

THE PERSUASIVENESS OF GRANT'S LAMENT FOR A NATION

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Canadians do not take George Grant seriously enough to sacrifice a modern standard of living for political and cultural sovereignty. Nevertheless Grant's *Lament* remains a classic, a book which many Canadian readers revisit perhaps in an attempt to understand their condition. If so, one might ask why a people who have left the farm for the city and who presumably subscribe to a faith in progress would accept Grant's nostalgic celebration of a beautiful and ordered Canada which never existed except perhaps as a hope or memory. As Leacock has written in the "Old Farm in the New Frame," "most people who came off the farms never go back. They talk about it but they don't really go. They know better." When Leacock's narrator attempts to return to his past, he is confronted only by a prettier, brighter and redecorated village, a no-where for tourists, which makes him long even more intensely for a past which is now suddenly recognized to be "grim and sober":

What charm is this, what magic this transformation? I hardly know the place; in fact I don't know it. The whole length of it now is neat with clipped grass and the next-to-impossible flowers copied from the motor car advertisements; there are the trim little cedars and box hedges, trees clipped to a Versailles perfection and house fronts all aglow with variegated paint and hanging flowers. . . . And the signs, what a multitude of them; it's like a mediaeval fair! "Old English Tea Room"! I didn't know this was England! And no, it isn't; see the next sign "Old Dutch Tea Room," and "Old Colony Rest House" and "Normandy Post House"! No, it's not England; I don't know where it is.'

The reader of both Leacock and Grant knows that we cannot really turn back and that the only train back to Mariposa is the nostalgic train of thought which takes its departure from the urban setting of the Mausoleum Club, and he also knows that the myth or memory of a Garden of Eden from which we have been dispossessed has little historical relation to the tough pioneer realities of Canada past and present. I contend, however, that Grant's *Lament* is angled in such a way that it undermines the unexamined beliefs of such a reader.

¹Stephen Leacock, "The Old Farm and the New Frame," in *My Remarkable Uncle* (Toronto, 1965), p. 24.

Although Susanna Moodie's *Roughing it in the Bush* cannot be taken as an objective chronicle of pioneer realities in the 1830's, her construction of Canada's past can be used to bring Grant's mythical past into sharper focus. Moodie does not picture an ordered or temperate climate but wild extremes of heat and chill. She presents the English gentlemen attempting rather unsuccessfully to bear up and to retain their integrity as they are surrounded by Yankee neighbours, or "Republican rabble," an uncouth predatory people with no sense of propriety or limitation. As Moodie attempts to account for this predatory spirit, she describes even her compatriots, the emigrating Scots, embarking at Grosse Isle in the *St. Lawrence* as instantly infected with the spirit of the place and transformed into a mob of Yahoos. Moodie also points to the bush which is no ordered garden, no pastoral middle ground between the howling wilderness and the decadent city. Instead, the bush, as she describes it, is a destructive, tangled maze which threatens to wear down the spirit and manners of the cultivated emigrant. From this picture of the wilderness, the plot follows consistently. The Moodie's move from *their* idealized past, the British village, and they attempt to carry to Canada romantic modes of thought which might fit the British countryside, but which do not fit the raw Canadian bush farm. The ending of Moodie's book turns almost full circle as the Moodies retreat from the bush and return to the nearest equivalent to the British village, Belleville, where Mr. Moodie takes up the post of Sheriff. In Mrs. Moodie's last words, the Canadian setting has been nothing to her except a prison house.² Elsewhere, however, in her rather contradictory collection of sketches, she represents Canada as her land and her children's land of hope: her vision remains courageous as she is forever showing herself and her family overcoming adversity.

