Contents

INTRODUCTION

> Although these popular movements are often denounced by
> governments as 'anti-democratic,' they actually deepen de-
> mocracy. Liberal democratic institutions are often described
> as the bridge between individual citizens and the state,
> but elections, parties and parliaments seem increasingly
> ineffective for this purpose. This is especially so when-
> ever corporate profits sag. Indeed, 'the more serious these
> problems become the less can governments afford to allow
> the type and actual timing of their policy to be determined
> by whatever consensus does—or does not—emerge from
> the process of democratic politics.' Governments become
> desperate for private investments and try to by-pass normal
> democratic procedures. In the circumstances, people have
> to resort to unconventional means to make their influence
> felt. This is what extra-parliamentary politics is all about.
> —William K. Carroll 1984, 111[1]

This book is a reading of a moment, a reading of the 1980s, a reading
of a time when poetry was political not (only) in terms of its content,
but formally. A time when the politics of Vancouver, of British Co-
lumbia, meant large-scale demonstrations in the streets and the threat
of a general strike. A time when a shut-down, rural university writing
program was reborn as an urban hotbed of experiment and cosmo-
politan theory, with as much in common with Gramsci as with the

anarchistic Direct Action group. A time when a still coalescing American L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E poetry scene would find itself brought together in Vancouver, outside of the US (if not outside of America), giving birth to the Kootenay School of Writing like a teen mother gestating a fully grown child. A poetry movement—the KSW—that was as much about the street as the library, about art as literature, about politics as aesthetics, about community as the academy. And like that movement, this book straddles different worlds, is of the archive but also wants to be read in the café, is about (some) writers I've known for twenty years but abjures the interview for close reading. Because this is about the writing, about the poems, about not so much *what* they mean as what they *do* with meaning. And we can only figure that conundrum out if we don't dodge the bullet, if we meet the bristling, dense, playful, and yes, sometimes difficult, writing head-on.

So what I'd like to do in this introduction is three things. First of all, I want to flesh out the title of this book, unpack the various meanings of "matter," and do this not merely theoretically but through a reading of the work of Nancy Shaw, a key member of the KSW who passed away at the age of forty-five. For, as I will show again later in this book, it is in the reading of the work that we learn the most. This is to jump in feet first, but then to pull back, to quickly situate the KSW in a couple of different ways: in terms of the histories of poetry in Canada and the US, but also in terms of the political and social histories of Vancouver art and communities. Finally, I outline the structure of this book, how I look at the writing in different chapters, developing a psychoanalytic theory of poetry—drawing especially on Jacques Lacan, as well as Slavoj Žižek and Sigmund Freud.

What do I mean by "the only poetry that matters"? First, to think of "matter" in three different ways: as mater, or mother; as what matters or is important; and as material(ism). As *mater*, the KSW body of work is also a body in dialogue with feminism—both in the work by women inside and outside the grouping and in work by men that

is itself constituted in relation to feminism. And, with a nod to the punk band The Clash, whose 1979 album *London Calling* was advertised as being by "the only band that matters," the body of KSW poetry as "what matters," as what is important in Canadian or contemporary writing: work that is, I would argue, the most vital body of innovative poetry today (emerging from a social milieu that still, almost thirty years on, continues to host and produce such work). In terms of materialism, again, this concept breaks down: first, material as the stuff of language—the books, magazines, publications—the pages and letters and bindings—the archivist's substrate. Then, materialism as a political concept, referring to the economic conditions for the production of culture, the exchange value promulgated under capitalism and the critique thereof (in the sense that Marxism can be said to be a form of materialism). Finally, the materiality of the signifier, which means the semiotic and psychoanalytic notions of discourse, of the laws of language and how writing can challenge those.

These notions play out in various ways in the chapters that follow. In my readings of work by Colin Smith (the chapter on Social Collage), Kathryn MacLeod (the chapter Empty Speech), and Lisa Robertson (the chapter on Red Tories), gender politics come to the fore. In the Social Collage chapter, the juxtaposition found in these post-lyrics (especially in Dorothy Trujillo Lusk and Deanna Ferguson) is analogous to the collage aesthetic found throughout punk—from Dick Hebdige's notion of the visual look (leather jackets and safety pins, Jamie Reid's collaged album cover for the Sex Pistols) to musical juxtapositions (between reggae, heavy metal, rockabilly). Here the materialism of the archival *substrate*—of the objects to be found in the KSW archive—is also discussed in terms of a political economy. And the Lacanian critique of language—especially as outlined in the Empty Speech chapter, maintains a tension between a political materialism and a materiality of the signifier.

