In recent decades, activism through literature has become an increasingly popular mode of political and social resistance; as literature becomes more accessible to communities, communities become more accessible in turn, thereby creating a stream of information that connects literary and community knowledge and links the past with the present. In what often feels to be an increasingly oppressive and volatile global atmosphere, literature remains a medium of relation. Activist literature is a literature that acts—a literature in motion. How do activists engage storytelling to generate systemic change? How does activist literature aid in raising the voices that seek to restore agency, thus amplifying the crescendo of resistance?

Black feminist scholar Barbara Christian writes in “Race for Theory” that “people of colour have always theorized — but in forms quite different from the forms of abstract Western logic” (52). Imperialist education systems have long denied theorizing by communities of colour through the censorship of texts, the marginalization of non-literary methods of communication, and the exclusion of their works from academic study. Activist literature has challenged these hegemonic discourses for decades, using literature as a medium of communication and connection to communities across the globe. From Césaire appropriating Shakespeare in Une Tempête, forefronting the struggle of the colonized Black man, to Thomas King dismantling the historical misrecognition of Aboriginal bodies, activist literature speaks to a contemporary global struggle for decolonization. This “global” is the global of diaspora, of Indigenous community, of the voices that have been muffled by imperial cacophony; activist literature circumvents colonial impositions on speech to reach a crescendo that refuses to go unheard.

This year’s Graduate English Conference at York University invites proposals that analyze the role of activism in literature, investigating how authors use their work to explore issues of justice, identity, environmental preservation, and sovereignty. We welcome papers from English, Humanities, History, Education, Political Science, Equity Studies, Law, and other adjacent disciplines. We welcome proposals on (but not limited to) the following topics:

- Law and Literature
- Indigenous Literature
- Social Justice
- Diaspora Literature
- Literary History
- Translation Theory
- Language and Identity
- Ecocriticism
- Postcolonialism
- Gender Studies
- Queer Theory
- Genre and Literary Form
- Adaptation and Palimpsests
- Dystopian and Speculative Fiction

Please send an essay proposal of 250-300 words and a 100-word biographical note to thecrescendo2020@gmail.com. **Deadline for submissions is March 15.**