

## Pierre Trudeau, Michael Ignatieff, and the Flame of 1968

BEFORE THE SUITS TOOK OVER and the polar ice cap began to melt, there was 1968. It was a remarkable year in a remarkable decade. To young people everywhere, anything seemed possible. The world, they believed, could be remade in their image. The civil rights movement, the women's movement, the antiwar movement, and the Red Power movement all promised and delivered real change – not just in the United States, but in Canada as well.<sup>1</sup> In 1968, for instance, students at McGill University released the controversial and, for its time and place, revolutionary *Birth Control Handbook*; Mark Satin published the underground bestseller *Manual for Draft-Age Immigrants to Canada* to help young American men resist the draft; and residents of Akwesasne blockaded the Seaway International Bridge at Cornwall, Ontario, as part of its “You are on Indian Land” demonstration.

It was, of course, an accident of history that Lester Pearson resigned when he did. But it was a prodigious one because it allowed Pierre Trudeau to become both the leader of the Liberal Party and the prime minister of Canada. Young, idealistic, and hopeful, he told convention delegates that liberalism “is the only philosophy for our time” because “it is prepared to experiment and innovate and because it knows that the past is less important than the future.”<sup>2</sup> Meanwhile, Paul Hellyer packed his convention speech “with facts about milk prices and wheat prices” and Robert Winters declared that he was “a private-ownership man” who would sell Air Canada if elected. Sensing that Trudeau had all the momentum, a frustrated Winters reminded reporters that choosing a prime minister was a serious matter. “It’s not,” he said, “a psychedelic experience.”<sup>3</sup> But it was 1968. Everything was psychedelic, including, it seems, choosing a prime minister.

To young people, Trudeau was not just another politician. He was a philosopher king; he was a sex symbol; he was a ray of light in a dark world; he was a more fulfilling future. To a young Michael Ignatieff, he was a source of fascination. “My trouble is that I am tired of talking about Trudeau, but somehow can’t seem to stop,” he wrote in 1968. Interrogating his “unrelenting and prurient fascination” with Trudeau, Ignatieff made a perceptive observation. Trudeau was not another Paul Hellyer because he was not really a politician. He was a mythical figure, the sort of figure who is able, however briefly, to transcend a group’s internal divisions, resolve its many contradictions, and reveal its inchoate destinies. “The Americans have always had such a figure at the heart of their mythology and at the centre of their institutions,” noted Ignatieff. “Now we’ve got one, and our frustrations and our aspirations about our country are thrust upon him in anger and in hope.”<sup>4</sup>

1 See Bryan Palmer, *Canada's 1960s: The Ironies of Identity in a Rebellious Era* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009).

2 Quoted in John English, *Citizen of the World: The Life of Pierre Elliott Trudeau* (Toronto: Knopf Canada, 2006), 476.

3 “Candidates make last-minute efforts for today’s vote,” *Globe and Mail* (6 April 1968); “Would sell Air Canada, other Crown Companies if elected, Winters says,” *Globe and Mail* (6 April 1968).

4 Michael Ignatieff, “Trudeau,” *The Varsity* 89, no. 14 (18 October 1968).

The trouble with English Canada's intellectual class is Michael Ignatieff's trouble: it cannot stop talking about Trudeau. Despite the disappointments, the missed opportunities, the petty corruptions, and the vulgar Senate appointments, Trudeau represents its 1968 and its hopes for a new and better day. And, because of this, English Canada's intellectual class is still looking for the next Trudeau.