Now, it may seem paradoxical to "explain" poetry by recourse to

an even more difficult language, that of psychoanalysis. But my hope here is that the two discourses will illuminate each other, without either mindlessly simplifying or obscurely complicating. So let's turn to Nancy Shaw's work, and especially to some of the poems in her first full-length book collection, *Scoptocratic*, published in 1992 by ECW Press. The book's title already signals that we are in the realm of film theory, of Lacan's (male) gaze, and perhaps of feminism: scopophilia was a Freudian term popularized in the 1970s by writers in the British film journal *Screen*, and especially by Laura Mulvey in her 1975 essay "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema." There, using Lacan, she argued that the symbolic order of cinema depended on a certain lack, a gendered lack, in the castrated female subject. That system then depends on a pleasure in looking, which is how the term "scopophilia" was first used by Freud in his 1905 text *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* (1966, vol. VII, 156–57) and in being looked at; but this pleasure is also imaginary, or having to do with the image, with the recognition/misrecognition that occurs not only when we see ourselves in the mirror but in all of our relations with the Other.

So this sense of potential meanings in the title *Scoptocratic* points to the various filmic aspects of Shaw's text (and also its visual aspects, as in her photograph that graces the cover, in which we see a forest mirrored in a lake or inlet). "Unrealized Scenarios" (15–37) is the most ambitious of these "Cine poems" (the title of another text: 50–69), and it often reads as treatment for a *film noir*:

> The two men begin. Without having seen each other for quite some time, they recount a problem of some intellectual propensity, of trouble to them both. With each change of scene there is a new round of drinks. Other gestures that punctuate pertinent moments include: looking in the mirror, smoking cigarettes, smoothing hair or accentuating physical features, drinking without reply, walking the periphery. (20)

The text is occupied with the visual (from the colloquialism of "Without having seen each other for quite some time" to "looking in the mirror"), with the double (*two* men), but also, like much of *Scoptocratic*, with the textual or dialogic: the men "recount a problem," or its absence when there is "drinking without reply," or even speech's oral substitutions—smoking, drinking. Such filmic concerns are a matter for *Scoptocratic* both formally as well as thematically—via reference to such genres as a "Shooting script" (23*ff*), the "Scenarios," or, in the much more minimalist "Cine poem," the look of a few isolated words on the page (the page as screen). Thus page 52 features only:

cratic

In some ways this page then functions as a critique of scopophilia, by showing that the scoptocrat is, when shorn of his visual power, left as a nonsense word, meaningless, vulnerable to the reader's gaze.

There are certainly ways to read Shaw's book via film theory itself in terms of the *mater* that I see as key to the KSW program—and, as will be evident throughout this book, the feminist critique of language and power is key to the work by many, if not most, of the writers associated with the collective.[2] But we can also trace this feminism, this question of gender, as well as other senses of the "matter," though a less tendential text, one that sits awkwardly in *Scoptocratic*, no doubt in part because it is a collaboration: "Close to Naked" (70–76), which was written with Gerald Creede and first published in *Writing* 23/24. (Interestingly, in terms of the trajectory Shaw's work was to take—including posthumously—collaboration was an important strategy, resulting in *A Sunday Drive* [1993, a catalogue essay with Lisa Robertson], *Busted* [2000, with Catriona Strang] *Light Sweet Crude* [2008, with Strang], and *Cold Trip* [2009, also with Strang, a libretto].)

