

## Ode to the Order of Canada, "The People's Nobility," on the 50th Anniversary of Its 1967 Founding

Kings and queens love to pomp, primp, and prize  
Lords and ladies whose triumphs glamourize  
The blessings, "divine," of the monarch's rule—  
Paradisiac dead (never any fool),  
Gilding immemorial cemeteries—  
With e'er undying genealogies—  
Heroes who vanquished every enemy,  
Plus souls charismatic in Charity.  
But Canada's elect are nobles who  
Earn no imitation, import Who's Who,  
Are doers whose deeds transcend the border  
(No hasty origin for this order),  
And are citizen-chosen for ascent  
To the Order of Canada, intent  
On exalting citizens who inspire  
Us all, a better country to desire....  
Invented to honour the hundred years  
Canadians—dreamers and engineers—  
Had proven exemplary at thriving—  
In snow, and in the business of striving,  
And in unsurpassed manoeuvres in sports—  
Hockey—slap shots, ball-swished basketball courts—  
And in navigating canoe or ski  
Cross government-defiant Geography,  
And in translating Shakespeare's global themes,  
And in being thinkers, tinkering with dreams,  
Or being imperishable missionaries  
Of Peace, or doctors staving off disease—  
(Witness insulin), or soldiers shocking  
Our foes (who know our fists out-talk talking).  
In attack, we are so articulate,  
Our foes fall back, tongue-tied and illiterate.  
Who could outface our patriots, our lists,  
Righting wrongs—but backing rights of leftists?  
Who're their poeticae (imitators)?  
They're more than sound-bytes for stump-orators.  
They're more than tidbits of decoration  
For French or English, dulcet oration.  
They outrun Erasure; these heroes made  
By overturning every barricade.  
They hammer out laws; they sculpture Beauty;  
They paint what light is—and light up Duty.  
To communicate Wonder, for what this Host  
Achieves; to honour each (not as a ghost,  
Haunting some roofless and ruined Parthenon),  
But as a citizen, our champion,

Whose name will be copied from book to book,  
Century by century. All ye look  
To the Order of Canada, and see  
Yourself in "The People's Nobility."

**George Elliott Clarke**  
**Parliamentary Poet Laureate (2016-17)**