

## **Marge Piercy – Five Poems**

### **The goddess who can evaporate**

Water, water –substance of which  
I am mostly made. Always people  
complain there is too much of you  
or too little. We need you but take

you for granted like air or dirt. You  
flow downhill, even as the Romans  
understood, for miles with the slightest  
inclination rushing over aqueducts.

I immerse in you each morning, some  
times later after getting dirty, muddy,  
sweaty, smelly. You make me clean,  
sufficient to draw lips to my skin.

You freeze hard enough to walk on  
hard enough to crush a house.  
You turn into bullets of hail. You  
entice us to glide bladed over you.

You look blue, you look green, grey,  
brown, even black—but unless you  
bear debris, a glassful is transparent  
as glass. The mother of us all, we

are not precious to you but you  
should be to us. Without you in us  
we die. With you all around us, we  
die. You are the goddess who gives

and takes with many hands reaching  
up, reaching down, held straight out:  
I don't know why people worship old  
men with beards instead of you.

## Seasons of the couch

In winter I often sprawl upon it  
reading, watching TV, having deep  
or silly conversations. Cats snooze  
on my belly. I eat one chocolate.

Maybe I use a heating pad for warmth.  
We pull couches to face each other  
when we entertain friends.  
Sick, I huddle there under a quilt.

In summer I toss things on it  
as I rush by. It's almost a table.  
Friends visit outside. Parties  
occur in the garden. Even the cats

desert it for the screened-in porch.  
But the bed: except when we travel  
laying ourselves down in rented  
beds of dubious comfort and germs,

every night there we are, wrapped  
in its friendly sheets, abandoning  
our brains like bodies given  
to the sea, floating face upwards.

Some friends are seasonal, gone  
in winter, some working three jobs  
for their nut in summer, some hosting  
guests every weekend. A few are constant

in every season, comfortable, aiding  
and abetting, giving rides and dinners,  
reliable as tides. We all have parttime  
comrades and comforts, like couches.

## **Right now, come on**

The buds on the crab apple are swelling  
and forsythia all along the highway  
flaunts its slightly dirty yellow  
or oilskin slicker almost neon.

The gobbler in the cul-de-sac  
turns this way, that, his tail burst  
into a wide fan for the hens who  
peck on, barely interested.

A doe is followed into rhododendrons  
by two yearlings and a fawn who stares.  
The doe has been here before. She knows  
there's no danger for them from us.

The cats split their time between dozing  
in the sun till their fur almost smokes  
and chattering at the squirrels robbing  
the feeders and chipmunks darting by.

The winter was far too long and violent  
disappearing the car into a snow bank  
battering the house with wolf winds  
that threatened to blow it all down.

Now everything is in a hurry to sprout,  
to grow, to mate. We need a nest now  
the birds shout. Worms eat their way  
through garden soil, fertilizing.

All the pleasures of winter--reading,  
films, giving and going to parties--all  
dim to the little lights of shut off  
appliances and only the sun draws us.

My computer can sleep. Every tulip,  
each nodding daffodil is far more  
compelling than any poem or story.  
Goodbye. I'm going outside to plant.

## **T'was a dark and stormy night**

The wind is cold  
the night is long  
dark confounds us.  
Will the house still  
stand with the dawn?

Great wind is attacking  
the pines and oaks.  
Chickadees and finches  
hide in the hemlock  
always hungry now.

Who can sleep  
in the wind's roar?  
Mice scuttle in  
through foundation's  
cracks to hide.

Branches split, some  
large thing falls  
with a massive thud  
we feel in our bones.  
What survives out there?

This night is long  
as an epic in a tongue  
all foreign to us. We  
only know we're scared  
begging for daylight.

## **Multitasking it away**

Tasks pile up like an overloaded  
bookcase about to fall and crush  
us. We are busy, very busy,  
exceedingly so. While pleasure

like a plateful of raspberries  
forgotten in the refrigerator  
rots, molds, is quite, quite dead.  
On our final beds, at home

or in hospice or hospital, will  
we regret the bill not paid, book  
not returned, email not sent  
or kisses withheld, love unmade

the quiet times of conversation  
unfolding slowly and sweetly  
as a birch leaf, the hour we did not  
steal to knit ourselves together.

Love is often the last thing  
on the list. We seek it, then  
leave it folded in a drawer:  
the miracle we forget to celebrate.

Knopf published **Marge Piercy's** *The Hunger Moon: New & Selected Poems* and this spring, her 19<sup>th</sup>, *Made In Detroit*. Piercy has written 17 novels, most recently *Sex Wars*. PM Press just republished *Dance The Eagle to Sleep*, *Vida* and *Braided Lives* with new introductions, her first short story collection *The Cost of Lunch, Etc.* The expanded paperback is due in September; also essays and poems, *My Life, My Body*, in the Outspoken Author series. Her memoir is *Sleeping With Cats*, Harper Perennial. Her work has been translated into 19 languages; she's given readings, workshops or lectures at over 450 venues here and abroad. [www.margepiercy.com](http://www.margepiercy.com)