But "Close to Naked" is an important text not only because it brings together Shaw's erudite, and coolly elegant, approach with Creede's more brutalist, pulp fiction/poverty *noir*, but also because of

how it makes this unlikely synthesis work at the level of formal disjunction as well as thematic readability. The poem is concerned with the spatial/urban:

> We always hung out in someone else's neighbourhood. (70)
> In the old family neighbourhood, others watch faithfully.
> (72)

But also with language *qua* material signifier:

> A blouse, abuse, a pose, arouse, something on paper. (71)
> Whore is ontological. Whore is until. (73)

With the difficulty of communities and institutions:

> Zealous reformers in the community centre seemed to bask
> in the suspicion that they might be. (73)
> On the cornerstone of the community centre, while the
> cement was still wet, some kid had written Fuck God and
> drawn a heart around it. (76)

And also with the fantasy of culture, of film, and perhaps even *film noir*:

> He'd had enough of intrigue. A movie night, a barbecue, a
> mixed dance. […] All the closeups are body doubles. (70)
> She'd been made an accomplice to the affair. […] Film
> tactics. (72)
> Body double. Voice over. (75)

In its doubling, in its voice-over a body double (but also a voice that is over, or done), such a text, and indeed such a text by such different writers, is so thoroughly a matter of literary miscegenation that it brings to mind an earlier text in the avant-garde, Gertrude Stein's "Lifting Belly." Indeed, in opening a discussion of the position of the

Kootenay School as an institution in relation to the more hegemonic academy, it is worth noting that University of British Columbia English professor Peter Quartermain not only taught courses on Stein at the KSW in the 1980s (see Chapter Five), but wrote about her work in a book published the same year *Scoptocratic* saw release: *Disjunctive Poetics: From Gertrude Stein and Louis Zukofsky to Susan Howe*. For Stein's quite astonishing "Lifting Belly" is a text that, if in some ways a love poem, is also one in which there is a dialogue, as if love itself were to be a matter of speech, of countering one proposition with another. Stein begins by declaring, "I said lifting belly," and then "I said it I mean lifting belly," and when asked by an interlocutor, "What did you say lifting belly," affirms through the question "Did you say, oh lifting belly," and even if subject to doubt ("I am so discouraged about lifting belly"), she counters that "Lifting belly is so able to be praised," indeed, is a matter in need of validation ("You mean lifting belly is all right"), and also that "Lifting belly makes a sound," for not only is lifting belly "kind and good and beautiful," but, Stein reaffirms, "Lifting belly is my joy," and, indeed, "is perfect." But it perhaps is not perfect, for we are only ten pages into a fifty-page poem, and it is the poem's—and indeed Stein's—method to return again and again to this matter, signalling the provisionality of what "lifting belly" as a phrase may be or mean, a provisionality that, Quartermain contends, makes "Lifting Belly" referential yet obscure, inaccessible yet coherent, a text in which an "unassigned voice" privileges a pre-existing narrative where we must trust language patterns, recurrences, and variations, and the situation of the telling, even while uniformity and predictability is always being undermined. Crucial to Quartermain's reading is the assertion that the reader cannot "distinguish inner from audible speech," that there are different speakers, but those speakers blur into each other. (Quartermain 1992, 29–32)[3]

I am arguing that just as Stein's text can be read in a dialogic manner, as Quartermain does so brilliantly in *Disjunctive Poetics*, so too is

Shaw and Creede's text referential yet obscure, inaccessible yet co-
herent, a text in which *more than one* "unassigned voice" suggests a
pre-existing narrative (in the preponderance of antecedent-less pro-
nouns—he and she—for example). Too, the speakers blur into one
another in "Close to Naked." But this formal—or dialogic—aspect of
the text, which, in my reading, aligns the poem to a certain strand
of the (American) avant-garde, that is, to the *mater* of us all, is also
joined by a global strategy in "Close to Naked." This strategy has more
to do with the materiality of the signifier, a matter I will return to later
in this book with respect to other writers as well: I mean the notion
of the ideologeme. This term comes to us from Fredric Jameson, from
his argument in *The Political Unconscious* that texts work at the level
of the signifier as bearers of political, or ideological, meaning. I dis-
cuss this strategy in a number of KSW texts (including "Close to Na-
ked") later in this book, but let's have a brief preview of what Jameson
means and see if it can help us to think about the materiality of the
text in this poem. Jameson's ideologeme refers to the smallest pos-
sible unit of political belief or action that mediates "between concep-
tions of ideology as abstract opinion, class value, and the like" and lit-
erary materials (1991, 87). The example he gives from Nietzsche and
nineteenth century novels is *ressentiment* as a class ideology. But such
ideologemes find their material life in the utterance, in the material of
language. "Close to Naked" intervenes into ideologemes via the utter-
ance, as in the following instances: "Raindrops on roses and whiskers
on killers" (Creede 1989, 70), "Kick out the raspberries. Kick out the
plum" (71), "the boys spent more time in the bar than in jail" (71), "No
explanations were in order" (73), and "Out of sight, out of jail" (73).
The first two examples from "Close to Naked" are parsed from popular
music—"My Favorite Things" from *The Sound of Music* and "Kick Out
the Jams" by Detroit garage rockers MC5. In both cases an inversion
takes place at the level of the utterance: "kittens" become "killers"—a
metonymic shift of the signifier—and "jams" becomes "raspberries"

