

**David Malouf**

**A Touch of the Sun**

Earlier than the sun  
and stronger, our need  
for comfort in the dark.

Always on cue  
with its doodle-do and smallgrass recitativo  
we take the sun

as given, its shadow-play  
Of slats on a bed-sheet  
(a hot thought

in a hot shade) semaphore  
to the blood that knows nothing  
of distinctions, dawn

from dusk, May from December.  
Or in a deck-chair within sight of  
the road,

and of rain-pool and melon-flower,  
what sunlight  
is to old bones.

**At Hazard**

for Jaya Savige

At hazard, whether or not  
we know it and wherever  
we go. Without it no

surprise, no enchantment.

There is law enough all about us  
in almanac and season, anniversary

days come round, the round earth's carnival  
of chimes and recessionals.

Good to be included

there. Good also what is not  
fixed, or sure even,  
the second breath of being

here when the May-bush  
snows in mid-September. As giddy  
happenstance leads us

this way into  
a lost one's arms, or that way  
deeper into the maze.

## **Rondeau II, Pop Song**

As long as  
the stock keep turning  
over as long  
as spring keeps knocking  
on wood and willows bud

as long as  
Jane and Jed and Lou are still rocking  
on and have got  
my number as long as  
a wet weekend in bed

with you in chill November  
just the two of us and maybe Sting  
as long  
as long as a piece of string

## **Toccata II**

A man sits pen in hand, paper  
before him. What is on his mind  
he will set down now, the word not to be spoken

lightly. As if of all  
his words this was the one that touched the heart  
of things and made touch

the last sense of all as it was the first, and the word  
that speaks it loaded  
with all that came strongest, a planet's-worth

of sunlight, cooling green, the close comfort  
of kind. It is the world he must set down  
now, also lightly, each thing

changed yet as it was; in so many fumblings traced back  
to the print of his fingertips still warm upon it,  
the warmth  
that came when he was touched.

The last, as he sets it down, no more than  
a breath; though much  
that is still to be grasped may ride upon it.

**David Malouf** was born in Brisbane, Queensland in 1934. He left Australia aged twenty-four and lived in Britain from 1959-68 where he taught in London and Birkenhead. He returned to Australia in 1968 and lectured at the University of Sydney. He became a full-time writer in 1978 and now lives in Sydney. His first two published books were both collections of poetry: *Bicycle and Other Poems* (1970) and *Neighbours in a Thicket: Poems* (1974). He later published another collection of poems *Revolving Days* (2008). He is the internationally acclaimed author of novels including *An Imaginary Life* (1978), *The Great World* (1990) winner of the Commonwealth Writers' prize and the Prix Femina Etranger, *Remembering Babylon* (1993), shortlisted for the Booker Prize and winner of the IMPAC Dublin Literary Award, *The Conversations at Curlow Creek* (1996) and *Ransom* (2009), and his

autobiographical classic *12 Edmondstone Street* (1985). He has published three collections of short-stories *Antipodes* (1985), *Dream Stuff* (2000) and *Every Move You Make* (2006). He also wrote the libretti for *Voss*, an adaptation of the novel by Patrick White and first produced in Sydney in 1986, and *Baa Baa Black Sheep*, an opera with music by Michael Berkeley, the play *Blood Relations* (1988), and his latest collaboration with Michael Berkeley is the opera *Jane Eyre* (2000). He was awarded the Neustadt International Prize for Literature in 2000 and the inaugural Australia-Asia Literary Award in 2008.