

The Closing of the Centre Block, or Village

(field notes)

Georgette LeBlanc, Parliamentary Poet Laureate

the centre block is closing, but
the icon will not
close, will remain there, the icon
remains, *is* already
engraved on the collective
eye, around its library
everything the flames
could not take away
over the years, undo, unsettle
everything that is still present
protected under the dome
of its arcs and its windows
of its majestic light
of its warmth and its silence, the privilege
of its respite, these moments
far from the echoes of rushed footsteps, right there
next to it but far away, everything that remains
that is always there
from the tree, from its skin,
from its paper, the spine of its text
the icon will not close
peaceful, timeless, in the service of a world
under the sun of a golden leaf
its arms benevolent and peaceful
the chorus, our
memory
remains there

we will shift directions
to bring the village to life
every day outside its centre
its block, every minute, second
for as long as it takes
your itinerary will change, the wind's direction, its angle
will take your breath away, a bit different
your route between the cement skyscrapers
its streets, will have different names, but
the vaulted roof, the icon
will remain
there, present
on the display screen of your ideas
it will guide, attract you,
carry you

you will bring to it the experience of your
new paths and passage-ways
the icon will keep the experience alive
remembering these moments, years spent in the foyer of the building,
the light bathing the stone in gold, the solemn
limestone, the call to honour, to the safety
its marble, the way your feet sought out
the centre of each of its stairs
curved by the erosion of footsteps
rushed, decisive, of every
colour, ricochets
of agreements, threats, and puffs of conversation
billowing up, muffled exchanges, rising up
its staircase

centre block
its marble, its copper
the green grass of the village, its carpet spread out
for others who have come to visit, who have crossed
oceans, deaths and declines, injustices, partings
to make their way here
to the energy of this building, of its last cups of coffee
scalding or left to get cold, set down by
skilled hands, hands too full, the wooden thud
of the gavel, the summit of a decision
at the morning cafeteria, to the
currents, waves, outpourings of
journalists, visitors, tours
the focus on the written word, issued
to find an answer, to be accepted, to test the waters,
to be swept along in the crowd, under the columns
and within the banks of a river, the walls of a parliament
even more fierce
its edges emboldened
revitalized

closing the centre
block
taking the time to restore
itself, ourselves, even if it is
impossible, on some level, to restore
or rebuild
in exactly the same way, at the same cost
keeping, loving
its wisdom, its curves, and its columns
the experience of all that everyone has done, wanted to do, sought
and recognized in ourselves

the icon
will remain open
and closed, the centre
block is,
will be, forever
transformed

