

Au Château Frontenac

For André Alexis

Soot-like snow pummels the Saint Lawrence River,
Shocks this Hitchcock-shadowy night. Trapped stars
Atrophy in flurries. Brittle verses
Bitter poets pitch—hurtle down, down, flounder
In dismayed vertigo.

O *River*, swirl

Into your destroying volumes, the pale
Corpses of *pauvres Québécois* poets who failed.
Now absolutely dead to eloquence,
Their flesh tears, soft, into a billion tears.

Je suis au Château Frontenac ce soir,
Nursing a tragedy from tyranny—
An incubus of ink. Preserved, for now,
From suicide, I craft “Beatrice Chancy,”
An *Italia-Nuova Scozia* horror.
Poetry is merciless—like failure,
Or the lousy jealousy of authors.

GEORGE ELLIOTT CLARKE