

The Senate of Canada: An Update-in-Progress

For the Honourable Pierre Claude Nolin (1950-2015), Senate Reform partisan.

Whatever is *Tradition*,
Is impervious to *Fashion*,
But yet can evolve—
Via *Reflection* and *Resolve*,
Thus, to upkeep The Senate,
“The Red Chamber,” demands we update
Law-making, so law lives vivid
(And *scarlet* defines the Chamber’s *red*)....
For primary is “second thought”—
Preserving precious freedoms bought
Through battles, cataclysms, wars,
And upholding rights with righteous *Force*,
And insight grant through oversight,
So flaws in law get brought to light,
And whatever the House of Commons votes—
Is reviewed, revised, to clear all doubts:
But not as acts of *Interference*,
The Senate’s probity is forbearance,
Yet ensuring that elected Government
Enacts no law perverting Parliament,
And probe bills with *recherché Analysis*,
So legislated *Good* escapes paralysis,
And to render transparent Omnibus
Bills (for what’s opaque looks ominous),
And heed the needs of the regions,
And prosper the labouring legions
Of minorities, and uplift Indigenous
Peoples: Here is The Senate’s purpose!
Invention is craft; *Improvement* is art:
Honourable Senators, act this part.
“Sober second thought” isn’t partisan,
But, constitutionally, what is *Canadian*.

--George Elliott Clarke

Parliamentary Poet Laureate (2016-17)