

Richard Wilbur

(1921- )

Seed Leaves (1988)

*Homage to R. F.*

Here something stubborn comes,  
Dislodging the earth crumbs  
And making crusty rubble.  
It comes up bending double,  
And looks like a green staple.  
It could be seedling maple,  
Or artichoke, or bean.  
That remains to be seen.

Forced to make choice of ends,  
The stalk in time unbends,  
Shakes off the seed-case, heaves  
Aloft, and spreads two leaves  
Which still display no sure  
And special signature.  
Toothless and far, they keep  
The oval form of sleep.

This plant would like to grow  
And yet be embryo;  
Increase, and yet escape  
The doom of taking shape;  
Be vaguely vast, and climb  
To the tip end of time  
With all of space to fill,  
Like boundless Igdrasil  
That has the stars for fruit.

But something at the root  
More urgent than that urge  
Bids two true leaves emerge,  
And now the plant, resigned  
To being self-defined  
Before it can commerce  
With the great universe,  
Takes aim at all the sky  
And starts to ramify.