and "plums"—metonymy again. In the third example, we may expect the last word of the phrase to be "school," in which case this would be a judgmental utterance about boys wasting their time drinking instead of studying; but in comparison to jail, the bar doesn't look so bad. Or, indeed, no explanations are now in order (the original phrase, "explanations are in order" is an example of language being used as a form of power); the final phrase, repeating the content of the bar/jail line, uses the original utterance's anaphora (the repetition of "out of …" to suggest a parallelism) to different ends.

This reading of Nancy Shaw and Gerald Creede's "Close to Naked," then, suggests some of the ways in which I will argue, in this book, that the KSW is "the only poetry that matters." This is work that engages with gender and continues an avant-garde tradition embodied by such figures as Gertrude Stein. The poetry also is embedded in a political economy of counter-traditions, of marginalized spaces and bodies in the history of Vancouver. And it does this work via the materiality of the sign, via language itself not only representing a political alternative, but performing that alternative.

Some of these questions of materialism—the economic, especially—are explored in the fifth chapter of this book, when I look at the archive, but I want to situate the KSW in terms of a political economy of Vancouver history as well as a Canadian-American literary history. When I was working on the various chapters, I submitted two of them to academic Canadian journals. The procedure that is usually followed in such publications is for the submitted essays then to be sent out for peer review in a system known as "double-blind": the reviewer would have received my essay stripped of any identifying marks, and I, as author, would not know the identity of the reviewer. In the case of one of the chapters, it came back with the following comments:

… the question of significance in this critical work remains

> chiefly determined by whether the author can adequately
> demonstrate what Lacanian psychoanalysis can in itself add
> to literary criticism's interpretation and assessment of the
> poetic works featured in the piece and the Kootenay School
> of Writing in general as an important Canadian literary
> movement. Certainly current Canadian literary canons tend
> to marginalize the history and cultural importance of this
> particular Vancouver-based practice. Few university presses
> and peer-reviewed academic journals feature work or criti-
> cism on the school—a neglect that is due in part to its geo-
> graphical distance from Canada's literary establishments in
> Toronto and Montreal, its radical politics and its penchant
> for revisionary aesthetic forms. Hence, serious critical inter-
> rogation of this somewhat neglected lineage of poetry and
> aesthetic theory remains overdue, and the author's work is
> clearly an attempt to address this deficit.[4]

I think that this reviewer is correct in arguing that the KSW has
been marginalized in both the mainstream or canonical formation
of Canadian Literature and in its reception and critical construction
via academic discourse. So in providing a literary-historical context
for the Kootenay School, I have to speak to two audiences at once:
first of all, those who are familiar with, and indeed interested in, the
tradition of the Anglo-American literary avant garde, a tradition that
runs, in the first half of the twentieth century, from Stein and Pound
and Zukofsky and Niedecker to the New American poetries of Ol-
son, Creeley, Duncan, and Spicer; this tradition was then contested
in a Canadian context by the TISH poets (George Bowering, Daphne
Marlatt, Fred Wah, Frank Davey) and in the American one by the
L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E writers (Charles Bernstein, Bruce Andrews,
Susan Howe, Bob Perelman, Barrett Watten); more recently, "post-
Language" writers, sometimes denoted as conceptual or Flarf writers,
include the Americans Kenneth Goldsmith, Juliana Spahr, Vanessa

