Notice of the Final Oral Examination
for the Degree of Master of Arts

of

ASHLEY HOWARD

BSc (University of Victoria, 2010)


Department of English

Friday, June 26, 2020
9:30 A.M.
Remote Defence

Supervisory Committee:
Dr. Erin Kelly, Department of English, University of Victoria (Co-Supervisor)
Dr. Janelle Jenstad, Department of English, UVic (Co-Supervisor)
Dr. Gregory Rowe, Department of Greek and Roman Studies, UVic (Outside Member)

External Examiner:
Dr. Sara Beam, Department of History, UVic

Chair of Oral Examination:
Dr. Reeta Tremblay, Department of Political Science, UVic

Dr. David Capson, Dean, Faculty of Graduate Studies
Abstract

One spring afternoon in 1631, the Norwich Society of Florists held a feast to celebrate and display its exquisite flowers. The celebration included an entertainment written just for the occasion—Ralph Knevet’s quirky play about a war among flowers. Early modern florists were not the sort of people who sold cut flowers in shops; rather, they were experts in floriculture who applied this knowledge to cultivate new flowers. Norwich was already renowned for its gardens, but flowers soon became even more significant. *Rhodon and Iris* was performed just before tulipomania, a frenzy of tulip cultivation lasting from c.1634 – 1637. During this period, florists grew elaborate multi-coloured flower bulbs that sold for extremely high prices. In other words, the florists’ feast and Knevet’s play emerged when flowers were important to the economy and identity of Norwich.

My thesis presents an open-access, digital critical edition of *Rhodon and Iris* encoded in TEI-P5. This edition offers an old-spelling transcription of the 1631 playbook, a modernized text with annotations, and a critical introduction. Responding to the need for more editions of non-canonical early modern plays, my research widens the otherwise Shakespeare-centric canon and helps make more early modern drama accessible to student readers. *Rhodon and Iris* also merits critical attention on its own grounds: an example of Caroline occasional drama, the play experiments with convention and offers a rare glimpse into the Society of Florists. My thesis approaches the play with special interest in editorial praxis, ecotheory, and the history of floriculture. The florists’ feast delighted audiences and participated in a tradition of floral celebrations—one reaching, at least, from the ancient Roman *ludi Florales* to the modern Netflix series *The Big Flower Fight*.