

Michael Paul Hogan

IMITATIONS OF JACQUES CORRIDA

I.

The tightrope walker
despises the elephant
The aerialiste sleeps
with the tightrope walker
The acrobat reads Baudelaire
in his caravan
The ringmaster wears a coat
like a tuning fork
The ringmaster's wife
is a Chinese parasol
The Chinese parasol balances
a seal on its nose
The audience pays to throw
nuts at the elephant
The elephant sleeps
with the ringmaster's wife.

2.

Consuela,
you are more vanity
than a tangerine.

When we walk together
among the broken tortillas
you imagine yours breasts torn open
by the teeth of accordion players,

you imagine your nipples
being spat out
on the wet pavement
like strawberry stalks

(although your own teeth lie hidden
in the lipstick-lacquered cavity
of a castanet).

3.

The slender gipsy dances
with a bear
and the night's a shattering
of champagne flutes
and the firework festival begins...

Come, dance with me, dance
down this alleyway inbetween
top hats painted
with violent windows

violent and violet and aubergine

I shall bind my heart
with your bear's blue chains
while we dance down the cobblestones
of the Boulevard St. Germain.

4.

and came out suddenly the sun
like a painted bicycle

and the zinc table
of the pavement café
glistened
like a well-shaved armpit

smearred with coconut oil.

5.

Father, must I repudiate you
again and again?
(though to repudiate is to be
repudiated).

When I sit at my typewriter I know
that you who survived Guernica
cannot survive the anger
of my love / my verse.

Is it because of you
that elephants are seldom
(nearly never) aubergines?

Father, why, when I married Consuela,
did you lay the table of your heart
with just one bowl of miserable
paella?

Truth, if there is any truth at all,
must be begat
by understanding;
no father should have sons
who are matadors or undertakers,
least of all
literary ballet dancers.

Let us agree, therefore,
to love and misunderstand
one another,
for we are all of us
broken elevators
trapped between each other's floors...