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A Poetics of Place in the World-System: West Coast Modernism and the Integration of Vancouver into the Global Economy[1]

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Abstract: Considerations of place and the local can help to shed light on the specific ways in which literature and culture have mediated the global process of accumulation and dispossession associated with the capitalist world-system. If social geography and world-systems analysis can help to map and historicize space and place in terms of a global history of capitalist expansion, literature can also help to make sense of how the unequal and uneven development of capitalist modernity is experienced, understood, and contested in specific locations. By situating the West Coast avant-garde poetics associated with the literary magazine *Tish* and the Kootenay School of Writing in relation to Vancouver's place in the changing global economic system, this essay considers how the local provides a provisional site for an anti-imperialist poetics that defamiliarizes global processes of capital accumulation and its economies of dispossession and exclusion. In so doing, it suggests that contemporary West Coast experimental writing can be read as a form of peripheral modernism that interrupts the uneven and unequal logic of capitalist modernity and invites readers to reflect on the historical forms of dispossession and exploitation associated with globalization.

Keywords: poetics of place, Vancouver, *Tish*, Kootenay School of Writing, world-systems analysis, peripheral modernism

Recent scholarship in the field of world literature studies has provided some thought-provoking accounts of how literature and culture mediate

the uneven spatial and temporal expansion of capitalist modernity on a global scale. Drawing on the insights of world-systems theory, critics such as Franco Moretti (2000), Roberto Schwarz (2001), and Benita Parry (2009) (among others) have assessed how cultural forms such as the realist novel have registered the lived experience of capitalism from the periphery of the world economic system. Such a materialist approach to world literature has significant implications for reading experimental writing and understanding how avant-garde poetics concerned with space and place can shed light on the core-periphery dynamics of capitalist modernity.

The experimental writing of American poets such as Robert Creeley, Robert Duncan, and Charles Olson in the 1950s and 1960s has had a profound influence on contemporary avant-garde poetics in the United States and beyond, not least because of its preoccupation with ethnography, local history, and social geography. In "Projective Verse" (1950), an essay that redefined the theory and method of poetic composition, Olson used the ethnographic metaphor of fieldwork to describe how poetic composition by field entailed research into the poetic speaker's embodied location in space and time. In later essays such as "Place; & Names" (1962) and *Poetry and Truth: The Beloit Lectures and Poems* (1971), Olson developed these ideas to suggest a link between places, proper nouns, and the poetic subject's being in the world. In so doing, Olson suggested that the act of writing a poem is inextricably entwined with the poet's geographical and historical location.

Olson's poetics of place has also informed a concern with space and place among Canada's West Coast avant-garde writers. In an article on Vancouver's experimental poetry communities, poet Christian Bök compares the historical narratives of the so-called *Tish* group (a group of Vancouver poets associated with the poetry newsletter *Tish* in the early 1960s) and the Kootenay School of Writing (or KSW—a group of Vancouver-based poets who came together in the 1980s after the closure of David Thompson University Centre) and examines the almost mythical status that these historical narratives have conferred onto these groups within the West Coast avant-garde community.[2] Bök suggests that there is "no genealogy of hereditary succession" between

the two communities (98) and claims that one of the key differences between them is their relationship to Olson's idea of a poetics of place, exemplified in Olson's unfinished epic about the small Massachusetts fishing village of Gloucester, *The Maximus Poems*, as well as his essays and lectures.

Bök's account of the disagreements between the writers associated with *Tish* and those associated with KSW over the political significance of Olson's poetics of place has important implications for understanding Vancouver's place in the history of capitalist modernity, as this essay will show. Citing KSW poet Jeff Derksen's 1994 essay "Sites Taken as Signs," Bök argues that Derksen's essay rejects the claim made by former *Tish* poet George Bowering that Olson's poetics of place is postmodern and anti-lyrical; instead, Derksen argues that Olson's poetics of place recentres the lyrical subject in a particular locale. The point for Derksen is that Olson's poetics and by association the poetics of *Tish* is more bound by place and subjectivity than Bowering's gesture to the postmodern and anti-lyrical allows. It is against the perceived localism as well as the lyricism of the *Tish* group, in other words, that Derksen distinguishes his own poetics and by association (if not intention) that of KSW group, of which he is a founding member. This is not to suggest, however, that the poets associated with the *Tish* group were somehow blinkered in their focus on the local or that a poetics of place somehow excluded the world beyond Vancouver. In their focus on the immediate environment of Vancouver, poets such as Bowering, Frank Davey, and Daphne Marlatt were also concerned with Vancouver's historical place in an older global project of colonial settlement, race-labour, and imperial trade. Indeed, a comparison of the poetics associated with *Tish* and KSW can tell us much about Vancouver's changing historical place in the modern capitalist world-system. By tracing the ways in which these different writers have engaged with the techniques of American modernist writing—specifically Olson's poetics of place—this essay reads contemporary West Coast writing as a form of peripheral modernism that interrupts the uneven and unequal logic of capitalist modernity and invites readers to reflect on the historical forms of dispossession and exploitation associated with the modern world economic system.

In the editorial introduction to *Canadian Cultural Studies: A Reader* (2009), Souryan Mookerjea, Imre Szeman, and Gail Faurschou attempt to situate Canada's place in the world economy and make sense of what they term its "multiple passages *between empires*"—a term they adopt from Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri's *Empire* to describe Canada's place in the changing world economic system (15; emphasis in original). In the twentieth-century Canadian national imaginary, the transition from British to American imperial influence was certainly understood as a form of cultural dominance. Yet this is not to suggest that Hardt and Negri's account of empire provides the main theoretical frame of reference for their materialist account of Canadian culture. Referring instead to the work of Giovanni Arrighi and Immanuel Wallerstein, Mookerjea, Szeman, and Faurschou trace how these thinkers have understood social movements as anti-systemic, which is to say directed against the systemic inequalities wrought by the worldwide division of labour (20). While Mookerjea, Szeman, and Faurschou do not specifically focus on literature or poetics in their account of Canadian culture, they do offer a starting point for thinking through the challenges and potential pitfalls of a world-systems approach that sees culture as part of a global economic system. Against the charge of economic determinism that is sometimes levelled against Marxist cultural theory, they argue that the emphasis on agency and social struggles in the work of Samir Amin, Andreas Gunder Frank, Arrighi, and Wallerstein has "transformed the modern world system even as it endures as a worldwide division of labor" (18). Moreover, their historical account of the expansion and consolidation of British settlements, of confederation in 1867, and of western expansion across the northern prairies suggests a strong connection with Wallerstein's claim that the global expansion of the world market takes on a different mode of appearance in different places and at different times. Indeed, this emphasis on the uneven geographical and historical expansion of capitalism on a global scale helps to clarify the specific local processes that constitute the singular and unequal system of capitalist modernity.

