), pp. 497-521. (Can be supplied by HEI on request.)

3.4 Journal article. Greg Walker with T. Betteridge, 'Performance as Research: Performing John Heywood's *Play of the Weather* at Hampton Court', *Medieval English Theatre* 27 (2007 for 2005), pp. 86-104. (Can be supplied by HEI on request.)

3.5 Essay in a Book. Greg Walker, 'Early Tudor Drama and the Arts of Resistance', in *Reading literature historically* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013), pp.13-35 (Submitted in REF2.)

4. Details of the impact

This project delivered the first full, research-led staging of a Henrician interlude in the Hall, and was used by HCP to pilot performance research as part of their curatorial and interpretative work. Various hypotheses advanced in Walker's research concerning the interaction between actors, audiences and the symbolic geography of the hall were tested in performance. As visitors were able to observe rehearsals as well as performances, the project involved the public in the benefits of this collaboration throughout. AHRC Assessors for one of the project's follow-on activities (with Historic Scotland, described below) noted, 'The impact plan is a really wonderful example of how Universities and non-HEIs can work together to explore central aspects of our cultural life and make a real difference to the mediation of a historic building to its local and national communities.' (Corroborating sources: 5.1, 5.3, 5.5)

Michael Day, CEO of Historic Royal Palaces (HRP, the parent organization for HCP), acknowledged that *Staging* played "a pivotal role" in motivating and informing HRP's new research strategy. The project has had a lasting impact on the practices of both HCP and HRP, who have benefited from the chance to collaborate on research-led performances that both embodied collaborative research and piloted new modes of audience and visitor engagement through performance. The collaborations created synergies between the hitherto separate (and mutually wary) Curatorial and Interpretative departments: curators gained insights into how interpretative staff might inform their own research practice, and interpreters how their work might both be informed by and enable performance research. HCP's initial commitment can be judged from their contribution of £105k in kind to *Staging*. As Day confirms, the insights learned 'will continue to inform HRP's planning and policies with respect to the relationship between research and the visitor experience', and has been a contributory factor in HRP's decision to apply, most immediately, for Independent Research Organization status. (Corroborating sources: 5.2, 5.3, 5.5)

The links with HCP and HRP have initiated an ongoing collaboration, including productions of 'A Little Neck', produced by Betteridge and informed by Walker's research, and *The Rover*. Furthermore, Walker and Betteridge collaborated with Historic Scotland in a £939k AHRC-funded research-driven production of Lyndsay's *Satire of the Three Estates* at Linlithgow Palace and Stirling Castle (June 2013), drawing directly on insights gained from 'Staging' and the working relationships established with HRP. The transferability of the performance-research model thus demonstrates that the project has achieved an enduring and open-ended set of impacts. (Corroborating source: 5.4)

Impact case study (REF3b)

The project also had considerable impact on wider public audiences. Rehearsals were themselves made part of the visitor experience, with signage and guides' commentary pointing out that such performances were part of the ceremonial and cultural life of the Tudor palace. Visitors thus gained a deepened sense of both the historical intellectual and cultural context of the building, and of its enduring relevance as a performance space. Day commented, "Prior to the success of *Staging the Henrician Court* HRP was concerned that engaging in large scale research projects in public spaces at Hampton Court would be detrimental to the visitor experience. *Staging the Henrician Court* demonstrated that this was not the case." Indeed the project had "an extremely positive impact on day visitors." Additionally, both HCP and its visitors have benefitted from the contextual support to HCP's visitor attractions achieved through both the rehearsals and performances and through Walker and Betteridge's involvement with HCP's Research Advisory Panel for the 'Henry VIII 2009' exhibition (Betteridge as Chair), offering expert advice regarding the events. (Corroborating sources: 5.2, 5.5, 5.6, 5.7)

The project has achieved extensive reach. Audiences of 140 HRP professionals and the public attended the productions in 2009 and 2010, and thousands of visitors passed through the Hall while rehearsals were in progress. Although it is difficult to quantify the exact extent of the rehearsal's impact on visitor figures, Day notes that in 2009 HRP saw an increase of 43% (115,287) in visitor numbers, far in excess of their targeted 10% increase. Furthermore, the project's impact has been extended via the successful transformation of the research into other media, including films of the performances on the project website, interviews with researchers and participants, and a wiki. The project was highlighted in RCUK's publication *What's in it for Me?: the Benefits of Public Engagement for Researchers* (p.22), and in the AHRC's Annual Report and Accounts for 2010-11 as a case study of good practice in 'Supporting the Cultural Sector', which noted that, "Staging the... *The Play of the Weather* (1532/33)...enabled a public audience to experience the Great Hall as it once was. It also allowed the project team, with the involvement of the general public, to test academic theories about the management of space in Henry's court." (p.7). (Corroborating sources: 5.1, 5.2, 5.5, 5.8)

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

URLs below are original links. Should any be unavailable, see archived copies at:

<https://www.wiki.ed.ac.uk/display/REF2014REF3B/UoA+29>.

5.1 AHRC Annual Report and Accounts, 2010-11, p. 7 (<http://www.ahrc.ac.uk/News-and-Events/Publications/Documents/Annual-Report-2010-11.pdf>). Corroborates recognised good practice in the project's collaboration with HRP to mediate a historic building to the public.

5.2 A formal letter from CEO Historic Royal Palaces. Corroborates project's role in informing HRP's research strategy, policies and practices; also the effect on visitor numbers and experience. (Can be supplied by HEI on request.)

5.3 Project website, 'Staging the Henrician Court' (<http://stagingthehenriciancourt.brookes.ac.uk/>). Demonstrates the range of methods and media employed, and the public and expert debate and involvement generated.

5.4 Project website: 'Staging the Scottish Court' (<http://www.stagingthescottishcourt.org/>). Confirms ongoing impact and transferability of insights beyond the project itself.

5.5 Contact: Buildings Curator, Hampton Court Palace. Can confirm impact on HCP's curatorial and interpretative policy and practices.

5.6 Contact: Professional director for *Schtanhaus* theatre company. Can confirm insights gained by theatre company and effects of rehearsals and performances on the public.

5.7 Contact: Professional actor with *Schtanhaus* theatre company. Can confirm insights gained by performers and effects of rehearsals and performances on public.

5.8 *What's in it for Me?: the Benefits of Public Engagement for Researchers* (RCUK, 2010), p.22. (<http://www.rcuk.ac.uk/documents/scisoc/RCUKBenefitsofPE.pdf>). Confirms benefits to researchers and research practice.