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ON FALLING BODIES (AND OTHER SELECTED SUBJECTS):
A PHOTO ESSAY

"It's a little bit like walking
into an hallucination without
being quite sure whose it is."

Diane Arbus
Diane Arbus: An
Aperture Monograph

The High Dive

It's just another lure,
and sure enough, four
times a day the suckers
jam the midway.
Instinctively they seem
to know the time and
gather round the tiny
tub to see
his face
fall.

No fanfare here in freebie-land.
He's swallowed wet-suit up and all.

Greased for action he begins
the climb.

Rung by rung
bored faces-blur
a Rorschach of connecting
dots that ring the bull's-eye
round and round.

They blink at the sun,
frown to see the punctuation
of the climb.

He dots the tower's eye!

A bounce and then
parabola. His body question
marked by gaping
mouths below; the underlying
doubts that surface as he falls
converge to one, an
exclamation point.

He sees his shadow
take the lead, glance
off the up-turned
faces.

He cannon-balls,
dead-centre.
Those too close
are drenched,
their ardor cooled.

A meagre hand and
he withdraws,
gravity written
all over his
face.

Background Shots

A single snap
hooked me for life,
my chain of office
hanging round my neck.

Myopic friend,

that box eased
through puberty,
the mask that hid the
pimpled face or dangled
to disguise developments.

It paid my way
through university.
Those sporting jocks
the stars who shot and scored,
I took them sitting down,
with just a finger
kept them in their place.

I made a business
of my passion.
Power, magic, and
authority, my passport
to outrage.

I call the shots,
my black box
holds your soul.

The Barker

An angler,
his bark begs,
beckons, leads you
in, lures you
on. We follow fascinated
by the old gut-line; drawn on
by glitter, the slightly tarnished
tinsel glamor he dangles just
beyond the barrier.
He casts his spell
over the crowd, a steady stream
of numbing sound to put them
on, pull them
in.

Listen!

"Hurry, hurry, hurry, the show, love, life
is about to begin, ladies, gents, children
of all ages, step right up...hurry, hurry,
see the greatest show on...everything you
always wanted to know about...death-defying
thrills, mystery, always just about to begin
...so step right up...hurry, it's all yours
for one thin dream, the price of illusion,
hurry, hurry, Hurry...!"

His words are double-
edged, barbs baited with
a flash of flesh, something
for everyone to whet the wildest
fantasy: a quick tumble, a freak
or two, the barest bit
of tit&ass pass on review. He'll play
his line until he feels the tug;
another crowd hooked, yields
his bark its necessary
bite.

They fight
to put their money down.
One's born every minute, you know.
Poor suckers, we
hear the rhetoric, see the glimmer
and we dream. Jaws drop
and we open
wide, blinded by hype,
we're glad to be
taken in.
We don't even know when
the jig is up.
We gasp and reel,
drowning in air,
still grasping for
the brass-ringed fantasy
he jiggles there
always just
beyond our reach.

The Fat Lady

It's
hardly human,
a mass of flesh
that drips,
melted tallow
dropping
over the stool
that disappears
into her, making her
secure as she waxes
accommodating
while polite people
gape, gawk
for the price
of admission.

She recites her spiel,
her history,
reels off facts
of fantasy, measurements
the only actuality,
the rest
convenient 'once-
upon-a-time,'
the way the folks
back home
would like for things
to be.

Oh, she's one heavy lady,
and after the show
in almost every town
there's one
(or more) who
stays behind.
Slinks to plead
or strides
to proposition.

Consider her position -

she

never refuses.

Waddles wordless.

to her trailer; allows

anonymous hands

to maul the fat, nerve-

less flesh,

suck and stroke till

tired of their parody

of passion, enormous arms

lift and drop

these spindly, stiff-sexed

creatures into/

onto her greased

surface to

undulate, sputter,

raw

dough cooking. On her slippery

hulk they spill

seed against the roll of thigh,

the crease of a knee,

men coming

to her,

sinking in -

sliding

home.

Carnival Immersion

I shot them on assignment.
How was I to know
they'd got there by default
in this half-assed show,
the fall from grace into magic
conferred like a degree.

A juggler without balls,
a fire-eater in heat,
hooked by this tinsel
world they retreat
behind a putty nose.

I start to shoot
as they rush in
the costumes smeared,
the makeshift faces.
All members of a motley
crew, they take
their spots around the ring.

The one who spies me
mimes a dance,
reels up and shows
the fly agape
there in his baggy pants.

