

# POETRY

## Tommy's Song

Awaken *Mary Ann*, for  
*The Liar*,  
*The Man of No Conscience*, cries,  
*That No Irish Need Apply*  
*Peace and Justice* disappear  
in *the Rape of the Gael*  
*In That Land I Loved So Well*,  
*True Love and Time*.  
have stopped.

*There Was An Old Woman*.  
among the *Four Green Fields*,  
She entreated me,  
*Brendan, The Darkley Weaver*,  
*Don't Go Down To The Big Green Sea*.  
contrast,  
from *Clean Air, Clean Water*,  
to the *Ships of War* ready,  
even *The Water Sings* out -  
to the march of  
*The Enniskillen Dragoons*  
*Where Ever The Winds*,  
*The Winds of Morning?*

*The Winds Are Singing Freedom!*  
And call for *Better Times*.  
I went anyway.  
And so,  
*Farewell My Friends*.  
*Farewell to Carlingford*,  
*Fare Thee Well Enniskillen*  
Let there be none  
of *The Morning After Blues*.  
Fear, but hope again to walk  
*This Dusty Road*.  
when next again, in victory  
we are *Rolling Home*.

But now, as we enjoin  
*The Boys of Killybegs*  
toasting farewells,  
sipping *Paddy Kelly's Brew*.  
*Freedom's Sons* are singing;  
singing sad songs,  
to their love, songs.  
*Pretty Maggie O', Sally O'*,  
*Pretty Saro and Rosie*.  
for some,  
a *Song For The Children*.

In *The Time Of Scented Roses*,  
let they be not black,  
*The Long Woman's Grave*.  
Rather *Sing Me The Old Songs*;

of *Rambling Rivers*  
in *The Rambles of Spring*,  
*Clear Blue Hills*  
or *Grey October Clouds*,  
among *Long Winter Nights*.

If I should return,  
*If You Should Ask Me*,  
*I'm Going Home To Mary*,  
*Smiling Mary*  
I can see her, as she holds  
our *Gentle Annie* in her arms,  
listening to  
*The Listowel Blackbird* sing;  
*Music In The Twilight*,  
In *Newry Town*  
I will return again

### **A Window In a Memoir**

Time stops for no man, woman or child  
But the stories in "My Grandfather's Emigrant Eyes"  
or  
"The Old Man"  
slip away when they do  
Of lives lived, things that were that are no more  
First fading in memories,  
then just fading

History that I want to raise from the dead,  
before they are dead.  
History from before I ever lived  
For when I am gone,  
and they are gone,  
the history will be gone too  
Too precious to lose without remembering, recording, preserving,  
to be studied, admired,  
understood – history whose presence shaped  
and reshaped-  
to make the people and the land  
what they are today  
Old practices, old beliefs,  
rushed past by the trickling, falling sand  
And forgotten. Almost.  
I do not forget.  
I know what I do not know  
And seek to know it.  
Not only for myself but for my children,  
and theirs  
Preservation of the memories  
keep alive what has passed away  
I was raised on songs and stories,  
a stored up library  
given for others to borrow,  
read, see,  
re-live and mostly,  
As a window within a memoir -  
to understand.

## The Years in Her Eyes

I see the years in her eyes  
A miasma that can only be caused by the pain of a life well lived  
It may be the years, it may be the mileage  
It may be all she has seen or lost - that took bits of her heart

A far off look, of things remembered, regrets  
Then she smiles and those thoughts are supplanted, eradicated  
The stories come forth, Almost unwittingly, shyness overcome  
Good memories flood and wash away the momentary darkness  
and the present recedes, to become overloaded with recollections  
Now so much to tell, an urgency, to beat the recorder and the march of time  
Wouldn't do to have the stories lost.  
It wouldn't do to have the teller not feel this cherished, all of the time.  
at least while we can. Until the next injects its own urgency.  
The kettle is always boiling, and the stories taste so sweet.

Hours give way. New memories are born in crying the old.  
for both the teller and the awed.  
Perhaps, in a different way,  
even more treasured than the stories that brought me here in the first place  
The recorder shuts off but my mind keeps turning, reliving. The images so  
vividly reborn  
giving context to the foggy images of history  
that until now, only slipped in, and out of my consciousness.  
A way that was only legend, has now become a history –  
living and breathing – reborn, again.  
For a few more generations to breathe, taste  
Captured briefly, before it could disappear completely.  
to what was, today, I know the light in her eyes has illuminated.  
yet another window to what was, how it was.  
The stories in her eyes, light, explain  
how I see, the years in her eyes.