In a similar vein, the Warwick Research Collective have followed Franco Moretti and Wallerstein in attempting to see the development of

world literature as coeval with the global expansion of capitalism over the last 150 years. By defining modernity as "the way in which capitalism is 'lived'—*wherever* in the world system it is lived" (14; emphasis in original), the collective suggests that contemporary literary studies must investigate how literary texts register the ways in which the systemic inequalities of the capitalist world-system are lived, experienced, and contested in specific places, at specific times, and under specific socio-economic conditions. Considerations of specific places as sites of antagonism between capital and the dispossessed can certainly help to cast light on how social and cultural struggles have contested the global process of accumulation and dispossession associated with the capitalist world-system. If world-systems analysts such as Wallerstein, Amin, Frank, and Arrighi have emphasized the need to consider the history of capitalist expansion on a global scale, it is also important to remember that the core-periphery dynamics of capital accumulation depend on specific geographical infrastructures. As Neil Brenner points out, "[c]apital remains as dependent as ever upon relatively fixed, localized, and territorially embedded technological-institutional ensembles in which technology, the means of production, forms of industrial organization and labor-power are combined to extract surplus value" (124).

Urban space has provided one of the most important sites of capital accumulation, in part because cities were historically places in which industrial labour power and the technological means of production were concentrated but also because of the increasing opportunities provided by property, rent, and financial speculation. Social geographers such as John Friedmann (1986), Doreen Massey (1994), and Saskia Sassen (1991) have emphasized how world cities provide important nodes in the global circulation of commodities that form the capitalist world-system. For the same reason, world cities are also important sites in that they allow social movements to contest and challenge the unequal forces of capital accumulation on a global scale. The history of Vancouver as a port city in the global context of British imperial trade routes and its contemporary significance as a site of financial speculation in the Pacific Rim economy is an interesting case in point. If social geography and world-systems analysis can help to map and historicize the place of

Vancouver in relation to the global history of capitalist expansion, modernist poetics can help to make sense of how the unequal and uneven development of capitalist modernity is mediated and obfuscated by the signs and codes of real estate marketing and urban planning. By situating the West Coast avant-garde poetics of *Tish* and KSW in relation to Vancouver's place in the changing global economic system, this essay considers how the local is a provisional site for an anti-imperialist poetics that defamiliarizes and interrupts global processes of capital accumulation and its economies of dispossession and exclusion.

The differences between the poetics associated with the *Tish* group and that of KSW cannot be neatly calibrated in terms of a lyric poetry centred on the local (in the case of *Tish*) versus a metalinguistic, anti-lyrical poetics of the global (in the case of the poets associated with KSW). Such a calibration not only assumes a common agenda and a homogeneity of poetic form in the writing that constitutes these loose poetry communities where none exists; it also overlooks the particular historical and geographical dynamics of capitalism in western Canada. Bök observes that both *Tish* and KSW were formed in the context of a broader political anxiety about American hegemony (98). Yet this focus on an anxious cultural nationalism overlooks the state's increasingly important role as an agent of neoliberal economic policies, which indirectly helps to consolidate the political and economic hegemony of the US. In the context of this global economic restructuring of the nation state, this essay considers how the differences between the politics and poetics of the *Tish* and KSW poets depend on the poetic subject's capacity to cognitively map the changing world economic system from the local perspective of Vancouver.

I. *Tish*, Peripheral Modernism, A Poetics of Place, and the Passage between Empires

American avant-garde poets such as Duncan, Olson, and Creeley certainly had a formative influence on many of the *Tish* poets. The introduction to the anthology *Tish: No. 1–19* (1975) provides a retrospective account of how the "impulse to create TISH [*sic*] had been sparked by Robert Duncan during three nights of lectures, July 23, 24 and 25, 1961,

at the Vancouver home of Warren Tallman" (Davey 7) and how Tallman brought several other avant-garde American poets to Vancouver, including Creeley, Allen Ginsberg, Denise Levertov, Jack Spicer, Olson, Robin Blaser, and Margaret Avison (8).

Tallman was also partly responsible for re-framing Olson's idea of proprioceptive verse in the context of western Canada. In a survey of Canada's modernist poetries entitled "Wonder Merchants: Modernist Poetry in Vancouver During the 1960s," Tallman argues that much of the West Coast writing of the 1960s was preoccupied with a "personal localism," by which he means "the place where *you* are" rather than "the *place* where you are" (emphasis in original; 67). For Tallman,

> [m]odernism caught on in the Canadian west because it was right for the west, where the environment is so open and undefined that the self stays open and undefined, child-like perhaps, easily given over to a sense of inner wonder. The proprioceptive eye solves a major dilemma of modern times. Moving to "sensibility within the organism", it can discover those marvels within the self which can transform the growing viciousness everywhere evident in the growing environment. (67)

Tallman's reference to Olson's essay "Projective Verse" and his use of the term "proprioceptive eye," with its connotations of visual perception and the stimuli that the act of seeing produces within a living organism ("Proprioceptive"), offers a significant insight into the way writers reframed Olson's poetics in the context of 1960s Vancouver. Tallman's suggestion that "the environment is so open" in the Canadian west may resemble the settler-colonial trope of the landscape as an empty space against which the white, male modernist poetic ego can discover those "marvels within the self." Yet a more detailed consideration of the poetry and poetics of *Tish* can help to clarify the peripheral status of Vancouver and the Canadian west in the modern world-system. If the poetics of *Tish* mediates Vancouver's social, cultural, and economic marginality in relation to the historical transition from British to American imperial influence, in other words, it also brings more sharply into focus what Mookerjea, Szeman, and Faurschou call the "multiple passages *between*

empires" (15; emphasis in original). Like Tallman, Bowering's essay "Vancouver as Postmodern Poetry" posits an affiliation between the *Tish* poets and Olson's poetics of place in Bowering's assertion that "Charles Olson and the young Vancouver poets of the 1960s were conscious more than anything else of living by the sea, at the edge, on a margin" (121). The *Tish* poets' feeling of being on the margins was not simply based on a regional or geographical identity but also a "class-consciousness" or "outsider experience" (Butling and Rudy 51). This sense of social marginality underpinned the *Tish* poets' approach to Vancouver as "a legitimate cultural site" for their poetry (Butling and Rudy 51). Considered in relation to the core-periphery dynamics of world-systems analysis, the association of geographical marginality and class consciousness in the *Tish* poets' work clarifies how a poetics of place can be read as a form of peripheral modernism that foregrounds the specific lived experience of the worldwide division of labour in 1960s Vancouver. The literary critic Pauline Butling argues that many of the *Tish* poets rejected the "colonizing tropes of landscape poetry" in favour of "an anti-imperialist poetics" of the local (Butling and Rudy 51). The *Tish* poets rejected the Romantic conventions of landscape writing and its historical associations with European colonial settlement, and in this respect, they contributed to the post-war formation of a national culture that negated this colonial history. Yet in their engagement with Olson's poetics of the local, the *Tish* poets were also seen to reject a national tradition of Canadian writing in favour of a poetics imported from the US—a move that may indeed seem to exemplify the "multiple passages *between empires.*" Such anxieties about US cultural imperialism also inflected nationalist criticism of the *Tish* poets. As Keith Richardson puts it in *Poetry and the Colonized Mind*, "[t]he commitment to Black Mountain poetics made the people involved [in *Tish*] accept a structure of thought which led them to believe that the Canadian poetic tradition was weak and non-existent" (14).

