

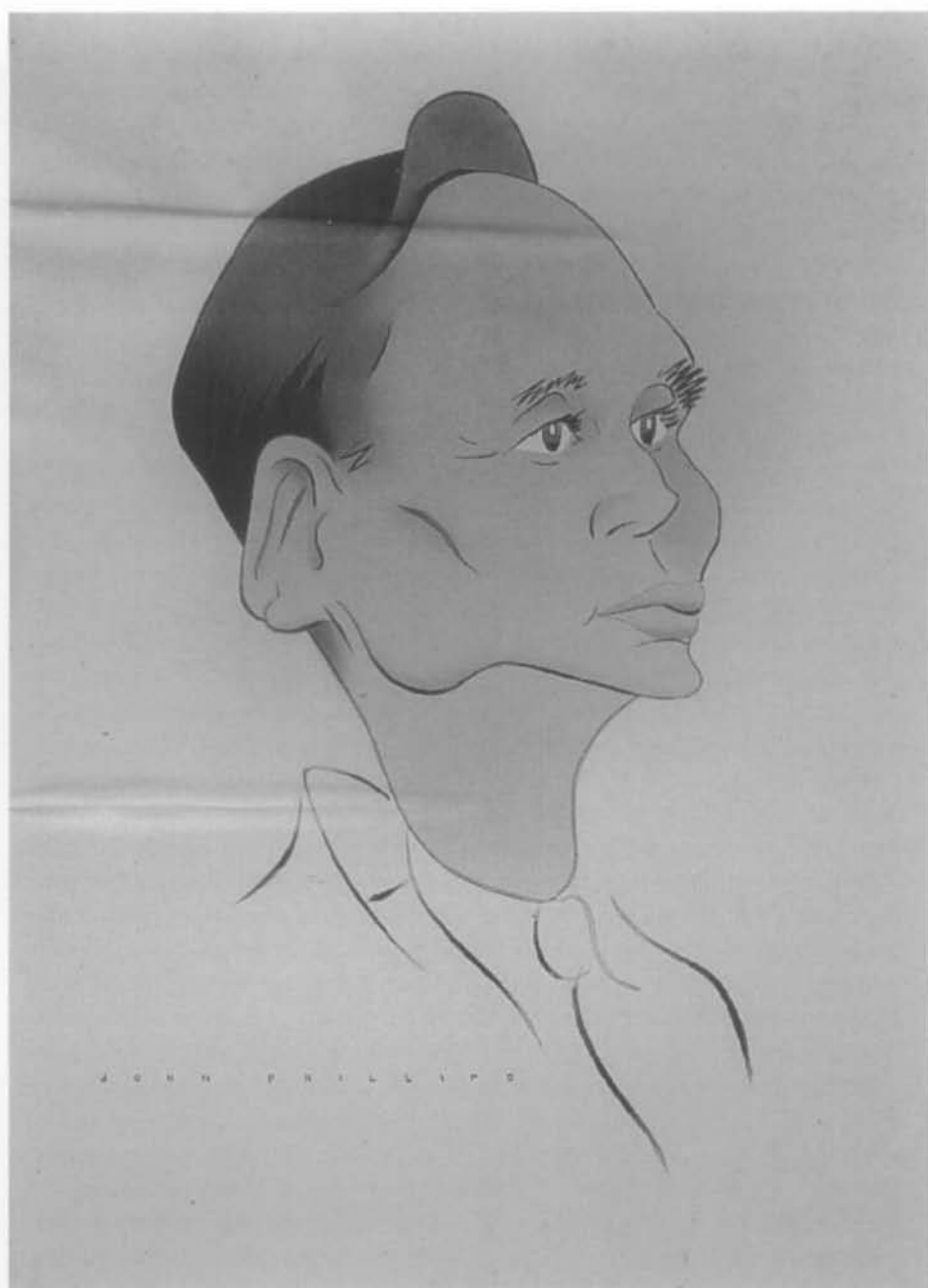


fig.1 John Phillips, Robert Gard. Collection of Mrs. Robert Gard. (Photo: courtesy of the author)

The Rockefeller Foundation and Cultural Policy on the North Western Frontier

You know how it is. You get a feeling about a certain place. You can't exactly explain the way you feel except to say, "this place is different from any place on earth," or "there's a spell over this country," or "it's a mighty mysterious bit o' the land."

You can't exactly put it into words, but you'd like to, and you'd like to be able to command a muse, or spirit, or some sort of supernatural being to help you do it. That's the way I happened to meet Johnny Chinook. I wished for him and there he was.

Robert E. Gard (1945)

These words were written by American folklorist Robert Gard (1910-92) (fig.1) as the prologue to his book, *Johnny Chinook: Tall Tales and True from the Canadian West*.¹ *Johnny Chinook* was published in 1945 shortly after Gard's stint as a teacher of play writing at the Banff School of Fine Arts and as Director of the Alberta Folklore and Local History Project at the University of Alberta. The book, which was illustrated by Calgary artist W.J. Phillips (1884-1963), represented Gard's retelling of folk tales he had heard during the course of his two-year long quest for Albertan folklore. The story of that quest and how and why this American folklorist came to Alberta to spin the romantic lore of the north-western frontier, is the subject of this text. I will consider how the interests of the Rockefeller Foundation, the organization that funded Gard's work in Alberta, related to the growing interest of the province's cultural producers and intellectuals in local and regional folklore, history, and identities. I examine how this meeting of minds and emotions was critical to the development of the Banff School's innovative programme in music, painting, drama and folklore and how it fostered a multi-dimensional art movement intimately embedded in a sense of place and region. Situating the activities of Gard and his colleagues at Banff and the University of Alberta in the broader context of the interplay between American philanthropy and Canadian artists, cultural producers and intellectuals in the 1930s, 40s, and 50s, I argue that this confluence of cultural agendas speaks of a twentieth-century incorporated form of Manifest Destiny — a cultural continentalism that intersected with the process of North American military and economic integration.² In this particular case, the image of the long-gone and always mythical free frontier of the American west was resurrected in the Canadian north-west. At the same time, however, I argue that the support of American philanthropic foundations for local cultural producers and their institutions was a critical stimulus and an empowering agent in the construction of a strong regional consciousness and culture that stood as counter forces to a hegemonic central-Canadian-based nationalism.³

In the early 1930s, in the midst of the Great Depression, the leaders of the Rockefeller Foundation began to express their concern about the social and cultural implications of the boom-and-bust rhythm of industrial capitalism. Able to provide leadership in the development of public health, medical education and scientific knowledge, the Rockefeller managers had come to the realization that they were losing influence in the free market of ideas.⁴ At a time of extreme economic crisis, they feared that unregulated mass production of information posed a grave challenge to the moral and spiritual health of the nation and, in particular, to older "traditional" notions of community. While the Foundation had played a fundamental role in establishing the prominence of the humanities in North American universities, it had done little, as one officer put it, to bring the "humanities from books, seminars and museums into the currents of modern life."⁵ Rockefeller philanthropy, it was felt, had placed millions of dollars into the hands of the "elder statesmen" who dominated the traditional fields of humanistic study. "While advancing human knowledge," a Rockefeller officer later noted, "we were strengthening the aristocracy of scholasticism."⁶

In 1935, in an effort to address this situation, Rockefeller Foundation Director for the Humanities, David Stevens, and his Associate Director, John Marshall, established a new programme in what they referred to as "cultural interpretation." Stevens and Marshall aimed to reach deeper into American society, not to operate "above" the emerging mass culture, but rather to bring the Foundation's work in the humanities "more directly into contact with daily living" and to gain a clearer idea of "the ways in which the American public now gains its culture."⁷ The officers saw their target as nothing less than a reformulation of the humanist tradition in order to make it directly relevant in Depression-era America. As cultural leaders who wanted to maintain the existing social hierarchy, men like Marshall and Stevens believed that humanistic thought could be used to combat the sense of rootlessness and the accompanying crisis of authority brought on by the tragedy of the Great Depression. The resulting programme was designed to influence how Americans created, as Stevens put it, their "own forms of mental, emotional and spiritual freedom."⁸ Funding artists and intellectuals engaged in community theatre, educational film and radio, as well as in the collection of regional folklore, the Foundation attempted to combat the assumption that "culture was something foreign" and to foster "a larger appreciation of those elements in American life that constitute our national heritage."⁹ The primary concern was for the survival (or indeed the re-creation) of a cultural identity at a time when older notions of community were being challenged by great social, economic, and technological change. In taking measures to create or re-create local, regional and national heritages, the Foundation and the cultural producers it supported were engaging in the selection and ordering of the elements of that heritage.

