

WILDER BENTLEY

AT THE ARCHETYPE PRESS

Six photographs by Bernard Rosenthal

with six sonnets by the Poet-Printer

& an appreciation by Andrew Hoyem

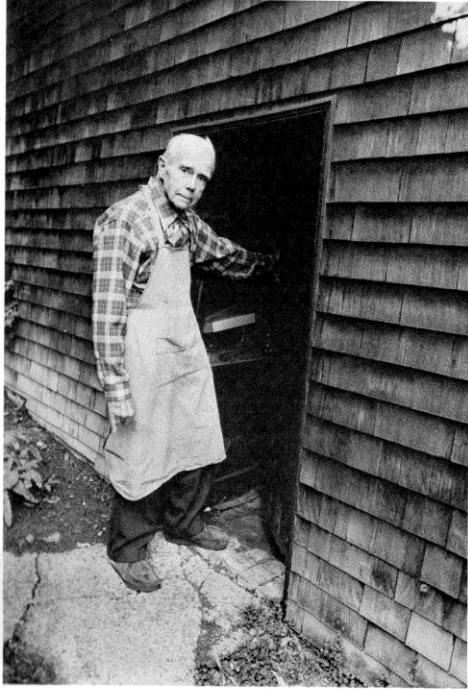
Wilder Bentley THE ELDER



AT THE ARCHETYPE PRESS

PRINTER'S NOTE

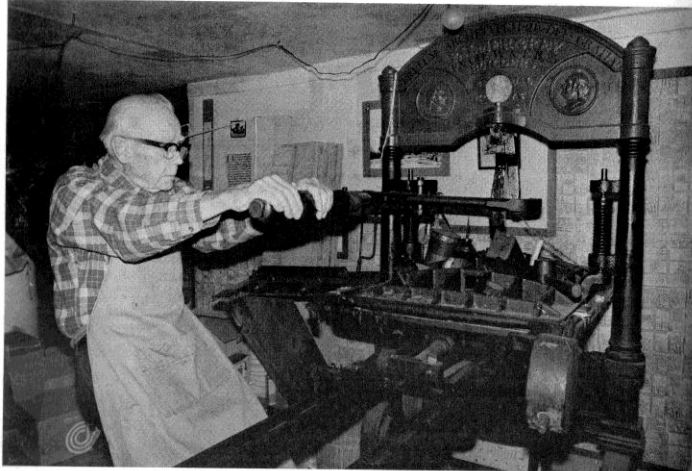
The Wilder
the Bentley,
the straighter
the shooting;
the longer
the scrolling,
the sooner
the sonnet;
the saner
the diet,
the surer
the painting;
the gooder
the gaffer,
the finer
the printing;
the sweeter
the Ellen,
the wiser
the Elder.



I. At the Pressroom Door.

I

Pause at thy pressroom door, reflect, take stock,
Gerontion!—Hast thou dotted every i?—
Crossed every t?—Tracked down the faults that mar
Thy sight no longer able to descry
Th' inverted s, the work-up, and the smudge
That mar thy would-be-flawless printed page?
For lo! this is thy codicil, thy judge,
Thy rack, thine executioner, thy gauge:
This final forme's thy homemade coffin's lid
Planed down, screw'd tight, and lowered six feet deep
This final forme's a poetaster's bid
For fame ere falling clods disturb his sleep.—
Mark well his bold grimace, his dogged chin
Held high, as for the battle death must win!



V. The Handpressman Demonstrating the *Dwell*.

V

Gerontion here doth demonstrate the *dwell*—
A term that handpress printers handed down
From master to apprentice ere our hell
Of speed and profit scuttled brain and brawn.—
The *dwell* itself doth pause but for a trice,
Whereas the camera needs more time, alas,
Than he could hold the pose: his edifice
Collapsed, 'tis plain to see.— Like Balaam's ass,
Despite, he'll have the final word when Barney,
In addition to his toil, must pay
For all this film.— And since this blarney
Dwells at length on all save *dwell*, he'll bray
It in a phrase: *Dwell presses ink upon*
The dampened sheet until both bond as one.



VI. Releasing the Imprinted Sheet from the *Forme*.

VI

To practiced eyes this whole procedure's fudged—
And so indeed be all five others, too!—
For Barney and Gerontion both were nudged
By chance into this mummery of rue—
He as the Bookman turned photographer,
I as the Handpressman after the fact.—
This lifted sheet should be far lissomer,
With fresh ink clinging to it all intact—
Not soiled and rumpled like a jack-tar's chart.—
Then why continue in this travesty
Of documents pertaining to an art
As though it were a manual, pardie?—
Right on! ye carping critics, cuckold-wise,
Till critic crow with glee as carper dies!