



**BACS**

BRITISH ASSOCIATION FOR CANADIAN STUDIES

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BACS (Mini) Conference, 16-17 April 2021

Programme | Abstracts | Participants

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RÉSEAU DU PATRIMOINE  
ANGLOPHONE DU QUÉBEC  
RPAQ

DAY 1 - Friday 16 April

4.00pm Welcome/Introduction (EST – 11.00am; PDT - 8.00am)

4:15 – 5:45 Session 1: Trans/national Literature and Print

Alexandra Abletshauser (University of Glasgow): 'Edith Maude Eaton and Performative Nationality'

Zhen Liu (Shandong University): 'Writing as another: Edith Eaton's "Wing Sing of Los Angeles on His Travels"'

Rachael Alexander (University of Strathclyde): 'Feminism and Nation: Periodical Identities and American and Canadian Feminist Magazines'

Chair: Faye Hammill (University of Glasgow, panel organiser)

5:45 – 6:00 Break

6.00 – 7:30 Session 2: Eccles Lecture (introduced by Jean Petrovic, Eccles Centre for American Studies, British Library)

Professor Robert Dunbar (University of Edinburgh)

'Indigenous Languages in Canada: Addressing the Challenges, Righting the Wrongs?'

Chair: James Kennedy (University of Edinburgh)

## DAY 2 - Saturday 17 April

1:00 – 2:00 Annual General Meeting (BACS members only)

4:00pm Welcome to Day 2 (EST – 11.00am; PDT - 8.00am)

### 4.15 – 5:45 Session 3: October Crisis of 1970

Steve Hewitt (University of Birmingham): 'The October Crisis through the Eyes of James Cross'

Patrick Holdich (Foreign and Commonwealth Office, UK): 'The October Crisis: the British government's response'

Ceri Morgan (Keele University): 'Writing the October Crisis'

Chair: Tony McCulloch (University College London, panel organiser)

### 5.45-6.00 Break

### 6.00 – 7:30 Session 4: Public Policy and Constitutional Questions in Canada (and the UK)

Daniel Béland (McGill University)

Karlo Basta (University of Edinburgh)

Chair: James Kennedy (University of Edinburgh)

## Abstracts

### Session 1: Trans/national Literature and Print

This session explores the way that literary and periodical texts construct Canadian nationhood in transnational frames. It traces the movement of authors, ideas, and printed matter across national borders. Our case studies are oriented towards the study of short-form and serially published texts. Each of the papers takes up our shared themes of mobility, constructions of nation, and Canada's international cultural relations.

#### **Alexandra Abletshauer: 'Edith Maude Eaton and Performative Nationality'**

Asian-Canadian writer Edith Maude Eaton (1865-1914) was of English and Chinese descent. She worked as a journalist and writer in Britain, North America and the Caribbean, often focusing on the lives of North American Chinese and Eurasian people. Due to her transnational work and life, she is identified today as an Asian-American as well as an Asian-Canadian writer. Her national and ethnic affiliation is further problematized through her self-identification as Chinese and choice of a Chinese pen name, Sui Sin Far. Eaton's work presents various narratives of national belonging, inclusion and exclusion which mobilise strong emotions including shame, fear, anger and pride. All these are expressed by Eaton's ethnically Chinese characters, and the responses of White society towards them are likewise emotionally charged.

This paper explores how Eaton's writings challenge the foundations on which concepts of national and ethnic belonging rest, and how her depictions of racism and exclusion intersect with dominant constructions of Canadian nationality based on Whiteness. Eaton's autobiographical text 'Leaves from the Mental Portfolio of an Eurasian' (1909), a selection of her articles from the Montreal Star and the Montreal Daily Witness as well as her short story collection *Mrs. Spring Fragrance and Other Writings* (1912) will be considered. By exploring Eaton's perspectives on the strategic construction of national and ethnic identities, I will ask how her analyses challenge or reaffirm dominant accounts. My paper will demonstrate how the literary construction of nationality is inflected by emotional discourse in the early twentieth century.

#### **Zhen Liu: Writing as another: 'Edith Eaton's "Wing Sing of Los Angeles on His Travels"'**

In 1904, Edith Eaton, more famously known by her penname Sui Sin Far, published a travelogue series in the form of letters to the editor of the Los Angeles Express. Her personal journey started from Los Angeles and she made her way up via San Francisco to Vancouver, where she took a Canadian Pacific Railway train to Montreal and back, making stops at New York and Chicago as she was under a contract to promote railway services. With the publication of *Becoming Sui Sin Far* (2016), Eaton's travel writing, unique in her oeuvre, became available in complete form for the first time. The travelogue is unique as it features the fictional persona of a successful Chinese merchant, Wing Sing, traveling in a cheerful and remarkably unconstrained way through a North American continent that was dominated by virulent racism against Chinese immigrants.