Two primary objectives of the new Rockefeller humanities programme of cultural interpretation paradoxically led to its exportation to Canada. For Marshall

and Stevens, "American life" was not restricted to territory within the political boundaries of the nation-state. In their eyes culture flowed freely across the American-Canadian border. As Marshall later observed, "[i]f the cultural history of the United States were to be studied, the basis had to be not political units, not the nation, but the human regions that made up North America."¹⁰ In this they reflected the attitudes of most representatives of American corporate philanthropy of the era. Indeed, for much of the interwar period the Rockefeller Foundation and its New York City neighbour, the Carnegie Corporation, treated Canadian intellectual and cultural infrastructure as part of a broader North American network. Examples of this sort of continental cultural integration abound. They include both foundations' support for the establishment and maintenance of the Social Science and Humanities Research Councils of Canada and the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace support for texts and conferences on relations between Canada and the United States. The Carnegie Corporation sponsored Chairs of fine arts at Acadia University, the University of Toronto, and McMaster University; it employed Goodridge Roberts and later André Biéler as artists-in-residence at Queen's University; it funded Arthur Lismer's art education programmes at the Art Gallery of Toronto and the Art Association of Montreal throughout the 1930s and early 40s; and it played a crucial role in the Kingston Conference for Canadian artists in 1941.¹¹ Most critically, in the context of this discussion, the Banff School of Fine Arts had been sustained exclusively by Carnegie funding for the first five years of its existence. At the same time, Canada's status as an independent nation made it an object of the Foundation's desire to improve "cultural understanding amongst nations," particularly after the start of the Second World War and the advent of closer and more coordinated relations between Canada and the United States.¹² As had been the case earlier in the century when the Foundation had extended its public health and medical education programmes north of the border,¹³ Canada was thus treated both as a collection of northern regions of a continental culture and as a foreign nation.

Between September 1941 and November 1942, Marshall toured Canadian cultural centers searching for individuals and institutions that could, with the helping hand of his organization, contribute to "a better interpretation of Canadian tradition."¹⁴ The foundation was, as he put it, interested in "activities which aimed at formulating the findings of investigators and at interpreting them in ways which made them available for purposes of general diffusion."¹⁵ In fact, Marshall and the Foundation hoped to contribute to a process of organizing the raw material on which a set of unifying traditions could be based.

As was the case with the Foundation's efforts to nurture traditions in the United States, "the rich regional cultures" of North America were thought to be the building blocks of a Canadian national tradition.¹⁶ In keeping with the metropolitanism that infused all Rockefeller philanthropy, each of these "human regions" was seen to emanate from a metropolitan base that served as the center of overlapping

transportation, economic, and educational systems. According to this definition, culture in the age of mass communications was not only inherited from the indeterminate past, but was the product of modern organizing and structuring forces. In other words, the thought, action, and rhetoric which characterized Rockefeller "traditionalism" came to terms with modernity, not by rejecting it wholesale but by reinforcing selected traditions of identity and of culture. As Canadian cultural historian Ian McKay reminds readers of his *Quest of the Folk*, "It was and is possible to believe on one level in the golden age, the simple life, and the stolid Folk while extolling the virtues of progress, urban sophistication, and the risk-taking entrepreneur."¹⁷

In late October 1941 Marshall completed the western leg of his Canadian tour. He had been favorably impressed with the provincial universities and was confident, as he later noted in his diary, that the "time [was]...ripe for helping Canada to a better interpretation of herself."¹⁸ While he did not perceive a strong sense of Canadian national identity on the prairies or further west there was, he thought, great interest in fostering regional identity.¹⁹ Marshall was particularly interested in the uniquely varied arts programme at the Banff School. There, writers including Gwen Pharis Ringwood, Elsie Park Gowan, Rowena Hawkings and John MacLaren were successfully developing a western Canadian literature and theatre based on local history and folklore. Similarly, artists such as W.J. Phillips, H.G. Glyde and André Bièler were engaging the physical environment of the region as subject matter for instruction and in their own practice.

Founded with the support of the Carnegie Corporation of New York in 1933, and administered through the University of Alberta's Department of Extension, the Banff School's mandate was, in the words of its director Donald Cameron, "to simulate the cultivation of drama and the appreciation of music and art in the rural districts of the province."²⁰ Ringwood and Gowan in particular had already successfully produced radio theatre for the University of Alberta's radio station CKUA and for regional and national CBC programming.²¹ According to Anne Nothof, who has written about their work, their radio plays were evidence of the "dramatic potential of history as human interaction."²² Their efforts shared many of the goals of the Rockefeller Foundation's new programme of cultural interpretation and were encouraged by Frederick Koch, who served as Banff's Director of Creative Writing from 1935 to 1941. He was brought to Banff by Cameron precisely because of his proven ability to "inspire the students with a new sense of the milieu in which they lived and with a new sense of its richness from the standpoint of dramatic material."²³ Koch, who headed the Department of Dramatic Art at the University of North Carolina, had extensive experience with community theatre, having founded the Carolina Players with the support of the Rockefeller Foundation. Perhaps more significant for the future prospects of the Banff School, Koch was also one of the primary architects of the Rockefeller Foundation's drama programme.²⁴ However,

the manner in which the visual and theatre arts were meshed in a broader range of regional interpretation made the situation at Banff unique and distinguished it from Rockefeller-sponsored projects in the United States. As the American Robert Gard, who taught drama at Banff during the summers of 1942 and 1943, later noted, the painters with whom he worked at the school were "eager to make their students and the public more sensitive to the western landscape.... These men loved the West and were able to transmit to me through their personal approaches to painting a new feeling and regard for western places."²⁵

After meeting with scholars, cultural producers, and administrators at the University of Alberta and the Banff School, Marshall concluded that the institutions should host one of the most diverse and innovative regional projects sponsored by the Rockefeller Foundation. In September 1943, Gard received a Foundation grant to work with Cameron and George Smith, the Dean of the Faculty of Arts at the University of Alberta, to establish the Alberta Folklore and Local History Project. Gard brought impressive credentials to Edmonton. In the late 1930s with the aid of a Rockefeller graduate fellowship, he had worked on Cornell University's New York State Play Project under A.M. Drummond, another pioneer in the regional theatre movement. The University of Alberta and its Banff School were, moreover, receptive environments for the type of project Gard and Marshall envisioned. Like Gard and Koch before him, instructors Sidney Risk and E.M. Jones were both veterans of Rockefeller-sponsored community theatre projects at Cornell University and the University of Iowa respectively. In addition, Gwen Pharis Ringwood had honed her skills and developed her interest in community history as material for dramatic production when she was a student in Koch's programme at the University of North Carolina in the late 1930s.²⁶

When Gard arrived in Edmonton he was struck by what he perceived as the previously untapped potential of the province for regional interpretation. To Gard, this was a distinct region even if the inhabitants needed a little help to recognize their culture. "Up here," Gard wrote Drummond,

our work is a new idea. So far the folk have been too busy living.... I was constantly told that Alberta folk have no feeling for the land. No loyalty to their region. This is false. The feeling is there — and perhaps more deeply rooted because of the struggles they have made. I will find it an interesting year, and a satisfying one in helping to awaken a keener interest in the traditions and deep loyalties of this land.²⁷

To achieve his goals, Gard employed an impressive variety of techniques and mediums. Using the stories he collected as he criss-crossed the province, he wrote regular columns on local history for provincial newspapers including the *Calgary Herald* and the *Edmonton Journal*, and for his own journal, the *Alberta Folklore Quarterly*. He also provided student playwrights with historical material to use in their contributions to the community theatre movement centered at Banff and the