Just as Moodie in her highest moments sees hope in the people who live in the rough Canadian setting, Grant celebrates beauty and goodness born out of adversity. In *Technology and Empire* Grant celebrates not only pioneer Canada but pioneer North America, as he shows an awareness of the tough, "worldly asceticism" which has been created by "the meeting of the alien and yet conquerable land with English-speaking Protestants."³ Like Moodie, Grant is well aware of how that pioneering experience forced the migrants to discipline their minds and bodies as if they were merely instruments of survival. He is aware of the complex causes which created a joyless attitude to life and the loss of the contemplative attitude regarding the mysteries of man, nature, and God. Like Moodie, he is well aware of the pioneer's difficult yet heroic battle to make a new life for himself: "To know that parents had to force the instinct of their children to the service of pioneering control; to have seen the pained and unrelenting faces of the women; to know, even in one's flesh and dreams, the results of generations of the mechanising of the body; to see all around one the excesses and follies now necessary to people who can win back the body only through sexuality.

²I develop this argument more fully elsewhere. See R. D. MacDonald, "Design and Purpose," *Canadian Literature*, No. 51 (Winter 1972).

³George Grant, "In Defence of North America," in *Technology and Empire* (Toronto, 1969), p. 19.

must not be to forget what was necessary and what was heroic in that conquest."⁴ Again, in *Technology and Empire*, Grant takes a tough-minded view of the past and of his own book, *Lament for a Nation*: he denies that his lament is founded merely upon a "harking back in nostalgia to the British empire and old fashioned Canada." He asserts that his argument is primarily a reaction against the modern-industrial-liberal levelling or homogenisation of "indigenous traditions." Yet later he declares, through a rhetorical question, our need to find the universal through the particular: "...is it not also true that only through some particular roots, however partial, can human beings first grasp what is good and it is the juice of such roots which for most men sustain their partaking in a more universal good?"⁵

Grant forces one, however, to wonder about the reality of these "indigenous traditions" or "particular roots" because Grant ironically dismisses the possibility of Canada's being a particular place engendering a particular culture or nation: "Was British conservatism likely, then, to continue as a force to make English-speaking Canada independent? If not, what would? The Laurentian Shield and the Eskimos?"⁶ Again while arguing that the pioneer's brutal mastering of the land prevented the Canadian from receiving the spirit of the place, Grant brings into doubt the possibility of an indigenous Canadian culture which might permit resistance to modernist or American homogenisation: "That conquering relation to place has left its mark within us. When we go into the Rockies we may have some sense that gods are there. But if so, they cannot manifest themselves to us as ours. They are the gods of another race, and we cannot know them because of what we are, and what we did. There can be nothing immemorial for us except the environment as object."⁷ The effect of such an experience, says Grant, is a sense of "homelessness" or, what in *Time as History* he calls, being "without horizon."

How then can Grant possibly create a sense of the lost "home" when he denies our relation to the objective world around us? What parochial root can he possibly establish for us if we are to resist "levelling" or "homogenisation"? Certainly attachment to the land, to something approaching the mythic Garden, must be minor. Grant's strategy therefore is to set the mythic Garden at a shadowy remove and to concentrate instead upon the mythic character, Adam, who is dispossessed of the Garden. Even at that, perhaps for the sake of appearing objective and thereby credible, in the introduction to a later edition, Grant disguises his mythic norm by suggesting that in a world of "technological progressivism and personal self-assertion," "a writer has a greater responsibility to ridicule the widespread ignoble delusions than to protect the few remaining beliefs which might result in nobility." And further: "protecting romantic hopes of Canadian nationalism is a second responsibility."⁸ One must ask, however,

⁴"In Defence of North America," p. 25.

⁵Grant, "Canadian Fate and Imperialism," in *Technology and Empire*, pp. 68-69.

⁶Grant, *Lament for a Nation* (Toronto, 1970), p. 74.

⁷Grant, "In Defence of North America," p. 17.

⁸"Introduction to the Carleton Library Edition," *Lament for a Nation*, pp. xi-xii.

whether the primary responsibility is really the ridiculing of the "ignoble delusions"? In *The Lament* itself Grant suggests surely that one cannot ridicule the "ignoble" without a primal conception of and commitment to the noble: to be dismayed by evil or the absurd implies a prior commitment to order and goodness. Thus the *Lament* itself *does* establish a mythic norm, a noble character-type, through the opposing terms of British conservatism and American republicanism — an antithesis whose Canadian antecedents might be found in Moodie's British gentleman and American con-artist and in Haliburton's sober Squire and ebullient Slick. Speaking of the character-type or spirit in the most generalized terms, Grant writes:

It was an inchoate desire to build, in these cold and forbidding regions, a society with a greater sense of order and restraint than the freedom-loving republicanism would allow. It was no better defined than a kind of suspicion that we in Canada could be less lawless and have a greater sense of propriety than the United States. . . . English speaking Canadians have been called a dull and costive lot. In these dynamic days, such qualities are particularly unattractive to the chic.

