



129+

## More Poets of Washington

*Issue 4 of 4 in a limited-edition  
chapbook series expanding WA129*

129+: More Poets of Washington 4

© 2017 The Washington State Poet Laureate Program  
All Rights Reserved

Limited Edition Printing, December 2017

Printed in the United States

Compiled and edited by Tod Marshall,  
Washington State Poet Laureate, 2016-2018

Publisher: Jeffrey G. Dodd

Managing Editor: David Landoni

Book and Cover Design: David Landoni

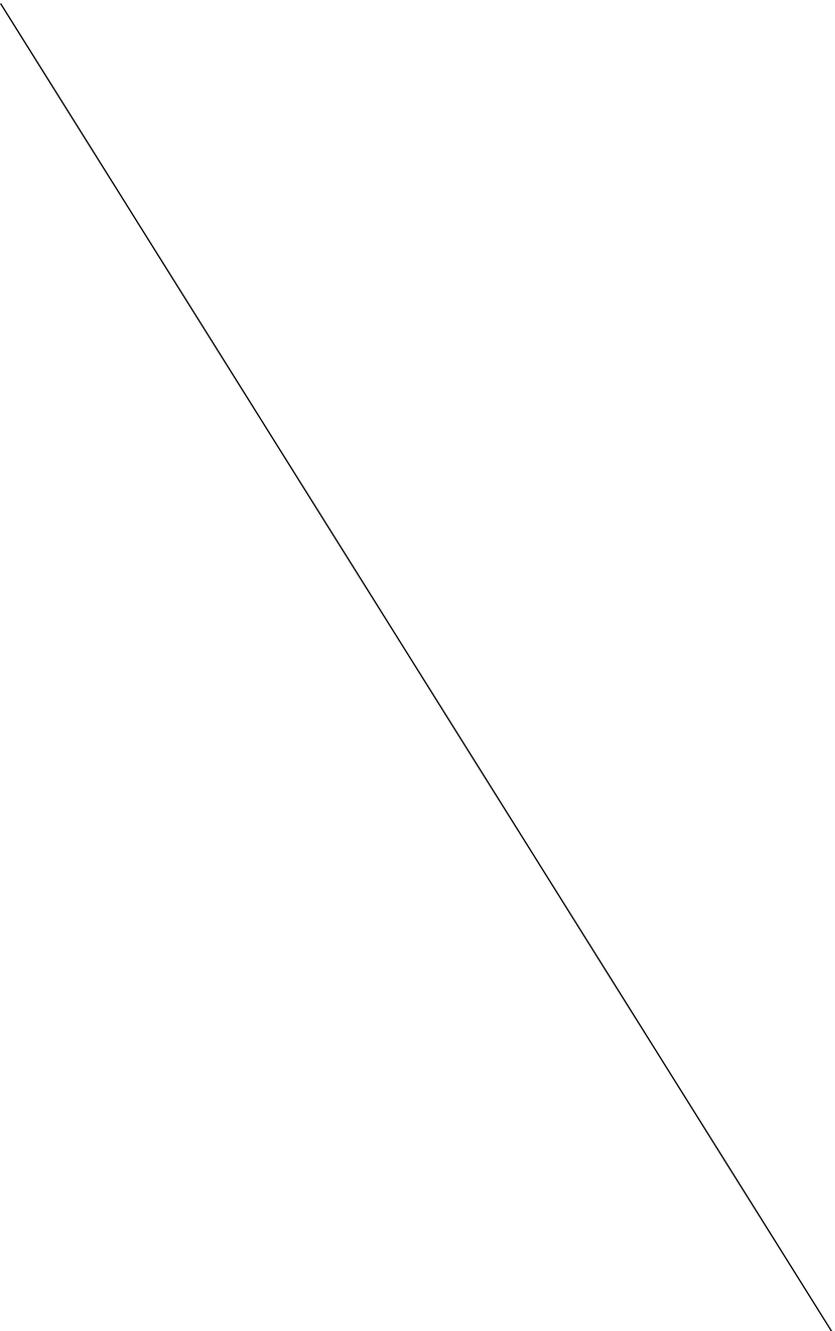


WASHINGTON STATE  
ARTS COMMISSION



## Contents

|  |    |
|--|----|
| <i>Chris Dahl</i>  |    |
| A Personal Topology of Issaquah                                | 5  |
| <i>Rachel Nutter</i>   |    |
| Driving Home   | 7  |
| <i>David Fewster</i>   |    |
| A Rhyme for Nihongo Gakko<br>(411 S. 15th Street, Tacoma)      | 8  |
| <i>Pamela Krueger</i>  |    |
| driving down I-5   | 9  |
| <i>Leon Petty</i>  |    |
| My Brother Drew Monsters                                       | 13 |
| <i>Joannie Stangeland</i>                                      |    |
| January River  | 18 |
| <i>Devin Devine</i>  |    |
| Son of Mirrors   | 19 |
| <i>Susan Johnson</i>   |    |
| When Nothing's to be Done                                      | 21 |
| <i>James Rodgers</i>   |    |
| Southerly  | 23 |
| <i>Don Foran</i>   |    |
| Flights  | 24 |
| <i>Alex Gallo-Brown</i>  |    |
| To the North Seattle NIMBY<br>With Whom I Shared Garlic Prawns | 25 |
| <i>Danica Ready Kaufman</i>                                    |    |
| Serotiny   | 27 |
| <i>Mona Lydon Rochelle</i>                                     |    |
| Albariño   | 28 |
| <i>Suzanne Simons</i>  |    |
| Lake Chelan Trail  | 29 |
| <i>Scott Van Amburg</i>  |    |
| Mariner Game   | 31 |



## Chris Dahl

### A Personal Topology of Issaquah

Something venomous but tiny, chigger-like, pricks her attention whenever she passes the turn-off to Issaquah.

This Issaquah is not the city, not even its site, but a compound of sensations buried in the understory of brooding mountains. A personal topography, where a sixteen-year-old had her first grown-up drink: vodka and orange juice, sticky-sweet, an aromatically overripe emblem of Christmas.

An internal Issaquah where the businessman great-uncle lived up to his success. Where she could finger the brocade of what it meant to have money, the kind of money that soared beyond sustenance.

Her mother's cousin, a grown-up twenty-three, mixed her the drink before he drove her to see his wife and new baby, the baby not well, the wife watchful.

