Window Seat

CARL LEGGO
University of British Columbia

I'm squat in the window
seat of an Air Canada Airbus,
a cigar tube with wings, flying
from Halifax to Vancouver,
while claustrophobia seeps
into my swollen feet, my luck
to be squashed in the worst seat
after my assigned aisle seat
disappeared in a new plane's
design (the plane is full, sir),
panic about needing the lavatory
(airplanes, the only place I use
that word), and the woman in
the middle seat smells like Avon,
or my long-gone grandmother,
and waves through the window
at people she can't see, who can't
see her, a kind of hopeful, hopeless
sentimentalism, and I know I need
to breathe, in and out, but I want
to scream, at least histrionically,

and last night while visiting
my parents, Uncle Bert dropped in
as he does on Sunday evenings,
and told stories about all the fights
he's had and continues to have
(he listed a veritable *Who's Who*
of local businesses, bank managers,
bureaucrats, a litany of complaints
about almost everybody, a victim
of a convoluted vicious conspiracy,
even though it always seems to me
my uncle lives a charmed life),
and suddenly my complaints about
my seat and the waving woman are
Uncle Bert's complaints. Everything
works or doesn't work according
to laws of physics or philosophy
or fate or faith. Things work out, at
least sometimes, at least somehow,
in some ways, perhaps. I could
spend my entire life being upset,
fighting with people and ghosts,
and while I want my aisle seat,
and I want somebody to show
more interest in my poetry, and
I want to publish more, and I want
to be cited, and I want to lose
weight, and I want clerks at
Wal-Mart to smile a little more,
and I want people at Silver City
Cinemas to turn off their phones
and chatter and translations, I
mostly just want to grow enough
wisdom for deciding when to speak

up and when to ignore stuff. So,
I smile at the woman crammed
into the seat beside me, and I wave
through the window just in case
somebody in the terminal can see
us, even though I know they can't.