

Poems by Phil Brennán

1997

January 1997

Note: 1997 was a very hard year for me, and this is reflected in the poetry written during what was the worst period of my life. Needless to say that this makes for some very grim reading indeed. You have been warned...

Do Mhàire Mhòr Nic an Phearsùin [For
Big Mary McPhearson]

Is cuimhim liom a hainm
Amhail is nach mbeadh anm ach inné
Nuair a chonaic mé scannàn
Faoina saol

Faoin dòigh ar throid sì
Faoin dòigh ar shaothraigh sì
Ar son saoirse a clann mac
Ar son saoirse a tìr dhùchais

Is is cuimhim le Garbhchìocha na hAlban
Mar ar ghlaoigh sì in ard a gutha
Cosùil le filiméala ar an bhré
Nò le bean sì san oiche

Agus tharraing mo chroì ar na téada
Ar chloisteail dom glòr na nGael
Ag teitheadh as Droichead na Sìog
Agus amach leis, trasna na genoc

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Dead Man Walking

I:

Inside the work agencies
Everybody whispers
“Dead man walking”

In side the Job Centres
Everybody whispers
“Dead man walking”

In the precinct
In the mall
In the houses
In the halls
Everybody whispers
“Dead man walking”

II:

I've spent too much time writing
About love and hope
And all those other things
That I know nothing about

I've lied, and cheated, and blagged my way by
Never stopping to think that it would all catch
up with me
That one day I'd be exposed
Naked, and afraid

And now as I look back upon my life
I realise everything that I had ever done was
wrong
That I should have opened up instead of hiding
from the truth
That I should have trusted those who are known
by the Name

But it's too late for regrets
Too late for apologies
So I resign myself to my fate
To be naked, and afraid

III:

I sit here inside a café in the Dolphin Centre
Listening to snippets of other peoples'
conversations
A trace of normality in a world of confusion
As I wait for the next move to be played

And I hear them whisper
"Dead man walking"
And the whisper gets louder
And louder still
Until it blocks all thought
From within my mind

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A Letter

I wrote a letter to a girl I once loved today
And said sorry for my life
I told her that I wasn't coming back
That she wasn't to be my wife

And I can imagine the pain I've caused her
Though I'll never know for sure
If she'll find it in her heart to forgive me
Or if she'll damn my soul to hell

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One More Day

I'm still breathing
I'm amazed at how much I can survive
I'm still breathing
I'm amazed that I'm still alive
And where there's life there's hope
For just another day

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Inside

I sit here wondering how long I've got
Before it's time to go
Go where the sun don't shine
Through bars and gates and doors

Inside, it's hell on earth
And nobody is there to hold your hand
Inside, it's lonelier than death itself
Lonelier than the grave

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Low Ebb #1

In the cold, long watches of the night
I lie awake in bed
And it seems like only yesterday
I had plans for a future

And the aching, burning sweat pours from every
part of me
A soulless life waiting for the fall into cold
insanity

No scripture verse can save me now
No hope for pure release
Save that I know, and know it well
That He even died for me

Though people look with horror
At what I have become
One man stands with open arms
God's one and only Son

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Untitled Stanzas #1

But now, as I face the curtain call
I know it's not my final bow
For grace shall come, and nearer still
Yet still I know not how

Where I'm to go is unassured
Another man has the final word
And as I wait, I wait in peace
For grace and sure release

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Last Song

Life is cheap, or so they say
As if it mattered anyway
Will we live, will we die
Will anyone at our graveside cry?

Will we be forgotten
When our loved ones, too, have passed away
Or will the dead be raised
Upon that fateful, final day?

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Low Ebb #2

I live in hope
It's all I have
This burning desire
To see an end

And I don't know all the answers
So don't you dare ask me why
We live and breathe, eat and breed
Until, at last, we die

I face despair
I haven't the strength to run
To me this isn't fair
To eke out my existence beneath the sun

But I do know that there's more to life than this
More than we could ever really know
If only we could see past our own empty lives
Then it wouldn't seem so low

I turn around (I dare not look)
Into that burning, shining book
Written by hand throughout all time
An illuminated list of name
Will I see mine?

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Words

Words, words
It's all words
The words I say
The words I withhold
The words unspoken
The words untold
Words, words
They don't mean a thing
It's only a way of hiding
Behind a façade of lies
And does it really matter what I say
As long as I do it anyway?
Words, words
I've had enough of words!

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Endgame

I keep on writing
I don't know why
Seems like I'm waiting
For something to give

To give what?
It's not as if there's any time to be lost
Spent going over the same old ground
Trying to see where I went wrong
This wonderful gift of hindsight
Bears heavily down upon my shoulders
Like some kind of curse
To be borne without a sense of release

And all in all it's all the same to me
It doesn't really matter if I bear up under this
The end result is still the same
Waiting for the next move to be played
Endgame

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Time to Mourn

I don't know how to cry
It's as if I've forgotten how

So long have I held back my tears
At what I have become
Now I have only deep regret
To mourn my loss of innocence

Where did it all go wrong?
Where was the point that I strayed?
Why did I let it happen?
Surely I would have seen it coming?

