

**AT THE GUEST HOUSE PARLOR**

(for Mrs. Claire Pike)

Now it's nearly off season.  
All summer, city people came for fresh air  
and our famous long ocean views.  
No matter, I've saved some this year.

Today, the light's clean  
through my lace curtains.  
Sunny and calm when few cars climb the hill.

Linus, my big gold tomcat, sits in my lap  
and sleeps without stirring.  
It's so cold these nights,  
he doesn't climb the roof much.

In the corner of my hutch,  
those are my grandchildren's portraits.  
They help fill time now that my husband's gone.

What he left is how I live  
along with the money from guests.  
Between the recession and hurricane,  
it's been a hard year.

That storm blew the trees down  
though this house has a solid foundation,  
a big porch, hardwood floors.

I don't get to the ocean much.  
I do more needlepoint and polish lamps  
but it won't do to get nostalgic.  
The ferry will bring a lot of people over.

I'll make sure there's plenty of soap and towels,  
plump the pillows and pull the shades up.  
This home is a good place for city people.

When they come at night,  
the stars will guide them  
and in the morning, the carillon will chime  
"Smiling Through" and "Abide with Me".

-- Carolyn Gregory