



StFX
UNIVERSITY

BRIAN MULRONEY
INSTITUTE OF GOVERNMENT

Lament for a Nation at 60

November 13–14, 2025

Mulroney Hall 4030 / Zoom

PROGRAM

November 13, 2025

10:00 am

Arrival (coffee available)

10:00 am–10:15am

Welcome from organizers

10:30 am–12:00 pm

L4aN and the Sixties in Canada

Azzi, Bryden, Shoikhedbrod & Cruchet

12:00 pm–1:00 pm

Lunch

1:15 pm–2:45 pm

L4aN as Philosophy and Theory

Chamberlain, Heystee, Groarke, Roberston

2:45 pm–3:00 pm

Break

3:00 pm–4:00 pm

Keynote: Edward Andrew (Virtual)

“The Gulf Between Grant’s Nationalism and Our Own”

6:00 pm

Dinner

November 14, 2025

8:30 am–9:00 am

Arrival (coffee available)

9:00 am–9:15 am

Welcome

9:30 am–10:30 am

Keynote: George Elliott Clarke (Virtual)

*“Was Grant Right? Or Has He Been Left Behind?
Reflections on Lament for a Nation”*

10:30 am–10:45 am

Break

10:45 am–12:15 pm

How to Lament

Cormack, Harling Stalker, Elson

12:15–1:15 pm

Lunch

1:15–2:00 pm

Round-up, publication plans and farewell

Panel I: *Lament for a Nation* and the Sixties in Canada

A Nation Laments: Scandal and the Rise of Canadian Nationalism, 1963–1968

Penny Bryden, University of Victoria

As George Grant was lamenting the death of conservative nationalism in 1965, and with it the end of Canada as a sovereign entity, the Canadian public was collectively passing judgement on a series of political misdeeds. The Munsinger scandal was, perhaps, the most significant, but scandals involving transnational crime and political graft also featured prominently. Focussing on scandals that implicated both Liberals and Conservatives alike, and which affected Canadian sovereignty in ways both big and small, this paper argues that a careful examination of political scandals can illustrate the limits and expectations of political behaviour. In 1960s Canada, the public exercised its voice, passed judgement on political behaviour, and expressed its own verdict on Canadian nationalism.

The American Empire and the Canadian Psyche: Popular Fiction's Lament for a Nation

Stephen Azzi, Carleton University

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, popular novels dramatized a US invasion of Canada, revealing a widespread national anxiety north of the border. Bruce Powe's *Killing Ground*, Ian Adams's *The Trudeau Papers*, and Richard Rohmer's *Ultimatum* and *Exxoneration* were written from divergent perspectives but shared a common theme: the fear of American aggression. These novels depicted Canada as vulnerable—militarily, economically, and culturally—while portraying the US as a brutal or oblivious imperial power hungry for Canadian resources. The novels resonated with growing anti-American sentiment, fed by images of violence in Vietnam and in American cities. As cultural artifacts, they exemplify Canadian paranoia during the Long Sixties, confirming Margaret Atwood's claim that invasion anxiety was Canada's "national mania."

The Return of Canadian (Economic) Nationalism? Revisiting George Grant's Neglected Relationship with the Canadian Economic Nationalists

Igor Shoikhedbrod and Jacob Cruchet, St. Francis Xavier University

We revisit the largely neglected relationship between George Grant and the Canadian Economic Nationalists (CENs) with the aim of grasping its relevance for our present predicament. Historically, we trace the convergence between Grant and the CENs to the Royal Commission on Canada's Economic Prospects, which was led by Walter Gordon. Philosophically, Grant's variety of "Red Toryism" was guided by a Platonic-Christian critique of modern capitalist technology and its imperatives. Despite their differences, the CENs found common cause with Grant in Karl Polanyi's idea of "re-embedding the economy in society" as an integral counterforce to what Polanyi called the "self-regulating market". Although the latest manifestation of Canadian economic

nationalism shows little in common with its more ambitious predecessor, we argue that it pays to revisit Grant's political-philosophical contributions alongside the proposals of the CENs.

Panel II: *Lament for a Nation* as Philosophy and Theory

Intimations of Deprival and The Survival of Canada in the Thought of George Grant

Tyler Chamberlain, Trinity Western University

George Grant's *Lament for a Nation* was a reflection on the possibility of Canada's survival in the modern world. It ended on a somber yet ambiguous note, lamenting the fate of particular cultures, including Canada, that are rooted in a Good beyond technological willing, yet was unable to provide a satisfactory philosophical defense of this pre-modern vision. This paper will look to Grant's 1969 essay "A Platitude" to supplement the account given in *Lament*. "A Platitude" clarifies how technological liberalism's elimination of local cultures and the language of Goodness can be understood as a loss while also accounting for our difficulty in articulating why such a loss should be lamented. It also provides a slightly more hopeful account of the possibility of a recovery, encouraging readers to look for "intimations of deprival." The paper will conclude by considering some of these potential intimations in the 21st century.

