

## 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 translucent  
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.