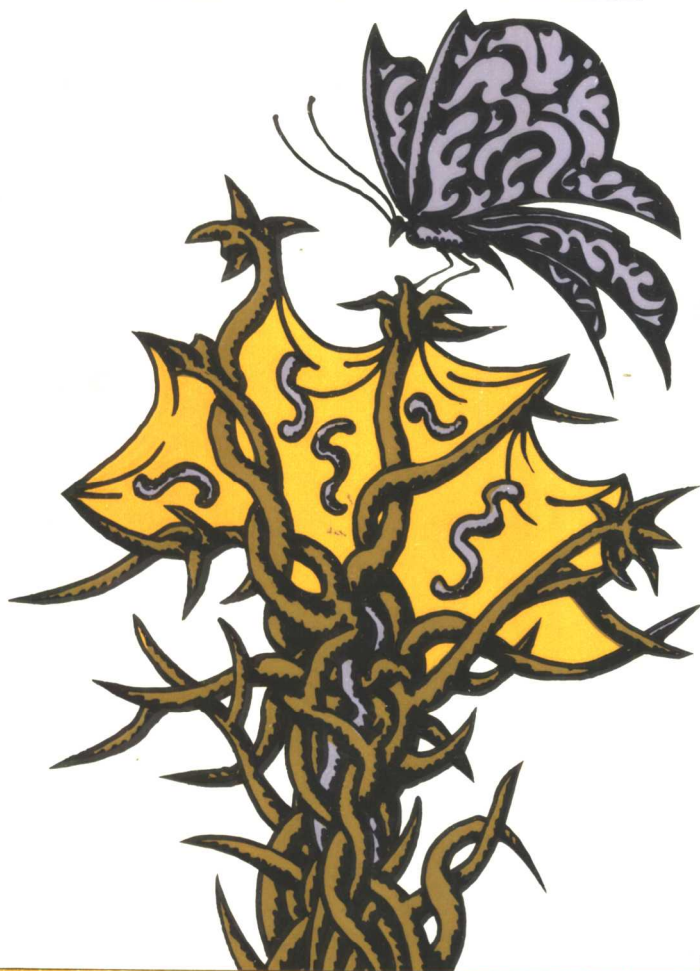


THE  
POEMS  
— OF —  
RICHARD WILBUR



A HARVEST/HBJ BOOK

# The Poems of Richard Wilbur

A Harvest/HBJ Book  
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# BY RICHARD WILBUR

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The Beautiful Changes and Other Poems

Ceremony and Other Poems

A Bestiary (editor, with Alexander Calder)

Molière's *The Misanthrope* (translator)

Things of This World

Poems 1943-1958

Candide (with Lillian Hellman)

Poe: Complete Poems (editor)

Advice to a Prophet and Other Poems

Molière's *Tartuffe* (translator)

The Poems of Richard Wilbur

Loudmouse (for children)

Shakespeare: Poems (co-editor, with Alfred Harbage)

Walking to Sleep: New Poems and Translations

Molière's *The School for Wives* (translator)

Opposites (for children and others)

The Mind-Reader: New Poems

Responses: Prose Pieces: 1953-1976

Molière's *The Learned Ladies* (translator)

Seven Poems

The Whale & Other Uncollected Translations

Molière: Four Comedies (translator)

Racine's *Andromache* (translator)

Racine's *Phaedra* (translator)

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Advice to a Prophet  
and Other Poems  
1961



**FOR LILLIAN HELLMAN**



## TWO VOICES IN A MEADOW

### *A Milkweed*

Anonymous as cherubs  
Over the crib of God,  
White seeds are floating  
Out of my burst pod.  
What power had I  
Before I learned to yield?  
Shatter me, great wind:  
I shall possess the field.

### *A Stone*

As casual as cow-dung  
Under the crib of God,  
I lie where chance would have me,  
Up to the ears in sod.  
Why should I move? To move  
Befits a light desire.  
The sill of Heaven would founder,  
Did such as I aspire.

## ADVICE TO A PROPHET

When you come, as you soon must, to the streets of our city,  
Mad-eyed from stating the obvious,  
Not proclaiming our fall but begging us  
In God's name to have self-pity,

Spare us all word of the weapons, their force and range,  
The long numbers that rocket the mind;  
Our slow, unreckoning hearts will be left behind,  
Unable to fear what is too strange.

Nor shall you scare us with talk of the death of the race.  
How should we dream of this place without us?—  
The sun mere fire, the leaves untroubled about us,  
A stone look on the stone's face?

Speak of the world's own change. Though we cannot conceive  
Of an undreamt thing, we know to our cost  
How the dreamt cloud crumbles, the vines are blackened  
by frost,  
How the view alters. We could believe,

If you told us so, that the white-tailed deer will slip  
Into perfect shade, grown perfectly shy,  
The lark avoid the reaches of our eye,  
The jack-pine lose its knuckled grip

On the cold ledge, and every torrent burn  
As Xanthus once, its gliding trout  
Stunned in a twinkling. What should we be without  
The dolphin's arc, the dove's return,



These things in which we have seen ourselves and spoken?  
Ask us, prophet, how we shall call  
Our natures forth when that live tongue is all  
Dispelled, that glass obscured or broken

In which we have said the rose of our love and the clean  
Horse of our courage, in which beheld  
The singing locust of the soul unshelled,  
And all we mean or wish to mean.

Ask us, ask us whether with the worldless rose  
Our hearts shall fail us; come demanding  
Whether there shall be lofty or long standing  
When the bronze annals of the oak-tree close.