Place, Mark Nowak, Rob Fitterman, Rod Smith, and the Canadians Rachel Zolf, Sina Queryas, Christian Bök, Kate Eichhorn, and Darren Wershler. This is all just a list of names, a list that is hardly exhaustive or uncontroversial, but which functions as a placeholder. It can stand in contrast to readers who may come to this text from other traditions, whether from more conservative twentieth-century modernism and anti-modernism (which may run from Eliot and Frost to Plath and Lowell and the contemporary "workshop" or *New Yorker* poem or follow a less hegemonic trajectory) or the various strands and counter-hegemonic traditions of so-called "identity" poetics, from the Harlem Renaissance of Hughes to Brooks in the 1950s and then the Black Arts Movement and Canadian iterations in George Elliot Clarke or, closer to home, Wayde Compton, and the gendered poetics of Adrienne Rich and Margaret Atwood and Lowther; *or* the various anti-academic and sometimes populist forms from the New York school (Frank O'Hara but also Ted Berrigan and Ron Padgett) and its late-century epigones in spoken word and rap poetics to the Canadian small press and visual poetry movements, including Stuart Ross, jwcurry, Daniel f. Bradley, and other carriers of the Coach House torch.

But as the regional power imbalances cited in the reader's review of my essay above suggests, there is no "United States of poetry," no liberal chorus of eclecticism, and no discussion of poetry can indulge in the fantasy of "covering all the bases." The stakes may seem small in the poetry world, but the power disparities (whether around the question of representations of "raced" or gendered subjects or academic and critical reception) are, as in other social formations, nonetheless formidable.

And this literary history is then also contested on the ground and in the streets of Vancouver, the city where the Kootenay School has worked since the mid-1980s. Here is a brief recap of a history that is familiar to any reader of the KSW anthology[5]: in the 1980s in British Columbia, a conservative government—the Social Credit party,

which had ruled the province almost uninterrupted since World War II—got onto the Thatcherite/Reagonomics bandwagon and enacted legislation that would introduce "fiscal restraint." Which is to say, the government decided to cut its spending, and part of what that meant was shutting down a small liberal arts college in the town of Nelson, in the south-eastern corner of the province: David Thompson University Centre, or DTUC. The college had a lively creative writing program, including Colin Browne and Tom Wayman as instructors, a rotating roster of visiting writers (David McFadden, John Newlove, Margaret Atwood—apparently British novelist Ian McEwan even dropped by for a party at some point), and a budding group of students. When the college was shut down, protests happened locally—protests were going on all over the province, it was an exciting time—but in the end many decamped for Vancouver, where they transferred their energies to building a new entity, the Kootenay School of Writing (named after the region of British Columbia in which DTUC was located).[6]

As a collective, the KSW began on the run, as it were, as the off-shoot of 1980s-style neoliberalism[7] (as David Harvey and others have come to call the tendency in the late twentieth century to roll back modest post-war gains of social democracy in the name of globalization and consumer choice)—but it also took root in an already existing, and lively, Vancouver political and artistic culture. This was a city that since the 1960s had seen a rise in independent, non-profit art galleries, known in the Canadian art world as artist-run centres; a city that also was well-known for its clashes between civic authorities and hippies in the '60s and '70s; a city that had an exciting punk scene that gave rise to any number of acts, bands, and personalities, from the U-J3RK5 and D.O.A. to the Subhumans and Art Bergman (see Armstrong, Keithley); a city that nurtured a resilient anarchist culture, giving rise not only to squats, militant veganism, and a protest culture, but also the urban guerilla tactics of the Direct Action group, whose firebombing of porn shops, arms manufacturers, and hydro towers

led to the brief media controversy of the "Squamish Five" (see Antliff, Hansen); and a city that, after the flourishing of the TISH poets in the 1960s, had seen their retreat to the academy, leaving the scene to the determined activities of their fellow-travellers in the urban milieu, including the Vancouver Co-op Radio host and *BC Monthly* publisher Gerry Gilbert, red-diaper-baby-gone-hippie Maxine Gadd and, maybe, a few writers beginning to pick up on the new writing happening south of the border, some in exile from Vancouver Island (Kevin Davies and Peter Culley, both of whom had novelist Jack Hodgins as a high school teacher), and others, such as Dorothy Trujillo Lusk and then Gerald Creede, just doing their thing, waiting for something to happen, making something happen.[8]

