

# White owl flies into and out of the field

by [Mary Oliver](#)

March 8, 2004

Coming down  
out of the freezing sky  
with its depths of light,  
like an angel,  
or a buddha with wings,  
it was beautiful  
and accurate,  
striking the snow and whatever was there  
with a force that left the imprint  
of the tips of its wings—  
five feet apart—and the grabbing  
thrust of its feet,  
and the indentation of what had been running  
through the white valleys  
of the snow—

and then it rose, gracefully,  
and flew back to the frozen marshes,  
to lurk there,  
like a little lighthouse,  
in the blue shadows—  
so I thought:  
maybe death  
isn't darkness, after all,  
but so much light  
wrapping itself around us—

as soft as feathers—  
that we are instantly weary

of looking, and looking, and shut our eyes,  
not without amazement,  
and let ourselves be carried,  
as through the translucence of mica,  
to the river  
that is without the least dapple or shadow—  
that is nothing but light—scalding, aortal light—  
in which we are washed and washed  
out of our bones.