Yet our stodginess has made us a society of greater simplicity, formality, and perhaps even innocence than the people to the south.⁹

If not republicanism, and if not a new cultural or political type bred from a new relation to the new land, surely what Grant is describing above is the transplanted conservatism of the British, a conservatism already eroded by the very fact of the outward movement of the British empire. John Diefenbaker, then, in his allegiance to the British empire becomes the dispossessed Adam who retains his integrity in defeat, the incarnation of what had been beautiful and good in Canada and Britain, the rallying point from which the reader must resist the further absorption of Canada by the modern or American condition.

Grant's mythic design may be summarized as follows: a man of nobility and integrity has fallen, and his fall involves more than himself as it signifies the passing of something great and good, an order of life which had something sacred attached to it. The loss of this goodness, however, was inevitable; it was necessary; it was part of a larger movement, a new spirit whose roots lay centuries back, but a new spirit, a new way of thinking, which destroyed the soil out of which it grew. Yet even this loss of what was seen to be good may in the largest scheme of things not be evil. Consequently, the book ends with the speaker, in an impersonal voice like that of a Greek chorus, suggesting that perhaps it is improper to lament. He does not know what the future holds in store for us. He *does* know that when one cannot answer the most important questions, tradition is the best basis for the practical life. But he has already shown how tradition itself has been eroded by the new questioning Renaissance spirit, and so he turns to courage, the same courage manifested through his hero, John Diefenbaker, a courage

⁹*Lament*, p. 70.

which could permit mankind to do more than endure the unendurable — to prevail. The last lines of the book, an echo from tradition and an assertion of a strange religious hope, are what make me think of Faulkner's word "prevail" rather than "endure." From Virgil and translated: "They were holding their arms outstretched in love toward the further shore." Who could not respect such a magnanimous response to life's apparent betrayal? I say "apparent" because the speaker or the chorus has already suggested that despite the dissolution of the old human order, there is somehow an even larger immutable order within which the new spirit, the new dissolving spirit, is working: "Beyond courage, it is also possible to live in the ancient faith which asserts that changes in the world, even if they be recognised more as a loss than a gain, take place within an eternal order that is not affected by their taking place."¹⁰ Whether or not, then, as various critics have suggested,¹¹ the basic movement of the book be false or true to "life," the movement as abstracted above follows closely the tragic form of drama. As in the conventional tragic dénouement, the voice moves to an overview which is serenely magnanimous. The voice is still lamenting something good which was lost. It is even yet a voice intensely aware of loss but now a voice reconciled to the inevitability, not a voice in any way rejoicing in change itself but a voice finally and quietly convinced that these apparently earth-shaking events take place within a much larger scheme which goes beyond man and contains man.

Grant's voice is in the final analysis complex and humane, far more complex than the voice he ascribes earlier to his antagonists, the liberals, technocrats and "moderns," who, in Grant's characterization, celebrate in a silly way the bursting of tradition and its heroes and the advent of the "brave new world." The design I have traced may be compared to the complex mood and movement of Shakespearean tragedy. In Shakespearean terms, Grant's dramatization of Diefenbaker's fall presents the Liberals as the "new men," those without attachment to the old order or tradition, the new men whom Shakespeare apparently recognized as the germs of the future in Machiavelli's political philosophy, the new men who shrewdly employ whatever means suit their end, an end which is finally the assertion of power for its own sake. In Shakespeare's characterization, the new man may be the natural son, like Edmund in *King Lear* who is outside civilization: he is illegitimate, literally outside the law, beyond any loyalty except that of self-power.¹² Grant differs from the tragedian Shakespeare in that his

¹⁰*Lament*, p. 97.