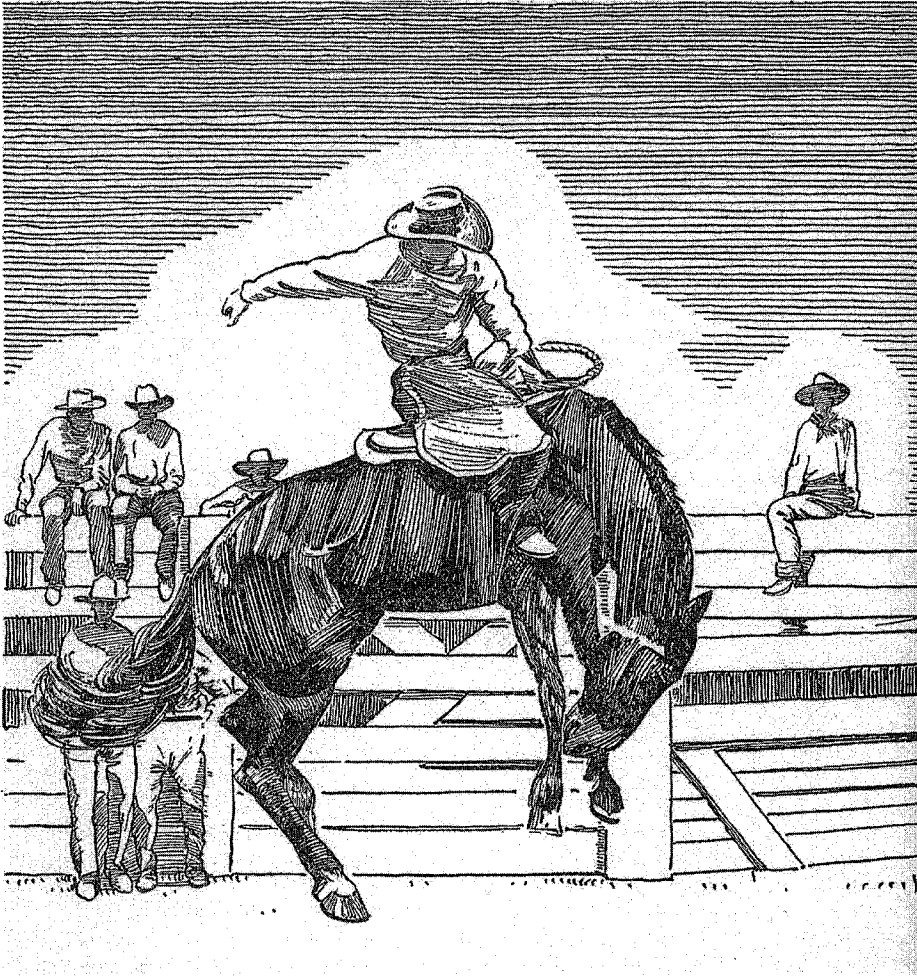


fig.2 W.J. Phillips, illustration from Robert Gard's, *Johnny Chinook: Tall Tales and True from the Canadian West*, 1945. (Photo: the author)

University of Alberta. In addition to giving weekly radio lectures for CKUA and for the Prairie Regional Network of the CBC, Gard and others wrote and performed several plays, including *Johnny Dunn*, *Hatfield the Rainmaker*, *The Ballad of Frank Slide*, and *Twelve Foot Davis*, all of which were broadcast nationally by the CBC. Both Gowan and Ringwood were contracted under the terms of the Folklore Project's Rockefeller Foundation grant to write plays.²⁸

Gard's work at Banff and in the mass media was accompanied by efforts to build a permanent infrastructure which would foster the development of local and regional identity. The Rockefeller grant provided ten Alberta writers with financial assistance to attend the first Alberta Writers' Conference at Banff in August 1944. It now seems ironic that Gard's mentor, A.M. Drummond, was brought from Cornell to lead discussions on the idea of a distinctly Albertan or Western Canadian literature. Discussion at the Conference focused specifically on the preservation of folklore and historical material and their use as source material for drama, fiction, and radio programming.²⁹ Intent on fostering "a National People's Theatre in Canada" and promoting drama as a means of education at the secondary and post-secondary levels, the Rockefeller Foundation also provided funds to bring together individuals from the four western provinces to participate in the Western Canadian Theatre Conference.³⁰ Working with Solon Low, the Minister of Education for the Social Credit government, Gard distributed materials throughout Alberta's public school system in order to increase the amount of regional history in the provincial curriculum.³¹ To further interest students in the local and regional past, the Folklore project established a province-wide creative writing competition.³² At Marshall's suggestion, Gard also successfully lobbied the provincial government's Committee on Reconstruction to make a formal commitment to establish a professionally-staffed, state-funded provincial archives at the University of Alberta at the end of the Second World War.³³

In the summer of 1945, after almost two years in Edmonton, Gard accepted a position at the University of Wisconsin to establish and direct a project modeled after the Alberta Folklore Project. The Alberta project had established Gard's prominence in the field and the Rockefeller staff also considered it to be one its most successful forays into regional analysis. In 1955 Rockefeller officer David Stevens noted approvingly that "in Alberta," Gard, "showed his ideas on drama so successfully that an entire province of Canada gained an enduring awareness of its place in a living world. I know of no demonstration more swiftly executed in a merging of history, folklore, and people for a unique expressiveness of an environment."³⁴ Gard more modestly attributed the success of the project to the fact that Alberta was in reality a unified region. In addition to the economic and geographic factors that held it together, Gard felt that there was a consciousness of shared identity. He advised Stevens that:

