

# POETRY

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GEORGE ELLIOTT CLARKE

## I. iii (Everything is Holy)

Everything is holy, as Ginsberg says:  
the carpet, the light, the door,  
the radio not turned on,  
the bedcovers turned back—  
like US barbarians at Niagara Falls,  
the arteries hardening,  
the penis hardening,  
the auto-eroticism of the pen,  
the chair pulled back from the table,  
the man pulled away from the woman,  
the wastepaper basket clasping an empty Kleenex package,  
the water bottle announcing I'm thirsty,  
the squandered bottle of Limon Limonero, Liquore di Limone  
(28% alcohol, now only 1/16th of a bottle)—  
brackish, sickish, yellow-green in taste, like mustard gas—  
the two glasses silenced on the bureau,  
the few blue candies—mints—and band-aids under the mirror,  
the lamp on, on the table,  
the watch eyeing 4h,  
the white and purple flowers dying in their round, glassed grave of  
    water,  
the black ink pacified in the bottle,  
the history of Mussolini's assassination calm in its prose,  
as orderly as bullets,  
the firing squad so fiery in the blood,  
the depleted film canister, black and brooding,

the finished manuscripts and the unfinished books,  
 all discoursing together—  
 Ovid's *Poetry of Exile* abutting on Massey's opera on English,  
 French, and Yiddish lovers in Québec—  
 the mirror giving back the wall,  
*The President's Daughter* lying suggestively under *The Paradox of  
 Cruelty*,  
 the pencil looking pensive  
 (bee-coloured, yellow and black, like a scrawny mulatto),  
 the MCI Calling Card advertising pricey repartee,  
 the terracotta-looking floor tiles,  
 the comfortable Italian sandals looking comfortable with the tiles  
 (like two races, miscegenated),  
 the curtains drawn (but not haggard or quartered),  
 the woman next door probably asleep and alone,  
 the telephone condemned,  
*Le Lucciole* sixty-nining *Le Ore Super*  
 (two women's four eyes purring languor),  
 the insolence and sorrow of now 4h,  
 these words saying too much,  
 these words condemning the poem,  
 the breath drawing sharp as guillotines,  
 the hand quivering,  
 the idea of reading Fowlie on Rimbaud,  
 the idea of reading folly,  
 the dead small bottle of Schweppes ("Since 1783") Limone on the  
 floor,  
 the racy postcards rearing to go,  
 the Italian travel brochure abridging Canada  
 (*Self Drive Package: Canada in Liberta*:  
 scarlet, with a white border, and the half-tone  
 of a gigantic maple leaf dominating the cover),  
 the two black pens lying, faggish, together—  
 the fountain pen and the Bic ballpoint pen—  
 the pen always lying,  
 the brassy coins stacked shaky as the Tower of Pisa—  
 amounting to four L.1000 and three L.200 coins—  
 the *Autobiography of William Butler Yeats*  
 conspiring with *The Memoirs of Frederic Mistral*  
 (both Nobel laureates, one unread),

the memory of JFK in the Villa Serbelloni,  
 the memory of Pliny the Younger in marble,  
 the empty, brown, handmade, Québécois shoes under the desk,  
 the thought of you reading this,  
 the memory of the ferry yesterday to Cannenabia  
 (and that spelling is wrong),  
 Tremezzo in the distance,  
 the baroquely glowing water,  
 the men with long fishing rods,  
 the carping, Freudian imagery,  
 the words *Allegata Copia Omaggio* imposed on the *faux* blonde's  
 forehead,  
 the depressed light switch,  
 the switch from *vers blanc* to *vers libre*,  
 the black camera in its blacker case,  
 the *camera obscura* that is the brain,  
 the bicameral Parliament lost across the Atlantic,  
 the chiaroscuro of sunlight over Bellagio,  
 the collapse of Pescalo into its cool, piss-scent alleys,  
 the blonde tourist inviting,  
 the others scowling,  
 the memory of the lone black woman youngish in a rose coat,  
*bella*, under an umbrella by the ferry terminal in Bellagio,  
 the drizzle of leaves,  
 the armpits itchy with deodorant,  
 the memory of the *bancomat* and the Sao Paolo bank in Caden-  
 nabia (?),  
 the closed closet door with the brass handle,  
 the shadow of the half-turned key,  
 the scrolling of liquid (probably water) in my stomach,  
 the pitiless Italian porno photographed at f:64  
 so that each pubic hair is ferociously vivid,  
 the utterance's pleasurable closure,  
 the immaculate ejaculation.