

ROB BUDDE / 'Tankful'

*(& if they dare,
the system, the tangled boundary
(that has no place in what we learn as place)
deflates, at every encounter point
—George Stanley, "Gentle Northern Summer"*

1

The Esso owner shoots me
a scowl when I ask, 'you
from around here.' He is changing
the till and thinks I might rob him.
I consider

tracing the tributaries, the small
flow/large currency, where
the caches are, the upward
ascendancy of cash, torrents
from the station, 5th & Central,
to Vancouver, Calgary,
Toronto, New York, places

we go to
vacation, enjoy the amenities
(after all the fill-ups & hotel
expenses), the infrastructure
bought, at both ends,
by poor envious us

*i would wish
not to be used*

The gas plant chugs out
across the river, the local
thug & his territory—the truck
is god,
icon & driven.

2

Back in the day,
the logs hauled by horse,
those men like the local grocer
bulldozed under by the 7-11
on 20th (the VLA lives on Mars
bars) 18 wheels and the power
of conformity, all the

fast food and box stores smile,
'give back to the community' in charity,
overload the landfill.

*If I bought in bulk,
would knowledge be cheaper?*

We send raw logs, fire them
straight out to China
(me, little, trying to
dig there—like the trees)
& buy the kids meals
with plastic toys made in China
(the logs clog the system
in return) &

deflation occurs not at a point
of political catharsis

but upon the collapse,
the breaking point where nothing
is left, and we leave, get in the car
on empty.