

Eyes on Davenport

Dos Stats Canada notice that Davenport is shaped right enticingly—
Like a stubby-handled, pie-and-cake server—perhaps unsurprisingly,
Because so many Davenport citizens love their pastries, some sweetness
To power up the day, alongside coffee—that char-smoke broth, some neatness
To power folks through the day? Consider the constituency’s Southern
European citizens—Italian and Portuguese. It’s the southern
Portion of Davenport where they’ve set up home and set up shop. Little
Portugal could dub the riding “Davenportugal.” despite Poles from *Mittel*
Europa also being vitally present. But Portuguese are more
Than a quarter of Davenport, most from The Azores, and used to once pour
Sweat as they poured cement, coffee, wine, paint, and flour, labouring hard to pass
From bailiwicks of poverty into the trade-unionized working-class.
Arrived in Toronto, since 1953, the Portuguese have built
A community as they’ve helped build Canada, happy to jilt
Backbiters (all backward), preferring to enjoy churrasqueira chicken
With hot sauce, plus green wine, and urge a team—FC Benefica—quicken
The pulse of a match. These Davenporters thus spiff up Toronto’s cuisine
And culture. But Little Italy’s smaller version—if mirror demesne—
Corso Italia—also flavours, spices, styles Davenport. Italian
Grocers, bakers, shoe-sellers, gelato-makers, egalitarian
Baristas, vintners, and backyard gardeners, and experts at construction—
Carpenters, masons, painters, electricians (who make even the conduction
Of power a thing of art), plumbers, and bricklayers—who heft hafted tools and

Conjure household Utopia out of tiles, timber, ceramics, some land—
Are the four-corner, square-deal, well-rounded geniuses, who bring on Beauty—
Elsewhere as scarce as a Renaissance. Statisticians, true to their duty,
Acknowledge that Davenporters are also Spanish, Polish, Mexican,
Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Afghan, Trinidadian, Peruvian,
Ecuadorian, Syrian, Caribbean, and also know Vietnamese
Is only spoken more, out of all Ontario constituencies,
In just one. Davenport is clearly diverse in timbre and tongue and tint,
But its population of dreamers is quite democratic, for what's mint
Is the mass, all who drove through drifts of waves to Pier 21, or who flew
As dictator-fleeing refugees, fugitives—Muslim, Christian, or Jew—
Above the earth but not home-free—to land, finally, here at Davenport,
To share ailments and alms, stories, salves, and sermons, or loud-played songs and sport,
Amid the grace of St. Clair Gardens, other parks, or the reborn hotels—
Gladstone and Drake—where hipsters hang and headbangers and poets consort, wise
To the inspirations of amplified, turntable beats out of hi-fis....
But Davenport is also places—not only portrait faces. Railway lines—
Whose first lineage goes back to Sir John A. Macdonald—The Junction refines,
Triangulating (now that factories are closed), artists, start-ups, and first
Time home-buyers, so the average age is thirty-eight years young, and renovate,
And/or cogitate (as at Ubisoft), and sip mocha and contemplate
The arrival of the Museum of Contemporary Art (MOCA—
Pronounced as two syllables), or head to Oakwood-Vaughn, to fire a Coca-
Cola with rum (Trini-style) or just teetotal for health—perhaps wary

Of a premature laying down of one's bones in fine Prospect Cemetery,
Its solemn beauty.... And one can't neglect the Villages triple—Brockton,
Home to “Davenportugal,” that chic, manicured, cultivated portion—
Bloordale, whose eateries seduce artists who eye kaleidoscopic menus—
Muticulturalizing what cheers hippies, Hurons, Hondurans, Hindus—
And Dovercourt, no longer a warren of tarpaper shacks, for it now
Has prestige as an accommodating site to buy a debut condo.
Listen up, Davenport has become the avant-garde's Arts nerve-centre:
House of Anansi Press, The Big on Bloor Festival, Theatre Centre,
Akin Art Collective, and Arts & Crafts Production (which has twenty-one
Juno Awards to its credit). Poets, singers, artist and artisan,
Understand that Davenport is where languages compose broadcast cascades
And local politicians chop up, axe down, the ugliest barricades
To popular equality—and rights no authority can distort:
Apt egalitarians be those citizens whose home is Davenport.

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