

## **INTRODUCING THAT MOST MARVELLOUS HUMAN FREAK, THE BEARDED LADY MISS LUPIN**

*Chris Berg (b. 1949)*

*Clare Pollard (b. 1978)*

So here you are, sir,  
in the shadow of the tilt,  
the tented dark,

done with the stick and rag show:  
the dizzying plinky-plonk galloper tunes,  
the popcorn, piranhas & pin-heads,

the Half-Woman – a bust on her pedestal –  
the mule-face who brays in his booth,  
the Aethiop savage girl white as your wife,

and here I am,  
wonder of wonders!  
You look nervous, sir.

Is it the mewl of the tyger?  
He's harmless, toothless.  
So come on, closer:

trace the fur of my face,  
moist at the mouth, pink lips,  
the string-of-pearls teeth -

it's softer than sawdust,  
softer than wolves,  
a tangle to tug.

I have watched many times  
how desire contorts men –  
how they tattoo my name down their spines,

how they flail on their nail-beds,  
gulp fire, swallow swords;  
how they make those sounds that are not words.

How I'll make the suit and snuff,  
the ledgers and the way you pass the port –  
all your life – feel like a ghost walk.

Some say we are clairvoyant,  
saints or witches.  
I say we make you want what you most fear –

if he is she, if wrong feels right,  
then what are you, sir?  
My fellow freak, come kiss this beard. Here.