

Seán Dunne

COLLECTED

Edited by Peter Fallon



Gallery Books

Collected
is first published
simultaneously in paperback
and in a clothbound edition
on 8 December 2005.

The Gallery Press
Loughcrew
Oldcastle
County Meath
Ireland

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Estate of Seán Dunne 2005

ISBN 1 85235 394 5 *paperback*
1 85235 395 3 *clothbound*

A CIP catalogue record for this book
is available from the British Library.



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Anniversary

One year dead tonight and still no sign
of a comeback, no new recital of the lost
lore and recipes you took when you died.
The last Mills & Boon books I gave you rest
in drawers lined with newspapers,
racing results and pictures of presidents
toppled long since in televised coups.
With them you are a speck in history, too.

One year dead tonight and no one tells
of the doctor falling for the swooning nurse,
his stethoscope twitching near her heart.
For years you read nothing else, except
The Sacred Heart Messenger and *Ireland's Own*.
Your only cosmetic was Eau de Cologne.
You sprayed it at the air like insecticide
to hide smells; polishing made you tired.

One year dead tonight and I think
of your aprons, the bread you baked,
hairnets and coats, your Sunday missal.
In a city hospital before you died you turned
from offered water and asked for the pure
drop from a well you'd known since a girl.
'I'm finished,' you whispered near the end.
You were even too tired for love stories then.

Lament from Another Room

My dead love,
without permission
they came and washed you
soaped away your usual smells
dressed you in foolish brown
despite your love for blue
sadfacedly sat with you
our private sofa seized
cards scattered around you
flowers in borrowed bowls
your plants dead on windowsills
your frozen hands joined
to prevent our further touch
bass rosaries droned
despite your need for everyday song
darkly they confined you
hammered nails into you
who feared forced things
while rooms away I loved you
caught gestures in photographs
life in remembered voice
to spite the dark intruders
with untrammelled song.

There are Four of Us

after Akhmatova

I renounce all that I own
and rid myself of all my things.
The guardian of this place is a worn
tree stump stranded in water.

Earth briefly takes us as guests
whose lives are habits we must break.
On paths of air I think I hear
two friends' voices, talking in turn.

Was it two, I said? There, by the east
wall where brambles twist and trail —
look, it's a dark elderberry branch,
surely a letter from Marina!

Lullaby

after Akhmatova

I bend over the cradle
like a black fir.
Lullay, lullay.

No sign of a falcon
far or near.
Lullay, lullay,
my little one.

26 August 1949
(afternoon)
Fountain House