

# At the Intersections of Stylistics, Narratology, and Translatology: SHEN Dan's Interdisciplinary Studies

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**Abstract:** This paper enquires into SHEN Dan's interdisciplinary studies especially at the intersections of three apparently distinct disciplines, i.e. stylistics, narratology, and translatology, by focusing on her prolific international publications. First, it investigates how she combines linguistics and literary criticism and enriches stylistics through innovating linguistic models and proposing new critical concepts; secondly, it explicates how her approach of combining stylistics and narratology to the study of narratives has contributed to the development of both disciplines; thirdly, it discusses how her taking the combined interdisciplinary approach to fictional translation studies has remolded translatology from both disciplinary perspectives, and shows how her translation studies has retroactively transformed literary stylistics and narratology. It concludes from a semiotic point of view that Shen has theoretically and methodologically blazed new trails in the study of language and literature, broadened stylistics, narratology, and translatology by promoting their interactions, and offered insights into further interdisciplinary studies.

**Keywords:** SHEN Dan; interdisciplinarity; stylistics; narratology; translatology

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**标题:** 申丹在文体学、叙事学、翻译学交汇点上的跨学科研究

**内容摘要:** 本文聚焦申丹丰硕的国际论著, 主要探讨了她在文体学、叙事学、翻译学交汇点上的跨学科研究。她将语言学和文学批评相结合, 并通过在语言学模式上的创新和提出文学批评的新概念, 丰富了文学文体学研究; 她在叙事作品研究领域将文体学与叙事学相结合的研究路径, 对这两个学科的发展都做出了贡献; 她把文体学和叙事学整合起来用于小说翻译研究, 从两个学科视角重塑了翻译学; 她的翻译研究又推动了文学文体学和叙事学的创新。结论从符号学视角指出, 申丹在理论和方法上为语言与文学研究开辟了新的路径, 通过促进学科间的互动拓宽了文体学、叙事学和翻译学, 并为

进一步的跨学科研究提供了洞见。

**关键词：**申丹；跨学科；文体学；叙事学；翻译学

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From her thought-provoking arguments on fidelity vs. pragmatism in translation (“Fidelity” 1985), subjectivity vs. objectivity in stylistics (“Stylistics” 1988), story vs. discourse in narratology (“Defense” 2002), then to her systematic construction of the new theory of covert progression and dual narrative dynamics involving all three fields (“Covert” 2021), and from her *Literary Stylistics and Fictional Translation* (1995), *Style and Rhetoric of Short Narrative Fiction* (2014) to *Dual Narrative Dynamics* (2023), SHEN Dan has continuously made original and significant contributions to stylistics, narratology, and translatology as distinctive disciplines on the one hand, and to interdisciplinary studies between or among them on the other. She has revisited key concepts and principles in stylistics, narratology, and translatology, and addressed a series of issues that are important or crucial in theories and methods of interdisciplinary studies. Shen’s academic achievements can be conceived from the heights of semiotics of language and discourse, semiotics of literature, and semiotics of translation. Even one of these disciplines or fields of research might preoccupy an individual scholar for a lifetime, but Shen has contributed to all these from interdisciplinary or multidisciplinary perspectives. Her remarkable achievements can be partly seen in her 15 articles published in *Style* (the international journal that “addresses questions of style, stylistics, and poetics [...]”) alone, 5 in *Narrative* (the official journal of the International Society for the Study of Narrative), 4 in *Babel: International Journal of Translation*, and numerous articles in other A&HCI indexed international journals, including *Journal of Literary Semantics*, *Poetics*, *Poetics Today*, *Journal of Narrative Technique*, *Journal of Narrative Theory*, *ARIEL: A Review of International English Literature*, *Partial Answers*, *Nineteenth-Century Literature*, *English Studies*, *Comparative Literature Studies*, and *Language and Literature*, as well as about one hundred articles in major journals of literary, narrative, stylistic, and translation studies in China. Moreover, she has published seven single-authored and two first-author books in Chinese and in English. This study will focus on her publications in English and concentrate on her interdisciplinary studies from a semiotic perspective.

