



## Waves I - Texts

### Elliott Gyger - **Petit Testament** (2008)

In the twenty-fifth year of my age  
I find myself to be a dromedary  
That has run short of water between  
One oasis and the next mirage  
And having despaired of ever  
Making my obsessions intelligible  
I am content at last to be  
The sole clerk of my metamorphoses.  
Begin here:

In the year 1943  
I resigned to the living all collateral images  
Reserving to myself a man's  
Inalienable right to be sad  
At his own funeral.  
(Here the peacock blinks the eyes  
of his multipennate tail.)  
In the same year  
I said to my love (who is living)  
Dear we shall never be that verb  
Perched on the sole Arabian Tree  
Not having learnt in our green age to forget  
The sins that flow between the hands and feet  
(Here the Tree weeps gum tears  
Which are also real: I tell you  
These things are real)  
So I forced a parting  
Scrubbing my few dingy words to brightness.

Where I have lived  
The bed-bug sleeps in the seam, the cockroach  
Inhabits the crack and the careful spider  
Spins his aphorisms in the corner.  
I have heard them shout in the streets  
The chiasmus of the Socialist Reich  
And in the magazines I have read  
The Popular Front-to-Back.  
But where I have lived  
Spain weeps in the gutters of Footscray  
Guernica is the ticking of the clock  
The nightmare has become real, not as belief  
But in the scrub-typhus of Mubo.  
It is something to be at last speaking  
Though in this No-Man's-language appropriate  
Only to No-Man's-Land.  
Set this down too:  
I have pursued rhyme, image, and metre,  
Known all the clefts in which the foot may stick,  
Stumbled often, stammered,  
But in time the fading voice grows wise  
And seizing the co-ordinates of all existence  
Traces the inevitable graph  
And in conclusion:  
There is a moment when the pelvis  
Explodes like a grenade. I  
Who have lived in the shadow that each act  
Casts on the next act now emerge  
As loyal as the thistle that in session  
Puffs its full seed upon the indicative air.  
I have split the infinite. Beyond is anything.

Ern Malley

## Andrew Ford - Willow Songs (2009)

### *Epigraph*

Birth.

Impossible to imagine

Not knowing how to expect.

Childbirth.

Impossible to imagine

Years of the tall son.

Death.

Impossible to imagine,

Exactly, *exactly*.

### *On Watching a Cold Woman Wade into a Cold Sea*

The way that wintry woman

Walked into the sea

Was as if, in adultery,

She strode to her leman.\*

Something in the way she

Shrugged off her daughters,

Moping by the sea's hem

As if they were human.

But she of the pedigree

And breed of Poseidon,

Slicing through the breakers

With her gold plated knees,

Twisting up her hair

With a Medusan gesture;

Something in the augury

She took from her nature

Made women look at women

Over stiff cups of tea,

And husbands in their season

Sigh suburbanly to see her.

Oh go dally with your children  
Or your dogs, naked sirs!  
The venom of the ocean  
Is as kindness to hers.

\* leman = lover

*Eros*

I called for love  
But help me, who arrives?  
This thug with broken nose  
And squinty eyes.  
'Eros, my bully boy,  
Can this be you,  
With boxer lips  
And patchy wings askew?'

'Madam,' cries Eros,  
'Know the brute you see  
Is what long overuse  
Has made of me.  
My face that so offends you  
Is the sum  
Of blows your lust delivered  
One by one.

We slaves who are immortal  
Gloss your fate  
And are the archetypes  
That you create.  
Better my battered visage,  
Bruised but hot,  
Than love dissolved in loss  
Or left to rot.'

*Fool's Gold (A Saturday Night Sonnet)*

Girls in their nervous freedom, heeled and painted,  
Swarm out in teams – oh, bold pursuit of passion!  
Geared for the sexual snatch, they seem acquainted  
With all the ways and means of public fashion.  
Who has not seen them, arm in arm, come rolling,  
Midriffs agape but fending off all gazes,  
Haughty and cool, forbidding yet controlling;  
Each breast inflames us, every hip amazes.  
Girls, were these parts for other girls created?  
Walking exposed, you shrug aside our doting.  
Or has the art of dressing been defeated  
By skilfulness in wearing nearly nothing?  
If so, put on your clothes and tease our pleasure.  
Bared flesh is fool's gold, wealth's a buried treasure.

*Incident*

She must have been about  
twelve in 1942.

She stood in front  
of the tall hall mirror  
and she made a mou.  
With her pretty not-  
yet-kissed mouth she made an ugly  
mou mou  
that didn't mean anything  
she knew.  
So bony, so skinny,  
and so very naked.  
Little pink belled swellings.  
Two.

The mirror did what she did.  
Mou mou. Mou mou.

Nowhere to go.  
Nothing to do.

*Epigraph*

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Impossible to imagine  
Not knowing how to expect.

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Impossible to imagine  
Years of the tall son.

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Impossible to imagine,  
Exactly, exactly.

*Willow Song*

I went down to the railway  
But the railway wasn't there.  
A long scar lay across the waste  
Bound up with vetch and maidenhair  
And birdsfoot trefoils everywhere.  
But the clover and the sweet hay,  
The cranesbill and the yarrow  
Were as nothing to the rose bay  
                  the rose bay, the rose bay  
As nothing to the rose bay willow.

I went down to the river  
But the river wasn't there.  
A hill of slag lay in its course  
With pennycress and cocklebur  
And thistles bristling with fur.  
But ragweed, dock and bitter may  
and hawkbit in the hollow  
Were as nothing to the rose bay  
                  the rose bay, the rose bay  
As nothing to the rose bay willow.

I went down to find my love.  
But my sweet love wasn't there.  
A shadow stole into her place  
And spoiled the looestrife of her hair  
And counselled me to pick despair.  
Old elder and young honesty  
Turned ashen, but their sorrow

Was as nothing to the rose bay  
the rose bay, the rose bay  
As nothing to the rose bay willow.

Oh I remember summer  
When the hemlock was in leaf.  
The sudden poppies by the path  
Were little pools of crimson grief.  
Sick henbane cowered like a thief.  
But self-heal sprang up in her way,  
And mignonette's light yellow,  
To flourish with the rose bay  
the rose bay, the rose bay  
To flourish with the rose bay willow.

Its flames took all the wasteland  
And all the river's silt,  
But as my dear grew thin and grey  
They turned as white as salt or milk.  
Great purples withered out of guilt,  
And bright weeds blew away  
In cloudy wreaths of summer snow.  
And the first one was the rose bay  
the rose bay, the rose bay  
The first one was the rose bay willow.

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