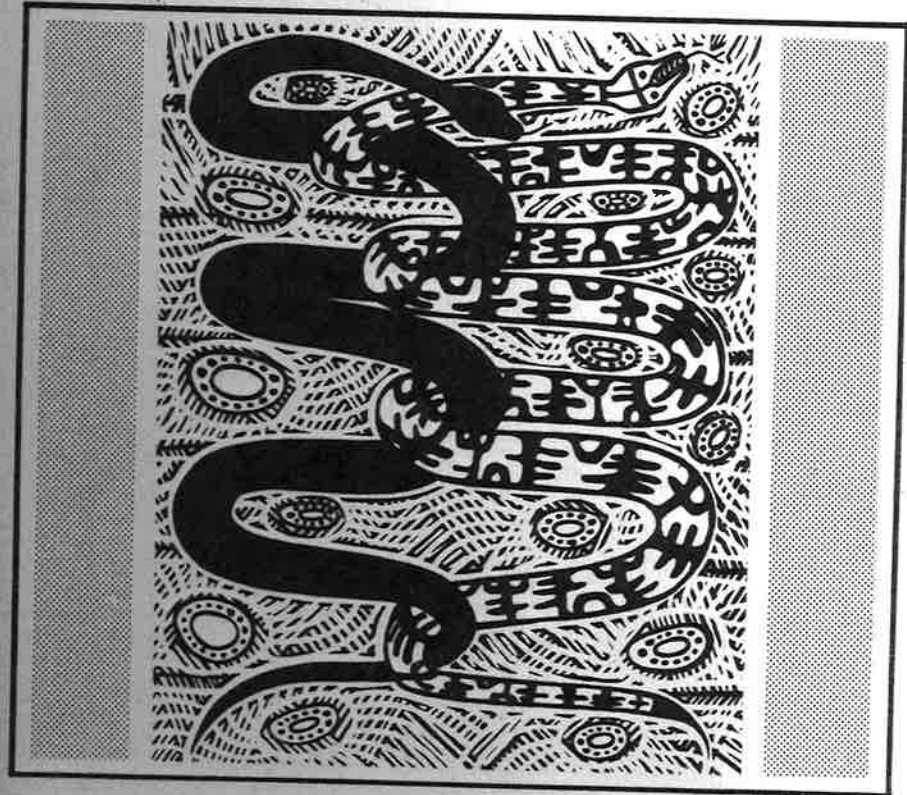


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editorial

In the best of all worlds the editorial stands as the point where the writings which follow are wrestled into a semblance of coherence, a kind of metaphorical binding which brings the issue into an intellectual shape. *Australian-Canadian Studies* by its very nature eludes this kind of capture. For a start, this editor's desk has two orientations, the humanities and the social sciences. Furthermore, the enterprise is complicated by the variety of work generated by the Australian-Canadian comparison.

This issue is a good example of that diversity. Here, articles by Dorothy Seaton, Richard Davis and Jack Warwick together re-read writings of the explorers in Australia and Canada, finding there not unproblematic chronicles of discovery but journals and memoirs which are authored in complex ways. As Jack Warwick reminds us, the process of exploration took place not only in birch bark canoes but also in the libraries of Paris or London, where the experience was completed in the writing. The oppositions between what Dorothy Seaton calls 'the familiar European "self" and the strange "other" of the new lands' recur throughout these three papers.

Articles by Diana Brydon and Helen Tiffin sustain this textual orientation. In particular, Timothy Findley's *Not Wanted on the Voyage* features as a novel central to debates about myths of origin and in both national and post-colonial contexts. For Brydon and Tiffin, too, the process of writing in colonial space is distinctively problematic. Canadian and Australian writers, denizens of two post-colonial cultures, continue to write against European pre-texts as part of a process of ongoing resistance or counter discourse.

These five articles originated as papers in the Literature section of the 1988 ACSANZ conference in Canberra. In their formulation here they reproduce what became increasingly apparent at that conference, that in literary and textual studies and, in particular, through the practice of post-colonial criticism, the Australian-Canadian comparison has found an especially potent site. The two literatures come together as part of that process whereby 'the empire writes back'. It may be that, in text-based analyses at least, the hitherto discontinuous history of this endeavour has found its *métier*.

The focus of comparative work remains more elusive in other disciplinary areas. Paul Bartrop's paper comes from the History section of the ACSANZ conference. There has been little history in this journal to date and, hopefully, more will follow. The review essay by Doug Owsram certainly points to the profitability of comparison in the important area of intellectual history.

There is a rich array of Australian-Canadian comparisons in political studies. John Dargavel's comparison of the politics of forestry in British Columbia and Tasmania illustrates this, while other articles in this issue tackle the question of

future directions for this work. Robert Jackson's survey of Canadian political science suggests that comparative work has had less prominence in Canadian than in U.S. political science. The Canadian discipline has had a greater predilection for single-country studies which, ironically, aligns it with the trend to the 'new institutionalism' in the United States. But does this mean that comparative study is now less appropriate in this area? In *Taking Issue* Malcolm Alexander suggests that we need to recognise a greater variety of comparative strategies in our work which generates other ways of using comparative approaches. As yet, however, political studies does not have an obvious equivalent concept to post-colonialism in literary studies, although continuing interest in federalism sustains debate in this area.

Clearly, Australian-Canadian comparisons will assume many forms. These will include the eerie parallels and family resemblances noted by Ian Lowe and Doug Owsram, regional comparisons like John Dargavel's, comparative scrutiny of particular policy areas or, in literary studies, particular schools or writings such as the explorers' chronicles examined in this issue. Disciplinary structured and standardised comparisons of political institutions and systems or cultural and intellectual traditions also abound. Whether the present generation of Australian-Canadian scholars will generate and systematise common, distinctive, comparatively grounded concepts of analysis remains to be seen. The potential of the Australian-Canadian comparison has been celebrated for a century, but each generation has to realise that potential for itself. What is crucial to the enterprise is the commitment and intellectual energy of the ACSANZ community, which can serve as an ongoing framework.

Mention of commitment and energy leads us to celebrate with Peter Crabb, recipient of the Northern Telecom Five Continents Award in Canadian Studies in 1989. This Award honours an individual - a scholar, writer, academic, teacher or researcher - for outstanding contributions to the development of Canadian Studies in Europe, Asia, Africa, Australia or South America. As the founder and moving spirit of ACSANZ and its precursor ANZACS, Peter has done more than anyone else to foster comparative work between Australia, Canada and New Zealand across a range of disciplines. He has been a good friend and generous colleague to many of us in the Association. Congratulations Peter.