

A decorative border with intricate floral and scrollwork patterns, rendered in a dark brown color, framing the entire page.

Collected Poems (1987 - 1989)

John Henry Carrozza

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By John Henry Carrozza

Listen to the Sound

... of a thousand drums –
deep in the heart
of a mesmeric
jungle ...
enchanted,
rhythmic,
drifting closer, then

of laughter –
disguised as the roar
of a Bengal tiger ...
basking in unconscious
fear of itself,
stalking no prey, but then

of your gentle voice –
calling my name, but
it's only a mockingbird
perched on a limb ...
roaring and
laughing and
musing of drums –
its playful call
becomes piercing, until

I reach
to silence the alarm –
too late,
for I am already
awake.

Somnambulist

Sleepy wintry breeze
Through a half-open window flows;
Wispy curtains cloak the wind,
As myriad eyes peer blinking within.

Stepping spritely to the jig,
Floorboards creak like violins,
Minuet in several keys,
Tripping light fantastically.

Cat beneath a Victorian chair
Watches the dance in horror,
As the night air's tentacles sweep into the room,
Slithering in from the shadowy gloom,
Wrapping about her arm like a skein
And swirling 'neath her gown;
Carrying her body like the arms of a groom
And setting her gently down.

She pirouettes once inside the door,
Her beauty vespertine,
Then passamezzos from her dream
And waltzes into mine.

Meanwhile, in the compartment I ride
Idly over the rails
Of some vast exotic tramway
I have fashioned in my mind –
 Trees are bending in the wake of the train;
 Mollusks fill the skies.

Meandering in from the buffet car,
She hovers, and I stare
Hypnotically, without my eyes

And see inside of her;
Entrancingly she moves along the corridor
To where I stand,
But fear instills –
I must not touch or brush against her gown
And risk that she awaken ...

While slow without a sound
An evening mist beyond the window stirs,
The cat, its peaceful slumber found,
Re-stokes the coal and purrs.

Pancakes & Satin (Love Awakes)

The warm light of morning caresses my neck
As I sit in my favorite chair ...
Her soft shoulder is rippling
With shadows cast by Venetian blinds,
And then suddenly her arm
Sways along her side –
She reaches to her forehead
As her slender leg is folded,
Accordion-like towards her thigh,
And yawns and rubs her eyes.
Satin sheets evolve with ease,
Like mountain ranges crawling from the sea;
“She must be a god,” I think, as I smile,
Unable to avert my eyes;
“She must, or else there is no god ...”
And when she moves again,
Her knee reclines once more,
Her shoulders slant towards the door,
Her arms begin to stretch,
She blinks and sighs –
A thousand angels light into the air;
My mind becomes a fountain ...
“All my cares and all my fears
Are true,”
And when she smiles, she smiles for me,
And when she wakes –
I cease to be.

Time Doth Rarely Speak

Time doth rarely speak to me
Of moments when from oft my lips
There sprung the words I wished to say
Nor words I've longed to utter since.

Yet, oft the conversation turns
To precious seconds I would stare
Out through my eyes and into yours
And slip away from consciousness –
I've seen my gaze reflected back
And passed around the room like wine
Which I would swallow feverishly,
Then mutter something not divine
By no one standard, save by mine.

So, if again our eyes shall meet
I will so strain to look away,
For only when my mind's awake
Might those long words I chance to say.

Inner Groove

Turn the pillow over;
Your dream's reached the inner groove:
Deepest in repose, your heart –
It trembles 'neath the quake
Of that popping, scratching, swirling disk
Each noise assuming form (and limb)
Which hastens the motor
Which turns thy bed
And brings thee nearer waking thoughts
To banish demons of thy fierce id –
Those which moan
And those which howl –
Snarling, barking hounds of war;
 (Oh, could such visions as these reflect
 The plagues of Samuel Taylor's ode?)
Yet, ne'er within thine grasp
Did that forbidden blossom wander? No;
It is the absence of that soul
Has made the heart grow fodder.

Aurora (Goddess of the Morning)

Her eyes are dyed wisteria blue,
Her lips are lobster red;
Her walls are the color of advent wax,
Of hyacinth sings her bed.

And every morning at five o'clock
She's swimming in the pool;
Her towel, basking on a bench,
Would lick its chops and drool.

The percolator would on at dawn
And, seething like a spring,
Would fill the pot and hiss and scream
In senseless suffering.

But meanwhile, 'side the water,
She reclines upon the stones;
The willow, hovering o'er her skin,
Just hangs its paws and moans.

And every morning at twelve o'clock
She climbs back into bed;
Her eyes are dyed wisteria blue,
Her lips are lobster red.

Her Favorite Stars

We used to descend upon the city
And visit her favorite bars;
But now along the beach I stroll
And gaze at her favorite stars.