I

Nino Ricci's biography of Trudeau – *Pierre Elliott Trudeau* (Toronto: Penguin, 2009) – is part of John Ralston Saul's "Extraordinary Canadians" series, which aims to explore the lives of so-called "extraordinary" men and women who, because of their triumphs and their failures, "constitute a mirror of our society." According to Saul, he selected authors on the basis of what he described as their "powerful connection to their subject."<sup>5</sup> David Adams Richards, for example, wrote a biography of Lord Beaverbrook: both are sons of the Miramichi. Ricci, though, is a less obvious choice. He is the child of Italian immigrants and could be considered a child of Trudeau's policy of official multiculturalism. But, at the end of the day, he is from English Canada and not French Canada. One wonders why Saul did not look to a writer from French Canada, someone with a more powerful, and more complicated, connection to Trudeau. Perhaps he tried but could find no takers. After all, Trudeau has become a lightning rod in his native province where he attracts charged – and almost always negative – opinion.

Ricci opens the biography with himself as an eight-year-old child and his first introduction to Pierre Trudeau. It was 1967 and he was in grade two. One day he found himself in the school's audiovisual room. A teacher was watching one of the television sets. He was watching Pierre Trudeau, then a cabinet minister in Lester Pearson's government. "The teacher had an intent look on his face," writes Ricci. "That man is going to be our next prime minister," he said without taking his eyes from the screen." Ricci was also impressed. He got it. Trudeau was not John F. Kennedy and he was not Pope John XXIII. He was not American and he was not a religious leader. He was ours and he was Canadian. It was "as if I had suddenly sensed a different possibility than the ones represented by the two dead Johns in my family's kitchen." For Ricci, Trudeau represented the 1960s and the possibility that a new world could be made. It was not Expo '67 that has since inspired him. It was Trudeau '68. "Expo," Ricci writes, "was not about counterculture but about Culture, with a very capital C – about claiming we actually had one." Ricci, though, is quick to acknowledge that Trudeau was largely an invention. Like Ignatieff, he understands that Trudeau functioned as a sort of blank slate on which Canadians wrote their hopes, fears, anxieties, frustrations, aspirations, and anger. "If he hadn't existed," Ricci writes, "we would have had to invent him. In many ways, of course, we did."<sup>6</sup>

Ricci's biography covers familiar ground: Trudeau's childhood, his education at Collège Jean-de-Brébeuf and the Université de Montréal, his studies abroad and his decision to travel around the world, his return to Quebec and the launch of *Cité Libre*,

5 John Ralston Saul, "Introduction," in Nino Ricci, *Pierre Elliott Trudeau* (Toronto: Penguin, 2009), ix, xi.

6 Ricci, *Trudeau*, 2, 4, 17, 6.

the Quiet Revolution and his decision to enter federal politics, and, finally, his tenure as Canada's longest-serving French Canadian prime minister. Ricci is too good a writer to reduce Trudeau to a thesis statement in the last sentence of the last paragraph of the introduction. But he is also too good a writer not to provide a connecting thread. Drawing on his own background as an Italian Canadian, and summoning the novelist's insight into character, Ricci sees in Trudeau someone who was constantly negotiating his doubleness – his dual identity as the son of a French Canadian father and an English Canadian mother. As a child Ricci had to negotiate his own doubleness, his Italianness on the one hand and his Canadianness on the other: "Somewhere I had got the notion that the true height of being Canadian was to be British, and I had created an alter ego for myself who went around saying things like 'Pip, pip!' and 'Cheerio!' in a broad English accent."<sup>7</sup> Ricci's Trudeau negotiated his doubleness as a child, as an adolescent, and as an adult; he negotiated it at home, at school, and in the Prime Minister's Office. The drive to reconcile his doubleness – and Canada's doubleness – found its fullest expression in the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, a document based on human universality and the appeal to reason and not ethnic particularity and the appeal to emotion.