The contribution of Olson's idea of a poetics of place to the formation of the Vancouver avant-garde is reflected in some of Davey's observations in his *Five Readings of Olson's Maximus* (1970), a section of his Ph.D. thesis on the Black Mountain poets published by Bowering's

small press, Beaver Kosmos Folios. In his reading of Olson's *Maximus Poems*, Davey warns against readings that entirely equate Maximus with second-century eclectic Platonist philosopher Maximus of Tyre, on the grounds that such a reading is not supported by the *Maximus Texts* or by Olson's critical writings. While Davey acknowledges that "there are sufficient similarities in the teachings of the two men to explain both Olson's interest in Maximus of Tyre and his invocation of him in *The Maximus Poems*," he also emphasizes that "it would be unwise to identify Maximus of Gloucester totally with Maximus of Tyre—if only because of Olson's warning that 'any thing, impinges on us by a more important fact, its self-existence without any reference to any other thing'" (10). The crucial point to highlight, however, is Davey's interest in Olson's poetics of place in the *Maximus Poems*—a poetics that suggests parallels between places it references such as Tyre and Gloucester, without equating one place with the other. Davey notes that both Tyre and Gloucester are seaports, which are "not only among the leading ports of their areas, but totally dependent on the sea" (3–4), and writes that "Gloucester, with its harbor and fish, was one of the magical places of this world, a place of the numen which readily fed the men who would cooperate with its orders" (17). Furthermore, by invoking Duncan's tape-recorded lecture on *The Maximus Poems*, Davey unpacks the site-specific basis of Olson's poetics:

> Hence, says Duncan, "Charles laid down one law: nothing should be in *Maximus* that wasn't in Gloucester—for himself." Each event not only had to be there but Olson personally had to know it was there. This particular determination, claims Duncan, explains the presence of the map of Gloucester on the cover of *The Maximus Poems*. . . . The map keeps the poet working with real things and moving within a specific reality. (18–19)

Davey also notes a continuity between "the repeated message of *The Maximus Poems* that man should give all his awareness to participation with the actual" (30–31) and Olson's "instruction for composition" (31) in "Projective Verse": "The attention to the actual unfolding par-

ticulars of reality that Olson recommends for fishermen and all others who should know the real, is the same attention to unfolding perceptions that Olson asks of the poet" (31). Davey acknowledges that the Olsonian real in "The Songs of Maximus" is obscured by "the veneer of commercialism that modern life had placed over everything[,]. . . . the roads lined with billboards, the air filled with radio and television commercials, and the newspapers littered with advertisements" (34). Yet in distinguishing between the real and the veneer of commercialism, Davey suggests that Olson is able to recover a poetic language that is not tainted by the language of commerce.

Like his commentary on Olson's *Maximus Poems*, Davey's poetry in the early 1960s displays a preoccupation with the local. For example, his poetry chapbook *City of the Gulls and Sea* (1964) contains references to the landscape and seascape of Vancouver and Victoria, which are filtered through the speaker's consciousness. In "Victoria II," for instance, the poetic speaker reflects on local meteorological information:

> The records show
> that the temperatures are milder here
> and the rainfall less
> than on the coast
> and yet
> there is more
> weather here,
> the long island
> thrusting the city at its tip
> down into the largest sea. (10)

For Davey, "Exposure / is the word" that defines the local environment of Victoria; indeed, the sea "is inescapable. / Any route from the city / encounters the sea" (11). "Victoria III" develops these observations on the physical environment of Victoria by describing social life on the island through character descriptions:

> Here a lady
> steps over logs

in fur-heeled boots
her collar tight
in one gloved hand
scraps of wood loose in the other.

A man with a rented chain-saw
on a Sunday outing for the fire place
his children standing back
aloof in their woollens
admiring daddy
and the noise,
his station wagon
parked on the pavement
wheels turned sharply
away. (12)

The use of metonymy in these two verses extends the speaker's reflections on the weather in the earlier poems that form the sequence. The images of "fur-heeled boots," "collar tight," and "one gloved hand" certainly evoke a locale that is exposed to the elements of the Pacific northwest. In addition, the juxtaposition of the "lady" with "scraps of wood loose" in one of her gloved hands and the "man with a rented chain-saw" hints at a means of subsistence that is not entirely integrated with the consumerist lifestyle of capitalist modernity.

If Davey's poems in *City of the Gulls and Sea* seem to recontextualize Olson's focus on the "actual unfolding of real things" through a series of observations of Victoria's seascape and social space, Fred Wah's poem "Don't Cut Me Down," published in *Tree* (1972), overtly contests the European Romantic tradition of landscape writing by adopting the working-class voice of a logger:

I don't want any of this tree poetry
shit from you. You don't know what a
fuckin tree is. If ya think its [*sic*] only
in yer head yer full a shit. Trees is
trees and the only thing they're good

> for is lumber so don't give me any crap
> about them being sumpin else. Fer chrys
> sake you think the rest of us don't
> know sweet fuck all compared to you.
> Well you don't know nuthin till ya go
> out there and bust yer back on em.
> Setting chockers'd break yer ass so fast
> ya wouldn't even wanna look at a
> goddamned tree let alone write about
> em. Then ya'd know what a tree wuz,
> steda yappin about it.

In this poem the second-person pronoun refers to an audience familiar with the Romantic literary conventions of landscape writing or "tree poetry." Yet by asserting the tree's physical materiality and use value through a tautological proposition—"Trees is / trees and the only thing they're good / for is lumber"—Wah proceeds to articulate a knowledge of trees from the standpoint of a worker engaged in the manual labour of chopping down trees: "[Y]ou don't know nuthin till ya go / out there and bust yer back on em." Moreover, by emphasizing the physical labour required to produce "lumber" in a non-standard English idiom that refuses the cultural authority and value associated with British Romantic writing, Wah's speaker also discloses the local labour required to produce globally exported commodities such as lumber. In so doing, "Don't Cut Me Down" not only offers a comic counterpoint to the Romantic conventions of landscape writing, it also situates the poem in relation to the local economy of British Columbia through its reference to logging.

