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## Don't boycott pro-choice Amnesty

COLUMNS

By Frank Brennan



Amnesty International has changed its policy on abortion. Amnesty states that it is not for or against abortion. But it is now a pro-choice organisation.

As a result, some Catholic schools have withdrawn from Amnesty, and the Australian Catholic bishops have now urged Catholics 'to seek other avenues of defending human rights', adopting a position that 'membership of Amnesty International is no longer compatible with Catholic teaching and belief on this important point'.

But within the framework of Catholic moral reflection, to which I shall confine myself in this article, the issue does not permit such a blanket determination. Amnesty, like many modern NGOs, has moved to a 'full spectrum approach' in articulating policies on a broad range of social issues. It maintains its core business which includes the release of prisoners of conscience and fair and prompt trials for political prisoners.

The Australian bishops' blanket determination, in the absence of any published reasoning distinguishing both formal and material cooperation, and permissible and impermissible material cooperation, raises a significant problem.

The issue would be simple if the organisation in question were Children by Choice, an organisation which is dedicated to making abortion more readily available, such that any participation with the organisation would be tainted by cooperation with abortion.

But members of organisations such as Amnesty, which take a full spectrum approach to human rights, are not taken to agree to every item in the organisations' policy statements.

It would be wrong for a Catholic formally to cooperate in providing abortions or in activities aimed at making abortion more readily available. Bishop Anthony Fisher gave a useful description of formal cooperation in a recent address at the University of Sydney entitled 'From Good Doctor to Dr Evil: When Should a Doctor Cooperate in Evil?':

'Formal cooperation is where the cooperator not only does something that foreseeably helps the principal agent do wrong, but the cooperator does so while sharing in the wrongfulness of the principal agent's act — his/her wrongful end or intention or will.'

So it would be wrong for a Catholic to join Amnesty, participate in an Amnesty campaign or donate to Amnesty with the specific intention that abortion be made more readily available. It would not be wrong for a Catholic to participate in an Amnesty campaign which was unrelated to abortion, nor would it be wrong to donate funds to Amnesty for purposes other than the provision of abortion.

It is quite consistent with Catholic moral reasoning for a Catholic to remain a member of, or cooperater with, Amnesty and involve him or herself only in campaigns unrelated to abortion. If troubled by the prospect that some financial contribution would be dedicated to abortion activity, a conscientious Catholic could ask that Amnesty establish bookkeeping practices which would quarantine flagged payments from abortion activities.

Consider an example which has occupied Catholic moralists for generations. All would agree that a conscientious Catholic should not work at an abortion clinic. But surely it is more a matter for individual prudence and prayerful discernment for the conscientious Catholic deciding whether to work (in any role not directly related to the performance of abortions) at a public hospital where abortions are performed.

In the past Catholic bishops have not suggested that Catholics could not serve on the fund raising committees of our prominent and esteemed public hospitals, nor that Catholic surgeons should not work at them because some of their co-workers practise abortion, nor that Catholics should not work as cleaners or domestic staff in such institutions.

In fact, there have been occasions when church leaders have espoused Catholics working in the public health system so that they might influence the system with a coherent Christian health ethic. Could not the same case be made for ongoing involvement with Amnesty?

Participation in a 'tainted' organisation only for untainted purposes is the more readily justified when there is no practical alternative for achieving a good result. For example, there may be no better way to agitate for the release of prisoners of conscience than by signing on with Amnesty.

Though it may be permissible or desirable for individual Catholic adults to remain part of Amnesty, is it a good pedagogical decision to align students with a pro-choice organisation when the other admirable human rights objectives could be achieved without membership of such an organisation?

Alternatively, is it a good pedagogical decision to isolate students from a compromised organisation with otherwise admirable objectives? Wouldn't it be better to educate students in the way of mediate and remote material cooperation with Amnesty while they are at school so they may be better equipped to contribute to the common good in a fallen world, realising that purity and martyrdom are not the daily fare of public political life and activity?

Though respecting the bishops' decision, especially in the absence of any published,

persuasive reasons analysing the different types of cooperation, I maintain there must continue to be a place for prudential decisions by persons involved in permissible material cooperation in Amnesty's work.

*Frank Brennan SJ AO is a professor of law in the Institute of Legal Studies at the Australian Catholic University, professor of human rights and social justice at the University of Notre Dame, and Professorial Visiting Fellow, Faculty of Law, University of NSW.*

## Parliamentarians represent

### POLITICS

By John Warhurst

The Coalition's attack on trade union officials as thugs and stand-over merchants is misrepresentation and exaggeration. The use of the derogatory term 'union bosses' betrays the mind-set behind the government attack. I'm not surprised that it is so offensive to many in the trade union movement. But the real and immediate target is the Labor Party; the unions themselves are only secondary and longer-term targets.



How might the government's attack on Labor and the trade unions be rebutted? There are many different options. Those who want a full-blown stoush say Labor should in turn just attack the links between the Coalition and the top end of town. Wiser heads have prevailed and Labor has chosen instead to emphasise the positive contribution of unions to the community.

Kevin Rudd points out that Bob Hawke and Paul Keating were themselves union officials and that Hawke was a union leader of such prominence that he became president of the Australian Council of Trade Unions.

The government's attack on Labor-union links (alleging that 70 per cent of the Labor front bench are former union officials) has several elements that must be disentangled for its potential electoral impact to be judged. Some have no sting at all, but others might be persuasive and ought to be taken seriously.

The government first tries to scare the electorate with allegations of union power and control. Professor Ian McAllister, reporting on his election surveys in *Trends in Australian Public Opinion: Results from the Australian Election Study, 1987–2004*, demonstrates that this won't wash anymore. The electorate, by 2004, actually feared the excessive power of big business (71 per cent) much more than the excessive power of trade unions (41per cent); though 41per cent is still no small matter.

John Howard also claims explicitly that the union connection is 'out of whack', that is unrepresentative, because only 15 per cent of the private sector workforce is unionised. This claim is harder for Labor to rebut, other than by the truth that Labor is after all a trade union party so what else would you expect.

Labor has also tried, with some success, to deflect the attack by pointing out the large number of lawyers and party officials in the Coalition's own ranks. While this shows the shallow pool from which all parties draw their representatives, it is only a partial rebuttal.

Thirdly, the government implies that the union link makes Labor old-fashioned because it reflects a time years ago when more than 50 per cent of the workforce was unionised. This implication might cut across Labor's claim to a fresh, new approach. Labor's slogan 'New Leadership' may be vulnerable if those new leaders are frequently drawn from the same talent pool.

