

Laocoön is the name of the figure ·
Marge Piercy

That sweet sinewy green nymph
eddying in curves through the grasses:
she must stop and stare at him.
Of all the savage secret creatures
he imagines stealthy in the quivering
night, she must be made to approach,
she must be tamed to love him.
The power of his wanting will turn
her from hostile dark wandering
other beyond the circle of his
campfire into his own, his flesh,
his other wanting half. To keep her
she must be filled with his baby,
weighted down.

Then suddenly
the horror of it: he awakens,
wrapped in the coils of the mother,
the great old serpent hag,
the hungry ravening witch who gives
birth and demands, and the lesser
mouths of the grinning children
gobbling his substance. He
must cut free.

An epic battle
in courts and beds and offices,
in barrooms and before the bar
and then free at last, he wanders.
There on the grassy hill, how the body
moves,
her, the real one,
green
as a Mayfly she hovers and he pounces.