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

of

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MA (Queen’s University, 2012)
BA Honours (Queen’s University, 2011)

““Poem[s] of a New Class’:
Women Poets and the Late Victorian Verse Novel”

Department of English

Thursday, April 25, 2019
9:30 A.M.
Clearihue Building
Room B017

Supervisory Committee:
Dr. Lisa Surridge, Department of English, University of Victoria (Supervisor)
Dr. Mary Elizabeth Leighton, Department of English, UVic (Member)
Dr. Mariel Grant, Department of History, UVic (Outside Member)

External Examiner:
Dr. Marjorie Stone, Department of English, Dalhousie University

Chair of Oral Examination:
Dr. Elisabeth Gugl, Department of Economics, UVic

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

Because of its importance in the history of the verse novel and the history of women’s writing, Elizabeth Barrett Browning’s *Aurora Leigh* (1856) has overshadowed the works of other female verse novelists in Victorian studies scholarship. By focusing on non-canonical works by four understudied women poets writing in the late nineteenth century—Augusta Webster’s “Lota” (1867), Violet Fane’s *Denzil Place: A Story in Verse* (1875), Emily Pfeiffer’s *The Rhyme of the Lady of the Rock, and How It Grew* (1884), and Emily Hickey’s “Michael Villiers, Idealist” (1891)—this dissertation expands our understanding of both women’s poetry and the verse novel in the Victorian period. It demonstrates that the genre was taken up in multiple ways after *Aurora Leigh* by women poets who, like Barrett Browning, addressed urgent and controversial social and political issues—such as parliamentary enfranchisement, adultery, marital rape, political sovereignty and land use in the Scottish Highlands, as well as socialism and the Irish Question—through inventive and complex generic combinations. This dissertation does not outline a teleological development of genre but, rather, recovers works through case studies that offer microhistories of verse novels at particular historical moments in order to expand the canon and definition of the Victorian verse novel.