

Affective Solidarity: Poetry as Decolonial Praxis in the Borderlands

Workshop Convenors

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The Double Bind of the Global South Scholar

Global South critical scholars frequently navigate a paralyzing double bind. At home, their critical or decolonial research agendas are often dismissed as impractical, overly political, or insufficiently ‘scientific’. Internationally, they face the gatekeeping of the Global North’s academic centers. This double translation (Barros & Alcadipani, 2023) and self-legitimation produce an affective state of suspension, a profound liminality of feeling caught between worlds, never fully legible to their home institutions nor fully belonging to the international centers. Decolonial MOS scholars have long analyzed these relations and their implications on the lives of scholars and knowledge-making in our discipline (Abdallah et al., 2025; Banday, 2026a; Barros & Alcadipani, 2023; Cooms & Saunders, 2024; Dar et al., 2021; Dixit et al., 2026; Ibarra-Colado, 2006; Jammulamadaka et al., 2021; Manning et al., 2024; Silva, 2021).

To understand this precarity and epistemic exclusion, as well as the potential of these diverse

experiences, we turn to Anzaldúa's (1987) concept of the borderlands. Borderlands are the in-between spaces forged by geographical or metaphorical boundaries that define who belongs and who does not. Her visceral theorization of embodied experience in the frontier of the Mexico-US border offers a unique vocabulary for life that needs this double translation. Inhabiting these spaces cultivates a 'mestiza consciousness' (Anzaldúa, 1987), a transformative hybridity that holds conflicting visions simultaneously and that potentially bridges differences without reinforcing divisions (Arcuri et al., 2026). This workshop invites scholars and poet-researchers to reframe the discomfort of their borderland experience not as a deficit, but as an epistemic resource.

Poetic Inquiry as Affective Praxis

This workshop proposes poetry as precisely such an embodied border thinking praxis (Banday, 2026b; Cooms & Saunders, 2024; Dar, 2018). Poetry is invited as a means of articulating the borderland organizational life of scholars existing at multiple margins simultaneously. Drawing on poetic inquiry as an affective decolonizing praxis (Banday, 2026b), we center the body as a site of knowledge creation (Boncori et al., 2023; Faulkner, 2018; Van Amsterdam et al., 2023). By refusing to reduce embodied reality to rational, objective facts, poetic inquiry destabilizes the 'white heteromascline and colonial heritage' of the academy (Collins, 2000, 2016; Dar & Ibrahim, 2019; Cunliffe, 2022; Mandalaki, 2021; Rodrigues Silva et al., 2025; Van Amsterdam et al., 2023). It offers ways of speaking from a position of situated authority (Anthym, 2018; Van Amsterdam et al., 2023), enabling the articulation of our experiences through world senses and philosophies beyond the colonial canon (Banday, 2026b; Cooms & Saunders, 2024; Harari & Pozzebon, 2024).

Arts-based practices such as poetry contribute to agential relationality by allowing individuals to

express and evoke the complexities of embodied experience (Fotaki & Vachhani, 2017; Kumar & Kamble, 2022; Leavy, 2020; Taylor & Ladkin, 2009; Ward & Shortt, 2020) practices also help access our subjective inner life (Rostron, 2025), engaging embodied individual experience with the collective through openness to relational vulnerability (Butler et al., 2016) and creative uncertainty (Cozza et al., 2025; Cunliffe, 2022; Lyle et al., 2024). Collective poetic inquiry rooted in affective methodology ‘writing differently,’ and relational vulnerability (Boncori et al., 2025), thus offers a regenerative counter-space to the isolating conditions of neoliberal academia (Cozza et al., 2025; Van Amsterdam et al., 2023).

The Workshop: Poetics and Affective Solidarities

By proposing poetry as a legitimate mode of knowledge production, our workshop actively refuses the homogenizing metrics of ‘excellence’, ‘research impact’, and ‘student experiences’, among others. More importantly, the workshop itself functions as a ‘regenerative counter-space,’ enacting the kind of caring, generative epistemic production that the call for streams invites. It aligns with the theme by demonstrating that how we organize our scholarly communities is inseparable from what we can know.

