

THEA ASTLEY'S POEMS: CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER OF WRITING

[Untitled or ambiguously titled poems are identified by inclusion of first line. Thea's notes and dates are reproduced as written; my explanatory comments are in square brackets.]

"At the Seaside," by Thea Astley (**eight years**) [*Courier Mail* January 4 1934, p. 8]

EXERCISE BOOK A: 1940-1946 (Fryer 97/42)

1940-1943: THEA WAS FIFTEEN TO EIGHTEEN.

A Sequence of Numbered Poems:

1. "Unrest" 1940
2. "Fantasy" 1941
3. "Picture" [published in *All Hallows School Magazine?*]
4. "Friend, let not thy passing be..." 1942
5. "Death"
6. "The Awakening"
7. "No More My Child"
8. "Antiquity"
9. "Enchantment" (Warwick)

The next pages torn out, but Poem No. 21 of the sequence remains:

21. "Absent" [sonnet]
"Two Soldiers"
"The Shadows"
"From Troy:--(1943) [*Barjai* 13 (March 1944):12]

1944 [Heading in Exercise Book A]: THEA WAS NINETEEN.

- "To Laurie: You have a slow smile" [Laurie Collinson]
"Idiot" [*Barjai* 16 (September-October 1944): 5]
"Poem: Beyond the sleeping and the wake,..." [*Barjai* 16 (September-October 1944): 5]
"Poem: Look sang the boy..." [*Barjai* 15 (July 1944):16]
"Creation" [*Barjai* 15 (July 1944): 16]
"Love's Fault"
"Query"
"For Barrie—a Poet Friend" [Barrie Reid]
"To O: Dance like a flame my love—"
"Sun Song"
"Grey Afternoon"
"Poem: The essence of new life—"
"With Evening: With evening the city was lost in an ocean..."
"Poem: A woman sat beside me in the train,/July the seventeenth of forty-four..."
"Poem: For Egbert"
"Poem: I was not aware of you, red tree/ Until today..."
"Sonnet: Child by the Shore"
"Sonnet: Frustration"
"Sonnet: To Francis Thompson"
"Sonnet: To Myself"
"Poem—For Vida" [Vida Horn]
"Poem: Bird on the tree, keep singing..."
"To Poetry: You are a silver urn/Where I pour my thoughts,..."

“Poetic Chagrin”

“To Helen” [“To H.” *Barjai* 14 (May 1944): 3]

“Saturday Night.” [*Barjai* 14 (May 1944):3]

“à l’ordinaire—*pro patria*” [fragment]

“Poem: “The leaf of a moment frosted black;/Parting of hands is a little thing....”

“Poem: The length of a day/ Has withered away...”

“Sonnet 17 July 1944: This day has been a season out of place...” [Marked by Thea as published, but not yet found]

“On Sunday (Mid-winter) Doubtless we were wrong....”

“Bend/ And all the little houses will bow down/Around us,....”

“Into yesterday/ I placed the heart...”

“Darling of the dreaming/ And the laughter—”

“Absence is a death—/You gone and I cold-lipped...”

“Sonites: Summer is sweetness....”

“Traces on the wind like trees against the air/ You are the visitant...” [fragment]

Saturday 9 December sequence:

(i) “Pain is dark/ And the world shouts blackly on me,....”

(ii) [missing]

(iii) “Under the stony [?] sky I sang sadly...”

(iv) “Sing to me now,/ The dream is clear once more...”

“I have just realised my love./ The singing grasses...”

“For the Pleasure of Laurie: When I am dead and little blades of grass...” [Collinson, presumably; published *Barjai* 17 (1944):9]

“Revelation: Enter-harshness/ The facing of the world...”

“String Quartet” “Monday 11th Dec. ‘44”

“Song: When shivering roses fade in sleep, /And sleep is a whitened sorrow,....”

