

## The Train Problem · *Jim Gauer*

A.

The train problem begins  
Almost immediately. Here's how it happens.  
Or it begins soon after and this  
Is how long it lasts. Suit yourself.  
The train problem begins one morning and ends  
Almost interminably. No one knows how.

B.

Here comes the train problem, but not  
All at once. If a train hit  
Your bird dog, that would be all  
At once. No problem there.

C.

You can't imagine the train problem. It used to be called  
Go find the body, or what happens to a canary  
When you cover its cage. You can imagine  
The canary, how it screeches while it happens, like  
Brakes on a train.

D.

When you think about the train problem  
What do you think? You sit there by the window  
With your bird dog, thinking  
*Canary*. Each time you think you notice  
A few more feathers on the muzzle of the beast.  
You don't think *boxcar* or *railroad*. You know your  
capacity.  
You sit in the tunnel of the afternoon hearing  
A whistle, and thinking  
*Canary*. It's only the canary.

E.

The train problem doesn't wait. It isn't hereafter.  
It is not the kind of problem where you  
Whistle when you're ready. By the time you think  
*I'm ready*, there's no problem there.

F.

This must be almost night then in the land  
Of the train problem. You begin to think  
The last few canaries, but not all at once.  
Or a small crowd in red caps waiting at a terminal  
For the last load of cagecovers. Suit yourself.  
All this and your pale dog, lying on its side there, like  
A tunnel that has just  
Swallowed a train.