

Keeping the Lights On

Marcie Pierson

*If it's darkness we're having,
let it be extravagant.*—Jane Kenyon

It's a week after Epiphany
the Kings have found their way,
and still, vestiges of Christmas
are strung along houses,
draped across shrubs.

In our window a solitary light
glows,
mirrored across the street,
like the Civil War custom—
a candle in the window
until the soldiers come home.

Every year since 9.11
I watch the lights go up sooner,
stay lit longer,
in the January darkness
that comes too early.

They called me crazy the first time
I dragged our cut tree
to the back deck,
ornaments boxed away,
the lights still attached.

Easter came. I decorated it
with plastic eggs,
switched on the lights at dusk,
kept the tree there until May,
the branches turned brown.

This year it was easier.
No one complained about
the crystal-lit Noble
that graced our deck 'til spring.
In the distance . . .

the lights of the
Narrows Bridge Project
guide the workers,
illuminate the night sky,
change color now and then—

while the community
rallies to keep them on,
whatever the cost.