

# Book Review

**Style in Narrative: Aspects of an Affective-Cognitive Stylistics** By Patrick Colm Hogan. Oxford University Press, 2021. ISBN: 9780197539590, pp303.

In this book, Patrick Colm Hogan attempts to answer challenging questions such as “What is style?” and “What purposes are served by style?” when discussing narratives. He proposes to answer these questions through formulating a new theory of style, an approach he defines as *affective-cognitive stylistics*. This new methodology stems from his notion that the way the academic discipline of *stylistics* is currently defined in literary study can be unclear. According to Hogan, at times stylistics is too narrow compared to what the name of “stylistics” suggests, in that it is confined to the analysis of linguistic features of a text despite the term “style” being used in other ways, such as discussing the stylistic features of a story as part of a narrative. At the same time, he argues that stylistics is sometimes used too broadly when referred to as an academic discipline, in that it is often used to include anything that connects linguistic study with literature, even though much of this may not be directly related to style as a literary concept. Hogan also notes that any discussion of style in literary study should integrate research on emotion, stating that “without emotion, one does not have a literary work, at least not a literary work that anyone would care to read” (2). However, he aims to avoid confusion with broader concepts of

emotion that are included in fields such as *affective narratology*, focusing only on how emotion and cognitive processing are inseparably linked. It is the combination of these ideas from stylistics and affective narratology, while being separate from both, that leads to his defined approach of affective-cognitive stylistics. Following the introduction, in which Hogan presents a wide-ranging theoretical discussion of what constitutes style supported by examples of verbalization, the book is divided into three parts: Part I discusses literary style, including story structure and verbal narration; Part II discusses style in film, including perceptual interface and painterly cinema, employment, and visual narration; and Part III discusses stylistic choices in graphic narratives.

In the first chapter of Part I, Hogan begins by providing his definition of style and a discussion of authorial intent. He then presents a detailed analysis of the internal and external levels of literary style; the internal levels are divided between story and discourse, with discourse being summarised through the three components of communication, plot, and verbalization, while the storyworld level is examined through textual, authorial, genre, and stylistic patterns, such as rhythm in text, or the use of sound and visual techniques to highlight the themes of a film. Both the internal and external levels are supported by examples from *Mrs. Dalloway* by Virginia Woolf, with the exception of textualization, which is supported with an example from Chinese poetry. This is done to demonstrate how stylistic patterning in the typesetting of a text (such as in the number of strokes in a written Chinese character) can influence its interpretation. Hogan uses the Chinese example because this form of textualization in European prose is “generally [...] understood as something added by publishers [...] thus it is not part of the literary work proper” (49). However, it would have been interesting to see Hogan also use an English language example, such as *House of Leaves* by Mark Danielewski, which makes use of various typesetting techniques (such as writing text upside down or vertically) as a form of thematic representation. This discussion is followed by chapter 2, which focuses on a discussion of how story genres are combined to create individual story style in works by William Shakespeare, and

chapter 3, which focuses on verbal narration in William Faulkner's *As I Lay Dying*.

In Part II, chapter 4, Hogan moves on to discuss style in film, presenting an overview of the theoretical principles that are required to understand film style. Hogan focuses on the differences between literary and film style, namely in the matters of medium and perceptual interface. This begins with a discussion on the extrinsic and intrinsic norms in cinema, particularly highlighting the differences between literature and cinema (particularly Hollywood cinema) in wealth and distribution, as well as in national tradition (such as Japanese cinema) or a movement (such as the French New Wave). A brief discussion on stylistic scope in film follows, with the key difference being the individual “authorial scope” in literature and the more collaborative “auteorial scope” in cinema. Finally, there is again an examination of discourse and storyworld levels, with comparisons made to literature. Hogan argues that while the greatest similarities between literature and film can be found in the content of the story that is told, the greatest differences are found in the discourse of *how* the story is told. While highlighting these differences throughout Part II, Hogan also makes references to the parallels between film and literature, with the structure of Part II being parallel to Part I. In chapter 4, Hogan uses the film adaptation of *As I Lay Dying* for his supporting examples, drawing direct comparison with the literary version in chapter 3. Chapter 5 focuses on the perceptual interface of films, the process of how the cinematic visuals chosen to portray the story contribute to style, parallel to the process of verbalisation in chapter 1, the process of how the words chosen to convey the story contribute to style. Chapter 6 focuses on emplotment, the organisation of story information in film, parallel to the focus on story genre in literature in chapter 2, while chapter 7 discusses visual narration in parallel to the verbal narration in a single work in chapter 3. Ultimately Hogan argues that the definition of style remains the same for film as it was for literature, while the scope is parallel, and the greatest divergences can be found in narration.

Part III begins with a discussion of Benoît Peeters' theory of graphic narrative, before moving on to discuss functions of style in graphic narrative, specifically the perceptual interface. This includes some examples from art Spiegelman's *Maus* and Marjane Satrapi's *Persepolis* to highlight the particular perceptual features of graphic narratives, including layout and panels. Once more, Hogan discusses patterns in the narratological levels of storyworld, story, narration, and plot, as well as book and chapter organisation, with clear comparisons made to verbal novels. Again, Hogan summarises this chapter by concluding "the stylistic principles of graphic narrative carry over from literature and film" (267) while highlighting the differences in perceptual interface.

Overall, Hogan succeeds in providing a comprehensive discussion of style in different forms of narrative with extensive but necessary examples. Novice readers might struggle at times with some of the more complex ideas involved in narratological levels, but Hogan makes a good effort to explain these as clearly as possible, generally introducing the ideas in the opening chapter of each part before providing more extensive explanations in the analyses presented in the following chapters. While the section on graphic narratives is shorter than the others, it still presents some interesting comparisons for a medium that is often ignored at this level of academic enquiry. The text ends with an afterword that briefly touches on politics and the political analysis of style with specific references to the Trump administration. Considering the increasing importance and impact of political discourse in modern politics, this could potentially be an important area for future exploration of the effectiveness of Hogan's theory of affective-cognitive stylistics.

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**WORKS CITED**

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