The impact of the government's attacks on Labor-union links will be clearer once the election results are known. But they have put Labor on the defensive. The party's responses have not been fully convincing on this issue, partly because there is some discomfit within the party itself about such links and about the behaviour of a few union officials.

The former leader Simon Crean believed that Labor's structure had failed to move with the times. He successfully sought during his time as leader to reduce the union quota in Labor representative bodies, like conferences, from 60per cent to 50per cent.

An election campaign is no place for sensible discussion. But whether or not Labor wins, the party ought not to allow the issue to fade away, because it is central to its long-term health. Whatever happens on 24 November, the prominent place of former union officials within Labor is not endangered. The entry of union leaders like Greg Combet and Bill Shorten into Labor's parliamentary ranks means that the next generation of Labor leaders will have a serious union component.

Given that fact, Labor should redouble its efforts to broaden the characteristics of its parliamentary representatives, not as a matter of capacity to govern well but as a matter of being more representative of the wider community.

*John Warhurst is Professor of Political Science at the Australian National University and a Canberra Times columnist.*

## Mark Latham's War on Everything

POLITICS

By Scott Stephens



Perhaps the clearest indication of the underwhelming torpor that has become the defining feature of this seemingly endless federal election campaign is the fact that its highlights have been provided by the luminaries of Labor past — Paul Keating and Mark Latham.

In June it was Paul Keating's virtuoso explanation of the key reforms undertaken by himself and Bob Hawke: the internationalisation of the Australian economy through tariff reduction and the floating of the dollar, and the suppression of wages — and consequent capping of inflation — through the Price and Incomes Accord. These bold reforms, said Keating, were 'natural structural stabilisers'. Keating likened them to 'a set of pneumatic rams' that 'adjust each week to economic conditions'.

When Keating accepted the invitation to launch Greg Combet's bid for the seat of Charleton he reiterated that it was his reforms, endorsed and enabled by the trade unions, that fixed inflation at around three per cent and laid the foundation for the future stability of the Australian economy. When Peter Costello inherited the job, Keating claimed, he had nothing left to do except enjoy the fruits of Keating's own labour and not blow the budget.

But Keating did more than just rip a gaping hole in the Liberals' economic façade. He also exposed Kevin Rudd's retreat to the supposed safe ground of 'economic conservatism', along with his parroting of the Liberal mantra: budget surplus, low interest rates, personal tax cuts. Indeed, the net effect of Keating's interventions was to further dwarf the already Lilliputian intelligentsia of modern Labor, demoting Rudd and Shadow Treasurer Wayne Swan to the rank of fiscal imbeciles unable and unwilling to take the economic fight to the Coalition.

The cold reality of Australia's much-celebrated economic growth, particularly as it concerns the electorate, is that it is fuelled by an unsustainable housing boom, driven by avarice, and maintained by federal ineptitude. As Andrew Charlton has demonstrated in his brilliant book, *Ozonomics*, the accrual of the current budget surplus has been at the expense of skyrocketing personal debt.

According to Charlton, the Howard/Costello duo has merely displaced public debt onto the



electorate by means of the sale of public assets, the availability of cheap credit and the absurd buoyancy of the housing market. And now that we are beginning to see stress fractures in the economic edifice, the government's solution — progressive tax cuts — is but a short-term pseudo-response, a way of injecting more money into an already saturated economy, thus artificially propping up a fragile prosperity.

Keating's point was that it is only in this kind of economic environment, overladen with record levels of personal debt that interest rates can define the electoral landscape in the way they have. But Keating insists it is Labor's fault to have allowed the Liberals to get away with this ruse. He questions why interest rates are an issue in this election when they were not in 1990, 1993 or 1996. 'The answer is because of the Labor Party's inability to get across the argument and put it.'

The startling fact is that, due to unprecedented levels of personal debt, Australian families are actually paying more interest under Howard/Costello than they did under Hawke/Keating. But instead of addressing this, calling the government's bluff and exposing its fiscal short-sightedness, Rudd has, quite simply, pandered to this well-ensconced culture of avarice and debt-addiction, without putting forward any alternative economic program, much less a vision for social cohesion, mutual beneficence, and moral substance.



It is only in contrast to Rudd's lack of vision that we can appreciate the brilliance of Mark Latham's piece in *The Australian Financial Review*. There remains an integrity, a self-evident rightness, about his observations that cannot be obscured by the media's sensationalist reporting of them.

'Some people, of course, still argue that Australia is a generous and egalitarian nation. At election time the truth is brutally exposed. Through their polling, the two major parties have identified the values and fears of middle class Australia ... Labor and Liberal are simply following their polling and public opinion: more money for private schools, more money for private housing and more money for private spending through tax cuts and middle-class welfare. The dominant ethos is greed, not generosity.'

Dennis Glover (Latham's former speech-writer) has accused Latham of being apolitical, of peddling an embittered pessimism. But far from himself being apolitical, Latham insists that Australian politics itself has become apolitical.

Politics has abandoned the belief that has historically defined Labor's intellectual leaders — that it can actually make a difference in people's lives and shape our national soul. Instead, it has contented itself with squabbling over manufactured crises and pandering to the electorate's fears, engaging in 'a bit of media melodrama' and capitalising on social disintegration.

If anything, this election campaign — with Rudd’s craven adoption of ‘Howardonomics’ and the massive electoral swing toward Labor — confirms the depth of the complicity between popular avarice and political cynicism. But it also confirms the correctness of the personal realisation that finally drove Latham from public office: ‘Cynicism is the gold standard of modern politics, the public discount all the words and go for self-interest.’ Ultimately, Latham didn’t lose faith in politics, but in the capacity of the Australian people to give a damn.

*Scott Stephens is an author and theologian who lives in Brisbane, Queensland. He is the co-editor (with Rex Butler) and translator of the two volumes of the selected writings of Slavoj Zizek, Interrogating the Real and The Universal Exception.*

## Neither John nor Kevin is Lord

### THEOLOGY

By Kylie Crabbe



Are we there yet? Because I've already left the bus, and I don't think I'm alone. This never-ending election campaign reminds me of another never-ending story — of the age-old disappointment in political machinery captured by the phrase 'Caesar is not Lord'.

That's what the early Christian church meant when they struck upon the now familiar affirmation 'Jesus is Lord'. It wasn't pious or proper; it was political and more than a little divisive. And the subtext was heavy: Caesar, the political ruler of the moment, is therefore not Lord.

