



Punctuation: Art, Politics, and Play

Jennifer DeVere Brody

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In *Punctuation: Art, Politics, and Play*, Jennifer DeVere Brody places punctuation at center stage. She illuminates the performative aspects of dots, ellipses, hyphens, quotation marks, semicolons, colons, and exclamation points by considering them in relation to aesthetics and experimental art. Through her readings of texts and symbols ranging from style guides to digital art, from emoticons to dance pieces, Brody suggests that instead of always clarifying meaning, punctuation can sometimes open up space for interpretation, enabling writers and visual artists to interrogate and reformulate notions of life, death, art, and identity politics.

Brody provides a playful, erudite meditation on punctuation's power to direct discourse and, consequently, to shape human subjectivity. Her analysis ranges from a consideration of typography as a mode for representing black subjectivity in Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man* to a reflection on hyphenation and identity politics in light of Strunk and White's prediction that the hyphen would disappear from written English. Ultimately, Brody takes punctuation off the "stage of the page" to examine visual and performance artists' experimentation with non-grammatical punctuation. She looks at different ways that punctuation performs as gesture in dances choreographed by Bill T. Jones, in the hybrid sculpture of Richard Artschwager, in the multimedia works of the Japanese artist Yayoi Kusama, and in Miranda July's film *Me and You and Everyone We Know*. Brody concludes with a reflection on the future of punctuation in the digital era.

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