Mourn, my son, mourn

Mourn because of the disaster that has
overtaken you

Mourn because you have nothing left to hold on
to but me

Mourn because your sins are like crimson

Turn around, face me if you dare

Seek my face, I still care

Though I am angry, my wrath is short
And a furnace is made for redemption

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Remember Me

Remember that I said I loved you

So many moons ago?

I know that I wasn't that true

But that's just the way it goes

And I'm walking back

Yes I'm walking back

I'm sorry I've been so far away

But I'm walking back

To you

No time left for excuses

They've all escaped my mind

When I stare long and hard

And wonder about my kind

And I'm walking back

Yes I'm walking back

I'm sorry I've been so far away

But I'm walking back

To you

But all I have left

Isn't really mine to give

I'll give it all to you

If you'd just let me live

And I'm walking back
Yes I'm walking back
I'm sorry I've been so far away
But I'm walking back
To you

And as I wait for the redemption song
Coming in on a wing and a prayer
I know I won't wait that long
For you are drawing near

And I'm walking back
Yes I'm walking back
I'm sorry I've been so far away
But I'm walking back
To you

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Untitled Stanzas #2

It's time, you said
And I've nothing left to argue with
I'm naked and I'm scared
For I have died and yet you still live

© Phil Brennán 31st January 1997

February 1997

Blue Moon

Blue moon
Blue moon
Don't you have a sister?
How come
You turn your face
Away from her?

Blue moon
Blue moon
Don't you have a sister?
Isn't it strange
How you look
A lot like her?

Blue moon
Blue moon
Don't you have a sister?

© Phil Brennán 9th February 1997

Sixteen Times

Sixteen times I've heard these lies
Like pouring sand
Into my eyes
Many times I've felt like shouting
"Enough, enough
Enough of these lies!"

But you just carry on
And the sky turns darker
And I kinda get scared
That the sun has gone forever

And you just stand there
With that smile upon your lips
So I pull tight the corners of my mouth
And put my hands upon my hips

And it all goes darker when you turn away
You freeze me out
Like there's nothing to say
But I still stand here like a lemon
While you smile sweetly
And call my name

But there's nothing left to say
And you're getting kinda bored
Like I ain't no fun
And you want to play the whore
But I'm tired of all these games
That we play all the while
So I bunch up my fists
And knock off that smile

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The Battle Lines are Drawn

I'm sat here drinking my cup of Earl Grey
Thinking of things to say
And all the while the lines on the page
Move from side to side
And the battle lines are drawn across my mind
And the heroes have no names

But there's flags and drummer boys
Trumpets and shouts
And the charge is called on the horn
And the piper is piping
The Mull of Kintyre
And the battle lines are drawn

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March 1997

Song of Kaddish

When I am gone
And they've laid my bones down to rest
Sing me a song
A song of Kaddish

© Phil Brennán 4th March 1997

On the Outside

I've got it all written down in a little blue book
And it seems to me as if I'm wasting my time
And I'm turning around to take a final look
Before I go inside

And it seems as if the air is free
On the outside
And it seems as if it's alright with me
When I dream of being
On the outside

© Phil Brennán 4th March 1997

Turn Blue

Turn blue
That's all I ever do
Turn blue

Turn blue
That's all I ever do
Turn blue

And you paint it black
While I'm turning blue
It's not that hard
It's just the way I am
Turn blue
That's all I ever do
Turn blue

Turn blue
That's all I ever do
Turn blue

And the world turns on
While I forget the song
It's not so crazy
When you know the score

Turn blue
That's all I ever do
Turn blue

Turn blue
That's all I ever do
Turn blue

And I lift my hands to the sky
And wonder why we cry
When all in all it's all up to you
To prevent me from turning blue

© Phil Brennán 4th March 1997

Endgame #1

So I sit like a hermit monk
Upon the memories of my life
And I don't know where to go from here
And I'm not too sure if they'd care

It seems to me that all I do
Is procrastinate myself away from you
To run and run and not look back
To make a rod for my own back

So I sit here like a hermit monk
Not wanting to move at all
In case I'd fall
And I don't know where to go from here
And I'm not too sure if I'd dare

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Endgame #2

I've got my little book of lies
And a hundred disguises
To make it seem so real
I've got many names to call
And many ways to fall
But only one way to feel

I've got poems that would make you cry
And plenty of ways to sigh
To make it seem alright
I've got cyanide in my pen
And shadows upon the fen
And an eagle in the night

