

# THE CENTRE FOR CAPITAL, LINGUISTIC AND ALLUVIAL EXPENDITURES (CCLAE) / Field Notes

## Location #1 Tsawwassen

*An alluvium of beastlike hopefulness sifted words of faith, submission, and revolt. Their faith therefore was typo. Tongues to wash against habitat.*

*Notes towards slack.* Here we find the idea of reading in a more primordial sense than reading words. The hunter on the track of game is a reader of signs as is the shaman who interprets the symptoms of illness. The imprint of feet in the mud is the first writing of intentional existence.

*We set off; long walks or cagey stumbles. Set across, set need, set sextant. Each minute apparatus orients thrown crustaceans. We can find their placement by flutter logarhythms before sunk.*

Here we find beachcombing for washed-up invertebrates as a performance of lexical harvest. On any given day we can see children (or men and women of every age) parading these spaces for treasure. Not sustenance, no, not anymore! But a trounce for prize, a chorus of: "look what I found," or "can I take this home?" It seems we interact with these tidal flats as submerged vocabularies: exotic, mysterious, gutted mouths for our pleasure and wonder. But what of this harvest? The child stuffs pockets and buckets not for potlatch but for display windows on suburban lawns: "This is what I got"—pointing to the drying starfish on the lawn. Is this kind of beachcombing then not a replica of waste and expenditure in tongue and breath? What a collision! What a tangle! This flanerrie atop a tidal space that otherwise has such determination and purpose. Is it a wonder that the Chinook lexicon was forged on these alluvial flats? That this hybrid and crude language which originates solely from, and exists to serve, the structures capital (*how can we trade? Your English? My Salish?*), found its echo in these places of so much awkward death?

Or perhaps this bucket and pocket full economic is nothing more than a reaction to the ecosystem itself. The child who prowls the tide line witnesses a whole earth in spasm and flail—a space rife with the smell of rot and slow failure. The child never stays to watch the sea return and the logic unfold.

But does this urgency of harvest, of *take take*, not also ignite a politics of rescue? What happens when we decide not to ‘take the lexicon home’ but return it?

Last year, my family and I were vacationing in Tsawwassen British Columbia. This part of the world boasts miles of fertile coast line—soft shores—marked by wild and vast tides. One August afternoon I observed a group of children harvesting the shore line for alphabets of a once submerged world. Predictably, most of the children dug and plucked at these creatures for gross innards and alien squirms. Once the bucket was full, each child carried mounds of species back to their parents who lounged on towels and chairs far from the shore line. I could hear the children’s gasps, songs, and cries as they ran inland. At first, each symphonic burst seemed to come as a surprise to their own mouths. They seemed to struggle with their own throats and glottal stops—pulsing out sounds which grew louder in mimicry and fervor. But there soon came to be something rehearsed about these belt-outs. As the children became more comfortable with these alien orbs in their palms, so did their grunts and calls exhibit uniformity. The children, these harvesters, had an anthem, a quickly developed lexical strategy to deal with the waste they stumbled across.

It was while recording these anthems that I noticed another child still ankle deep in the sea. This child had his bucket full but was reaching into it with careful calculation, with an exactness reserved for clinicians. This child was returning the invertebrates to the sea—tossing them back in what I could only describe as a politics of rescue. So what of this child? What of *his* harvest? So much labour expended in *take take* and the silence of his plotted return. What language was he was throwing back into the depths? Would these exiled urchins, sandollars and clams not disrupt the text of the underneath?

*Splay palms and graph return. Insertion linguistics. Crustaceans do not need the sun. Biologists found “as” an aid. Made up vibrations to migrate from mirror to water.*

## Location #2 Fraser Delta

*Notes, flood: a rip in the thistle.*

Re: naming—"Capital, Linguistic, and Alluvial Expenditures."

In what sense I wonder "expenditure"? "Expending or laying out." Often meaning "waste." Also consumption: using up, consuming. Or expending any reserve of energy (thus depletion, exhaustion?). A river's energy is renewable, sustainable—it keeps shouting its text into the sea, dragging the silt tonsil of earth with it. Language's expenditures are also inexhaustible, sustainable: my saying something doesn't prevent you from saying something. There is always more to say.

*I put my canoe in the water. The current isn't too strong. Ladner it is named after some European founder—who made expenditures and reaped profits. I settle into the glass bottom, curl out towards slim current.*

"Capital expenditure": expenditure from which benefits may be expected over a relatively long period; expenditure on capital or fixed assets (like buying a canoe for trolling the estuary, or pens and paper for composing its flows). Capital expenditures are seen as necessary (under capitalism), but must be compensated for (via profit). Overhead. Operating costs. Extra to but a condition of "making money." Whether we seek profits or not, we all constantly expend—energy, money, capital. What will we get back? What will sustain us?

