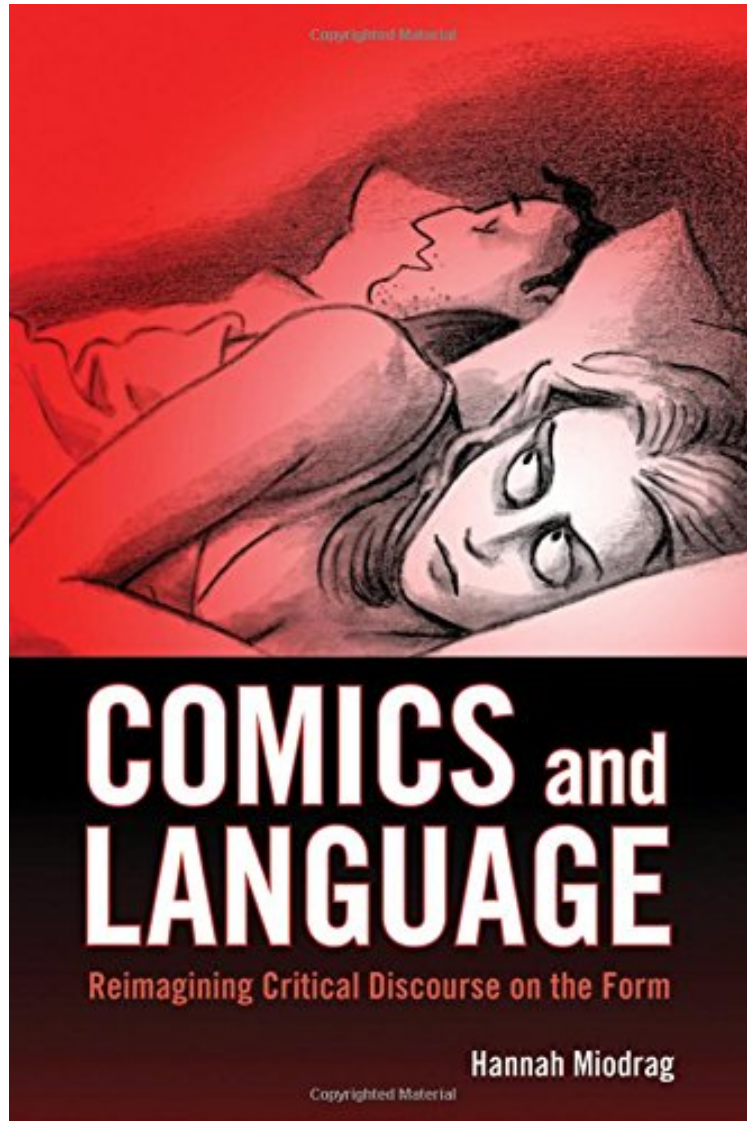


(Mobile pdf) Comics and Language: Reimagining Critical Discourse on the Form

# Comics and Language: Reimagining Critical Discourse on the Form

*Hannah Miodrag*

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**Hannah Miodrag : Comics and Language: Reimagining Critical Discourse on the Form** before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Comics and Language: Reimagining Critical Discourse on the Form:

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. Great for what it is: Literary analysis By Shannon Quinn Comics and Language by Hannah Miodrag is a text that defends the literary merit of comics. Miodrag gives evidence throughout the ages of examples of comics that she considers equally as literary as a poem or book. She cites famous critics, explains

artistic techniques, and story-telling elements of what makes comics real literature. This is NOT a book for a comic book fan who is not an academic. Just because you love reading comics doesn't mean you will love reading about comic book analysis. I have gone through and read some of the reviews of this book, and the biggest complaints I see are that it is dry. I'll say this: I only found it interesting because I, myself, am an extremely academic English nerd. Reading this book reminded me of all of the Film Theory classes I took in college. Everyone loves watching movies, but almost no one loves reading about film analysis. I believe that *Comics and Language* could be used as a textbook in literature classes. If you are a professor, I recommend that you check this out yourself to see if you would want to use it in your classroom. 4 of 5 people found the following review helpful. Seriously, folks.

