

Poems and other writing by Gary Critchley

The sky is always there

An endless weightless sea
Supporting balls of cloudy white
Like huge marshmallows
Fluffed and light
And altogether fair
The sky is always there

Sometimes black, sometimes blue
Tinged with red or clouded through
But always there
To cushion our fragile world
And us too

Though man has risen above
Climbed to space in metal doves
And left it all below
Some of us still care and know
The sky is always there

Loneliness

Loneliness is more than a feeling
Loneliness is alive
When you feel the knives of despair in your heart
Loneliness is the hand that drives them

Loneliness is an eagle way up in the sky
All alone it soars so high
Then swooping fast in search of prey
It steals your soul away

Loneliness is a tiger that stalks you through endless nights
(its useless to fight)
Sinking sharp claws in your mind
Devouring your sanity
Leaving behind an empty shell.

Loneliness is a prisoner
Locked up in a cell
As his memories degrade
His hopes and dreams fade
He gets nearer to hell day by day by day by day by day....

In-Justice

Transvestite pensioners
Sitting on the bench
With gowns and wigs and everything
'cept and ounce of sense.

In their eyes you're guilty
Soon as you walk in the dock
They feel that it's their duty
To put you under lock
and key.

Legal aid is give
For those who cannot pay.
Appointed representatives
To help you have your say.
But they don't try too hard
Why should they when you're poor
We all know there's no justice
Under British bloody law
for free

The judge bangs his gavel and the whole court stands
You smile and grovel to him – your future's in his hands
'Yes your Honour – No your honour – three bags full my Lord'
But still end up in prison with all your pleas ignored
You see.

TV Tears

My television cries tears of drama
They roll from its one square eye
Then...reaching the carpet....fade and die
Leaving echoes of technicolour dreams

Silent Noise (Dharma)

A thistle talks a silent noise
Unheard by man or beast,
A noise that's barbed and green.... and thick,
A noise that sits in wait....to prick
The flesh of unsuspecting man.

The Act

My body is a theatre
My every move an act
Yet the script is self-directed
So the seats are always packed

My eyes are super-troopers,
Their brightness lights the lead

With only my personas
How can I fail succeed?

My mind is an arena
With stage-inspired thought
That makes each scene an actors dream
With ego holding court

Here there are no critics
And all reviews are rave,
From the stalls the curtain calls
Go with me to the grave

From Gary's letters

In the Victorian local prisons, if you were to walk on to a wing after mealtimes, apart from the hum of various radios, etc., you would be forgiven for thinking it was derelict with everything so still. Yet behind every door are people, some alone lost in private nightmares, some stoned without a care in the world, and other being abused, bullied etc by 'cell-mates', and none of it is immediately evident but every now and then a scream will come from this artificial wilderness.

Imprisoned by my number – As I've said before it is not just the bricks, bars and locks that imprison me but the cold dehumanising use of a 'prison number' before (sometimes in place of) your name. This barcode like number is more of a barrier between you and freedom/humanity than any architectural feature. My number B39969 has become the walls/bricks/bars that contain me – imprisoning my soul

Gary's Parole Board

The whole panel was a total shambles, To begin with they were short of chairs (bearing in mind these panels are supposed to equate with High Court hearings) and so, as each witness came forward to give evidence, they had to bring their chair backwards and forwards with them. I have, on previous panels, always been called to give evidence and be questioned first - but on this occasion the Judge (a rather grumpy sort who fidgeted that much that I suspect that his stockings and suspenders may have been chafing him a little) decided to reverse the process and leave me until last. There were supposed to be 6 witnesses – however firstly the bloke from the Ley Community didn't turn up, or send anyone in his place. Secondly, the judge called the two psychologists first (prison one and an independent one named Dr Pratt – though he's anything but one) and though they were both favourable, the Judge and a Lady Psychiatrist who helped form the panel along with some business mogul bloke, insisted on asking both of them medical questions – which they said they couldn't answer – despite the fact that the Senior Manager of Healthcare sat waiting to give evidence. However after about an hour during which time the Judge laboriously typed the complete minutes himself on a lap-top we were all told to take a break. Then 10 minutes or so later everyone was summoned back into the room and treated to a long rambling speech from the fidgeting cross-dresser, the gist of which was that he had decided (presumably because of his unanswered medical questions which he asked the wrong witnesses) to adjourn the hearing until February 2009 to allow for a full report from a consultant rheumatologist (despite the fact that

I've never had and don't have rheumatism but was diagnosed as having severe osteo-arthritis. He wanted to know from the consultant whether I was 'allowed' to come off pain-killing drugs, despite the fact that they were already assured that I was coming off them but had been recommended to stay on them until the time came. But the point was that I had already decided to go without any pain medication, anti-depressants or anything to get this moving, but obviously the Judge feels that's not my decision to make but a 'rheumatologist's' (who's speciality must be osteo-arthritis and depression?) Clever these judges! Everyone was called back later to say that it was adjourned until 2009 (February) or for 6 months to get a Rheumatologists report on whether I am 'allowed' to come off the pain-killers I am on. What a day!