

REMEMBERING (AND) THE SELF IN A WOMAN WRITER'S MEMOIR *SLEEPING WITH CATS* BY MARGE PIERCY

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Original scientific paper
DOI: 10.31902/flj.33.2020.5
UDC: 821.111(73).09-31

Abstract: This article aims to explore the concept of the self in Marge Piercy's memoir *Sleeping with Cats*. This memoir occupies a very important place in the literary oeuvre of Marge Piercy as one of the representative writers in contemporary American literature. It embodies her own personal journey through the years, experience and memories of her life in search of a deeper understanding and remembering of the self.

Her memoir is written as a combination of prose and poems, which is an essential feature of the text and as such it will be a primary object of analysis in this paper. The blending of these two literary genres contributes to Piercy's original approach toward the self and to the way she relates to memory. It represents Piercy's original finding to reveal her deep commitment to poetry as a vital component of her being and of the way she situates the self in the world. The paper will focus also on another element which is critical in understanding the way Piercy remembers herself in time and the process of becoming the person she is today. This element is Piercy's very strong bond to her mother and grandmother, as they had an enormous influence on her as a woman, and a writer. The paper will employ the methods of text analysis and the biographical approach.

Keywords: the self, poetry, memoir, woman (writer), contemporary American literature, identity.

Introduction

The focus of this article is the concept of the self in Marge Piercy's memoir *Sleeping with Cats*, explored mainly through two generations of women in her family and through her relation to poetry. The memoir as a genre of life writing is grounded on the self and its relations to the others in various contexts. In memoirs one can see the self in a close relationship to others, while it "historically situates the subject in a social environment, as either observer or participant; the memoir directs attention more toward the lives and actions of others than to the narrator" (Smith & Watson 198). In the case of memoir written by women the context becomes more intricate as the self's

relationship to the world and to the others is characterized by specific challenges that aren't present in the case of memoirs authored by men. This clearly influences the nature of the memoir written by women, its approach to the reader as well as the reader's approach to the memoir; consequently, this fact is of particular importance to the study of the genre.

Marge Piercy is famous as a poet, novelist, feminist, and social activist. With her *Sleeping with Cats*, she became also a representative of the memoir. By providing a view of the self through the lenses of women in her family, through poetry and through her immense love for cats as inseparable companions in her life, Piercy's memoir contributes to further in-depth analysis of her worldview, and of the role of memoir written by women in contemporary (American) literature.

Poetry in the memoir, the poet memoirist

Sleeping with Cats is a discovery of the parallel journeys of the woman and the writer in search of a deeper understanding of the self and of the ways to express and preserve in her memory all the lived experiences of love, pain, struggles, and everything that formed her as a woman. Therefore, in Piercy's memoir remembering acquires a significant value: it doesn't address either a passive remembrance of days past, or an abstract or rigid objectivity in recalling events, people and places. Piercy's memoir is an active, open-minded meditation on numerous aspects of Piercy's life as a woman, a wife, a daughter, a niece, a writer, a social activist, a feminist and on the way all these aspects have constituted to her life and were eventually imprinted in her memory. Consequently, in this memoir we find "[t]he personal and the political recollected with honesty and passion" (Kirkus Review 2003).

Piercy's memoir consists of twenty-four chapters, each comprising memories from significant moments of her life. Starting from her life at the present in Cape Cod, Piercy moves back in time to her childhood describing family problems and relatives, her time as a teenager, then the university years and so on focusing on significant moments and relationships that she says helped her understand herself better. Such moments include narration about her abortion in a young age, her marriages, her love for literature, her social activism, the relationships to particular relatives and friends that had significant influence on her life etc. It is particularly important to point that each chapter is concluded thoughtfully with a poem that embodies the rich and sophisticated tones, images and other widely studied stylistic

characteristics of Piercy's poetry. The opening text of the book is also a poem *Attempt at Autobiography* that represents the best introduction to this text on life and on the way a woman writer remembers it.

