

Aysha Pollnitz

Paper: *Erasmus and Machiavelli in the Education of Edward VI*
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As Henry VIII's long-awaited son and heir Edward VI of England (1537-1553) was educated with particular care by some of the foremost English humanists of his day. While scholars have commented on his grammatical and rhetorical facility it has often been remarked that the king's academic 'hot-housing' did little more than drive him to an early grave. This paper argues, however, that Edward's education was shaped by two rival ideologies for the instruction of rulers. The first, based on Erasmus' *Institutio principis Christiani* (1516), was substantiated by Edward's schoolmaster, John Cheke (1514-1557) who was determined that an 'academike' education would render his pupil a moderate and virtuous ruler. Erasmus' influence on Edward's schooling may be traced via the prince's curriculum, his juvenile writing and his early attempts at political decision-making. Indeed Edward became enough of a Christian Prince to be a political inconvenience. So in September 1551 William Thomas (d.1554), a client of the earl of Warwick, secretly sent the king a series of discourses based on the political writing of Niccolò Machiavelli, in which he urged Edward to read histories and 'phrame his proceading unto his tyme'. This paper attempts to articulate the relationship between humanist pedagogical theory and practice and to suggest the manner in which two major accounts of early modern monarchy were read in the mid-century Tudor court.

Suggestions for further reading:

Primary Sources

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About the author

Aysha Pollnitz is a Title A (Junior Research) Fellow at Trinity College, Cambridge. She completed her Cambridge PhD in 2006. Her research interests lie in the fields of early modern British and intellectual history, particularly the influence of humanism on the political culture of the sixteenth century. She is the author of a several book chapters on court culture, education, the intellectual life of Tudor noblewomen and Shakespearean political thought, forthcoming in 2008-9 and developing a monograph entitled 'Princely education in sixteenth-century Britain'. In 2009 she will take up a fellowship at the Folger Shakespeare Library, Washington D.C.

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