**The Journey** by Mary Oliver

One day you finally knew

what you had to do, and began,

though the voices around you

kept shouting

their bad advice –

though the whole house

began to tremble

and you felt the old tug

at your ankles.

‘Mend my life!’

each voice cried.

But you didn’t stop.

You knew what you had to do,

though the wind pried

with its stiff fingers

at the very foundations

though their melancholy

was terrible.

It was already late

enough, and a wild night,

and the road full of fallen

branches and stones.

But little by little,

as you left their voices behind,

the stars began to burn

through the sheets of clouds,

and there was a new voice

which you slowly

recognised as your own,

that kept you company

as you strode deeper and deeper

into the world

determined to do

the only thing you could do –

determined to save

the only life you could save.

From *New and Selected Poems Vol I* (Beacon Press 2011).