Whereas Wah's "Don't Cut Me Down" adopts the rhetorical position of a local BC labourer to develop a poetics of the local that rejects the romanticization of the landscape associated with the European literary conventions of landscape poetry, Bowering's *George, Vancouver: A Discovery Poem* (1970) reflects on the history of colonial settlement in western Canada and the inadequacy of language to map the visible landscape. By adopting the persona of the eighteenth-century explorer George Vancouver, Bowering interrogates Vancouver's attempt to repre-

sent the uncharted space of western Canada in writing and the role of such writing in the global project of European colonial expansion. As the speaker puts it:

> To chart this land
> hanging over ten thousand inlets
> & a distant mind of as many narrows,
>
> an impossible thing--- (5)

By interleaving travel narratives such as George Vancouver's *A Voyage of Discovery to the North Pacific Ocean, and Round the World . . . in the Years 1790–1795* (1798) with his own reflections on contemporary Vancouver, Bowering highlights the limitations of the European literary imagination in describing western Canada. This is particularly accentuated in the speaker's underlined criticism of the King's "fancy":

> It was the king's fancy that Cook's "River" was the passage
> across British North America that would allow him to send his
> fighting men to the Pacific to defend his interests.
>
> Captain Vancouver found that the "river" was just an inlet,
> & so it was renamed Cook's Inlet. (Bowering 7)

Bowering's use of the word "fancy" in this underlined passage is significant in that it denotes the king's sovereign wishes and commands, as well as the Romantic sense of fancy, with its connotations of the literary imagination.

By attributing the Romantic idea of "fancy" to the king, Bowering's speaker suggests that the king's deluded geopolitical imagination is a symptom of his "lunacy" (25), a lunacy that recalls the mental illness of King George the Third of England. In contradistinction to the king's geopolitical imagination of a northwest passage "across British North America," the speaker names the river "an inlet" (7). In doing so, Bowering reveals how George Vancouver offers a corrective to the king's fancy, which is more appropriate to describe the geographical landscape that he surveys.

Bowering's parenthetical reference to Samuel Taylor Coleridge's poem "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" also suggests a parallel between the global explorations of George Vancouver and those of the ancient mariner in Coleridge's long poem:

> George Vancouver.
>
> (Was dying in England
> when Coleridge began to write
> The Rime of the Ancient Mariner.) (18)

Yet Bowering's late twentieth-century framing of George Vancouver's travel narrative around Vancouver island, with its "skinned off" "condoms" and "washed up Burrard sewage" (13) offers a late twentieth-century material counterpoint to the ancient mariner's fantastic narrative of ghost ships, sea monsters, and birds of portentous significance. In so doing, Bowering also foregrounds how Vancouver island has become integrated into the modern public infrastructure of an emerging global city.

Like Bowering's *George, Vancouver*, Marlatt's *Vancouver Poems* (1972) situates Vancouver in a history of imperial trade and is composed through a collage of found archival material. In one section of the book, for example, Marlatt's speaker refers to the local significance of Pier D, a pier that enabled the transportation of cargo on and off "white Empresses from the Orient" via the Canadian Pacific Railroad. For the speaker, Pier D operates as a form of anamnesis that prompts a more detailed recollection of Vancouver's place as a port in the global economy of the early twentieth century:

> Back to an open harbour, Pier D legendary
> viaduct that thousands walk
> in time, seagulls crying,
> . . . . . .
> VIADUCT:
> "several transcontinental trains daily" underfoot.
> At foot, sea. "CPR's 14-ship coastal fleet…(or) regular
> calls of white Empresses from the Orient"

The phrases "several transcontinental trains daily" and "white Empresses from the Orient" evoke a discourse of travel advertisements promoting Vancouver's importance as a port in a national and transnational network of tourism and shipping. Yet Marlatt's subsequent account of Chinese migrant labour provides a counterpoint to the rhetoric of transnational mobility associated with globalization:

> "first thing off the ship & onto the
> train east…silk train…heavily insured"
>
> orchids,
> flown in crates, "shipments" (Yokohama, Hong Kong,
> Shanghai)
>
> wait…
>
> Viaduct. Led West, or turning, shadows do in "gateway
> to the east" of rising sun, set, in their sunset
> London 29 days out of Yokohama!... "the birth of an era"
> SS Abyssinia. In transit, peoples. A time of "terrific
> coolie movements…The Chinese were going through Canada
> in transit & were heavily guarded".

The reference to the SS Abyssinia in this passage embeds a historical reference to the achievements of Canadian shipping: the first voyage of the Abyssinia for Canadian Pacific Steamships broke all previous records for Trans-Pacific shipping, taking only thirteen days to sail from Yokohama, Japan to Vancouver, BC. It arrived there on 13 June 1887, with its freight shipment of silk and tea arriving in New York, via Montreal, on 21 June and in London on 29 June (Morley 97).

By using a collage technique to juxtapose a transnational discourse of shipping and imperial trade with an account of "coolie movements" and Chinese workers through Vancouver, however, Marlatt also draws attention to the importance of race labour migration for the world economic system and the economic growth of western Canada. Indeed, the repetition of the adverb "heavily" in the phrase "heavily insured" and "heavily guarded" implies a parallel between commodities such as silk

and orchids, which are transported in "shipments," and the "transit" of Chinese coolie workers. Yet the different connotations of "insured" and "guarded" also suggest an important distinction between the transnational movements of commodities and people through Vancouver. Whereas the insurance of silk guards against the loss of economic value associated with that commodity, the guarding of "[t]he Chinese" refers to the Canadian government's framing of the Chinese immigrant population as a threat to state sovereignty in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. If the Chinese immigrant population were included for their labour power in the development of national infrastructure such as the Canadian Pacific Railroad they were also excluded from the privileges associated with citizenship. In this sense, the guarding of Chinese workers can be seen to exemplify Giorgio Agamben's suggestion that the sovereign power of the modern state is structured around an ambivalent logic of inclusive exclusion (27).

Marlatt's references to Vancouver's position in Canada's history of race labour encourages readers to consider how the "singularity of 'place'" has always been tied to national and global processes (Mookerjea, Szeman, and Faurschou 16). Mookerjea, Szeman, and Faurschou have suggested that social movements in Canada correspond in thought-provoking ways with the anti-systemic struggles in Europe and North America of 1968, struggles which they frame as a revolt against "the blindnesses, errors, and collusions of the social movements of 1848" (20). If we situate Marlatt's use of material from the Vancouver archives in relation to this longer history of social and political struggle, it is possible to see how a poetics of place can illuminate the ways in which racism and racial exclusion serve the interests of capital accumulation on a global scale.

