

## Postcolonial Punctuation/s: Demarcations | Interventions | Transgressions

7<sup>th</sup> postgraduate forum **Postcolonial Narrations**  
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Punctuation marks instances in which the text travels beyond the written word into alternate semiotic spheres. It is, as Jennifer De Vere Brody argues both “seen and unspoken, sounded and unseen”, staging “an intervention between utterance and inscription, speech and writing, activism/activity and apathy, body and gesture.” (2008: 9) Perhaps the most prominent example of punctuation in postcolonial contexts is the infamous hyphen that raises questions about how the post(-)colonial is spelled, thought, and conceptualized. For many, the hyphen tends to indicate a spatial and temporal locatedness in the *aftermath* of colonialism as opposed to expressions of the continuing legacies of colonialism attributed to unhyphenated postcolonialisms. Other readings propose an alternative understanding of the hyphen as occupying a liminal position, enabling movement between the categories it conjoins. Drawing on Brody’s performative theory of punctuation, Andrea Medovarski argues that “hyphens may link or divide, move away from things or toward them; but they always *act*” (2002: 149).

Following the observation that punctuation *acts*, acts of punctuation may emphasize, question, con-join, separate, destabilize\*, “borrow”, ‘ironize’, traverse & punctuate in and across various postcolonial textualities – whether in oral, print, or online cultures. The ellipsis in “home ... or where home should be” in Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o’s *In the House of the Interpreter* (2013: 5), e.g. marks not only a halted realization of loss, but arguably a traumatic displacement of ‘home’ that haunts the entire narrative. The forum thus asks the question how postcolonial textualities engage and engender punctuation, and how punctuation can challenge and subvert dominant hegemonic epistemologies, as the multiple punctuated differentiations in the field of gender studies have done.

Beyond the formal stylistics and politics of punctuation, the forum opens the notion to larger allegorical implications, interrogating how postcolonial textualities themselves ideologically demarcate, intervene, and transgress. We are thus also interested in exploring how the idea of *punctuating* may be useful in describing a specific mode of postcolonial textualities. Punctuation/s are thinkable with the prepositions *as* and *through*. How do postcolonial texts punctuate and perforate dominant epistemological regimes? How is formal punctuation implicated in these processes? How does punctuation affect and create meaning?

Contributions may include, but are not limited to, the following topics:

- The functions, performances, and politics of punctuation in postcolonial textualities (e.g. poetry, literature, art, and film)
- Queering as and through punctuation, gendered languages
- Border-crossings as punctuation and border-crossings through punctuation (e.g. spatial, temporal, thematic, generic, intertextual, etc.)
- Theoretical deliberations on terminologies, concepts, and categorizations in the field of postcolonial studies
- Non-Western frames of reference and alternate systems of punctuation
- Evolving paradigms in punctuation and their use for postcolonial theory/in postcolonial textualities
- Postcolonial digital media, participatory cultures, emotions, and emoticons

If you are interested in contributing to the postgraduate forum, please send an abstract (200 words) for a 20-minute presentation to [postcolonial.narrations2019@gmail.com](mailto:postcolonial.narrations2019@gmail.com) no later than **July 15, 2019**, including a short biographical note. For further information, please visit [www.postcolonialnarrations.wordpress.com](http://www.postcolonialnarrations.wordpress.com).