

The Four Seasons · *Henry Carlile*

In the shape of a submarine  
frost lengthens on a window.  
Outside, winter sparrows perch  
in rhinoceros-colored trees.  
Mare's tails chase whitely  
past brick chimneys.  
I have seen those lights before,  
small rectangular eyes  
of far buildings, one church  
steeple darkening the blue sky.

It looks like a stopped gray heart  
if hearts sport such delicate scallops  
and trees wear hearts on their sleeves.  
Now the first wasp of spring emerges,  
its wings a transparency of fish scales,  
old isinglass or vein-fretted windows—  
wings of the first untranscendent angel  
sentenced to death by the god frost.  
How can some later spring reclaim this  
paper city or repair its walls damaged  
in the long drop from the one hundred  
and twentieth odd year of a tree?

The sky wears that color through which  
you expect a tornado's black drill.  
Only cicadas try the air, a scratching  
that cannon could not silence.  
Beyond the barn with three siloes  
and the wind pump stopped like a tin daisy,  
carp lip the surface of reflected sky,  
the promised violence.

I always imagined that place  
as an orchard on a mountaintop,  
its summer Delicious freckling  
to a sunset by Seurat.  
But the last time it was fall,  
the sere grass bent one way  
toward an open gate,  
as though a great wind had swept  
down stones of the garden walls.  
Two posts bent where the orchard  
had been, their purpose obscure.  
They stood, I think, where flowers  
had rivaled deepest  
in their colors and scents.