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

of

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MEd (University of New Brunswick, 2011)
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“#AnthropoceneChild: Speculative Child-Figures at the End of the World”

School of Child and Youth Care

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10:00 am
Remote Defence

Supervisory Committee:
Dr. Veronica Pacini-Ketchabaw, School of Child and Youth Care, University of Victoria (Supervisor)
Dr. Denise Hodgins, School of Child and Youth Care, UVic (Member)
Dr. Graham Giles, Faculty of Education, York University (Outside Member)

External Examiner:
Dr. Rebekah Sheldon, Department of English, Indiana University

Chair of Oral Examination:
Dr. Carmen Rodriguez de France, Indigenous Education, UVic
Abstract

In this dissertation I think-with figures of #AnthropoceneChild in speculative texts that story the end of the world through some form of climate catastrophe. In these post-apocalyptic tales, the child-figures do different things. Firstly, child-figures can reflect problematics of the contemporary world without interrupting dominant patterns of thought, materiality, and governance. In these stories, the child is the future and the future is the child. Secondly, some child-figures are tasked with protecting a world in which they have been made disposable. This incites critical questions about distributions of racialized harm and also exposes the limits of survivalist logics. Thirdly, a few child-figures refuse current arrangements of existence and set in motion new worlds, even if the contours, forces, and politics cannot yet be fully described. These are speculative worlds of what if, not this, and not yet. Different aspects of this assemblage are centred at different moments in this dissertation. The looseness of the framework allows me to move between the unsettled complexities of bionormative childhoods, anthropogenic climate change, reproductive futurism, and structures of anti-blackness, settler colonialism, and white supremacy in relation to (1) child-figures at the end of a world, (2) child-figures who save their world, and (3) child-figures who destroy the world.

This dissertation is organised into two main sections: Part I provides the theoretical background for the speculative arguments developed over Part II. In Part I, I unpack my proposal that #AnthropoceneChild bookends the Anthropocene. By this I mean that the language of birth, origin, and innocence finds repetitious form in scholarly discussions of Anthropocene beginnings (Chapter 2), and that child-figures are pivotal to playing out the end of the world in pop culture performances of Anthropocene pedagogy (Chapter 3). Part II consists of three chapters that engage with speculative child-figures that inherit and inhabit a damaged planet. This includes grappling with racialized technologies of care and abandonment (Chapter 4), folding parent-child relations into environmental discourses of stewardship (Chapter 5), and gesturing towards imaginaries of what might be possible after the end of the (white) world (Chapter 6). The conclusion pulls the ideas and figures of previous chapters together in a queer-kin consideration of geos-futurities for #AnthropoceneChild wherein the end of the world might not be a cause for mourning but a possibility for an otherwise.