

Roaring

by [Paul Illidge](#) (March 2021)



The Blue Circus, Marc Chagall, 1950

Under the big top
they call Love,
where no strangeness
is too spectacular,
I wander amused
by the stunts & routines,
the high wires & hoops,
the freaks & clowns,
until I see a man the
master of ceremonies
calls the mighty Pagliacci
preparing to fire
my wife from a cannon.

He is a ringleader.
I can tell right away
she has been caged
by his capacity to tame,
the dark confinement
of his circus power,
his enthralling feats of daring.

Thus I resort to showing off,
placing my head inside
a hot, sharp-toothed mouth
hoping all will hear the courageous
crack of my heart's whip—

but the cannon fires.
My wife sails through
the death-defying air
with the greatest of ease,
landing singed but smiling
in a sideshow midget's arms as,
with spotlights fading slowly,
the animals go wild

in raptures of trained applause.

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Paul Illidge is the author of *The Bleaks* (ECW Press), a Globe & Mail Best Book of 2014, and *Shakespeare for the E-generation: The Page, the Stage, the Digital Age*. His work appears regularly on Mental Health Talk.info

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