*A tango among the potsherd
in bare feet, soon bloody.*

*Ah, bitch memory, you tangle
me in your barbed hair.*

*How can I tell enchantment
from fact, lies from promises?*

*You sing to me in my own voice
but on key with harmonics*

*that make my bones quiver.
The familiarity of your face makes*

*me trust where I should close
my eyes till I see sparks.*

*You persuade me of scenes I cannot
have witnessed, you sing ballads*

*of deeds only daydreamed. I am
your fool, your lover, your liar.*
(Piercy 2003, p. vii)

A dialogue with one's memory, focusing on the way memory shapes us and on the intricate relationship one develops with it over the years, points at the very need to remember as essential to confirm one's self. This poem points at the challenge that the lyrical self faces as she struggles in the labyrinth of memory in order to express her life and her own self. Eventually, Piercy's *Attempt to Autobiography* is a difficult task especially because of the nature of memory and the way it relates to what we call reality. In this poem, configured as a dialogue with the memory, Piercy refers to memory as a lying dishonest woman whose impact on her is tremendous. Said by Piercy, the combination of elements: dishonest, woman, and influence is extremely important. What we can't fully understand and control seems to be considered sometimes as deceiving, dishonest and is often associated to the

woman. Eventually, Piercy admits later in the same poem: “*I am your fool, your lover, your liar*” (Piercy vii). Memory embodies several contrasting features, such as the enchantment, the familiarity, the unexpected, the unpredictable, the attractive, the hostile etc., which are seen in the imagery of the poem through elements such as the hair, the tango, the singing, the eyes etc. Such images configure memory as the one that seems to describe the lyrical self and to control her even by inspiring the illusory idea of the lyrical self about owning her memory and her memories. In this respect, this whole book, this memoir represents a distinctive way of seeing memory and time, history, life and the soul, the feelings and thoughts of a woman in time. The self and memory clearly influence and shape one another. Therefore, Piercy is true when she maintains that she speaks of her life the way she wants to remember it, being at the same time the memory’s fool, lover and liar. There’s reason to believe that this complex relationship with memory and the way the self is configured in this relationship is expressed especially through the blending of the literary genres in her memoir. As Piercy joins together the most striking and challenging aspects of poetry and prose but also elements of essay and storytelling, in her memoir there can be noticed some of the characteristics of contemporary American literature itself, that have been often addressed by scholars such as the blending of literary genres, the role of gender in literature as a constantly new call to explore the complex condition of women in today’s world and the role of ethnicity, race and various cultural factors in the formation of a person and, more specifically, of a woman writer (See *Contemporary American Poetry* 700).

Piercy’s memoir and the remembering and visualizing of the self especially in the poems included in it have been an object of investigation in my previous works (Shatro 2017). As they are an organic part of the text, they become a poetic memoir about Piercy’s life, a poetic autobiography within the memoir that the narrative part of the text cannot replace. Piercy has maintained in her interviews that poetry comes naturally to her and there is reason to believe that the presence of the poems in the memoir adds to the personal, bold and thoughtful tone of the memoir. The unbiased voice and the rich poetic imagery of the poems (See Shatro 199-207) seem to be Piercy’s way to explore the self and her life through all the possible viewpoints and by all the means offered by literature. This is her way of understanding and expressing herself and the way she believes that memory and remembering take place. Her memory exists in/through words and somehow words are her inevitable destination because through words,

through what one writes we can change the consciousness of people; this is the only change we can make, Piercy said in one of her interviews (Casper 2014). In the poems of the memoir Piercy analyses her own life with the undeniable intuition, insight, sensitivity, and attention to details, which is particularly characteristic of a poet, as well as with the wide social and psychological perspective of a novelist. And at the end she remains a *woman* writer.

Piercy's being a writer and firstly a poet is critical to an engagement with her memoir, with the way she understands the self and the remembering of one's self in time. Together with her perspective as a woman, being a poet is one of the two main factors that greatly contribute to the originality of her memoir. Piercy has explained that she is a poet and this is the simple and obvious reason why poems are included in her memoir. To her, poetry "is the creation of this artifact made of human utterance. It arises somehow more directly out of human experience" (Friedmann and Robson). Furthermore, Piercy maintains that poetry, ties all the different ways of knowing and being together. [...] Certainly, my autobiographical impulse has primarily played itself out in poetry rather than in fiction. [...] Poetry is a necessity to me. Even when I have no access to paper and pen or silence, I make up poems. [...] I can even imagine, when I am at the bottom of a long uphill grade, doing something besides writing novels, although I doubt it. But I never imagine living without poetry. (Wood 1982)

