

Nijinsky · *Michael McGuire*

It is contagious  
like applause, or the harmless, simple  
germs that make the rounds  
at Christmastime  
when everyone is familiar and we  
shake hands and kiss each other  
on both cheeks.

I am embarrassed by the bodies  
of boys in tight pants.  
They are secretly exploding  
like the bellies of the poor, or like me,  
wanting to touch everything with  
my thighs. But not so secretly either,  
since the only lie  
is cloth, and look how easily  
we can slip through  
its wavering bars.

I am embarrassed by the faces  
of men—now winter's coming on—  
that grow shaggy like a dog's.  
They will be warm. I could give them  
the sack full of my broken bones.  
It would be safe there. And so I am  
embarrassed more by the woman  
whose hips are so big  
she blocks the sidewalk. If she would  
move to one side, there'd be room for all of us.  
There is room for all of us  
inside her.  
When we pass by her we are  
passing through her. I am  
embarrassed to love her  
so much.

(You see  
there is a clown on a streetcorner  
up ahead  
inside me.  
He is passing out  
strips of his flesh to the poor

as though casting  
a play or bestowing  
the gift of song  
on the first mouths. He thinks  
this is a beautiful act.  
It is a beautiful act.)