But I'm still wondering where it's all gone
Or if I've forgotten the song
But there's only so much I can say
There's no life left in my soul
And I'm feeling so old
Older than the sum of my days

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Lamentation

It's been many months since I last saw you
And drank your blood and ate your flesh
And remembered why you did all this
But it's funny how it's so easy to forget

And it's funny how I run so hard
To make my own bed to lay in
But I find it's cold and full of stones
And steeped in original sin

If only I listened to what you said
If only I took a little more time
To weigh it up and find it wanting
If only I knew then what I now know
And didn't let my other half show
To take a look and throw it out the door

It's been a long time since I called your name
And longer since you answered
But all in all the truth has walked out my door
And I'm left here looking like a coward

I've done all I could to hold back the tears
Gathered over many long years
To hide from you and let it pass
To hide myself away from the past

If only I listened to what you said
If only I took a little more time
To weigh it up and find it wanting
If only I had another chance
To weigh it up and find it wanting
I'd change
I'd change this whole damn mess

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Tired of Digging this Hole

I'm sat in my cell writing my life away
And I cannot look forward to another day
It's just that I'm tired and frail of soul
And I'm forever digging this hole

I'm stood on this mountain looking down
At ordinary people in an ordinary town
Their lives, you see, are no worse than mine
It's just that I'm not doing so fine

I'm sat in my cell writing my life away
And I cannot look forward to another day
It's just that I'm tired and frail of soul
And I'm forever digging this hole

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Harlequin

I've said all that I've got to say
I just wish that you would go away
And suck your brains out of someone else's ear
I'm far too gone to care

I don't like it what you say
It just leaves me in a daze
Your purple-scented lies are like smoke in my eyes
I want you out of my hair

But you're far too stubborn to care
And I'm far too gone to leave it alone
So I leave my curse and pass the door
It's time I made myself a new home

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One More Day

And now I've looked back upon my life
I tend to wonder where it all went
I've spent my whole life running
And I think that my time is all spent
But I just wait here one more day
For a miracle to come

The dice have been rolled and counted
The cards have played their hand
For once I'm without a say
And does it matter, anyway?
So I just wait here one more day
For a miracle to come

© Phil Brennán 6th March 1997

Love's Game

I: Entreat

I see the shadows beneath your eyes
Like you've been crying for a hundred years
And I don't what to say
And I don't know how to act
When I know that you're falling apart

You turn your face away from me
As if to say that you're turning blue
And it seems like a thousand years
And it feels like a thousand tears
When I know that I'm losing your heart

And I cannot put the colours back into the world
And I don't even know if I should try
Sometimes I wonder what it's all about
And the tears
Your tears
They bleed me dry

So I walk away and shake my head
Curse aloud to wake the dead
But all the while I shake
And all the while I quake
To know that I'm losing you

II: Bitterness

I look through the broken mirror of your smile
And I shake my teeth
But even though you turn away from me
I still cannot get any relief

I just cannot walk away
No matter what others might say
I just cannot leave you here
I just cannot change the day

© Phil Brennán 9th March 1997

Untitled

What do I care for company?
It's not for want of trying that I'm alone;
But fate has dealt me an unfair hand,
To be restless and to roam.

What would I want with redemption;
Surely I have little left to redeem?
My soul is entwined in my own sense of guilt,
A cloud of sorrows unseen.

Yet I wait, and wait too long,
For stranger things than these;
To earn some merit in a world full of lies,
To earn some sort of reprieve.

What do I care if I live or die?
The end result is all the same;
For want of love I have fallen,
And alone I must shoulder the blame.

© Phil Brennán 12th March 1997

Untitled

Is life spent at such an early year?
Surely not! - I'm not dead 'till I'm buried,
This coil of mortal life still entwines,
It's self around this frame of dust.

And people may judge and cast their stones,
And curse me but once,
Surely that is to be expected?
Yet I have not defence or wise words to say.

© Phil Brennán 12th March 1997

Remember

Remember me my friends
For the time is almost done
For your eyes they start to fade
And you finally see no one
When all in all falls with a bloody roar
And you don't know where to hand
This mystery called life
It gets out off hand

My friends it's time to leave you
And leave you feeling blue
These words are made of salt
These words are just for you

Don't let the sun go down on your anger
Don't let it twist your heart
Don't let it blow your mind
Or tear your soul apart
No more time for anger
No more time to hate
No more time to wonder
And no more time to waste

I sit before my computer with my hand posed by
my lap
Without any pride or prejudice to remind me of
this single fact
And knows all things together
That counts for good or ill
May all things together
Work out, but not my will

