

On Heckling, or Oral Violations of Standing Order 16

To exclaim, loudly, is no boorish act -
So long as Members honour the contract
That one is silent to let others speak,
To audit discourse with thought forensic.

What worth's an audience for one's remarks,
If *Prejudice* presumes one's words bulwarks
For *Blarney* or *Prevarication* (worse)—
So that every utterance sounds a curse

And every sigh boomerangs as a roar?²
Or dissertation occasion outpour
Of "pooh-pooh" or "bah" or "fuddle duddle"
Or "oink-oink," "yap-yap," so all thoughts muddle

And the people's business echoes a brawl—
And Parliament a stop on a pub-crawl—
As if Dr. Seuss has stepped in to preach,
So Beelzebub hub-bub substitutes for *Speech*—

And balderdash and brouhaha and din
Negate *Reason* so *Philosophy's Sin*;
And rules of *Decorum* seem writ in rum,
And *Babble* balloons like brats' bubblegum.....

To interject a Point of Order's fine!
But to interrupt speakers by design
Of *Outrage* pretended, or snarky quip
Suggests one's *Eloquence* quits at each lip,

Or that one'd fail a *Lie-Detector Test*,
So one's riposte proves *Kindergarten* jest—
Or barnyard monosyllable, uncouth
Yinkyank, salty as a delinquent youth,

Or some Shakespeare fishwife assaulting ears—
With *Wi's* antonyms, synonyms of jeers....
Honourable Members should remember
Standing Order 16, not dismember

This *Corps*, spiking it with *Interjection*
(That *Savagery* mimics *Vivisection*).
Note accordingly: The desire to heckle
Makes hideous Hyde of gentle Jekyll,

And would besmirch a church as much as schools,

So *philosophes* degenerate to fools,
And a lecture or a revelation
Becomes conjecture or imprecation;

And all who yahoo like ruffians or thugs
May be ejected—tossed out on their mugs,
As the Sergeant-At-Arms may have to do—
To restore *Order* the disordered rue.

So to this House, let no impediment
Obstruct the people's select *Government*,
For *Opposition* must not pose nor act
Facetious, supercilious, nor “refract”;

Or else they're unruly as clowns that ruckus,
Nasty as freaks—or cranks at a circus.
The House of Commons is not for comics—
Despite Pierre Trudeau's quip! All frolics

And hijinks belong to trapeze artists,
Jugglers, acrobats, somersaulters' twists,
And buskers on streets, not to elected
Members, whose actions should be respected;

And whose words come sobre, precise, exact—
Scholarly in tone and intoned as *Fact*.
Squalid is that language meant to lambaste—
Whose weight is piffle and whose worth is waste.

Honourable members, I now appeal
To thy *Honour* to be honest in zeal,
To protest when opportune, to deny
And contradict when there's proof of a *Lie*;

But to refrain from plain *Obstinacy*
When it's vain, for such is *Profligacy*.
Let *Truth* guide us, never whim for *Drama*.
What else governs well beloved Canada?

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