



## THE WRECK OF THE HESPERUS

On a foggy morning in '76  
I idled my VW at the intersection  
of Cedar and 28th Streets,  
awaiting the traffic light's decision.

Stealing through the mist nearby  
a two-axle truck headed for the landfill  
manned by Steve and his uncle Guy,  
would soon have a screaming handful.

The garbage truck in overdrive  
gathered speed in lightly falling rain.  
My fevered brain could not surmise  
the convergence of the twain.

I heard a poem in my ear.  
The light was red, but turning green.  
I slipped the Superbeetle into first gear  
and throttled the machine.

The truck's enormous left front tire  
rolled up onto my hood,  
and the truck ramped into the air,  
all white and beautiful and good.

My car stopped instantly, crushed.  
I watched the truck fly o'er  
the intersection, and the great nose pushed  
itself into the asphalt floor.

The axles snapped and spun away.  
Two wheels in tandem headed east.  
The great container heaved and swayed  
and tipped and dumped its feast.

Coffee grounds, eggshells, cereal  
boxes scattered wide and far.  
The screeching metal carrier  
scraped street and gave off sparks.

Banana peels, venetian blinds,  
and Sunday comics sections.  
Burned out light bulbs and orange rinds  
with jotted down directions.

I saw a flattened beach ball skin  
flapping in the truck's rubble.  
I saw Guy and Steve stagger from within  
and feared there might be trouble.

The men seemed drunk and at a loss.  
Their feet met no resistance.  
People on the sidewalks paused  
to offer their assistance.

Me, I crawled from the front seat,  
cassette deck in one hand.  
I had a small bump on my head  
but was otherwise able to stand.

An ancient man from a nursing home  
stepped forward with accusing eye.  
He gestured with his finger bone  
that I was to draw nigh.

"Young man," he asked, a squeaky falsetto,  
"What church do you go to?"  
I asked why the old man wanted to know.  
"Because I want to go to that church, too."