

# From Affect to Morality: The Internal Tension and Methodological Dilemmas in Hogan's Affective Narratology

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**Abstract:** Hogan's affective narratology, which integrates cognitive-affective science and narratology, advocates for the establishment of literary universals through recurring affective narrative types, sparking extensive academic debate. Through an examination of Hogan's theoretical foundations and textual analysis methods, along with a tracing of the theoretical trajectory of affective narratology and cognitive cultural poetics, this analysis identifies three internal contradictions within his affective narratology: First, the gradient-based plot classification method, adopted to enhance cross-cultural interpretive power, emphasizes the stability of emotional systems and the openness of plots while decoupling the necessary connection between emotions and narrative structures. This, in turn, leads to a tendency toward arbitrariness in emotional dynamics, undermining the theoretical foundation. Second, his theoretical construction aims to establish a universal narrative typology, yet simultaneously seeks to anchor textual interpretation within the realm of social ethics, creating a methodological tension that is difficult to reconcile. Finally, during his theoretical transition, Hogan treats texts both as sample data for constructing universal theories and as concrete exemplars to substantiate theoretical claims. This dual methodological approach further weakens the consistency of his arguments, exposing the deep-seated dilemma between universality and particularity in his theory.

**Keywords:** Hogan; Affective Narratology; literary universals; morality

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**题目:** 从情感到道德：霍根情感叙事学的内在张力与方法论困境

**内容摘要:** 霍根情感叙事学结合认知情感科学与叙事学，试图通过反复出现的情感叙事类型建构文学的普遍性，引发学界广泛讨论。本文在梳理其理论基础、文本分析方法及认知文化诗学脉络的基础上，指出它的内在张力：情

感叙事学中的文学普遍性的理论基础在于情感系统与叙事结构的稳定的对应关系，但为了强调文学普遍性的跨文化适用性，霍根在情感系统保持恒定的情况下对叙事类型进行梯度分类，导致情感和情节的关系的不稳定性，动摇了理论建立的基础；在具体的文本分析过程中，情感叙事学理论一方面追求普遍适用的叙事类型，另一方面又试图将文本解读锚定于具体社会伦理，形成难以调和的方法张力；在认知诗学由情感科学向文化诗学转型的过程中，文本既被视为建构普遍理论的抽样样本，又被用作验证理论的具体范本，这种双重取向削弱了论证的一致性，暴露出其在普遍性与特殊性之间的深层困境。

**关键词：**霍根；情感叙事学；文学普遍性；道德

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### Introduction

The concept of “literary universality” aims to explore the commonalities of narrative patterns in different cultural contexts. When discussing the literary narrative of different cultures, traditional literary research mostly emphasizes historical background and ideological differences, and regards cultural specificity as a key factor in determining the form of literary narrative. However, with the rise of cognitive science and affective studies, some scholars have turned their attention to the shared affective mechanisms of human beings, inquiring why certain emotional structures and story types always recur in different cultural traditions. This turn has positioned “literary universality” as a focal point of interdisciplinary debate, while also reviving longstanding concerns within the humanities about the theoretical risks and ideological implications of universalism.

Patrick Colm Hogan’s affective narratology offers one of the most systematic attempts to address literary universality from a cognitive–affective perspective, which can relate to the scientific turn of Humanities Studies.<sup>1</sup> Integrating narratology with affective science, Hogan argues that shared emotional systems<sup>2</sup> generate recurring narrative prototypes—such as love stories or hero narratives—which are

1 See Nie Zhenzhao, “The Scientific Turn of Humanities Studies,” *Interdisciplinary Studies of Literature* 4 (2022): 563-568

2 In Hogan’s framework, the emotional system governs goals, the development of plotlines, the actions or experiences of the protagonist, how trajectories of goal pursuit are initiated, what constitutes an ending, and more. Consequently, the emotional system defines the standard features of all stories, as well as the recurring clusters of features found in universal prototype—such as romance or heroism—across cultures. See Hogan Patrick Colm, *Affective Narratology: The Emotional Structure of Stories*, Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2011, 2.

realized in culturally specific texts. These shared affective structures, he claims, enable readers to empathize with characters, experience their goals and emotions, and derive aesthetic pleasure from narrative. On this basis, Hogan explains the cross-cultural recurrence of similar story types and defines such recurrence as “literary universality,” and pointed out that its roots lie in the fact that, according to research in cognitive science, affective science, and empirical psychology, certain mental structures and processes are, to some extent, derived from shared genetic characteristics of humankind. This assertion, attributing literary universality to a biological basis, has become one of the most controversial propositions in the field of cognitive and affective poetics.