¹¹John Porter, "Canadian Character in the Twentieth Century," *The American Academy of Political and Social Sciences*, March 1967. Porter writes about a "negative archetype": "Canadian poets have been found to express a melancholy, a feeling of resignation to misery, isolation and the feeling that man is 'encompassed by forces beyond his ability to control which strike out repeatedly and blindly to destroy him.'" Porter here quotes McDougall, "The Dodo and the Cruising Auk," *Canadian Literature* (Autumn 1963). Porter sees little more of Grant than Grant's image of "ourselves like fish left on the shores of a drying lake." Porter's assumptions seem basically American in their expectation of the "positive."

¹²See J. F. Danby's *Shakespeare's Doctrine of Nature; A Study of King Lear* (London 1962).

antagonists are little more than "bastards" while Shakespeare's antagonists become all too complexly human and indeed attractive in their clever villainy. Grant's tone (as will be seen later) is much more shrill, his villains, despite his apparently serene dénouement, little more than caricatures, or cardboard bastards.

Consider the stance which Grant has promised. He promises to be a man lamenting; his work will be a meditation upon what was good and what has passed away and upon what the new implies. The *Lament* as "meditation" should be emphasized because it implies something private, and yet so thoughtful that it becomes almost impersonal, like the voice one would expect in the tragic dénouement. From the following then one would not expect to find partisan argument or propaganda:

It is interesting to speculate why Diefenbaker raised the concentrated wrath of the established classes. Most of his critics claim that he is dominated by ambition, almost to the point of egomania. They also claimed (while he was still in office) that he was dangerous because he was an astute politician who put personal power first. Yet his actions turned the ruling class into a pack howling for his blood. Astute politicians, who are only interested in political power, simply do not act in this way. There must be something false or something missing in this description of his actions. To search for a consistent description is partly why I have written this book.

Grant's declared purpose is to transcend contemporary politics, to get beyond personalities, to get beyond ideology and polemics, in order to see clearly and consistently what has happened. He continues:

The search must be related to the title of this meditation. To lament is to cry out at the death or at the dying of something loved. This lament mourns the end of Canada as a sovereign state. Political laments are not usual in the age of progress, because most people think that society always moves forward to better things. Lamentation is not an indulgence in despair or cynicism. In a lament for a child's death, there is not only pain and regret, but also a celebration of passed good. "I cannot but remember such things that were most precious to me!" In Mozart's great threnody, the countess sings of *la memoria di quel bene*. One cannot argue the meaninglessness of the world from the facts of evil, because what could evil deprive us of, if we had not some prior knowledge of good?

What Grant says here might explain a connection that could be made between the pastoral and dystopic modes of writing. In the pastoral mode one receives an impression of a past which was good. In the dystopic mode one receives an impression of a disintegrating present which can be seen only because of the after-image of the pastoral memory. Grant continues:

The situation of absolute despair does not allow a man to write. In the theatre of the absurd, dramatists like Ionesco and Beckett do not escape this dilemma. They pretend to absolute despair and yet pour out novels and plays. When a man truly despairs, he does not write; he commits suicide. At the other extreme, there are the saints who know that the destruction of good serves the supernatural end; therefore they cannot lament. Those who write laments may have heard the proposition of the saints, but they do not know that they are true. A lament arises from a condition that is common to the majority of men, for we are situated between despair and absolute certainty.¹³

At the end of the first chapter, Grant promises again that he will do no more than lament: he is not the man to offer some solution that will save us. His will not be a practical or polemical argument, but instead a measured argument which explores the passing of the old temporal order and the creation of the new spirit. He writes:

This meditation is limited to lamenting. It makes no practical proposals for our survival as a nation. It argues that Canada's disappearance was a matter of necessity. But how can one lament necessity — or, if you will, fate? The noblest of men love it; the ordinary accept it; the narcissists rail against it. But I lament it as a celebration of memory; in this case, the memory of that tenuous hope that was the principle of my ancestors. The insignificance of that hope in the endless ebb and flow of nature does not prevent us from mourning. At least we can say with Richard Hooker: 'Posterity may know we have not loosely through silence permitted things to pass away as in a dream.'¹⁴