It is in her deep connection to poetry that one can look in order to understand the essential role of the poems in her memoir. They significantly expand the reach of her journey(s) into the past, in search of a deeper understanding of her life and the self. Not just narrative but more particularly poems are her way of investigating her past, the people of her life, her cats, particular events and places. In order to offer insight and address the numerous types of relations between the self and the others both lyrics and prose seem to be necessary to Piercy. With the blending of both genres she makes visible the past and her innermost self by revealing the two main and inseparable ways of expression for her poetry and prose. This reminds us that:

The memoir makes the invisible world of memories visible and the past important. The memoir confirms history. It is witness to a passing past. It refuses to let it move on unnoticed and unremarked upon. This is true even in the most conventional contemporary memoirs and the most lyrical and imaginative. (Fass 116)

Such complexity of style based on the blending of poetry and narrative as Piercy's ways of exploring her past and herself in time lead

me to see *Sleeping with Cats* as a journey toward plural destinations; journey(s) which confirm that Marge Piercy has finally found her own much desired destination, her home in all the complexity of this term, as she writes from the perspective of a woman poet, a woman writer and through the different positions that she has had in her life. Piercy's journeys, which she actually calls wanderings, are addressed as follows in her memoir:

These are my wanderings in search of a place where I could write and be myself, and have what I consider necessary and what is not perhaps necessary but makes life good enough to endure the hard times. A place and time to write is a necessity, and love is a luxury, but I have spent a great many years searching for both. I am a stray cat who has finally found a good home. (Piercy 11)

The very title of her memoir is pretty symbolic. Sleeping and the attempt to run to the unconscious through sleep, which sometimes Piercy finds difficult, are mysterious to her. Therefore, cats and their peculiar relationship to sleep have constantly amazed her. The reference to cats enriches the title of the book with inspiring semantic and interpretative levels, while Piercy has also stated that "*Sleeping with Cats* has a spine of cats that have gone through my life. [...] I simply viewed the cats I have known as characters in my life, often as quirky and complex as the humans with whom I have spent time" (Templin 2004). In her memoir, she explains:

A cat's ability to drop off any time and almost anywhere never stops enchanting and amazing me. Sleep is mysterious to me. Sometimes I climb into bed exhausted and cannot imagine how I can ever move from this restless raw fatigue into unconsciousness. It appears to me to require some kind of divine intervention to sink from one state into the other. There are nights when I cannot cross over, doomed to look at the greenish light of the clock again and again, telling myself if I fall asleep now, I'll still get four hours sleep, three and a half, three. Other times of course, I doze readily and then it's morning. Some nights when I have trouble sleeping, Malkah comes into bed and purrs me to sleep. She seems to bring sleep with her, like a dark halo around her thick apricot and white fur. She presses her bulk into my side and sometimes gently kneads me. Sleep seems to emanate from her and slide down into it. (Piercy 245)

It is of particular interest to read this in a memoir as the writer intends to search in the emotional archive of events, to re-experience, express and preserve at the best of her knowledge and memory all that she has

lived and experienced in life. This is Piercy's way of reminding us that sleep is a unique way of coping with the world and with the self when we are unable to voluntarily remember things and we simply immerse ourselves in what lies somewhere in the deepest part of ourselves but which is maybe the core of our being. This clearly adds to the labyrinthine nature of memory and to the challenges of her *Attempt to Autobiography*.

Reading these poems in the memoir makes one meditate also about the complexity of our place in the world, among the people, events, animals, places, and nature that form our identity and our relationship with the world. Such relationships are shown in Piercy's memoir with sincerity and passion as she narrates and writes poems about the strong connection and affinity to her mother Bert and grandmother Hannah, to her cats, Fluffy, Oboe, Dinah, Max, Malkah, Efi, to gardening which she practices regularly at her home in Cape Cod, to nature and to events starting from her early childhood, to the time when she got pregnant and decided to abort risking her own life, reaching to her marriages and all aspects of her personal and sexual life. This wide dimension in which the concept of relationship is elaborated bear the mark of a woman, of a writer, of a poet.

