

Marge Piercy – Four Poems

How I bury

When a cat dies, I let the others
sniff the body so they know.
We bury them and plant a bush.

I did the same for my mother's
ashes and you've never seen
a more vigorous wisteria.

It's avid for life as she was
until the end when she knew
a stroke was looming and didn't

any longer care. Rhododendrons
pink and lavender and white.
A holly bush. Over Sugar Ray

and Puck, double red Knockout
roses now in sturdy bloom. Me?
I want a tree growing out of me,

oak, I think but any long lived
tough tree will do fine. I'll give
my body freely to its rise.

I can't replace it

The fierce nor'easter that broke lines
with ice and cast thousands into the cold
huddling in dark houses, also broke
the white fir planted forty-two years ago.

The wild wind snapped it like a stick
and its beautiful huge bushy top
fell down into a drift and froze there
like a great bear with a green pelt.

A summer nest fell with its branch.
Now there's a hole when I gaze
downhill to the dead end road
and I can't endure long enough to fill

it with another steeple of tree.
My hill is a mouth with a missing tooth.
I thought that fir would outlive me
an obelisk, a needled monument.

Legacy of a vacant lot

Only us kids used the local vacant lot
mostly the boys and me. We played
cowboys and Indians, we played
war and made a foxhole to duck into.

We all had toy guns, cap pistols
I had a wooden rifle my brother left.
I made up stories we acted out.
My brother was a marine, but often

I wanted to be a guerilla fighter
appealing to me even at seven.
With a couple of girls who didn't
mind my being a Jew, we were

mamas to our dolls. We married
our cats. We danced hollyhocks
in basins of water. But my heart
belonged to the rough games

in the vacant lot overgrown with
ragweed and bright blue chicory.
That patch of something unbuilt
untamed rooted in me and grew.

Contemplating an angry ankle

I had never thought much about
my ankles before a graduate
student asked me *What is your
writing process* as I stepped off

a curb looking at her and *Zowie*
my ankle turned sideways, swelled
like a watermelon, hurt in a scream
and refused to bear any weight.

A sprain doesn't sound serious
but it is. Lasts month after month.
Restricts movement. Did I say
it hurts? It's excellent at that.

What part of my body is next
to erupt? All in their aging turn.

Marge Piercy has written 17 novels including The New York Times Bestseller *Gone To Soldiers*; the National Bestsellers *Braided Lives* and *The Longings of Women*; the classics *Woman on the Edge of Time* and *He, She and It*; and most recently *Sex Wars*. Among her 19 volumes of poetry the most recently published include *The Hunger Moon: New & Selected Poems 1980-2010*, and *Made in Detroit*. Her critically acclaimed memoir is *Sleeping with Cats*. Born in center city Detroit, educated at the University of Michigan and Northwestern, the recipient of four honorary doctorates, she is active in antiwar, feminist and environmental causes.