

The Humorous Magistrate and The Osborne Project Timeline

1972 University of Calgary Special Collections purchases rare books and manuscripts from UK bookseller Edgar Osborne.

2004 With the support of the University Research Grants Committee, Faculty and graduate student members of the Medieval and Early Modern Cultural Studies Research group begin to examine an undated, untitled, anonymous play in manuscript from the Osborne Collection at the urging of Special Collections chief archivist Appolonia Steele. Osborne's notation on the flyleaf indicates that he purchased the play from a sale at Watnall Hall, Nottinghamshire (Rolleston family). Graduate students Amy (Britton) Scott and Jean-Sebastien Windle and English dept. members Jacqueline Jenkins and Mary Polito first transcribe the play.

2005 An April Symposium shares findings with university and Calgary community.

-research group member historian Louis Knafla confirms that the hand is mid seventeenth-century

-English dept. readers find the genre and characterizations to be pre-interregnum

-English MA student Andrew Bretz (now doctoral candidate at Guelph) acts as dramaturg for a workshop performance by Department of Drama class. Bretz writes to the expert in Shakespearean song, Ross Duffin, sharing with him the transcription of the song sung by the shepherds in act four and Duffin generously supplies a speculative setting for the song (now with permission to print in Special Issue).

- Symposium keynote speaker Margaret Jane Kidnie reveals the existence of an earlier draft of the same play, also anonymous, at Arbury Hall Warwickshire (Newdigate family). Team learns that T. Howard Hill named the Arbury version of the Osborne play *The Humorous Magistrate* and that the Newdigate archives contains three other such unpublished, anonymous plays. While many scholars of early modern manuscript drama knew of the existence of these plays, very, very few knew their content. Kidnie had studied them during her postgraduate work at The Shakespeare Institute and immediately remembered Thrifty and the rest of the personae.

June 2005 Polito, Scott, Bretz and Windle present their findings as a panel at the Pacific Northwest Renaissance Conference at Banff.

2006-2010

Polito and Jenkins assemble a research team of local, national and international researchers to pursue a full investigation of these plays and the people associated with

them. They receive a collaborative standard research grant from the Social Science and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC).

SSHRC Collaborative Research Team

Principal Investigator: Mary Polito (Calgary)

Co Investigators: Jacqueline Jenkins and Susan Bennett (Calgary)

Collaborators: Louis Knafla and Murray McGillivray (Calgary); Margaret Jane Kidnie (University of Western Ontario); and Martin Butler (University of Leeds)

2006-2010

Polito and Jenkins propose to edit the Osborne version of the play for The Malone Society; Kidnie proposes to edit the Arbury version. The Malone Board accepts the proposal. Editions published in 2011. Link to catalogue: <http://www.manchesteruniversitypress.co.uk/cgi-bin/indexer?series=59>

2007

Five new graduate students join the team: Boyda Johnstone, Kirsten Inglis, Paul Faber, John Siddons and Owen Stockden.

-Caroline drama expert Julie Sanders spends a week at Calgary as scholar in residence and delivers lecture to the Medieval and Early Modern Cultural Studies Research Group.

-all five graduate students spend a term in the postgraduate program at the University of Leeds with which Calgary's Dept. of English grad program has an exchange agreement. Martin Butler acts as Leeds contact as well as Osborne project research guide in the UK.

-UK archives visited: Nottinghamshire Archives Office, The British Library, the Derbyshire County Records Office, the Bodleian Library (Oxford), Newcastle Public Library, Brotherton Library (Leeds), Lichfield Cathedral Library, Hatfield House Library, University of Nottingham Special Collections and the Warwickshire County Records Office.

-U.S. archives (with Newdigate holdings) visited: Folger Shakespeare Library, Huntington Library, The Harry Ransom Center at the University of Texas at Austin.

-Team builds a massive archive of digital images and research reports.

2008

-Polito invited to submit a Workshop proposal to the Shakespeare Association of America on the processes of the Osborne investigation. Does so with Jenkins for SAA meeting in Washington in

2009. SAA contributors Margaret Jane Kidnie, Siobhan Keenan (invited guests) Vimala Pasaputhi and Laura Estill extend their work for the *Early Theatre* Special Issue.

