

## I . v i i

George Elliott Clarke

Rain-scruffed yellow-stone,  
 weather-wrinkled as bark  
 is like bark, flood-lit by rain;  
 and the harbour is slate,  
 heaving like a black lung —  
 or a cascade of rat's paws  
 tearing at the boats barged  
 against chafing wharves,  
 those tongues cunnilingusing  
 the salt-blasted waves.  
 The wind stinks of pitch or oil;  
 boats wobble back and forth  
 like Liberal Party rhetoric,  
 the keel and rudder uncertain  
 while the Imperoyal Refinery's  
 hellish, deathless flame smudges  
 the night-bitter air, its broth  
 and chowder of pollution.  
 If only snow or rain cascading  
 through smoky, cranky alleys,  
 could tint this city of raw war  
 petrifyingly beautiful! But its  
 history has only blessed horror:  
 the legislature's flanked by Howe,  
 defiant, and a Boer War soldier,  
*La Liberté guidant le peuple*.  
 So orange light goes up as prayer  
 and comes down leaf-dark,  
 rotten as crushed cockroaches,  
 and pornographic drizzle  
 lays dirty rain and explicit sleet,  
 this *King Lear* weather heaps up  
 snow and shotgunned corpses.  
 Winter-closed roses look vase-  
 shaped; the harbour is stone  
 leeching black water, leaking  
 black water, near the winged  
 lion that Venice gave Halifax,  
 the Worker's Sodom, the Vatican  
 of Vice, the Dominion of Doom,  
 where every clock is stopped  
 at 9:06 A.M., December 6, 1917,  
 when eyes spiked on glass,  
 and molten iron rained on the streets  
 and the war came home viciously,  
 and all the light was smoke.