

The Old Man beside Me on the Bus in Montreal

hunched his overcoat against the winter's chill,
saying McGill was a good university
until they ruined it.

You know, like the American universities
those long hairs – the hippies -- they
bombed that computer center, didn't they?

Students are all right. I can take students
defining Puritanism through blonde mustaches
in paperback bookstores open late,
maybe no one else.

Not angry old men with stained
trousers and stale tobacco breath.

Not stern women with drooping pouted cheeks,
and face lines where they ought not to be.

Not graying people surreptitious about reading
articles titled, "Sex Foreplay."

Not men and women who don't even want to know
if what they've been thinking is all right;

or if there's some other way someone else
had a reason for thinking better.

Not those particular paired ones who together have
consigned their lives to petty politics and the determination
of the restaurant with the most interesting salads.

Old men spraddle their thighs against you
on buses and sit contentedly.

My leg goes tight and seeks excuses
for withdrawing.

Where will the lines form in the students' faces?
How does a man's leg become unfeeling?
When does he stop noticing the stains?