II. From *Tish* to the Kootenay School of Writing: Anti-Imperialist Poetics, War Measures, and the Neoliberal Turn

If, as Richardson suggests, the imperial influence of the Black Mountain poets on writers such as Bowering, Davey, Marlatt, and Wah was a sign of the *Tish* group's "colonized mind," Bowering's *At War with the U.S.* (1974) appears to announce the decolonization of the *Tish* group's poet-

ics. The front cover of Bowering's book displays an ink sketch in black, red, and white by Greg Curnoe: a military plane with maple leaves on its wings shooting down another military plane with the US Air Force insignia on its wings. Some of the poems in this book offer an overt critique of US foreign policy in Vietnam. The speaker in "3," for instance, notes how "American life / is transparent" and declares:

> The instant I saw
> the young bearded man
> swing by with crutches & one leg
>
> I thought: he's been in Viet Nam

The speaker proceeds to assert that this stereotypical perception of an American Vietnam war veteran '"is what passes / thru' minds in the USA / every day.'" Yet it is not clear whether these "minds" are conscious of the veteran's relationship to American foreign policy during the Cold War. Indeed, Bowering also questions the comfortable complacency of the heterosexual, middle-class, suburban American family by juxtaposing it with the stereotype of the war veteran at the start of the poem: "Hi Mom, hi Dad, hi Son / take it easy sitting down in California." In a similar vein, Bowering's observation in "6" that the US Armed Forces "are trying to obliterate / measure" with "[t]he sheer / intensity / & numbers of their bombs—" reflects on the unspoken necro-political imperative of the US war in Vietnam. Considered in relation to the subsequent references to counting, the word "measure" strongly implies the calculation of the loss of individual human lives. Indeed, if the line "We help them count" is taken to refer to a human body count, it could simultaneously be read as a statement about poetry's public role in the context of the US war in Vietnam. In this respect, the poem works to interrupt the unspoken necro-political imperative of militarized violence that normalizes death on a scale beyond measure or calculation.

Yet at the same time, *At War With the U.S.* reflects on the limitations of poetics as a public discourse through which to promote effective political opposition to US foreign policy in Vietnam. As the speaker puts it in "22," "who has time / for this / when there are / bodies in the forest"

(22). Consequently, as Lynette Hunter suggests, Bowering "begins to shift toward less explicitly referential language and the need for writers first to effect change through the processes of writing" (153). In this respect, Bowering's poems in *At War with the U.S.* seem to share with American avant-garde poetry of the 1970s a growing tendency to question poetry's referentiality, expressiveness, and capacity for communicative action in response to a crisis in the public sphere instantiated by the aftermath of the Watergate crisis and the Nixon administration's control and regulation of the media.[3] As Barrett Watten explains in an interview with Andrew Ross,

> [t]he central problem of reference in this writing may be seen in a context as directly related to the administration of information about the War on the part of the government and media that elicited, from intellectuals in-the-making, a radical denial of consent for the conduct of the War. . . . There was a denial of "national" culture in all aspects. . . . The formation of radical tendencies in the arts discussed above occurred directly as a refusal of the larger context, but at the same time it was a response to the crisis of meaning at that level. (197–98)

At War with the U.S. reacts not only to US foreign policy in Vietnam but also in part to Canadian Prime Minister Pierre Elliott Trudeau's implementation of emergency measures in 1970 in response to the kidnapping of a British diplomat and a Quebec provincial cabinet minister by Quebec nationalists and the Quebec Liberation Front (FLQ). Indeed, Bowering's declaration in the first poem that "[t]here comes a time / when we must / take measures" supports Hunter's claim that *At War with the U.S.* comments "implicitly on the internal Canadian conflict focused rather drastically on Quebec and on the War Measures Act of 1970" (153). In this respect, Bowering's text invites readers to draw parallels between the Canadian state's repressive policies toward its own citizens and US foreign policy in Vietnam during the Cold War.

If the early work of Bowering, Davey, Marlatt, and Wah adapt some of Olson's poetic strategies in order to articulate and question the place of Vancouver in an older transnational network of British imperial

trade, European settlement, and race-labour migration, the writing of Kevin Davies, Jeff Derksen, Dan Farrell, and Dorothy Trujillo Lusk (to mention some of the writers associated with KSW) responds to the restructuring and privatization of Vancouver's public sector—particularly education and housing—by local government, private business, and foreign investment in the late twentieth century. As a consequence, the possibility of a poetics that can cognitively map what Fredric Jameson calls the great, decentred network of multinational capitalism from the local perspective of Vancouver becomes increasingly challenging.

Indeed, the formal shift away from the geographically referential and syllogistically coherent form of writing associated with the *Tish* poets and prefigured by Bowering's *At War with the U.S.* parallels the global restructuring of Vancouver's local economy, the transition from an industrial to a post-industrial mode of production, the privatization of the public sector, and the emergence of a dominant discourse centred on the values of "the market." Derkson exemplifies such a response in his reworking of a passage from Olson's *Maximus Poems* in his 1993 collection *Dwell*:

> Cranes dot the skyline in an homage to the
> domination of economic over place—it is unbuilt business
> I'm talking about, the Pacific Rim lapping at
> my ankles (16)

We have already seen how in Olson's long poem, the Maximus speaker emphasizes the details of place in post-war America, such as the fishing economy of his native hometown of Gloucester, Massachusetts. Such a focus on the local is partly illustrated in the following passage from "Maximus to Himself":

> It is undone business
> That I speak of this morning,
> with the sea
> stretching out from my feet (Olson 57)

In contrast, the poetic speaker in *Dwell* highlights the local impact of global capitalism or "economics" on the Vancouver "skyline." Moreover,

the fact that the first-person speaker is standing in the "Pacific Rim" rather than Vancouver exemplifies the masculine poetic speaker's recognition that the agenda of multinational corporate investment has "dominated place" by redefining the local in a network of global economic relations. In this respect, Derksen's reframing of Olson's poetics of place broadly complements Michael Davidson's critical reading of Olson's depiction of the Pacific Rim in "The Kingfishers"—a reading that situates Olson's poem in the context of US intelligence gathering in Asia during the early stages of the Cold War and the rise of area studies in the US academy. In Davidson's reading, Olson's poem was "written in the discursive arena of the emerging cold war when foreign policy was dictated by metaphors of disease (infection, containment) and contract (consensus)" (198). Davidson suggests that Olson counters this Cold War rhetoric by offering an image of the East that is mediated through speculations on the cultural significance of the kingfisher in Mayan civilization, Plutarch's essay on the Delphic stone, and Mao's 1948 address to the Communist Party. By reframing Olson's poetics in the era of post-Soviet neoliberal globalization, Derksen writes an ironic "homage" to a poetics of place and raises important questions about the capacity of a place-based poetics to contest the emergence of the Pacific Rim as "an entrepreneurial zone" (Davidson 198). If we read the "[c]ranes" that "dot the skyline" as a metonym for the growth in construction and real estate, then Derksen's Olsonian speaker seems to be able to do little more than prophesy the "unbuilt business" that the cranes symbolize.