I have been many people in my life. We all change as we take new lovers and partners, as we take on new tasks, new jobs, new interests. Yet there have been constants: my need to write, my drive to write what was meaningful to me and I hope to other people, my desire to love and be loved, my valuing of freedom as close to an absolute, and of course my companions, the cats whose love was there when others failed me or I failed them. (Piercy 4)

As the narrative of remembering extends to her recording of events in early childhood, in high school, at the university and later in life, at the same time it opens another route, a parallel one that crosses thoroughly the whole text, that is related to her essential affinity: (a) to cats and (b) to writing which started early in life before she could even understand what literature is. It is in this perspective too that the blending of poetry and prose is a central feature of the text as it embodies the blurring lines and the intertwined aspects of (her) life and of the way she remembers it—consequently of the memoir as well.

The woman, the writer; journey(s) to/of one's self

In one of her interviews, Marge Piercy maintained:

This memoir, *Sleeping with Cats*, focused on my emotional life rather than my political activities or literary journey. I was also more involved

with the central relationships in my life and less with the many friendships I usually did not even mention. (Templin 2004)

The writer clearly explains that what she writes about is after all, her perspective on her own personal life, not anyone else's. It is this clear and frank voice, focused on the self which unavoidably addresses also the other that represents one of the most striking aspects of Piercy's memoir as I've already addressed earlier in this article. It reminds us what Peter Gilmour has maintained, that "[m]emoir echoes larger worlds. Every memoir reflects not only the individual but also the social, not only the personal but also the communal, not only the local but also the universal" (See Carr 2). This leads us at another characteristics of Piercy's memoir: the merging of the personal and the collective. These two dimensions successfully co-exist in *Sleeping with Cats* and underline the fact that Piercy has never been the stereotypical lonely writer, on the contrary she has been highly engaged in crucial events of her time and has lived openly her own perspective on the world, her dreams, goals, her writing, her sexuality etc. It is also in this regard that with this book "Marge Piercy holds up a mirror to modern life" (Chicago Tribune 2003). Her memoir develops as an exploration of the indelible trace in Piercy's emotional life left by events, people and relationships. It is especially the relationship between three generations of women in her family: grandmother, mother, and daughter that is key to this exploration and to this/these long and challenging journey(s) that claim equality, openness, demarginalization of the woman and of everything that is related to her as a human being.

In Piercy's memoir, there are the voices of her mother and grandmother shared with the reader, following Piercy's memories about how these special women influenced her life immensely. In this sense, she offers an idea also on the conceiving of the self intersubjectively (See Cosslett et al, 2000). Her search and respect for the truth as well as her perspective on the self wouldn't be possible without reflecting on these women's personal experiences and worldview, through the prints that they left in their daughter and niece. In a way, it appears as if through the voice of Marge Piercy one can also hear the echoes of these two other women communicating to us their worlds, their experiences, something of their own selves.

Her mother and grandmother acquire a crucial role in this memoir because as Piercy openly maintains much of the way she understands herself as a woman and also her early connection to literature are due to the influence of these two women in her life. Part

of this influence is related to the way she understands remembering. She states that women and the need to remember and to be remembered are closely related between them. She further elaborates on this by maintaining:

Both those women [mother and grandmother -B.Sh] live in me and in my work, at the same time that I never cease to miss them in the flesh. [...] I am a woman with my mother inside, inside her my grandmother, her mother, reaching beyond memory, all of us making the same ritual gesture. It comforts me. I have lost so many people that I need ways to remember and cherish my dead. (Piercy 11)

Her adventures with literature, friendships, politics etc. are seen in the memoir through the prints that these women have left in Piercy. This is particularly obvious in her affinity to storytelling. Her primary connection to literature since early childhood is through storytelling and it was connected to her mother and grandmother. Piercy offers a dimension of her own when it comes to our relation to storytelling reminding us that "We are a story-telling species. We relate to narratives and to the people who tell them" (Melissa Lee 2012, p. 4). Piercy explains that she learned about viewpoint long before she wrote her first novel due to the fact that her mother and grandmother who were both storytellers would narrate the same story in very different versions by changing characters, by emphasizing different elements and even by changing the outcome of the story. Aunt Ruth would add her own versions of the stories as well. Her mother's stories were more dramatic and sensational, while her grandmother's were more moralistic or spiritual and her best stories came from folklore and the women of shtetl, "a world of brutal violence and powerful magic" (Piercy 2003, p. 34). Piercy even says that the story of the golem that she used in her book *He, She and It* she first heard from her grandmother (Piercy 34). Eventually, she maintains that she comes from a long line of storytelling women pointing at the essential fact that the woman and the writer are indeed inseparable and engaged in various continuing journeys in her life, journeys to discover and to understand the way life and literature share the same sense of the unpredictable, of precariousness, of uniqueness, and eventually the same fascination.

