

How Is This Done? · Jim Gauer

Birds begin by changing sizes. Don't be alarmed.
The deep structure of a flying bird
Is empty space, asking itself what size.
And then a man on a bench with his eyes closed
Holding out his arms This Size, This Size, while birds
Settled deep in their emptiness echo
His answer, filling the shallow air
With This-Sized birds.
Isn't that how a man tells his emptiness
How large it is, by the space in his arms?
Of course it is. And other things are
A form of How also, How did they build this becoming
Concrete and machinery, How did we get here turning itself
Into buses and automobiles, How did the fire start
Transforming the city sky into shy towers that cause
Their own solitude, beginning each answer
With the words *fire alarm*.

And then these people halted in the flagrant street, the obvious
answer
To a brief and standing question their existence
Must pose: How is this done?
How is it the city as it is
Buries them in shadows, feet first in a crosswalk, dying to ask
themselves
Into being as they stand there, heads bowed,
Arms crossed, bodies bent
Deep into question marks they answer
As they are: How do I do this? How do I do this *now*?
The deep structure of a walking man
Is an unmoving shadow, asking itself how.
And then a man on a bench with his eyes open
Pointing with his arms Say How, Say How, while birds
And beasts and wonderful children
Start up from the standstill of all moving things, and a fire
Settles back to dance in answer, flames holding close
The shadows they cast of themselves.