The Late Year
By Marge Piercy

I like Rosh Hashonah late,
when the leaves are half burnt
umber and scarlet, when sunset
marks the horizon with slow fire
and the black silhouettes
of migrating birds perch
on the wires davening.

I like Rosh Hashonah late
when all living are counting
their days toward death
or sleep or the putting by
of what will sustain them—
when the cold whose tendrils
translucent as a jellyfish

and with a hidden sting
just brush our faces
at twilight. The threat
of frost, a premonition
a warning, a whisper
whose words we cannot
yet decipher but will.

I repent better in the waning
season when the blood
runs swiftly and all creatures
look keenly about them
for quickening danger.
Then I study the rockface
of my life, its granite pitted

and pocked and pickaxed
eroded, discolored by sun
and wind and rain—
my rock emerging
from the veil of greenery
to be mapped, to be examined, to be judged.