“Close the door/Upon this windy life beating/”

(vi) “It’s strange that love/ Should bring with it/ A little snake of hating” [This seems an addition to the earlier numbered sequence of love poems]

“Poem: Cool morning in the street”

“Trellis” Dec. ’44

“Poem: You were dreaming when the grey wind shook the lamps,....” Dec. ’44

“Triolet”

“Picture”

“Ballad”

“Vignette”

(i) Thin fingers plucked the glass,/Grape on a crystal stem.

(ii) Green cloak, red stain, silver blade,/ Found in a shadow by the moon

“Last Night in Mt. Crosby” 1944

Eheu, fugaces, Postume, Postume. Labuntur anni...--Horace “Quick, love, snatch the curtains from the years,....” The epigram is the opening of Horace, *Carminum* II.14: “Alas, Postumus, Postumus, how the swift years glide by!” [*Galmahra* 1944: 14]

“To Isa” [1944-1945]

“The Idler”

“Poem: I said:--‘O look at the trees!...”

“If all the golden blooms were heaped together,....” [hand-printed, and may not be by Thea]

1945: THEA WAS TWENTY

Constat fugam melius esse. “Flight” *Quo vadis? Ad locum desideriorum quo cor semper fugit.* “The love that you have now denied to me...” 2 January 1945 [sonnet]

“Sweet Rivals” 9/1/45 Signed BGR [probably Barrie Reid]

1945: [Heading in Exercise Book A]

“This hate is hard and heavy; dull/As lead...”

“Poem (Melbourne): Boringly repetitive the night...”

“Shorncliffe (January)”

“14 Jan. To my brother. Sunlight and spires are strangely tangled...” [pub. *A Flash of Life*. Mountain View, Victoria, 1986:10]

“Protest”

“Keep loving for the bitter hours...”

“For Aubrey: When your thoughts laced light with sleep...”

“Melbourne 24th Jan. ’45: The long, long hours of afternoon...” 24th Jan 1945 [written on Hotel notepaper “opposite Spencer Street Railway Station”]

“Summer: Elizabeth: Parks and silver children meet...”

“Poem: Similde speaks: I am an old man’s dream...”

“The Card Players” (March 45)’

“Roland to Arlene” April

“To Paul Grano”

“Sonnet: après **Baudelaire**”

“The boy was half asleep,/Under the alder boughs,...”

“Altar Piece”

“Because perplexed me people’s laughter, words/Rocketing and rioting about...” [fragment]

Sequence: (i) When both our hands [**de Musset**]

(ii) I love too easily I find, [**de Musset**]

(iii) Do not let this end within the year, [**de Musset**]

May “Returned Man” [*Galmahra* 1945: 25]

“Culture, 1945” [Perkins, Elizabeth and Robert Handicott, eds. *North of Capricorn: An Anthology of Verse*. Townsville, Queensland: Foundation for Australian Literary Studies, 1988: 5]

“The Sailor”

“I clasped my Hands/ On the thin strands...”

“To Laurie: Stun the soul and wreck the clock,” [Laurie Collinson]

“Charles”

“May: Light this branch at the moon/ And gild the air”

“June: Peter”

“June. Sonnet: This love has more of spirit than of flesh,...”

“From June: When all the frost is fled/ From winter’s eyes...”

“To Peter M.: O laureated Peter...”

“Poem: If I am just another love/ To add to all your lovers dead—“

“You are a bright stream,...”

“Epitaph: It’s possible, that when I go,

“Toni’s”

“To Laurie” [sonnet, to Laurie Collinson]

“And again:--How awkward just to offer thanks/Not for the gift so much, as giver.”

“To a Poet”

“The Fountain”

“Sonnet: **de Musset**: I beg you, all might soon dissolve, but this,/This must impregnate our night with soul.