They take it as another gag,
hoot and egg him on until
he prances close,
stands still,
relieves himself
within the ring.

And there I stand
victimized, pissed off
and on. The squirting stream
seeks out the camera's
eye. A hit.
I rise, a clown,
new baptized.

The Siamese Twins - A Vision

for Judith Rossner

I came upon the photo in Life
when I was only eight. Mirrored

images smiled beatifically, one's
leg crossed upon the other's knee.

Where was the other half of me,
the missing link? I tied my doll

around my waist, carried it every-
where with me, the first of many freakish
attachments.

Corny Roots

A
star
atop her
family's tree,
she rises gracefully.
Abetted by shoulder and hip,
she climbs the human rungs and peers
amid assorted siblings' parts. They give her
her start and support her all the way. Only a
moment spent basking in the spot before the act
gets
the
axe.

Not a minute too soon.
Bodies begin
to
sway;
log their way
towards the
ground
accompanied by the
timbre
of thunderous
applause.

The Tattooed Lady

"Lydia, oh Lydia, you encyclopedia, Lydia
the tattooed lady."

E.Y. Harburg

She's a real
one-woman show,
a carnal gallery.
No ordinary freak
just take a peek
and get an education -
a thumb-nail sketch of
history, a course
in art appreciation.

A drop of her cape
and her mural's unveiled,
a master piece is on display.
Sketches etched
in living flesh, stills
that come to life. Yes,
muscle moves behind
the scenes supplying
animation. God,
she's more than living
art, the lady's cinematic!
Eyes stare at pictures
moving there while she
provides narration, fills
in each and every blank
for your elucidation.

Her stretch marks are
land-marks on
The Plains of Abraham;
Wolfe ascends the gap
below. Courreurs de bois
traverse her back,
Laporte is kidnapped
on her knee. Just when
they think they've seen it all,
she offers more to see.

For just a buck
she'll drop her drawers,
reveal the whole creation.

And they're all such
patrons of the arts,
they drop their
offerings in the hat, crowd
and push to see the work
hung in her private
gallery.

It's some collection,
worth the price: Riel
is there well hung upon
a thigh; staring up
his gaze is fixed on God's
unseeing eye. And Leda
lounging on a pubic shore,
wrestles with her swan
(not even Yeats has done this much
to flog mythology).

Her breasts, her back-
side, all X-rated,
not a spot is left
unfilled. There's just
the blankness
in her virgin face.
But time, a master of tattoo, will claim
that canvas too, needle her.
until he's made his point.
At the final show you're sure to know -

"...you can learn a lot from Lydia."

Short Takes on a Trapeze

#1, The Entrance: A Close-up.

Muscle sausaged in a second
 skin of tights. Two men (a single
 mold) and she
 between them, breaking
 symmetry. Her arms
 hooking the belted waists.
 Sequins halo in the light.
 Left, the rope
 they must ascend;
 a smile stretched taut
 across three faces.

#2, Throwing the Trick: With A Telescopic Lens

Daughter of a grip who married up,
 the catcher's wife hangs
 in pose upon the platform
 on the border
 of the shot.
 A motor-driven moment
 caught by practice with the lens.
 The flyer captured; hands grab wrists.
 The line is fine
 between suspense
 and suicide.
 You almost feel the pop
 of pressured limbs. See
 sweaty faces double-imaged
 in a look of fear
 and doubt.

#3, Coming Down: Focused
For Ground Images.

The catcher catapults from out
the net. His brother
smiling, waits his turn.
A falling body
tracked by light,
a galaxy explodes
above their heads.
The nova
fragments
in the outspread
hand of net.

The Bareback Rider in Retirement

Had I arranged it,
posed her there
I doubt it would have been
as good. Sitting, stark
naked, a bonus just for me,
uncharted star,
a serendipity.

The night before
I shot them setting up;
grabbed what sleep I could
there in the car. Then
I was up to catch
the morning light; shoot
the midway free,
no human images
to hassle me.

The rides I saved for last.
Not much to do there. A few
snaps of rusted junk,
and then some sleep.

Her orthopedic oxfords stood
mid-step outside the carousel.
A dress, a slip,
a bra and pants, I followed
the trail of clues.

Feet!
One dangled
limp, a hoof
of scar; the other, stirruped,
held her there, her pelvis
moving rhythmically. From below
I could see her lips pressed to the pole.

A painting by Bosch! A shade
from hell. Deflated tits
on either side, blinkered
the sightless horse. He played
his bit part woodenly, impaled,
pinioned in suspended
animation. The wind made
a whip of her straggle of hair
but only I picked up my pace.
I tendered the light,
checked every shot, composed
her space, God knows, there'd be
no second chance.