The 2024 special issue of *Style*, focusing on the universality of literature, provides a forum for discussing this controversial topic. This special issue uses Hogan’s theory of affective narratology as a starting point for in-depth exploration and further advances critical discussion on this subject. In the discussions surrounding the universality of literature, scholars either completely oppose or partially question Hogan’s views. The fundamental disagreement lies in how to understand and interpret the universality of literature: whether universal emotional types based on shared human biological are valid, and to what extent the universality of literature interacts with diverse cultural characteristics?

A major point of contention is the theoretical basis of literary universality. Hogan, based on Chomsky’s distinction, divides “universality” into two categories: “statistical universality” and “absolute universality”.<sup>1</sup> The former refers to narrative types that are common but not necessarily present in every culture, while the latter refers to narrative types that appear in every culture. Hogan maintains that the ultimate goal of universality research is to identify absolute universals. Scholars such as Nigel Fabb argue that literary universality cannot be directly analogized to linguistic universals: whereas language is constrained by grammatical systems, literary creation remains open-ended.<sup>2</sup> Fabb argued that the universality of literature cannot be directly compared to the universality of language, because language is strictly constrained by grammatical systems, while literary creation is inexhaustible. Classifying literary universality would conflate the limitations of linguistics with the openness of literature, representing a fundamental difference in their understanding of the theory of cultural universality.

Simultaneously, the debate also involves the methodology of arguing for

1 See Patrick Colm Hogan, “What Literary Universals Are and What Culture Is Not: The Example of Descriptive Ethics,” *Style* 3 (2024): 243-271

2 See Nigel Fabb, “Response to Hogan,” *Style* 3 (2024): 291-296.

literary universals. Brian Richardson points out that Hogan's research does not present the universality of cross-cultural emotional genres in a hierarchical manner.<sup>1</sup> Richardson suggests a more refined "tripartite classification" to address the inadequacies in Hogan's framework. However, a closer examination of Hogan's scholarly practice reveals that he has already implemented similar gradient classification methods (e.g., distinguishing universal prototypes and minor genres) in works such as *Affective Narratology*.

Furthermore, scholars also debate how literary universals dissolve cultural differences. In contrast, the theorists typically focus more on how cultural forms shape, train, and reflect the workings of the human mind, rather than seeking universality in emotional expression from human physiological structures. Scholars who advocate for cognitive and cultural interaction generally believe that the term "universality" is too absolute both methodologically and linguistically, limiting the openness of literary understanding.<sup>2</sup>

The fundamental reason for the aforementioned divergences lies in the fact that the discussions in the *Style* special issue predominantly remained at a macro-theoretical level, failing to engage thoroughly with the concrete methodological operations of Hogan's theory and its diachronic evolution. That is to say, questioning the theoretical foundation of literary universals still necessitates a return to the theoretical presuppositions and textual analyses underlying Hogan's classification of affective narrative types for cultural universality, through which its basic logic can be clarified. The shifts in Hogan's theoretical focus must be traced within the internal trajectory of his own theoretical development, as regards the contradiction between the concept of cultural universality and the interactive relationship between emotion and culture.

In fact, regarding Hogan himself, his classification methods for cross-cultural emotional genres have evolved and been revised along his academic path. *Affective Narratology: The Emotional Structure of Stories* (2011) proposed the foundational methodology for establishing affective narratology, integrating the theoretical legacy of classical narratology with recent achievements in cognitive science (cognitive psychology, cognitive linguistics, artificial intelligence, etc.) in emotion research.

Comparing the classification of literary genres and specific work analyses in these two works is precisely intended to address two angles not yet touched upon

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1 See Brian Richardson, "Partial Universals in Literature," *Style* 3 (2024): 326-329.

2 See Marco Caracciolo, "Why Cognitive Literary Studies Cannot Do Without Culture," *Style* 3 (2024): 281-286; Bradley J Irish, "What's in a Name: Can 'Universality' Be Resuscitated?" *Style* 3 (2024): 321-325.

in the *Style* debate—the internal differences in Hogan’s theoretical construction and textual analysis, and the internal changes in his academic trajectory—providing a new, methodology-based explanatory framework for a deeper understanding of literary universals. Therefore, this article is not only a critique of Hogan’s theory, but also a methodological reflection on the research paradigm of “literary universality,” providing a new approach for the discussion of cognitive poetics in a multicultural context.