Derksen's reference to the Pacific Rim in *Dwell* also resonates with the specific history of neoliberal capitalism in late twentieth-century Vancouver. In an essay published in a catalogue on the photo-conceptualist Stan Douglas, Derksen, in collaboration with the Marxist social geographer Neil Smith, observes that the right-wing Social Credit provincial government in BC "implemented a turn away from a productive industrial economy toward one centred on service economies, real estate and construction" during the 1980s (76). The neoliberal policies of the provincial government are further manifest in the rhetoric of urban redevelopment underpinning the subsequent Liberal government's hous-

ing policy, which promoted "redevelopment 'partnerships'" rather than providing affordable public housing (Smith and Derksen 86). Derksen articulates such a neoliberal policy in his juxtaposition of a pastoral cliché with the discourse of real estate marketing in *Dwell*: "The late fall beauty / of an "Outstanding / Development Opportunity" (28).

Vancouver's shift from a productive industrial economy to an economy centred on service, construction, and real estate is also coextensive with an attempt to attract foreign investment from the Pacific Rim. In the early 1980s, local government and businesses made a concerted effort to market Vancouver to the Hong Kong business elite in the hope of attracting offshore Asian capital investment (Mitchell 223). They also tried to encourage global capital flows into the city through a federal business immigration programme, which required investors to have a "minimum personal networth of C$500,000 with a promise to commit C$350,000 to a Canadian business over a three-year period" (224). Also, banks established networks between Hong Kong and Vancouver, which eventually led to the Hongkong Bank of Canada buying out the Bank of British Columbia and Lloyds Bank of Canada. The time difference between Hong Kong and Vancouver facilitated easy financial transactions such as the sale of Vancouver's real estate to financial entrepreneurs in Hong Kong (Mitchell 224–26). It is this spatial and temporal flow of capital that partly underpins the following proposition from Farrell's *Last Instance* (1999): "My foreign employer slipped me a one hundred dollar bill because bonus is the cost of doing business in BC" (41). In this example the "foreign employer" of the first person subject is significant: the wording suggests that "bonus" is not merely the "cost of doing business in BC" but the cost of "foreign" investors doing business.

The history of the formation of KSW, with which Davies, Derksen, Farrell, and Lusk have been affiliated, is also bound up with the neoliberal restructuring of Vancouver's economy and public services in the 1980s. KSW was established after the provincial Social Credit government in British Columbia forced the liberal arts college David Thompson University Centre (DTUC) to permanently close its doors in 1983. The geographical location of DTUC in Nelson, a small industrial city in eastern BC, partly contributed to the politicized ethos of the

school and its cultural programme. Indeed, for Andrew Klobucar and Michael Barnholden, the fact that DTUC drew its student population from "the large blue-collar community surrounding the area" (3) and that public services in Nelson were organized and run by the unions created the atmosphere for a radical political approach to writing and cultural production:

> Centred prominently within a politically active, culturally exciting environment, far from the official eyes of Ministry of Education bureaucrats, DTUC was able to pursue a much more progressive pedagogy than other mainstream post-secondary institutions. . . . Identifying with neither conventional colleges nor large city campuses, DTUC prided itself on its fierce, almost anti-institutional independence in programming. (4)

After the forced closure of DTUC, the founders of KSW in Vancouver sought to continue the radical approach to cultural production that had been formulated at DTUC. KSW originally cohered around its opposition to Bill 20, the right-wing Social Credit government's education reform act, which gave control over education spending and curriculum building to the Ministry of Education. As Butling explains,

> [t]he DTUC closure very quickly galvanized the students and faculty (myself included) into a cohesive, politicized group; the subsequent four months of active protest provided an instant education in the social and political issues of the day. Writing became irrevocably imbricated in questions of power and value, especially as the cuts in government funding were accompanied by rhetoric about sloth, excess and greed in certain sectors of society. (86)

If the right-wing government cutbacks in education and the closure of DTUC shaped the formation of KSW in Vancouver, however, it was a commitment to rethinking the ideological and political determinants of literary production and reception that framed its cultural mandate. By forming a community around a programme of poetry readings and

discussions that intervened in Vancouver's public sphere, KSW sought to define a socio-political function for avant-garde poetics in an urban space divided by the forces of rampant neoliberalism.

For some critics of KSW, the group's concern with the politics of poetic form was incompatible with its early political aspirations to re-engage a working-class audience and forge an alliance with the labour movement along the same lines as DTUC. Brian Fawcett, for example, was "wary of KSW's ties to a poetics imported from America" and wrote that "Language Centered Writing is a device based on a rhetorical joining of the communicator and the target of communication so as to give both the appearance of community and intellectual coherence without any of the responsibilities of either community or coherence" (qtd. in Derksen, "Kootenay School" 155). Yet Fawcett's criticism ignores how the very coherence of class struggle itself had been fragmented by the post-Fordist restructuring of the local industrial workforce. As cultural theorists such as Sassen (2001), David Harvey (2005), and Stuart Hall (2011) have pointed out, in the late twentieth-century economic conjuncture of downsizing and cutbacks, multinational-hired sub-contractors have tended to favour flexible and non-unionized labour. And in Vancouver, the systematic dismantling of the welfare state and unions by the right-wing provincial government redefined the terms of political representation and cultural production.

It is partly in response to this redefinition of political representation that the poetic persona in Derksen's *Downtime* (1990) traces a shift from a politics of representation centred on an antagonism between labour and capital to the impact of a neoliberal global capitalism on the emergent discourse of consumerism and commodity culture:

> good design takes care
> of beauty, function
> is action, door
> hinge, are you
> or can you negotiate
> scabs divide
> a family, technology (11)

In this passage, the juxtaposition of the use value of the door hinge and the substitution of mass-produced "design" for the uniqueness of "beauty" traces the disappearance of the working-class body in the production of that commodity, and the hypotactic coordination of phrases verbally enacts the fragmentation of the old labour movements as "scabs divide / a family, technology."

The attempt to trace the disappearance of the working-class body in the face of a late capitalist consumer culture is developed later in this section, where the speaker asserts:

> I
> only want these individual
> moments riveted
> produces desire
> recorded with VISA
> at the three elements
> paper, mall
> and mini-mall (18)

The use of the verb "rivet" to connect "individual / moments" could be an attempt to inscribe a lexicon of labour in public memory. Yet instead of rivets, it is the paper VISA receipts of electronic financial transactions that operate as a counterpoint to this amnesia and document the interface between electronic finance capital, land capital or real estate, and the individual consumer. In making this connection, the speaker tries to track the discontinuous and uneven geographical flows of electronic finance capital from a local shopping mall.

Derksen further develops his concern with the subject's place in the world economic system in *Transnational Muscle Cars* (2003), a book that makes use of a hyper-referential and paratactic style to foreground the lived experience, at different times and in different places, of the systemic inequalities of the global capitalist system. In the section titled "But Could I Make A Living From It," Derksen assembles a series of apparently disconnected sentences, lists of place names, and dates and times. On a first reading, some of these sentences may seem like "socialist one liners" (Stefans). Consider the following extract:

1976: 0.9861

"Land Rover owners go on forever."

