**Owl**

is my favourite. Who flies
like a nothing through the night,
who-whoing. Is a feather
duster in leafy corners ring-a-rosy-ing
boles of mice. Twice

you hear him call. Who
is he looking for? You hear
him hoovering over the floor
of the wood. O would you be gold
rings in the driving skull

if you could? Hooded and
vulnerable by the winter suns
owl looks. Is the grain of bark
in the dark. Round beaks are at
work in the pellety nest,

working. Owl is an eye
in the barn. For a hole
in the trunk owl’s blood
is to blame. Black talons in the
petrified fur! Cold walnut hands

on the case of the brain! In the reign
of the chicken owl comes like
a god. Is a goad in
the rain to the pink eyes,
dripping. For a meal in the day

flew, killed, on the moor. Six
mouths are the seed of his
arc in the season. Torn meat
from the sky. Owl lives
by the claws of his brain. On the branch

in the sever of the hand’s
twigs owl is a backward look.
Flown wind in the skin. Fine
Rain in the bones. Owl breaks
Like the day. Am an owl, am an owl.

 —George MacBeth

 **A Barred Owl**

The warping night air having brought the boom

Of an owl’s voice into her darkened room,

We tell the wakened child that all she heard

Was an odd question from a forest bird,

Asking of us, if rightly listened to,

“Who cooks for you?” and then “Who cooks for you?”

Words, which can make our terrors bravely clear,

Can also thus domesticate a fear,

And send a small child back to sleep at night

Not listening for the sound of stealthy flight

Or dreaming of some small thing in a claw

Borne up to some dark branch and eaten raw.

 —Richard Wilbur

 **Sea Owl**

Unlike the hawk he has no dream of height,
his shadow is what he cannot remember.
In the wide and unlit room of the night
he waits. It is always December,

with the floor of the pines full of silver.
His toys move but his claws go tight
as soundlessly he descends the stair.
Nothing knows his cradle, where the white

drone of the day hides him. The flesh-bright
ribbons tear in his grip. He dismembers
the shore’s secrets. The iron spike
of the sun is all he remembers.

 —Dave Smith

 **The Owl**

I saw my world again through your eyes
As I would see it again through your children’s eyes.
Through your eyes it was foreign.
Plain hedge hawthorns were peculiar aliens,
A mystery of peculiar lore and doings.
Anything wild, on legs, in your eyes
Emerged at a point of exclamation
As if it had appeared to dinner guests
In the middle of the table. Common mallards
Were artefacts of some unearthliness,
Their wooings were a hypnagogic film
Unreeled by the river. Impossible
To comprehend the comfort of their feet
In the freezing water. You were a camera
Recording reflections you could not fathom.
I made my world perform its utmost for you.
You took it all in with an incredulous joy
Like a mother handed her new baby
By the midwife. Your frenzy made me giddy.
It woke up my dumb, ecstatic boyhood
Of fifteen years before. My masterpiece
Came that black night on the Grantchester road.
I sucked the throaty thin woe of a rabbit
Out of my wetted knuckle, by a copse
Where a tawny owl was enquiring.
Suddenly it swooped up, splaying its pinions
Into my face, taking me for a post.

 —Ted Hughes

**Owl**

last night at the joint of dawn,
an owl's call opened the darkness

miles away, more than a world beyond this room

and immediately, I was in the woods again,
poised, seeing my eyes seen,
hearing my listening heard

under a huge tree improvised by fear

dead brush falling then a star
straight through to God
founded and fixed the wood

then out, until it touched the town’s lights,
an owl’s elsewhere swelled and questioned

twice, like you might lean and strike
two matches in the wind

 —Alice Oswald