Although it reads quickly and nicely, Ricci's biography is not without its faults. In many ways, the faults of the book are the faults of the series itself. First, there is no original or primary research. Instead, Ricci relies on Trudeau biographies by John English, Stephen Clarkson and Christina McCall, and Max and Monique Nemni.<sup>8</sup> He acknowledges his many debts, but he does not attempt to repay those debts by any research of his own. This leads him, time and again, to use the conditional voice (i.e., "must have" and "may have") and to also speculate excessively (i.e., "perhaps," "surely," and "likely"). Second, there is the problem of Ricci himself. Although John Ralston Saul wanted his authors to be present, and although he wanted them to bring their particular backgrounds to bear on their subject, Ricci goes too far. Do readers really need to know about his graduate studies in Montreal? His daily sessions with a Freudian analyst? His young man's worrying about "the state of the world"? His "datelessness"?<sup>9</sup> Does any of this advance our understanding of Trudeau? To an extent, all biography is autobiography. But as every writing instructor will tell you, the trick is to show and not tell.

Far more serious than his annoying personal disclosures is Ricci's chapter on the patriation of the constitution with a charter of rights and freedoms and an amending formula. Briefly, Ricci asserts that Trudeau made a promise to Quebecers during the 1980 referendum. Although he gets the date wrong – Trudeau made his speech at Montreal's Paul Sauvé Arena six days before the referendum, not the night before – Ricci correctly states that Trudeau "made it clear that he had no intention of negotiating sovereignty association in the event of a 'Yes' victory but promised to interpret a 'No' as a mandate to begin at once the process of constitutional change."

7 Ricci, *Trudeau*, 3.

8 See John English, *Citizen of the World: The Life of Pierre Elliott Trudeau* (Toronto: Knopf Canada, 2006); Stephen Clarkson and Christina McCall, *Trudeau and Our Times: The Magnificent Obsession* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1990); and Max and Monique Nemni, *Young Trudeau: Son of Quebec, Father of Canada* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 2006).

9 Ricci, *Trudeau*, 185.

But Ricci quickly adopts the destructive mythology of Quebec nationalists when he asserts that Trudeau broke the very promise he made to Quebecers at the height of the referendum. He likens Trudeau to a magician when he charges him with employing a “sleight of hand” to trick Quebecers, he accuses him of “true perfidy” for indicating that the federal government would attempt to patriate unilaterally the constitution with a charter, and he inculcates him in the Night of the Long Knives.<sup>10</sup>

But like the Quebec nationalists who fulminate against Trudeau’s broken promise, Ricci never tells us what, exactly, that promise was because he cannot. For the record, here is the extent of Trudeau’s so-called promise:

And I make a solemn declaration to all Canadians in the other provinces, we, the Quebec MPs, are laying ourselves on the line, because we are telling Quebecers to vote NO and telling you in the other provinces that we will not agree to your interpreting a NO vote as an indication that everything is fine and can remain as it was before. We want change and we are willing to lay our seats in the House on the line to have change.<sup>11</sup>

In other words, it was not much of a promise at all. Besides, Trudeau had always been clear and consistent: change meant patriation of the constitution with a charter of rights and freedoms and an amending formula. It did not mean special status for Quebec. It did not mean more powers for Quebec. It did not mean the recognition of Quebec as a distinct society.<sup>12</sup> The Night of the Long Knives – the night when Ottawa and the provinces stabbed Quebec in the back, leaving it isolated and humiliated – may be powerful mythology, but it is poor history. It conveniently ignores the fact that it was Lévesque who first abandoned the Gang of Eight when he agreed to fight a referendum on the question of patriating the constitution with a charter and an amending formula. Immediately afterwards, one of Lévesque’s closest advisers described it as “the perfect solution for us. We put off the threat for two years and are sure of victory in the referendum.”<sup>13</sup> Only when it became clear that the provinces and the federal government had achieved a consensus without Quebec did Quebec nationalists re-write what had happened: it was Quebec that had been abandoned.

Notwithstanding his chapter on the patriation of the constitution, Ricci presents a sympathetic portrait of Trudeau: the champion of bilingualism, multiculturalism, and the Charter of Rights and Freedoms was neither a saint nor a villain, but he was, and still is, a powerful and lasting presence in Ricci’s life: “In this, it seems, I was not in any way distinctive but entirely typical of my generation.”<sup>14</sup>

10 Ricci, *Trudeau*, 156, 163, 164.

11 Pierre Trudeau, speech at the Paul Sauvé Arena, 14 May 1980. Available at <http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/2/4/h4-4083-e.html>.