While analyzing Maxine Hong Kingston's memoir *The Woman Warrior: Memoirs of a Girlhood Among Ghosts*, Anh Hua, says that "Kingston notes that women are frequently the transmitters of memory – personal, familial, cultural, and collective – through their storytelling" (72). She further addresses the fact that "gender, memory and identity are dialogically related" (73), and connects memory with

storytelling. She says that Kingston's writing reveals that women often act as transmitters of generational, counter-cultural, or collective memories via storytelling [...] (72-73). Piercy states that thanks to the vivid descriptions of her mother, grandmother and Aunt Ruth she has very rich and splendid memories of events that have taken place long before she was born, for example in 1912 and in 1926. One can't have memories of events not witnessed but the accounts she heard might have been so vivid and with such influence in her that she might have configured everything in her mind and remain with the strong impression that it is almost as having experienced those events. Eventually, she uses the word memories to name them. As it points at the influence that strong emotional experiences had on her, this fact is in line with the other fact stated by Piercy herself that her memoir is based on her emotional experiences and on the significant relationships in her life. Especially the influence of these two women—mother and grandmother— on her as a woman and as a writer is immense.

With regard to her mother Bert, Piercy says that although depending on Percy's father for much in her life, there was a streak of feminism in her as she admired women who kept their surnames (Piercy 32). This became an essential teaching to Piercy; in whose feminist worldview her mother remains a reference. In the first chapter of her memoir, *A Family of Seven*, Piercy narrates about the early death of her mother, after which the author, still very young, began to can, which is an activity her mother practiced on regular basis. Regarding the loss of her mother and the meaning she had for Piercy, she says:

Whenever I look at the few pictures of my mother in her youth that I possess, my sense of how she was cheated of her potential, how she was stymied and stifled and starved of affection and pleasure and knowledge, cuts through me. I mourn her death but I also mourn her stunted and unfulfilled life. (152)

And she further explains her mother's legacy to her: "I still mourn her. In some ways, she was my muse. By teaching me close observation, developing my memory and playing word games with me, she made me a poet" (Piercy 10-11). In Piercy's memoir memory seems to function as a tool to challenge conventional gender ideology as her identity as a woman is central to the book and is highly influenced by the fate and the storytelling of other women. Piercy hasn't only lived her life the way she considered it best for her as a woman who seeks freedom in the widest sense of the word but she is also narrating it, she is remembering and breaking silence about the lives of the women

who influenced her significantly. Therefore, in Piercy's memoir there is personal familial memory and also some collective memory when she addresses the story of the golem or several rites of Jewish religion and culture and in all of the them the women of her family are of paramount importance.

Such linking to her Jewish origin is related especially to Piercy's grandmother Hannah with whom she had a very strong connection. In *Sleeping with Cats* she provides detailed accounts about her grandmother and says that her presence and influence is undeniable in Piercy's life even today. She remembers her grandmother every time that she lights the Shabbat candles and says the blessings. She says that she embodies her grandmother in all these occasions probably because this woman gave her the religious education and taught her storytelling by her rich example (Piercy 10-11).

Being a woman and a Jew has been particularly important to Piercy's identity and these two crucial components of her identity are strongly related to her mother and grandmother. She maintains that she was continuously beaten up at school for being a Jew and learned the meaning of the word anti-Semitic pretty early in life (Piercy 31). She further explains in her memoir that since her childhood she loved stories about animals because of two reasons. In those stories, females were as powerful as males and animals were not anti-Semitic. Her grandmother was proud of being a Jew and practiced her religion openly but her mother would always ask Marge not to tell anyone that she was a Jew. Marge promised her grandmother that she would always be a Jew just like her (Piercy 28, 54). Piercy has clearly admitted that memory has a very special significance to Jewish writers and consequently it is particularly significant to her.

