

Autumn Morning, Hoary Bees

Three or four hoary bees
were silent this morning --
too old to swarm, too cold
to strike with summer's blazing
bite. Abandoning flight --

they crawled toward my warmer window,
huddled together – brown and yellow
as turning leaves. From that same pane,
I spied a black-billed magpie, stylishly hot
in black and white, uttering cries –

announcing what it is it forgot.
Hovering over my leaf-spattered deck,
it rent a windblown, honeycombed hive –
dislodged a small thing over and over, flew
away, back again -- sweeping its queenly

iridescent tail. Intent, eerily quiet, its bill
tapped, probed, raided this heavy, fallen
perforated world -- raised its stolen
paper castle from my whitewashed planks –
back to a splintering sky. That's no impulse.

Bird and bee – and me in late bathrobe,
just wakened, forced out from shadows --
we have an eye for comfort when autumn calls,
when autumn falls, circling our pale house,
gathering silence, one on the other, on the other.

--Jane Shaffer