12 For Trudeau’s own discussion of the promise, see Pierre Trudeau, *Against the Current: Selected Writings, 1939-1996* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1996), 237-45.

13 Quotation from Max Nemni, “‘Canada in Crisis and the Destructive Power of Myth,’” *Queen’s Quarterly* 99, no. 1 (Spring 1992): 230.

14 Ricci, *Trudeau*, 8.

II

Bruce Powe and Nino Ricci belong to the same generation and, like Ricci, Powe continues to feel Trudeau in his life. To come to some kind of terms with that presence, he did what writers do: he wrote a book. *Mystic Trudeau: The Fire and the Rose* (Toronto: Thomas Allen, 2007) is not a biography of Trudeau, although it provides biographical information. It is not a memoir of a friendship, although it recounts Powe's many meetings with Trudeau in Montreal. It is not an academic monograph, although it is a work of philosophy and communication theory. Rather, it is an extended and open-ended séance with a ghost and, ultimately, it is an attempt to relight the flame of 1968 before it, like Trudeau, disappears into hearsay.

As it turns out, a 13-year-old Powe was at the leadership convention in Ottawa with his father, a powerful Liberal and a supporter of John Turner. But it was not Turner who captured Powe's imagination. It was Trudeau. Hiding them from his father, Powe secretly pinned Trudeau buttons to the inside of his jacket. "In 1968 Trudeau had the aura of heretical youth," Powe recalls. "His wave to the crowd after his victory – a gesture caught in many photographs – seemed to be at once a signal to the airwaves and a beckoning to the future. We felt the nearness of dreams, the world turning towards the new." The convention, Trudeau himself, and the sense that a break could be made "with the cold status quo of impersonal structures" shaped a young, idealistic Powe: "Events of our youth forever guide us."<sup>15</sup>

*Mystic Trudeau* is actually two books, one intertwined with the other but also separated one from the other by a different font. The first book is a conversation with Trudeau the ghost and a consideration of what Powe calls the electric global village. Deeply personal and addressed to Pierre, it is also opaque and, frankly, self-indulgent: "So I've set aside time to contemplate what you meant to me and to us. Pierre, the conversation continues." These "conversations" do not, in the end, add up to much. All too often, Powe loses his reader in incomprehensible jargon. Speaking to Pierre, for instance, he writes: "You resided in the numinousness of the e-cosmos, the compulsion of epiphanies and synergy of tremors and plenitude that make up the *mysterium tremendum et fascinans* of the new information networks."<sup>16</sup> We defy anyone to tell us what this means.

The second book is a memoir of sorts of Powe's friendship with Trudeau who, at this point, is now retired and living in Montreal. They would meet for an extended lunch to discuss books, ideas, politics, and, at least once, their respective marriages. To be sure, this book provides a number of amusing anecdotes. On one occasion, Trudeau rushes to help an elderly woman who has fallen. As she is helped to her feet, she says, "You look like that awful fellow who defeated that nice Joe Clark." Trudeau only laughs while the woman walks away muttering something about "damn lookalikes." Powe asks him why he did not tell the woman who he was. "Why would I do that?" he responded.<sup>17</sup> Here we catch a glimpse of a humble Trudeau – a man who did not need to tell everyone that yes, he was prime minister of Canada for 15 years.