Despite what Grant declares, he does more than lament, and he does more than celebrate a noble aspiration. His pattern of words, images, and argument often imply a more than meditative and mournful exploration of truth. As will be seen later, the voice is shrill, the body and texture of the prose polemical. The odd mixture of shrillness and calmness can be seen by noting the pastoral myth which lies behind Grant's tragic vision, a pastoral myth which Grant and his reader must know has never been an actuality nor even an agreed fiction in the Canadian setting. In biblical myth, dispossessed man longs for the simple existence of the Garden of Eden. In the political realm, the conservative nostalgically recalls a similar golden age and recoils in dismay from what seems a tawdry present and future. Following the myth of the fall, Canada of the nineteenth century becomes the Garden, and John Diefenbaker, as the twentieth-century incarnation of that nineteenth century, becomes a heroic yet confused Adam who falls yet retains his integrity. In Grant's polemical rendering of the myth, which concentrates more upon the fall and its aftermath than upon its pastoral

¹³*Lament for a Nation*, pp. 2-3. ¹⁴*Lament*, pp. 5-6.

prelude, Eve and the serpent, the betrayers of Canada and Diefenbaker, become Pearson and the Liberal Party, the modernist party of innovation, skepticism, and science:

When [Canadians] oblate themselves before 'the American way of life', they offer themselves on the altar of the reigning Western goddess. When Pearson set out on his electoral campaign of 1963, he was photographed reading Will Durant's *The Dawning of the Age of Reason*. To Durant the age of reason is the age of progress. The book was therefore appropriate reading for Pearson, who was about to persuade Canadians to adopt American atomic arms.¹⁵

The liberals, like Milton's serpent, become the party which opposes any limitations because limitations inhibit freedom, progress, and the enjoyment of power. Of course, while the mythic serpent is not alluded to directly, he stands in the background as a shadowy dangerous force and is most fully manifested in Grant's satirical characterization of the American or modernist spirit. Adam stands not so much as an inhabitant of the Garden but as the dispossessed tenant, removed from a world which had manifested something sacred and timeless, living now in a new world of chaos which is contained, perhaps, in some shadowy and distant order.

Moving from the mythic core, consider now Grant's design as it is manifested in the arrangement of chapters. Chapter I presents Grant's description of purpose and stance: the book is to be a lament begun in the aftermath of the fall. The second movement, Chapters II and III, comprise Grant's chronicle of Diefenbaker's reign and then his fall. The next movement, Chapter IV through Chapter VI, comprises Grant's discussion of liberalism, which is juxtaposed against the earlier analysis of conservatism seen in the first three chapters. Thus in Chapter IV, Grant presents us with the justification of the conquering liberals and then, against them, Grant's rebuttal. Grant considers for the moment DeGaulleism and Castroism as possible alternatives to liberalism or Americanism. He then undercuts these alternatives to the American or the liberal way. This dialectic leads to his conclusion about the inevitability of the liberal's ideas being realized in time. (To Grant, awareness of inevitability does not imply an assumption of progress.) In the next chapter, Chapter V, Grant describes the modern spirit and argues that the United States is its purest manifestation. The United States becomes the epitome of a dynamic society as opposed to a reactionary or static one. To support this argument, Grant ironically presents arguments of the American conservatives who insist that the United States (rather than being a country which grows willy-nilly) is based upon a tradition and constitution protecting freedom, and Grant ironically presents the arguments of the Russian Marxists who believe that the United States is reactionary rather than progressive. Grant's rebuttal follows as Americanism is seen to be the purest expression of modernism or unrestrained dynamism and to be opposed to the Marxian hope of order and belief in restraint.

¹⁵*Lament*, p. 54.

