

» DAVID MALOUF



(above)

**Cyanotype**

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DAVID MALOUF AO FAHA is internationally recognised as one of the world's finest and most versatile contemporary writers. He has published many prize-winning novels, collections of poems, short stories and essays, as well as opera libretti and a play. In 2015 he became the *Australian Book Review's* inaugural Laureate and in 2016 received the Australia Council Award for Lifetime Achievement in Literature.

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# Earth Hour

It is on our hands, it is in our mouths at every breath, how not  
remember? Called back  
to nights when we were wildlife, before kindling  
or kine, we sit behind moonlit  
glass in our McMansions, cool  
millions at rehearsal  
here for our rendezvous each with his own  
earth hour.

We are feral  
at heart, unhouseled creatures. Mind  
is the maker, mad for light, for enlightenment, this late admission  
of darkness the cost, and the silence  
on our tongue as we count the hour down — the coin we bring,  
long hoarded just for this — the extended cry of our first coming  
to this ambulant, airy  
*Schatzkammer* and midden, our green accommodating tomb.

» DAVID MALOUF



### Ladybird

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# Ladybird

Childhood visitors,  
the surprise of  
their presence a kind of grace.

Kindest of all the ladybird,  
neither lady  
(unless like so much else

in those days disguised  
in a witch's spell) nor  
bird but an amber-beadlike

jewel that pinned itself  
to our breast; a reward for  
some good deed we did not

know we'd done, or earnest  
of a good world's good will  
towards us. Ladybird, ladybird,

fly away home, we sang,  
our full hearts lifted  
by all that was best

in us, pity for what  
like us was small (but why  
was her house on fire?), and sped her

on her way with the same breath  
we used to snuff out birthdays  
on a cake, the break and flare

of her wings the flame that leapt  
from the match, snug  
in its box, snug in our fist under the house

that out of hand went sprinting  
up stairwells, and stamped and roared  
about us. Ladybird,

mother, quick, fly  
home! The house, our hair, everything close  
and dear, even the air,

is burning! In our hands  
(we had no warning  
of this) the world is alive and dangerous.