Because Caesar, it seems, is too easily captive to the priorities of the world. This is not news. It's been no picnic watching the promises unfold each day of this election campaign. From the tone-setting opening act we might call 'tax cuts for beginners' or 'people worried about their seats' onwards, the election protagonists have wanted to persuade us that life will be good with them in charge.

But all they've got me asking is, are we there yet? And where would 'there' be anyway? At this stage I'm tempted to think just having the election out of the way might be enough. But what kind of place are we going to live in when it's over? It's got me downright cranky just thinking about it. I feel quite a bit like the early church contemplating the local Caesar — hell, no, he's not my Lord!

Traditionally, as we know, Australians like to keep religion separate, rendering unto Caesar that which is political. So even just raising the question of faith in voting can be controversial, and the campaign hasn't been without its share of flack regarding the political influence of Christians.

While the Christian Lobby was releasing statements on how to make your faith count in voting, the front page was fanning controversy about which politicians have connections with which of the more extreme Christian groups — and Bob Brown (unlikely spokesperson of the church!) was offering sound bites admonishing against letting one Christian group speak as though they represent them all.

So it seems that winning over Christian voters is an issue already on the table. So despite

the Aussie instinct to avoid mixing faith and politics, perhaps some help in this respect is in order. If you're a candidate for Caesar and you want the Christian vote, then here's some advice.

First up, you're in a tough spot because at the end of the day, for Christians, Jesus is still Lord. But given we get some say in Caesar-selection these days, it's worth your while checking out Jesus to work out how to really appeal to Christian elements in the electorate.

From the get-go you'll realise a few things, like that the Christian vote can't be bought. You can put away your tax plan, because what you've presented so far really isn't our thing.

You might have noticed that tax collectors aren't very popular in the Gospels, not because they haven't been buying enough people off but because of an endemic practice of cheating the poor. So that'd be something to watch out for if you're putting together a tax plan to appeal to Christian voters. Taking money from the poor and passing it on to the middle class will not sit well with us.

And then there's the subject of consultation. Christian voters are not that keen on trigger-happy decision-making. It might seem popular to look like you're doing something, whether in some international conflict zone, or in communities closer to home. But when you're dealing with people, you actually need to meet some in order to make sure you're pursuing the right course of action.

Jesus used to get to know people — particularly those who society often shunned or ignored — by sitting down with them over a meal. So those who follow him will be looking for political leadership that knows the human face affected by their policies. They'll look to leaders who find ways to listen, especially to those on the fringes of society, who might need more than an opinion poll to be heard.

The advice could keep flowing. But pretty soon (thank goodness), this election campaign will actually end. However, the debate about good leadership will not. The focus will move from vote-winning to the everyday business of governing.

But, for whoever is elected to the pleasure, as Caesar you can always expect to wake up to the niggling, persistent voice of those for whom Jesus is Lord. And the long history of disappointment with Caesar's approach won't put an end to that.

*Kylie Crabbe lives in Northcote and is preparing for ministry in the Uniting Church.*

## Good politician

POLITICS

By Tony Smith

Eulogies for [Peter Andren](#), federal MP for Calare in Central West NSW, included many metaphors. Perhaps the finest was Senator Bob Brown's. He described Mr Andren as a refreshing rain on the parched plain of Australian politics.



Mr Andren was held in high regard within his electorate, and while people often respect their local MPs more than politicians generally, Andren was admired beyond Calare, with many observers describing him as the 'conscience' of the parliament.

Because we all have an interest in the quality of democracy and government, it is important to reflect on the Andren phenomenon. Certainly, some of Mr Andren's success is attributable to personal characteristics that cannot be taught or acquired, but some factors provide a model that aspiring politicians should emulate.

At the 1996 election Andren nominated as an Independent. He believed regional Australia suffered disproportionately under economic rationalism and major party neglect.

Calare covered two NSW state seats: Bathurst (traditionally Labor) and Orange (National Party territory). The seat coincided with the Prime television viewing area, and Andren was its main newsreader. Rural journalists are heavily involved in the community and Andren was widely known, respected and liked.

Still, a high profile, strong opinions and compassion did not guarantee either election or success as an MP. Sceptics suggested Andren's election on preferences made him a compromise MP who might serve one term. But by 2001 Calare was among the safest seats in the House of Representatives.

Yet Mr Andren did not take the electorate for granted, but continued to work hard. A ParlInfo search at [www.aph.gov.au](http://www.aph.gov.au) returns some 200 contributions as Andren asked questions, proposed and debated legislation and commented on matters of public importance. He was accessible and involved in the community and retained a sense of humility.

He told the ABC program *Compass* that he recognised a force greater than himself and

when under pressure, he would fall to his knees and beg for assistance. *Compass* called Andren a '[Real Believer](#)', and belief was central to his success. He had faith in himself, in the importance of principle and in the decency of ordinary Australians.

Constituents supported Mr Andren enthusiastically. They rejected the parties' claims that their MP would be isolated on the cross bench and could not secure attention for the electorate. They did not resent him taking stances on issues such as the invasion of Iraq and asylum seekers that differed from their own. They knew he took his responsibilities seriously and put their interests first. They respected him for expressing views that were strongly reasoned and sincerely held and felt proud of the wider admiration he attracted to Calare.

Peter Andren held a distinct political philosophy. One typology casts parliamentarians as politicians, delegates or trustees. Politicians are party animals, as are most MPs. Many electors resent MPs giving first loyalty to their parties. Parties distribute perks such as ministries, allowances, salaries and superannuation. Enduring personal vilification in Canberra, Andren exposed the rorting of travel allowances and campaigned against increased benefits for MPs. He was vindicated in both cases.

Some Independents see themselves as delegates, political neutrals who continually test the electorate's wishes. Although respecting public opinion, Mr Andren believed in leadership. He praised the prime minister for taking the lead over firearms control in 1996, but criticised him and Opposition leaders for following opinion expressed in newspaper polls and talkback radio programs on issues such as heroin injecting room trials, mandatory sentencing, the Northern Territory's legislation on medical assistance for the dying and asylum seekers.

Mr Andren displayed all the best qualities of the trustee. By openly stating his own values, he earned the respect of his electorate, and managed to provide local leadership. Research conducted by [Australian Fieldwork Solutions](#) into why people voted for Andren showed that many electors changed their views on issues after hearing his arguments. Mr Andren was a skilled communicator. He stressed the importance of listening carefully and his media skills were a definite asset.

While Mr Andren was proved correct in most instances, he held his principles humbly, and believed his own values were commonly held. He shunned the notion that the market should determine social values and believed that most Australians happily surrendered freedoms to allow the state to participate in their lives. The great democratic project is to redistribute resources and guarantee all Australians equal access to justice.