Probably, as we are commanded at every Pesach during the reading of the Haggadah to experience the Exodus as if we were truly there and truly participating in it. Every Jewish holiday has a religious significance, a historical significance, and a relevance to the time of year in the natural calendar of the seasons and trees and growing things, as well as a personal significance. So, you are always looking backward, outward, inward and forward.

We are also now commanded to remember the Shoah and to remember those who died, babies, old women, old men, children, people in the prime of life – who were shot, who were gassed, who were starved to death, who were worked to death, who died in the uprisings, in the Partisan forest, in the camps, and to remember too those who survived. Memory in Greek mythology is the mother of the muses, and it is so for me. Both personal and societal memory move

me strongly, and that is one of the sources of my writing. (Templin 2004)

The loss of her grandmother due to stomach cancer, the loss of her girlfriend of an overdose of heroine— another female figure of great importance to her when she was a teenager— and the loss of her cat Fluffy, which was poisoned by her neighbors when Piercy's family sold their home to an Afro-American doctor, changed her life forever when she was fifteen years old. At that time, she also understood the meaning of race and the violence of racism. Her memoir narrates all these crucial events that marked Piercy's life and explores sensitive issues of contemporary American society and culture. The way she experienced these events—both intellectually and emotionally—is shown through a clear, and candid voice in the text. She re-visits her past and sees it through the lenses of her own unforgettable inner experiences. Therefore, she seems to remind us that we really are—at least somehow—the result of our memory.

I believe that the significant presence of the mother and her grandmother in the memoir is related to Piercy's attempt to configure the woman in front of the world and in the world. In the challenges of these two women of her family she sees part of the challenges of the woman in time. Her own challenges echo to some degree their imposed limitations but also their inner strength and desire to be heard. This is where the collective joins the personal in the memoir. As Piercy narrates episodes of violence, of anti-Semitism, of hardship perceived by women of her family in their everyday life, of the lack of understanding in personal relationships, of the sense of not belonging, and of hard decisions to make such as when against all expectations she chose not to pursue doctoral studies in order to focus on writing, or when she divorced from her previous husband etc. the personal in her memoir acquires very tough social and cultural accent. This combination is the point where the woman and the writer beautifully join and become inseparable. Eventually the social and the political causes that she devoted her life to are inevitably found to a degree or another in this memoir reminding us that memory itself is found exactly in the intertwining of the political and personal, and in the relationship of the self with the world. Piercy is deeply moved by both personal and societal memory. [...] Each chapter in Piercy's book *Sleeping with Cats* ends with a poem in which the woman, the poet, the daughter, the sister, the aunt, the friend, the lover, the wife, the nature lover, the explorer of life and relationships, the social and political activist, the visionary, all of them are united in an essentially

organic and symbiotic way. In all of these positions which Piercy filled in her life, she always remained a woman. (Shatro 204)

Although it is very personal, *Sleeping with Cats* does not address only a woman writer or only women writers that face much of what Piercy writes about her own life. This makes it inevitable the return at the beginning of the memoir, recalling the very challenging question that stands at the first lines of the first chapter of this book: "Do I have faith in memory? Who doesn't?" (Piercy 2003, p.1) There are far too many answers in these two questions that await to be verbalized and analyzed. They summarize what scholars constantly struggle to explain and what represents the challenge of memory and of writing about it.

Memory is a means of "passing on," of sharing a social past that may have been obscured, in order to activate its potential for reshaping a future of and for other subjects. Thus, acts of personal remembering are fundamentally social and collective. (Smith 20-21)

In one of her interviews, when she was asked why she turned to the memoir after decades as a poet and a novelist, Piercy answered: "Because I have turned sixty-five, it seemed a reasonable time for stock-taking, for looking back and seeing what I had done so far and what I could learn from studying my own life" (Templin 2004). In reading her memoir one rests with the feeling that her attempt to study her own life is a journey that has a beginning, many routes, challenging goals and that continues... it never comes to an end, reminding us that:

"The origin and the end of autobiography converge in the very act of writing, as Proust brilliantly demonstrates at the end of *Le temps retrouve*, for no autobiography can take place except within the boundaries of a writing where concepts of subject, self, and author collapse into the act of producing a text." (Sprinker 342)

Conclusions: On the road...