© Phil Brennán 14th March 1997

Reprisal

I remember a time when all was young
And things just wandered in song
And I sat by a tree with ribbons 'round it's bows
And I don't know how but it got me thinking
Of life and all this seems to me to be wasted
In little insignificant insecurities of mankind
that comes to mind
Of my kind and things just slope away too fast
Before you know it the future's past
And poetry is words,
And hope it falls down dead
It's a simple fact that man does not like to be
Reminded of his need for spite and revenge
And vengeance is a word
That should remain unheard if it was up to me
But it's not,
And to be quite honest It doesn't matter much at
all
Whether we live or die or fall

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Untitled Stanza

Remember this, my sons
Freedom cannot be bought at any price

© Phil Brennán 27th March 1997

Remember

Remember when we were once a nation
Free from the Beast of Europe
And we could make our own laws
And rule our own land
And now you want to throw it all away
For a Federalist's Dream
A mad man's nightmare?

How could you do it?
How could you let it happen?
And how dare you throw our freedom away!
I would rather die than bow down to Brussels

But no one would listen
And they closed their ears to the truth
Oh stupid, slothful nation!
When will you wake up
And determine your own future?
And now, there is no future in England
That time has almost past
Our leaders have become as sheep
To lead us to the slaughter house
And we follow like the sheep that we are
To witness the death of our nation

We were once a great nation
Did you not think that we could be so again?
But we eat their lies
And like sheep we are led to the slaughter

© Phil Brennán 27 March 1997

May 1997

A Hundred Thousand Men

A hundred thousand men all stood in a line
A hundred thousand men all dying in time
An' it bothers me with all this waste
An' all this losing time

Six men in the war room all looking at a map
Six men in the war room all reeling from this
mishap
An' it bothers me with all this waste
An' all this government crap

A corner in a foreign field which is forever
England
An' a name carved upon the Cenotaph
Sonny Jim came home in a box with a flag
An' a wasted fucking life

© Phil Brennán 13th May 1997

After Three Days of Drunkenness

I've sobered up an' I'm wondering why the fuck
I bothered
Too many drugs an' too much to drink
An' too much to care about

An' there's too much fucking blackness to take
care of
An' I'll be fucked if I'm gonna say this
But I'm fucked if I don't

So I raise my single digit towards the sky
An' give the anarchist's salute
But this gesture is empty and hollow
An' I'm too fucked to care
My father broods and my mother sighs
As I sign my life away
But nothing matters to me
As it's all a load of fucking bullshit
An' it doesn't matter if I live or die
Or if I fade away

I don't have a Nine or a sign
An' I sure as hell don't have a name
I've just got this chip on my shoulder
An' nothing to knock it off with

© Phil Brennán 18th May 1997

Why?

Can you remember the colour of the sky
Or the colour of your skin?
Can you tell me why it is
That man is born to sin?

Can you tell me the point of the tale
Or why I've come in half way through?
It matters nought to me
Why should it matter to you?

© Phil Brennán 18th May 1997

It All Comes 'Round Again

Well, I've drunk too much an' said not enough
I don't know why it is but I never wanted to
sober up
An' I'm staring it right in the face
The means of my own destruction

Johnny Boy's been booted out of number ten
Fucked up Labour's in again
Nothing ever surprises me
An' nothing will ever change

What does it matter if we have a change of face?
It's not as if they're the ones pulling all the
strings
We handed that one over years ago
An' I don't remember getting to vote

As for me, I'm totally fucked
I've drunk too much an' not enough
An' if the truth was to be told
I would rather had not sobered up

© Phil Brennán 18th May 1997

Trippin' Out

Sat in the underpass with my back against the
wall
Transfixed by the shapes floating by the floor
A fire burns low and gives no heat
My body's shaking and I want to eat

My hands are skeletons devoid of skin
The Acid burns on through this mortal sin
Faces surround me painted in neon
And the trip goes on and on

My fag burns green as the light is red
It feels like I'm playing with the dead
Love is lost as the Vampyre feeds
And I bleed

© Phil Brennán 24th May 1997

Blood, Sweat, Tears

Blood
My debt is in blood

Sweat
Sweat pours from me in rivers

Tears
I cry crocodile tears

© Phil Brennán 24th May 1997

But Nothing Ever Happens My Way

I'm empty and dry
And I'm waiting to die
But nothing ever happens my way

I have lost it all
'Though I could've won
But nothing ever happens my way

I'm angry but I don't know why
I'm tired because I cannot cry
But nothing ever happens my way

© Phil Brennán 24th May 1997

June 1997

Song of Our Fathers

Listen son
Said the man with the gun
I'll tell you why I am
Do you remember
A world of peace
When it's still ruled Clan by Clan?

And do you remember the tribal song
Sung so many times?
It's all the same to me
I never ask why
And can you remember the names
Of heroes dead and gone?
Another epitaph carved in stone
Another man with a gun

Listen son
Said the man with the gun
I'll tell you why I am
It's not for peace
Or a small piece of land
We're still ruled Clan by Clan

© Phil Brennán 4th June 1997

Hey You

Hey you
Hey you
Do you feel the way I do
Or am I the only one?