2010

-Inspired by both their research results and the general questions about manuscript drama, site specific drama, editing and performance raised in the process, investigators bring leading and emerging scholars to Calgary to explore “New Directions in Medieval and Early Modern Performance.” The SSHRC funded Workshop coincided with the final meeting of Osborne project researchers and a full stage production of the *The Humorous Magistrate* by the Department of Drama.

Two collections of essays deriving from the conference will be published by Palgrave (both forthcoming 2014):

Editing, Performance, Texts: New Practices in Medieval and Early Modern English Drama. Ed. Jacqueline Jenkins and Julie Sanders.

Performing Environments: Site-Specificity in Medieval and Early Modern English Drama. Ed. Susan Bennett and Mary Polito.

2011

Mary Polito edits a special issue of *Early Theatre* featuring research on the Osborne and Arbury plays and their theatrical and political context.

Polito, Mary, ed. *Circles and Circuits: Drama and Politics in the Midlands*. Special Issue of *Early Theatre* 14.2 (2011).

2013-present

-Researchers work with the University of Calgary Taylor Family Digital Library and to set up an open access digital repository for project documents, images, and publications (D-Space link: <http://dspace.ucalgary.ca/handle/1880/49353>) and with Special Collections to house physical materials associated with the project (microfilms).

Narrative Report for SSHRC

This collaborative research project was generated by the discovery, in 2004, of an anonymous drama in manuscript in the University of Calgary Library Osborne Collection. Antiquarian Edgar Osborne recorded that he purchased the play at Watnall Hall, Nottinghamshire. The play is a comedy set in a rural community; it satirizes a corrupt Justice of the Peace and the central government that can't control him, as well as celebrating the romantic developments among

several couples. UofC researchers identified the document as having been composed during the latter years of the Shakespearean playhouse period. We learned of another, less developed and also anonymous version of the same play extant at Arbury Hall in Warwickshire; this version had been titled *The Humorous Magistrate* by an earlier scholar (and so scholars have adopted this moniker). The Humorous Magistrate is bound with three other anonymous plays. Extant manuscript plays from the period are rare; to find two versions of the same play in the same hand is rarer still. Further, the proximity of Watnall and Arbury Halls argued for a dramatic and literary community of writer, audience and readers of country house drama. SSHRC funding allowed us to seize the rare opportunity to place this previously unedited, seventeenth-century play in its original social and theatrical contexts. Three teams of scholars, devoted to textual and manuscript studies, literature and cultural study and performance studies, each pursued specific goals. The first team aimed to edit and publish both versions of the play (both forthcoming Sept., 2011 with the Malone Society). Through conference presentations and publication we have also contributed to discussions about what these manuscripts add to our knowledge of Renaissance composition and revision practices and to contemporary debates about editing. Secondly, we placed all three plays in the context of social and theatrical history. We found that two of the four Arbury plays (including HM) have a strong political valence; it is questionable whether they would have been licensed for play by the censor in London. We discovered a literary circle linked to these dramas based around the Newdigates of Arbury Hall; this community stretches across three counties and included at least one active woman participant: Lady Jane Burdett. Five graduate students contributed immensely to these discoveries; all spent a term at the University of Leeds and carried out research at eight archives in England. All students developed an area of expertise in this investigation that resulted in numerous conference papers and at least one publication for each student. Two students developed a novel tool for paleographical research: the digital hand comparison chart. With almost all archives now either allowing digital photography by researchers or providing such images, the students use images of individual letter forms to compare within and across documents over time. They used the method to determine that the author of the plays is John Newdigate III (1600-1642); their co-written article on this finding is forthcoming in the Dec., 2011 issue of *Early Theatre*, having been well reviewed by experts in the field. Thirdly, we studied the play through the lens of performance studies. We supported the Department of Drama's full stage production of the play, which we saw as a performance "lab" through which we learned an immense amount. Finally, we have also investigated *The Humorous Magistrate* from a performance studies perspective; one co-investigator has used the methods of cultural geography to literarily "place" the plays in the early modern situations and "sites" where they were likely performed.