In his final term, Andren grew disillusioned with government control of debate in the lower house. He lauded the proportional representation electoral system used in the Senate and decided to run for that chamber, hoping to help renew its status as a house of review. This campaign was ended by a diagnosis of pancreatic cancer. His life was cut short soon thereafter.

Wildflowers can blossom on a parched plain, but although concrete can be washed clean it is essentially impervious. Anyone seeking to emulate Peter Andren must eschew self-aggrandisement, advocate for the supremacy of parliament, treat constituents with respect, work tirelessly for the community, formulate principled positions and defend them courageously, and display genuine leadership.

But they must also be persons of integrity, gentleness, humility and compassion. Peter Andren most certainly was, and a suitable legacy would be that we adopt similarly high standards for all political aspirants.

*Tony Smith holds a PhD in political science. He has taught at several universities, most recently at the University of Sydney.*

## Our own generational change

EDITORIAL

By Michael Mullins

*Eureka Street* publishes articles about society and culture with a particular characteristic — reasoned ethical argument based on humane values.

Handing responsibility to younger people is a factor lurking in the background of the election campaign, as the major parties struggle to convince voters that they're relevant and focused on the future. For *Eureka Street*, we're looking to encourage a new generation of writers able to bring ethical argument and human values to their treatment of society and culture.

Within the past few years, we've sought to do this through offering prizes to young writers who contribute essays with these characteristics. The prize money for the Margaret Dooley Award is donated by *Eureka Street* supporter Brendan Dooley, in memory of his wife Margaret, who died in 2004.

Entries for this year's award closed last month. During the past week, the judge Fr Kevin McGovern has communicated his decisions to us, and we have notified the winners. Fr McGovern has taught ethics and moral theology at the tertiary level for the past ten years. He is currently the Director of the Caroline Chisholm Centre for Health Ethics, which is sponsored by Victoria's Catholic hospitals.

There are three prize winners.

**The first prize is awarded to Sophie Rudolph of Victoria.** She draws on a variety of material such as the Shoah and the slave trade in England, to argue that the failure to acknowledge past hurts and injustices condemns the Howard Government to repeating the mistakes of the past in its efforts towards Aboriginal reconciliation. Sophie's second essay is about the ethics of travel, and it demonstrates her versatility as a writer. She argues that international travel requires ethical justification, and this can be achieved through a traveller's deliberate attempt to enter into conversation with those whose land is visited.

**The second prize winner is Michelle Coram of South Australia.** She writes about work-life balance, in a reflection on her own experience of a pilgrimage trail in Spain. Her shorter essay chronicles the development of relationships during a gap year she took at the age of 30.



**The third prize goes to Simon Reeves of Victoria.** He reflects on his arrest this year at a non-violent action at Shoalwater Bay. His second essay presents a reasoned defence of pacifism.

Congratulations to the three prize winners. Selections from their entries will be published in coming issues of *Eureka Street*, and we hope that you will see more of their writing in the future. Thank you to Brendan Dooley for his support of the award, and to all who contributed essays.

*Michael Mullins is editor of Eureka Street.*

## The Romantic poets and climate change

COLUMNS

By Brian Matthews



In the unlikely event that I was ever quizzed about it, I would describe myself as someone genuinely interested in nature. By nature I mean not essence or the inherent character of something but all that green and brown and blue stuff out there. Trees, paddocks, earth, sky and clouds. The animal, bird and marine life that gets on with things between earth and sky. And the winds, storms, heat and cold that sweep over it all.

From the time I first heard of it, I loved the idea of ‘natura naturans’ — ‘nature naturing’, nature doing its thing. This concept, popularised by the 17th century metaphysician, Spinoza, allows us to contemplate nature as a discrete system going about its business regardless of us and taking account of us only when forced to — like when we blow it up, cut it down, kill bits of it off, poison it etc.

The Romantic poets reckoned that there was a spirit within the natural world that you could connect with — something ‘more deeply infused’, as Wordsworth called it.

But Darwinism messed that up and Matthew Arnold, gazing at ‘the mute turf we tread ... The strange-scrawled rocks, the lonely sky’ decided if these had a voice they would say they were simply enduring, not rejoicing. Romanticism was done for; nature simply natured, regardless, so if nature was God, God was dead.

But even those of us who find comfort of whatever kind in nature can sometimes get too much of it. In the first fingers of pre-dawn light a week or so ago, I saw that the kangaroos were back, about six of them, each with an anxious, fussing joey. Around the same time, the ducks appeared leading a squadron of ducklings up from the dam to the garden mulch their parents had told them about.

In the same week, a large fox stared insolently at me when I came upon it in the scrub. A long Eastern Brown snake oiled its way into the curvaceous native grasses that the Higher Power of our domestic hierarchy had lovingly raised and planted. A rabbit irritably abandoned the lettuces when I inconveniently arrived to pick one. Crows expertly snipped, shelled and ate the broad beans, though not anywhere near as fast as we did. Magpies strutted and quarrelled with their querulous young wherever they chose to, including on the back

doorstep. And flocks of exquisite yellow-beaked, grey-blue birds crowded into a wonderful, flowering native bush and protested wildly at any threatened incursion.

When you add much blooming, leafing, sprouting and fruiting this amounts to a fair bit of naturing.

But as if that wasn't enough, in the early gloom of another morning recently, investigating an odd looking bulky shape — a kind of deeper darkness among the still shadowy shrubs and saplings — I found myself being eyed by a large deer. Standard efforts to shift him, like loud profanity and violent arm-waving, produced only grunts and a testy stamping of hooves, before a closer approach sent the intruder off naturing elsewhere.

Living in a city does not necessarily mean being cut off from nature if you don't want to be. There are private gardens, potted plants, blackbirds and doves on light poles, city squares and their flowerbeds and drought-struggling lawns, parks and the Botanic Gardens. But is it possible, in city or country, to ignore the natural world in the same magisterial way that it ignores us?

Well, yes. In fact it's easy to imagine people who simply shut all this out, whose world is full, for example, of politics and policies, or stock markets and their vagaries, or poker machines and their inane tinkling orchestration of false promises. Someone who achieves this kind of exclusion of the natural world — one of our leading politicians, say — would be a ready-made climate change sceptic. In fact, beyond scepticism, because you need to be aware of something to be sceptical about it.