### **I. The Gradient Method and Theoretical Foundation of Hogan’s Affective Narratology**

Hogan’s discussion of literary universality is based on a classification and distinction between universal prototypes and minor genres, in which the concept of prototype plays a central role. As Hogan defines it, prototypes are standard cases of categories, including emotional categories such as grief or anger.<sup>1</sup> While this notion superficially recalls Northrop Frye’s archetypal criticism, the two approaches differ fundamentally in their theoretical foundations. Frye’s archetypes are symbolic forms rooted in Jungian psychology and anthropological myth studies, transmitted through cultural inheritance and ritual repetition. Hogan’s prototypes, by contrast, are grounded in cognitive and affective science and refer to shared emotional structures that motivate goal-directed action and generate narrative plots.

This reconceptualization marks a paradigmatic shift from a cultural-symbolic model of universality to a cognitive-scientific one. Emotional systems, in Hogan’s framework, are not inherited symbols but biologically and psychologically shared mechanisms whose externalization in social action produces narrative form. Hogan believes that genres are related to the cognition and emotions of authors and readers: “An author’s elaboration of a prototype into a singular plot and a reader’s response to that plot (in part as an instance of the prototype) are inseparable from the emotion systems that guide the prototype initially” (Hogan “Affective Narratology” 9) In other words, the boundaries of narrative types are fuzzy, and their legitimacy stems from the shared cognitive-emotional processing between authors and readers, rather than from closed textual symbols. For Hogan, narrative types become externalized devices of emotional systems, and the classification standard is no longer static narrative functions or ritual symbols but the emotional dynamics themselves.

It is precisely due to the dynamic nature of emotions that Hogan classifies affective narrative types according to a hierarchical gradient, with the most important being universal narrative prototypes and minor genres. Universal

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<sup>1</sup> See Patrick Colm Hogan, *Affective Narratology: The Emotional Structure of Stories*, Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2011, 125.

narrative prototypes address clear affective narratives such as sacrifice, heroism, and romantic love as main plots. These have formed relatively mature and clear plot structures and frequently recur across various cultural texts. Their recurrent appearance in cross-cultural texts provides strong evidence for Hogan's theory of statistical universals.

In contrast, minor genres mostly originate from experiential narratives. Minor genres primarily refer to specific emotional narratives such as attachment, revenge, and desire. Unlike universal narrative prototypes like sacrifice, heroism, and romantic love, these types do not appear as prominently or frequently in the canonical works of various cultures and do not serve as main plot structures. These types form due to our spontaneous, unconscious classification of works, lacking relatively conventionalized, rigid narrative structures. "Beyond their recruitment of highly motivational emotion systems into shared emotion goals, more widespread genres will tend to have the following characteristics. They are potentially incident-rich, with incidents readily expandable into events and episodes. They are easy to elaborate in such a way as to produce empathically communicable emotional intensification. Their plot elements may be readily integrated into the ordinary story structure of normalcy, deviation from normalcy, and so on. They are open to recruitment by both dominant and resistant ideologies. They easily incorporate the emotional division of space. Finally, they treat a type of deviation from normalcy that is widely shared by readers or viewers" (Hogan, "Affective Narratology" 233). They frequently appear as subsidiary elements within universal prototypes. Minor genres are not without structure; rather, their structures are comparatively fluid, organized around emotional dynamics rather than fixed plot formulas. They arise from the categorization of emotional experience, and their structural patterns are embedded in commonly shared ways in which humans perceive, process, and respond to emotion. Therefore, they can flexibly adapt to and integrate into different cultural narrative frameworks, demonstrating powerful scalability.