This is a quick sketch of a social context for the KSW (which I go into more detail about via the archival research in Chapter Five; while, in Chapter Three, I deal more with the KSW in relation to the twentieth-century poetic tradition); I conclude this introduction with a brief synopsis of the five main chapters that follow. In the first chapter, "Tripartite Taxonomy," I argue that the work of the KSW falls, in terms of poetic method, into three categories: the social collage method, the Red Tories, and that of empty speech. This chapter is where I range over a variety of poets in each group, and introduce arguments and readings that are then explored in further depth in the three chapters that follow. In effect, the Tripartite Taxonomy chapter is like a home page with links; as a form of experiment, I develop readings that are then elaborated upon in the following chapters. In this regard, I was thinking especially of comments that Walter Benjamin makes early in his study of German baroque tragedy, the *Trauerspiel*, in which he writes that "the value of fragments of thought is all the greater the less direct their relationship to the underlying idea" and "the writer must stop and restart with every new sentence" and, further, that the content of the work of art "is revealed in a process which might be described metaphorically as the burning up of the husk as it

enters the realm of ideas, that is to say a destruction of the work in which its external form achieves its most brilliant degree of illumination" (1985, 29, 31). With this context, in the first chapter, the fragments of interpretation bear a relationship to the more extended work of the following chapters and, in reverse analogy, those later chapters' engagements are with, for the most part, fragments of poems, or single poems from larger bodies of work. The reader, like the writer, must stop and start—must jump to links—and then this book as a whole is consumed in its reading, as its critical exegesis consumes the poetry proper. (To be more explicit: there are various segments of the "Tripartite Taxonomy" chapter that are repeated, almost verbatim, in the following three chapters. Readings of Kathryn MacLeod's work thus are repeated in the second chapter, of Deanna Ferguson's in the third chapter, of Lisa Robertson's in the fourth chapter. The purpose of this method is to transform the book from an inert object into one that, like the poetry it examines, is alive with intertextual reference, with allusion, influence, and the anxieties thereof.)

This reference to Benjamin introduces him as a curious fellow-traveller to the more orthodox Lacanian apparatus of this study: as, for the most part, it will be Lacan, and his latter-day commentators Bruce Fink, Slavoj Žižek, Malcolm Bowie, and Jodi Dean, to whom I turn for theoretical accompaniment in these readings of KSW poetry. But Benjamin has also joined this party. In part, this is because of my own engagement with his work over the past three or four years, going back to a homophonic translation I undertook in 2007–08 of his *Berliner Kindheit um neunzehnhundert*, published in 2009 by Book-Thug as *The Benjamin Sonnets*. More recently, I have been teaching *The Arcades Project*, and so it was almost inevitable that this poetic, obscurantist, Marxist critic should come along for the ride.

In the "Tripartite Taxonomy" of the first chapter, I make some references to the Lacanian ideas that I develop in this book, but we really get into it in Chapter Two, on empty and full speech. In terms

of engaging with Lacan, I should offer some biographical justification or at least context: In the fall of 2007, after ten years of bouncing around Vancouver from one academic institution to another as a sessional instructor, I was given a limited term appointment at Simon Fraser University (SFU) and was about to sign the paperwork for a tenure stream position when a group of clinicians and academics in Vancouver started a Lacan Salon, a reading group that has been meeting every two weeks since. This intensive reading practice—of essays from *Écrits* and from various *Seminars*—then seemed to provide me with a new entrée into the KSW corpus and history. On the one hand, it offers a much more supple way of reading texts than the tendentious politicized reading practices that surround the school (and here I must be impolite and single out the introduction to *Writing Class: The Kootenay School of Writing Antholog*y); and on the other hand, the combination of Lacanian theory and KSW poetics offers a way to use the one to explain or introduce the other. My theoretical approach— what I later came to call my *lapproach*, a way of combining the *la* with the approach, a nod to Lacan's *llangue* or *lalangue*—was to map out or taxonomize the writing of the KSW into three groups or tendencies or formal approaches: the Red Tory neopastoralism of Lisa Robertson and Peter Culley (which I look at in terms of Lacan's Imaginary, or the dialectic of screen and mirror, as well as Žižek on lack and loss and left melancholy); the social collage/disjunction form to be found in the work of Jeff Derksen, Deanna Ferguson, Colin Smith, and Dorothy Trujillo Lusk (this work I talk about in terms of the Real, or the notion of capitalism as unsymbolizable, especially as theorized in terms of Lacan's four discourses—the hysteric, master, analyst, and university—in *Seminar XVII*); and the concerns of procedural constraints and Blanchotesque absence in Susan Clark, Kathryn MacLeod, Dan Farrell, and Melissa Wolsak (this work I interrogate in terms of the Lacanian Symbolic, or his theories of language to be found in his work of the 1950s).

