

Alan Catlin – Three Poems

Asked to explain

the prevalence of
nudity in her
photographic work,
Diane Arbus appeared
on stage at a University
of Florida naked, like
some kind of wiggled out
rock star, authorities
must have thought, as
they escorted her from
the dais, though nothing
could have been further
from the truth.

More important to Diane
was she was paid,
as she hated giving lectures,
teaching, and all that personal
appearance stuff, only taking
those assignments when
desperate for rent, food,
a new camera and, sometimes,
clothes.

Arbus's Triplets on a Bed

These unsure identical
adolescents
unsure of themselves

in their private space
bedroom

so close together
they are almost
conjoined

seeking safety in
numbers

defense from this
adult lady with a
camera sweet talking

coaxing them out of comfort
zones toward another
place

House of Horrors Coney Island

after Diane Arbus

In daylight, this place seems like
just another rundown roadside
attraction:

worn, iron rails disappearing into
tunnel of darkness;

where the two-seater thrill ride cars go
over not-swept-for-decades, concrete
passages;

where the satanic images are painted
on outdoor walls advertising what lies
within, skeletons and monsters;

All chipped and peeling now, unimposing
as long past billboard posts;

All the demons have retreated inside
to hide in their lairs, in their hideaways
behind floor and ceiling panels spring
triggered to open and leap at unexpected
angles, at unexpected times;

All colored lighted to emphasize
their glares, their deformed faces,
their threatening miens;

A sinister sound track added: maniacal,
fear gripped, primal in nature despite
Grade B, 40's movie budget of a dollar ninety-five

Timing and place are everything in a house
of horrors I rode in, hand gripping
my mother's as she, trance induced,
recited impressions of alternate lives
lived, places lurking inside this one,
images more fear inducing than any

cheap thrill induced effect.
Once inside the House of Horrors,
no one will hear you scream.

Alan Catlin has published four completely different full length poetry books in an otherwise totally bleak 2020. The most recent one is *Memories* from Alien Buddha Press. He is the poetry and reviews editor of *misfit magazine* on line.