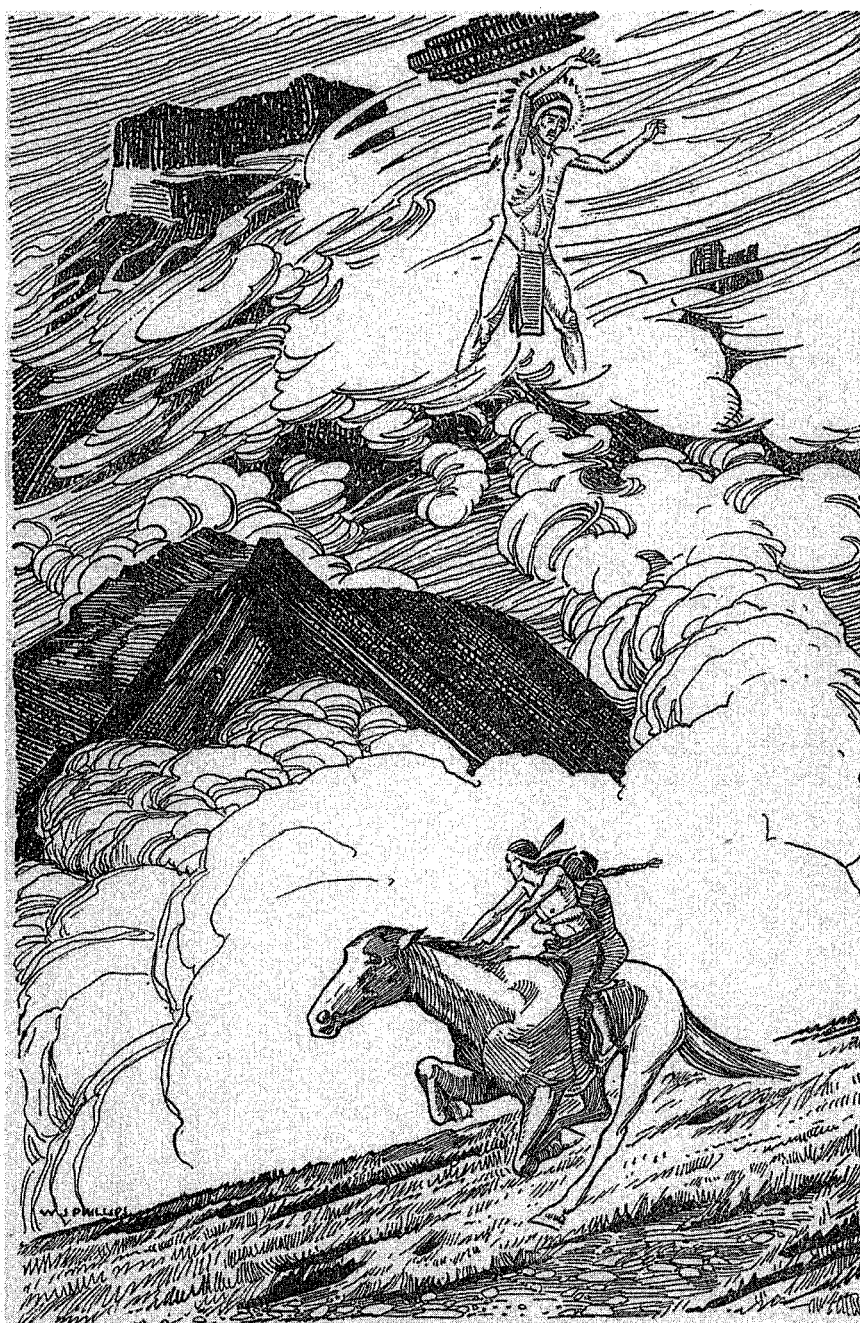


fig.3 W.J. Phillips, illustration from Robert Gard's, *Johnny Chinook: Tall Tales and True from the Canadian West*, 1945. (Photo: the author)

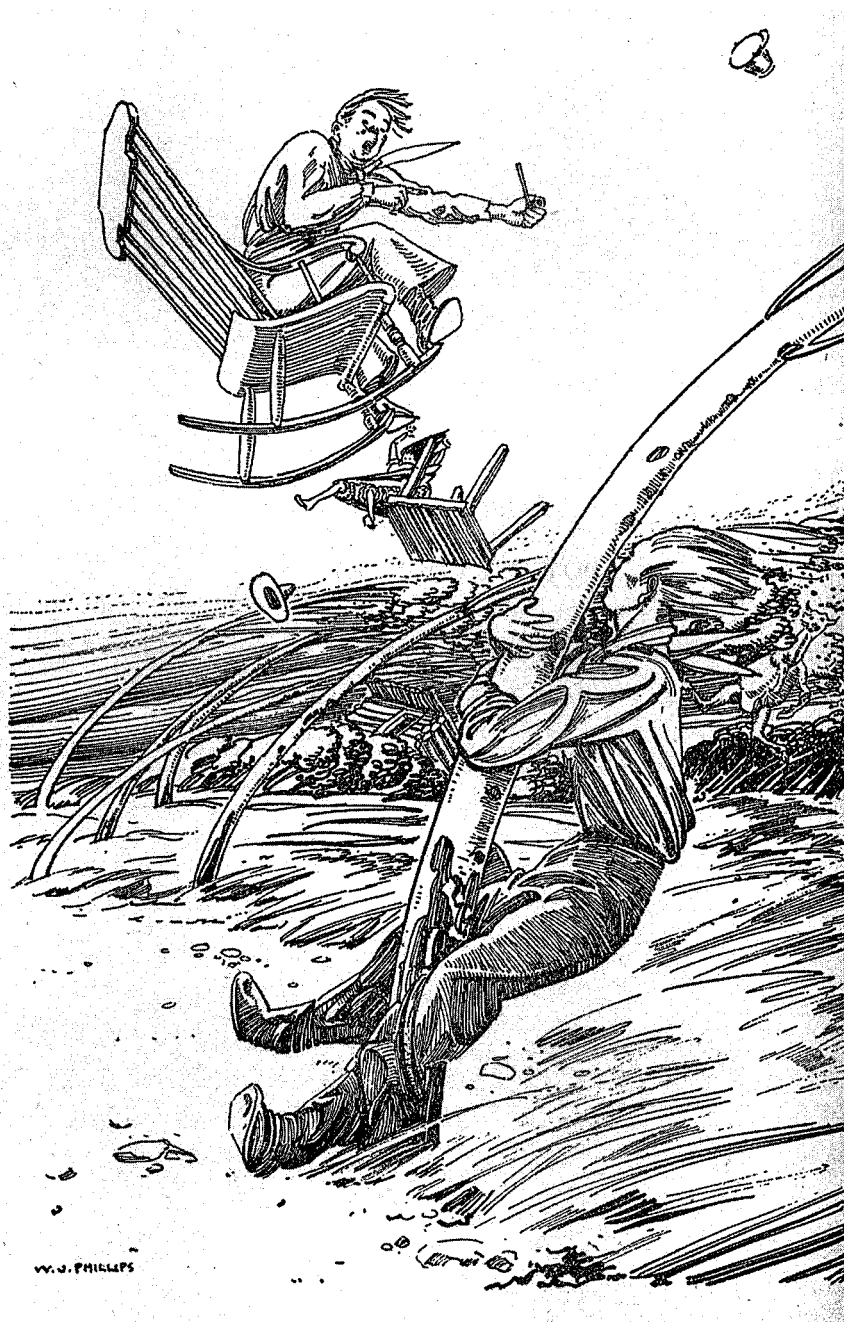


fig.4 W.J. Phillips, illustration from Robert Gard's, *Johnny Chinook: Tall Tales and True from the Canadian West*, 1945. (Photo: the author)

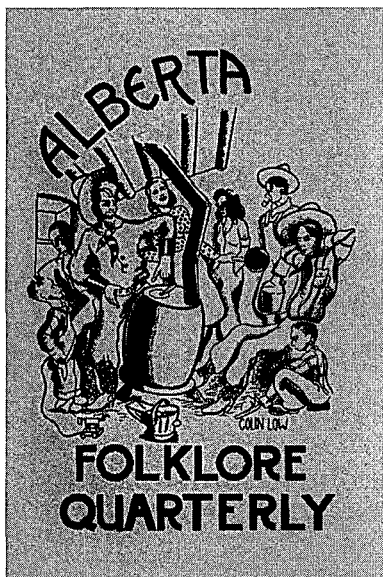
[T]he people had a sort of common folklore based on the common knowledge of the region and its distinguishing characteristics. (In other words, the stories they liked best to tell were distinctly regional in that they dealt with rains, hails, drouth [*sic*], the Chinook wind, dust, the various industries of the region: ranching, dry farming, etc.).³⁵

However, Gard did not discount the role he and others at Banff and Edmonton had played in disseminating this developing sense of region. In radio broadcasts and newspaper columns, Gard noted, "I studiously tried to build up such heroes as Twelve Foot Davis (the little fellow with a giant's heart); Dave McDougall (hero of the tall story); Bob Edwards (editor, champion of the under-dog); Nigger John Ware (American Negro, hero of the ranching country); and others, as a part of the regional consciousness."³⁶ In addition, Gard gathered these and other folk legends in his collection, *Johnny Chinook: Tall Tales and True from the Canadian West*. Illustrated with drawings by W. J. Phillips, the prominent Canadian artist and Gard's colleague at the Banff School, *Johnny Chinook* depicted a rough and rugged north-west, complete with "cowboys" (fig.2), "Indians" (fig.3), "tricksters," and, of course, chinook winds (fig.4).