Hey you
Hey you
Am I only dreaming
Or do they come true?

I don't care for money
It just about fills my needs
I don't care to play the fool
Because fools are never free

Hey you
Hey you
Do you wonder why we're here
Or am I the only one?

Hey you
Hey you
What am I doing here
And are you as confused as me?

It doesn't really matter much
If no one could tell me 'why'
It's not as if the question's hard
But answers don't come with ease

Hey you
Hey you
Do you feel the way I do
Or am I the only one?

© Phil Brennán 4th June 1997

Fire in the Wind

Many times I've asked these questions
Many times I've sought the answers
But still I strive without knowing why
And it causes me to fall

And I've buried it deep
Too deep to show
These questions that burn inside of me
Like a fire in the wind

© Phil Brennán 4th June 1997

Beyond the Pale Blue Sky

I'm cold
Colder inside than it is out there
I'm old
Older than a hundred years
But it doesn't matter if you can't see
Beyond the pale blue sky

I'm tired
Tired of all these crimson lies
I'm tired
Tired of all these games we play
But it doesn't matter if you can't see
Beyond the pale blue sky

And I lift my hands in aeroplanes
Wishing that I could fly away
To where the skies are blue
And you'd follow me but you don't know how
To escape from cold reality for awhile
To where the skies are blue

© Phil Brennán 4th June 1997

Love Song

It's funny how things get out of hand
An' it's funny how I never seem to land
On my feet
It doesn't matter if I'm right or wrong
Just as long as you are here

Baby, I can't live without your
Arms around me
I can't live without that touch of love
But I just keep on running
Every time you're near
Playing games just to hide my fear

Blue skies, you can keep them
I'd rather have the rain
Water running down my face
There to hide the pain
It gets too much to bear
And then I understand
It's better to walk with you
Hand in hand

Baby, I can't live without your
Arms around me
I can't live without that touch of love
But I just keep on running
Every time you're near
It's time to turn around
And face my fear

© Phil Brennán 27th June 1997

Freedom

“Maybe you've had a little too much dope” she said
An' I said “No, I haven't had enough to ease this pain”
“Well, maybe you've dropped too much acid” she said
An' I said “No, I haven't done enough to go insane
And this world is crashing down around my ears
And I'm too scared to face my fears”

“Well, isn't it time you straightened out?” she said
An' I said “No, I'm fine as long as I never come down”
“Why are you so scared to face the truth?” she said
An' I said “Well, it's kinda like seeing how hollow it all is
And how it never seems to get any better
Than is already is”

So she got up to leave, an' I said
“Why are you leaving me alone
When you know that you're all I have
And all that's keeping me whole?
And doesn't it make you as bad as me
When you too leave this sinking ship?
I cannot keep living this way without you
For you're all that's keeping me whole”

And she said “Listen, I love you
But you've got to understand
That I cannot help you this way
It seems to me that you want to die
And I shall not stand in your way
But if you ever change your mind
And stop being so fucking blind
I'll stay here by your side”

So I said “Wait! I want you here
Can't you see? Am I making myself clear?
You're all I have to hold on to
And all I have to live for
An' I'm sorry that I haven't been all there
For such a very long time
But today, yes today I swear
I'm gonna make this change”

© Phil Brennán 29th June 1997

July 1997

Monologue #1

I don't understand how I've ended up the way that I have. I won't go into my life story as it is a farce, and a very unpleasant one at that. But needless to say that I have become very cold inside, and I can't even remember the last time I smiled, or the last time I cried. The drugs that the doctor has given me just about keeps me level, just about keeps me from the edge of something so terrible and black that I dare not turn around and face it. It scares the fucking shit out of me to think that I am no longer in tune with myself, let alone other people. I withdraw away from all meaningful personal contact like a leper, and I avoid society like the plague. I don't really socialise unless it is upon MY terms with ME in complete and utter control.

I find that people always categorise me into some little box that I'm supposed to fit into no matter what. I protest and say that it isn't quite like that but they never believe me. They say that because I am ill that they know best, but they don't have all the answers. I don't think that anyone has except for perhaps myself. I know what happens inside my head better than any shrink does, and to tell you the truth it scares the shit out of me.

I know that I am capable of such rage and anger that it is almost uncontrollable at times. I feel like ripping someone's head off and pissing down their neck at times, and I used to consider myself as quite a mellow, laid back person.

