

GEORGE ELLIOTT CLARKE

## CANTICLES

### MY POETICS AND/OR DISCOURSE ON *PLEASURE* BY ALEXANDER PUSHKIN (1830)

#### I.

A Rubenesque, roseate, rightly fat *femme*—  
plump in rump and plush in blush—  
her face less Nordic and more Asian  
(or more Nordic and less Asian)—

bustled unto bed at breakfast feast—

(dependably smoking salmon  
sliced onto black bread soured  
in pear-flavoured vinaigrette,  
chased by plums,

plus pours of iced vodka [*Tito's*],  
scads, scores, of iced vodka [*Tito's*])—

comforts my heart.

*Pleasure* makes comfy my heart, my heart.

*Pleasure* makes comfy my heart.

#### II.

A wife is throaty bitterness, really:  
Her eyes scald; her speech spews acid.

Yet, she can't be cooled, quieted, cajoled,  
pacified, or pleased, eh?  
For she's as fickle as a tyrant—  
cryptically malevolent—

and, mediievally deviate,

acts the stubborn virgin,  
dons the prim demeanour of a dead nun.

To coax her to biblically necessary *Coitus*  
is a task as tricky  
as parbuckling a reef-riven ship.

Reason with her mumbo jumbo,  
her incremental dementia,  
her out-and-out gobbledygook?

How?

I face a spouse and I face  
imperious alabaster—  
a being of supposed, unimaginable sugar—

but her tirades purple her face,  
black her face;

she goes violently violet—

lookin like eggplant I hate to eat.

Thus, I eye a catastrophic thespian  
dinning complaints,

in a bad play, a poor opera,  
wherein the heroine's virulence  
is incoherent *et* inexplicable.

I hear Russian jabberwocky—  
the phantasmagoric brogue—  
pathological chitchat—  
of Czar *et* Czarina.

So, *Ecstasy* bleeds away into *Anguish*:  
My luxuries become liabilities.

**III.**

*Art* is hard-done-by;  
*Inspiration* is hard-to-come-by;  
in a household where one's helpmate  
is more undulant in tongue than in thigh  
or more sibilant in sass than in bed.

But, a poet, unhesitating, stares at the sun,  
rakes in bright, blinding *Revelations*—

and brooks no waste of heart,  
no stagnant—or malignant—wine,

but only *that* convulsive blaze in the veins!

**IV.**

A poem is, really, illicit angles—  
words twisted coital in illegal tangles—  
sounding cantankerous hanky panky.

So I must let fly my scarf at buoyant gallop or romp,  
abandon cardiac-arrest lectures,  
a school's hard-ass furniture,  
or a household's prickle-legged crone,

and be as mad as Christ,  
à la Byron  
(Shakespeare disguised as Sade).

Poets cry torrents of ink—  
blanch over *Immorality*—  
black out *Legality*—  
for we be immodest saints.

Our tumbling cadences require inscrutable *Raptures*,  
unutterable wine  
and uninhibited, unhusbanded women—  
the opiates of poets!

(*Epic* is generous, not static;  
it's an open mouth, not pursed lips.)

I do burn up ink and candle.  
I do eye a delicate, vivacious face—  
glittering eyes, jittery tits,  
a-shakin in the bed,  
as I touch and she twitters.  
(*Tweet, tweet, tweet!*)

**V.**

*Decency* be damnable—  
as is a scrupulous house  
(the definition of a mausoleum).

Paltry *Lust* is blasphemous.

I take my Muse as womanly as a whore,  
a disreputable dish,  
happy in the jiggling, jingling trade.

Her open-minded sex is  
constantly tugged—  
topped up—  
sopping my generative fluid  
in our symphony of breaths.

I plumb even a plum-coloured gal,  
a black-velvet mulatta,

or a big-butt peasant wench—

any *belle* so rustic, she's atavistic, lusty—

with earth smeared on her thighs

and a tinkling laugh at her teeth,

a smouldering scent at her breasts,

and who's eager to give-and-take

immeasurable *Pleasure*.

Her soft mildness—

my Muse—

yields

the idylls,

the epics, the georgics, the wine and kisses, each night,

the climax, each night,

and then the *Prize*.

## PUSHKIN ACTS BYRONIC

Vigorous wallowing in vodka—  
plush swallows of sweet poison—  
coax Pushkin to his nightly spew—

jetting spunk in his drunk wife's cunt,  
that bitch well-thumped on a pillow,  
her ass braying like a trumpet.

