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BOOK REVIEWS/RECENSIONS

## Could It Happen Here? Canada in the Age of Trump and Brexit

Michael Adams Toronto: Simon & Schuster, 2017, 178 pages

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In this short book, Canada's best-known public opinion researcher tackles a question that has been on the minds of many since 2016: Will we succumb to the populist and nativist trends happening elsewhere in the world? This important contribution by Michael Adams provides us with a good start in answering this from a Canadian standpoint. What it lacks in depth is made up for in a breadth of analysis that should please both a casual readership and those political scientists looking for a wide-ranging exploration of the title's question. That said, the book's response—that Canada is unlikely to follow the turn toward populism and nativism because “[the] appetite for that form of politics is limited [here]” (15)—might be overly optimistic and not fully address factors that could undermine this assessment.

In the June 2017 issue of this journal, Daniel Béland, in his review of *What Is Populism?* by Jan-Werner Müller, noted that Müller's book raises a key unaddressed question: Why has populism not performed as well in Canada as it has in Europe and the United States, given some of the same recent frustrations with democracy? More research is needed on this topic, he argued; *Could It Happen Here?* offers an attempt to tackle the lack of systemic analysis of Canada's experience with current populism that will be helpful for political science research. Here, the methodology is what Michael Adams does best: comparing Canadian social attitudes and values with those in the United States and elsewhere. Will we “catch Trumpism,” he asks, “that storm of angry, isolationist and frequently nativist populism” (9) that has swept through other Western countries?

Like all advanced democracies, Canada is susceptible to what this book argues are the key elements associated with contemporary populism: anti-immigration attitudes and policies, wealth and social inequalities, and institutional weaknesses within Western countries. Adams contends that while anti-immigrant sentiments may be on the rise in Canada, the “issue of immigration has tended not to be controversial [here] for many years, and the main political parties are largely in consensus about the importance of immigration” (64). In short, our “core values continue to embrace diversity and reasonable accommodation” (65), in large part because Canadian culture has become progressively “more secular, risk averse and self-effacing” (66), compared to that of our American neighbours.

On inequality, Adams admits that social mobility in Canada, especially in large urban areas, may be under threat with increasing segregation and polarization between newcomers and longer settled citizens. But the book also contends that public policies have prevented exacerbating the problem because “[social programs] with broad reach”—such as pensions and health care—“continue to enjoy public support” (98), and the structure of our public education funding largely prevents the disparities that plague the US system and feed into a growing “politics of economic resentment” (102). Adams provides a variety of data on economic mobility, citizen happiness, and other indicators as evidence that Canadian governments “have managed ... to prevent or mitigate the accumulation of corrosive social forces” (121) that are surfacing angrily in the Trump/Brexit era.

Finally, on the critical question of democratic institutions, the book notes that while Canada suffers from some of the same features plaguing other countries—such as a decline in voter participation—we are immune from other factors impairing American democracy, particularly third-party advertising and gerrymandering. These realities, combined with a higher level of Canadian public trust in institutions such as the judiciary and legislative bodies, have led to what Adams calls a “virtuous circle at work in Canada and a vicious cycle playing out in the US” (141).

This book is a good and important contribution that helps start unpacking the extent to which Canada is susceptible to what is happening in countries with whom we share economic, political and historical ties. The closing argument—that although polarizing populism and divisive nativism might spark some fires here, the underlying values in Canada point to our tendency to “muddle our way back to the middle” (153) and prevent more serious damage to Canadian society—is mainly a convincing one, as far as it goes. With a limited focus on public opinion data, however, it does not sufficiently explore factors that political scientists might deem more compelling, such as structural political economic trends or institutional dynamics that Canada shares with other advanced democracies. Given the tendency for some cultural trends to take a longer time before flourishing in Canada, one wonders how immune we truly are to the current forces of populism and nativism. Could there not develop a significant backlash to immigration, resulting in more restrictive future policies? Might Canadian political leaders enact policies undermining the social protections lauded by the book? Michael Adams could be correct that there are better “guard rails” in Canada to protect us, but this book raises just as many questions as it answers and should be the beginning, not the end, of serious engagement on this issue by scholars in political science.

### **Les fondements de la culture, le pouvoir de l'art : *Les soixante premières années du Conseil des arts du Canada***

**Monica Gattinger McGill-Queen's University Press Montréal, 2017, 217 pages ISBN : 9780773551633**

Mariana Castellanos, École nationale d'administration publique

Je me rappelle que lorsque j'étais jeune chaque anniversaire était une bonne occasion pour regarder les albums de famille et se souvenir de personnes, d'événements, d'objets et d'expériences qui ont marqué notre histoire. La même sensation apparaît après la lecture du livre *Les fondements de la culture, le pouvoir de l'art. Les soixante premières années du Conseil des arts du Canada* de Monica Gattinger. Ce livre est l'album de la famille du Conseil des arts du Canada (CAC). Il a été composé pour célébrer son 60<sup>e</sup> anniversaire en présentant l'histoire, la structure, les fondements, les changements et l'avenir du CAC.

Le ton du texte est dynamique, positif, évocateur et, même parfois, poétique. L'ouvrage est confectionné comme un roman qui nous transporte et nous fait visiter le Conseil, depuis l'entrée principale sur la rue Elgin à Ottawa jusqu'au cœur des acteurs qui le composent. Le texte nous amène à parcourir l'organisme, en commençant par son mandat, ses défis et ses contributions. Nous éprouvons la sensation d'être même à l'intérieur de la salle d'exposition Ajagemô, participant à un vernissage et discutant avec les fonctionnaires.

Le design du livre est très attirant, coloré, et dans sa version papier, rafraichissant à cause de la beauté de l'objet. C'est gratifiant, et rare pour un texte académique, d'être présenté de cette