Up close I framed her
face. Eyes
stared, beckoned,
and obediently
I mounted up.

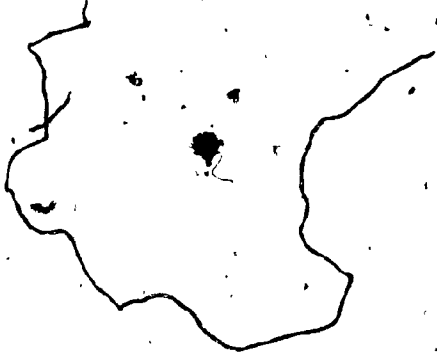
I gathered the bits and pieces
she spat out between
curses and exotic imprecations.
A bareback rider, a beauty,
and a wife? He
saw her circle the centre ring
and drew his circle
round her twice?

The spell took hold,
she sold her act -
her heart wrung
with desire.

He broke her spirit
with his flesh; she bore
his yoke with equanimity, shied
from comparisons, laboured
faithfully.

A flight, a workhorse
spooked, and it was over.
Hopes crushed - the woman
and the child inside. No doctor
had to tell her, she knew
she'd never ride again.

The world begins to turn!
The carny crew
stands round,
their laughter
rings us in.
The horses lunge
and we begin
to circle
in dead heat.



In The House of Fun

Popcorn, sweat and piss,
the carnival's high noon.
The carnivores are stroked
to madness by the sun.
The camera burrows for relief
between my breasts, admits
defeat. I make
a mirthless retreat
into The House of Fun.

A blast of dry air
cools my crotch
There's nothing here
that rates a shot,
a world of plastic
shadows on display.

The sun works
through the roof.
I keep moving through
the makeshift maze until
I see my throbbing head
compounded
in a ring
of silvered glass.

I'm circled by distortion,
a squad of mutant clones
who ape my every act.
It freaks me out.
I see the silver
cascade
down the mirrors'
slopes, a moat
to keep me
captive
in my cage of glass.

I grab my trusty Canon:
I'll shoot my way
out! The automatic
flash fires, ricochets,
reflected to the nth degree;
shadows dive for cover as I
exit
through the looking glass.

The Siamese Twins - Re-vision

"Hurry, hurry, step right up; we give you
two for the price of one. Don't be shy, look,
touch, double your pleasure, double your fun!"

Cell mates, sentenced
for life;
Each the other's
ball and chain, the individual
restraint.

No chance for escape
in a sad three-legged race,
no way they can file
for divorce.
Secretly they plot
variations on a single theme,
mastermind the dream
of separation.

Each heads his own
break, hacks, slices, divides
the goods, declines
joint custody. Rules -
decree absolute.

They wake in shock, afraid
they'll talk, solitary,
confined. They wonder
at the hope for sole
survivors. Is there a salve
to deaden amputation's phantom
pain, replace the missing link
of nerve and bone no longer
in contention?

On Falling Bodies

Had it been he,
dropped into space
by the snap
of that wire, he
would have fallen at
precisely the same speed -
thirtytwo feet per second per second.
Galileo proved it, physics
upheld his conclusion,
gravity is an equal
opportunity employer.

She was a special
subject, a fascination.
Rolls of film
recorded each action;
I shot her
again and again.

He was a grip, a roustabout.
Graduated at her request,
he managed her equipment,
husbanded her time, emotions.
She gave him his big break;
he gave her
advice - "Get rid of the safety
net, let a little
danger in. You'll get a following
faster. Fame will catch you, offer
a ticket to THE BIG TIME
express-for-two."

Fame is fleet
but not quite as fleet as gravity's
32ft./ sec./ sec.
I was working that night, my
Olympus tripoded in place. Front
row (snapped on, dildo-ing
out from the camera's face
an obscene tele-
photo snout, borrowed so that
nothing would be left out),
my view-
finder set on the centre
of her wire, so that with
enlargements I might see
a foot, the hands,
the face,
expressions
of a woman who
had conquered
space.

I started snapping
as she stepped into
view. One moment she
was standing there, suspended
on the high
wire, tension mounting
in the crowd. Then from behind
the camera's blind
came my first clue, the sound
of sucked-in air, then
screams and the snap of wire,
and her stream-
lined, slipping
through
air.

