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Nijinsky

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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.)