

# The *Journal of Canadian Studies* then and now

## FOUNDING THE JOURNAL

Forty-one years ago the *Journal of Canadian Studies* was launched. Proudly featured on its cover was Champlain's astrolabe, which in 1966 was part of the New York Historical Society's collection. The editors didn't explain the astrolabe. Perhaps they felt they didn't have to. Its symbolism was obvious: as a navigation device, the astrolabe helped Champlain explore unknown worlds; as an academic journal, the *Journal of Canadian Studies* has helped Canadians navigate familiar and unfamiliar worlds, past and present, in both English and French.

It was a different time and a different place. The Quiet Revolution was unfolding at a staggering and bewildering rate; once the domain of dreamers and radicals, separatism had become fashionable and respectable, if not yet mainstream. The "Other Quiet Revolution," this one in English Canada, saw English Canadians re-imagine themselves in part through a new flag while the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism criss-crossed the country en route to its bleak assessment in February 1965: Canada, the commissioners warned, "is passing through the greatest crisis in its history." Meanwhile, the war in Vietnam raged on and on and talk of the Americanization of English-Canadian universities grew louder and more anxious.

The appearance of a new journal is, by definition, an optimistic statement: we have something important to say and we are going to say it. In his inaugural editorial, Denis Smith noted that Canada must contend with the challenges posed by the "creative explosion of French-Canadian ambition" and by living "always in the shadow of the neighbouring superpower." If something is not done, he warned, well, let's just say, "there are limits to what the collective national

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spirit can endure." As part of doing something in these inauspicious times, the *Journal of Canadian Studies* "has been founded." It is hoped, Smith explained, that "the country will achieve greater self-understanding and a more tolerable national consensus, and that the *Journal* may contribute something to these ends."

Has the *Journal of Canadian Studies* contributed to a "greater self-understanding and a more tolerable national consensus"? The answer is mixed.

Certainly, through the publication of outstanding scholarship and critical reviews, the *Journal of Canadian Studies* has added immeasurably to our understanding of Canada and, ultimately, of ourselves. It is now contributing to our

understanding of 1960s Canada, the very context in which the *Journal* was founded. Volume 40, number 3, contains three articles—one written by a professor of English, another by an historian, and yet another by a doctoral candidate in Comparative Literature. The issue examines the historical imperative to imagine a nation through the Centennial Voyageur Canoe Pageant, the new flag, and the CBC television series *Adventures in Rainbow Country*. Chris Champion's brilliant essay on the flag debate even adds to our understanding of Tom Symons, one of the *Journal's* founders.

## FRANCOPHONES AND CANADIAN STUDIES

But has the *Journal* contributed to a national consensus between French and English Canada? In 1966, the *Journal of Canadian Studies* published 12 articles, 9 in English and 3 in French. It did not publish another French-language article until 1972 when it published one French-language article and eighteen English-language articles. And so it went. Since 1966 the JCS has published 1,367 articles. Only 92 have been published in French, or less than 7 per cent. Of course, these figures are imperfect. They do not take into account French-speaking authors who choose to write in English because they know that the *Journal's* audience is, for the most part, English-speaking, and they obscure the *Journal's* honest efforts to create a scholarly dialogue across the two solitudes through editorial board membership, direct invitation, and thematic issues.

Still, these figures point to the ongoing challenges of publishing a bilingual journal and to the elusive goal of contributing to "a more tolerable national consensus." The *Journal* Denis Smith introduced

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in 1966 is not the journal of today. It has evolved from a magazine-format journal of opinion and ideas into one of the very best academic journals in the country and into the leading journal of Canadian Studies in the world. Its mandate—to publish the best scholarship about Canadian history, culture, and society from both junior and senior scholars—is clear. And its mission—“to track the great transformation of the Canada project and to contribute to the development of ‘Canadian Studies’ with appropriate interdisciplinary tools and approaches”—is ambitious.

### NEW CONTEXTS

But like other journals its age, and indeed some much younger, the Journal must face the demand for open access publishing and all that it entails. In addition, the Journal operates in a very different academic environment than the one in which it was founded. For example, the Americanization of English-Canadian universities, of the professoriate and of undergraduate and graduate curricula, is a non-issue. The study of Canada—as distinct from Canadian Studies—is thriving. There are over 200 academic journals in Canada today, many of which are dedicated to some aspect of the Canadian experience and some of which are

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dedicated to interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary scholarship. The Journal must compete in an academic environment in which there are only so many subscribers and only so many high-quality submissions to go around.

Yet, given the Journal’s outstanding track record of publishing the very best scholarship on Canadian history, culture, science, and society in a timely fashion, there is every reason to be optimistic.

As Tom Symons observed in his 1975 report for the Commission on Canadian Studies, the “soundest justification for Canadian studies” is the “need for self-knowledge.” He was right then and he is right now. Knowing ourselves is not a destination; it is a journey. I like to think that with a little luck, a lot of hard work, and a commitment to academic excellence, the Journal of Canadian Studies will remain part of that journey—with Champlain’s astrolabe now housed at the Canadian Museum of Civilization, not far from where it was lost nearly 400 years ago. ❁

## Les études québécoises

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certaines tendances qui ont marqué le développement du champ des études québécoises comme l’histoire politique, les études amérindiennes ou l’anthropologie culturelle. — Pour les mêmes raisons, le programme n’a pu attirer une clientèle intéressée par une histoire américaine ou canadienne (hors Québec) susceptible d’apporter un regard continental sur l’expérience québécoise. Néanmoins, il faut reconnaître le dynamisme du champ des études québécoises avec la parution prochaine du dixième volume de *Globe. La Revue internationale*

*d’études québécoises*, publié par l’Association internationale d’études québécoises, ainsi que le quinzième anniversaire du Centre interuniversitaire d’études québécoises, formé par le CÉDEQ et le Laboratoire de géographie historique de l’Université Laval en 1993. — C’est d’ailleurs cette vitalité qui encourage peut-être un nombre de plus en plus grand d’étudiants étrangers (Canada, France, États-Unis, Roumanie, Japon) à s’inscrire aux programmes de maîtrise et de doctorat en études québécoises à l’UQTR. ❁

## Robarts Centre Mandate

The Robarts Centre for Canadian Studies supports interdisciplinary and discipline-specific research pertinent to the study of Canada and “Canada in the World.” In practice, this has meant an orientation toward broader Canadian and international scholarly and policy-making communities, inquiries into comparative perspectives on the Canadian mosaic, and assistance to York scholars in working with their counterparts in other countries.

Faculty at the Robarts Centre, including the Director, the Robarts Chair and other Robarts researchers, regularly teach courses and contribute to curriculum development in areas pertaining Canadian and North American as well as comparative studies. The Robarts Centre also provides supervised research and writing opportunities for graduate students from a wide range of York graduate programs.

The Robarts Centre offers a strong program of high-level seminars, workshops, and conferences on major issues focusing on Canadian perspectives on Communications, Culture, the Fine Arts, History, Political Economy, Public Policy, and International Relation. Participants include York faculty and students, Canadian and international scholars as well as the larger community of Metropolitan Toronto.

At the present time, ongoing work at the Centre includes research initiatives on the public domains and international standards, Canadian cinema, and issues pertaining to media perspectives on Canada. The Centre acts as a research arm for the Joint Program in Communication and Culture and its work on the Canadian Internet Project. It also houses the Toronto offices of the Great Unsolved Mysteries in Canadian History project. ❁