It was natural that Gard should turn to Phillips to provide the visual expression of the folklore in his publication. During his time in Alberta, Gard developed a strong friendship with Phillips and, in addition to teaching together at Banff, the folklorist and the painter travelled around the mountains and the prairies of the province.³⁷ The friendship that resulted in *Johnny Chinook* was symbolic of a greater collaboration of art forms taking place at Banff — a partnership in the service of regional interpretation. Gard, who had done so much to inspire others, learned from Phillips "to appreciate landscape through an artist's eyes."³⁸ As Gard noted in an autobiographical study of his early career, Phillips provided him with

an expressive understanding of the sharp beauty of grain elevators seen against the varied prairie backdrops, of washes and coulees, and of the stark fronts of stores and dwellings in the western towns.... I developed a concept of painting and theater working together toward fine regional interpretation.³⁹

The lasting impact of the Alberta Folklore and Local History Project is difficult to assess. In retrospect much of the activity can be seen as a temporary reaction to the external stimulus provided by Gard and the Rockefeller Foundation. The *Alberta Folklore Quarterly* and the Alberta Folklore Association were not maintained after Gard's departure. Their loss was mitigated somewhat by the reorganization and revitalization of the Alberta Historical Society at about the same time. By 1948, however, the provincial government had still not fulfilled its pledge to create a provincial archives. On the positive side of the ledger, the University of Alberta did make provision for the inclusion of a university archives in its new library facility.⁴⁰ The Foundation's support for the folklore project contributed to the already impressive growth of the Banff School at a critical stage in its development and brought the



figs. 5 Colin Low,
cover, *Alberta Folklore
Quarterly*, Volume 1,
no. 1 (March 1945).
(Photo: the author)



fig. 6 Colin Low,
cover, *Alberta Folklore
Quarterly*, Volume 1,
no. 2 (June 1945).
(Photo: the author)

school that much closer to realizing the goal of establishing the arts as a vital component of regional life. The flurry of activity that surrounded the folklore project also provided the impetus for the creation of the University of Alberta's new Department of Fine Arts which was the first in Canada to include divisions of visual arts, music and drama. The drama section in particular was the product of Gard's efforts, as well as those of Banff instructors Jones, Risk, Ringwood, and Gowan. Encouraged by the success of community drama in Alberta, the Rockefeller Foundation supported the creation of a Chair of drama at the University of Saskatchewan in 1945. The first Alberta Writers' Conference in 1944 had been a product of American organization, supervision and financing; by 1948 it had evolved into a permanent institution: the Western Writers' Conference.⁴¹

The extent to which the Alberta Folklore and Local History Project stimulated and empowered individual cultural producers is even more difficult to trace, but should not be discounted. At the age of nineteen, Colin Low, who was studying under Glyde and Phillips at Banff and at the Calgary Institute of Technology and Art, was selected to draw cover sketches for the first two issues of the *Alberta Folklore Quarterly* (figs. 5 and 6). His sketches, which depict a bunkhouse scene on the resource frontier and an "Indian folk legend about two lovers escaping from the wrath of the thunder god,"⁴² visually articulated the literary content of the journal. It is worth pointing out the thematic similarities between these early productions which reflect the aims and objectives of the Alberta Folklore Project, and Low's later work as a producer and director at the National Film Board (NFB).⁴³ *Corral* (1954), and *City Of Gold* (1957), two of Low's more important early films at the NFB, are nostalgic portrayals of the western Canadian frontier.⁴⁴ *Corral*, which won first place in the documentary short category at the 1954 Venice Film Festival, shows a cowboy at work breaking in a horse on his ranch in southwestern Alberta. Like the folklore Gard collected and disseminated, the film is, in the words of film historian Peter Harcourt, "less [a recreation] of an actual event than of an atmosphere that has vanished." Harcourt continues his analysis of the film by observing that, like many of Low's movies, there is "a sense of something lost....[an] atmosphere of events more deeply felt than understood."⁴⁵ Low's 1957 Academy Award-winning documentary short, *City of Gold*, recalls the early days of Dawson City, the town at the heart of the Klondike Gold Rush of 1897. Narrated by Pierre Berton who reminisces about his childhood in the city, the film also uses a series of still photographs to depict the rough and tumble of the gold rush. The women of Paradise Alley and the seemingly "endless human chain" of men climbing the 45-degree ice slope in the Chilkoot Pass, are but two of the subjects. These reminders of the city's illustrious history are juxtaposed at the film's beginning and end with photographs of the present-day city now desolate and overgrown with grass. As Harcourt points out, the film "while superficially about a gold rush, becomes an emblem of the incomprehensible motivation of man."⁴⁶

More immediately representative of the symbiotic relationship between Gard's brand of folklore and an emerging regional art of western Canada was the

performance of Gwen Pharis Ringwood's three-act play, *Stampede*, which opened at the University of Alberta's Convocation Hall on 4 March 1946. Commissioned by the Alberta Folklore and Local History Project, it was directed by Risk and performed by students in the programme. Centered on the Calgary Stampede of 1912, the play, according to Cameron, was "a sort of Canadian 'Oklahoma' ...[which] caught the romance of the rangelands and is one of the most authentic pieces of dramatization of that colourful period in Western Canada when the cowman was king."⁴⁷ A writer who reviewed the production for the *Alberta Folklore Quarterly* described it as "a colourful panoramic of crowds, music, cowboys, Mounties, Indians, and horse ranglers — in fact, it embodies everyone and everything found at the Stampede."⁴⁸

While it is easy to acknowledge the positive impact of the cultural and economic exchange between American philanthropy and Canadian institutions such as the University of Alberta and its Banff School, Gard's concept of the "dramatic lore of the frontier" has interesting implications for Canadian cultural sovereignty. The goal of the Rockefeller Foundation's programme in regional interpretation was to subtly foster the growth of a common scholarly community in North America and to contribute to the creation of common cultural practices, attitudes, and policies. As Cameron pointed out in the preface to Gard's *Johnny Chinook: Tall Tales and True from the Canadian West*, the region that Gard conceptualized was actually part of a broader geographic, climactic, and cultural zone, which included not only southern Alberta but also the states of North and South Dakota, Nebraska, and parts of Colorado, Wyoming and Montana. And it represented an American-style frontier where, as Cameron put it, "the people have developed a distinctive way of life and a different outlook from that of the people who live on the Pacific Coast or in Eastern Canada and the Eastern United States."⁴⁹ It was, in short, a land of legends and traditions where the border between Canada and the United States was meaningless. In this sense, the land of Johnny Chinook is an exemplary reflection of the Rockefeller Foundation's ideological belief in cultural regions that transcended political boundaries.

To be sure, the idea of transnational regions and analysis of the frontier were not new and were not purely American in origin. At the 1931 annual meeting of the Canadian Historical Association, J. Bartlett Brebner called on his colleagues to apply what he described as "North American, that is, continental, contours to the histories of Canada and the United States," and to avoid being hindered in historical analysis "by what to hundreds of thousands of North Americans was a negligible political boundary."⁵⁰ But Gard's heroic lore was created and then disseminated in a manner patterned after earlier Rockefeller projects at Cornell University, University of North Carolina, and the University of Iowa and was, therefore, distinctly American in style and production. Gard's prose spoke more of Frederick Jackson Turner's American Frontier with its rugged individualism, spirit of egalitarianism, and sense of distance from supposedly civilized Europe and eastern

North America than it did of the west described in Harold Innis's *The Fur Trade in Canada*, or the west that lay beyond Donald Creighton's paradigmatic statement on Canadian historical development, *The Commercial Empire of the St. Lawrence, 1760-1850*.⁵¹

Central-Canadian intellectuals such as Creighton and Innis certainly dealt with the relationship between humanity and the environment, and some Canadian historians, most notably Arthur Lower,⁵² were influenced by Turner's notions of the frontier. However, the leaders of the dominant Laurentian school prioritized political, commercial, and social developments in metropolitan centers in Europe and in central Canada. In their narratives, the heart of the Canadian story was Toronto, Montreal or Paris and London, and it was not located in what they defined as the hinterland. In their writings the Canadian-American border was not only a geographic reality, it was a vital economic, political, ideological, and cultural marker. Turner viewed American culture, in the words of one American historian, "not as an importation from England via New England, but as a new order rising from the native soil."⁵³ The central-Canadian intellectuals who dominated both Canadian academic history and elite Anglo-Canadian opinion at the time simply did not view the west with this level of enthusiasm, nor did they see it as so critically formative in the story of national or continental development. As historian Michael Cross has observed, "For Turner, the frontier was the well-spring of all that was good in North American society; for Laurentianists like D.G. Creighton, the frontier was the homeland of parochial farmers who failed to appreciate the commercial dynamism found in cities like Montreal, a dynamism essential for the growth of Canada."⁵⁴ Even Canada's most prominent frontierist historian, Arthur Lower, who wrote in his 1946 text, *Colony to Nation: A History of Canada*, that "North American democracy was forest-born,"⁵⁵ perceived a decidedly placid frontier. While he later observed that the Canadian west, like any "new frontier invariably casts up the bizarre and the picturesque in more than average numbers," he concluded that

Canadians, not being exhibitionists, have not produced a large crop of such characters: their frontiers have carried relatively subdued colours...and the 'sterling fellow' has been more characteristic of them than the 'cut-up'.... How could it be otherwise when the sedate East was streaming out west in a vast migration that carried all its values along with it?⁵⁶

Gard's frontier vision was imported with the Rockefeller Foundation's programme of cultural interpretation — cultural baggage that came with cultural funding. Ironically, however, the intervention of American corporate philanthropy served to empower a regional culture in western Canada. In the age before the Canada Council and large-scale federal support for culture, American grants and influence acted as a viable and important counter-force to the dominance of central-Canadian intellectuals, institutions, and paradigms of Canadian development.

