

## THE QUEEN

There she stood,  
MARTHA GRAHAM.

We, her court, stood at attention  
when she walked in.

The Queen nodded, signaling us to sit on the floor,  
and for Bert, her demonstrator,  
to put the soles of his feet together in butterfly position.

She'd say **AND**  
in a voice that came from her toes  
and class would begin.

Sometimes benevolent  
when she'd pass a student saying, *Well done*.

Sometimes cruel  
when she'd smack us or yell,  
*Take off the fig leaf*.

Sometimes whimsical  
when she'd tweet, *Brrritsee, brrritsee*,  
her favorite nonsense syllables.

And sometimes her hands in prayer,  
she'd glow watching her students exercise  
in the technique she'd created  
during her lifelong love affair with dance.

Medea.

Jocasta.

Eve.

Clytemnestra.

Young Bride.

Martha embraced women  
though she might've said,

I created those roles because when I began in the nineteen twenties,  
there was little suitable for me to dance.

Martha choreographed because she needed to perform  
and from that need an empire was born.