But before that, before they reached the house, half a mile away, he pulled into a snowy field and stopped (Was it snowy? She remembers being surrounded by white. She remembers answering the kisses—though that's all it was—a few kisses).

Later, there were token presents wrapped in shining gold paper, foil, with reflections flushed from the tree lights.

The cousin dies—shot by a jealous husband. The great-uncle dies. She's in her forties when she visits him for the last time. He still grins sideways. He talks about prohibition and trapping squirrels at a hidden still. The youngest son dies and the sister retires to Maui. No Issaquah has been left in her Issaquah, except some snow and a silent field and that intimation of what it means to grow up: the bitter sweetness of stolen kisses; the false promise of glittery wrapping that overshadows the trinkets inside.

Since then she has stood with one foot on the North American continent and one on Eurasia as the plates pull apart two centimeters a year. She thinks about massive underground forces and how, with such a magnitude of change, what surfaces is a slender crack.

Yes, surely there was snow blurring the edges, the way time always blurs and softens and sets some scenes in relief.

One foot in the present, one in the past, the gap widening, and still, every time, that sting when she passes the turn-off.

# Rachel Nutter

## Driving Home

I realize how starved I've been for trees.  
I mean real trees,  
not ones scattered here and there,  
not ones measured along streets  
or spaced around manicured lawns.  
I'm thinking of driving home  
through the Gorge today, reaching  
that point along Highway 14 or 84  
where there's a definite break,  
a line along the landscape, when  
suddenly there's green.  
I mean real green, layered  
along both sides,  
a solid mass of trees  
too thick to count:  
pine, cedar, hemlock, fir,  
evergreens, evergreens, evergreens.  
I realize how starved I am for trees.  
I mean real trees.  
I'm driving home through the Gorge today.

# David Fewster

## A Rhyme for Nihongo Gakko (411 S. 15th Street, Tacoma)

Bix would often walk past  
the old wood Japanese school  
and watch the children laugh and run.  
It was different the day  
that he strolled on by—  
December 8, 1941.

A lonely silence reigned  
where once the courtyard rang  
with the shouts of the little scamps.  
They've all gone away  
on that midnight train  
to their far-flung internment camps.

