



# Lament for a Nation?

The Importance of Canadian Thought and Experience

## Week 1: An Image of the Past

George P. Grant, *Lament for a Nation: The Defeat of Canadian Nationalism*, Chap. 5

A. M. Klein, "The Rocking Chair" and "Heirloom"

### Note on readings:

Grant's great fear is that Canada will be swallowed by the global monoculture whose epicenter, he believes, is the United States. Klein's poems hallow things local and unique. The rocking chair, for example, moves without relocating, always returning to itself, marking time by the rhythm of family life rather than standardized time. "Heirloom" offers a poetic look at the Jewish idea of cultural rootedness.

## Week 2: Some Views Toward the Present

Dennis Lee, *Civil Elegies* (I–IX)

Mordecai Richler, "Their Canada and Mine." *Commentary*

### Note on readings:

In his "civil elegies," Lee laments the loss of a real natural community in Canada, while, at about the same moment, Richler describes a Jewish community that is a self-defined cultural enclave. How are these views compatible? What type of community does Lee think has disappeared and what type of community is Richler describing? What does Richler suggest is the long-term viability of the Jewish Canadian "ghetto"? How are immigrants supposed to adapt, assimilate, or integrate into a wider society, and have Jews in Canada done so successfully or not?

## Week 3: The Modern Crack-Up

Charles Taylor, "Three Malaises," fm *The Ethics of Authenticity*

### Note on reading:

"Three Malaises" is the first chapter of the *Ethics of Authenticity* (1991) by one of Canada's most respected living philosophers, Charles Taylor. Taylor is regarded as an incisive critic of the loss of community and faith in the modern age. Here Taylor breaks down three key aspects of modernity (individualism, instrumental reason, and alienation). Is Taylor right that these are the three key aspects of modernity? How have they manifested? Do we agree with his positive and negative evaluations? Whether or not we agree with Taylor's analysis, what is to be done about the problems he identifies?



## Week 4: Antisemitism in Canada

Ayelet Tsabari, “Knives.” *Tablet*

Terry Glavin, “The Explosion of Jew-Hate in Trudeau’s Canada.” *The Free Press*

### Note on readings

Tsabari’s short story offers a fictional look into how relations between Jews (and perhaps specifically, Israelis) and other Canadians have developed in recent years—the tensions and assumptions that poison personal relationships. Glavin’s hard-hitting journalism offers a non-fictional counterpart to Tsabari’s story, tracing the dangers that have manifested for Canadian Jews in recent years.

How do these explorations of the dangers and assumptions Jews face in Canada compare to your personal experience? What assumptions underlie Tsabari’s and Glavin’s different portraits of the same type of phenomena? How does antisemitism in Canada affect Orthodox Jews compared to secular Jews?

## Week 5: Dangers Present and Ahead

George P. Grant, “The Language of Euthanasia,” from *Technology and Justice*

Alexander Raikin, “Practitioners of Infanticide.” *First Things*

### Note on readings

In the first session, we read Grant’s lament about Canada’s fate in the orbit of American-led economic and technological modernity. “The Language of Euthanasia,” by contrast, focuses squarely on a debate within Canada: physician-assisted suicide, or euthanasia. But Grant’s fears of technological modernity, and the fate of human dignity in a world of instrumental reason, remain consistent. Grant’s philosophical exploration is paired with a recent exposé of euthanasia as applied to infants in the Canadian medical system today.

Do Grant’s arguments, made more than 30 years ago, still hold up? Are his claims too rooted in his Christian beliefs to convince or be used by Jews? How do the claims of MAID advocates square with Raikin’s pointed demonstration that euthanasia is routinely practiced on infants?