

Two Poems · *David Wojahn*

Mystery Train: JANIS JOPLIN LEAVES PORT ARTHUR FOR POINTS WEST, 1964

Train she rides is sixteen coaches long,
 The long dark train that takes the girl away.
The silver wheels
 click and sing along

 The Panhandle, the half-assed cattle towns,
All night until the misty break of day.
 Dark train,
 dark train, sixteen coaches long.

Girl's looked out her window all night long,
 Bad dreams:
 couldn't sleep her thoughts away.
The wheels click, mournful, dream along.

 Amarillo, Paradise,
 Albuquerque still a long
Night's ride. Scrub pine, cactus, fog all gray
 Around the dark train
 sixteen coaches long.

A cardboard suitcase and she's dressed all wrong.
 Got some cousin's address,
 no skills, no smarts, no money.
The wheels mock her as they click along.

A half-pint of Four Roses,
 then she hums a Woody song,
 I Ain't Got No Home.
 The whistle brays.
The Mystery Train is sixteen coaches long.

 The whistle howls, the wheels click along.