*Father William J. ("Bix") Bichsel S.J. (1928-2015) founded  
Guadalupe House, the Tacoma chapter of the Catholic Worker.  
An ardent anti-war, anti-nuke activist, he served two stints in  
federal prison for his protests against School of the Americas  
and Bangor Naval Base.*

# Pamela Krueger

## driving down I-5

this car is my sanctuary  
suburban blue, mid-size, it  
holds the key to my sanity  
on the road between  
leaving one son  
and riding towards another  
the transition somewhere in Fife  
the half-way point of  
my ripped-down-the-middle life

in these windowed walls  
I cry and pray and  
scream and wail,  
grieve for that life  
that came before  
while driving up and down I-5  
between hospital bed  
and teen sleepy head  
since that dawn

when foreboding was only

a piece of shame spicing joy  
an illusion of temperament  
an imagined tragedy  
and now, the Nisqually Bridge:  
signaling home incomplete  
driving down my forested street  
half my life on the other side of Fife  
pulling me back  
tilting me forward

when I drop you off at school,  
see the back of your head bob  
towards that edifice,  
once casual

now, you look small  
even at 14 and six feet tall  
you walk away and fade softly as I  
drive towards your brother  
and grieve my goodbye to you  
this pulling me apart  
day-by-day, sends  
my jawline into a fixed firm pose  
sets my skin to crawl  
sends chills through my spine—  
no it's not the air vent  
circulating gloom in this hospital room  
it's the separation that blows in  
between who we were

and who we are becoming, now—  
letting go of school lunches,  
mother's day brunches,  
all that time to spare, be scarce,  
mock danger  
let teenagers become strangers.  
adding up now to rolling  
slowly over speed bumps  
where no one dares go over 10

we who tread there, cautious,  
averting further tragedy  
see those tired parents' eyes  
almost in total glaze  
running fast past the white lines  
and past the tree-tiled

gleaming white halls  
 holding breath in  
 until turning the corner into that room

then, upon seeing nothing changed,  
 moving slowly towards that seat  
 that permanent seat  
 no speed bump  
 to ward off what lies here, now  
 the only sign  
 a slight smile or surrendering sigh  
 signaling nothing  
 got worse

the miles add up the distance,  
 a vacuous thunder of  
 craters of time  
 peel back what once-was  
 sure, regular, certain.  
 now hiding underneath visors of pain—  
 I lift my head up  
 shielding my eyes  
 from the bright sun rising

1.15

that last lone drive—  
 I can't recall it now,  
 it's make-believe quality  
 suspending my disbelief  
 can it be what we leave behind  
 carting carloads back home  
 barreling up Fairview  
 taking a sharp turn onto  
 that highway of freedom

now we greet our home again

cross the threshold  
together once more, we  
rush to our separate spaces  
huddle back together  
then part again  
now the parting is only between  
rooms in our house  
can we rest now?

# Leon Petty

## My Brother Drew Monsters

Have you ever seen a cowed down dog  
crawling up to you  
looking up at you with sorrowful eyes  
and saying to you "I want your love  
but I don't want to take your beating"

My brother drew monsters  
He had one of those  
cardboard, blue linen covered three ring binders  
that he had taken a black Magic Marker to  
and drawn Megazoid dinosaurs  
with gigantic incisors  
Smug, round headed ghouls  
with spike shaped ears  
and flat headed Frankenstein's monsters  
with bulbous bloodshot eyes

These heads of horror  
so captured the essence of evil for me  
that I had to possess these images for myself  
so I stole my brothers binder  
and hid it away for a million years

Once I had a disobedient puppy  
and I would beat the puppy when it did not follow my  
instructions  
and one day when I was beating the puppy  
I happened to look into his sorrowful eyes  
and the puppy said to me  
"Please my companion, get it across to me  
what it is that you would like me to do  
and I will do it"  
and I was changed by this moment

but a few days later  
the puppy was killed by a car at the top of the hill  
and it laid dead at the side of the road for three days  
and when I was riding the bus home from school  
a neighbor boy told me  
that if somebody didn't do something  
about that dogs dead body  
that his father would  
So I walked up the hill  
and with a shovel that I will carry forever  
I picked up the dog's fetal body  
and chucked it over the side

School was difficult for me  
They would escort me down  
to the principal's office  
to wash my clothes  
and make me take a bath  
or down to the nurse's station  
to dig out some infection  
and I really could not relate very well  
to people who did not know  
how to bleed from their backs

My brother grew to be the hero  
Straight A's for a while  
and basketball with the boys  
then off to Viet Nam  
and back  
barely with an honorable

