

Ciaran Carson

**COLLECTED  
POEMS**

*Volume Two*



Gallery Books

*Collected Poems: Volume Two*  
is first published  
on 14 September 2023.

The Gallery Press  
Loughcrew  
Oldcastle  
County Meath  
Ireland

[www.gallerypress.com](http://www.gallerypress.com)

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ISBN 978 1 91133 859 8

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

*Collected Poems: Volume Two* receives financial  
assistance from the Arts Councils of Ireland.



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*Par les champs: Through the Fields*

They see these same fields  
quickset with hedges every day  
in an approximation of time  
they weigh on an enormous pair of cracked scales  
powerless to comprehend  
how many ears of wheat  
are stirred by a breeze  
women display themselves by lamplight  
a high blank wall grows ever longer  
sometimes there  
intervenes  
a fleeting kiss upon the lips.

*Time*

The scales of Justice atop  
the courthouse pediment  
are drilled with holes  
lest rainwater  
disturb the equilibrium  
the heavens open  
an inmate is set free  
a sentence done  
to walk the dark  
mile into the city  
a nightwalker stands by  
an aperture from which  
intervenes  
the mouth of a gun.

*Les livres et l'amour: Books and Love*

The books that throng the bedchamber  
are set atremble like aeolian harps  
when the wind blows from the orange groves  
and the letter embedded in the page  
adheres to  
the white linen paper  
and the war thunders from afar  
into the blaze of autumn  
killing both mistress and lover  
on the border of an ancient shoreline.

*The Wall*

A breeze ruffles  
the pages of a book left open  
at an open window  
a man gazes out across  
the roofs to where his quarter  
of the city borders  
on another  
then down storey  
after storey to  
the back yard  
wall of crumbling brick  
the sickly ivy has yet to climb  
to its skyline  
of green glass shards.  
Again he shuts the window to write  
in the book with no end in sight.

*Gerard Dillon, Self Contained Flat, exhibited 1955*

As in a medieval panel of the saint proceeding through  
the landscape of his miracles  
Gerard Dillon is seen three times under various appearances  
in the same frame, here  
Is Dillon in a blue fisherman's pullover walking in the door as  
skewed from the perspective  
Of the wee hallway-cum-kitchen another door or is it the same  
door lies open to show  
Dillon gardening on the garden path in denim dungarees as Dillon  
in the foreground in  
A bold blue and white check shirt and red-trimmed light grey sports  
cardigan stands by a pine worktop  
Emblazoned with the emblems of his trade: blowtorch, bottle  
of spirits, screwdriver, pliers,  
As if to say fisherman gardener painter-decorator here I am  
this that and the other.

What great colours there are in this painting — the Cardinal or  
Chagall Red of the carpet  
Corresponding to the red trim of the cardigan that complements  
the Green Carnation Green  
Of Dillon's foreground face; the Madonna Blue of the raincoat hung  
on the yellow dresser,  
Yellow that for Dillon stood for happiness, as in *The Yellow Bungalow*,  
Daffadowndilly Yellow  
Of the single bed a naked figure occupies whatever she or he  
might represent  
The colours of the rainbow as if to say Gauguin Chagall icon painter  
here I am this that and the other.

*Basil Blackshaw, Windows I-V, 2001*

1

All these months I've been looking around for ways to describe  
the windows that would be  
By definition to write about the windows or indeed around them:  
not so much to delineate  
As to allow a little leeway as to what they mean that must include  
the shifting memories,  
The unreliability of exactly when it was I first set eyes on them  
seventeen years ago —  
Give or take a month or two — in the Ulster Museum. And were  
you there with me then?  
I can't remember, nor can you when I ask. But we like to think  
of that first viewing  
As by both of us, whether probable or possible we cannot tell  
in this long retrospect.  
And as for the present moment, I've been writing 'windows'  
for all that they are not.

They are paintings of windows, each entitled *Window* followed  
by a Roman numeral,  
Which we assume denotes the order in which they were painted.  
And dimly I remember  
The 'window' adumbrated by Alberti in his *On Painting* (1435).  
I've just looked  
For it online, and here it is: 'Let me tell you what I do when I am  
painting. First of all,  
On the surface which I am going to paint, I draw a rectangle of  
whatever size I want,  
Which I regard as an open window through which the subject  
to be painted is seen.'