This is just a front. A mask I use to disguise myself as being relatively normal. Inside is an anger that just will not go away. By suppressing my emotions I prevent myself from exploding like a time bomb. I am perfectly capable of hurting myself. I am perfectly capable of lashing out at someone else. I keep myself in check by not allowing myself to have any emotions whatsoever. Emotions are forbidden. Love is forbidden. Hate is forbidden. Anger is forbidden. Lust is forbidden. Fear is forbidden. Hope is forbidden. Joy is forbidden. Despair is forbidden but still excused. So I have become the ultra-phlegmatic, the perfect emotional sloth.

I can't even begin to say why I hurt so much inside that I would want to destroy the world and piss upon the remains like an incontinent lunatic. All I know is that there is a whole landscape of broken dreams and unfulfilled promises of a life totally different from the one that I've led so far. I want so much for everything to be different, to be better. But as we all say, life throws up challenges that we either meet or crumble under, there are brick walls to be scaled and strongholds to throw down. There are wars to be won or lost in the uncharted landscape of the human psyche. Anyone who says that they understand the human mind is telling you a load of crap. No one truly knows what our minds are capable of. No one knows for sure how the synapses fire off in relation to one another, or what endorphins and other chemical messages really mean in real terms.

Most psychology is a load of guess work at best, and a load of bollocks at worst. All I know is that I'm hitting brick walls that I can no longer climb over. I can't scale these walls because I have no strong footholds to cling to. I can't dig beneath them. I can't go around them. And I can't pretend that they just don't exist any more than I can deny the laws of physics. The seventh blind bat said to his fellows "What elephant?" simply because he missed it as he couldn't see what was before his eyes. He was, to coin a phrase, as blind as a bat. I have become blind to life and all it has to offer. I have lost all sense of direction to the point that I have become the seventh blind bat who missed the targeted elephant entirely.

I don't see myself ever getting a job. I don't think that I'll ever marry or start a family. I can't see anything but the dole queue and the happy pills taken in the vain hope that it will keep everything at bay for another twenty-four hours. I can deal with the symptoms but not the cause. I can cope with the what but not the why. I have become so rejected that I reject myself in protest at everything around me. That is why I don't eat right. That is why I don't date or look after myself. That is why I don't socialise more than I absolutely have to. That is why I prefer solitude to company. Loneliness to communication. Apathy to action. I don't even care if I see another human being during a day or a week or a month or a year or even a decade. That is why I don't date or socialise much, and I keep myself to myself. I refuse to participate in society in any way other than to sign on and cash my giro. I hate shopping at Asdas. I hate having to put up with other people more than I have to. I panic in large crowds or if the shopping is doing my head in. I don't often go to the pub or chat to other people in the hostel unless society is forced upon me and I have to interact with it.

This is the way I have become; a monk alone in
a big city. A gypsy on a council estate. A
traveller stuck in London with only a needle and
a bag of brown for company.

© Phil Brennán July 1997

Ghetto

Hey man, can you show me the way?
I'm lost and I'm blind and I'm going insane
Hey man, can you hear me at all?
I'm tired and I'm scared and I'm going to fall

And little Johnny is shooting up
With smack inside his eyes
While daddy sits with a can in his hands
And a vacant look in his eyes
And all the while I'm sitting here
Like a utopian hermit monk
Another life wasted, another life lost
Another stupid fucking punk

Hey man, can you show me the door?
I've fallen too far to scrape myself off the floor
Hey ma, I'm too far gone you see
And I'm not too sure what that means to me

And Lucy is itching at her scabs
Caused by the razor torn
Mommy sits and cries by herself
Broken and forlorn
And all the while I'm sitting here
Like some utopian hermit monk
Another life wasted, another life lost
Another stupid fucking punk

© Phil Brennán 3rd July 1997

Throughout the Dark Watches of the
Night

A dozen reasons why
And the memory of flight
Tossing and turning in my sleep
Throughout the dark watches of the night

A twisted mirror to reality
And a morbid sense of mortality
My bedclothes strangle me and fight
Throughout the dark watches of the night

A razor held high
And a strong urge to fly
Watching my fancies take flight
Throughout the dark watches of the night

And sleep escapes me now
As I lie here to watch the dawn
My mind is set though my heart unwill
As I wait out the dark watches of the night

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Song of the Fallen

I sit in my cell which is carved within hell
I listen to the voices and the toll of a bell
That deafens all that stands within its peal
And unearths all the hidden sins revealed
A siren call that breaks the heart
While others refuse to play their part
In redemption's song so sweet and low
And then I know it's time to go
To where the sun don't shine for a year or two
Sat in my cell with nothing else to do
But write my poems and sing my songs
[I hope this time is not too long]
A jester with a harlequin's smile
To sit and wait for awhile

While others get on with their lives
But little do they realise
That all in all we must fall
And those that do are shot against walls

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There is Nothing Upon This Earth [To
Compare With You]

I've been across this world with a roving heart
And I've seen all I wanted to see
I've been in the pits and I've been in the clouds
I've sobbed in silence and I've screamed out
loud
But nothing upon this earth
Could ever compare with you

I've had all my loves and my fair share of wine
I've dined with kings and stole food from the
swine
These things I have done and much more
besides
But I was never there when my Saviour died
And nothing upon this earth
Could ever compare with you

So why do I fall when I know you so well?
Why am I torn 'twix heaven and hell?
I've read your word and yet I still fall
And why am I deaf when I should answer your
call?

