

Richard Wilbur Is Appointed New Poet Laureate

Richard Wilbur, a versatile man of letters whose poetry has won virtually every honor, has been named the second Poet Laureate of the United States. He will succeed Robert Penn Warren. The appointment, effective in September, was made by Librarian of Congress Daniel J. Boorstin, who said of Mr. Wilbur: "We are fortunate that there is a Richard Wilbur to serve as successor to Robert Penn Warren as Poet Laureate Consultant in Poetry in the Library of Congress. He is a poet for us all, whose elegant words brim with wit and paradox. He is also a poet's poet, at home in the long tradition and the traveled ways of the great poets of our language. And he is a cosmopolitan citizen of the world of letters, whose essays and translations help us to the poets of other languages. His poems are among the best our country has to offer."



The position which Richard Wilbur will occupy was created 50 years ago as the Consultantship in Poetry in the Library of Congress.

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(In late March the Library celebrated that anniversary with a reunion of its former Consultants in Poetry, and three nights of public readings.) The position, established by a private endowment, was changed by a provision of Public Law 99-194, enacted in December 1985, which recognized that the Library position was equivalent to that of poet laureate of the United States. The provision, sponsored by Senator Spark M. Matsunaga (D-Hawaii), redesignated the Library's position as "Poet Laureate Consultant in Poetry."

Born in 1921 and a native of New York City, Richard Wilbur grew up in New Jersey and was educated at Amherst College (A.B. 1942) and Harvard University (A.M. 1947). In between were three years of active duty in World War II, in which he served with the 36th Infantry at Cassino and Anzio in Italy, in the southern invasion of France, and along the Siegfried Line in Germany.

His first book of poetry, *The Beautiful Changes*, was published in 1947. For the next four decades he combined a varied literary output with university teaching at Harvard University, Wellesley College, Wesleyan University, and Smith College, from which he retired last year. Mr. Wilbur is married and is the father of four children.

His third book of poetry, *Things of This World* (1956), won both the Pulitzer Prize and National Book Award. In 1971 he received the Bollingen Prize for Poetry. He has held Guggenheim and Ford Foundation fellowships and the Prix de Rome of the American Academy of Arts and Letters, of which he was president 1974-76. He is also a member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, the National Institute of Arts and Letters, and the Academy of American Poets, of which he is a chancellor.



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Bruce Tapper, Editor

Richard Wilbur has been almost equally well known as a critic and translator. In 1952-53 he translated Molière's *Le Misanthrope*, which was published in 1955 and produced at the Poets' Theatre in Cambridge, Mass., and off-Broadway. His translation of Molière's *Tartuffe* (1963), which received the Bollingen Translation Prize, was produced at Lincoln Center in 1965. Mr. Wilbur was also the lyricist for *Candide*, Leonard Bernstein's musical version of Voltaire's classic, for which Lillian Hellman wrote the book. Since the 1950s his published volumes of poetry have contained both original verse and translations.

Mr. Wilbur first read his poems at the Library of Congress in 1957. Two years later he lectured on "The House of Poe," an influential essay on an American writer with whom Mr. Wilbur has frequently concerned himself. (His edition of Poe's poems also appeared in 1959.) Richard Wilbur took a leading role in the National Poetry Festival at the Library in 1962. His most recent appearance at the Library was in 1983, in a program celebrating the 50th anniversary of the Academy of American Poets.

The second person to hold the laureateship, Richard Wilbur will be the 29th Consultant in Poetry, a position established by a fund donated by Archer M. Huntington in 1936. A list of former Consultants in Poetry follows:

Joseph Auslander	1937-41
Allen Tate	1943-44
Robert Penn Warren	1944-45
Louise Bogan	1945-46
Karl Shapiro	1946-47
Robert Lowell	1947-48
Leonie Adams	1948-49
Elizabeth Bishop	1949-50
Conrad Aiken	1950-52
William Carlos Williams	(appointed in 1952 but did not serve)
Randall Jarrell	1956-58
Robert Frost	1958-59
Richard Eberhart	1959-61
Louis Untermeyer	1961-63
Howard Nemerov	1963-64
Reed Whittemore	1964-65
Stephen Spender	1965-66
James Dickey	1966-68
William Jay Smith	1968-70
William Stafford	1970-71
Josephine Jacobsen	1971-73
Daniel Hoffman	1973-74
Stanley Kunitz	1974-76
Robert Hayden	1976-78
William Meredith	1978-80
Maxine Kumin	1981-82
Anthony Hecht	1982-84
Robert Fitzgerald	1984-85 (appointed but did not serve because of illness)
Reed Whittemore	1984-85
(interim consultant)	
Gwendolyn Brooks	1985-86
Robert Penn Warren	1986-87