

CYRIL DABYDEEN

Municipalities

Listen, you municipalities,
I tell you of byelaws, sewers, roads that are blocked;
I tell you with a nerve that I've acquired
From distant places as traffic keeps blaring,
Sheep with a will of their own bleating
More than a selfish music... a horse walking across
The middle of a highway in a far country
And showing disdain for the sun.

Staring up at large apartment blocks I see
Developers bulldozing or breaking things down,
Mortar and concrete, brick and glass...
There's sweet perfume in the air!
Now breathe hard at the Rideau Centre
In downtown Ottawa in busy traffic...
I raise a hand of dismay, or cry softly,
This constant jutting of a politician's ear.

I walk forward as the Mayor sits on his dais
In the Council Chamber, and I tie ropes
Around the necks of elected officials, letting them know
That in other places, like Nicaragua, El Salvador—
Cities also exist on flat lands, or hills that continue
To rise in the sun. Let the Clerk also be aware
Of other origins as I imagine Furies coming together—
And we bask at love while thinking we're the best.

Billboards flap, and snow-ploughs are never at rest—
Amidst newscasters reporting the drama of election results
In stormy weather, voices telling us on Parliament Hill
As I stand tall before a microphone urging voters
To bestow us with honours, charting a new course—
Answering the call from traffic cops, or grimacing
At property tax, school boards, housing and fire departments—
Always making much ado about much.