I was right there, in motion too. Mechanized, motor-driven, I went for my Canon, shooting from the hip; reflex action, fighting to compete with 32 feet per second per second. I shot her going down, shot as her body hit the ground and bounced, saw-dust spraying up; settling down around her with a soft sigh.

I couldn't stop. Feet worked independently, carried me to centre ring, my subject in her rag-doll pose. I moved taking all the angles till the film ran out, the motor stopped winding. Thank God, the camera called it quits or I'd have stayed till someone had to pull me off.

In the dark
images emerge
on paper; strange faces
reacting
in the chemicals.
A clown, makeup
smeared, trapped
in eternal scream
(Munch-face made
real by accident).
And him, her man,
arrested in prints:
the usual stare and,
I'll be damned,
a slight smile -
in black and white.

Only now
I smell the vomit
feel the terror
of the crowd, time
lapsed, stopped
by the tight-
rope dancer's last
finale.

I see
the grave
in gravity,
the sentence
in a lover's smile.
After the fall
the ultimate divorce:
decree-absolute

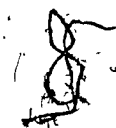
Of course, the inquest finds
no negligence, no
fault (why waste local taxes
on that piece
of carny trash). So,
the show
goes on. I
go
on with the
show.

After all, who knows but me and
the he who sometimes shares
my bed: the dreams,
falling,
muscles jerking, trying
to tread
air,
a cartoon character, pumping
pulling at the edge, fighting
back to the over-shot
ledge, but never, never
making it -

falling. My hands
clawing
him, nails
digging in, trying
to get a grip
on his ribs -
falling.

He sheds his dream,
wakes me. Limp
body, sweat-
spaked sheets
break
my fall, just in the nick
of time.

"You better get a grip
on yourself," he says
(always a source
of practical advice). I'm
cold as ice, lie
still, contemplating earth
and air, those elemental
gamblers vying
nightly for me
now. I see
them with their laser
lenses, greedy, calling
the shots, pushing me
to take the plunge.



Can I pretend
I'm still
asleep? No, real hands probe, push
up the night
dress, real
voice demands. "For Christ's sake
loosen up a bit! We might as well...come
on baby, I mean, what-the-hell, we're both
awake now thanks-to-you!"
What can I do? I take
a solid grip
on the edge of the bed
while he checks out
my equipment, assures me it's A-
ok; then
my act begins, the show
must go on. He guides me, a real
live wire, he starts to
smile as I
let go, start to
slip, plummeting
again, heading
down, this time
almost aching for the sudden
slap
of the solid
ground.

The Lion Tamer

Send in the cats and
let the show begin!
There's no place safer
than the cage he's
in. One whip
crack and the crowd's
in his control.
Bengal tigers glide
across the cage, the leopard
shows his spots, the lions
roar. Each coiled muscle
waiting its revenge.
He puts them through
their paces: they jump
the hoops, they toe
the line.

He drops the whip and bows
before the king of beasts. A playful
hug, a nuzzle of that furry neck and
he spreads the iron jaws,
that cave of yellowed
teeth.

They urge him on,
wild-eyed and twitching.
It's all he needs.
Sideways he slips in;
lays cheek on
tongue. A rush
of breath, the jaws
relax. He gets
the point, knows he could
pull out all the stops, descend.
Perfect consumers,
they'd eat it up; how can he
refuse the exit
they expect?

The Death and Life of Rella, Reptile Lady

It's legend round the carny;
how her end was met. If only
I'd have been there, I bet
I could have saved the show
so no one could forget.
I've got a feel
for the routine: one last
ironic twist of that ancient myth -
a woman, a snake,
a serious mistake.
I know the angle I'd have shot,
a snake's-eye point of view;
and on the side, to add pizzazz
an exclusive interview.

I see it all now!
I would have won a prize;
Hollywood hot to get the rights;
a movie, a tv show.
Who knows how far
I might have made it go?

Mr. Snake, give me the facts.
Let's face it, it was an easy
act. What happened on
that fateful day? Why
did you get carried away?

Sure, I tell you it was a cinch,
I don't think there's an easier way
to guarantee three squares a day. My only
job, to make ends meet; at showtime go
for a little slither
around the body of my lady,
Rella, while she grinned
and bared it before admiring fellas.

Yup, it was a real free ride.
My tour of duty, a sensuous glide
of her girth. Like a tourist I'd
round her earthy shape; take in
all her sites. The equator of waist,
the Everest of breast and last
but never least the part I liked best,
her great divide!

It was exotic, even erotic
back when we worked the girlie
show; but that was a long, long
time ago. Middle age set in,
my territory grew; she settled
down on her growing spread and I
had more rounding-up to do.

