

# Two Poems

**George Stanley**

Balaclava St.

When the crane lifts  
flats of lumber to the roof  
of the apartment house  
under construction  
across the street,  
big wavy shadows flit  
past the living room window  
& half-drawn blinds.

As the crane lifts  
a flat of boards  
a shadow climbs  
the leaves & branches  
of the tall linden  
like a darker tree.

There's a hole  
in the foliage  
near the top  
of the big linden  
and a gap on its side  
where some branches  
droop. White cumulus  
was visible there  
just now, but must have  
blown east, now all  
is pale blue. The whole tree  
looks ragged and tired

like it was the end of summer,  
not late in May.

And out my other eye  
there's the gaudy, high-browed  
baseball cap, got in Maui.  
Soooooo embarrassing,  
the team manager  
on his knees, sorting through  
a carton of caps, to find  
one my size.

The cap rests on a box,  
a handmade wooden box  
(atop the black bookcase)  
Simon used to send me  
the chunk of "Carwash rock"  
he either pried loose  
or found fallen off  
the rock face on Highway 16  
west of Terrace. "Carwash rock"  
would spill or splash  
rainwater on passing  
westbound cars.  
Now the chunk  
lies out on the porch  
with other junk. It  
has lost its meaning.

2.

The bright now  
is thrust like a sword  
into the darkness of tomorrow.  
(Gerald said, "That's optimistic.")

The apartment house nears completion.  
That black, rectangular cave will be  
the gracious entrance to “The Grace,”  
for so it shall be called.

Young couples,  
old couples, roommates, bedmates,  
& the odd well-to-do single senior  
(one-bedrooms go for \$2000 per nowadays)  
will pass through its doors, with kids,  
infants in strollers, bikes (but probably not dogs),  
ascend by stair and elevator to discover  
their new “homes,” settle in, and ere long  
will say hello to strangers in the halls.

Spanking new sidewalks, lindens give shade,  
and in keeping with the “Vancouver model”  
(ground floor for retail),  
Parthenon Supermarket will move  
its olives & cheeses across Broadway  
into spacious new premises — already  
visible, vacant but dimly lit, by night.

After four shots & three beers,  
reaching backward to press the button  
for the light (around 9:30 pm,  
SW corner of West Broadway and Balaclava)  
lost balance, almost fell, righted self.

A young Asian man, wearing a cap, about  
to cross Balaclava, looked back, said  
“Are you all right?”

## The Hollywood

Eros has found  
a new path  
to my heart

Memory, flashback,  
is like a radio

Old, sick, and yes, dying,  
we know ourselves to be a tribe

faraway stations  
come in at night  
(faraway in time)

reach out with your hand  
to touch the dial

to tune the mind

there is no dial

Seated across from each other  
at the front of the bus  
(not facing in the direction of travel)

Odd thing is, when one of those stations  
comes in, you know exactly  
where you were standing—  
exactly

any one of these

That's us—  
front of the bus—  
not facing in the direction of travel  
but facing each other across the aisle  
us seeing us!

understanding

or not—

staring over the heads of the others  
at shop signs the bus is passing  
staring into the past

(The way I had of getting  
physical pleasure  
don't work no more,  
just a far-off tremor)

They've enclosed the linden  
outside the Hollywood  
in wood & wire fencing  
("Tree Protection Zone")

which must mean  
they intend some work  
on the theatre's façade

the new apartment house  
(ground not broken yet,  
empty pubs and shops  
not knocked down yet)  
will extend west as far as  
Young Brothers Produce

six stories— the city gave the developer  
one extra for saving the theatre  
(which will block the view west  
from the fifth floor of The Grace)

Happiness is hiding  
somewhere inside me

I shop at the Parthenon  
Sunday mornings

his name is on the receipt