



## FIVE POEMS

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*Edward Haworth Hoepfner*

### **On Being Watched**

For instance: she quietly fled  
From my sleeping, or those billboard eyes

In *Gatsby*, studying the dream. I've returned  
Today to my childish notion—surfacing

Again into the milk-washed  
Morning, and again my hands far too little

To hold the infinite gift. What I know of infinite.  
A nebula calved, 50 million light years wide—still

A smallish thing. What distance and what means,  
In the video—how was it truly *seen*,

So once-invisible? And why have I felt  
My life in someone's darkroom, rising out?

## Elemental Primer: Fire

1. the car's great nuzzle and hum
2. my sister curled against me like a dog made out of commas  
in the front seat, my dark mother, dark father, talking
3. mine vents, fires, burning gas on hillsides, mother's face  
turned half way to us, flickerings  
reflected in her glasses not her eyes
5. what I've breathed in, that is time  
so very thin, little Everest  
of vapor, glass that fills with darkness, fills again with light
6. a field of Queen Anne's lace erupted
7. I want to make a long speech, on planetary moths
8. there is no eye inside the palm though it feels  
that way: I live in these mistakes
9. since *air* means also *melody*, isn't every breath  
a questioning
10. how flowers thin as they approach the edge of the field
12. who wants to take a shade that fits them, shadow-like,  
and then collapse inside it
13. I couldn't hold my breath for *that* long
14. sacrilege: to imagine dying in a wreath of fire—  
my clothing once was translated  
into flames, too much gasoline,  
but the scars that dot me offer little help...
15. monks I saw in film from Vietnam consumed themselves in fire  
and grew—  
I try to think *inhaling flame* and can't
16. *suffer* meant once *allow*: almost *invite*

## For My Mother, Now Long Enjambed

The black trapezoid in a crow's mouth  
opening; the white ellipse above her

cuticle. The stalked red flowers

on moss, a city dressed in bunting, spied  
from the plane which is my mother's

body, long turned into spirit, bomb

bay doors shut. Like her I exploded into  
a wild life. *There!* And *there!* Scraps

of fierce color, shrapnel, witness.

## Roses Stems in Deep Snow

I thought it was a loss, like the splash of light  
on the inside

of children's wrists, smear  
of blossom gone, the fallen leaves and winter after  
winter twisted

cane, the snarl of thin stem bent,  
thorns hooked brightly on the ice, their shadows  
pinched or drawn out

against the snow,  
and I measured loss, year by year, this way.

But loss has a way of being  
misunderstood. My full-grown daughter stands  
in the kitchen mixing dark

syrup into flour.

I see her grace at last as strung on bones.

## Snow Blank

Say something moves: the little smoot of feathers  
we'd say *bird* in summertime  
blinking off a snowy dune;  
the *so-that-was-a-fox* pile of dark that stuated-up  
the middle of a frozen field and broke  
in a stream of weary explosions  
toward the underbrush across the too-deep drifts.  
The problem is you turn your head  
to watch. The problem is  
looking back to where it was—the moving thing—  
and seeing in its place, still blared  
against the deep white,  
its bluish aura, flashpoint. Against the snowfield  
at daybreak my shadow flared out  
twenty times my height.  
Who grows up here, walks through winter—grows up  
seeing not, seeing what's no longer there,  
this dim and brilliant afterimage  
everything that shifts will make. Against the featureless,  
against the *non*. The angels that we made,  
sitzmark, we made of where  
they had been, fallen to the snowy earth, childish silhouettes,  
with telltale feet. *There*, one walked off  
into a doorway; *there*,  
one disappeared along the street. These impressions,  
this, not a world we were created for.  
Just because we move  
as we must, too slowly in this thick whiteness,  
in our step-by-awkward-step, and leave  
behind no glowing  
where we were. Though skiing, once, I did see something  
like you, turning back, when you had gone  
downhill in blind sunlight.