Canadian dollar?

But the city is an urban mistake imposed on a place
that makes sense—a monument to a certain model of
history.

By this I mean I'll take the bigger one and put it on my card.

Afghanistan, Angola, Bangladesh, Benin. (25)

If we read the repetition of dates and times as references to the "'spot rate' or average noon exchange rate of US to Canadian dollars" (Jaeger 32) and the lists of countries such as "Afghanistan, Angola, Bangladesh, Benin" or "Bhutan, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cambodia" (Derksen, *Transnational* 26) as references to countries that have been subjected to IMF/World Bank policies of structural adjustment, we can begin to see how Derksen assembles the more jocular sentences to encourage readers to reflect on their own complicity in the global division of wealth that characterizes the world economic system. The pronoun "this" in the sentence "[b]y this I mean I'll take the bigger one and put it on my card" suggests a logical connection between this financial transaction and the previous reflection on the city as "an urban mistake." Yet the lack of any determinate referent raises questions about what "this" might refer to. How, for instance, might the discourse of individual consumer debt suggested by putting "the bigger one . . . on my card" relate to the idea of the city as an "urban mistake"? And how does a rampant debt-fuelled consumerism parallel the national debt of "Afghanistan, Angola, Bangladesh, [or] Benin"? The startling shifts in scale and register between such sentences may at times seem playful, but such play implies a more profound political point. If, as Freud once suggested, jokes can offer insights into the structure of the unconscious, the humour of

Derksen's poetics invites readers to reflect on the complex ways in which the language of individual freedom, consumerism, and market rationality associated with neoliberalism repress the relationship between global poverty, debt, consumerism, and the accumulation of wealth.

If *Transnational Muscle Cars* highlights how the subject is increasingly implicated in the language of neoliberalism, Farrell, in a section titled "Body" from *Thimking* [*sic*] *of You* (1994), connects the environmental impact of capitalism to the dominance of the market and the waning of labour power:

> is there land under this pollution
> or more earth but frame is the cold frame
> known in yielding to the market-place and all
> hasty voice not so untrue as produce—
> what—man's salute to labor power backs off
> from its own bestowed head

The question that opens this quoted extract ("is there land under the pollution") seems to invert the rhetoric of property speculation and business deals by subordinating "land" to "pollution." If the rather cryptic noun phrase "cold frame" is part of the "earth," this could be an environmental or geological consequence of "yielding to the market-place." Such "yielding" could also be attributed to the "hasty voice" described in the subsequent line, which is "not so untrue as produce." If the word "produce" is "untrue" in comparison to the "hasty voice" that yields "to the marketplace," however, the significance of "man's salute to labor power" hinges on whether the word "what," embedded in em dashes, is an exclamation or a question. If it is a question, then the subsequent phrase can be read either as a question about what is being produced in the first part of the statement or as a rhetorical question about "labor power" in the second part of the sentence. The statement "what man's salute to labor power backs off / from its own bestowed head" seems to renew the call for workers' solidarity and suggests that the "salute to labor power" is disingenuous because it "backs off / from its own bestowed head." The word "bestowed" is also significant because it implies that the "labor power" has conferred the position of authority associated

with the word "head," and yet this "head" is now backing off from the "labor power" that has "bestowed" its authority. If the word "what" is an exclamation or an expression of outrage, however, the statement that follows this interrogative would appear to announce the backing off of "man's salute to labor power." The ambivalent position of "labor power" in Farrell's "Body" is crucial in that it appeals for workers' solidarity at the very moment that the triumphalist neoliberal rhetoric of the "market-place" announces its demise.

If Farrell's "Body" raises questions about the agency of labour power in an age of neoliberal globalization, Davies' declaration in *Comp.* (1999) that "[h]ometowns are *reformist idiots*" (65; emphasis in original) exemplifies the rethinking of the local and the global that preoccupies some of the poets associated with KSW. By combining a left-wing insult with a form of anthropomorphism that attributes idiocy to the "hometown" rather than the resident of a hometown, Davies suggests that it is the self-interested parochialism of the "hometown" as a spatial and political mindset that perpetuates an ideology of reformism. He further develops a criticism of hometown reformism in the following passage:

> Butch feels better after dialysis
> though he's angry Andrea hired Tony to shovel snow.
> Cookie needs two dollars and forty cents for crack.
>
> All this will have to be radically cut back to save the suburbs
> (75)

Davies' startling juxtaposition of the economies of drug addiction, snow shovelling, and dialysis with the imperative to "cut back" on public spending in order to "save the suburbs" evokes the rhetoric of neoliberal economics and its tendency to subsidize the private sector, symbolized by the property development associated with suburban expansion. Such juxtaposition counters the conservative rhetoric of hometown reformism that the speaker criticizes earlier in this section of his poem.

The spatial dynamics of neoliberalism also have profoundly gendered implications, as Lusk's poetics amply demonstrate. Consider the following passage from *Ogress Oblige* (2001):

> The Mummy's archaic corporeality is a remaindered site of surplus value or conceivably, post-surplus ballyhoo.
>
> I've decided to become an equal, just like you.
> Here is my money. Now where's my mouth?
>
> The flows of Capital and bohemia converge in these vincula of disgust. *e.g.* the pejoratific term 'breeder' coursing across divers artoid subcultures, so-called.
>
> An ahistorical avant-garde verges on apoplexy at the approach of an active mother—RRRRRRR—. One's 'condition of being' as recipient of another's motive, rendering one mute or mum.
>
> Along with the rationalization of property
> comes the rationing of the "View." (32; emphasis in original)

The speaker's question "where is my mouth?" raises important questions about the place of women's voices in an avant-garde writing community that is broadly opposed to the uneven development of capitalist modernity. If the speaker's "mouth" also denotes the ability to speak and be heard by a reading public, what place do such voices have in struggles against land speculation and gentrification? And to what extent are considerations of social reproduction, childcare, and the household economy subordinated or silenced in struggles against austerity, cuts to public services, and the privatization of public housing?

