

A Very Short Anthology of



The Waterfall

*Orb-weaver shivering
among the filaments: how many
fibers generated from within
transect the air?*

*How many hirsute, sightless
gropings anchor
these redwood trees, suffuse
the flowery tracteries*

*of the oxtails? The veining
in this hand, these
eyeballs, the circuitous
and scintillating*

*leap within the brain —
the synapse,
the waterfall, the black-
thread mane of fern*

*beside it — all, all
suspend, here:
everywhere, existences
hang by a hair*

— Amy Clampitt

From "The Collected Poems" (Alfred A. Knopf)

My Fly

for Erving Goffman, 1922-1982

*One of those great, garishly emerald flies that al-
ways look freshly generated from fresh excre-
ment
and who maneuver through our airspace with a
deft intentionality that makes them seem to
think,
materializes just above my desk, then vanishes,
his dense, abrasive buzz sucked in after him.*

*I wait, imagine him, hidden somewhere, waiting,
too, then think, who knows why, of you —
don't laugh — that he's a messenger from you, or
that you yourself (you'd howl at this),
ten years afterwards have let yourself be incar-
nated as this pestering anti-angel.*

*Now he, or you, abruptly reappears, with a
weightless pounce alighting near my hand.*

Elizabeth Schmidt, who chose this anthology of re-
cently published poems, is an editor at Open City.

*I lean down close, and though he has to sense my
looming presence, he patiently attends,
as though my study of him had become an ele-
ment of his own observations — maybe it is
you!*

*Joy! To be together, even for a time! Yes, tilt
your fuselage, turn it towards the light,
aim the thousand lenses of your eyes back up at
me; how I've missed the layers of your atten-
tion,
how often been bereft without your gift for sniff-
ing out pretentiousness and moral sham.*

*Why would you come back, though? Was that oth-
er radiance not intricate enough to parse?
Did you find yourself in some monotonous centu-
ry hovering down the tidy queue of creatures
waiting to experience again the eternally unlikely
bliss of being matter and extension?*

*You lift, you land — you're rushed, I know; the in-
terval in all our terminals is much too short.
Now you hurl against the window, skid and jitter
on the pane: I open it and step aside
and follow for one final moment of felicity your
brilliant ardent atom swerving through.*

— C. K. Williams

From "The Vigil" (Farrar, Straus & Giroux)

Cameo Appearance

*I had a small, nonspeaking part
In a bloody epic. I was one of the
Bombed and fleeing humanity.
In the distance our great leader
Crowded like a rooster from a balcony,
Or was it a great actor
Impersonating our great leader?*

*That's me there, I said to the kiddies.
I'm squeezed between the man
With two bandaged hands raised
And the old woman with her mouth open
As if she were showing us a tooth*

*That hurts badly. The hundred times
I rewound the tape, not once
Could they catch sight of me
In that huge gray crowd.
That was like any other gray crowd.*

*Trot off to bed, I said finally
I know I was there. One take*

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