Our workshop opens a regenerative counter-space to the isolating conditions of neoliberal academia. Writing and researching differently is made possible by the force of collectivity, which Van Amsterdam et al. (2023) describe as the courage that emerges when ‘being a gang’ confers legitimacy in situations where risks are taken. The act of doing poetry itself plays a role in creating safe, collective spaces within the borderland where vulnerability is welcomed, and affect circulates as the life force of solidarity (Banday, 2026b). We invite scholars, practitioners, and poet-researchers living within Global North–South dialogues, those who constantly encounter the discomfort of making themselves heard within dominant paradigms, to reframe

that discomfort not as an epistemic resource. It is precisely this experience of discomfort that sharpens awareness of the limits of hegemonic paradigms and opens space for epistemic reorientation (Ahmed, 2006; Arcuri et al., 2026; Dixit, 2026; Jammulamadaka & Faria, 2023; Lopes, 2023; Moreira et al., 2025) and the breaking of silences (Jaser, 2026).

The group gathers as a collective body, sharing in small circles, embracing two orienting commitments (Ahonen et al., 2020). The first is embracing discomfort rather than trying to solve the pressure of institutional demands; participants use creative uncertainty (Cozza et al., 2025) to map new ways of surviving and flourishing. The second is affective solidarity as voices resonate and multiply, the discrete struggles of individual scholars merge into a shared, restorative experience, allowing participants to attune to one another respectfully and without prejudice.

Writing and researching differently (Boncori et al., 2025; Gilmore et al., 2019) requires the force of collectivity, the courage that emerges when "being a gang" creates mutual legitimacy in situations where risks are taken (Van Amsterdam et al., 2023). The collaborative poem-making ('being a gang') forges a temporary, lived community that operates outside the competitive, individualistic logic of neoliberal academia. This workshop seeks to make liminality legible. Scholars who carry that project in their bodies deserve a space to feel that weight and discover they are not carrying it alone. This collective experience is designed to be transmissible; participants depart with embodied practices of 'writing differently' and collective survival that they can carry into their activist networks, pedagogical spaces, and home communities. In doing so, the workshop performs a form of prefigurative organizing, building a microcosm of what a more caring, relationally vulnerable, and decolonial academic life could look like, extending that possibility well beyond the conference walls.

The workshop is planned in a hybrid format, consisting of the following phases:

Phase 1: Opening the borderland

Drawing on Anzaldúa's borderlands framework, the convenors' opening address invokes mestiza consciousness to loosen traditional epistemic boundaries. Positioning liminality as the foundational research/creative terrain the workshop inhabits, transforming the borderland into a site of affective solidarity.

Phase 2: Offering the self

By sharing pre-prepared poems and collages, participants offer their liminality as archives of borderland realities. Through the vulnerable act of offering the 'self' to the group, participants create a collective mooring, finding shared grounding in the double translations they must constantly navigate.

Phase 3: Small-circle dialogue

Gathering in small circles creates an affective space of attunement, where individuals can speak about their struggles with double translation. This format actively enacts the workshop's core commitment to hearing without prejudice. By sustaining a space for participants to share their border reckonings, the ensuing dialogue generates a shared awareness through affective circulation, forming resonances among group members.

Phase 4: Collective poem-making ('being a gang')

Transitioning from the creative individual reflection, participants harness the discomfort of their borderland positions as an epistemic resource. Refusing to translate these liminal experiences into the rational-objective conventions of mainstream academia serves as a deliberate

decolonizing gesture. As participants collaborate to co-create poems, they enact Van Amsterdam et al.'s (2023) insight that 'being a gang' forges collective courage, making each participant's borders mutually legible. This shared authorship instantiates a regenerative counter-space to the isolating conditions of neoliberal academia, replacing competitive individualism with collaborative survival.

Phase 5: Group Sharing

The collective discussion of each group's poetry creates a space where plural voices and the affective resonances of individual borders can be witnessed. This shared witnessing enacts mestiza consciousness, the capacity to hold conflicting visions and ambiguity together. The poems become artifacts of an epistemic reorientation, demonstrating that the accumulated weight of structural exclusion can be held communally rather than carried alone. Through the restorative experience of sharing their borders, scholars leave with this project rooted in their embodied consciousness. They depart knowing that the tangled borders they navigate are no longer borne in isolation, but are shared and sustained by the collective.

Please use the link below to register your expression of interest in joining us for the workshop. We would also appreciate it if you could answer the questions provided, as your responses will help us plan and execute the workshop more effectively.

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSeCmA_nBOFICFz15vV11eoXsmcUODnj3bAXmVnDvR0btoV1mw/viewform?usp=publish-editor

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