By David Wineberg  
The task at hand is to find a more optimal method of criticizing comics. It's like saying - describe the Earth. Where do you stop? The task is enormous. Hannah Miodrag examines most of the angles, from artwork as language to language as art, and lots in between. Everything is significant. The font choice and size, the kerning of letters, the shape, position and outline of speech balloons, the size of the panes, their distribution on the page, the style of the art, the intensity and sophistication of the artwork, the leaps required by the reader - and of course, the story itself - all play their roles. But we knew that. We learn that the Francophone world has left the Anglophone world in its comic dust. Francophone comics are a far more extensive, expansive industry, and their critics and criticism far more frequent, available and sophisticated. So a lot of the references are to French critics and authors. And let's be clear; this is not the four panel Peanuts cartoon in the daily paper Miodrag is talking about. This is mostly about full page and full length comics, often hardcover books, which have a whole, integral, purposeful and complete story to tell. And that brings in references to cinematic composition and effects, which is an additional layer for criticism. At bottom, comic artists are artists. Their tableaux are well-thought-through art. The language they employ is part and parcel of it, and its level of importance is up to the artist. Comics can be language dominated, or visual dominated, and the full range in between is enormous. So it is difficult, if not impossible to somehow rank comics in the hierarchy of literature word and image. One annoyance in the book is the emphasis on the use of color - the palpable shifts of tone as colors deepen or fade, the intensity, the dramatic effect of outlines in different colors, the palette... Yet all the illustrations where these effects can be seen are in black and white. Miodrag refers to the critical importance of color throughout the last third of book, but we never see it. Similarly, there is a tendency to forget about placement of the images. She refers to them as above when we haven't seen them yet, and below when they were on the previous page. Unlike paintings, which might be hard to understand or even envision, and unlike books which might be dense, dull or dry, comics have the unique characteristic of appealing to all readers at the same level. It doesn't matter if they're cartoonish or super realistic or stylized, single pane or micro pane, colorful or monochrome, action oriented or talking heads. They never cross the line of being beyond intuition. We are innately capable of sorting out the correct path to follow with our eyes, re-ordering the words and actions to make sense, and grasping the overall intent of the artist. We don't fret over breaking the barrier walls of the panes, or finding the characters changed by time or circumstance from one pane to another. We can handle twisted language, and it adds to our enjoyment. But it takes 250 pages of analysis to appreciate this. Along the way, there's a fascinating education in examining this whole subculture - of criticism.

David Wineberg  
1 of 6 people found the following review helpful. For Academics Only

By Travis Starnes  
I recently got a hold of a copy of *Comics and Language: Reimagining Critical Discourse on the Form* and was genuinely excited to read it. I do a lot of study on the medium thanks to a project I have been working on for several years and consider myself well versed on the subject. I am always looking for new ways to examine the art form, although to be fair I am not a long time comic reader as it has only been the last few years that I revisited comics since I was a child. That being said this book was marked that it would "appeal to the general comics reader" and that I most certainly am. This book seemed like a great way to start a new direction in conversations on comics. Unfortunately neither the marketing nor the book lived up to even my least expectation. This book reads like someone published their English doctoral thesis, in fact I have a strong feeling that is exactly what this book is. The way this book is presented only someone who loves to study the structure of English and the syntax of language would enjoy it. This is a book for scholars, and that is it. The "general comics reader" would not make it through the first 5 pages. The language is purely academic and dry. Getting through this book was a study in determination for me and I don't imagine anyone would read this book for fun. Hannah Miodrag is an excellent writer in a technical sense but in no way a writer in the entertainment sense. If you like studies of the English language then this is a book for you, otherwise skip this unless you need a sleep aid. Disclaimer: I received this book for free in exchange for an honest review. This does not affect my opinion of the book or the content of my review.

It has become an axiom in comic studies that "comics is a language, not a genre." But what exactly does that mean, and how is discourse on the form both aided and hindered by thinking of it in linguistic terms? In *Comics and Language*, Hannah Miodrag challenges many of the key assumptions about the "grammar" and formal characteristics of comics, and offers a more nuanced, theoretical framework that she argues will better serve the field by offering a consistent means for communicating critical theory in the scholarship. Through engaging close readings and an accessible use of theory, this book exposes the problems embedded in the ways critics have used ideas of language,

literature, structuralism, and semiotics, and sets out a new and more theoretically sound way of understanding how comics communicate. *Comics and Language* argues against the critical tendency to flatten the distinctions between language and images and to discuss literature purely in terms of story content. It closely examines the original critical theories that such arguments purport to draw on and shows how they in fact point away from the conclusions they are commonly used to prove. The book improves the use the field makes of existing scholarly disciplines and furthers the ongoing sophistication of the field. It provides animated and insightful analyses of a range of different texts and takes an interdisciplinary approach. *Comics and Language* will appeal to the general comics reader and will prove crucial for specialized scholars in the fields of comics, literature, cultural studies, art history, and visual studies. It also provides a valuable summary of the current state of formalist criticism within comics studies and so presents the ideal text for those interested in exploring this growing area of research

Miodrag unflinchingly challenges what she considers to be the false assumptions of comics scholarship: comics are a kind of language, comics are a kind of literature, words and images are equivalent in comics. She undercuts these claims with compelling arguments about the significant differences between written language and visual language. But Miodrag is doing more than merely hurling brickbats; *Comics and Language* provides a new critical framework for understanding comics form. Randy Duncan, co-author of *The Power of Comics: History, Form, and Culture* and co-editor of the Eisner-nominated *Critical Approaches to Comics: Theories and Methods* Hannah Miodrag's *Comics and Language* is a powerful corrective to failures in the existing literature of comics studies around the use of language and offers new avenues for engaging with the scholarship of comics. Her close readings of specific works are insightful and succeed at what good criticism should do. After reading this book, I wanted to go pull volumes of George Herriman, Lynda Barry, and Posy Simmonds off the shelf and start rereading with renewed enthusiasm and an expanded attention to the language at work in the comics. Derik A. Badman, artist, critic, and web developer From the Inside Flap A new theoretical framework that critiques many of the assumptions of comics studies About the Author Hannah Miodrag, Leicester, United Kingdom, is a postdoctoral fellow of English at the University of Leicester. Her work has been published in the *International Journal of Comic Art*, *Studies in Comics*, and *PEER English: The Journal of New Critical Thinking*.