Vesper, through the evening haze,
Would always catch her eye –
And “twinkle, twinkle” she would sing,
A whisper towards the sky.

And when the summer solstice dawned,
The north star would arise;
Polaris bright, Oh beauteous sight,
Reflected in her eyes.

She like the one called Sirius,
“Because it’s so demure,”
And though the Pleiades be but myth,
She’s now the eighth sister.

And lo! It seems her eyes did sparkle,
Like a Lucifer;
Tonight, I’ll draw a constellation
And name it after her.

Coastal Epiphany

Wading the tidal pools of my mind,
I trod upon a thousand creatures,
Slimy and oozing like gelatin,
Yet fractal, as the punchbowl where
The ladle stirs a brew –
An elixir of mottled hues;
And, like the other party guests,
‘Tween idle conversations, I
Refill my cup and quietly sip
The concoction, spitting out the seeds.

Soon, the room which light
Contains the astral tea party starts to fade,
Photons dispersing as do the guests.
And then I hear the swell of nature,
Loud as though inside a conch;
Waves appear, a sandy shore,
Encroaching rocks on either side,
Where bathe the sirens of my mind.

And there she stands, but only
For an instant on the patio,
Calling me to dinner,
Dog barking at her feet –
New England in the fall ...
And I tumble endless in her arms,
Beside the bay.

Lampshade Memories

Feet will not move beneath covers iron shell constricting and then I'm free and spinning into the void all is void what is not void does not exist but is full of life and death and sex and television and someone other than the man stapled to the prison wall asks "Is that the face of God?" a faceless face and so it maybe cannot see but if it could then only void and so nothing would be perceived but that face is me because I am a mirror of existence of myself a reflection of a thought and God I wish I could stop that lampshade from spinning it makes me dizzy.

Without a door he enters unaware into a starless city street or is it an alley but anyway he sighs and kicks a pile of dung and his boot remains stuck and the flies they keep it warm but soon his feet become cold and freeze beneath his socks which is bad because it is not yet dawn or evening which are the same and he aches as he falls to his knees in mercy and he turns to stone and quietly erodes after a million and twenty years ironically in April which is the only month in which he was not born and so much for saving the world his soul recalls and if it could talk it would say "I only want to make you happy."

When the bulb explodes the lampshade will burn and if I could sear my soul in the flame it would burn away and for you and my eyes would crack but I would not cry or if I cried it would be a silent cry like the drowning sun in a sea of endless memories and I would hold the iron in the fire and I would watch you walk away and say "turn the light off when you leave."

Wardrobe Envy

Sometimes, I wish I were your closet;
No – not your closet – your clothes.
Particularly that silk paisley skirt
Or that blouse ... no, the one with without the bows
And frilly collars ... the plain one
That buttons in the front;
To serve no duty but to cover your skin
And keep unwanted eyes from peering within.

I would not like to be your scarf or your hat,
Though elegant they may be;
Nor your brassiere – that would be too much work,
But that cardigan sweater is keen.
That's a life ... to lay there
And feel your every breath;
To follow your journey throughout the day
To cradle your shape wherever you lay.

Pajamas are cozy, and slippers are warm
Upon your tiny feet;
Perhaps your robe would be sublime
To dissipate the heat
That radiates from your heart
And keeps me feeling useful.
But, all through the night, the thought I can't bear
Is the dismal despair of the clothes you don't wear.

Holding On

Holding on -
 to lifelong dreams
Is the hardest part of living,
In a world that stands beside itself
There is no time forgiving.
But dream
 and live
 and never lose the touch

Holding on -
 believing myths
Is part of what is missing,
In lands of mystery, all that lives
Are mirages grand and glistening.
But believe
 and share
 and pass along the story.

Holding on -
 to icy chains
That bar and push the shaper
Only takes away from man
His hot and futile saber.
But chain
 and save
 the memories which feed us.

For life without darkness is blinding light
Which penetrates the furnace;
Sacrificing every night
Leaves days to scar and burn us;
Entrapping forces to enslave,
For benefit of man,

Entitles justice to be sold
For any price it can.

But dream, believe, and chain the love
That offers forth its hand
And hold on to the only part
Of life that is so grand.
For wooden temples burn and rot
And stone embankments crumble;
But strongholds built inside the heart
Can make a tyrant humble.

Holding on -
 in spite of who
May ostracize your speeches
Reinvents the cradle
And the lessons that it teaches.

Holding on -
 remaining sane
Indeed is lifelong toil,
When all of those whom each we trust
In turn become our foils.

Holding on -
 to sentimental
Dreams and sacred wishes
Is only ferrous, blinding bliss
Which tarnishes the dishes.

But speak
 and fight
 for each and every hope;
Believe
 and never
 snare upon the rope.

For yesterday's solutions are only means to follow
Paths which first were laid by men
Infernal, dark, and hollow.