First Snow

Jonathan Holden
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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.