

Masthead Logo

The Iowa Review

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Volume 11  
Issue 1 *Winter*

Article 16

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1980

## First Snow

Jonathan Holden

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### Recommended Citation

Holden, Jonathan. "First Snow." *The Iowa Review* 11.1 (1980): 113-114. Web.  
Available at: <https://doi.org/10.17077/0021-065X.2557>

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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.