**The Ruptured Commons**

July, 11-15, 2022

Toronto, Ontario, Canada

At a time when we are experiencing profound and unexpected disruptions to our shared spaces, routines, economies, societies, and work-lives, ACLALS 2022 proposes that we convene in Toronto (fingers crossed!) to consider the nature and implications of rupture, the commons, and their conjoining: *the ruptured commons*. And while disease and risk are top of mind these days, imperialism and colonialism were always, of course, forms of severe rupture – to lifeways, cultures, and forms of inhabitation, community, and governance. Capitalism is inherently disruptive, and disruptive technologies (from the printing press to social media, the steam engine to the drone) transform lives and present their own opportunities and threats. Rupture is increasingly becoming a modus operandi among political actors, whether they seek to exploit and accentuate divisions, or, in the case of anti-colonial movements and Black Lives Matter protests, to contest hierarchies, privileges, and prejudices embedded in social attitudes and institutional practice. The increasingly frequent eruptions of such moments raise important questions about social consensus around common realities and common truths.

Garnett Hardin wrote in 1968 about “the tragedy of the commons” – the tendency for publicly owned, shared space to degrade through the neglect, abuse, overuse, and simple taking-for-granted of its multiple owners, who, because there are so many, do not identify as owners and take little responsibility. With each new climate-change study we become more aware of the ways our common environment has seen its natural states and processes violated by human activity. The ruptured commons is at the heart of the concept of the Anthropocene and what Amitav Ghosh has called “the great derangement” of our unsustainable ways. The global pandemic, with its multiple and far-reaching disruptions, has forced us to rethink our common spaces and how we use them, from city streets to airplanes, domestic spaces to workplaces – including academic ones. Indeed, our work as scholars, teachers, and students has been ruptured in countless ways as our institutional commons of classrooms and conferences fragment into rectangle-bound faces and voices on screens. Finally, the “common” in Commonwealth has come under fire for decades, whether by rewriting it as “common poverty” or by rejecting its presence in the names of our discipline and, for some, in ACLALS itself.

At a time when so much of our shared future is uncertain and when we have the opportunity to reimagine the commons, we invite delegates to place notions of rupture and commons in a wide variety of pan-historical contexts and scales from the local to the global. Approaches and topics could include but are not limited to:

* Borders and boundaries: disrupted, shored up; transgressed, (re-)imposed
* Disruptive histories and aftermaths of imperialism and colonialism, including trans-Atlantic slavery and the legacies of anti-Black racism
* Ecological and ecocritical approaches to the literary representation of the commons and of its inhabitants, non-human and human
* Environmental humanities
* Finding commonalities, understanding differences
* Healing ruptures and reconciliation
* Inclusive vs. exclusive models of the commons: access, control, ownership
* Indigenous knowledges and perspectives: on ruptured places and times; on the commons
* Interrogating “Commonwealth”
* Literature and contagion, health, medicine, and/or dis-ease
* Literature and disaster: natural or otherwise
* Literature of protest and activism: disrupting the present to transform the future
* Medical Humanities
* Mending and reclaiming the commons
* New perspectives on risk and the risk society
* Representation and inhabitation of common spaces
* Resource extraction and the ruptured commons
* Rupture as a mode of literary representation
* Ruptures of community, culture, economy, family, language
* Shared paths
* Spaces and places in times of rupture: private and public, physical and virtual; urban, rural and wild
* Teaching and scholarship in a time of rupture and as means to disruption
* Technology and/as rupture

Confirmed Keynote Speakers include:

Kateri Akiwennze-Damm (University of Toronto)

Lillian Allen (OCAD University)

Cajetan Iheka (Yale University)

Susie O’Brien (McMaster University)

Ruth Vanita (University of Montana)

Proposals for papers and panels on these or other topics of relevance to our discipline are welcome. Abstracts should be no more than 350 words and are to be submitted online by Oct. 1, 2021 at the following site:

<http://aclals.net/conferences-and-cfps/aclals-2022/>

This site can also be used to submit panel proposals.