Progressivism, Pragmatism, and the Universal and Homogeneous State

Bryan Heystee, Memorial University

In this paper, I discuss George Grant's account of progressivism in *Lament for a Nation* and in particular his claim that the United States is the most progressive society on earth. Grant's account of progressivism is surprising because it contradicts not only popular wisdom but Leo Strauss, on whom Grant otherwise depends for the theoretical background of *Lament*. To explain this contradiction, I turn to Grant's 1959 book, *Philosophy in the Mass Age* and the account of pragmatism found therein. Grant's account of pragmatism gives theoretical justification for his claim that the United States is the most progressive society on earth and, hence, his un-Straussian claim that the United States is the spearhead of the universal and homogeneous state.

The Death of Canadian Nationalism: Out with a Bang or Out with a Whimper?

Louis Groarke, St. Francis Xavier University

George Grant's wildly popular book *Lament for a Nation* and his subsequent role as a public intellectual were motivated by an original, even eclectic mix of philosophical ideas. Grant's diatribe against Canada's eventual absorption into our southern neighbor is rooted in a variety of conflicting sources: ancient philosophy, Hegel, High Church Anglicanism, social conservatism, and Leo Strauss. To Grant, the US came to symbolize a series of ideological dangers that had coalesced into an imperialist Leviathan that, in

spite of commercial, technological, and political successes, contained within itself the seeds of its own destruction. Grant was worried about modernist political trends that undermined the natural roots of any enduring group identity. In this paper, I will argue that neither the right nor the left in the contemporary political spectrum offers a solution to the quandary that Grant, accurately and powerfully, unveils in his writing.

“Die Weltgeschichte ist das Weltgericht”: Hegel and Lament for a Nation

Neil Robertson, University of King’s College

In the concluding chapter of *Lament for a Nation*, Grant turned explicitly against what he found most disturbing in the Hegelian doctrine of progress, namely the claim that “*Die Weltgeschichte ist da Weltgericht*” (the world's history is the world's court of judgment). It was in this context that Grant also argued that “the doctrines of progress and providence have been brought together”. This doctrine of progress was connected to Grant's account of Canada because he saw in its hold upon Canadians a source of their blindness to what was being lost in the passing away of what was specifically Canadian through ever greater integration with the United States and its dynamic modernity. In this doctrine, Canadians could see this integration not as loss, but rather, as part of the beneficent, liberating movement of history, a stage in the fuller realization of freedom. Grant saw in the Hegelian uniting of progress and providence a radical reduction of all otherness to human historical life, ultimately to human subjectivity and will. This short presentation will explore Grant's turn away from Hegel in the early 1960s, which gave birth to a deepening insight into the fragility, indeed the impossibility, of Canada – or perhaps it was a deepening sense of the impossibility of Canada in the context of North America that gave him insight into the problematic character of the Hegelian philosophy.

Panel III: How to Lament

Grant’s *Lament for a Nation* and the roots of Classical Sociology

Patricia Cormack, St. Francis Xavier University

While George Grant was a philosopher and theologian, his *Lament for a Nation* is grounded in classical sociology’s most foundational concerns about modernity. Grant’s description of a Canada that has become individualist, technocratic, and progressivist mirror the most basic concerns of Durkheim (“anomie”), Weber (“rationality”), and Marx (“alienation”). It is important to note that Canadian nationalists of his day united around common themes that overrode traditional political dichotomies of right and left to get down to the work of Canadian identity. Revisiting Grant by way of sociologist’s classical thinkers, this paper explores the possibility of a collective identity grounded in more than the pragmatics of power. What is the justification for the continued existence of Canada as a sovereign nation-state?

Lament and Nostalgia: Is George Grant's nostalgia reflected in today's nationalism

Lynda Harling Stalker, St. Francis Xavier University

Nostalgia is a complex emotion that indicates a yearning and a longing for a “golden” past. This is what we see George Grant doing in *Lament for a Nation*; he is not only lamenting something that is gone, but almost aches for the past to return to the present. To Grant, Canada is no longer a utopia where it is a nation epitomised by peace, order and good government; it has succumbed to an empire that cares little for Canada as a sovereign state. Grant is harkening back to a time where the United States had minimal influence over Canadian identity, much like his uncle Vincent Massey tried to put into motion a few years earlier. This paper problematizes the concept of nostalgia, thinks through nostalgia within the context of Grant's writing, and asks if this is still the past that present day Canadians are nostalgic for?

“Hurry and do it, Scott!”: George Grant and Scott Symons's friendship 1965-1980

Chris Elson, University of King's College and Dalhousie University

This paper recalls the George Grant-Scott Symons friendship as it emerged in the 1960s, with a look forward to its last stages in a 1980 meeting diarized by Symons and written about by Charles Taylor in his book *Radical Tories*. It shows how, using examples from the 1960s both Canadian (the new flag; Expo 67; the B and B commission) and international (consciousness raising; the counterculture; sexual liberation in general and gay liberation in particular; etc.), how Symons the “radical Tory” is also a participant in radical 60s movements, “a consciousness at full stretch.” This will allow us to see why the admiration and friendship of Grant could be both enthusiastically real yet deeply hesitant, and why it inevitably suffered strains.

Keynote Address I: Edward Andrew, The Gulf Between Grant's Nationalism and Our Own

Keynote Address II: George Elliott Clarke, Was Grant Right? Or Has He Been Left Behind? Reflections on *Lament for a Nation*