She began to drink, a little oil,
to loosen up her bump
and grind. And before I knew
what was coming off the show
left us behind. Let me tell you,
it was the pits! That sideshow
was our last resort. Forced to
perform a dozen times a day: a
helluva increase in working time
with not a bit
more pay.

Of course, I didn't have a say
and I was the whole show.
It was my slide that pulled her
strings, till one night I
called it curtains on the whole thing.
Chalk it up to loyalty, I stuck
for as long as I could. Then one day
she forgot my pay, not even
a scrap. Enough is enough! I took
control, and it was
quite an act!

I'd like to take credit
for the script, but I did
what came naturally.
The act was ending, Rella
stripped, with only my body
strategically slipped around
the spots that couldn't be shown,
when my resolve stiffened. I
couldn't un-clip, there were no
reserves to call, forced into
constriction, I gave it my all.

I pulled out the stops,
the finale neared. She reeled,
I re-coiled, she tried to slough me
off. Me, the apple of her eye,
just another garment to be stripped.
And that was the gesture that finally
tipped off the boys backstage.

A living girdle, I held her in,
incased her so she couldn't sag.
But even as the crowd yelled
"TAKE IT OFF!" I saw the end
of my little gag.

One grip for heads, another
for tails, they carried us, married,
out of the tent. An exit made to shouts of
"EN-
CORE!" and I for one would have
answered the roar but for Rella,
of course, there was
no more.

I close my mental notebook,
conclude my interview. The snake
slithers back to his mythical spot, and I
resume my carny shots.

The Doggy Position

Man's best friend
is woman's too! So
wags this little
tale.

It's quite an act;
they do their parts
to keep it in
the family.

She manages,
observes the pedigreed
pups strut out their
stuff, their detailed
choreography.

He prods the rumps
of docile bitches,
tenders doggy treats,

Fears surface
in his dreams
and things are never
what they seem.

The swish of whip
hardens to a crack.
The bitches balk,
refuse the hoops. No
rolling over, playing
dead, no more tricks!
The snap of canines
rips the flesh of dreams,
devours the human
host.

Now where is she,
the wife, the guarantor
of symmetry, the keeper
of the books, the balance?
Sweat gushes
and he screams.

A bark
of laughter
punctuates the snarls.

And She's The Girl Who Rides The Elephant.

Just look at her!
Too late
to liberate,
she loves her role
as common property.
If the costume fits
she wears it; no
job's too odd to try.
She earns her keep
by keeping on the go;
one whiff
of grease paint,
and she's high.

The saw-blade nibbles
at her waist, strokes
her to dichotomy. Even
the audience doubles-up
in pain, piece-work
like that deserves
their empathy.

They throw her glances,
the edge and points of lust
that pin her to the wall.
Steel shafts fondle cheek
and neck but she won't
stick around for more.
She sheds her silhouette, moves
to her finale.

Aloof above the crowd;
she's riding high, tons
of muscle held in thrall
by the press
of girlish thigh.
Beauty astride her beast
moved by the easy
undulation of his gait.

It drives them crazy
in their seats.

And brings it off!
Christ, the elephant
bends and she descends
the proffered trunk
as shafts of light
search out the sequined
crotch.

They watch her inching
snaking slowly down.
Halfway to the ground
they're all erect, begin
to pound their feet.
She takes up the beat,
lets go, comes down
at last into her
own.

A bow,
lips brush the upturned
snout still lodged
and flexing there
among the sequined stars.
Flushed, she drinks
the heady sound, the wild
applause that brings
the whole house
down!

* The India Rubber Man

My aim is clear,
I'm here to catch them
in the act. In and out
of focus, one by one, their images
drop in place. But he's earned
a special space in my collection.

Unique in a world
where the norm
is abnormality, his body
eclipses other stars,
God, he's seven foot
or more, his entrance
overpowers my view. I retreat
to trap him in my lens, as wordlessly
his show begins.

Arms that loll like licorice ropes
hang free. With boneless glide
they wrap him round, bound in
selfish embrace. He back-bends,
retrieves the coins the suckers fling
in awe. A split, he's leveled, a man
of many feats. He slings both legs
around his neck, like scarves or boas
they accessorize. Limbs
hitch and knot!
My spastic finger can't snap
fast enough for me. Every action
captured for posterity.