I have written poetry ever since I can remember  
so after I was thrown out of school  
for the second or third time  
my neighbor invited me to take his poetry class  
So I took the binder  
that my brother had adorned so long ago

and I used it to bind the poems  
that my neighbor  
would mimeograph  
for his poetry class  
And so it came to pass that the likes of  
Archibald MacLeish and Matthew Arnold  
W. H. Auden and Denise Levertov

Wallace Stevens and Grace Slick  
and the works of many other poets  
were bound inside  
the linen and cardboard arms  
of my brother's monsters

For many years  
I groveled around  
thinking that the act of groveling  
certified my humility  
convinced that  
as unlovable as I was  
begging for love  
was the only true way to attain it

If only I could have appreciated  
that some forms of mercy  
are impossible for humans to give  
and although the role of a dog  
had saved my life many times  
it was still only a role in which I had hidden  
and not nearly the person I really was  
and wanted to be

And through the thick of it  
I can now see  
how much easier it was for me  
to have been a dog  
rather than to have been a hero

and how grateful I am  
for the incidence  
of my brother's monsters  
and for the understanding  
that sometimes  
it is only a monster  
by which I may be moved

Creation and destruction  
are utterly tantamount

I can only be created  
to the exact extent  
that I am being destroyed  
but sometimes, lately  
as I commonly witness  
the process of my destruction  
if I choose to proceed  
slowly, gently  
and carefully as I can  
I have some control  
of what soon  
is to be  
created

A few days ago  
as I drove into town  
I passed by the bullied body  
of a long haired black cat  
dead at the side of the road  
Then when I returned home that afternoon  
the corpse of the crumpled cat  
was still there

Early the next morning  
once more I passed by the cat  
but this time

I had brought with me a blue linen sheet  
so upon returning at dusk  
I stopped to wrap the cat into the sheet  
and to take it home  
where I would bury the cat  
in the sunny southwest corner  
of my eternal garden

# Joannie Stangeland

## January River

When winter hangs its gray head low,  
is it wrong to want a river,  
drive east across the mountains and slow by Ellensburg,  
set up a camp chair, blanket,  
thermos full of coffee on the bank,  
snow dusting the ground  
as ice crusts old footprints,

and where a few yellow leaves  
might yet cling, wind in the slender trees  
a master of branch language,  
the scritch-crack chatter,  
bone-clack sound, each twig  
a tongue the water answers?

Is it wrong to want to step outside  
the walls, outside the fight, and listen  
to creek talk, cold running  
another name for a new year  
rushing past, Columbia-bound  
then heading west for the Pacific—  
that the stillness here  
might stream around the planet?

Is it wrong to spend my hours  
breathing in what speaks  
so quietly, and maybe sun, a streak  
to make those last leaves glow,  
a ray to silver the rippling skin  
until the day waves me gone  
and I drive home? Tire mumble,  
road and road and road.

# Devin Devine

## Son of Mirrors

If I were to ever meet his son,  
his, the man (one of) who didn't listen,  
didn't hear, no,  
didn't want to hear,  
decided not to hear,  
ignored, no,  
maybe his eyes  
were bigger than his  
hands.

He couldn't get enough to drink.  
He was thirsty.

I want to ask his son,  
"Do you know the story of  
Narcissus & Echo?"  
(funny, isn't that, \*echo,  
a word repeated back, like me,  
like this moment, like a word)

"Narcissus died,  
staring at his own pretty  
little face,  
like this, like yours, boy.  
While Echo, who loved him,  
was condemned to exist  
as a reflection of words,  
both of them  
falling in love with  
nothing but the water."

But,  
when his son answers 'no'  
I will tell him of Athena  
instead. (You know,

the goddess of wisdom & war,  
law & justice, born fully armed.)

I would hit him  
on the forehead,  
stun this boy into shock,  
gift him bow & arrows,  
hearts & bones,  
maybe then he'll understand  
why the gods & their children,  
have origin stories  
& why \*women  
are more scared of his father  
than they are of dying,  
why all women run from mirrors.

## Susan Johnson

### When Nothing's to be Done

I left you that day with friends in a cabin,  
near the shore of Lake Cle Elum. I'd go sailing  
with a friend—a few hours—not long.

The clank of trailer chains rattled  
as the boat slid from the ramp  
to the swell of snowmelt waters,  
cold spray against my cotton pants.  
Wind thrummed through cedars,  
reluctance through me. I climbed  
to the canvas of the catamaran.

