FIVE POEMS BY ELIZABETH SMITHER

The Question of widows

Widows have — we walk to discover this
Down rows — spaces to the left or right
My left hand, my wife, or
A space under which looks more like love.
We decide on the second. You are the cloud
Drawn on the stone, my mother will be the island.

To my father on his burial

Now you have a hill behind
Clods over, no name as yet
Some of your own wild flowers
A view of sheep, some lambs
A fledgling tree tied to a stake (in bud)
And neighbours at the same depth
We envy thinking of your talk
So level, gentle, fundamental.

Finger to finger

People comment on my cold fingers
But they are warm. They lay between
His that were white and translucient
In which the small injuries his fingers always had
Small bleedings, missing with nails, cuts
All his large economies, savings
My school shoes, ballet lessons, wasted music
Look up at me, like a leaf looks up at autumn.
Mourning garb

If only we went into mourning half/mourning
Black, grey/black, purple
I'd know what to wear this morning.

Sitting in front of a one-bar heater
Is not the same as wearing purple
Small movements do not equal black.

I feel the need for veils and capes
Long gloves, violets, layers that rustle
As the heart and soul are bared.

Pansies

Some blindness they face into asks for touch
As Jane Eyre asked Mr Rochester
To memorize her face and grant her that
Smoke would do as well as blackener.

Indeed he thought Jane's brow so conscious struck
Its lines so fine, her heart so well enclosed
Might not her eyes have wished the grief of fire
To free these great dark shadows which the pansies have.