*Geez*, the gouts of vodka that poet  
deprives all the other depraved  
of, at the Court, that salon of booze.

Strumpets with peppermint skin  
swallow Pushkin's chocolate mint,  
while he slobbers down their brine,

and then fucks, deposits, fucks off,  
so *les belles dames* spy the white lie  
of his silhouette,

not as dark as his actual self.  
Still, soon a fresh slut sweetens his sheets,  
laps his chrome-plated spew.

(The taste of vodka is sugar made light.)  
Her belly gets plastered with tears  
as viscous as glue.

*Nyet!*  
Her belly is plastered with tears  
the colour of anis, milky.

## THE UNFALSIFIED HISTORY OF QUEEN CHARLOTTE SOPHIA (1744–1818)

Princess of a gerrymandered German  
 Duchy—Mecklenburg-Strelitz, and only  
 17 when packed off to George III,  
 Who drooled for a legs-jacked-wide, Virgin bride,  
 Ignorant of politics (Don Juans  
 And Machiavellis), and, fetchingly,  
 More like Sade’s Justine than Sade’s Juliette,  
 Queen Charlotte Sophia was “dark-complected”;  
 Had flared nostrils; mirrored a pallid cow.

Shipped out from her backward, awkward nowhere,  
 Hot August of 1761,  
 Charlotte docked, still *intacta*, in England,  
 On September 7. The sequent morn,  
 Promptly at 9, she lisped, “I do,” to George,  
 And the King launched quick *Raunch*. Her haunches, laid,  
 Had her coming, kicking, to splayed outcome:  
 In 1762, the Welsh Prince,  
 (Later George IV), came bawling to breath.

Even in pastel, Charlotte looked Negroid—  
 More like Beethoven than *Mona Lisa*,  
 That usual, European cream blush.  
 She selected only Negro servants,  
 Appropriately, who conceived her as  
 A Creole vision, poetic in tint.

Anyway, the Black Queen loved Palatial  
 Decoration, hanging halls in brocade,  
 Vivid as rainbows, to cheer up *Le Roi*,  
 After he’d slain limp fawns and broke-wing swans.

When hubby became too erratic, weird,  
 Hinging on unhinged, the Queen demanded—  
 Fanatically—more baroque fixtures,  
 Rococo furniture, ornamental  
 Bric-a-brac, *les beaux-arts*, et cetera,  
 Even commandeering that brat, Mozart,  
 To fix up *Opus 3*, in her honour,  
 For a princely price, some 50 guineas  
 (Coinage coined after Afro, Negro gold).  
 She preferred flowers as art, and so renamed  
 South Africa's "Bird of Paradise" bloom,  
*Strelitzia reginae*, her license,  
 Right, as Royal Patroness of Botany  
 And everything anyone deems "Pretty."

Charlotte Sophia was taken aback  
 By George's *porphyria*, true. Much worse,  
 Though, was Marie Antoinette's beheading.  
 ("Shit," murmured the Queen.) Down France's beach front  
 Thumped that royal head—bump, bump, bump—ending  
 In a ditch, a sewer—a right royal flush.

By 1812, so bizarre was King George,  
 Queen Charlotte could stomach no more congress,  
 And, besides, she had now to keep an eye  
 To the statecraft of her boy, the Welsh Prince,  
 Who was prosecuting wars (diffidently),  
 Piling up debts (profligately), draining  
 The treasury as he drained his sherry.

The strain of watching her son leech England—  
 Bleed dry her Empire—stopped the Queen's own breath.  
 His ma'm deceased, the Prince lived off her jewels.  
 Next, George III—gone berserk, went kaput,  
 In 1820, thanks to totally  
 Chugging the drugs of total witchdoctors.



Charlotte Sophia survives regally  
In a portrait across the Atlantic  
In the Red Room, at the Nova Scotia  
Legislature. Here, clearly, her face seems  
Perfectly “Mulatto,” despite dissent  
From naysayers who ignore her descent  
From Margarita de Castro e Souza,  
Offspring of Portugal’s Alfonso III  
And his gal pal, Madragana, who was  
Either Moorish or Jewish (Sephardic),  
But, by all accounts, gifted visibly  
With pretty features pretty much “*Negro*.”