It seems consistent therefore for Grant to move in Chapter VI to a description of conservatism which implies the impossibility of conservatism in our age, for Grant has represented liberalism as a dissolvant, destroying the traditions from which it has grown. The corrosive agent in the liberal outlook is the pretension to objectivity and the skepticism which does not accept the authority of received wisdom. In the last section of the book, Grant moves to the ironic resolution of Chapter VII, the ironic celebration of Canada's death. The reader sees the economic justification for the direction Canada has taken, the argument that we have moved to a wider and richer continental horizon. Following upon this is Grant's rebuttal, then the political justification and again Grant's rebuttal, and finally his question regarding the propriety of lamenting. Should we lament? How can we lament when we do not know whether in the long run this change has been for good or ill? This widened perspective diminishes the particulars of Grant's Canadian drama: his focus moves far beyond the particular question of Canada's final good as he alludes to a religious awareness of an order containing all man's activities.

In each movement, Grant typically sets up an argument, often one which appears to be his own. The argument ascends; the implication is worked out consistently within that framework and worked out strongly. Then Grant turns around quite deliberately and destroys that apparent voice of reason. For example, Grant poses the economic and political arguments of the liberals: the new relationship of Canada and the United States will provide opportunity for the young, wider opportunity and higher employment. The new philosophy will permit or encourage a greater degree of freedom and greater equality. Close alliance with the States will bring the constitutional equality of individuals, authority having been more fully operative than constitutional equality heretofore in Canada. The integration of Canada into the United States will be a step towards internationalism or perhaps world federalism. In the quotation below, Grant can be seen ironically posing the arguments of his opponents, in an apparently serious manner, for the sake of undercutting them:

It has already been argued that, because of our modern assumptions about human good, Canada's disappearance is necessary. In deciding whether continentalism is good, one is making a judgement about progressive political philosophy and its interpretation of history. Those who dislike continentalism are in some sense rejecting that progressive interpretation. It can only be with an enormous sense of hesitation that one dares to question modern political philosophy. If its assumptions are false, the age of progress has been a tragic aberration in the history of the species. To assert such a proposition lightly would be the height of irresponsibility.¹⁶

This is where Grant in his tentativeness *seems* to take upon himself entirely the guise of the skeptical liberal. Then he trots out the liberals' arguments, only to undercut them later:

¹⁶Lament, pp. 88-92.

Has it not been in the age of progress that disease and overwork, hunger and poverty, have been drastically reduced? Those who criticize our age must at the same time contemplate pain, infant mortality, crop failures in isolated areas and the sixteen-hour day. As soon as that is said [here Grant is turning the argument around] facts about our age must also be remembered. The increasing outbreaks of impersonal ferocity, the banality of existence in technological societies, the pursuit of expansion as an end in itself. Will it be good for men to control their genes? The possibility of nuclear destruction and mass starvation may be no more terrible than that of man tampering with the roots of his humanity. Interference with human nature seems to the moderns the hope of a higher species in the ascent of life. To others it may seem that man in his pride could corrupt his very being. The powers of manipulation now available may portend the most complete tyranny imaginable. At least, it is feasible, to wonder whether modern assumptions may be basically inhuman.¹⁷

The dying note at this particular point is consistent with Grant's myth of the fall and the design of his book. But one must look closer at the dialectical style itself, the argument that continually turns in upon itself. Certainly the continued opposition of thesis and antithesis and then a synthesis, which is a falling away, suggests consistent pessimism and skepticism which are appropriate enough to the theme and the myth of the fall. But Grant's wilful writhing from side to side suggests not a mournful exploration of truth but a kind of intellectual wrestling with himself and his reader for a principle or spirit which is not yet lost.