A communal gasp of wonder
serves as fanfare for his close.
Shocked to inaction my finger stops.
I long to shoot but I can only watch
as he initiates another bend.
His head disappears and then
emerges just
below the crotch. Stunned as
a rube, I stare. He squats
so all can see. And meets his end.
Nose nuzzles balls. Lips participate
plant a peck, a private tribute
to all things male. I feel
the tension in my neck; the drops
of sweat descend; my glass eye view
begins to spin.

And then
it's only him and me.
From crowds of crowds
he picks me out. Invites
me up to share his stage.
Clothing, inhibitions
fall away. Teaming
with excitement, we work up
a paired routine.

He envelopes me, rubs me
the right way. My
chemicals comply. Contact
cements the embrace.
I ride him like a trampoline,
secured upon his one stiffed joint.

Drum roll of heart,
finale's near.
He takes up the rear, stretches
his influence as he
goes over backwards
to satisfy me. The ultimate
warp! Tongue ties in, licks
the crux of the whole
matter.

Sublime extinction -
flick of switch, circuits
overload, the juice ignites us
and we drown.

Sound of applause.
Three acts later,
back in the crowd.
My rubber finger
flexes. It's O.K.
I'll shoot his act
tomorrow, he shot mine
today!

Freaking Out

At the dinner table,
a gathering of friends,
a prearranged man
sits on my right.
Made-up, costumed
for real life
I watch amazed
as one hand
stuffs the chicken
in his mouth,
the other runs
its greasy fingers
up my thigh.

Who is this guy
trying to overtake my
midway?
I throw my head back,
grab the butter knife,
and like the man who
does it on the stage,
try to ease its smooth
descent into my untrained
throat.

We almost pull it
off; it's more than
half-way in before
my reflex activates.

What's next,
a flaming cocktail
or a bed of nails?

I set the switch
for time-exposure.
I'll search the prints
for details later on.

The Midget (A Short Story)

A shadow in the foreground,
just a blur. At first
I took it for coincidence
but now it's coming clear.
His tiny shape insinuates
itself in every shot
I take. Omnipresent, he
invades my magic box, a
multiple exposure.

I never see him watching
me. It's only later
he shows up, floating
unexpectedly within
the tray, large as
life with eyes unfathomable
to me.

Slowly he commands,
my sleeping hours,
projects the dreams I view.
Reduced and pinned below
a compound microscope
I see his giant eye
observing my reaction
to a hundred pokes and prods.
In recurring scenes he
changes filters,
attaches one more lens,
each gesture just
to toy with me.

My days, as well,
fall into his domain.
My thoughts are smeared
with vaseline; futile,
but I try containing him
within the camera's
eye. I work as long
as I can stay awake,
seek in celluloid
illusion what reality
denies.

I pin him
to my wall;
hang him wet
and dripping on the line.
I set the stage;
he steals the show.

If that's the way
it has to be, I'll make
my little man a real
celebrity, the voice
of carny knowledge.
The manager can set it up:
I pay the price, he'll pose.
One private session
and it's done.

Tiny tables, little
chairs, a bed no bigger
than a crib - like Alice
I'm a giant here,
nervous, half-afraid
to move.

He enters without knocking
(his home, his castle
after all). His hair's
combed back, wrinkles line
his face. I feel his eyes
consume me, as we rally
crotch to face.

Without a word we set
to work. His legs dangle
from the only normal
chair. I move, heart-pounding,
to adjust his tie and looking
down I see the white translucent
flesh of scar beginning
at the jugular
and going down
God-knows how far.

My fingers are possessed,
move to touch but
pull back. I tell him
to relax, fumble with the camera
and reload.

When I'm composed
I turn and see
a naked man in miniature
leer back at me. The scar
is lost within his hair
then surfaces again down
where his only man-sized
parts appear.

What filter can I use
for this? He grabs
his own equipment, adds
a telescopic lens; I
snap away, my finger
moving rhythmically
while he joins
in a syncopated beat.

His red and angry
eye proclaims monopoly,
zeros in to where I squat.
"Zoom in on this," he squeaks.

I retreat, still
shooting down. He
laughs, starts coming
after me, my back
can feel the
trailer's door, I
place my hand upon the knob, ready
to open up
to him.

Now he's the one
who's pulling back,
I give my camera slack
(it swings against my nipples,
hard, erect) and
reach out.

He turns, gives me his back,
walks away.

"You got all you paid for,
babe, go finish off the rest
yourself. Blow me up,
air-brush my faults.
Get good and wet, cause
you ain't fit to fuck
a freak; you're lower
than the lowest carny trash,
babe, you're a geek!"

