

# Fonder

Susan Gubernat

I awaken to the rough sex of boxcars  
coupling, uncoupling, having fallen asleep  
to the souging of mourning doves, putty  
dollops with pure voices, their rodomontade  
of loss. On the back road someone's driving  
up and down, his amped-up bass line drubbing  
my peace. Soon we'll see each other after  
our longest absence. Our hair will have grown  
to our napes, and I wonder if you'll be  
wearing clothes I'll find familiar in shape  
and smell, and if we'll kiss more awkwardly  
than the time you risked my first refusal.  
I surprised you then with my open mouth.  
Which of us will startle into intimacy?

Which of us will startle into intimacy  
into a kind of half-awakening,  
as the breath of the few resident cows  
on a moonless night stirred me out of dark,  
impatient thoughts and made me laugh  
at my own pretensions. The beasts harrumphed,  
and in their fairy tale I was the fool  
who traded one of them for magic beans  
and a beanstalk jutting into the clouds.  
There was the deep grass, all a ruminant  
could ever need. Our love's terrestrial,  
even grounded, where we might safely graze.

Even grounded, where I might safely graze,  
I long to stir things up. Can frenzy be  
behind us? For instance, your wild dancing?  
I don't mean just self-parody, you vamping  
to a Prokofiev suite, me laughing  
at your antics. I mean, dear, bump and grind,  
slow-dance lust, everything short of fucking  
on the dance floor. And this display in public,  
since your face is like a carnival mask—  
a satyr's smile extending ear to ear  
beneath that aquiline nose, however  
broken. For too long you've avoided things  
bacchanalian. Dance with me, lover.  
We can do it without drugs, stone sober.

We can do it without drugs, stone sober  
though I'm likely to add red wine to the mix.  
You know me—a maenad from way back  
but never one who went so far as you.  
Well, as they say, we both have histories  
we revisit now and then. Mendocino,  
for example, the bar and dancehall  
that you drove me to—closed up (it was morning).  
You'd arrive there from the city years ago,  
chasing pussy. Your palpable nostalgia  
made me queasy. A certain little Irish  
girl was often cited; her house, her child.  
I thought "too much information." Is there  
such a thing as retrospective jealousy?

Such a thing as retrospective jealousy  
wastes too much bile, I know. I'm in detox  
from that stuff, though truth be told I can't quite  
get enough of yours, feigned or real. A man  
comes up in conversation and you need  
the who, the what, the when. Soon I'll run out  
of stories and invent like Scheherazade,  
keep you poised on that delicious fulcrum  
between having and desire. (Read Carson's  
*Eros* for the "*analyse du texte*"). Mark,  
now let's be serious. I promise not  
to play you for a fool. I ask the same  
of you. In my presence you will always be  
(read Donne) the center of my universe.

Read Donne. The center of *his* universe  
was fixed as he went voyaging. For us  
the shoe is, so to speak, now on my wayward foot.  
Old homebody, you won't consider  
Italy or even Greece. Wanderlust  
is in my genes (unlike the other kind,  
residing in my jeans, soon to be quelled.)  
But there is that phrase of yours—"go with"—  
you use a lot, in fact, invited me that way  
to our first concert date. *Go with, go with,*  
*whither thou go with* I wish you'd say.  
Although for now these absences provoke  
more poetry than our propinquity. Donne,  
that errant metaphysical, once proved it.

The errant metaphysical once proved  
a perfect landscape for desire: the soul  
and body first removed, then joined back up  
in perfect symmetry. But impatient  
with duality, I'd rather sidle  
up to you in Union Station, pull you  
to me. I've longed for you so long no  
witty trope will do. Let's get to the hotel—  
an imperfect room awaits; we will fit  
inside of it, inside ourselves, each other.  
The medium is distance, the method,  
*eros*. Yet I'd rather be in your arms,  
here, than writing poems about you, alone,  
awakening to the rough sex of boxcars.