Considering Grant's language and characterization, again one might find the writing to be rather polemical for a lament. At the beginning of his book, Grant points an accusing and satirical finger at the journalists of *The Globe and Mail* and *Time* magazine and at the suburban women and university intellectuals at cocktail parties who enjoyed their easy ridicule of John Diefenbaker. What he objects to are their arguments *ad hominem*, their avoidance of Diefenbaker's policy and practice, what the man really said and did. Grant objects to their speculating about Diefenbaker's "real" motives instead of attending to the public events or facts of history. He objects to their attributing ignoble motives to Diefenbaker's words, policies and actions, his "egomania," his "ambition," and his "indecisiveness." (The proof of Diefenbaker's confused nobility to Grant is Diefenbaker's apparently not giving a damn about his own survival when he made himself unpopular to the city people, to the United States, and to Great Britain as he refused to have American nuclear arms on Canadian soil.) Grant apparently is saying, then, that to understand, one must be distressed enough to rise above personal hatred: one must analyze, explore and meditate upon what he can see; one must not create malicious fictions which serve one's own interests or ends. Grant, however, after having established his own guise of

¹⁷*Lament*, pp. 93-94. See Lampman's dystopic poem, "City of the End of Things": "They are not flesh, they are not bone, / They see not with the human eye, / And from their lips is blown / A dreadful and monotonous cry."

disinterest does not avoid what he initially warns against. He characterizes liberals from the opening pages of the book as the villains of his drama. He sullies their reputation by the words and images he lays upon them. Putting aside the possibility of discussing the human condition from a wholly disinterested viewpoint, one must not overlook the disparity between Grant's promise and practice, his own unfair characterization of his adversaries, the liberals. Consider his presentation of William Lyon Mackenzie King. Grant damns King not so much for what he did as for the influences which gave rise to King's ideas and personality.

In the case of King, this lack of balance seems to be bound up with a very usual syndrome among people who give themselves to the practical life: when they gain power they carry on with the ideas they learnt thirty years before. King had seen the centre of Canadian independence as being threatened by the British; he had been raised by a beloved mother who was impregnated with the memory of the supposed injustices that her father, William Lyon Mackenzie, had received at the hands of the British. Even after 1940, he still held the theory that Canadian independence was threatened from Whitehall. It may also have been that King was sufficiently held by liberal theory to believe that the United States was a democracy, and therefore not in essence an imperial power like the old societies of Europe.

Grant suggests that men at the centre of the political stage have little choice in their decisions: they simply repeat unconsciously the influences of thirty years before. King becomes a virtual fool — he cannot see the obvious truth that American liberals are imperialists:

His relations with the Rockefellers were certainly a classic case of the ability of liberals to fool themselves about the relation between capitalism and democracy. King seems to have admired instinctively the liberal rhetoric of Franklin Delano Roosevelt, and Roosevelt surely stands as a perfect example of the division between ideology and action. One of the great imperialists of American history imagined himself an enemy of imperialism¹⁸

The civil service is maligned in the same way. It is not so much that the policies or decisions of the civil servants are attacked as blame is placed upon the influences that gave rise to their attitudes — Queen's University and Oxford:

It would be a travesty to deny that most of them wanted to preserve their country. But they were not of the diamond stuff of which nationalists must be made in these circumstances. Their education was not of a kind to produce a realistic attitude toward the twentieth century. The officials of the Department of Finance have mostly

¹⁸Lament, pp. 50-51.

learnt their economics at Queen's University in Ontario, where the glories of the free market were the first dogma. But nationalism was negated by the policies that proceeded from such a dogma. The officials of External Affairs had mostly been educated in the twilight scepticism of Oxford liberalism. This kind of culture does not give one the stamina to be a nationalist in the twentieth century.¹⁹

If one returns to the opening page of the book, he finds now that almost every word becomes an emblem of contempt. Having read the whole book, one knows now that the "wealthy" are those ruled by the profit motive, those whose loyalty is to the pocket book; the "clever," those without roots, the ruthless; the "emancipated" journalists, those freed from responsibility or commitment and yet the toadies of the liberal establishment.

Never has such a torrent of abuse been poured on any Canadian figure as that during the years from 1960 to 1965. Never have the wealthy and the clever been so united as they were on their joint attack on Mr. John Diefenbaker. It has made life pleasant for the literate classes to know that they were on the winning side. Emancipated journalists were encouraged to express their dislike of the small-town Protestant politician, and they knew they would be well paid by the powerful for their efforts. Suburban matrons and professors knew that there was an open season on Diefenbaker, and that jokes against him at cocktail parties would guarantee the medal of sophistication.

