

After a Long Absence

Sue Scalf

Memory is a candle that won't blow out.
Though there is nothing here, new shoots sprout
where the maples stood,
and I recall

the odor of must and coal dust, and a two a.m. train,
a dim bulb at the depot wavering in rain,
a ride home in Sim's truck
through the silent town, then Grandma letting us in,

the ironstead bed smelling of camphor, old quilts
warm as a welcome, and the sound of wind
shaking the maples, rain on the screens,
then sleep, contented and deep.

Now, a few bricks, broken steps,
bring back all that is gone,
all that will never go--
maples and rain, the sound of wind,

life that ends like a long journey,
a sleep, and waking at home.