

The Susquehanna

Heading back north on a train, I try
to remember the overflowing
banks of the Susquehanna, the towns
where the roads were small fleets,
narrow brown vessels, paddling always
with the current, which flowed only away.

The land was blue factories and
the winter sang
on through the grand past, abandoning
the flowers, flooding on the banks

where reflexes are slow. I tried
to find slowly the black, wet earth
of my grandfather, the grim waters,
the town, choked with air.

I don't remember the thawing,
the silent, lovely ice beginning
to free the still air, frozen
by winter's aspen lips.

The river steeped in stiff flowers,
and the hard people would laugh

noiseless, like pebbles.