

# The Writer

by Richard Wilbur

In her room at the prow of the house  
Where light breaks, and the windows are tossed with linden,  
My daughter is writing a story.

I pause in the stairwell, hearing  
From her shut door a commotion of typewriter-keys  
Like a chain hauled over a gunwale.

Young as she is, the stuff  
Of her life is a great cargo, and some of it heavy:  
I wish her a lucky passage.

But now it is she who pauses,  
As if to reject my thought and its easy figure.  
A stillness greatens, in which

The whole house seems to be thinking,  
And then she is at it again with a bunched clamor  
Of strokes, and again is silent.

I remember the dazed starling  
Which was trapped in that very room, two years ago;  
How we stole in, lifted a sash

And retreated, not to affright it;  
And how for a helpless hour, through the crack of the door,  
We watched the sleek, wild, dark

And iridescent creature  
Batter against the brilliance, drop like a glove  
To the hard floor, or the desk-top,

And wait then, humped and bloody,  
For the wits to try it again; and how our spirits  
Rose when, suddenly sure,

It lifted off from a chair-back,  
Beating a smooth course for the right window  
And clearing the sill of the world.

It is always a matter, my darling,  
Of life or death, as I had forgotten. I wish  
What I wished you before, but harder.