He raised the sail—a thunderous flap,  
and we sped from the gravel beach,  
loosened the ropes to control the thrust,  
and rushed through tattered waves.

We lurched in zigzags, cabins  
on shore shrinking to dots. A shiver  
of surprise flashed in his eyes.  
Mine locked shut, helpless, afraid.

One wild gust flung us to water,  
bodies and sails slapping, mast  
plunging to dark below, hulls upturned,  
a drifting beetle, helpless, absurd.  
We struggled, chilled, too far from shore to swim,  
too muted by wind to be heard, and the water  
so cold.

I couldn't slow the light fading that day  
or shorten the shadows dimming the beach.

We finally ran out of ideas, of hope.  
When nothing's to be done, there's nothing.  
A peace settled on me.  
We drifted.

Out of that peace, drifting in twilight,  
an image of you in the cabin.  
They say a mother can lift a two-ton car  
to save her child's life. Your mother,  
that moment, knew to live.

A shout—sudden from shore—  
then the hum of a motor.  
Last light held still on the darkening beach.  
We abandoned the carcass drifting in darkness,  
found grace in a stranger's face.

# James Rodgers

## Southerly

It's only early October,  
but I can see my breath,  
even during the day,  
the leaves no longer green,  
now multi-colored dancers  
pirouetting on the breeze.  
A large flock of geese,  
somewhere close  
to two hundred birds,  
honk and squonk overhead,  
spread out  
in waves across the sky,  
swiftly moving south.  
I'm also heading southerly,  
but just down to Third Street  
to grab a bite,  
my journey less distance,  
yet we are all still traveling,  
yearning for something warm.

## Flights

I set out early on my Saturday morning jaunt, listening  
To the conversations of crows and seagulls  
playing in Budd Inlet.  
By the time I had traipsed south to West Bay Park  
My neck and shoulders had released most of their tension  
And I looked east to Mt. Rainier, resplendent  
In the fresh and bracing morning air.  
There I saw three perfectly shaped spaceships  
Hovering over the mountain, their inhabitants  
Presumably come to save us from ourselves.  
Well, yes, I knew what I viewed were not extra-  
Terrestrials but lovely lenticular clouds,  
But, wait, might some interplanetary denizens  
Of higher intelligence than we have descended  
With a plan to end the bellicose, sexist, racist,  
Homophobic, elitist gunk we daily feast on  
Or regurgitate, depending on our proclivities?  
I thought about how a great blue heron once,  
Years ago, took off from a dock where I had  
Spent an hour meditating, to give me an  
Epiphanic jolt, a salvific shock which I, in my smugness  
Badly needed.  
This morning I mused on such sudden visitations  
And almost stepped on a tiny caterpillar as I resumed  
My walk. My God, I might have terminated the life  
Of a future butterfly sent somehow from an unknown  
Sphere to keep us mindful of the freshness  
Deep down things which would help us survive  
Our silly selves.

## Alex Gallo-Brown

### To the North Seattle NIMBY With Whom I Shared Garlic Prawns

You want more police, you said, more patrols,  
 the Aurora crap pushed away,  
 some other neighborhood, some other place,  
 somebody else's problem now, somebody else's fate.  
 They don't want help, anyway, they want  
 to snort powder in the back seats of cars,  
 to break into decent people's homes,  
 make your mom afraid.  
 Our system is capitalism and democracy,  
 which means people will be poor.  
 Keep them the hell away.

In the poem I've been trying to write you,  
 I tell you about the hole in my car  
 where the radio used to be,  
 how it was taken two days  
 before we shared prawns  
 at the Thai restaurant on Eastlake,  
 eating family-style at a long table,  
 all of it civilized, all of it peaceful,  
 all of it equal so long  
 as our bank accounts were sturdy enough  
 to sustain cocktails and too greasy Pad Thai  
 and a nice spicy beef salad  
 alongside talk of the homeless,  
 criminal justice, the mayor,  
 and your lawn.  
 You see? I've been trying  
 to write you a poem  
 but all I can come up with  
 are these banal thoughts  
 and prosaic observations.

In the poem I've been trying to write you,  
I tell you about how I look down  
into the hole where the radio used to be,

how I stare into the cords and wires  
and Styrofoam each morning before work.  
The radio's absence like a wound,  
like a gap between the way I used to live  
and the life that now belongs to me.

I tell you about the thief, a man  
who I never saw but now sense, a small man  
a little ashamed

as he disconnected the wires and cords  
causing the minimum amount of damage.

