



Marge Piercy – Three Poems

Though the window is shut

A hammer taps taps through the fall air
the sun glittering on leaves drying
but not yet dead, the kale still upright
little tits along stems of brussel sprouts.

Who is building what? It must be that
house I can't see through the oaks.
it makes me guilty I am not outside
tending to the living, dumping the dead

into the compost pile to feed what
will replace them. I imagine a shed
or steps. Maybe a fence. In my head
a house rises where there's still woods.

Building is potential and destruction.
How many mice and finches will be
displaced? Foxes will abandon the site.
Will real or summer people move in?

There it goes again, a subtle drum
telling me I should be doing something--
but I am. A poem exists in imaginary
space and displaces no one at all.

The wall of cold descends

Near the end of our annual solstice party
as guests were rummaging through the pile
for their coats and hugging many goodbyes
the very first snow of the year began
to eddy down in big flat flakes.

It was cold enough to stick with the grass
poking through and then buried.
Now the ground gives it back
under the low ruddy sun that sits
on the boughs of the pine like a fox

if red foxes would climb. The cats
crowd the windows for its touch.
The Wolf Moon seemed bigger than
the sun, almost brighter as last night
it turned the snow ghostly.

Now it too wanes. The nub end
of the year when all northern
cultures celebrate fire and light.
Tonight we'll take the first two candles
to kindle one from the other.

When we go out after dark, our
eyes seek lights that bore holes
in the thick black like the pelt
of a huge hairy monster, a grizzly
who devours the warm blooded.

We are kin with the birds who huddle
in evergreens, who crowd feeders,
kin with the foxes and their prey, kin
with all who shiver this night, home-
less or housed, clutching or alone

under the vast high dome of night.

All gone

It never heals. You go over the moment
the jaws of that night snapping shut.
When you forget you feel guilty
and when you remember, you want to forget.

I could have been there, I could have prevented,
I could have returned the phone call, come back
two weeks early, I could have guessed at the blood
thickening her voice, I could have stopped him,

found the remedy, the antidote, the healing
medicine, the right words that would patch the rip
in the wall of his life. Forgetting makes you guilty
and when you remember, you want to forget.

We stumble along making do, getting by, improvising.
Things dangle. Stuff piles up in corners with dustballs.
The *to do* list is much too long to do, so friends get put off.
Those we love will forgive us. Tomorrow, next week, in a month

we will make time to patch the wound, to fulfill
the promise forgotten in the mind's back closet.
But time is all gone. When you forget, you feel guilty
and when you remember, you try to forget.

Knopf brought out **Marge Piercy's** 18th poetry book *The Hunger Moon: New & selected poems 1980-2010* in paperback in November. Knopf has *The Crooked Inheritance*, *The Moon Is Always Female*, *What Are Big Girls Made Of*, *Colors Passing Through Us*, *Circles On The Water* and others in paperback. Piercy has published 17 novels, most recently *Sex Wars*, PM Press just republished *Dance The Eagle To Sleep* and *Vida* with new introductions. Her memoir is *Sleeping With Cats*, Harper Perennial. Her work has been translated into 19 languages and given readings, workshops or lectures at well over 450 venues here and abroad. www.margepiercy.com.