15 B.W. Powe, *Mystic Trudeau: The Fire and the Rose* (Toronto: Thomas Allen, 2007), 217, 216.

16 Powe, *Mystic Trudeau*, 34-35, 92.

17 Powe, *Mystic Trudeau*, 96.

The second book is also an examination of Trudeau as a myth and as a mystic. Powe's Trudeau is a spiritual man who wanted to realize the soul's deepest yearnings for communion with an ultimate reality. He was a politician who believed that the "Universal Spirit," and not national or ethnic particularities, "would provide guiding brilliance." He was a prime minister who invited his country to realize its vision of a just society. A mythical figure, Trudeau revealed our hidden longings, he articulated our inarticulate aspirations, and he aroused our collective passions. "From an early age I felt from afar the importance of Trudeau's political engagement," Powe writes. "The sense of calling in him was impossible to ignore. It was about more than politics. It was about mind, intelligence, society and culture directed towards a new kind of inspired consciousness."<sup>18</sup>

*Mystic Trudeau* is a difficult book to read, not the least because it jumps from topic to topic and from font to font. It does not help that Powe deliberately eschews chronology. He wanted to write a book, he tells us, that moved away "from chronology and history and towards mystical biography, the contours and mythologies of spirit and soul." He wanted to "catch the vitalist waves of the e-cosmos." And he wanted to "dispense with linear sequence, and work with epiphanies and radiances, incidents and traces of dialogue, in expanding spheres of learning and knowing."<sup>19</sup> In other words, he wanted form to match content.

But one gets the sense that there was more at play in Powe's decision to write a non-linear, ahistorical book than the desire to marry form to content. Simply put, Powe does not like history because it gets in the way. The historical Trudeau overshadows the mythical Trudeau while Trudeau the politician overshadows Trudeau the mystic. At one of their lunches, for example, the conversation turned to liberty and equality of opportunity. Trudeau told Powe that as a young man in his twenties he had been obsessed with liberty. "But when I entered politics I changed my mind," maintained Trudeau. "I began to feel that equality of opportunity was one of the most important factors in that trinity of liberty, equality and fraternity." Powe was impressed, even moved: "Typically, when he spoke in this way he glared into you. I had the sensation I was being X-rayed. He made slicing gestures with his hands. Yet his voice remained quiet, his tone was steady." Trudeau, notes Powe, then went on to expand on the importance of equality of opportunity. "What," he asked, "if only the wealthy have liberty? The underprivileged, the weak, the desperate, the sick, the elderly, may need equality in society to establish justice." Then, "reaching into his mind to find the next words," Trudeau said, "Liberty . . . it's still essential to me. But equality of opportunity must be the essence of a just society."<sup>20</sup>

That's it? That's all there is? That is our philosopher king? Trudeau's musings about only the wealthy having liberty – about the contradictions between the equality of opportunity and the equality of condition – are neither original nor profound. Indeed, they stem from a long tradition in the history of political thought. "Man is born free," Rousseau wrote, "and everywhere he is in chains."<sup>21</sup> Liberty, Mary

18 Powe, *Mystic Trudeau*, 8, 30.

19 Powe, *Mystic Trudeau*, 11.

20 Powe, *Mystic Trudeau*, 236-7.

21 Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Social Contract and Discourses* (London: J.M. Dent, 1993), 181.



Wollstonecraft reminded us, is a wonderful idea that has yet to be realized because “the demon of property has ever been at hand to encroach on the sacred rights of men.”<sup>22</sup> Put another way, some people can afford liberty and others cannot. Moreover, Powe does not interrogate Trudeau’s comments with history. He might have asked him about his government’s introduction of wage and price controls in 1975, which organized labour always understood as an attack on the collective bargaining process. It was, labour said, the “Wage Measures Act.” Or Powe might have asked him why his government never implemented a guaranteed annual income to fight poverty in Canada. If he did not want to ask such questions at the time, he could have asked them after the fact or he could have asked them in his book. But that would have turned the séance into an exorcism, which is something, one suspects, Powe desperately wanted to avoid. His Trudeau is a benevolent ghost, not an evil spirit; his Trudeau is the just society, not Wollstonecraft’s demon of property.