*Pollen from trees in clouds blows onto river surface and disappears towards the sea. Some becomes gummed on the cream side of my canoe. Along the blade of my paddle. I drift into channel, pry and draw towards reedy banks. Expend energy to fit form.*

This connects to "potlatch." Is the expenditure mentioned here the same as in potlatch—as in gift economies? So—not "take take" but flooding out—alluvial—into the world. Giving it all away knowing we will reap in turn. Expenditure in and of itself does not mean capitalism. All life is calculations of expenditures (usually of primary energies) that will then hopefully lead to a return (of the gift). We



are everywhere given by the world (crabs in the reach, sweet grass, wild berry, a salmon cool in shallow shadow). What do we have to give? A language to the world. Consciousness of and for things, attention to the untended, words—throwing our vocal energies out so the world will be spoken. Like plants hold the river bank in place (for a time), and the river waters the plants—we speak the world that feeds us.

*Say salal say squid say sumptuary say season say synthetic say salmonberry say sapien say sedge say satellite say sea say season say sea.*

Of “waste and expenditure in tongue and breath”—there is no waste of words or breath. All language swathes the living. We gather, naming, not to keep but to collect—composing the world—a surplus activity, we tell ourselves, narrating our actions as we expend everywhere, feeding story where we empty muscle—not to accumulate or profit, but to encounter the world—to meet it and say it—to gather and give away (potlatch)—which is what language is, pure expenditure, steam coming off working muscle, sweat falling from brow to river.

*I am close to shore close close I pry I draw the boat alongside some island it is here banks and birch tress we will gather and gathering encounter what words will flood out between us here rivering what we say surrounded saying.*

Cclae. Clay. The name banks something can flood through. I can live with that. A “(de) Centre for Capital, Linguistic, and Alluvial Expenditures.” A potlatch.

### Location #3 Unknown

Reflections of McCaffery—Robbin' the Hood: taking meaning from the Author-Gods and empowering the proles (but the proles ain't taking their newfound liberation well).

By resituating the site of meaning-formation to the reader, attempting to give the reader the tools to form meaning that were formerly the sole property of the author (Barthes' author-god from D.o.T.a), McCaffery turns a voyeur, a passive node, into a participant singing its location in the matrix of ideology. The act of reading a text with no clearly prescriptive purpose has the potential to reveal more about the reader than about the author or poem. This has always been the case, but with a carefully regimented and widely accepted method for content-delivery we were able to hide in the critical distance behind 'objectivity (egads)' and fidelity to the author's intent.

Poems used to be written in words we knew, about things we knew, in a manner that we found familiar, but recently the top has come off that pandora's box known as the community. What becomes clear, and has already been demonstrated, is that to understand something that seems as easy to understand as the sitcom three and a half men requires a whole nest of assumptions that disappear if you are in the community that birthed that show (namely the entire western world [sic]). The same is true for anything that can be 'read.' The first and silent annunciation of understanding (even if the understanding is in an attempt to lead to refutation) is a great big wave to say "I'm here! and I get it!"

Protest at the gates of meaning.

Not addressing the fact that language and capitalism are intertwined, such that the acquisition of language is a precondition for consumerist behavior and acceptance of a duty to produce, consume, and organize is tantamount to pretending there is no poverty in the world.

McCaffery's writing is perverse. It celebrates the desire for meaning by pointing out the inability of language to reliably convey meaning. I should clarify that understanding language is not simply the receiver's ability to link abstract concepts

and words to concrete things. Every time someone understands something, they silently affirm the entire system that plays into the ability to understand, meaning the social, political, economic, what-have-you systems that all participate in forming the armor around their 'identity,' that all allow for a pointing to them to occur, that all act when a person understands something like a giant red flag that loudly proclaims I am here and I support this system. The problem is that even pointing out that this is the situation, invokes the situation and McCaffery's poems are perverse for enjoying that paradox!

Christine Stewart said:

Partly McCaffery's 'manipulation' reveals the mechanics of the machine of lyric poetry (its traditions, assumptions etc.) and exposes to the reading reader the extent and intensity of their own investments in that machine and their own complicity in its functions.

from:

<http://journals.sfu.ca/poeticfront/index.php/pf/article/viewFile/11/9>>

It is no wonder people are trying to make the act of writing political again when content and meaning have been almost totally corrupted by the capitalist drive to production, where object, where content and meaning are produced to be decoded, read, rationalized... whatever. If we can find a way to frame writing as political before content is understood by a reader, then it is capable of circumscribing the totality of capitalism's territory, captured as it will be in a moment of paralysis before it spins off again, de-territorialized by its own sense of necessity.

I write of capitalism as an enemy, as a localizable force into a body that I can attack, even if that body is made of words, because it belies the fact that capitalism is an immanent axiomatic that bends every flow to its will. However, its will is non-localized because it is experienced as the voice of the father, as a command from within our own heads driven by fear and fuelled by its intertwined relationship with our survival as an individual and as a species. That is capitalism's masterstroke (making us believe in the correctness of masterstrokes and locking us into the desire to reproduce them ourselves to approach correctness, i.e., success).