“Life is only love and neglect/ But never hate.”
 “Occasioned by Pat: The three scarlet ladies...”
 “**de Musset**: Were the moon a castle of porcelain”
 “**de Musset**: Futility appears the total day,/ The useless consummation. Interest...” [sonnet]
 “**de Musset**: “There’s nothing more to gain/ Through this deception,”
 (iv) “Desire and want are two such different/ Episodes in love...”
 “Epitaph: Nothing was nobly done, but the words/At the end...”
 “Clown”
 (v) “Light in the golden time/ Is wasted as a desire...”
 “**de Musset**: Even when the harvesting of days/Sweeps all the silver flesh...”
 “She: Grief is thin as the moon.”
 “To those: Warn me if the flesh...” [fragment]
 “You are my quiet music you/My thin flutes over an evening of space...” [fragment]
 “This clock has worn/The fire away...”
 “Sonnet: This might be finality, the aim/Of all I ever hoped to have—not end...” [completed, 27 October]
 “In the alley-ways of sleep...”
 “My very dear, my very dear,/ I love you so...” [triolet]
 “I am afraid/To tell you how I love...” [adapted triolet]
 “To the mind moved by a song” [fragment]
 “Silently let’s pause beside the dawn” [sonnet]
 “Juvenilia” [sonnet]: “All we regret”
 “**de Musset**: What! Should a love-song so die on the tongue...”
 “**de Musset**: You are the tears and the laughter...”
 “A Prayer”
 “Edward St. December ’45” “The uphill street and casual tram...”

1945 [Heading in Exercise Book B]

“Let me plant a tune or buy a singing bird...”

1946: THEA WAS TWENTY-ONE.

1946: [Heading in Exercise Book A]

“Rain after Drought”

“**de Musset**: Sunday 20 Jan 1946: I have but to say and you believe...” [sonnet]

“**de Musset**: Surely the eyes shine often/Through their pain...”

“**de Musset**: Five days ago I could have sworn/Love reached its peak...”

“**de Musset**: Twice, I say, I’ve pledged my very soul/ Into a loving...”

“**de Musset**: Feb., Monday 25th ’46: “That we,/ Chance voyagers...”

“Before a coldness kills our kiss...”

“March 17th Sunday: **de Musset**: The flesh can bear a hurt, eradicate...” [sonnet]

Undated: “Life and Love” **Catullus**: “Let us live, my Lesbia, and let us love...” [fragment; *Catullus Carmina V*]

Undated: “Translation” **Baudelaire’s** “Recueillement” [fragment]

Undated: “Rain-cool tune, remember?/ How those gay notes...”

[On reverse of “ECONOMICS 1 1946 Supplementary Notes”:]

“To the once young”
“Mollie with the dark hair...”
“Pilgrim Pie”

“1946: To reconcile four seasons in a day!...” [earliest poem in Exercise Book B: Fryer 97/41]
“1946, Ashgrove Hills. O, the gentleness on my soul/Is not of your making...” [Exercise Book B]

1946-47: Translations written into Thea’s copy of *The Oxford Book of French Verse*:

Théophile Gautier, “Chinoiserie”: “It is not you, fair lady, whom I love...”
Victor Hugo, “Nuits de Juin”: “When summer days have run their round...”
Paul Verlaine, “Chanson d’Automne”: “The sadly sobbing strings/ Of weeping violins...”

1947: THEA WAS TWENTY-TWO.

1947 Townsville: “Letter to Nathalie”: This brain once rich/ With new translations of old things...” [Exercise Book B]
1947: “Flesh-fettered so I plead to clasp the real...” [sonnet; *A.B.C. Weekly?*; Exercise Book B]

1948: THEA WAS TWENTY-THREE.

Pomona 1948: “Tomorrow: Today’s intensity lies dying...” [Exercise Book B]
Pomona 1948. Wednesday, June. John. “All night during the wind...” [Exercise Book B]
“Echo Point. January 1948: I shall remember though the years deny” [Exercise Book B]

1949: THEA WAS TWENTY-FOUR.

1949 May. Hunter’s Hill: “These quiet houses, river-lost, tremble away...” [Exercise Book B]
1949 Hunter’s Hill: “No trees are witnesses, or she...” [Exercise Book B]

1950: THEA WAS TWENTY-FIVE.