I've been on my knees more times than I'd care
to know
I stopped and I stalled when you told me to go
I've bitten my tongue when you asked me to
speak
I closed my eyes when you bade me to seek
Yet nothing upon this earth
Could ever compare with you

I withheld my pain when you asked for it back
I capitulated under satanic attack
I hid from the truth and made you a lie
And yet for me you would even have died
And nothing upon this earth
Could ever compare with you

So I'm back on my feet and I'll try it once more
It don't taste too nice when your mouth's on the
floor
There's nought on this earth that I could ever
want
But to be by your side once more

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A Song of Redemption

Lord, I am tired
And it feels as if all I ever do
Is never quite worthy of you
And I'm struggling to live my life
The way that you'd want me to

Lord, I am thirsty
And the sun is burning down upon my head
Bleeding me dry and bleeding me dead
And it feels as if I've been here before
Like I'm walking backwards instead

But even when I'm down
I still know that you love me
And even when I walk away from you
You'd still walk after me

So I lift my hands towards you
To say that I'm sorry for the way I've lived
before
And the more that I strive, the more that I fall
But no matter what happens you'll restore

Lord, you know how much we fall
It's as if we don't know the truth
And we're caught by the folly of youth
But then you turn us around once more
And you show us the truth

Lord, it's time to try again
And tho' I keep falling
You'll keep on restoring
Because that's just who you are
And although I may walk away
You'll never let me walk too far

But even when I'm down
I still know that you love me
And even when I walk away from you
You'd still walk after me

So I lift my hands towards you
To say that I'm sorry for the way I've lived
before
And the more that I strive, the more that I fall
But no matter what happens you'll restore

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August 1997

A Thousand Drummers

A thousand drummers drumming
And a flag upon a hill
The cannons roar their symphonies
To the gods of death and war
The generals sit neck deep in shit
While a mother's son bleeds and dies
And the parliament meets three times a week
To churn out their fucking lies

A poppy on a foreign field
And an epitaph carved in bronze
The armistice came like a thief in the night
And silenced all the guns
Then we drove through the death camps
Built with human bones
Our Rabbi sang the Song of Kaddish
And then we all went home

© Phil Brennán 10th August 1997

Melancholy

I sit here in my room
In someone else's home
Trapped by indecision
Nowhere left to roam
My computer screen shows the shite
Written by my hand
A cuckoo in the nest
A stranger in a foreign land

© Phil Brennán 10th August 1997

A Vicious Circle

I ended up on the scrap heap at sixteen
With hardly any exams an' a chip on my
shoulder
Went straight into YTS with my head in the
clouds
And designs upon my very own Giro

In my spare time I read loads of books
By the likes of Marion Zimmer Bradley
Isaac Asimov, David Eddings
And several other authors who were a
convenient excuse
To hide away from reality
I wrote crap poems to fill in all those empty
spaces
Only to find that I'd create a lot more
And the ones that were left got even wider still

I dropped acid, smoked dope
Did anything to fill up the emptiness inside
But the holes got bigger
And my Giro seemed smaller for all the effort
I wore a lot of black and read tarot cards
Listened to a lot of Goth Rock
And painted my face white with black eye liner
And lips like Robert Smith

Then I found God
Or at least, I thought I did
I ripped up all my tarot cards because they just
wouldn't burn
I bought a Celtic cross and hung it around my
neck
I even attended church
And I started to be human again
I examined my past and put it away again
But I never really resolved it

Four years later we moved to Dorset
I resented it from the beginning
I hated moving away from all my old friends
The ones I came to trust and love
Yes, love – I started to love again
I even started to smile on occasions
But then we moved
And my world fell apart

Everything that could go wrong, did
My past kept catching up with me
And I was constantly running from the things
that I feared
And I was falling apart at the seams
And then I fell
I did exactly the same things which was done to
me
The things that caused the emptiness in the first
place
And I almost lost my liberty

Now I'm back at square one
And I'm left with what is past
And what little left is to come
And I'm left with the feeling that it didn't have
to be this way

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September 1997

Untitled #3

When I fall I think to myself that sometimes I
set myself up
And then I only have myself to blame and no
one else
But falling is so much more preferable than
living on the edge
And diving is to be preferred over falling

I have no excuses other than the usual reasons
And I don't care for redemption as I've been on
that trip before
And nothing ever changes and we still remain
the same
And reasons are always treated as excuses to be
borne