## Location # 4 Twin Island, Indian Arm

*There is always more to say. Our tussle, our muscle, brings warm saliva to an edge: lava.  
We feed the story where we empty. Verbal flow to graphic marks, visions for algae scrawl.*

The Twin Islands, such as the South Sandwich Islands, are Oceanic Islands. These islands are “originary, essential islands. They emerge from underwater eruptions”—a vivisection of deep Pacific anatomy. What is below bloats surface, dislocating salt pastures and fracturing tides. Some of these islands rise slow, mimicking the turtle herds that lounge in ash forms. Some disappear and return as vocal miscues in orb yanked liquid. There is no time to annex these spaces, no high ground for girders, and no bedrock for concrete. Considering the characteristics of these Oceanic Islands, the memory I have of these islands perhaps expresses less the want of an actual island but for an upchuck or vocal, a gut pool of slang and patios. That islands are aggregates of interiors (lava, tectonics), that they are fragile geographical bulwarks invaded by lap and current, that they (sometimes) disappear in tide, all lead me to believe that this reverie is more about speech, specifically, of my own expenditures.

*one*

*That islands cannot be relied upon; that islands are sites of waste and expenditure; that it was night and I was camping with strangers again.*

*two*

So oral was our desire to reach this place of clog that we rung the mainland with yells, hoots, and muses of the coming paddle. However, I knew in that moment, as I know now, that those vocal patters would dissipate in ocean current and turbidity, that our fervour to reach Twin Island (no matter how many times we licked the shore) would remain part of the mainland. Although I puffed and whooped atop tectonics, I knew that access to this island would be equivalent to washing the mouth out with soap—vocal erosion—a forgetfulness of the disruption and inflection that hived in

my own mouth. This is not new, this voyage to place, and nor is the fixation of hull and lips to sea. Perhaps though, lusting to forget my own tongue on tephra deposits signals a desire for interiors—to spelunk through the noise our mouths expend and lantern lungs and guts—where eruptions epicentre.

*three*

Nylon shoals pock this place of drown. Our bodies lie together, their worn trysts flirt the massing palps. “This isthmus floods”—swills between our cavities as we pass barnacles from tongue tips, each to each, secrete to accrete, tic tac rattle and moan until octopus pad our lungs, suction and grapple the prattle of our moontide blather. I archive in atoll. Munch cerebrum as coral. *Almost drown* appears as hieroglyphs: that of vocal bawl to that of flipper puncture. Pastel drenched mouths or legs blotched with heavy passes. We hush and crinkle against the slow salt creep, our thoughts dampen and shamble:

*I take a boat to you, archipelago, my only tracks: wake. If I swim, only flail and tread muffle against your turquoise bellow. Cartography forgets my mouth. Legend tattoos mouth as stitch. You have survived the absorption that once contained you. Irked nations with longitude creeps. I slick towards your pillow lava. Desire your fixed geography, your annex and floral anthem, the ability to count your species, to always fear flood and dream now of slow erosion. Of sleeping always in your middle, hoping to wake afloat.*

*four*

It is virtually impossible to examine such a memory, so fraught as it is with lust and geographical formations, with epidermis and minute species. However, the basic scaffold of the memory is that I was camping, many years ago, with a group of boys and girls from a nearby summer camp. Our destination was Twin Island and an ill-advised camp on the tidal isthmus which began to flood late into the night. The need to seek direction from such a reverie will always be disrupted by the fact that dreams, like memories, are closer to hieroglyphic texts than that of verbal speech. Think of this memory as the stain spit leaves on the pavement rather than the actual



chatter before mucus. In other words, we must get down on our hands and knees to examine the splatter before it dries. No longer can we rely on the noise of speech for recollection. Rather, it is the scar; what is expended, the body in tumult which wriggles amidst our synapses.

Perhaps we can even add ecology to this supposition of *memory by expenditure* by examining the Chinese myth about the origin of writing as recounted by Chang Yen-Yaun in the *Li Tai Ming Hua Chi*: "The K'uei star with pointed rays is the Lord of Literatures on earth and as Tsang Chieh, who had four eyes, looked up into heaven he saw images dropping down from the star and these he combined with footprints of birds and tortoises."

In this myth, writing, image, and the visible mark are all linked by movements of outflow and expenditure: Images *drop*. Footprints are *left*. Writing is *detritus*. What then can we say about memory? Perhaps memory, like writing, is the midden heap full with hunks and chunks of sense, pleasure, pain. Again we find ourselves on our hands and knees, desperate to reconcile the visible with our image, rummaging for mussel shells from May's harvest, for one lover's hair or bones from meals. So then it is possible to examine certain reveries, but only by crawling and sniffing through what is *left*. But how to recall an event that took place on an island? A space that is hemmed in by vicious borders; a space that risks its earth for tide; a space that only has so much room for crawling.