

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...