However, this gradient method, driven by emotion internally and manifested through plot externally, while possessing immense explanatory power, also harbors a potential theoretical risk. As Omoha states, "Literary universals assume the 'governing problem', that is to say, it is a centrifugal project held together by emotion" (Omoha 342) The explanatory power of this gradient method lies in the fact that the "absoluteness" in minor genres is reflected in the inevitable recurrence of their emotional systems across cross-cultural texts. Simultaneously, the "centrifugal construction" is manifested in its "extensibility" after being externalized into social behavior, i.e., narrative events in the text, and its "potential"

to evolve into universal prototypes, which reduces the risk of absolutizing universality. Therefore, Hogan's theory is not, as some scholars claim, a "narrowly restrictive, formulaic character of the story types and the emotions with which they are associated" (Carroll 275). The potential and extensibility of minor genres, as classification methods and features of affective narrative types, themselves corroborate Hogan's view that emotional dynamics externalize in narrative types—narrative plots are not entirely absolute.

Furthermore, this expandability may also lead to arbitrariness. Hogan's emotional system aims to demonstrate that narrative plots are driven by emotions, implying an inseparable relationship between the two. If the correspondence between emotional dynamics and narrative forms becomes too flexible or even arbitrary, the logical foundation of the theory may be undermined. If universal human emotions are stable, while narrative types may be unstable, then the question arises whether universal human emotions simultaneously serve as the core driving force of narrative plots and form narrative types with stable categorical meaning, or merely drive the plot without shaping the narrative type. This is a question that needs to be reconsidered.

## II. From Affect Theory Construction to Cultural Morality Interpretation

Hogan not only emphasizes the correspondence between emotion and narrative when explaining theory, but he also applies this approach to textual analysis. As he points out, "In this way, the emotional dynamics of recurring story patterns are not only of broad explanatory importance but of particular, interpretive significance as well" (Hogan, "Affective Narratology" 9).

Thus, the revenge narrative can be regarded as a key exemplar through which one can thoroughly examine how Hogan establishes connections between theoretical construction and close reading, thereby illuminating his specific methodological approach to addressing issues of literary universals. In *Affective Narratology* (2011), Hogan notes: "The most emotionally intense form of the revenge narrative is initiated by the murder of some attachment figure. The murderer often commits a sexual transgression as well. In some cases, there is a difference between the person who commits the crime and the person who is ultimately responsible for it. The protagonist pursues the murderer, commonly making some mistake in identification on the way to exacting his or her revenge. That mistake may lead to the loss of innocent lives. In the end, the protagonist kills the person who committed the initial murder, often dying in the process. The person ultimately responsible for the initial murder may go unpunished" (Hogan, "Affective Narratology" 234).

In *Colonialism and Literature: An Affective Narratology* (2024), Hogan's understanding of revenge narratives undergoes a significant shift: "Since a revenge response is personal, it involves a personal choice. Personal choices are the area in which ethics enters, for an ethical decision is a decision about what we will do in certain cases where we have a choice" (Hogan, *Colonialism and Literature* 194). This indicates that his research focus has shifted from theorizing the relationship between emotion and narrative to examining the role of recurring narrative types in human behavior and moral evaluation.

This shift in focus is not merely a change in the subject of study, but rather a necessary consequence of the deepening of the theory itself. As textual analysis increasingly revealed that emotional states were more explanatory than narrative structure, the analytical framework of classical narratology proved insufficient to support his interpretive goals. Therefore, the turn to examining moral behavior in colonial history indicates a tendency in Hogan's affective narratology to shift from type construction to cultural interpretation.

In specific textual analyses, *Affective Narratology* (2011) examines multiple cross-cultural texts, with the discussion of the revenge plot in Shakespeare's *Hamlet* being particularly typical. In the play, the revenge plot is suspended due to Hamlet's complex inner struggles; revenge itself becomes the core choice the protagonist must face and also a key driving force of the plot. According to Hogan, revenge itself can be understood as a psychological compensation of the emotional system; If the revenger has already completed this process psychologically, the emotional system will interact with cognitions, thereby altering external behaviors. Hamlet's hesitation shows that emotional compensation can be completed within the mind, thus changing or even replacing external actions. Thus, the induction of narrative sequences is applicable only at the level of theoretical construction for narrative types. In textual analysis, Hogan focuses more on the emotional driving mechanisms behind characters' key actions.