I tell you about the pity he felt for me  
and the lack of peace he felt  
in himself.

I tell you about his sadness  
and fragility and fear.

I tell you the police will not help you,  
the prawns will not help you,  
playing civilized or socialized  
or familial will not help you.

I tell you  
you will die.

# Danica Ready Kaufman

## Serotiny

The serotinous pine cone  
opened only by extreme heat  
disperses its seeds as the cone expands and releases.  
A summer wildfire,  
the midwife to a determined landscape,  
up here in the north country.

Like the fall run Cutthroat,  
exhausted and nearly perished by her long journey home,  
she lays her eggs in the clear, gravel bottom stream.  
New life given only through death.

For the Lodegpole pine,  
a fire, the essential catalyst for opening,  
is not enough.

If not followed by a  
mild, wet season,  
if the conditions for germination  
are not just so,  
the seeds will have to wait quietly in the soil.

Perhaps this too, is the human task  
after the heat of change.  
To wait patiently  
for the next season.

Nature is like that.

# Mona Lydon Rochelle

## Albariño

A goldfinch on the highest branch burned with brilliance, as if offering all its joy to us, as if its song, night-into-dawn cried, 'The beauty of it all.' August alighted in warm fullness, Cascades and Olympics arching a purple backwash into infinity. Outside, the sky's arrayed with violet-green swallows swooning and rubied hummingbirds courting as a full-moon ascends Mount Rainer. We chime glass after glass of Albariño. Ah evening, we talk as blossoms fall from roses divine. I say I must leave. We quarrel without a kiss. And there, outside the window, screech owls trill, trill upon trills, their melodies clamoring for love.

# Suzanne Simons

## Lake Chelan Trail

A thin brown line stretches  
across a hillside of lodgepole pine,  
leading from here

to somewhere, this trail the width  
of my body wends along the deepest  
of North Cascade lakes. Our days

of respite mingle with harshness  
of charred stumps from old  
forest fires. Some desires ripen

into fruit, others haunt like magi  
in a tree. I once spent a summer  
yearning for a boy and his promises

to appear in my mailbox. This trail  
a desire at fruition. The ferry drops us  
mid-lake, a tawny young man pulls

up the gangplank. The boat's chug fades  
as we hoist our packs. To embrace  
a yearning is to let go. We've forgotten

playing cards, wristwatches. Thoughts slow,  
words too. We are filled with breath.  
Sudden rain leaves only brief traces

on arid land. Tracks of deer,  
mountain goat soften into mud,  
dry quickly and harden. Gullies of green

claim the moisture, slurp deep. An American  
flag on a pole burrowed into giving earth,  
a beer cooler and youth claimed

the campsite we'd hoped for. We continue  
in amethyst dusk, past a black bear foraging  
in the woods. She looks up. Dusk pulls

us to a deserted lodge, two claw-foot bathtubs  
on the deck overlooking a lake melting  
into vast shadows.

The bath water hot, we shed  
packs, no longer bothered by lack  
of playing cards, settle in with meteors

streaking across jeweled heavens.

# Scott Van Amburg

## Mariner Game

The day's arrived to don my favorite hat  
supporting men who play with ball and bat  
down to the ballyard headed with a smile  
avoiding pricey parking costs a mile  
but one of many ways to make a stat

The numbers are what draws me to the game  
those beasts that roam the Clink just aren't the same  
great violence in their clash is not the rub  
a lack of tidy digits earns the snub  
one can't judge whom should make the Hall of Fame

Cascading sounds of merry fill my ear  
dudes hawking peanuts plus a cheaper beer  
gents holding signs with scripting on each side  
this skirting of the law engenders pride  
'cause only StubHub scalpers have no fear

The navigation to my seat is long  
new metal detectors slow down the throng  
the chap in front of me fails seven times  
yet wearily waved through despite his crimes  
I hope he managed to sneak something wrong

A stench of garlic fries pollutes the air  
consumed while glued to phones without a care  
by those whose greatest thrill throughout the night  
is watching cartoon hydroplanes take flight  
I really do enjoy this stuff I swear

Concession lines are short yet move quite slow  
professional cashiers left long ago

it's nice that volunteers support a cause  
but lack of training does expose their flaws  
a missed DP as my rage starts to grow

No good shall come should I decide to fight  
these trips do have the power to excite  
a passive method to express my pain  
capacity is endless to complain  
which surely helps enable me to write