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

of

ALETA GRUENEWALD

BA (Queen’s University at Kingston, 2008)

“Djuna Barnes’s Nightwood and Transgender Epistemologies in the Biopolitical State”

Department of English

Wednesday, August 26, 2015
1:00 P.M.
Clearihue Building
Room C316

Supervisory Committee:
Dr. Stephen Ross, Department of English, University of Victoria (Supervisor)
Dr. Nicole Shukin, Department of English, UVic (Member)
Dr. Emile Fromet de Rosnay, Department of French, UVic (Outside Member)

External Examiner:
Dr. Nina Belmonte, Department of Philosophy, UVic

Chair of Oral Examination:
Dr. Rishi Gupta, Department of Mechanical Engineering, UVic

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

This thesis examines why contemporary transgender populations in democratic states fail to see the benefits of social rights legislation. I use Giorgio Agamben’s *Homo Sacer* to explain how transgender people have become encamped in the margins of the contemporary biopolitical world in such a way as the rule of law does not apply to them. This encampment is especially severe for those who defy the current definition of transgender. I trace transgender back to its inter-war origins in order to establish how medicalized discourses have created the current narrow definition. I use Djuna Barnes’s *Nightwood*, which details the lives of non-passing invertedverts in the “night-world” of interwar Europe, to trace the origins of transgender people who are not included in contemporary definitions. Linking Barnes’s characterization of inverted figures to contemporary trans people who do not pass allows for the creation of alternate transgender epistemologies that undermine states of encampment.