

PARK? or PARK?

(NYC Dept. of Transportation 1999 – In Defense of Canal Park)

State DOT  
Mr. King  
Is that Stephen?  
Is this a horrifying horror film?  
Oh no  
It's just life  
On Canal Street  
I have lived on Canal  
Between West and Washington  
For almost 25 years  
I ingest diesel fumes  
For breakfast  
Lunch  
And dinner  
I hear incessant honking  
Even in those rare moments  
When it doesn't exist  
I can't remember  
What a tree looks like  
Though I'm told they're quite fine  
And belong here on earth  
I do not smoke  
Drink  
Take drugs  
Or eat meat  
Sugar  
Or white flour  
For that matter  
Because health matters to me  
But I'm more likely  
To die  
Of lung cancer  
Than my  
Less conscientious  
Counterparts  
Elsewhere  
Because the air I breathe  
Is so highly noxious

I generously  
Inadvertently  
Season  
All my organic meals  
With 2.5 particulates  
Particularly virulent  
I wouldn't mind  
Living on Canal Street  
If only I could breathe  
In Tahiti  
I wouldn't mind  
Living on Canal Street  
If only the 70 ft. semi truck route  
Wasn't routed directly through  
The canal  
Of my inner ear  
Night and day  
I wouldn't mind  
Living on Canal Street  
If only historic Canal Park  
Wasn't slated  
For an idling parking lot  
Nightmare  
Of added lanes  
Exacerbated bottleneck  
Gridlocked  
Carbon monoxide-emitting  
Vehicular air quality manslaughter  
Drive-by asphyxiation  
Drive-by asphyxiation  
On route  
To the toxic tunnel  
With our lungs  
And nervous systems  
As the trail of casualties  
In their caustic wake  
So let's choose:  
Parking lot of lanes  
Of exhaust  
A what cost?  
Parking lot of lanes  
Or a Park?

Park?  
Or  
Park?  
Park?  
Or  
Park?  
Vehicular air quality manslaughter  
Drive-by asphyxiation  
Drive-by asphyxiation  
Please try to hear us  
If we've spoken softly  
It's just that we can barely breathe  
To speak  
Can you grasp that we gasp?  
24,480 toxic breaths per day  
Can you grasp that we gasp?  
24,480 lethal breaths each day  
Listen closely  
Amidst the din of traffic noise  
To the content  
Of our commitment  
In our voices  
And our choices  
In a word  
We must  
And shall  
Be heard  
This is not a Canal  
That you can walk on  
This is not a Canal  
That you can walk all over  
Parking lot  
Of lanes  
Of exhaust  
At what cost?  
Parking lot  
Of lanes  
Or a Park?  
Park?  
Or Park?  
Park?  
Or  
Park?