Powe’s book is about Trudeau and what he thinks Trudeau meant. But it is also about the 1960s and Powe’s own youth. “Trudeau embodied a portion of the time’s pressure and calling,” he tells us. He “was a creature of the 1960s.” Although Powe was too young to go to Woodstock, he was old enough, he says, “to understand the longings in its songs and cries for peace.” Rock and roll, love and peace, freedom and possibility, the sixties in general and 1968 in particular: to English Canada’s intellectual class, this is what Trudeau represented and represents. In mythologizing him, it is mythologizing its own lost youth. In looking for the next Trudeau, it is looking for the fountain of youth. It is waiting, Powe tells us in his final sentence, “for the opening to come again.”<sup>23</sup>

### III

Michael Ignatieff carries a heavy burden. Is he that opening? Is he the next Trudeau? The comparisons are easy to make. In the same way that Trudeau was a public intellectual who believed in the power of ideas, Ignatieff is a public intellectual who believes in the power of ideas. In the same way that Trudeau was cultured and urbane, Ignatieff is cultured and urbane. And in the same way that Trudeau was largely unknown to English Canada, Ignatieff is largely unknown to English Canada. To this end, towards making himself known, Ignatieff has written a memoir of his mother’s side of the family: the Grants.

*True Patriot Love: Four Generations in Search of Canada* (Toronto: Viking, 2009) links the story of the Grant family to the larger story of Canada. Ignatieff’s great-grandfather was George Monro Grant, a minister, writer, and, most famously, principal of Queen’s University. An ardent imperialist, Grant believed in Canada’s connection to Great Britain but he also believed in Canada’s destiny as a great and wealthy nation. Ignatieff, though, says that his great-grandfather’s identity was a paradox. It was not. There was nothing paradoxical about it. To that generation, Canadianness meant Britishness. Britishness was not something imported from outside English Canada. It was native to English Canada. In any event, Grant believed Canada’s destiny lay in the west and in its exploration, settlement, and ultimate transformation into the breadbasket

22 Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Men* (Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 1996), 17.

23 Powe, *Mystic Trudeau*, 32, 215-16, 262.

of the world. In 1872 he served as secretary to Sandford Fleming's expedition across Canada to survey the route for the Canadian Pacific Railway; his subsequent book, *Ocean to Ocean*, was an optimistic assessment of this country's potential and what he called its "distinctive mission." That distinctive mission, though, came at a cost – a cost paid disproportionately by Aboriginal peoples. Their dispossession was at the heart of the colonial and national projects and, like nearly everyone else at that time and in that place, Grant believed in the notion of the "disappearing Indian": "It may be said that, do what we like, the Indians as a race, must eventually die out."<sup>24</sup> Ignatieff acknowledges the blindness of his great-grandfather and the price Aboriginal peoples paid, but he fails to extinguish the romance of his ocean-to-ocean trek and his "promotion of a national dream."<sup>25</sup> On the contrary, Ignatieff wants to rekindle that romance; he wants, he told the *Globe and Mail*'s Michael Valpy, "to connect with the romantic vision of the country that his great-grandfather held."<sup>26</sup>

George Grant's son, and Michael Ignatieff's grandfather, was William Lawson Grant, a historian, writer, and eventually principal of Upper Canada College. Like his father, Grant believed in Canada's connection to Great Britain and the British Empire. Although 42 years old, he enlisted in the Canadian Expeditionary Force, saw active duty on the Western Front, was invalided, and returned home. According to Ignatieff, his grandfather now believed that Canada's destiny lay in its independence and not in its membership in some imperial federation. "In the cauldron of war," Ignatieff writes, "a new identity was born and an old identity died away."<sup>27</sup> Not exactly, for although many English Canadians looked forward to Canada's independence in a new British Commonwealth they still saw themselves as British.<sup>28</sup>

