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Jeffery D. Brison. *Rockefeller, Carnegie, and Canada: American Philanthropy and the Arts and Letters in Canada*; McGill-Queen's University Press. xii, 282. \$75.00 [End Page 494]

Jeffery D. Brison's engaging writing style belies the importance of this contribution to the literature on Canadian cultural history. He tackles one of the most fundamental and long-held beliefs about the Canadian arts: that state funding in the mid-twentieth century was a mark of the differences between Canada and the United States, designed to *protect* Canada from American influence, and that the era, epitomized by the Massey Commission, represented a golden age of cultural nationalism. Instead, Brison shows that such national differences were largely constructed after the fact, that the American presence extended deep into Canadian arts and scholarship – and that Canadians welcomed, even courted it. In analysing the work of the Carnegie Corporation and Rockefeller Foundations, he offers some striking evidence: for example, the academic forerunners to the Canada Council, the Canadian Social Science Research Council and Humanities Research Council of Canada, depended on American philanthropy for 90 per cent of their funding. And he provides amusing irony: landmark titles in nationalist historiography such as Donald Creighton's *Commercial Empire of the St. Lawrence* and *Dominion of North* were published with American funding.

National boundaries, Brison argues, were less important than a community of interest between cultural elites (Canadians could work with what Vincent Massey called 'thinking Americans') who shared such concerns as an ambivalence towards modernization. Nor is it accurate to characterize Canadian culture as a reflection of our statist tradition, a rejection of the private enterprise favoured to the south; rather it is 'a mixed economy of culture' that relied on both private and public funding. This atmosphere of

co-operation leads Brison to argue that Canadians exerted a degree of agency within the framework of American funding, and to conclude that the American presence was not one of coercion but persuasion and influence.

The foundations' 'business of benevolence' initially focused on higher education, emphasizing efficiency and rationalization where possible. (The Carnegie Corporation's attempt to federate the Maritime Universities in the 1920s epitomized these principles.) Although they branched out into the arts and academic scholarship through the 1930s, they continued to pursue a rationalization of sorts: the integration of regional cultures under the leadership of national institutions. Both foundations openly favoured 'national' institutions located in Central Canada (the National Gallery, University of Toronto), which they assumed voiced a broader and thus more important perspective beyond the provincialism of (other) regions. This was well received by the Canadian elites, who were interested in regional difference, but who agreed with such a vertical integration of cultural infrastructure that could cement their privileged position.

The results of American funding are obvious and extensive, from the Banff School of Fine Arts to art exchanges that integrated Canadians into **[End Page 495]** an international network. (There are a lot of 'Hey! They paid for that too?' moments in the book, which only proves Brison's central point.) He also emphasizes that the foundations, although imperial in manner at times, could demonstrate 'acute sensitivity to Canadian leadership.' Yet there are aspects of the corporate approach which ring warning bells, and which Brison leaves unremarked: pressure to align research plans with foundation goals in order to win grants; foundation officers determining which intellectuals were 'the best'; and gauging projects' financial viability over scholarly merit. I was curious, too, about the overtly anti-continental sentiment which persisted in Canadian publications, a contradiction that remained unresolved: a mark of American tolerance towards seeming Canadian ingratitude, or a genuine resentment towards the 'imperialism'? Brison's only negative remarks as to Canadian dependency appear briefly at the end of the book.

Such criticism would make the parallels between now and then even more apparent. What struck me was the number of issues familiar to anyone in the arts community or the academy today: the desire to make the humanities relevant to the public sphere; the need for funding commitment (rather 'than to have made a start and then to have dropped us unceremoniously,' as the chair of the Canadian Museums Committee complained in 1936); the use of centres of excellence. And perhaps most troublingly, the influence of corporate sponsorship: the foundations may not have used the stick, but they showed no hesitation in selectively offering carrots to produce desired results. Which only makes *Rockefeller, Carnegie, and Canada* the more essential reading.