

ethereal Canadianism or what Gwyn had called in 1994 “the First Postmodern Nation.”

CANADIANISM WITHOUT CANADA?

For traditional nationalists, though, this all could be read as Canada evolving into a pleasant and useful memory. Nor were they alone in this opinion. Anthony DePalma, concluding his stint as *The New York Times*’ man in Ottawa, left us with *Here: A Biography of the New American Continent* (2001). DePalma observed that the work of continentalism was all but complete—and that Canadians welcomed their newly assimilated identity. His predictions got a boost after 9/11, when Michael Bliss and others opined that Canadian nationalism would not survive a militant American demand for continental unity in their “War on Terror.”

There was little faith on the part of traditional Canadian nationalists that the Chrétien government, given its record, would prevent Canada from becoming anything more than a department within US Homeland Security. A year after 9/11, Murray Dobbin, writing for the Council of Canadians, decried the “rapid Americanization of Canada’s institutions and political culture.” Mel Hurtig’s *The Vanishing Country: Is It Too Late to Save Canada?* (2002) concluded that nothing less than a new political party could protect the country from an American onslaught.

Perhaps the best researched of the Chrétien era nationalist laments was Stephen Clarkson’s *Uncle Sam and US: Globalization, Neoconservatism and the Canadian State* (2002). Clarkson was no happier than the traditional nationalists when looking at the Chrétien record. If there was a way out, it would come in the Canadian federal, provincial, and municipal governments finally seeing themselves pushed to irrelevance by the neo-conservative tide and, at long last, stemming it. Clarkson went so far as to suggest that this public-sphere revolution might in fact be inevitable.

Michael Adams’s extensive opinion polling, summarized elsewhere in this issue, gives a hint as to why. Despite or because of all the affronts documented in the nationalist tomes, it seems Canadians spent the Chrétien years becoming more Canadian, their core values diverging ever further from Americans. It is also possible to read into Adams’s data a vindication of the nationalists’ claim of a massive disconnect between the will of the people and the Canada being moulded by the nation’s political and financial elites.

THE NEWEST NATIONALIST

At the end of the Chrétien era, Canadians appeared to be the people that Canadian nationalists had been talking about all along. But even more surprising was the fact that these independent-minded Canucks finally had themselves a prime minister. For it was in his lame duck year that Jean Chrétien decided to play his long neglected nationalist cards. The canny politician may have simply been acknowledging the trends

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The Rt. Hon. Jean Chrétien: Revised standard version

BY GEORGE ELLIOTT CLARKE

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at the University of Toronto.

A Frankenstein-faced, meeching, elfish
Aghoul,
Skulking in a graveyard of prime ministers,
Admiring how they bagged elections—
Or dreading how they later got sacked—
Those lumberjacks hulking in silk suits,
Those attorneys awkward in buckskins,
Defining the country as one more strip mine
After one more lucrative deforestation,
All Chrétien ever wanted was to join
This Gothic junkyard of shat-upon statues,
Clutching the *Criminal Code* in one hand,
A golf club in the other,
While sloshing out rhetoric that was Martinis
And pabulum drizzled over cooing ministers.
Slick, he slipped through cracks in bad news
And popped up gleaming like a televangelist,
While acting Laurier with an Alley Oop
scowl—
“Le p’tit gars” orating, “C’est de la bullshit,”
His speech spitting clarity like pepper spray.
His Canada was cant and cannot,
A Parliament of lepers and peons,
A politics of nothing doing
Cos doing nothing means nothing’s wrong.
He was the perfect mime of a prime minister,
Choosing to ape the mannerisms of the dead,
To shuffle, zombie-like, into *History*,
Through a labyrinth of fun-house mirrors
Stuttering his forged, misshapen greatness.