Accompanying Anne Carson in “The Fall of Rome”

“Almost *decaf* in the glare of the white sand ahead,”
I read. But she has written “almost *deaf*” —
can’t you hear it? how a c enters to swallow
the fear? She’s writing about death,
the stranger we concoct against
while drinking Nescafé. It’s the end of her
32-page poem, 5 lines to go, and she is
leaving with so much energy and wit, she has
put a c in my eyes as if never to go
blind. Or deaf for that matter.
It feels good to be part of someone substantial,
to take the unknown by the handle
of its cup and pour warmth (albeit specious)
into the void which comes after dessert.