

# A Barred Owl

By Richard Wilbur

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.

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Source: *Mayflies: New Poems and Translations* (Harcourt Inc., 2000)