



University  
of Victoria

Graduate Studies

Notice of the Final Oral Examination  
for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

of

**KIRSTEN ALM**

MA (Trinity Western University, 2011)  
BSc (University of Saskatchewan, 2001)

**“The “Cure of the Ground” Place in the Poetry of Wallace Stevens  
and Robert Bringhurst”**

Department of English

Tuesday, January 17, 2017  
8:30 A.M.  
David Turpin Building  
Room A136

Supervisory Committee:

Dr. Nicholas Bradley, Department of English, University of Victoria (Supervisor)  
Dr. Iain Higgins, Department of English, UVic (Member)  
Dr. Margaret Cameron, Department of Philosophy, UVic (Outside Member)

External Examiner:

Dr. Sarah Wylie Krotz, Department of English and Film Studies, University of Alberta

Chair of Oral Examination:

Dr. Wade Danis, School of Business, UVic

Dr. David Capson, Dean, Faculty of Graduate Studies

## **Abstract**

This study analyzes the Canadian poet, typographer, and translator Robert Bringhurst's (b. 1946) extensive engagement with the poetry, poetics and metaphysical concerns of the American modernist poet Wallace Stevens (1879-1966). It asserts that Bringhurst's poetry responds to Stevens' poetry and poetics to a degree that has not previously been recognized. Although Bringhurst's mature poetry—his works from the mid-1970s and after—departs from the obvious imitation of the elder poet's writing that is present in his early poems, it continues to engage some of Stevens' central concerns, namely the fertility of the liminal moment and/or space and a meditative contemplation of the physical world that frequently challenges anthropocentric narcissism. The dissertation proposes that Bringhurst shares Stevens' desire to inscribe an authentic encounter between person and place. The first chapters establish the literary basis for the comparison of the poets' works. The following chapters show how both poets draw on the symbology and metaphors of the Christian concept of the Sacrament in order to describe poetically the nature of the personally renewing experience of place. They examine poems from throughout Stevens' career, including those that express a more determinedly materialistic vision, and the pervasive use of sacramental terminology in Bringhurst's polyphonic poetry; such language is integral to Bringhurst's efforts to describe a transformative experience of encounter with the physical world. The final chapters contend that Stevens' and Bringhurst's divergent visions of the ethical responsibility of poetry are shaped by their differing perspectives on the relation between the poem and the sacramental experience inscribed within it. The dissertation makes original contributions to the study of the poetry of both Bringhurst and Stevens. It demonstrates the significance of the inheritances of the Protestant religious tradition to both poets' bodies of work, and it casts Bringhurst as a profoundly Stevensian author. A study of poetic influence it attests to the vitality of Stevens and Bringhurst as ecologically oriented writers concerned with the meaning of place in North America.