This all takes place in the next four chapters. The fifth chapter concerns the KSW archive, to be found at SFU's Contemporary Literature Collection, and concerns the materiality not only *of* the archive—the financial and socio-political context for KSW as an institution—but also *in* the archive—its material form as substrate, as papers, as five years' worth of weekly collective minutes on legal writing pads, for instance. Here I examine the archive and also ask what does the archive ask of us—in Lacanese, *Chè vuoi?* What do you want? Does the archive want to be read, or to be left alone, undisturbed? Who is the subject of the archive—the collective subjectivity of the poets of the KSW? The archivist? The researcher? And so on. My book then culminates with another chapter of close readings. In this case, the readings are an attempt to bridge the gap between the formally radical KSW work and the equally political work writing that developed simultaneously (here the work of Tom Wayman, but also Colin Browne, as key figures in the collective in the 1980s, must be underscored). While still in a psychoanalytic mode, this chapter looks to a work by the American poet Clark Coolidge—*Own Face*—and a poem by Canadian Tom Wayman—"The Face of Jack Munro"—in terms of what Žižek has to say about the face as the gentrification of the Other.

cess to the KSW archives, and I am especially thankful to Tony Power for his work above and beyond.

I am also grateful to members of the Lacan Salon for their intellectual challenges and companionship, including Hilda Fernandez, Ted Byrne, Alessandra Capperdoni, Paul Kingsbury, and Jesse Proudfoot. Writers, artists, activists, and academics here and elsewhere whose example always inspired include Aaron Vidaver, Am Johal, Andrew Klobucar, Chris Stroffolino, Christian Bök, Christine Stewart, Colin Browne, Colin Smith, Dan Farrell, Dorothy Trujillo Lusk, Fred Wah, George Bowering, Gerald Creede, Ivan Drury, Jason Starnes, Jim Green, Kathryn MacLeod, Kim Minkus, Lisa Robertson, Lori Emerson, Lorna Brown, Louis Cabri, Margery Fee, Mark Laba, Melissa Wolsak, Peter Culley, Rob Manery, Robyn Laba, Roger Farr, Roy Miki, Shawn Millar, Susan Clark, Terry Johnson (RIP), Tom LaViolette, Wayde Compton, and Wendy Pedersen.

Thanks also to the crew at Arsenal Pulp: Brian Lam, Robert Ballantyne, Shyla Seller, Susan Safyan, Cynara Geissler, and to Anne Stone for an awesome job of editing. Versions of some chapters of this book were read in 2009 by Hilda Fernandez, Steve Collis, and Rob Manery: thanks, but I'll still take credit for mistakes. Comments made by reviewers for *English Studies in Canada* and *Open Letter*—where earlier versions of chapters three and two, respectively, appeared—were also useful. An earlier version of Chapter Three was also published in draft form by Vancouver Publication Studio: thanks to Keith Higgins for the work on that (and to Matthew Stadler, whose franchise it is …), and also to Brian Kaufman for putting a chunk of the introduction into *subTerrain*.

I gave a talk on the process of writing Chapter Two at the Candahar Bar in 2010: thanks to Michael Turner and Reid Shier for the opportunity. Students at Emily Carr University, Capilano College, the University of British Columbia, and SFU were helpful in feedback (and, sometimes, the production of readings). Some less formal institutions

and sites that hosted—wittingly or not—the production of this book include Humanities 101, gene café, the Millennium line of Metro Vancouver's Skytrain system, the Carnegie and other locales of the Vancouver Public Library system, Artspeak, the OR Gallery, and the Western Front. Thank you to Julie Sawatsky and Devon Sawatsky Burnham for knowing that any acknowledgment of their contributions can only be an empty gesture, however necessary.