

## **Lonely, White Fields**

*Mary Oliver*

Every night  
the owl  
with his wild monkey-face  
calls through the black branches,  
and the mice freeze  
and he rabbits shiver  
in the snowy fields-  
and then there is the long, deep trough of silence  
when he stops singing, and steps  
into the air.  
I don't know  
what death's ultimate  
purpose is, but I think  
this: whoever dreams of holding his  
life in his fist  
year after year into the hundreds of years  
has never considered the owl  
how he comes, exhausted,  
through the snow,  
through the icy trees...  
turning this way and that way  
through the mesh of every obstacle-  
undeterred by anything  
filling himself time and time again  
with a red and digestible joy  
sickled up from the lonely, white fields-  
and how at daybreak,  
as though everything had been done  
that must be done, the fields  
swell with a rosy light,  
the owl fades  
back into the branches,  
the snow goes on falling  
flake after perfect flake.