A person unaware of and cut off from nature, with a profound lack of interest in it, will be taken by surprise when nature, in its immutable and fathomless way, embarks on one of its punitive cycles. It might be a cyclone, a bushfire, a tsunami — or everything getting ineluctably hotter, drier and less predictable. If you weren't paying attention, if you were making a virtue of not paying attention, nature would pop up and grab you by the throat.

Who knows what price you might pay? You might even — horror of horrors! — lose an election.

*Brian Matthews is the award winning author of A Fine and Private Place and, most recently, The Temple down the road: the life and times of the MCG.*

## Tim Flannery's total solution to global warming

ENVIRONMENT

By Luke Fraser

In 'The Long View' (*The Age* essay supplement, 31 October 2007), Dr Tim Flannery exposed one of the things we all have to fear about a future dominated by global warming: the abandonment of faith in reasoned, market-based systems as a way for humanity to survive the threat.



Dr Flannery is an expert on the causes and effects of dramatic climate change. He deserves praise for letting the average punter and government ministers alike know what's going on. Thanks to the efforts of many fine scientific minds like his, we now begin to understand that mankind is not-so-slowly cooking itself through its own avarice.

And Dr Flannery's solution? Power must be transferred. Central environmental control and command planning must rule the day everywhere. We are told to assume total market failure in this respect — no fancy trading system will get us out of this one. Dr Flannery's vision is for a single, ruthless (but well-intentioned?) overlord, telling all people everywhere exactly what to do and how to do it.

The challenge of climate change is real, but this naive solution has too many chilling precedents. Robespierre's Committee of Public Safety oversaw the French Revolution's Reign of Terror. While it may seem a dramatic comparison, its birth was prompted by one basic public impulse that found its mirror in 'The Long View': things are broken, we need immediate action and a strong leader.

Even more remarkably, 'The Long View' savages liberal democracy as a framework unsuitable for helping save us from a planet that is warming at our own hands. 'Politics', we are told, 'is the art of dealing with the problems of the day, which is well and good while challenges are small and relatively simple. But sometimes unique problems arise, whose implications extend well beyond the three-year horizon of our elected representatives — problems that require deep thinking.'

Let us be charitable and put aside any impulse to take offence; the efforts of many are devalued by this childish statement. What precisely does Dr Flannery think politics is? A daily sound bite, guided solely by the politician's will to save his own tail? Well, let us assume it is.

Would that pose such a problem? Surely, politicians — even the most cynical ones — would ignore community sentiment at their peril. There is simply no basis for suggesting that community sentiment on climate change would not find reflection in the actions of a popularly-elected Government.

And, failing our ability to source some benevolent philosopher-kings to save the day (Stalin and Hitler didn't quite work out ... but keep looking, by all means), the three-year parliamentary term that the author derides is in fact the greatest guarantee for frequent refinement of climate policy in the service of public concerns.

Dr Flannery's muddled concepts are unreasonable. And what does the sleep of reason produce? Well, Jacobins, if the author's words are to be our guide: 'When timelines are not of our making, we must march to the beat of nature's drum, and can only be grateful that execution (or the threat of it) does indeed concentrate the mind.'

Some of the finest minds of the day are now working to develop viable models for global emissions trading. For instance, the California Global Warming Solutions Act sets clear and quite steep emissions reductions targets and then allows market-based mechanisms their head in achieving these targets. Whether perfect or not, the speed at which this complex work is occurring is surely a breathtaking development by any human measure. Economic history will probably judge it so.

The case for total market failure has hardly been made by 'The Long View'. As to the case for central control and zealotry as a means to a brighter future, history tells us this is never the best response, no matter what the threat.

An effective market-based solution includes and energises everyone in its scope: the right-minded private citizen, the industrial polluter, the innovative research scientist backed by market capital, the poor country that by blessed luck sits on exploitable carbon offsets and finds a new market for what was once worthless. To paraphrase Smith, these people would be getting out of bed each morning to heal the planet, for no better reason than their own, ever-reliable, selfish interests. Amen to that.

We have Dr Flannery to thank for alerting the public to the perils of climate change. But anyone who admires humanity's proven faculty to reason its way past the threats to its own survival to date should be troubled as much by the underlying zealotry of 'The Long View' as they might be about the likely physical impacts of climate change itself.

*Luke Fraser is an industry executive with an interest in sound public policy who has worked as a chief of staff in a previous Federal Government. He lives and works in Canberra.*

## Australia's approving silence on US torture

INTERNATIONAL

By Vacy Vlazna



*'Action in the political field should be considered one of the most effective ways of bringing about a more just social order' — Pedro Arrupe SJ.*

Prime Minister John Howard and his political rival, Labor leader Kevin Rudd, are offering right leadership and new leadership respectively. But evidently neither corresponds to their electoral pitch. There's been little morally 'right' under Howard's watch and Rudd's 'me-tooism' purports nothing new or decent.

Rudd's recent back flip on Labor policy regarding foreign affairs spokesman Robert McClelland's moral comment on the death penalty is hypocrisy given his self-promoting Christian image — Christ himself was arrested, imprisoned, tortured and the sublime victim of the death penalty. As Pax Christi director, David Robinson, states, 'Christ is being crucified today through the practice of torture.'

Leadership is the present pre-election focus and Australians are challenged to deem what essential human qualities and skills are required to govern well so that as a nation we can walk proud. Rather than pampered politicians, for exemplars I turn to Jesuit Fr Steve Kelly, and Franciscan Fr Louis Vitale, who were sentenced this 17 October to five months imprisonment for trespass at the Army's main interrogation training facility, Fort Huachuca, Arizona.

Fathers Kelly and Vitale's non-violent protest against the practice of torture by US military and intelligence and their subsequent imprisonment went virtually unnoticed by the press. On 19 November 2006, they attempted to give a letter protesting against the practice of torture to the Fort Huachuca commander, Major General Barbara Fast. Fast was formerly the head of intelligence for the US command in Baghdad and in charge of interrogators at Abu Graib where prisoners were physically, psychologically and sexually tortured.

The letter reads in part: 'We are here today as concerned US people, veterans and clergy, to speak with enlisted personnel about the illegality and immorality of torture according to international humanitarian law, including the Geneva Conventions...

'We are here today at Fort Huachuca in solidarity with tens of thousands of people at the

Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation at Fort Benning, Georgia (formerly known as the School of the Americas) to say that the training of torturers must immediately stop. Nothing justifies the inhumane treatment of our fellow brothers and sisters. Torture by US military personnel has reached alarming proportions and has horrified people around the world.'

