Wall, Joseph Frazier. *Andrew Carnegie*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970; Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1989) reviewed in ISIS 81 (1990): 593-4.

Scholars must be indebted to the University of Pittsburgh Press for republishing Joseph Wall's compelling biography of Andrew Carnegie. The book remains invaluable as a description of business practice and technological strategy, owing much to the author's access to otherwise-closed U.S. Steel papers. This documentation is unusually complete and revealing due to Carnegie's active, nearly obsessive, absentee management of his Pittsburgh affairs via correspondence during his frequent travels and, after his marriage in 1887, his winter residence in New York and summer residence in Scotland. In addition, Carnegie's manifold literary, political and financial activities offer an intriguing slice of British and American history. The result is a gracefully written, if not practically portable, volume of broad interest.

The whole Carnegie is Wall's focus. His basic theme is that "Carnegie's continuing attempt to reconcile the entrepreneurial success and the paramountcy within the American plutocracy which he achieved as an adult with the egalitarian and radical Scottish Chartist ideals of his childhood ... provides the main tension and complexity to his life." (x) What else to make of a man who at the close of the Spanish-American War offered $20 million for the Philippines, a manumission by which Carnegie hoped to save the United States from the evils of empire? Wall admires Carnegie's achievements but here and elsewhere does not hesitate to point out his boastings, puffery, paternalism, and simplistic faith in progress.

Across his industrial, literary and philanthropic ventures, Carnegie's strengths were those of a nineteenth century entrepreneur, not those of a twentieth century rationalizer of organizations. Carnegie suffered rare losses in northwest Pennsylvania oil ventures and abandoned the field to others such as John D. Rockefeller; later, Carnegie supported Abraham Flexner's 1908-10 survey of medical education but ceded, again to Rockefeller, the chaos of post-Flexner medical reform. In steelmaking, Carnegie but intermittently supported the manufacturers' pools and other attempts to limit destructive competition--at which Carnegie excelled. Indeed, it was his announced threat to break the Pennsylvania Railroad's stranglehold on transportation to Pittsburgh (by building rival railroad lines) and to compete against J. P. Morgan's steel holdings (by building a tube mill strategically located on Lake Erie) that spurred Morgan in 1901 to buy out the limited-liability partnership which the pesky Scotchman dominated and create U. S. Steel, the nation's first billion-dollar corporation. In payment, Morgan quickly arranged Carnegie's demand for first-mortgage 5 percent gold bonds, which precluded Carnegie's influence over the steel trust.

Carnegie worked harder, so he said, to give away his $300 million fortune than he had had to amass it. His celebrated 1889 North American Review essay on "Wealth" posited the ideal of a wise individual administering wealth for the public benefit, but Carnegie would find it impossible to oversee personally the granting of 7689 church organs, 2811 public libraries, and countless pensions for university faculty and public figures. A half dozen Carnegie foundations took over these burdens. Even so, a decade after his exit from the

steel business, accumulated interest nearly equaled his benefactions; and the Gospel of Wealth condemned a man who died wealthy. Tired of philanthropy and wounded by continual public criticism (only the Carnegie Institution of Washington remained above the fray), Carnegie, almost in desperation, created the Carnegie Corporation of New York in 1911 and transferred to it the bulk of his remaining fortune, $125 million. He devoted his remaining years to promoting international peace, though the times hardly obliged. Depressed by the slaughter of the World War, and separated from his beloved Scotland, he died in August 1919 shortly after the promulgation of the League of Nations, which he had championed for years, but mercifully before its death at the hands of the U. S. Senate.

Wall advances few novel theories, preferring to debate those of others and to deflate the more egregious myths Carnegie promoted of himself. He demonstrates that "pioneering don't pay," sometimes cited as a key Carnegie dictum, was but a misleading catch phrase which confutes Carnegie's actions and ignores his manic drive to cut costs by scrapping any machine that could be improved. Wall also disputes Richard Hofstadter's classic equation of social Darwinism with post-Civil War business philosophy, for which Carnegie, with his adulation of Herbert Spencer, appears an ideal type. Wall notes that Carnegie took from Spencer only superficial slogans ("All is well, since all grows better") and misunderstood, ignored or even inverted his central ideas. Claiming to quote Spencer, Carnegie defended thus the concentration of capital: "It is an evolution from the heterogeneous to the homogeneous, and is clearly another step in the upward path of development." (p. 395) Of course, the Spencerian order of evolutionary development went from homogeneity to heterogeneity. For Carnegie, in social philosophy as well as in business, reason and consistency never quite triumphed over passion and commitment. Wall's portrait of the whole Carnegie, complexities, contradictions and all, is a durable achievement.

Thomas J. Misa
Illinois Institute of Technology