Especially in the present moment, when the concept of time, space, and distance have been so significantly re-conceptualized, memoir offers a mirror to one's self, one that has the ability to travel back in time and focus on the way the past remains imprinted in the present. It seems to clearly confirm that: "The 'memoir problem' is [...] widely and significantly inscribed in late-twentieth- and early-twenty first-century culture, in its literature, its social developments, and in how we seek to express and define the self in the contemporary world" (Fass 108). Marge Piercy in her *Sleeping with Cats* focuses on the self with a keen critical eye that allows for insightful observations

and analysis on issues of gender, identity, family and modern society. In this regard, Piercy's memoir is a multidimensional look at the self, which is achieved by the blurring of the borderlines between literary genres as well as the dynamics of style that enables the expression of her long journey(s) in search for the truth and for the ways to express it by reflecting aspects of the self that can be hardly presented in a different manner.

In a calm tone, in a fluent language close to an open everyday conversation with her reader, Piercy states that she wants to be remembered and that she needs to remember; this is probably the truest thing one could expect to read in a memoir. This is a strong inner need of the human being and is put in a challenging clarity that helps to engage with the reader and to guarantee the truthfulness in the search of the self through the years. By traveling back into the past Piercy speaks about what she remembers and how she has chosen to remember clearly pointing at the labyrinthine nature of the self and of memory.

Being a woman and a writer are joined in complex ways in this memoir, therefore this book is a wakeup call to notice and appreciate the ever-challenging journey(s) of a woman writer as well as of the storytelling women that nurture our memory and our lives. This journey is long, full of unexpected developments and its destination(s) acquire multiple meanings because the plural destinations and all the implications that they have in the life of the writer are clearly points of departure to future journeys in the exploration of the self and the world.

Among other things, this memoir is a departure point to explore the contemporary American literature written by women who focus on women and their relationship to today's world. This approach is particularly important considering some of the most important paradigms in contemporary American literature such as the translocal, the transpacific, the transcultural and the translational perspectives as well as the nature of the memoir as a genre. It seems inevitable that through her own memories of a woman writer in the twentieth and twenty-first century, Marge Piercy has much to say and strongly encourages us to remember because: "Our pasts constantly change" (Piercy 2).

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**KUJTESA DHE VETJA NE MEMUARIN E NJE SHKRIMTAREJE
SLEEPING WITH CATS NGA MARGE PIERCY**

Artikulli merr në studim konceptin e vetes në memuarin e Marge Piercy-t *Sleeping with Cats*. Ky memuar zë një vend tejet të rëndësishëm në opusin letrar të Marge Piercy-t, si një nga shkrimtaret përfaqësuese të letërsisë bashkëkohore amerikane. Ai përbën udhëtimin e saj vetjak nëpër vitet dhe përvojat domethënëse të jetës së saj, në kërkim të një të kuptuari më të thellë të vetes dhe të mënyrës si mund të kujtosh veten në kohë.

Memuari është shkruar si një ndërthurje e prozës dhe e poezisë, çka përbën një tipar themelor të tij dhe si rrjedhojë, do të përbëjë një objekt parësor studimi në këtë artikull. Kombinimi i dy zhanreve kontribuon gjerësisht në qasjen veçanërisht origjinale të Piercy-t ndaj vetes dhe marrëdhënies në të cilën vendoset ajo me kujtesën. Kjo ndërthurje paraqet mënyrën vetjake të Piercy-t për të treguar përkushtimin e saj të thellë ndaj poezisë si një përbërës thelbësor të qenies së saj dhe të mënyrës sesi ajo pozicionon veten në botë.

Artikulli do të trajtojë gjithashtu, edhe një element tjetër, i cili ka një rol kyç në të kuptuarit e mënyrës sesi e kujton Piercy veten në kohë dhe si kupton ajo procesin e të ndërtuarit të njeriut që është sot. Ky element është marrëdhënia e saj jashtëzakonisht e fortë me nënën dhe gjyshen, çka thekson rolin e pamatë të dy brezave femërorë të familjes së saj tek ajo si grua dhe si shkrimtare.

Metodat bazë që do të përdoren në artikull do të jenë analiza e tekstit dhe metoda biografike.

Fjalë çelës: vetja, poezia, memuari, gruaja (shkrimtare), letërsia bashkëkohore amerikane, identiteti.