In the larger project from which this paper is drawn I discuss the Rockefeller Foundation's efforts to cultivate transnational regional consciousness in other parts of Canada. Under this programme, in the early 1940s, the Foundation extended support to a number of projects aimed at interpreting the Maritime region. It also financed American sociologist Everett Hughes' important work on Quebec society, as well as his successful efforts to inspire the development of social research at Laval University.⁵⁷ However it is important to note that at the same time as the Foundation was fostering the development of regional interpretation of the Maritimes, of the Prairies, and of what Foundation officers referred to as "French Canada," it was also serving as a primary force in the creation and upkeep of the Social Science Research Council of Canada, and the Canadian Humanities Research Council. These activities mirrored those of the Carnegie Corporation, which funded and influenced the formation of both the National Film Society and the Federation of Canadian Artists.⁵⁸ All these "national" organizations depended entirely on American corporate philanthropy for their operating expenses and for their grant programmes from the time they were created in the early 1940s until 1957, when the Canada Council was formed.⁵⁹ While the Rockefeller Foundation encouraged Albertans to "think regionally," it was also promoting the Department of Political Economy at the University of Toronto and the Economics Department at Queen's University as national centres of research, as well as funding the work of Harold Innis, Donald Creighton, and Arthur Lower, among others, who believed in thinking and acting nationally.⁶⁰

I have argued elsewhere that in the first half of the century American philanthropy played a key role in the development of a Canadian cultural and intellectual infrastructure — and that in the 1950s, this infrastructure was absorbed into the fabric of the federal state.⁶¹ American foundations helped facilitate the transformation of Canada from a private, localized system of cultural and intellectual support to a complex nation-based system of incorporated patronage in which the major patron is the federal government. In the report of the *Royal Commission on National Development in the Arts, Letters and Sciences*, Vincent Massey wrote that the gifts of American philanthropists "applied with wisdom and imagination...have helped Canadians to live their own life and to develop a better Canadianism."⁶² By supporting Robert Gard and the Alberta Folklore Project, the officers of the Rockefeller Foundation demonstrated their belief that continental integration not only required what they, like Massey, saw as a better Canadianism, it also required a better regionalism.

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Notes

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1 Robert GARD, *Johnny Chinook: Tall Tales and True from the Canadian West* (Toronto: Longmans, Green and Co., 1945).

2 For discussions of North American integration during this period see J.L. GRANATSTEIN and Norman HILLMER, *For Better or for Worse: Canada and the United States to the 1990s* (Toronto: Copp Clark Pitman Ltd., 1991); J.L. GRANATSTEIN, *How Britain's Weakness Forced Canada into the Arms of the United States* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1989); John Herd THOMPSON with Allen SEAGER, *Canada 1922-1939: Decades of Discord* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Ltd., 1985), 158-92; and John Herd THOMPSON and Stephen J. RANDALL, *Canada and the United States: Ambivalent Allies* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1994).

3 The Banff School was founded through the University of Alberta's Department of Extension in 1933 with the aid of a \$30,000 grant from the Carnegie Corporation of New York and for the first five years of its life, the school depended exclusively on Carnegie financing. See Donald CAMERON, *The Campus in the Clouds* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Ltd., 1956), 15. In the 1930s, as part of its programme to solidify the status and position of the fine arts and art history in North American higher education the Carnegie Corporation funded art instruction at the University of Alberta. See Brenda JUBIN, *Carnegie Corporation: Program in the Arts 1911-1967* (New York: Carnegie Corporation of New York, 1968), 10-11. See also Jeffrey D. BRISON, "Cultural Interventions: American Corporate Philanthropy and the Construction of the Arts and Letters in Canada, 1900-1957" (Ph. D. thesis, Queen's University, 1998), 216-17.

4 David H. STEVENS, "The Humanities in Theory and Policy, 31 March 1937," 2. RG 3, Series 911, Box 2, Folder 10, Papers of the Rockefeller Foundation (hereafter RF), Rockefeller Archive Center (hereafter RAC).

5 "Humanities — Program and Policy: Extract from DR 486, Report of the Committee on Appraisal and Plan, December 11, 1934," 72. RG 3, Series 911, Box 2, Folder 9, RF, RAC.

6 "The Humanities Program of the Rockefeller Foundation: A Review of the Period 1934-1939," 14. RG 3, Series 911, Box 2, Folder 10, RF, RAC.

7 "New Program in the Humanities, 10 Apr. 1935," i-ii. RG 3, Series 911, Box 2, Folder 10, RF, RAC.

8 STEVENS, "The Humanities in Theory and Policy," 1.

9 "Program in the Humanities, March 1934." RG 3, Series 911, Box 2, Folder 9, RF, RAC.

10 Quoted in Charles R. ACLAND and William J. BUXTON, "Continentalism and Philanthropy: A Rockefeller Officer's Impressions of the Humanities in the Maritimes," *Acadiensis* 23 (Spring 1994): 75.

11 BRISON, "Cultural Interventions." See also Donald FISHER, *The Social Sciences in Canada: 50 Years of National Activity by the Social Science Federation of Canada* (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier Press in collaboration with the Social Sciences Federation of Canada, 1993); Carl BERGER, "The Conferences on Canadian-American Affairs, 1935-1941: An Overview," in *The Road to Ogdensburg: The Queen's/St. Lawrence Conferences on Canadian-American Affairs, 1935-1941*, ed. Frederick W. GIBSON and Jonathan G. ROSSIE (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1993), 11-35; Carl BERGER,

"Internationalism, Continentalism, and the Writing of History: Comments on the Carnegie Series on the Relations of Canada and the United States," in *The Influence of the United States on Canadian Development: Eleven Case Studies*, ed. Richard PRESTON (Durham: Duke University Press, 1972), 32-55; Maria TIPPETT, *Making Culture: English-Canadian Institutions and the Arts before the Massey Commission* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990); Michael BELL, "The Welfare of Art in Canada," introduction to *The Kingston Conference Proceedings: A Reprint of the Proceedings of the 1941 Kingston Artists' Conference* (Kingston: Agnes Etherington Art Centre, 1983); and Paul LITT "The Massey Commission, Americanization, and Canadian Cultural Nationalism," *Queen's Quarterly* 98 (Summer 1991): 375-87.

12 "Program in the Humanities, March 1934."

13 BRISON, "Cultural Interventions," 93-107; see also William B. SPAULDING, "Why Rockefeller Supported Medical Education in Canada: The William Lyon Mackenzie King Connection," *Canadian Bulletin of Medical History* 10 (1993): 67-76; and Marianne P. STEVENS, "The Rockefeller Foundation and Canadian Medical Education," *Research Reports from the Rockefeller Archive Center* (Spring 1999), 14-16.

14 John MARSHALL, "Canada: Diary of Visit, First Part: Quebec and Ontario, September 29-October 3, 1941," 1A. RG 1.1, Series 427R, Box 27, Folder 264, RF, RAC.

15 *Ibid.*, 2.A.

16 Raymond B. FOSDICK, *The Story of the Rockefeller Foundation* (New York: Harper and Brothers, Publishers, 1952), 256.

17 Ian MCKAY, *Quest of the Folk: Antimodernism and Cultural Selection in Twentieth-Century Nova Scotia* (Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1994), 216.

18 MARSHALL, "Canada: Diary of Visit, Second Part: Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta, and Vancouver, October 20-30, 1941," 41.

