ODE TO THE CITY BUS

Oh you silver whale with bulging eyes,
I love the way you ride the hot asphalt
on waves of lolling, sturdy spring.
I love the way you mess the flow of traffic,
taking the corners wide over curbs,
you rebel, you magic dragon,
you thorn in the neck of the efficient state.

Let me dissertate on your sounds:
the low carbon groan that sends
the smoking fart from your rear end,
the pss that opens all your doors,
the creech of brakes, the pong, pong, pong
so deliciously, the pulling of that string
running above the windows
stops the bus, stops the bus:
the chick-cling, chick-cling, chick-cling
of the counter coin drop.
Salute the driver, you riders!
Humble captain of the Democratic ship!
How in your interior sit silent eyes
holding packages, on verge of thought.
Kids barter their balance
against your surprising sway.
The studious study the ads,
while in the back, the long seat
bouncy stateroom, the young, in laughter,
flirting!

Oh bus! So ecologically sound!
So bannered proud! I bus your straining
angel chromium side!

FRED JOHNSON

AMERICA

who else has written about you?
Ginsberg? Whitman?
Baraka
maybe spoke of you
America
they loved you
at least enough to write

they wrote love america
and your answering echo
falling
into the syrupy dregs
of their coffee cups
murmured
something like love
your icy-wind breath
whipping around
chipped brick corners
of cold water tenements
sounded a little like love.

America, who else has sung your songs?
who else has shouted your name
drunk beyond their means to be;
high on the smell of you,
grabbing huge handfuls
of your concrete institutions;
who has loved you more than your poets—and
every man is a poet.
James M. Fraser

Eleanor Ray

THE CELLAR

There were six of us then, my four brothers, my sister and me. We all went down the cellar together. We took out the ashes. It was a dirt cellar, extending the length of the house. The raw walls gave the cellar its tomb-like feeling. The windows, covered over with years of dust, affected the stuffy suffocating atmosphere of the cellar.

When something went wrong with the cellar's furnace, a long electric cord with a light bulb on one end and a plug at the other was used to light the cellar area. The plug was attached to a wall socket on the first floor. Then the long cord was carried down the cellar steps, placed near the furnace in a catch on the ceiling. There it lit up a small area near the furnace. But we never used this lighting fixture. We kids had our flashlight.

Our flash-light was our most valuable possession. It warded off danger. Shadows of figures, portentous shapes of every kind lost their presence when our flash-light hit them. But we didn't just imagine those images. They were in the cellar. Because this house was not just your ordinary picture book row house. No, this house was the most exciting house in the world. Mrs. Davis, who paid us the fifty cents for taking the ashes out, told us that Walt Whitman, the world's greatest poet, died here, upstairs, right in the bed. We knew she was telling us the truth. We also knew every detail of the bed he died in. Walter, our oldest brother, was the first to learn the words on the plaque nailed to the foot of the bed. The plaque said, "Bed in which Walt Whitman died."