

First Snow · *Jonathan Holden*

All night, while we were
absorbed, our home was being
transported somewhere
else, toward here
where we woke as travellers
staring out a train window
at the abstract term
that might once have been a lawn.
We don't know where
we are going.
And I think we are almost as glad
as our children,
who don't care but are simply amazed
that what they had memorized—
the stance of a swing-set,
the faithful postures of trees—
could have been translated
so far yet put down again
here so gently, without
error, here
in exactly the same arrangement
as where they had lived
before.

I hardly believe anymore
in trains—only the lost trains
that Tolstoi's lovers meet,
coming from and returning
to life in the country,
those sad black engines shedding
steam like the breath of the patient
horses that wait, aiming
the troikas, mute witnesses.
And certain American locomotives
like muscular elegies
parting a few sparse flakes,

imperial and hell-bent as classic
fullbacks hurling
out of tunnels, leaning
heroically into curves
while inside, where it's all
confidence, some Babbitt
and his fellow drummers
dab their lips with fresh linen
and, as we do now,
look out with approval on the comfy snow.
I don't know how we got here
or if this place, this
morning that is so groundless,
so lost yet like some place
we have been before is the place
I need. Where we are
is new.