19 *Ibid.*, 7.

20 CAMERON, *The Campus in the Clouds*, 123-24.

21 For a description of this regional theatre movement and the early careers of Gowan and Ringwood see Anne NOTHOE, "Making Community History: The Radio Plays of Ringwood and Gowan," in *Edmonton: Life of the City*, ed. Bob HESKETH and Frances SWYRIPA (Edmonton: NeWest Publishers, 1995), 170-78.

22 *Ibid.*, 172.

23 CAMERON, *The Campus in the Clouds*, 22. For a discussion of Koch's influence on local playwrights see page 21.

24 In early 1934 Koch, Arthur Quinn (University of Pennsylvania), Allardyce Nicoll (Yale University), A.M. Drummond (Cornell University), and E.C. Marble (University of Iowa) were involved in discussions with the directors of the Rockefeller Foundation's Humanities Division. Out of these meetings emerged the guiding principals for the Foundation's support of community theatre in North America. See William J. BUXTON, "RF Support for Non-Professional Drama, 1933-1950," *Research Reports from the Rockefeller Archive Center* (Spring 1999): 2.

25 Robert GARD, *Grassroots Theater: A Search for Regional Arts in America* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1955), 47.

26 NOTHOE, "Making Community History," 171. With the support of a Rockefeller Fellowship arranged by Koch, Ringwood completed a Master's Degree under Koch and Paul Green at the University of North Carolina in 1939. See CAMERON, *The Campus in the Clouds*, 29-30; and GARD, *Grassroots Theater*, 67-68.

- 27 Robert Gard to A.M. Drummond, 14 Sept. 1943. RG 1.1, Series 427R, Box 29, Folder 286, RF, RAC.
- 28 Unsigned, *Alberta Folklore Quarterly* 1, no. 1 (March 1945): 27.
- 29 TIPPETT, *Making Culture*, 163.
- 30 *Ibid.*
- 31 Gard to Drummond, 14 Sept. 1943,
- 32 Unsigned, *Alberta Folklore Quarterly* 1, no. 1 (March 1945): 27.
- 33 See Marshall to R. Newton, 17 Feb. 1944. RG 1.1, Series 427R, Box 29, Folder 287, RF, RAC; and Newton to Marshall, 26 Feb. 1944. RG 1.1, Series 427R, Box 29, Folder 287, RF, RAC.
- 34 David H. STEVENS, foreword to GARD, *Grassroots Theater*, ix.
- 35 Gard to Stevens, 15 Aug. 1945, 4. RG 1.1, Series 427R, Box 29, Folder 288, RF, RAC.
- 36 *Ibid.*, 6.
- 37 See Maryo EWELL, "Meaning or McCalgary," http://www.communityarts.net/readingroom/archives/32_ewell.php.
- 38 GARD, *Grassroots Theater*, 47.
- 39 *Ibid.*
- 40 Newton to Stevens, 12 Nov. 1948, 2. RG 1.1, Series 427R, Box 29, Folder 288, RF, RAC.
- 41 See also Newton to Stevens, 28 Nov. 1946, 1, *ibid.*
- 42 Unsigned (cover), *Alberta Folklore Quarterly* 1, no. 2 (June 1945): 1.
- 43 Low joined the NFB in 1945 to work principally as an animator. In 1950 he was appointed the head of its animation unit. During his long career he directed and produced numerous titles for the Film Board and was nominated for nine Academy Awards. See Peter HARCOURT, "The Innocent Eye: An Aspect of the Work of the National Film Board of Canada," in *The Canadian Film Reader*, ed., Seth FELDMAN and Joyce NELSON (Toronto: Peter Martin Associates Ltd., 1977), 74-75; and see http://bigmoviezone.com/filmsearch/directors/director_display.html?unique=75; and http://www.nfb.ca/e/highlights/colin_low.html.
- 44 HARCOURT, "The Innocent Eye," 74.
- 45 *Ibid.*
- 46 *Ibid.*, 75.
- 47 CAMERON, *The Campus in the Clouds*, 30.
- 48 *Alberta Folklore Quarterly* 2, no. 1 (March 1946): 39.
- 49 Donald CAMERON, introduction to GARD, *Johnny Chinook*, xi-xii.
- 50 *Report of the Annual Meeting held at Ottawa, May 26 and 27, 1931* (Ottawa: Canadian Historical Association), 37, 43. J. Bartlett Brebner, a Canadian, taught North American history at Columbia University.
- 51 Frederick Jackson TURNER, "The Significance of the Frontier in American History," in his *The Frontier in American History* (New York, Harry Holt and Co., 1920); Harold INNIS, *The Fur Trade in Canada* (London: Oxford University Press, 1930); and Donald CREIGHTON, *The Commercial Empire of the St. Lawrence, 1760-1850* (Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1937). During his long and brilliant career, Brebner worked outside the University of Toronto-dominated Laurentian tradition. Insulated from the hegemonic power of Toronto intellectuals by his Columbia University posting and by the support he received from the New York City-based foundations, Brebner's work recognized

both imperial and continental influences on northern North America. See in particular, J. Bartlett BREBNER, *North Atlantic Triangle: The Interplay of Canada, the United States and Great Britain* (Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1945).

52 For a discussion of Turner's influence on Lower, see Michael S. CROSS, "The Frontier Thesis and the Canadas: The Debate on the Impact of the Canadian Environment" (Toronto: Copp Clark Publishing Co., 1970), 1.

53 Curtis NETTELS, "Frederick Jackson Turner and the New Deal," *The Wisconsin Magazine of History* XVII (1933-1934): 259.

54 CROSS, "The Frontier Thesis and the Canadas," 4.

55 Arthur LOWER, *Colony to Nation: A History of Canada* (Toronto: Longmans, Green and Co., 1946), 49.

56 Arthur LOWER, *Canadians in the Making: A Social History of Canada* (Toronto: Longmans, Green and Co., 1958), 361.

57 See BRISON, "Cultural Interventions," 181-209.

58 *Ibid.* For further discussion of the Federation of Canadian Artists see Jeffrey BRISON, "The Kingston Conference, The Carnegie Corporation and a New Deal for the Arts in Canada," *American Review of Canadian Studies* (Winter 1993): 503-22.

59 BRISON, "Cultural Interventions," 292-335.

60 *Ibid.*, 336-53.

61 *Ibid.*

62 "The Forces of Geography" in the report of the *Royal Commission on National Development in the Arts, Letters and Sciences, 1949-1951* (Ottawa: Edmond Cloutier, C.M.G., O.A., D.S.P., Printer to the King's Most Excellent Majesty, 1951), 13.

LA ROCKEFELLER FOUNDATION ET LA POLITIQUE CULTURELLE AU-DELÀ DE LA FRONTIÈRE NORD-OUEST

En 1945 le folkloriste américain Robert Gard publiait *Johnny Chinook : Tall Tales and True from the Canadian West*. Auparavant, il avait enseigné la dramaturgie à l'école des Beaux-Arts de Banff et il était directeur du programme de folklore et d'histoire locale de l'Alberta à l'Université de l'Alberta. Le livre, illustré par l'artiste de Calgary W. J. Phillips, racontait les contes folkloriques que Gard avait entendus durant ses deux années de recherches sur le folklore albertain. Les intérêts de la Rockefeller Foundation, qui avait subventionné les travaux de Gard en Alberta, étaient liés à l'intérêt croissant des intervenants culturels et intellectuels dans les traditions folkloriques, l'histoire et les identités locales et régionales. Cette convergence des esprits et des émotions eut aussi une importance cruciale dans le développement du mouvement artistique multidimensionnel de l'école de Banff. De plus, les subventions de la Carnegie Corporation de New York à l'école de Banff et à l'Université de l'Alberta servaient de contrepoids à l'hégémonie d'un nationalisme canadien centralisateur.