Fr Kelly was also impelled to act by a recent survey that said the majority of US Catholics think torture is acceptable. 'As a priest, I say torture is counter to the Gospel of Jesus ... We need to renounce torture, war and nuclear weapons. We have to learn to love as Christ loved, and abolish torture and war once and for all.'

Just as Jesus prophesied his own arrest, Fathers Kelly and Vitale knew arrest and imprisonment were likely. They are not strangers to detention. Fr Kelly has accumulated six years incarceration, half in solitary confinement for his anti-war protests. Fr Vitale is co-founder of the Nevada Desert Experience, a faith-based organisation that opposes nuclear weapons testing and is the Pace e Bene Action Advocate. In 2006 he served six months in jail following his arrest at the November 2005 Fort Benning vigil.

Participants in such non-violent actions are thoroughly prepared, spiritually and emotionally, for effective impact and probable detention in a tough American prison.

Australians are implicated in Fathers Kelly and Vitale's stand against torture. John Howard's friendship with George W. Bush has compromised and tainted Australia's once reputable record on human rights advocacy.

In July 2002 Australia voted against the adoption of the text of a protocol designed to strengthen the 1984 United Nations Convention against Torture in the UN's Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). Australian officials knew of Mamdouh Habib's extraordinary rendition to Egypt. Regarding the Howard government's five-year negligence of David Hicks, Catholic Bishop Kevin Manning said: 'When Australia fails to act to guarantee the human rights of one of its citizens, then we are all diminished.'

On 30 October 2007, *The Age* ran an article which says it all: 'Our silence on US torture looks like approval.'

Imagine an Australia governed by persons with the spiritual integrity of Steve Kelly, Louis Vitale or others like them. Yet none of these ex-cons would view themselves as leaders. They take their lead only from the principles of Christ.

This personal responsibility to act on the holy principles of love and justice makes for a new and right consideration of leadership. In the words of author Laurens van der Post: 'The age of leaders has come and gone. Every [person] must be [their] own leader now. You must remove your projection, and contain the spirit of our time in your own life and your own nature, because to go the old way and follow your leader is a form of psychological imprisonment.'

‘We want to be emancipated from that age, and the answer is to profoundly reappraise our systems of government and everything else.’

*Dr Vacy Vlazna is the coordinator of Justice for Palestine Matters. She was convenor of Australia East Timor Association and East Timor Justice Lobby and served in East Timor with UNAMET and UNTAET.*



## Buying and selling creativity

### BUSINESS

By Malcolm King

The term 'creativity' is now used so liberally and defined so broadly in job advertisements, political speeches, corporate flyers and university course guides, that it has become meaningless.

Everyone from real estate agents and academics to government spin doctors is flogging 'creativity'. It's the McDonald's of catch-all phrases.

British sociologist Frank Furendi says in *Where Have All the Intellectuals Gone?* that creativity has become a feelgood term intended to make us all feel a bit better about what we do, whether it's stocking shelves at the supermarket or playing cricket in the Australian Test team.

'Creativity is not a personal characteristic but the outcome of inspired, hard-earned achievement,' Furendi says.

We need to take a reality check on the current use of the term 'creative'. Remember the Dot-com crash in 2000? Part of the reason it crashed was that companies who bought into the online information revolution realised that it lacked creative content.

Organisations market creativity like this: 1. Creativity is an essential human attribute. 2. Creativity is the key to economic prosperity — the engine of the market. 3. Therefore, the market is simply an extension of the fundamental workings of human nature.

Total rubbish — but the guys in Enron and HIH used exactly this form of argument to pull the wool over the eyes of their clients.

One of the dangers of putting so much bias or spin on the term 'creative', and then applying it to almost every field of human endeavour, is that one runs the risk of self-parody or mumbo-jumbo. The authors of *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*, *Awaken the Giant Within*, *Elizabeth 1 CEO: Strategic Lessons in Leadership from the Woman who Built an Empire* and *The Leadership Secrets of Attila the Hun* used creativity as a lure for gullible executives hunting for magic in the workings of the market.

We used to say at university staff meetings that much our creative corporate planning was like a ritual rain dance. It had no effect on the weather but the dancers thought it did. Moreover, the advice about organisational creativity was directed at improving the dancing, not the weather.



The majority of corporations are not really looking for ‘creatives’ as such (they’d fail the psychometric tests). They don’t want a lot of divergent-thinking people running around with no understanding of the bottom line. They’re looking for people who can put business strategies in place — deal makers at the cutting edge of new capital creation.

I understand why universities appropriate the term ‘creative’. It has social caché — it’s good to be creative, like the way my mother used to say that it was ‘good’ that I learn to play the piano as a child because I would be popular at parties (‘But’, I added, to her anger, ‘only if there is a piano at the party’).

In his essay ‘On Creativity’, US physicist David Bohm argued that creativity is difficult to achieve and consequently rare. In Bohm’s view, most of what we do as humans is fairly humdrum and routine. For most of us, only occasionally is life marked by flashes of creativity. He did not regard this as a failing of individuals, but of a society that encourages us to conform and think in mechanical and repetitive ways.

It’s a paradox that a society that places such a high premium on creativity forces people to sit in an office all day shuffling paper around or staring at a computer screen. For all the cant spruiked by HR management, most organisations still operate in quasi-military hierarchies. These are not the fecund fields where creativity will bloom.

While I’ve been critical of businesses corraling the term creativity, there clearly is some form of phenomenon where life is marked by flashes of deep insight. It’s those flashes that interest me.

Why should a woman walking down a street suddenly formulate in her head, from a complex juxtaposition of memory and sense perception, an idea for a painting that will one day be hailed as a masterpiece? Why should a young man flying from Sydney to Hong Kong on holiday in the year 2010 make an astounding discovery about the pattern of prime numbers? Beats me.

Creativity is something we all have but we don’t know very much about it. I think it’s time we called big businesses’ bluff about their appropriation of creativity. For a truly creative nation to evolve, we need to study the wild mutability of the creative process. That would truly be a revolutionary step.

*Malcolm King is an Adelaide writer. He runs an educational PR business and teaches Sudanese children literacy and numeracy. He was the former head of the RMIT creative writing programs.*

## Writers miss out on election handouts

AUSTRALIA

By Rocky Wood



‘Australian artists would be justified in believing that the Coalition harbours a latent, sometimes visible, hostility to them and their calling.’ After a series of gaffes Peter Garrett, the Shadow Minister for Climate Change, Environment, Heritage and the Arts, wasn’t holding back when responding exclusively for this piece on the major parties’ policies towards literature and publishing.