In *Colonialism and Literature: An Affective Narratology*, Hogan extends his focus on emotional dynamics to the level of historical and cultural context. He analyzes Tagore's novel *Punishment* as an example. Hogan focuses on analyzing the motivations behind the female protagonist, Chandara. Her willingness to take the blame, without any argument, that it is closely tied to her self-moral cognition as a woman within the Indian sharecropping community. By refusing to participate in her husband's scheme to frame the deceased, Chandara responds to her position of low self-worth with silent resistance. In Hogan's view, this action itself constitutes a form of revenge, one that transcends traditional revenge narratives. If the analysis of

*Hamlet* reflects only a variant of the classic plot of general minor revenge narrative, then the analysis of *Punishment*, through detailed interpretation of the relationships between emotion, morality, and behavior, completely abandons alignment with classic revenge plots, focusing solely on the emotional motives, moral self-examination, and behavioral methods within a single revenge plot, without regard for the position of the revenge plot within the overall plot sequence.

It is noteworthy that Hogan also integrates the emotions and behavioral patterns within the text with India's colonial social conditions. He argues that the philosophy of nonviolence reflected in Tagore's literary works influenced Gandhi's later non-cooperation movement. "Indeed, Tagore went further than Gandhi in this direction, to the extent of criticizing Gandhi's program as too violent in its divisiveness and emphasis on relations of power. In the terminology of ethical philosophy, then, Tagore's response to colonialism (or to social reform more generally) favored an idealized, deontological ethics over more pragmatic, consequentialist assessments. His development and instantiation of the revenge prototype provide us with at least some hints as to how such views may be oriented by and also reconfigure this narrative prototype" (Hogan, *Colonialism and Literature* 203) Here, Hogan emphasizes that Tagore reconstructs the revenge prototype, presenting the method of revenge in a unique way shaped by Indian culture during the colonial period. Hogan's analysis here is highly insightful, brilliantly demonstrating how to integrate emotions, moral choices, and macro-historical contexts, showcasing the explanatory power of his theory in connecting emotions and moral behavior.

Although Hogan's methodological focus has shifted from universal theory toward the analysis of specific cultural contexts, his "descriptive ethics"—"A descriptive treatment of morality sets out to describe and explain what people think and do when they seek to act morally, how those decisions and actions may be understood systematically" (Hogan, *What Literary Universals Are and What Culture Is Not* 243-271)—continues to prioritize shared, emotion-driven patterns of moral psychology and behavior. Compared to more context-focused approaches (such as literary ethical criticism), Hogan's theoretical framework remains limited by its pursuit of universality. Hogan's analytical approach typically describes the protagonist's ethical conflict as a contradiction between behavioral goals (e.g., revenge), that is, between the (potential) narrative plot and emotions (e.g., hesitation or grief). In contrast, literary ethical criticism explores how ethical dilemmas arise in everyday life from interwoven social roles, ethical identities, and moral choices. In this sense, although Hogan's ethical inquiry involves cultural aspects, his treatment of specific moral issues is still limited by his universalist orientation.

When presenting the universality of cross-cultural story types in a gradient manner, Hogan suggests that regionality becomes one of the factors influencing universality. Marco Caracciolo's discussion provides corroboration for understanding Hogan's literary story types: "Hogan acknowledges as much when he suggests that the 'universals' he identified are only universal in a restricted sense—because they need not crop up in all cultural contexts, and because their frequency and specifics often differ widely" (Caracciolo 282). He also notes that the multiple classifications within Hogan's literary universal types will manifest differently in different social contexts.

However, when this analytical method is used to support grand narratives of "cross-cultural universality," the limitations of the theory begin to emerge. Hogan's gradient-based explanatory framework, aimed at enhancing the cross-cultural applicability of literary universals, is an interpretive strategy employed in textual analysis. Its theoretical basis is that the shared human emotional system is stable; therefore, narrative types are also stable, merely manifesting in corresponding variations in different narrative texts or cultural contexts. But suppose we abandon literary universality as the interpretive goal and instead adopt an analysis method centered on particularity. Universal variations can then be directly transformed into culturally specific characteristics.

For instance, Hogan suggests that Tagore's textual practice—which later influenced Gandhi's model of "non-violent" action—is in fact rooted in a complete and independent cultural value system formed by Indian religious philosophies such as "Ahimsa" (non-violence), rather than representing a universal human cultural-emotional expression. This value system does not merely adjust the expression of vengeful emotions; it fundamentally restructures or even transcends the primitive emotional logic centered around blood revenge. In other words, if the reconstruction of genres is seen as a fundamental change driven by cultural differences, the methodological approach to analyzing the relationships between emotion, behavior, and culture in texts also can be adopted to the text.

