

6.

It is the nature of stone
to be satisfied.
It is the nature of water
to want to be somewhere else.

Everywhere we look:
the sweet guttural swill of the water
tumbling.
Everywhere we look:
the stone, basking in the sun,

or offering itself
to the golden lichen.

It is our nature not only to see
that the world is beautiful

but to stand in the dark, under the stars,
or at noon, in the rainfall of light,

frenzied,
wringing our hands,

half-mad, saying over and over:

what does it mean, that the world is beautiful –
what does it mean?

The child asks this,
and the determined laboring adult asks this –

both the carpenter and the scholar ask this,
and the fisherman and the teacher;

both the rich and the poor ask this
(maybe the poor more than the rich)

and the old and the very old, not yet having figured it out, ask this
desperately

standing beside the golden-coated field rock,
or the tumbling water,
or under the stars –

what does it mean?
what does it mean?

from *The Leaf and the Cloud: Gravel* by Mary Oliver