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

of

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MA (Trinity Western University, 2009)
BA (Trinity Western University, 2004)

“Edge Effects: Poetry, Place, and Spiritual Practices”

Department of English

Wednesday, April 11, 2018
10:00 am
Clearihue Building
Room B017

Supervisory Committee:
Dr. Nicholas Bradley, Department of English, University of Victoria (Supervisor)
Dr. Iain Higgins, Department of English, UVic (Member)
Dr. Magdalena Kay, Department of English, UVic (Member)
Dr. Tim Lilburn, Department of Writing, UVic (Outside Member)

External Examiner:
Dr. Chad Wriglesworth, Department of English Language and Literature, University of Waterloo

Chair of Oral Examination:
Dr. Rachel Cleves, Department of History, UVic

Dr. Stephen Evans, Acting Dean, Faculty of Graduate Studies
Abstract

"Edge Effects: Poetry, Place, and Spiritual Practices" focusses on the intersection of the environmental and religious imaginations in the work of five West Coast poets: Robinson Jeffers, Theodore Roethke, Robert Hass, Denise Levertov, and Jan Zwicky. My research examines the selected poems for their reimagination of the sacred perceived through attachments to particular places. For these writers, poetry is a constitutive practice, part of a way of life that includes desire for wise participation in the more-than-human community. Taking into account the poets’ critical reflections and historical-cultural contexts, along with a range of critical and philosophical sources, their poetry is examined as a discursive spiritual exercise. It is seen as conjoined with other focal practices of place, notably meditative walking and attentive looking and listening under the influence of ecospiritual eros. My analysis attends to aesthetics of relinquishment, formal strategies employed to recognize and accept finitude and the nonanthropocentric nature of reality, along with the complementary aesthetics of affirmation, configuration of the goodness of the whole. I also identify an orienting feature of West Coast place particular to each poet, that recurs as a leitmotif for engagement of such aesthetics and related practices. In chapter one, I consider a group of Jeffers’s final poems as part of a project he designated “our De Natura,” attending especially to his affinity for stones and stars. In chapter two, I investigate both Roethke’s and Hass’s configurations of ecospiritual eros in accordance to their fascination for flora, while in chapter three, I employ the concepts of “aura” and “resonance” to explicate Levertov’s meditations on the “coming and going” Mount Rainier-Tacoma and Zwicky’s reflective iterations of the sea.