

Unheroic couplets for the poets of New Albion by Wilder Bentley. Berkeley, Calif. 1934.

UNHEROIC · COUPLETS · FOR · THE POETS · OF · NEW · ALBION by · Wilder · Bentley

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1. To A Writer Of Heroic Couplets

Most faces I encounter are of clay: Not wreath'd in smiles like flowers in May, Nor sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought Like those which Buonarroti wrought; And with them ticking past like zeros Wherewith shall I envisage heroes? The casual breathing of the Western Wind Conveys more truly what is in my mind.

2. To A Poet Of The Proletariat

Flat-breasted virgins, cold and dour, Invade the restive chambers of the poor; While little yard-stick men weave to and fro Their webs of logic out of human woe: A solemn ritual it seems to me, As, silently beneath the Green Bay Tree, I watch and ponder long on what to do To make such likely logic less untrue.

3. To Another Statistician

I know my way about this thumb-worn shop: How much it costs to feed the public slop; How long it takes to multiply the scorn, And add the principal for those unborn; And how much rent our vain illusions pay Before remaindering the whole away. The profits of this enterprise are nil, And yet, you know, it takes a lot of skill.

4. To A Poet Of The Pioneers

The vast cloaca of the Golden Gate Consigns unto the sea your "precious freight." There's cordage foul and pay-dirt by the pound In rotten hulls of clippers run aground By frenzied sailors on a frenzied shore, Before they'd staked a claim—Oh, what a bore! And what a stench! And all for worthless gold!— They did each other in; or so I'm told.

5. To A Pantheistic Rhapsodist

The wind sucks countless fragments off the dunes And heaves them far across the dark lagoons: I lack the wind's pedantic, patient lust To weigh each grain of sand as though it must, And feel the sad futility of moving things Along this fingered coast, though they have wings. Ici l'inspiration déploie ses ailes?— Perhaps. Yet so do geese and gulls as well.

6. To One Of The Humanists

When chaos and old night conceal the bones Of musty corpses on their shattered thrones; And silent fins course through a livid dawn Where once some glint of truth had faintly shone (No paleographers to name the date, Or date the name, or nourish learned hate), 'Twill be the same. For fish'll still be fish, And books be books—your wish is e'er a wish.

7. To A Disciple Of Nietzsche

I would abide awhile upon those ancient hills That purge the wearied soul of human ills: To dwell there in the stratosphere of light, Where star-beams filter through the blackest night, And feel my spirit glisten in their rays Like shotten silver on resplendent bays; Or watch my body's weathered timbers lie Well cured and bleached beneath a desert sky.

8. To A Mystical Mountebank

Whenever Death delves deep into a pool, He leaves the willows rustling, as a rule; Yet when He rises from its rippling brim, I see the image of Lord Elohim Emerging from sequestered lotus blooms, That draw their fragrance from complacent wombs. Lo, once I gazed upon His putrid flesh, Where it was tangled in a mossy mesh,

9.

And called it good, and so did Gabriel, And so did Death, and so did Death as well: "Come meet thy Master face to face," he said— Not Gabriel, but He from out his mossy bed. Some quaking aspens

shed a leaf or two, And marred this mirror of quiescent blue, And shot His image thro' and thro' with rings, That made me think on more transcendent things:

10.

These welling circles of infinitude Are bounded, it is true: an interlude Caught from the solvents of dark time (Must rhythms pulse the weaker without rhyme?); What spray of life, what fragile, slender vein But felt a fullest flowing ere the ebb and wane; What deadly nightshade on a drooping stem; What passion flower; what flower of Bethlehem.

OTHER TITLES PRINTED BY THE AUTHOR

Pollio: The Fourth Eclogue of Virgil. Translated by John Dryden. 8vo., 8 pp. 48 copies. Pittsburgh: Christmas, 1930. Out of print

The Frankeleyns Tale of Chauceer. 12mo., 48 pp. Limited to 234 copies, hand printed. Pittsburgh: 1931. Paper, \$1. Only 9 left

The First Seven Cantos of Hellesphere: A Vision of the World, by the author. 4to., 50 pp. 42 copies. Pittsburgh: 1933. Out of print

Berkeley: The Acorn Broadside Series: California

A Miscellany of Verse & Prose, Printed on a Hand Press

I. Excursion on the Bay, by the author. 17 x 23 inches. Folded in brown covers. 115 copies. February 24th, 1934. 30 cents

II. Unheroic Couplets for the Poets of New Albion, by the author. 12 x 19 inches. 121 copies. April 8th 1934. 30 cents

III. The True Ballad of the Galloping Hearse, by William Henry Davenport. Illustrated. (To be published in May 1934.)

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