In this paper, I will explore the many strategies and devices Eaton invented for her travel writings. I argue that by writing in the voice of another, Eaton achieved several things simultaneously, such as creating a new authorial voice, pronouncing her racial and identity politics and attacking orientalist thinking. Wing Sing establishes relaxed relationships with people he meets along the trip – we might describe these as "between one and another", instead of in the more intense and oppositional terms of "between one and the other". Thus the character of Wing Sing models Eaton's ideas about an ideal society which is tolerant and

free, where individuals are regarded and valued according to their individual characters instead of according to racial or national categories.

### **Rachael Alexander: 'Feminism and Nation: Periodical Identities and American and Canadian Feminist Magazines'**

Women have a long history of contributing to and engaging with periodicals. Numerous scholars have highlighted the importance of periodicals for feminist movements. The texts themselves facilitated and documented feminist debate, while women's experience in their production also served as a mode of feminist activity. From the 1970s onwards, feminist newsletters, journals and magazines flourished internationally. Recent digitisation projects have improved the accessibility of this wealth of material, yet the extent of the archive means that, inevitably, much of it remains underexplored. While American feminist magazines have gained considerable attention, those produced and published in Canada have not.

This paper begins to redress that imbalance, comparatively interrogating feminist magazines published in the two countries. The Canadian "Rise Up" feminist archive, established in 2014 and run by a volunteer collective, serves as a crucial resource in this effort. A transnational comparative approach enables examination of how magazines' aims, interests and identities are informed by constructions of national identity. This paper asks, specifically, how far the feminism(s) the magazines presented were nationally specific. Including a range of magazines—from the well-financed *Ms.* (1971- ) and self-described "newsjournal" *off our backs* (1970-2008) in the U.S., to the long-running *Kinesis* (1974-2001) and regional *Pandora* (1985-1994) in Canada—this paper will explore the various strategies these magazines employed when carving out a place in the American and Canadian publishing landscapes. It will ask how feminist magazines used relational periodical identities to position themselves as counterpoints to both male-dominated mainstream publications and conventional women's magazines.

## Session 2: Eccles Lecture

### **Robert Dunbar: 'Indigenous Languages in Canada: Addressing the Challenges, Righting the Wrongs?'**

One of the many issues highlighted by both the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, whose final report was published in 1996, and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, which published its executive summary, ninety-four calls to action and final report in 2015, was the negative impact of residential schools and wider policy on indigenous languages, and the need for urgent action to protect them. In response to the Truth and Reconciliation's work, in December of 2016 Prime Minister Justin Trudeau committed the Liberal government to enacting an Indigenous Languages Act, which it did in 2019. In this presentation, Professor Robert Dunbar will critically assess the act, as well as other legislative measures such as those in Nunavut, in the context of the wider challenges which face indigenous languages in Canada.

Professor Dunbar, a native of Canada, is Professor of Celtic at the University of Edinburgh, and a member of the Centre of Canadian Studies at the university. A lawyer by training as well as a Celtic scholar, Professor Dunbar has written extensively on legal regimes in both domestic and international law, and wider policy for minoritised languages and the languages of indigenous peoples. He is an expert of the Council of Europe in relation to language issues, and has advised on the development of the Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act 2005 in Scotland and the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011 in Wales.

## Session 3: October Crisis of 1970

This session marks the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the October Crisis in Canada that was played out largely in Montreal in October 1970. In Quebec, members of the militant FLQ (Front de libération du Québec), were calling for the overthrow of what they regarded as 'English colonialism' and control of the province. Since 1963 they had engaged in well over one hundred bombings, bank raids and kidnappings that had killed 8 people and injured many more. On 5 October FLQ militants kidnapped James ('Jasper') Cross, the British Trade Commissioner in Montreal, and a few days later, on 10 October, another group of FLQ militants kidnapped Pierre Laporte, the Minister of Labour and Vice-Premier of Quebec. In return for the safe release of these hostages the FLQ made a number of demands including the release of FLQ 'political prisoners' and the broadcast and publication of the FLQ Manifesto. When most of these demands were refused and Pierre Trudeau, the Canadian Prime Minister, invoked the War Measures Act of 1914, Laporte was murdered and the crisis escalated. Troops were sent to Montreal and the police arrested about 450 people with suspected links to the FLQ, most of whom were released without being charged. Cross was eventually freed in December 1970 when the location of his kidnappers was discovered and the kidnappers and murderers of Laporte were found later in the same month. The October Crisis was over, but it had left a powerful legacy in Canadian political and cultural memory.