1950 May: “I must be cursed with some black doom...” [Exercise Book B]
May 1950. “Over the young backyards each day, and I...” [Exercise Book B]
1950 Sonnet: “Sometimes, incredibly, the longing swings...” [Exercise Book B]

UNDATED POEMS TYPED AND PASTED IN EXERCISE BOOK B: WRITTEN LATE 1940s-1950s

“Magnetic”: “Thoughts pointed to the pole-star of the mind...” [sonnet, attributed to “Herald”]
“The thin lights of each day’s disguise recede...” [sonnet]
“Satori” “Taking the day as primal postulate...” [sonnet]
“Neap” “You may be sure I know my neap...”
“No more need these lips song-sue/ Sky...”
“You know now. I’ve not said...”
“The flesh can bear a hurt, eradicate...” [sonnet]
“Those were the months we found the summer texture/ Too personal to bear...” [sonnet]
“I beg you, all might soon dissolve, but this,/This must impregnate...” [sonnet]

UNDATED POEMS LATER IN EXERCISE BOOK B, SOME PUBLISHED 1950s

“Sulpicia III” [SMH 19 October 1957: 12]
“You of the heart and I/And the midnight roads...”

“Through the translucency of rain/The topmost conifers...”
 “Lament: “Last week the lugger’s in...”
 “Summer: Within the cage of bones the sullen/Lion that is I...”
 “A Warning: So I said smiling quietly: See...”
 “Dunes” [SMH 3 August, 1957: 17]
 “Last Week: Hand me your hat and I will pour...”
 “Picnic: Clean on the valley’s edge of afternoon...”
 “Poem: You are my quiet music, you/ My house roof under rain...” [A.B.C. Weekly?]
 “Solvency”: “In acres and oceans bright green on blue wave bending...”
 “Love in Our Time”: “Always and reasonably it is sad/ That one should so impersonalise...”
 “I’ll lean along the driving rain/ To watch the stippling of the river...”
 “Invocation for Frederick Delius: Play Hansel to my Gretel in this forest...” [earliest date 1956, when
 Thea moved to Epping]
 “Droving Man” [Bulletin 75, no. 3878 (1954): 13; Australian Poetry 1956, ed. A. A. Philips,
 Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1956): 52; The Queensland Centenary Anthology, ed. R.S. Byrnes and
 Val Vallis, London: Longmans Green, 1959; Modern Australian Verse, ed. Douglas Stewart,
 Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1964: 176-77; North of Capricorn: An Anthology of Verse, ed.
 Elizabeth Perkins and Robert Handicott, Townsville: Foundation for Australian Literary Studies,
 1988: 6.]
 “Lubra”: The girl stood where the wind/ made flowers of her hair...
 “Whitsunday”: “This is true pentecost...”
 “A Last Year’s Hero”: “You wore autumnally the wreathier wreath,/ Gargantuan” [Sydney Morning
 Herald 16 July 1957: 18; Australian Poetry 1957, ed. Hal Porter, Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1957:
 15]
 “Descant”: “For three nights now we two have lain/ Under rain-stippled roof...” [Published under
 pseudonym, Philip Cressy, Sydney Morning Herald 1 September 1956, p. 14]
 “A Seasonal Lament”: “Here boredom works through plangency...”
 “The Purist”: “The totals of his thought were colourless/ Perfect...” [sonnet; Sydney Morning Herald
 7 September 1957, p. 15]
 “On hearing the first cuckold in spring...”

UNDATED POEMS ON LOOSE PAGES IN BOX 4, FOLDER 97/44

“Horace I v: Pyrrha, who’s the slender fellow/ Now, scent-daubed...” [post 1966]
 “Written in Reply to J.M. Couper’s “Abelard to Heloise: Only monkish cant could turn...” [Sydney
 Morning Herald? –post 1966]
 “Landfall at Night; the long seas took me in...”

1967

“In the morning when it was light...” [Exercise Book B]; Thea’s note: “Written while at
 Correspondence School 1967”; [Stevenson’s poem for his wife, Holly, A Boatload of Home Folk, p.
 77, but the ending in Boatload adds the dinghy simile: “I found you empty like the last
 dinghy/Isolated by tide”]

“My child has a new plane” [Identify!]

“After all this, I don’t like you much my dear” [Boatload, p. 74]

“This eating sea has munched away...” [Boatload, p. 76]