IMPOSED PORTRAITS

"The force of a photograph is
that it keeps open to scrutiny
instants which the normal flow
of time immediately replaces."

Susan Sontag
On Photography

The Dentist

I arrange the assignation, wait
patiently. You
arrive on schedule, sterile-
scented, offering
small-talk,
prophylactic procedures;
I always preferred pain
to such anaesthesia.

A difficult case
you sigh. Gaps
to bridge, lost contact
points, restorations that must
be made. Still you accept this test
with grace, flick the switch and we
settle down to the business
at hand.

You
probe, prod, expose the naked nerve;
perform your skills
deftly. Ream, drill, pack,
fill the cavity.

I'm a sucker for specialization,
and you're certified a master
of oral anatomy. I pay
through the mouth for your
treatment, choke on the waste
of the work, while you
complete the case,
place it on file
for instant recall.

Numb, sore,
I stumble towards the door
trying to remember
how to use my jaws, trying to forget
you, my surgeon, oral master, painless
parker, son-
of-a-bitch.

The Virtuoso

In the wrong hands
discord,
cacophony,
or, at best, mere fiddling.
But enter the maestro;
watch, as talented, trained fingers
tune taut the gut.
React, as coolly he caresses the veneer,
slides down the curve of waist,
draws close this instrument
of pleasure.
Fingers knowingly find their place.
Ready, he gently draws his bow,
releases with his stroke soft,
treble wails
from living string.
Circles,
concentric, radiate, resonate
from the carved, curved sound hole
ringing the night,
vibrating on,
out.

Somewhere, light-
moments away, crystal
shatters.

Boomerang Man

How
could I
have known

your native talents, ab-
original accomplishments

in the land-down-under?

Sweet bushman, your weapon is unique!

Even as I start to throw you out, my body
makes ready, prepares to recapture your

sleek missile: awestruck, I observe
the magnitude of its natural

trajectory, arch as it comes
arcing, shooting back,

skimming home to touch
down again in-
to me.

Grave Robbers

We go through the motions
weekly, perform
the ritual,
our last
rites:

genitals
engage,

fuck-
in

spasms
of love-
less
melding.

Molding,
we dissolve
in one another; cheat
the future, rob
the grave
of archaeology. We
will never be
exhumed, venerated
like the bones of saints, we'll
carry on
interred by undeterred
fucking
in perpetuity. No
relics left
to desecrate our trust

just bone

grind-
ing
bone

to inseparable dust.

Physician

You insert your tongue,
into my mouth. Smooth,
cold instrument
you assume will warm
in me. Internal
heat reacting on
the external
you.

This diagnostic device, this
register of passion will not pass.
Physician, heal!

This growth, raw,
obscene,
stands carbuncular,
plagues the unwilling flesh,
while you, patient and surgeon,
attend to your business,
squeeze passion like pus.
Sterile, safe,
sheathed from sensation,
you probe the sheeted flesh.
Scalpel raised, you prepare
to operate. Detached, dexterous
you make the incision; then
with precise steel strokes,
lance the desire.

Preacher Man

Glory, glory, I've been saved!

Lord, I was headed
for perdition. You
offered succor, ministered
to me. Now I've got
the spirit deep within me.
The laying on of hands
has set me free.

Praise, God, I shall not want!

Your sermons are a private
inspiration; they have a stroke
of true divinity. Hosanna,
such prayerful
ejaculation!
Without question
you've converted me. I take it
all on faith; your
infallibility, proof positive of
a second coming.

Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me.

Now I'm a member,
born again, totally
immersed. Prepare
the table for me,

I hunger and thirst after righteousness.

My cup
runneth over; I'm consecrated.
Holiness
has rubbed off on me.
My donation's made,
there's nothing more
to collect.
I'll

make a joyful noise unto the Lord;

take my place
with the elect.

And dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

A - Men!

The Professor.

Ours is a professional association:
 I sit back, listen while you
 lecture, noting your technique, the fine line
 of rehearsed rhetoric you
 recite, that I might learn. A necessary adjunct,
 you enhance my formal
 education. I come for your critique,
 erudite advisor: you
 judge me, weigh my words, find me
 wanting. You know
 I long to head your class, to top them
 all; a star pupil, a
 prized protégé, I'm willing to cram
 whatever you require, spend nights
 preparing for your final
 examination. I await the word,
 will it be
 oral or
 written? I must leave my mark somewhere
 on the bare white sheet you proffer. Pass
 this final hump
 before I don
 the graduated robe.
 You subject me to this final
 test, objectively
 assay my last
 essay. I scrawl letters
 upon the foolscap,
 crawl toward the ribboned roll,
 the parchment scroll
 you dangle by degrees, my
 Magna Charta
summa
cum
laude. I long
 for a word of praise, pray
 that I can make
 the final grade.