George Grant, Ignatieff's uncle and the third generation of the Grant family, certainly saw himself as British and his famous lament was precisely that – a lament for Canada's British connection. Grant got many things wrong: his acidic remarks about Lester Pearson and the Liberal Party were ill-judged, his declaration of Canada's impossibility was incorrect, and his prediction of its disappearance was misplaced. "So he was wrong," Ignatieff writes. "Wrong. And wrong again."<sup>29</sup> But *Lament for a Nation* is really two books. The first is an indictment of Pearson and the Liberal Party, but the second is an indictment of capitalism and liberalism. Here Grant was not always right, but he was not always wrong either. He was right, for example, to worry about "a way of life based on the principle that the most important activity is profit-making." He was right to worry about "the conquest of nature." He was right to worry about the re-definition of human beings "in terms of their capacity to consume." And, finally, he was right about Harvard liberalism. It was, Grant said, "surely nobler when William James opposed the Spanish-

24 George Grant, *Ocean to Ocean* (Toronto: James Campbell, 1873), 96, 367.

25 Michael Ignatieff, *True Patriot Love: Four Generations in Search of Canada* (Toronto: Viking, 2009), 56.

26 Michael Valpy, "Being Michael Ignatieff," *Globe and Mail* (25 August 2006).

27 Ignatieff, *True Patriot Love*, 102.

28 See Phillip Buckner, "The Long Goodbye: English Canadians and the British World," in *Rediscovering the British World*, ed. Phillip Buckner and R. Douglas Francis (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2005), 181-208.

29 Ignatieff, *True Patriot Love*, 150.



American war than when Arthur Schlesinger Jr. advised Kennedy on Cuban policy.”<sup>30</sup> And, one might point out, Harvard liberalism was surely nobler when Arthur Schlesinger advised Kennedy on Cuban policy than when Michael Ignatieff supported the Iraq war.

In his final chapter, Ignatieff takes us along for the ride, as it were, when he and his family retrace the 1872 journey of his great-grandfather (which, parenthetically, began in Halifax and not in Thunder Bay like the Ignatieffs’). With the Ignatieffs we visit museums and interpretive centres, listen to country music on a scratchy car radio, and stop at gas stations “that sell fishing licenses and rent boats.” In Edmonton, Ignatieff makes the obligatory trip to the West Edmonton Mall where, without a hint of irony, he beholds its many “wonders,” including “a beach with plastic palms,” “water slides,” and “a pirate ship in the middle of a supermarket.”<sup>31</sup> “The purpose of life,” George Grant sighed, “is consumption.”<sup>32</sup> If Ignatieff thought of his uncle while taking in the spectacle of the world’s largest palace of consumption, he does not tell us.

In addition to his search for the best homemade pie in western Canada, Ignatieff ponders the meaning of Canada. It is, he said, an “affirmation.” It affirms hard work, compromise, tolerance, daring entrepreneurship, and possibility. But there is more to be done, more to affirm. To this end, Ignatieff offers a few insights into his policy vision: a national energy grid, a petroleum reserve, a better Trans-Canada Highway, a high-speed railway between Windsor and Quebec City, and (again, without a hint of irony) a willingness on Canada’s part to form its “own coalitions of the willing” in the international arena.<sup>33</sup> On the environment he writes only 29 words. In the face of global climate change and a melting polar ice cap, Ignatieff offers one sentence. Canadians in general and young people in particular want more. Talking to them about reducing inter-provincial trade barriers is like talking to them about “milk prices and wheat prices.”

The burden of being the next Trudeau is an impossible one and it is unfair to place that burden on Ignatieff’s shoulders. But the fact that English Canada’s intellectual class talks about Trudeau – and about the next Trudeau – to the extent that it does speaks volumes about its own longings and about its hopes for a new and better day. Trudeau represents that hope. He represents, in effect, the flame of 1968. If that flame is to be found, though, it will be found not in the next Trudeau but in the dreams of people around the world who yearn for other ways of living because, after all, that is where it always has been.

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30 George Grant, *Lament for a Nation* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2003), 61, 78, 100, 103.

31 Ignatieff, *True Patriot Love*, 159, 163.

32 Grant, *Lament for a Nation*, 100.

33 Ignatieff, *True Patriot Love*, 173.