

Plastic by Paul O'Brien

from Paul O'Brien's *Plastic* album (2008)

Lyrics:

I have the wrong accent, and I sing the wrong anthem  
It's not my fault but I've lived with the shame  
You just can't belong to a six-week long summer  
September always comes knocking again.

60's depression fuelled the diaspora  
Did they think they would stay for a year and a day?  
My past is no different but the bridge it is broken  
Was flesh and blood become Plastic instead

Now I can put them together again  
Birmingham Irish I am I am  
The fate of our fathers is lived by the children  
New York Irish I am

Grew up through the 'Troubles', consumed by two cultures  
We never called home the place that we lived  
I was born in the city, the city of workers  
And sang in the bars songs of my mother and father

You screamed out for Michael as the river flowed faster\*  
You sang out for Ray when the Lions he tamed  
But when I sang in Digbeth\*\* you called me 'Plastic'  
Am I so different never to be the same?

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Now I can put them together again  
Manchester Irish I am I am  
The fate of our fathers are lived by the children  
Boston Irish I am

Drinking in London the football fans mingle  
Everyone dressed in the green, white and gold  
But because of an accent bones they were broken  
On the same side but not sharing a home

Plastic is made by the coming together  
Of cultures and time and necessities hand  
Lasting for ever, and changing for better  
Blessed with a future and blessed with a plan

Now I can put them together again  
Glasgow Irish I am I am  
The fate of our fathers is lived by the children  
Toronto Irish I am

*\* Refers to two other successful second generation Irishmen: Chicago Irish Michael Flatley, who starred in the global phenomenon Riverdance, and Glasgow Irish footballer Ray Houghton, who scored in the Republic of Ireland's 1-0 victory over England in the European Championship 1988*

*\*\*Digbeth is a district in Birmingham City Centre with very close links to the Irish community. It is home to Birmingham's Irish Quarter, which comprises Irish pubs, the St Patrick's Parade route and the Birmingham Irish Centre*