Au milieu de la crise économique de la Grande Dépression, les dirigeants de la Rockefeller Foundation commencèrent à exprimer leur inquiétude devant une vaste quantité d'information non réglementée qui posait un sérieux défi à la santé morale et spirituelle de leur nation et aux anciennes idées traditionnelles de la communauté. En 1935, le directeur des sciences humaines de la Fondation, David Stevens, et son directeur associé, John Marshall, créèrent un nouveau programme sur ce qu'ils appelaient l'interprétation culturelle, avec l'intention de favoriser «une meilleure appréciation des éléments de la vie américaine qui constituent notre héritage national». Pendant une grande partie de l'entre-deux-guerres, la Rockefeller Foundation et sa voisine new-yorkaise, la Carnegie Corporation, traitèrent les infrastructures intellectuelles et culturelles canadiennes comme une partie d'un grand réseau nord-américain. En même temps, le statut du Canada en tant que nation indépendante inspirait à la Fondation le désir d'améliorer «la compréhension culturelle entre les nations», après le début de la Deuxième guerre mondiale et l'avènement de rapports plus étroits et mieux coordonnés entre le Canada et les États-Unis.

Entre septembre 1941 et novembre 1942, Marshall fit la tournée des centres culturels canadiens qui pouvaient contribuer à «une meilleure interprétation de la

tradition canadienne». Bien qu'il n'ait pas senti un fort sentiment d'identité nationale chez les Canadiens des Prairies et de l'Ouest, il croyait qu'il y avait un grand intérêt pour la promotion d'une identité régionale. Il s'intéressa particulièrement au programme des arts de l'Université de l'Alberta et de l'école de Banff, soutenu par la Carnegie Corporation. À Banff, des écrivains, dont Gwen Pharis Ringwood, Elsie Park Gowan, Rowena Hawkings et John MacLaren, avaient réussi à développer une littérature et un théâtre fondés sur l'histoire locale et le folklore de l'Ouest canadien. D'autre part, des artistes comme W.J. Phillips, H.G. Glyde et André Bièler utilisaient l'environnement physique comme sujet pour leurs cours et pour la pratique de leur art. En septembre 1943, l'Américain Robert Gard, qui avait enseigné l'art dramatique à Banff au cours des deux étés précédents, arriva à Edmonton, muni d'une bourse Rockefeller, pour fonder un programme innovateur de folklore et d'histoire locale de l'Alberta.

Utilisant les contes folkloriques recueillis au cours de ses randonnées à travers la province, Gard écrivit des articles sur l'histoire locale pour des journaux de la province, et fournit des données historiques aux étudiants en dramaturgie de l'école de Banff et de l'Université de l'Alberta. Il donna aussi des conférences radio-phoniques hebdomadaires sur la station universitaire CKUA, et pour le réseau régional des Prairies de la CBC. À Banff, Gard et d'autres collègues écrivirent et jouèrent plusieurs pièces, dont plusieurs furent radiodiffusées par la CBC. Il recueillit aussi diverses légendes folkloriques pour *Johnny Chinook*. Gard organisa la première conférence des écrivains de l'Alberta, à Banff en août 1944, et, avec des fonds de la Rockefeller Foundation, il mit sur pied la Western Canadian Theatre Conference. Il fit aussi des pressions auprès du gouvernement provincial pour qu'il augmente le nombre d'heures consacrées à l'histoire régionale dans les écoles publiques de l'Alberta et créa pour les étudiants un concours d'écriture créative à la grandeur de la province.

En 1945, Gard se rendit à l'Université du Wisconsin pour y fonder et diriger un programme sur le modèle albertain. Rétrospectivement, une grande partie de l'activité qui entoura le programme de folklore et d'histoire locale de l'Alberta peut être vue comme une réaction temporaire à l'élan donné par Gard et la Rockefeller Foundation. Ainsi, l'*Alberta Folklore Quarterly* et l'*Alberta Folklore Association* ne survécurent pas à son départ. Toutefois l'appui de la Fondation au programme de folklore contribua à la croissance, déjà impressionnante, de l'école de Banff et donna un élan au nouveau département des beaux-arts de l'Université de l'Alberta, le premier au Canada à inclure des sections d'arts visuels, de musique et de théâtre. La Rockefeller Foundation appuya aussi la création d'une chaire de théâtre à l'Université de la Saskatchewan en 1945. En 1948, l'Alberta Writers' Conference était devenue une institution permanente, la Western Writers' Conference. La meilleure preuve de la symbiose entre Gard et l'émergence d'un folklore régional de l'ouest canadien pourrait être la pièce de Gwen Pharis Ringwood, *Stampede*, écrite en 1946 à la demande de l'Alberta Folklore and Local History Project.

La définition que donne Gard de la frontière a des implications intéressantes pour la souveraineté culturelle canadienne. La région qu'il imaginait ne comprenait pas seulement le sud de l'Alberta, mais aussi plusieurs États américains. De plus, il s'agissait d'une frontière de style américain, où les limites entre le Canada et les États-Unis ne signifiaient pas grand chose et qui, par conséquent, reflétait l'idéologie de la Rockefeller Foundation pour qui les régions culturelles transcendaient les frontières politiques. Le concept de régions transnationales et d'analyse de frontières n'était pas nouvelle ni d'origine purement américaine. Mais le savoir populaire de Gard était créé et diffusé à la manière des premiers projets de la Rockefeller Foundation aux États-Unis. Son folklore s'inspirait davantage des théories de Frederick Jackson Turner sur la frontière américaine, avec son individualisme rugueux, son esprit égalitaire et un sentiment de distance vis-à-vis l'Europe et l'est américain censément «civilisés», que de la vision de l'ouest que l'on retrouve dans *The Fur Trade in Canada* de Harold Innis ou dans *The Commercial Empire of the St. Lawrence, 1760-1850* de Donald Creighton. Ces chefs de file de l'école laurentienne privilégiaient le développement politique, commercial et social du Canada central. Ils soutenaient que le cœur de l'histoire canadienne se trouvait à Toronto et à Montréal, et non dans l'«hinterland», et que la frontière canado-américaine était un marqueur économique, politique, idéologique et culturel majeur. Ils ne voyaient pas l'ouest avec le même enthousiasme que leurs collègues américains ni comme un élément formateur signifiant dans l'histoire du développement national ou continental. Gard avait importé, avec le programme d'interprétation culturelle de la Rockefeller Foundation, sa vision de la frontière. Ironiquement, la philanthropie corporatiste américaine a aussi servi à promouvoir une culture régionale dans l'ouest canadien. Antérieurement au Conseil des Arts du Canada et aux subventions fédérales à grande échelle, les octrois et l'influence des Américains furent un contrepoids viable et important face à la domination des intellectuels, des institutions et des modèles de développement du Canada central. Dans l'étude plus élaborée de laquelle cet article est tiré, je parle des efforts de la Rockefeller Foundation pour cultiver une conscience régionale transnationale dans d'autres parties du Canada, y compris les Maritimes, et dans ce que ses administrateurs appelaient le Canada français. En même temps, les fondations américaines fournirent un appui vital au Conseil canadien des recherches en sciences sociales, au Conseil des recherches en sciences humaines du Canada et à la Fédération des artistes canadiens. La Rockefeller Foundation a également soutenu les études en économie politique à l'Université de Toronto et au département des sciences économiques de l'Université Queens, comme centres nationaux de recherches, et financé les travaux de Harold Innis, Donald Creighton, Arthur Lower et autres.

Les fondations américaines ont joué un rôle clé dans le développement d'infrastructures culturelles canadiennes qui furent absorbées dans le tissu de l'État

fédéral dans les années cinquante. Ces organismes ont facilité la transformation du Canada d'un système privé, localisé de patronage culturel et intellectuel en un système national complexe de mécénat social dont le principal mécène était l'État fédéral. Vincent Massey a écrit dans son rapport à la *Commission royale d'enquête sur l'avancement des arts, des lettres et des sciences au Canada* que les dons des philanthropes américains «avaient aidé les Canadiens à développer un meilleur esprit canadien». En soutenant Robert Gard et l'*Alberta Folklore Project*, les administrateurs de la Rockefeller Foundation, tout comme Vincent Massey, ont montré qu'ils croyaient que l'intégration continentale exigeait non seulement un meilleur esprit canadien, mais aussi un meilleur esprit régional.

Traduction: Élise Bonnette