

An Elegy for Gord Downie—
via *A Review of Coke Machine Glow*

Elegantly trick-riding rain—
Savvy as Grant Fuhr in the crease—
Levitates militantly, but
Still drops, freckling, speckling sidewalks

In Kingston (ON); its task gets slurred:
Unlike a crack squad of hockey
Players, whose narrow explosions
Propel a puck, forward and back,

With prestigious impact—as if
They're families of mechanics?
Wasn't "He Who Walks with the Stars"—
Gord Downie—forensically

The same—gifted with poet genes,
Striking, pursuing *Excellence?*
Never once inconspicuous,
He vanished intermittently

From wine-country sunflowers to inns—
Under a chrome moon or brass sun—
With his band, so tragically hip,
Loping from moping bar to dope,

Yankee nightclub where the "plastic
Vampire teeth" turn out to be real,
And the hits echo revenge-porn—
Sociopathic advertising—

Grumpy chitchat, gritty upchuck—
Fools smacking dull guitars, punch-drunk
Drum kits, scuffing up Gothic airs.
Some hi-fis clarify a sewer?

He's too soon dead who was a son—
A husband, a brother, who knew
Canadian was cinnamon-glaze
Donuts dripping maple syrup,

Or to roam Withrow Park, or strum
A guitar as if effecting
A slap-shot, or find th'exotic
Quite at home—The Group of Seven,

Al Purdy's poems, curried *poutine*....
He knew that *Canadian* meant
"Anti-social" poets enjoying
"Long grass" in the wintry stretches,

Pitching the mind's Rocky Mountains
Toward the sun. Yes, he knew that
Canadian means bundling up
With loved ones, and not letting go.

George Elliott Clarke
7th Parliamentary Poet Laureate (2016-17)