The Lumberjack

Your saw-
edged words
grate relent-
lessly. I
remain aloof,
aloft but
you are a
proficient
feller
choosing
the perfect
angle, the most
vulnerable
spot to
penetrate.
Do you care
to count
the rings
once you're
done? Will
you wait
until it's
clear
that
I
can
stand
no more
before
you whet
your blade
and, then, begin?

Voo Doo Man

"Let me live 'neath your spell.
Do do that Voo Doo that you do so well.
Oh, you do something to me..."

Cole Porter

What have you done?

I thought distance
could de-mystify,
dilute the spell, but it's too
binding.
Darkness spreads
fills the black hole you used
to occupy,
reaches out to my
parted
thighs. How
can I exorcise you? Re-
possess my faculties. I suppose
you took some part
of me; was it a broken
nail, an ill-fated paring, a snatch
of hair, or some more vital
piece?

Possession is nine-tenths the law, but
what right have you
to this body
I inhabit?

I imagine you
out
there
playing with some doll you've made,
rag, bone, hair,
inert replica, willing
fetish, supine
surrogate.

Life-
less, this other
me lies
still
as you test the stick-
pin; cushioned, waits
while your fingers
clasp the head, steady
as you take
aim -

I am
miles away
but the action is relayed.
I feel you
stiffen for the thrust,
intuitively I shudder,
presage the stinging
pain
of the phantom
prick.

Jackhammer Man

It's hard work.
Get his hammer
warmed up
and there's no stopping him till the job is done.
With professional precision he
probes and prods
then eases
his powerful tool
into the fissure
and
he's off.
A vibrating machine
deaf to all sounds
but his own;
he grunts
as
enormous
globes of
salt sweat
spurt
from overheated
flesh.
The very earth
trembles
beneath
his driving frenzy.
Mesmerized
with motion
he is a drill
of human flesh
until
it comes
quitting time.
Sound and motion
cease,
limp with exhaustion
he packs it in.
Another day another
job well done.
And it's off for
a few quick ones
with other
operators.

Carpool

Clothed in,
oblivious to external
elements, we sit
thigh by thigh
parallel indentations
in the upholstery.
Locked in, buckled up
for safety, with no
recourse, no
reverse. Incased in
impotence.
The clutch is obsolete,
it's all automatic, feet frozen
to the brake, not a chance to
accelerate. A horny herd
of Trojan horses
stalled
in this consummate
jam.

Stifled senses make it seem
that we were always here, but
remember
Mr. Ford's invention when

excited fingers fumbled
sparking
sudden ignitions, stripping
gears, radiators over-
heating - a different scene
behind the steamed-
up windshield. Muffled moans,
the Midas touch, a spring tune-up
to be recalled, a transmission
guaranteed
for the life of this
souped-up,
customized vehicle
of undreamed
transport.

The Alchemist

Modern, scientific
I am skeptic
to claims made
by this ancient craft.
No midnight magic,
merely a pursuit
of primitive chemistry.
No bells, candle-
light is not required, this act
is by the book, obeys
only laws of action
and reaction. Whispered
words, black silk
cape of night
(patterned with glitter of
moon, stars) are
just useless props.

Still, I'm interested.
I enter
experimentally, science
or magic you
must prove
your claims to me.

You begin. Get the lead
out. Instead,
power pours
into you. Your touch,
a transformer, increases the current,
alters the basis of our
association.
Witless, I
enter the equation, test the mettle
of this old vocation. I lie
back, lay
my doubts onto your table
and am converted. The scales tip
in your favour. I savour
the interaction. We merge, compounded
we amalgamate, transmutate.
Rise, unleaded,
as we return to basics, rediscover elementals.

I believe, I believe!
Transformation, immortal
cure,
initial spark; circuitry
connects as we
surface. I see
the origin of such myth,
the stuff of old
black magic
in
your eyes.

The consummate collector, drawn by desire. Elusive possession is the fuel for your pursuit. A flash, a flutter and you are aflame, must swoop to conquer. No elitist, you covet moth and Monarch equally. Disguised by science you ensnare; total technique, you position and prepare the fragile fugitive, net profit of your chase. Next, you catalogue the creature wings spread in final flight. Make ready to impale your pinned prize: newest mount in an award-winning collection.