

## George Stanley / AFTER JOHN NEWLOVE

I'm approaching it from the wrong direction, & so I don't recognize it. Someone — that's as basic as you can get — someone is who we are. Someone arrived, just a moment ago, from the previous moment, where not-he, not-she, had spent a century, an eternity, but then not-his, not-her, lease was up, & someone had to skedaddle — & arrived here, not knowing what it was not-she, not-he, confronted, was over against, because not-he, not-she, approached it from the wrong direction.

If this is the world, then where am I,  
what is this loneliness, this outpost?  
Or if I am not I, but only someone,  
then there is nothing I am over against.

Finally we all face this together,  
but don't know what it is, even  
though no longer approaching it, in the heart  
of it, in our hearts, but still, somehow,  
from the wrong direction.

From someone's heart.

## THE CITY

I don't want to walk on Granville Mall    walk past the  
children    hear their eyes read my thoughts  
They crouch in entryway    squat or sit    legs skinny  
unfed    shaved head & tattoo, pierced flesh

Suits go by, briskly The children  
read their thoughts or vacant privacy (heads turn,  
eyes lowered, fingers meticulously roll a smoke)

Voices corroded, raspy worn by the effort of denying  
despair, just for a word or two the words muttered,  
laconic (like signals) spoken when needed  
for practical reasons (except when the demon of rage  
breaks free) Is it not to let  
the mortal breath catch the contagion of  
analysis? If you found yourself  
saying something that took too long to say, using a  
conjunction, say, *unless*, *but*, *nevertheless* —  
cut the crap! unless unless you had to  
get past the sour facts

as if a suit,  
or a nice middle-class lady bent down &  
extended her hand for you to place your foot  
on—the first step—up—& say all the  
nice words—*unless, it wouldn't have, if only,*  
*I never*

It's not those words we live by, but the unspeakable ones—maybe they can be kept true by shouting them, like the ultimate, *not!*

They read your thoughts—  
how can you live, only caring about money?  
how can you live, not caring about caring?  
how can you walk by, carefree, thinking  
about cars, jewelry,  
your mutual funds, security?

The orthodox say:

*Human nature is a mind that grows in a baby's brain,  
& learns to compete*

(As these children's bodies are starved)

*compete compute consume*

(As they huddle together, you stand apart)

*compute*

(As they seek to be friends & overcome bad feelings,  
you seek to overcome weakness & be secret enemies  
of all you smile on)

*compete compute consume*

*& learns skills, like  
friendliness, courtesy  
& different languages  
for different games*

By the towers the children sit, naked  
By the towers, with black stick legs,  
torn cloth, tiny holes in the mesh

The towers rise of steel & glass  
up over the streets in the carpeted suites  
the shadowless light the fine, filtered air  
cleansed of static the molecules, polished

the suits stride back & forth & get paid  
for their faces their eyes  
are information receptors cut of a jacket,  
knotted tie sweat drops 'synchilla sweaters  
made of recycled Coke bottles'

the hand is an information receptor  
(the hand is a starfish, the information enters  
via the mouth)

*You have to have more than five senses  
to keep ahead of the world—up here*

*I have a profit-maximizing module  
implanted in my hindbrain, it  
overrides family values. The data  
is sorted, screened the little things  
fall through the screen finer & finer  
screens the little things fall the trays  
are emptied into the clouds*

*I have the finest of minds—compete, compute*

High above the children with their stick legs  
red spots of anger, white faces

new towers rise, cranes ratchet up their sides

at the top, a visual racket



## NAKED IN NEW YORK

Ralph Macchio kissing Eric Stoltz on the lips, impulsively,  
on the screen at the Hollywood, in the audience loud gasps,  
as-if-sickened groans. These yahoos must have known  
their arrant discourtesy, not to the rest of us only,

but to *them*, the two giant heads soft as flags  
or luminous clouds above us negotiating  
a moment of intimacy - Macchio ruddy-cheeked,  
high on his cupid daring,  
Stoltz (the beloved) cool, 'vanilla pudding' (Spicer) -

two Harvard boys at an arty New York party,  
the straight one mildly pissed at being hit on - wanted,  
but gratified by the compliment paid to his beauty  
(not cataloguing the gay one's pain at his coolness),

but the guys in the seats, beneath them, the offended,  
*not* wanted - outside this story - outside *Hollywood* -  
this Harvard boy, really the actor Eric Stoltz,  
rich, young, handsome, wanted,  
& they not.

A boy being kissed by another boy could tip over the applecart,  
all the shiny red apples in stacks, pyramids, buffed up for sale,  
that were once in the dark of the barrel, homophobia high school,  
hoping none of us was rotten, no bad apple, no queer,  
certain we were all unwanted, none wanted by any of the others -  
tipped over, apples rolling, bumping, bouncing, in the street,  
in the mud,  
bruises, kisses (like pool balls), bites,  
desire all over the place.