These few words are enough to indicate Grant's compressed contempt and his unfair innuendo, a kinetic language far from meditative.

To review the contradictions: Grant promises a meditative work, a quiet work, which will explore what has been lost and why, but on the way he writes a work bristling with indignation and pugnacity, an historical and propagandistic melodrama in which the villains of the piece, the liberals, come close to being cardboard villains. In a similar contradiction, Grant blames the continentalists, the capitalists, the liberal interests for painting Diefenbaker black, for speculating unfairly about Diefenbaker's motives; this kind of speculation, he says, is both unfair and unphilosophical — one should look at what is said or done and proceed from there to the implication of things, Grant's premise being that we cannot know the secret of the private life of other human beings. Yet he attributes petty motives to his own adversaries. And a more fundamental contradiction: is not a central tenet of Grant's *Lament for a Nation* and *Technology and Empire in the Mass Age* that a man's motives are not his own or that his sensibility does not exist of itself? Enfolding circumstances shape the sensibility. The sensibility responds inevitably to the shifts in the social, political, religious, economic and technological circumstances. To illustrate: Grant asserts that DeGaulle, admirable as he may be in setting up French culture and French industry against the dominating power of the United States, is really leading France inevitably to a position where as an industrial nation her traditions and their philosophical accompaniment, skeptical liberalism, will dissolve what DeGaulle sees as being the peculiar and traditional traits of the French.

¹⁹*Lament*, p. 49.

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Therefore, this paradoxical dilemma arises: DeGaulle, as he reacts against the United States, as he industrializes France to protect France from American industry, in the long run is bringing France closer to the American or technological society.²⁰ Is Grant not virtually declaring, then, that man is no more than what he collectively does? If so, how can he blame the suburban housewives, the university intellectuals, and emancipated journalists for bringing Diefenbaker's motives into question rather than examining the importance of what he said? They probably did not truly see Diefenbaker, but assuming Grant's assumption of technological determinism, could they have done otherwise? If indeed technology inevitably makes us all liberals, and if we are then released from the authority of the past and from ideology, why should we take seriously a conservative's stated principles? Why not consider instead his possible motives and purposes, especially if they differ from our own and threaten our own? Surely it is reasonable to ask these cynical questions which cast doubt upon Grant's arguments when Grant's own book seems to have demonstrated the impossibility of conservatism in our technological age, the shallowness of liberalism, and the impossibility of holding confidently to any ideology. As doubt is apparently cast on all human thought, however, including Grant's own arguments, it is paradoxical that his lament becomes all the more persuasive: although at first the reader may be surprised at Grant's ending, that ending becomes strangely appropriate the more one considers it. One can see now the consistency of Grant's turning from the temporal realm leaving the reader with the gesture "of arms outstretched in love toward the further shore": if one has been seriously affected by Grant's arguments — if our faith in ourselves and our future has been cast into doubt — the now-homeless or dispossessed reader may well peer anxiously and hopefully in the same direction as Grant. What other choice or direction is left open?

If the book be read in this way, Grant has moved his *Lament* from polemical dialectics to a reconciliatory voice which seems elevated, impersonal, and magnanimous and which points the reader beyond the elevated but confused heroism of Diefenbaker to a timeless order which is beyond our control and which should draw forth our love. The final position of the speaker and reader is not one of disillusionment: the reader, who may have thought himself tough-minded, is disintoxicated or made more aware of what were probably unquestioned modernist notions, and offered a glimpse of an order which is beyond man, beyond the aspirations of the technocratic liberal, and yet somehow congenial to man's ultimate purposes. Through a skeptical analysis of Canadian liberalism, through a celebration of the passage of Canadian conservatism in Diefenbaker, Grant manages persuasively to suggest a more profound conservatism which transcends the temporal and polemical realm of Canadian nationalism.

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²⁰*Lament*, pp. 66-67. Elsewhere Grant points his reader to a book which is related to this dismal view of industrial France: J. Ellul, *The Technological Society*, London, 1965. Ellul, however, argues that technology makes us all conservatives, that is, prudent, phlegmatic organization-men.