He appeared to have a point when he claimed, ‘Sportspeople are often lauded by the Prime Minister and his senior team — but can you remember the last time they made a positive arts analogy?’ Consider this: the Coalition groups Arts and Sport under one Minister, Senator George Brandis. Google his website and you’ll find dozens of funding announcements for sport but barely a mention of the Arts, let alone literature.

Despite numerous phone calls and emails the Minister’s minder, Travis Bell, was unwilling or unable to respond to specific queries about Coalition policies in these areas — apparently they stand on their record.

The Government spends over \$1.3 billion per annum on the Arts. Of that only around \$24 million goes to major literary initiatives — the PLR, ELR, the Literature Board and Books Alive. Yet both parties rush to throw millions at the TV and movie industry. Last year the Government invested around \$110 million in our film industry, which generated only \$40 million at the box office. Bookshops sell \$750 million worth of Australian published books, all with GST. Yet the written arts receive less than a quarter of the filmed arts’ subsidies.

Both parties have failed writers and the publishing industry for decades. Australia gives some of the lowest support to the literary fields of any developed country. Australian publishers annually generate about 430 titles per million people — one-eighth of that of New Zealand! We have a large and vibrant group of published and unpublished writers in mainstream literature, genre fiction and non-fiction, but most are published overseas.

So far in the election campaign neither party has made specific commitments to writing, writers or publishing. Labor ‘supports’ an extension to the Educational Lending Rights scheme but ignores the more important Public Lending Rights scheme. They are also ‘committed’ to lifting the very low average income of ‘artists’, although it is unclear whether all types of artists are being regarded equally.

Garrett indicated Labor would examine overseas experience to determine ways to 'better equip artists for future work so that people might rely less on the welfare system to feed their families and continue their writer careers'. That's economically dry and not very promising.

And the Coalition — well, a deathly silence.

Governments of both persuasions have been happy to pander to the film industry and force property developers into some truly horrible examples of public art, while largely ignoring writers.

Garrett argues this is a mistake. 'Writers set up the national narrative; they set up the reflective foundations that a lot of creative endeavour can spring from ... that work is just absolutely core and innately valuable to our national identity.' He seems to be hearkening back to the Whitlam era, when new investment in the writing arts and public debate harnessed to rapid social change invigorated Australian literature.

Another such burst of creative investment is overdue. The 1970s cultural debate helped form the new Australian identity — Australians as a distinct society rather than daughter of Mother England. Today's writers, given voice, could establish a deeper cultural independence, truly engaged not only with America and England, but also with Asia and the broader world community.

To help achieve this there are several promises politicians, in the national interest, should make to the literary industry.

Funding across the board should be at least 10 per cent of the Arts Budget and no less than that provided to the film industry. This should include an immediate increase in funding for the ELR and PLR schemes.

Writers of genre fiction should be given financial support. Australia has world-leading writers of science fiction, graphic novels, horror and fantasy, but they receive almost no support from local publishing houses. The Literature Board needs restructuring to include genre groups with proper funding, including for Executive Officers.

Our highly-successful book festivals should receive more funding and the Books Alive campaign be extended to cover specific areas, including children's fiction and short stories.

Publishers should be offered project based funding through tax rebates, as offered to the film industry. One hundred writers could be offered a two-year living wage 'scholarship' for around \$5 million per annum. An accredited and subsidised training scheme for editors is well overdue.

And Australia needs broadly-based prizes along the lines of America's National Book Awards. It is particularly indefensible that Australia does not have a major prize for non-fiction.

All of these proposals will help build the 'future' Howard and Rudd both espouse. A strong literary culture helps define a Nation. It invigorates and defends free speech. And it encourages the debate about what type of country, and what type of individuals Australians wish to be.

*Rocky Wood is a Melbourne-based freelance writer. His new book is Stephen King: The Non-Fiction.*

## Silence has the last word

### BOOK REVIEW

By Andrew Hamilton

**Alex Miller, *Landscape of Farewell*, Allen & Unwin, 2007, ISBN 978 1741 753 752, RRP \$35.00, [website](#) .**

Anna Akhmatova, the great Russian poet, prefaces her poem cycle *Requiem*, with a story. During the Stalinist purges she was waiting in line outside the Lubyanka Prison for news of their relatives. A woman recognised her and asked, 'Can you describe this?' She said, 'I can'.

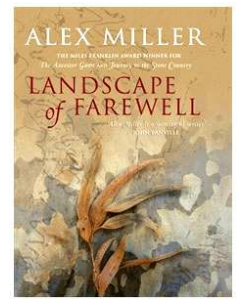
The question and answer resonate because they conjugate all the senses of silence and words. They ask whether Akhmatova has the skill to break silence about what she sees, the courage, the moral right, the experience, the grace that will give eloquence to good intentions, and the confidence that something can be passed on that will survive this apparently all-pervasive silencing.

The question and answer are echoed in Alex Miller's new novel. Its story is simple enough. The narrator is Professor Max Otto. Having lost his wife, he intends to take his own life after giving a valedictory address on the subject of massacres.

But Vita McLelland, a young Australian academic in Hamburg for the conference, attacks his talk. She later persuades him that he has something to live for and that he should visit Australia and meet her uncle, Dougald, an aboriginal elder, in Queensland. Max does so, and accepts the meaning of his own past through entering and finding words for the story of Dougald's great grandfather.

The energy of the novel comes from the paradox that when people of very different cultures come together words fail them, but out of their silence can come deeper words than either could have spoken alone. The protagonists are bound by similar histories through which they are entrapped in silence. Max suspected his father was complicit in Hitler's massacres of the Jews, but could never ask him. Dougald was brutally beaten by his father who suffered inarticulately the loss of his ancestral place in aboriginal society. Max was similarly oppressed by his uncle, who was equally inarticulate in his mad and despairing attachment to the soil.

The heart of the novel lies in its movement from despairing silence to words that lead to acceptance. At its beginning Max is alone after his wife's death, knows that he was never



brave enough to ask of his father the one question that mattered to him, and has capitulated to silence. Dougald has never been able to tell the story of his father or of his great grandfather. Neither has words for the curse at the centre of his people's history. Through their meeting they are finally able to help one another find words.

This is a novel of ideas in which the particularity of characters, places and events is subordinated to their symbolic significance. In a lesser novel this would be a fatal shortcoming. But in this novel they are so vividly described that they remain in the memory. Although Vita, whose vitality dominates the first chapter or two, only reappears in the novel to ensure that Max lives out his appointed role, she is the most strikingly individual character in the novel.