More importantly, there is a fundamental contradiction in Hogan's theoretical system. As Wehrs states: "In their dynamic proliferation in variations and counter-formations as revealed by comparative literary history and highlighted by Professor Hogan's scholarship, literary universals stress internal dissonance" (Wehrs 351). The "dissonance" means that Hogan attempts to construct a narrative typology to construct universality. At the same time, he also emphasizes interpretive analysis of specific texts within their socio-historical contexts. The latter focus on differences, while the former pursues universality. They constitute an inherent tension in

methodological goals.

### III. The Theoretical Context and Internal Tension of Affective Narratology

Reviewing Hogan's textual choices and analytical methods from *Hamlet* to *Punishment*, it is evident that he consistently attempts to understand texts by grasping the key emotions within revenge narratives. However, these two studies exhibit methodological inconsistencies: in his analysis of *Hamlet*, he focuses on how Hamlet's emotions drive the development of the revenge plot, analyzing the inner workings of the characters in the text to categorize various emotional states within the revenge narrative; while in his analysis of *Punishment*, he connects emotional analysis to the context of colonialism, linking Chandara's actions to the ideas of the author Tagore and contemporary thinker Gandhi, clearly transcending the boundaries of the text and exploring a non-universal real-world problem based on Indian historical and cultural traditions. This is, in fact, a concrete manifestation of two different methods of literary emotional analysis.

In *Literature and Emotion* (2018), Hogan clearly distinguishes between two methods of studying literary emotions: affective science and post-structuralist approaches to emotion. The former emphasizes common human emotional responses and behavioral patterns, employing empirical methods such as neuroscience data, linguistic tests, and behavioral studies. The latter, influenced by Foucault's discourse analysis and Derrida's deconstructionism, emphasizes the relationship between emotion and society. He argues that affective science is more rigorous, technically operational, and clearly expressed, and has better empirical support. On the other hand, post-structuralist approaches to emotion are more vague and obscure. At the same time, he also points out that affective scientists often lack the sense of urgency and practical engagement shown by post-structuralists when dealing with political issues.<sup>1</sup>Hogan's attitude towards these two research methods reflects his theoretical goal, which is to not only analyze and demonstrate the role of emotion as the main driving force of plot development within the text, but also to apply this interpretive method to the interpretation of reality. However, his analysis of *Punishment* demonstrates the impossibility of achieving this goal. When Hogan attributes Chandara's actions to the unique Indian tradition of "non-violence," he has, to some extent, abandoned the pursuit of a universal theoretical goal in literature, merely treating affective science as an unquestioned theoretical background.

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1 See Patrick Colm Hogan, *Affective Narratology: The Emotional Structure of Stories*, Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2011, 33.

Although he has shifted from emphasizing the determinism of emotional systems to focusing on social norms and ideals, he still insists that the differences in norms across cultures do not negate their shared universal foundation. Hogan states: “Story genres are in effect generated from the protagonist’s pursuit of goals, and the goals are defined by emotion systems. What I have not yet mentioned is that the emotions and goals are associated with norms or ideals. While such norms are not identical across cultures, they overlap considerably” (Hogan *What Literary Universals Are and What Culture Is Not* 261). Hogan’s skeptical attitude toward culture is not a denial of cultural differences but an opposition to interpretations that essentialize or determinize cultural differences. In the discussion of literary universals, there are two different orientations: one is the “cross-cultural narrative universality” pursued by Hogan, based on the overlap between emotional systems and social norms; the other is the “within-culture homogenized universality” he opposes, which assumes that all members within a culture share identical emotional patterns. Unlike scholars who criticize the concept of universality for limiting cultural openness, Hogan questions the tendency within cultures to reshape certain differences into a new form of absolute universality.

In other words, at the theoretical level, Hogan is committed to constructing recurring affective narrative types, aiming to reveal the overlap in human biological foundations and social ideal goals, thereby refuting the notion that cultural differences are irreconcilable. In textual analysis, he adopts a “descriptive ethics” approach using emotions and moral motivations as pivots to examine individual choices in socio-historical contexts, with the purpose of resisting the simplification and deterministic interpretation of individual choice capacity by within-culture absolutist notions. Therefore, whether he theoretically insists on the foundational status of emotional systems or introduces gradient discussions of cultural dimensions in analysis, he is essentially responding to the deterministic tendencies caused by within-culture universality.