Massey argues that the geographically uneven and differentiated expansion of capitalist relations of production is inextricably bound up with patriarchal social relations. While Massey focuses on the impact that the development of industrial forms of production such as coal mining had on working-class women's unwaged domestic labour in nineteenth- and twentieth-century British households, her observation has significant implications for understanding the gendered, social, and geographical dynamics at play in Lusk's poetics. By referring to "The Mummy's . . . corporeality" as both "archaic" and "remaindered," the poetic speaker implies that the maternal body is both outmoded and

devalued. Yet in foregrounding maternal "corporeality" in the context of a series of propositions about gentrification and avant-garde poetics as a form of public address, this statement could also mean that the maternal body and the social labour associated with motherhood are a crucial but often unacknowledged foundation of capitalist modernity. Such a reading is further apparent in the convergence of the "flows of Capital and bohemia" around the phrase "vincula of disgust"—a formulation that suggests an attempt to frame contemporary urban space in terms of a metaphor of the body. "Vincula" denotes both a mathematical line connecting a group of terms and a connecting band of tissue, such as a tendon. The use of the italicized Latinate abbreviation "*e.g.*" at the start of the next sentence also suggests that the subsequent statement—"the pejoratific term 'breeder' coursing across divers artoid subcultures"—is a specific example of the ways in which "flows of Capital and bohemia" are connected. The portmanteau word "pejoratific" combines "pejorative" with its connotations of contempt and disapproval and the suffix "-tific," a morpheme associated with words such as "scientific." If this word with two linguistic elements is repeated often enough, the pejorative term "breeder"—a derogatory word that is sometimes used to describe working-class or unemployed mothers on welfare—could almost become scientific. Moreover, the juxtaposition of these fragmented observations about the devaluation and silencing of the reproductive maternal body on the one hand and the "rationalization of property" on the other encourages readers to reflect on how gentrification, cuts to public housing, and financial speculation on private property have differing impacts on the everyday lives of mothers who have been abandoned and demonized by the neoliberal state.

III. Peripheral Modernism against the World-System

If the *Tish* poets' anti-imperialist poetics of the local was partly an attempt to challenge the European literary paradigms upon which early Canadian settler narratives were based—an aim they shared with more mainstream canonical writers who cultivated cultural nationalism such as Margaret Atwood and Robert Kroetsch—many KSW poets investigate how the local is embedded in a network of global economic

relations. Such a preoccupation does not in itself distinguish the geographical concerns of *Tish* poets from KSW poets because writers such as Bowering and Marlatt were partly concerned with Vancouver's historical place in an older global economy of European imperial trade and race-labour migrancy. Yet in the face of successive provincial government cutbacks in the 1980s, which reduced spending on education in order to encourage foreign economic investment in business, banking, and property, many of the writers associated with KSW examined how the local was rebranded as a global commodity. Consequently, the local became transformed from a rhetorical site, or a place from which to speak (in the case of the *Tish* poets), to a shifting relation of political antagonism against an ideology of neoliberal capitalism, which cut public spending on education and social housing (in the case of the poets associated with KSW). Such a shifting relation of political antagonism is exemplified in Davies' metaphor of an "extrapolated node / of expansion-contraction":

> What gets *me* is
>
> the robots are doing
> *my* job, but I don't get
> the money
> some extrapolated node
> of expansion-contraction gets
> my money, which *I* need
> for *time travel* (emphasis in original)

In this extract, the speaker reflects on the processes of downsizing and restructuring that underpin the precarity of living labour in the late capitalist workplace. If the "robots" who "do" the speaker's job signify the technological process of deskilling, the "extrapolated node / of expansion-contraction" denotes the electronic process of space-time compression through which money circulates transnationally. In this way, the speaker offers a global economic analysis of her or his material conditions from the local standpoint of an unemployed worker. The speaker's final assertion that she or he needs the "money" "for *time travel*" sug-

gests a utopian desire to return to another point in time when wage labour was more secure and labour power more powerful.

Moreover, Davies' "extrapolated node / of expansion-contraction" offers an apposite metaphor for imagining political resistance to the spatial and temporal dynamics of the capitalist world-system. As Derksen suggests in "Jerk," the first poem in *Transnational Muscle Cars*, a poetics centred on the local can no longer cognitively map the "overdetermined contradictions" linking non-unionized, Third World, and often gendered forms of labour in the garment manufacturing industries of Malaysia and Sri Lanka to the First World consumption of Gap clothing and Nike trainers (10). Instead, Davies proposes a dynamic, spatial-temporal paradigm for tracking both the local and global flows of capital and labour in the contemporary world economic system. Such a paradigm may seem more appropriate to imagine the de-territorialized social and economic relations underpinning the contemporary world economic system than a poetics centred on the local. Yet as this essay suggests, the rethinking of place in the work of writers associated with KSW is a political response to the changing spatial and temporal dynamics of neoliberal globalization in global cities such as Vancouver rather than a straightforward rejection of a poetics of place as an outmoded literary form. A comparison of the poetics of *Tish* and KSW can help to shed light on Canada's uneven geographical development, in part because of their preoccupation with Vancouver's position in relation to dominant economic and political centres of power in both Canada and the US. If, as Mookerjea, Szeman, and Faurschou have suggested, Canada's integration into the modern capitalist world-system has entailed multiple passages between empires, a poetics of place that takes account of Vancouver's passage from a peripheral port city in a wider cartography of British imperial trade routes to a global city of fiscal restructuring and property speculation in the Pacific Rim can expand and deepen our understanding of how literary texts can register the uneven and unequal development of capitalist modernity.

In the context of post-Confederation Canada, Mookerjea, Szeman, and Faurschou have suggested that "the final horizon of 'local' hegemony has long been a global one" (16)—a point that is particularly apposite to

the poetics and politics associated with *Tish* and KSW. By reading the poetry and poetics associated with *Tish* and KSW as a form of peripheral modernism, this essay has traced how techniques of literary modernism such as open-field poetics, collage, and parataxis foreground the uneven development of capitalist modernity. Such techniques may not offer a blueprint for political change. Yet in drawing attention to the economies of dispossession, exclusion, and abandonment that are coeval with the expansion of capitalist markets, these poetries work to defamiliarize and interrupt the global flows of capital and the dominant rhetoric of the free market.

Notes

1 The hyphenated term world-system is taken from Ferdinand Braudel and Wallerstein's historical sociology to suggest that throughout the history of the world there have been several world economies. As Wallerstein puts it, "'world-system' is not a system 'in the world' or 'of the world.' It is a system 'that is a world.' Hence the hyphen, since 'world' is not an attribute of the system. Rather the two words together constitute a single concept" (294–95).

2 As Davey suggests, the title of the magazine *Tish* was an anagram of "shit"—an excremental metaphor that suggested an irreverent, counter-cultural approach to literary composition. In Davey's account, one of the original ideas for the title of this literary magazine had been *Shit: A Magazine of Vancouver Writing* (*When Tish Happens* 129). The use of an excremental trope—rendered anagrammatically—to describe writing from Vancouver could be seen to offer a comment on the core-periphery dynamics of literary value. Read in terms of Olson's emphasis on the body as a physical source of poetic composition, the title extends the link between place and the body as a source of poetic composition.

3 For a further discussion of the relationship between L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E poetry and the crisis in the US public sphere following the Watergate scandal and the Nixon administration's control and regulation of the media, see Derksen's "Where Have All the Equal Signs Gone?" and Middleton's "1973."

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