**Steve Hewitt** is Senior Lecturer in American and Canadian Studies at the University of Birmingham. In his presentation he argues that, despite considerable scholarship on the October Crisis, James Cross remains an opaque figure. Cross did give a media interview at the time and later recorded a short memoir. In 2010, *The Current* interviewed him for the fortieth anniversary of his kidnapping. However, what were his private thoughts after his liberation that were unavailable to the public? Using documents obtained at the National Archives in Kew, this paper will analyse Cross's interpretation of the FLQ and its tactics and judge it against interpretations of the FLQ at the time and since. Of particular significance to this talk is a previously secret interview of Cross by British and Canadian officials that occurred on the flight which returned him to the United Kingdom. Steve Hewitt's paper argues that Cross's interpretation captured more accurately the nature of the FLQ by viewing it not simply through Canadian domestic lens but rather as part of a transnational revolutionary milieu around the world at the time. In doing so, Cross erased the simplistic dichotomy of domestic versus foreign that too often governs interpretations of terrorism, both in Canada and elsewhere.

**Patrick Holdich** is head of the Research Department at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and a former British Consul General in Montreal. In his presentation he points out that the British government was caught off-guard by the October Crisis in Quebec and faced a double challenge in how best to respond. On the one hand, it wanted to show full support for the provincial and federal governments in facing the terrorist threat from the FLQ, without however being seen to interfere in domestic Canadian politics. On the other hand, the kidnapping of the Montreal-based British Trade Commissioner to Canada, James Cross, meant it was directly involved in the crisis and working with the Canadian authorities to secure his safe release. This created some bilateral tensions behind the scenes as London tried to maintain a careful balance in its response, hoping among other things to avoid comparisons to the deteriorating political situation at the time in Northern Ireland. Using released FCO and other UK papers and speaking in a personal capacity as a long-standing associate and friend of the Institute, Patrick Holdich provides a unique perspective into UK government thinking and its impact on UK-Canadian and UK-Quebec relations.

**Ceri Morgan** is a Senior Lecturer in Canadian Literature at Keele University. Her presentation looks at representations of James Cross in creative nonfiction. The ‘events’ of 1970 have been taken up time and again in fiction, film and life-writing in Quebec. Unlike English-language novels of the 1970s, which range from documentary realism (Moore, 1971) to pulp fiction (Ross, 1977), a clear set of conventions is identifiable in French-language novels of this decade. These tend to engage with the October Crisis in non-realist modes (Morgan 2012), representing a turn away from the realism and hyper-realism which informed much of the neo-nationalist writing of the previous decade. Well-known examples include science fantasy and magic realism, as in Gérard Étienne’s *Un Ambassadeur macoute à Montréal* (1979) and Jacques Ferron’s *Les Confitures des coings* (1977), counter-cultural novels, such as Jacques Godbout’s *D’Amour, P.Q.* (1972) and Victor-Lévy Beaulieu’s *Un Rêve au québécois* (1972), and postmodern novels, as in Pierre Turgeon’s *Prochainement sur cet écran*. There is a good deal of variation in the October Crisis novel produced after 1980, and it is not easy to speak of a coherent body of texts beyond their shared thematic concerns. The fictional treatments of the October Crisis are often at odds with memoirs produced by those involved in the events, which have a consciousness-raising function (Mongeau, 1970), or serve as confessionals (de Vault, 1981), or self-styled correctives of political fact (Tetley, 2007). Ceri Morgan’s paper focuses on Carl LeBlanc’s, *Le personnage secondaire* (2006) which, as its title suggests, centres upon James Cross, figured as somewhat forgotten by history due to his having survived the Crisis.

## Session 4: Canada/UK Comparisons

**Daniel Béland (McGill University) and Karlo Basta (University of Edinburgh): ‘Public Policy and Constitutional Questions in Canada (and the UK)’**

This roundtable brings together two Canadian academics with expertise on public policy and constitutionalism respectively. From their vantage points in Canada and the UK, Béland and Basta reflect on current developments and possible takeaways for the UK.

## Participants:

### Session 1

Alexandra Abletshauer is a doctoral student in Canadian Literature at the University of Glasgow.

Zhen Liu is Lecturer in the School of Foreign Languages and Literature at Shandong University.

Rachael Alexander is a Learning Technologist at the University of Strathclyde.

Faye Hammill is Professor of English Literature at the University of Glasgow.

### Session 2

Robert Dunbar is Chair in Celtic at the University of Edinburgh.

James Kennedy is Senior Lecturer in Sociology and Director of the Centre of Canadian Studies at the University of Edinburgh. He is the outgoing president of BACS.

### Session 3

Steve Hewitt is Senior Lecturer in American and Canadian Studies at the University of Birmingham.

Patrick Holdich is Head of Foreign and Commonwealth Office Research and former British Consul General in Montréal.

Ceri Morgan is Senior Lecturer in English Literature and Creative Writing at Keele University.

Tony McCulloch is Senior Fellow in North American Studies at University College London. He is the incoming president of BACS.

### Session 4

Daniel Béland is James McGill Professor and Director of the Institute for the Study of Canada at McGill University.

Karlo Basta is Lecturer in Politics and International Relations and co-director of the Centre on Constitutional Change at the University of Edinburgh.