© Phil Brennán 19th September 1997

Epitaph

So I carved my epitaph in the flesh of the human heart and moved on

And I stowed my dreams away in a secret place where no one goes

I made my mistakes and paid for them with the price of sweat and tears

And blood was laid down upon the altar of the broken heart

Images of sex and fear swarmed beyond my vision to escape me

And I despised love for treating me like the fool that I am

I became the thing that I most hated and found the will to live

Only to lose it for the sake of the truth and many untold mysteries

Serendipity escaped me like so many times before

And I hid from the light blinded by selfishness and greed

Too many vipers have already eaten of my flesh and chewed the bone

And I poured out my blood like a sacrifice to an unknown god

Survival of the fittest and a means to an end without meaning or metre

And a heart upon my sleeve all twisted and black

Formaldehyde preserved the last of my humanity in a glass case

And at times I viewed the world through a Gentiles eyes

A flame still flickers where I'd least expect it to be

And a longing often suppressed awakens once more

Lone wolves and restless hicks travel the expanse of my psyche

And I view everything with foreboding and dread

So I carved my epitaph in the flesh of the human heart and moved on

With a sullen step and a heavy heart weighed down by years of longing

This jester of false smiles and many strange faces

Prays to strange gods with incense and crocodile tears

© Phil Brennán 19th September 1997

This Time

This time I've gone too far and yet not far enough to make it count

This time I've made my own bed yet I still refuse to lay in it

This time the pictures fall and reshape themselves anew

This time I've gone too far and yet not far enough to make it count

© Phil Brennán 20th September 1997

October 1997

The Fall of the Day

“A means to an end” you said
“And an escapade in mortality”
But you were blinded by storms
And you would not see

“A question of double entendres” you said
“And an excuse to blow it all away”
But things escape from darkened wombs
To haunt the fall of the day

“The art of English conversation” you said
“Is to talk for hours and reveal nothing”
That may be true, but truer still
Is the need to be heard

Anything goes no matter what sin
Is hidden, to be revealed
And quests never end, come what may
To haunt the fall of the day

© Phil Brennán 4th October 1997

One

One word creates the shadows
Gives the earth its foundation
Paints the sky a lighter hue
Separates the expanses of water

One breath animates the soil
Gives the clay its soul
Removes a rib from man
To fashion a mate

One sword divides the soul and the marrow
Causes proud men to fall
Makes the fallen run in fear
And daemons shake in dread

One word created the earth

© Phil Brennán 7th October 1997

This Time

This time I've said too much
And left you feeling blue
This time I've thrown my chances
And now I'm losing you

© Phil Brennán 7th October 1997

Love Song

All I can say is little compared with you
And all I can paint is grey
All I can sing is way out of tune
But I know you'll notice one day

© Phil Brennán 18th October 1997

Untitled

I dream of love and precious things
Of a secret shared in hidden places
Of passion, young and full
Unbridled and tearing at the bit

Meanwhile, I stand here at the edge
Of salvation in the sex I share
In the constant struggle of the out and in
In the risk that leaves me 'twix life and death

I have dreamed, at times, of marriage
And then I poured scorn upon myself
“You'll never marry for you won't settle down”
The words remembered from a chance meeting

So I stand with a foot on each side
And my ass hanging in the air
To sample all that there is on offer
And devil may care!

© Phil Brennán 25th October 1997

Homophobia

Turning a thousand blind paths
Through suffocating groves of memories
And longings often suppressed
Until the season of madness is upon me again

Shifting and changing in the shadows
Growing claws and an iron heart
To chase the shadows away
I must choose, and choose it well

“A means to an end” you said
“And a fond fare-thee-well”
Blind as bats we fall into each others' arms
To dance and gyrate the night away

So I walk out of your door
And leave you in the morning light
You roll over and whisper my name
But I'm gone

Turning a thousand blind paths
Through suffocating groves of memories
And longings often suppressed
Until the season of madness is upon me again...

© Phil Brennán 29th October 1997

December 1997

The Winter's Long Slumber

Justified paragraphs of words tumble from the page cracked yellow with age they strive and stretch with nothing much but the minds of those who listen to the poet's ramblings often fuelled by alcohol and nerves the silence stiffens the winter's chill that surrounds our hearts when the sun sets low with an amber glow and holly round about us glistens in the snow we hide in words and rhymes and wine to pass some time until spring is near and the waters run clear once more but for now we hide our sorrows in words that are borrowed from books that gather dust the rest of the year and the reason is unclear until you remember the bitch wind howling outside through the countryside to chill our bones and the hearths of men until again we see the sun glow warm and hot it is not too long now to wait as the poet prevaricates his rhythm of words to disturb the winter's long slumber.

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