But the ability to hold together ideas and dramatic narrative is seen best in the climactic chapter. In it Max writes the story which Dougald has told him of Gnapun, his great grandfather. His family were counsellors of their people. A group came to him telling of the desecration of their sacred sites by white settlers. He goes with them and makes plans to kill them all and destroy the settlement. Before this happens he has a dream in which he sees the settlement and the coming killing through the eyes of the settlers.

Max tells the story through the lens of his own history, ascribing to Gnapun Agamemnon's instruction to massacre the Trojans leaving no one to grieve them. The founding traditions of Western and indigenous civilisation come together. Much is at stake until the writing is completed, and Max and Dougald remain on edge. Finally Dougald finds his story told well, and Max finds his words accepted. The telling of the story is an emblem of reconciliation.

This chapter is symbolically rich and complex. But the narrative and description are spare and vivid. The conditions of truthful writing are explored and met in the writing.

In the novel Max is as articulate as we might expect a professor of history to be. Through his reflections Miller is able to explore all the reasons why silence might have the last word in a person's life or in a people's history. He makes the reader feel the weight of fear, loss of confidence, shame and the enormity of the challenge to speak and write. In recapitulating the force of the question put to Anna Akhmatova, he also affirms that silence does not have the last word. This is a memorable novel.

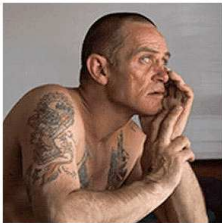
*Andrew Hamilton is the consulting editor for Eureka Street. He also teaches at the United Faculty of Theology in Melbourne.*

## Quality observation in no-frills suburban drama

### FILM REVIEW

By Tim Kroenert

***Boxing Day*: 82 minutes. Rated: MA. Director: Kriv Stenders. Starring: Richard Green, Tammy Anderson, Syd Brisbane, Stuart Clark, Misty Sparrow**



While technically difficult, extended takes allow for a distinctive style of filmmaking. The margin for error is minimal, but the incessancy of the camera's gaze means any character within its line of sight is subject to unforgiving and relentless scrutiny.

Films that unfold in real time are equally distinctive. They require careful distribution of exposition and action in order to sustain audience interest, and much in the way of non-verbal detail to flesh out the characters' stories beyond the events of the narrative.

This low-budget Australian film combines both methods for a simmering fly-on-the-wall documentary-style drama that seeks hope and forgiveness against a low-income suburban landscape, and also contributes to the broader story of reconciliation.

It was shot using minimal, inconspicuous camera cuts, giving the impression that the entire film is a single continuous shot. So there is little relief for either the characters or the audience as indigenous ex-con Chris (played by co-screenwriter Green) hosts a Boxing Day gathering that will either make or break his newly reformed life.

And it takes place in real time, so that every scene and frame is milked for its contribution to the story and the film's thematic makeup.

Chris, clean and sober for some time, has been looking forward to the visit of his ex-wife Donna (Anderson) and their teenage daughter Brooke (Sparrow) for Boxing Day lunch. But before they arrive, he receives an unexpected visit from a former partner in crime, Owen (Clark), who tries unsuccessfully to drag Chris back into his drug-dealing ways.

Owen is clearly a destructive force in Chris' life, and lands one final blow before Chris is finally able to be rid of him — Brooke and Donna arrive with Donna's new partner Dave (Brisbane), and Owen informs Chris that he recognises Dave as a known pedophile.

Overcome with fear for Brooke's safety and furious at the prospect that he may be already



too late to protect her, Chris must choose between seeking violent retribution against Dave, or finding new, constructive ways to negotiate his emotions and decide upon his actions.

His choice will determine the success of both his personal reformation, and his relationship with Brooke.

Chris is Brooke's biological uncle, although since her real father (Chris' brother) died when she was young, culturally and practically he's her father. But his sordid past has left their relationship fractured at best; a sense of indigenous cultural displacement echoes through the fissures in their familial bond, just as it echoes in the hallways of Chris' home.

It would be a disservice, however, to reduce any element of this superbly executed, well-observed and harrowing no-frills film to an archetype or symbol.

Each character (excepting, perhaps, Owen, (who comes off like a parody of Mark 'Chopper' Read) has nuance and dimension; Green in particular is a revelation as Chris, who represents one aspect of the contemporary experience of indigenous Australians, but also broils with all the pain, joy and depth of humanity.

*Tim Kroenert is the Assistant Editor of Eureka Street.*

## **Heave heavy individualism**

POETRY

By Daniel J. P.

### **A common dilemma**

Gathering dependencies harvested by glory  
Leave imprints of flash floods with completely new stories  
Soft-coloured justice and marble dÃ©cor  
And realistic conflict pushed down to the floor  
Natural identity and natural delights  
Heave heavy individualism against red-coloured spite  
A common dilemma which always occurs  
Thrusts angry dispositions and knowledge that spurs  
Well-appointed prospects but ill-advised devices  
And improper solutions prompting mixed sugar and spices  
Perceptual fatigue and favourable outcomes  
Leave heavy minded foolishness with garnished conundrums

— *Daniel J. P.*

### **Poetic Poems**

'Such is life' depends on how such a life is viewed  
And in simple things one's distasteful pleasures removed  
In grace upon grace, and in times of space  
When smiling fiercely becomes saving face  
Pleasant bullets, pleasantly released

Leaving young flowers wholeheartedly deceased  
Rising sun and plush young things  
Taste toxic water with polluted springs  
Symbolic metaphors and a broke-down palace  
Soft skin for an opening and a spear for a phallus  
Wave upon wave of poetic poems  
Leaves heavy boulders reduced to small stones  
Scratched lines in a surface breeds sufficient new purpose  
And gold-tipped wings become emancipated things  
Plush young things with gold-tipped wings  
Fly over green fields with green-coloured feelings  
Eye lash rose and splash-flavoured prose  
Leave many an observer with gathering foes  
Leave with a thought and be of the sort  
To have left with a thought but not to have fought

— *Daniel J. P.*

**Shiny lights and flicker fools**

To sail across a sea, by night time, who are we?  
Shiny lights and flicker fools, which of these, are God's tools?  
Lonely planet, effective nightmare, madness or sadness, which do you share?  
Captive mind, a not too eager heart, which of these, will you part with?  
In the lonely darkness, of my head, is where my fears, are a growing dread  
A tragic thing, it makes me wonder, beneath the thunder, just who, who are you?  
Mirrors on walls, far away calls, and a chance to leave this space.

— *Daniel J. P.*

