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

of

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MA (University of Toronto, 2007)
BA Honours (Queen’s University, 2004)

“Climate Change, the Ruined Island, and British Metamodernism”

Department of English

Thursday, August 8, 2019
9:00 A.M.
Clearihue Building
Room B017

Supervisory Committee:
Dr. Christopher Douglas, Department of English, University of Victoria (Supervisor)
Dr. Nicholas Bradley, Department of English, UVic (Member)
Dr. Helga Thorson, Department of Germanic and Slavic Studies, UVic (Outside Member)

External Examiner:
Dr. Alison Gibbons, Department of Humanities, Sheffield Hallam University

Chair of Oral Examination:
Dr. Prunamina Govindarajulu, Department of Environmental Studies, UVic

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

This dissertation on “Climate Change, the Ruined Island, and British Metamodernism” proceeds from the premise that a perspectival shift occurred in the early 2000s that altered the tenor of British climate fiction published in the decade that followed. The release of a third Assessment Report by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), less than a month after the 9/11 terrorist attacks, prompted an acute awareness of the present as a post-apocalyptic condition bracketed by catastrophe and extinction. In response, British authors experimented with double-mapping techniques designed to concretize the supranational scope of advanced climate change. An increasing number of British authors projected the historical ruination of remote island communities onto speculative topographies extrapolated from IPCC Assessments to compel contemporary readers to conceive of a climate-changed planet aslant. Given the spate of ruined-island-as-future-Earth novels published at the turn of the millennium, this dissertation intervenes in extant criticism by identifying David Mitchell’s Cloud Atlas (2004), Will Self’s The Book of Dave (2006), and Jeanette Winterson’s The Stone Gods (2007) as noteworthy examples of a metamodernist subgenre that makes a distant future of a “futureless” past to position the reader in a state of imagined obsolescence. This project consequently draws on metamodernist theory as a useful heuristic for articulating the traits that distinguish metamodernist cli-fi from precursory texts, with the aim to connect British post-apocalyptic fiction, climate-fiction, and literary metamodernism in productive ways. As the body chapters of this dissertation demonstrate, metamodernist cli-fi primarily uses the double-mapped island to structurally discredit the present as singular in cataclysmic consequence and, therefore, deserving of an unprecedented technological fix. Ultimately, in attempting to refute the moment of completion that would mark history’s end, metamodernist cli-fi challenges the givenness of an anticipated future through which to anchor the advent of an irreversible tipping point. Given the relative dearth of literary scholarship devoted to metamodernist cli-fi, this project posits that this subgenre warrants greater critical attention because it offers potent means for short-circuiting the type of cynical optimism that insists on envisioning human survival in terms of divine, authoritarian, or techno-escapist interventions.