

WINTER FLIES

One of the local butcher's
Largest carrion eaters
Visible in the dying daylight
On the high ornate ceiling
Of a rundown townhouse
Once occupied by the very rich:

A large room full of papers
Carefully stacked in piles
Around the desk in disarray,
The hunched shoulders and the unkept
Gray hair of the one writing
With many sighs and long pauses:

The reconstruction of some bygone
Massacre of the innocents
With all the terrors
Of that evil hour and day;
The large number of executed,
The few names the documents
Have preserved, their foreign sound . . .

The many-legged motionless fly
Watched by the siamese cats
And the ancient housekeeper,
the bony one in frayed slippers
Bringing in the pale herb tea
Against the growing chill and cough . . .

O blue-winged, shivering one!
Some days it's like using
A badly chipped white cane
And seeing mostly shadows
As one gropes for words that come next.