

THE AUTUMN POET

Near the burned down church
guided by a flashlight,
she read her poems in the dark.
A parade walked by
and cars on Centre Street honked.
She accepted it like our faces in the dark
as we gathered under the canopy
on artificial grass.

Her colors came from all the seasons
though her favorite was autumn ,
its russets and orange
bright lanterns for the trees,
skeleton trellises inside maple leaves.

Her keen eye saw the shapes
inside the common egg and nautilus.
Guiding us,
her spirit opened to the constellations.

The city's dark plots were not her domain
where arson and bruised children dwell
though she knew the world
of war and despair.
She kept her life simple
with careful hair and words.

Near the burned down church
guided by a flashlight,
she read her poems in September dark.
A slight Southern accent softened
her diction and stayed constant
above the horns and news.

We were her audience,
sharing her path through the woods
and chamber music,
sure-footed along the way
to crowning glory.

REMEMBERING WEIMAR

(after Kurt Weill's "The Seven Deadly Sins")

I thought they would forget me,
once they'd had their fill of crouching
over my honey
and I'd returned to sing of the shacks
and pretty girls in my harsh voice,
unvarnished now with diamonds
or promises.

Still alone in the spotlight,
my blonde hair shone like a crown
on a boy soprano
and I could still knock 'em dead
as storm clouds hovered over Germany,
my two children long forgotten.

I had to pay the bills with sex and singing.
The Seven Deadly Sins were handy
at times like these,
pushing away the bill collectors
while I smeared dark red lipstick
over all the broken memory.

At night, the glass was bottomless,
filling with vodka, old caviar,
a rose turned black from neglect.

Now I am blind like Tiresias.
These things happened long ago,

shimmering in a torn curtain
holding names of a love or two,
many regrets.

At night, I comb my hair down my back
and winter comes.

There's another woman now
singing with a harsh voice
on another floor of the world.

- Carolyn Gregory