

## **ELEGY FOR EDDIE McCARTHY**

**WE HAD NOT SEEN EACH OTHER IN YEARS  
SINCE I WAS YOUNGER, LEARNING ALL THE NAMES  
OF MEN AND TUNES, AND ALL THE RULES  
OF SITTING QUIETLY UNTIL ADDRESSED, OR (BEYOND HOPE)  
BEING ASKED TO JOIN THE PLAYING.**

**I REMEMBER YOU WERE THERE THAT NIGHT DOWN IN O'REILLY'S  
I PLAYED "CROSSING THE SHANNON" WITH JOE BURKE.  
MY FINGERS SLIPPED AND STUMBLED, BUT HE SAID  
I PLAYED IT WELL ... HE LIKED THE TUNE, HE SAID,  
AND YOU AGREED AND SHOOK MY SWEATING HAND.**

**TRUTH TO TELL, I HAD NOT THOUGHT OF YOU IN ALL THAT TIME -  
NOT OUT OF MALICE OR NEGLECT, BUT FOR THE REASON  
THAT THE MIND AND HEART FILL QUICKLY  
AND FLEETINGLY WITH OTHER THINGS, AS TIME AND A REMOVAL  
AND NEW FACES CROWD OUT THE DIMMER IMAGES  
UNTIL THEY PASS THEMSELVES TO SOME SHADOWY PLACE  
NEITHER MEMORY NOR FORGETTING.**

**BUT WHEN MCGANN SAID YOU HAD PASSED AWAY  
OR, IN THE COLDER WORDS THAT HIDE BOTH LOVE AND FEAR,  
"WE WAKED HIM LAST WEEK,"  
THEN I RECALLED YOUR CHEERFUL FACE, NEVER IN MY KNOWING  
WITHOUT A SMILE, AND THE BEER AND A SHOT  
(BLACKBERRY BRANDY IF CRONIN DID THE ORDERING)  
AND YOUR BODHRÁN AND CLAPPER NEVER FAR FROM YOU.**

**FOR YEARS YOU SAT AND MADE YOUR PATIENT RHYTHM  
FOR THE TUNES PLAYED IN A THOUSAND PUBS AND GATHERINGS  
BY THE GREATEST AND THE LEAST. I OFTEN THOUGHT  
IF THE LORD HIMSELF HAD DECIDED TO RETURN TO EARTH  
IN THE MIDDLE OF A HORNPIPE, YOU WOULD HAVE WAITED  
TO FINISH THE TUNE RIGHT THROUGH TO THE TWO TAPS  
BEFORE YOU WENT TO SAY HELLO.**

**AND NOW YOU'RE BRIGHT AND GLORIFIED, PLAYING AWAY  
AT THAT SESSION IN SOME RESPLENDENT CORNER OF HEAVEN  
WHERE WHAT IS LOVED SO MUCH DOWN HERE  
COMES TO ITS PERFECTION, AS EVERY MUSICIAN KNOWS.  
KILLORAN'S ON ONE SIDE OF YOU, SEÁN MCGLYNN ON THE OTHER  
BUT CRONIN'S HAVING A LITTLE TROUBLE LEARNING TO FOLD HIS WINGS**

## ***ELEGY FOR EDDIE McCARTHY***

**AND HE SAYS HE CAN'T GET USED TO THE GOLDEN FIDDLE  
EVEN THOUGH HE HAS HIS VERY OWN CHERUB  
TO TUNE IT FOR HIM. AS FOR YOU AND YOUR SHINING BODHRÁN,  
YOU'RE ONLY SLIGHTLY HAPPIER THAN YOU WERE IN THE BRONX  
(THEOLOGIANs TAKE NOTE). PRAY FOR US BETWEEN TUNES.**

**MCCARTHY, WOULD YOU MIND THIS LITTLE EPITAPH  
I OFFER YOU AS ONE MUSICIAN TO ANOTHER?**

***YOU MADE US ALL SOUND GOOD.***

***- June 1996***