Thus, scholars who criticize Hogan’s cultural universality often misinterpret his stance as a culturally homogenizing universality that denies differences, believing it limits the openness of cultural interpretation. At the same time, these criticisms fail to fully recognize that Hogan’s own research has actually been influenced by affective poststructuralism and has undergone changes. Despite disagreements, both sides share two major trends in cognitive-affective research: first, a gradual shift from biological determinism to focusing on the interaction between cultural environments and cognition; second, an opposition to essentializing correspondences between emotion and culture, rejecting any form of universality

that limits emotional diversity, and advocating for the establishment of analytical methods through the interpretation of specific interactions between emotion and culture.

It is at this point that the epistemological tension in Hogan's theoretical framework becomes apparent. As Jens points out, Hogan's theoretical explanation is not intended to identify a specific causal event or principle, but rather to determine the possibility of an appropriate explanatory domain and interpretive framework. This explanatory domain is the shared or inherited forms of human social structures and modes of interaction.<sup>1</sup> In determining this explanatory domain, Hogan uses literary texts as samples, extracting recurring common features to construct a universal theory of literary narrative types; at the same time, in interpreting the possibility of literary universality, specific cultural contexts and ethical ideas become the target of textual analysis, and literary texts become an illustration of cultural and contextual specificity. Assigning these two roles to literary texts creates an unavoidable tension in Hogan's theoretical system, ultimately weakening the coherence of his knowledge construction. The internal contradiction of his theoretical framework lies not in the sufficiency of its theoretical foundation or explanatory techniques, but in the two incompatible functions assigned to the textual material.

### Conclusion

Hogan's theory dilemma manifests itself on three levels: theoretical foundation, methodological practice, and knowledge construction, all fundamentally stemming from how "literary universality" is understood. That is, does "literary universality" refer to an objectively existing emotional structure inherent in everyday human life, with cross-cultural texts merely serving as a recurring arena for this emotional structure? Or is it merely an interpretive strategy applied to cross-cultural texts at a theoretical level?

In fact, Hogan's explanatory framework oscillates between these two positions. At the level of the theoretical foundation of emotional narratology, if "literary universality" is the manifestation of an objectively existing emotional structure in literary texts, then certain shared human emotions drive plots and form stable narrative types that hold true across cross-cultural texts. However, when it undergoes a gradient-change in narrative type, allowing for a wider range of emotions, "literary universality" transforms into a theoretical interpretive strategy that enhances universality. This pursuit of enhanced universality is reflected not

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1 See Jens Kjeldgaard-Christiansen, "Three Conceptions of Culture," *Style* 3 (2024): 287-290.

only in theoretical construction but also in textual analysis. Hogan's shift from constructing narrative types to specific cultural analysis is a manifestation of this shift from viewing literary universality as an objectively existing emotional structure to an interpretive strategy for texts.

Both theoretical construction and textual analysis lead to a particular way of constructing knowledge: when literary texts are used as samples to generalize narrative types, they simultaneously reflect an objectively existing emotional structure; however, when literary texts are used as illustrative examples for interpreting moral and ethical contexts, "literary universality" itself is no longer a hypothesis requiring proof, but rather a default premise that has been suspended, requiring only the interpretation of specific types of textual manifestations based on this premise. This again raises the question of the necessity and possibility of "literary universality," requiring further thorough argumentation.

Lisa Zunshine's discussion of cognitive cultural theory methods provide insightful explanations for this interpretive crisis. She explains that cognitive cultural analysis is inherently open-ended: the interaction between universal human cognition and specific cultural phenomena is "temporarily stable," and therefore the results are difficult to predict. Therefore, researchers cannot know in advance what forms of interaction will emerge, nor are they limited by methodological boundaries between subfields.<sup>1</sup> Hogan's research on existing cross-cultural texts offers a degree of balance between universality and particularity. However, due to the inherent openness between cognition and culture, this balance often tends to be unstable, making it a constantly evolving interpretive strategy.

These shifts in interpretive strategies remind us of the challenges and circuitous efforts involved in attempting to discuss the issues of universality and particularity in literature. That is, in literary studies, are there ways to understand the relationship between biological characteristics and specific cultural influences beyond simply discussing how they interact with the human condition? Using literary texts as his object of analysis, Hogan provides unprecedented insights into the multifaceted relationship between biological characteristics, character behavior, and cultural environment from the perspective of emotion-driven narrative development.

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