

WINTER IN FLORENCE

after Li Qingzhao

Howard Faerstein

Birds in frenzy on suet
as flakes drift in steady fall.
Summer kale uncovered
by yesterday's rain reburied.
Too tired to dream, I feed the fire
but even with stove's heat
house holds a chill.
This was my parent's country of refuge.
For myself, origin without choice.

America's vast river of families
gather at winter's table,
blessings O lord.
Profiteers grow fatter
for the love of country.
For the love of god.
After father's death I struggled to walk.
As she was dying
I washed and dressed mother.
She stayed in the marriage she often said
for the good of her children. She said.
For the love of god.
Senators milling in the Forum
in the best interests of the flag
refuse to expose Nero.
For the good of country. They say.

Cord wood drying in basement.
Apologists and bootlickers
speechifying to the crowd.
Amaryllis opens giant
salmon-yellow flowers.
Pallid dusk fading into night.
Three deer by the back door,
snow now pelting hemlock.