FIVE POEMS

Edward Haworth Hoeppner

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
4. what I’ve breathed in, that is time
   so very thin, little Everest
   of vapor, glass that fills with darkness, fills again with light
5. a field of Queen Anne’s lace erupted
6. I want to make a long speech, on planetary moths
7. there is no eye inside the palm though it feels
   that way: I live in these mistakes
8. since air means also melody, isn’t every breath
   a questioning
9. how flowers thin as they approach the edge of the field
10. who wants to take a shade that fits them, shadow-like,
    and then collapse inside it
11. I couldn’t hold my breath for that long
12. 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…
13. monks I saw in film from Vietnam consumed themselves in fire
    and grew—
    I try to think inhaling flame and can’t
14. 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 statued-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.