

Braided Lives

MARGE PIERCY

Marge Piercy carries her portrait of the American experience back into the 1950s—that closed, repressive time in which forces for the upheavals of the Sixties ticked away underground. Spanning twenty years, and teeming with vivid characters, *Braided Lives* tells the powerful, unsentimental story of two young women coming of age.

Jill, fiercely independent, dark, Jewish, an intellectual with Detroit street smarts, is a poet, curious, avid of life—a “professional student” and sometime thief. Donna, Jill’s cousin and closest friend, is blond, pretty, and alluring. Together, they grow and change at college in Ann Arbor, where the life of poets and painters contrasts sharply with the working-class neighborhood where Jill’s family lives.

In Michigan, and afterward in New York City, the two women taste love and betrayal, friendship and pain, independence and fear as they reach a deepening understanding that to control their lives they must fight. And though their fates differ as widely as their personalities, both reflect the danger that sex posed at a time when abortions were illegal and when an affair could destroy a woman’s life, making the outcome of a chance encounter or a night of love a matter of life and death.

Braided Lives is an enduring portrait of the past that has led to our tenuous present. In her new introduction to this anniversary edition, Marge Piercy reflects on both the most autobiographical of her novels, and the ongoing battles to ensure the hard-fought victories of the Sixties and Seventies, particularly around sex and reproductive rights.

ABOUT MARGE PIERCY

Marge Piercy is the author of seventeen novels including the national bestsellers *Gone to Soldiers*, *Braided Lives*, and *Woman on the Edge of Time*; seventeen volumes of poetry, and a critically acclaimed memoir, *Sleeping with Cats*. Born in center-city Detroit, educated at the University of Michigan, the recipient of four honorary doctorates, she has been a key player in many of the major progressive political battles of our time, including the anti-Vietnam War and the women’s movements, and more recently an active participant in the resistance to the war in Iraq.

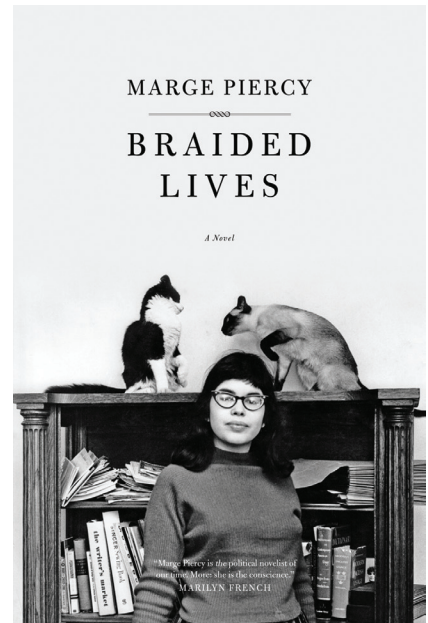
ACCOLADES

“This book demonstrates the maturation of Piercy’s native talent for storytelling...we would have to look to a French writer like Colette or to American writers of another generation, like May Sarton, to find anyone who writes as tenderly as Piercy about life’s redeeming pleasures—sex, of course, but also the joys of good food, good conversation, and the reassuring little rituals like feeding the cats, watering the plant, weeding the garden.”

—Judith Paterson, *Washington Post Book World*

“*Braided Lives* is a big, rich book. This writer just gets better and better. She is allowing more flashes of humor and more generosity...her sure novelist’s hold on making a good story, her poet’s eye for careful detail... *Braided Lives* is a novel that tries not to simplify but to clarify and by so doing, it adds a great deal to our understanding of how things came to be as they are, and what some of yesterday might have meant.”

—Marcie Hershman, *Boston Globe*



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