

## 2:22 AM, Cedar Rapids

Susan McMillan

Utility becomes music  
as a whistle, resonant, floats  
above the cling-clang of crossing signals  
whose arms extend across the wide street,  
whose bright eyes wink-wink-wink  
the color of caution

as a freight train rumbles in  
past the corner of this hotel where we two lie,  
married now for more than forty years.

Sometimes it still bothers me  
we don't know how to dance, not properly.  
But it's very late,  
the party's over, the bride and groom  
lost without their knot of revelers  
somewhere beyond this city's lights.

You sleep, breath slow and even,  
oblivious to me, the world outside, its timpani  
of heavy cars thundering on rails,  
whistled chords, basso continuo of motors  
as autos line up, wait to crawl home  
from late-night weekend bars.

And then it ends –  
the train gone, its music muffled  
deep inside the soot-lined throat of night.

At dawn, we'll retrace the highway back  
to a white-crusted, early winter lawn  
and our own bed in the same house  
that holds yet within its dusty creases  
a few gifts from the day we wed:

orange-flowered towels we now use as rags,  
crazed turkey platter, yellowed copy  
of Gibran's book, *The Prophet*,  
your college roommate gave us –  
Mark, who studied drama. Whose last name  
neither of us remembers.