### Connecting Linguistics and Literary Criticism

Part of Shen’s interdisciplinary studies covers linguistics and literary criticism,

with stylistics bridging up the two and cutting through her narrative and translation studies. Well-informed in linguistics (especially functional linguistics) and literary theory and highly competent in critical practice, she is a keen observer of subtleties of linguistic choices in English and intricacies in Anglo-American literary narratives and an enthusiastic proponent of stylistics to other disciplines. Key words in her works include “syntax,” “transitivity,” “modes of speech,” “mind-style,” “trajectories of signification,” “modes of speech presentation,” “literary stylistics,” and “literary significance.”

Shen tries to develop stylistics and literary criticism through her innovative use of linguistics. In her article “Internal Contrast and Double Decoding,” for instance, she makes a contribution concurrently to the three disciplines. Since the 1970s, there have appeared many linguistic and stylistic investigations of transitivity, which invariably focus on the contrast between different types of transitivity process. Shen breaks a new path by directing attention to how a literary writer creates a thematically-motivated contrast within the same (sub-)type of transitivity process. Shen’s insightful exploration shows: First, such an internal contrast may, “by way of semantic and cognitive reorganization, change the nature of certain transitivity processes on a deeper level” (53). Secondly, such context-determined meaning at a deeper level, which interacts with the conventional surface meaning, depends on reader’s double decoding. Thirdly, a systematic and penetrating transitivity analysis of clause patterning can shed new light on literary interpretation, as exemplified by Shen’s brilliant stylistic analysis of Langston Hugh’s “On the Road,” an analysis that uncovers the thematically-significant symbolic meaning, which has eluded the attention of literary critics. Fourth, such a stylistic analysis can help understand the complex relation between the real author and the implied author.

Shen also tries to enrich stylistics through proposing new critical concepts. In her article “Non-ironic Turning Ironic Contextually,” for example, Shen proposes the concept of “context-determined irony” to facilitate the stylistic analysis of Kate Chopin’s “The Story of an Hour.” Shen points out that although various existing types of irony are more or less related to context, none of them totally hinges upon context like the type she brings into attention. She convincingly shows that, in comparison with the well-known verbal and situational irony, “context-determined irony” generates more semantic density and textual tension due to the co-existence between the conventionally positive meaning and the contextually determined ironic meaning of the linguistic choices involved. By bringing to light multiple context-determined irony in the “The Story of an Hour,” Shen reveals that it is, in effect, not a feminist text as believed by many stylisticians and literary critics.

With broad theoretical vision and insightful practical analysis as a solid basis, Shen has been vigorously and repeatedly defended the validity of stylistics and its helpfulness and usefulness for literary interpretation. Her article “Defending the Validity of Stylistics,” which attempts to avail stylistics to literary interpretation, is a leading article in the section of “Stylistics – Language Varieties – Perspectives of Presentation” in *Linguistics and Literary Studies* edited by Monika Fludernik, making a very loud voice to justify a critical practice that is both linguistic and literary.

There has been a clear division of labor, even opposition, between language studies and literature studies since the early twentieth century. Roger Fowler describes the situation in Britain as “a lamentable spectacle of two close neighbours” who do not talk but argue irrationally (2). Mary Louise Pratt describes the same situation on the other side of the Atlantic as the MLA and the LSA having their annual meetings at the same time and in the same city but in different hotels, without exchanging programs or street guides (vii). Later, Roger Sell found that the situation was more complicated by “further sub-specialisation” in the two fields, and ironically, those who tried to bring the two sides together had sometimes been accused of “understanding neither” (xii-xiv). Even in 2007, Geoffrey Leech and Mick Short still find that “many mainstream” linguists and “almost all” literary critics know nothing about or studiously ignore stylistics even though it is useful to both groups (287). Fortunately, Sell observed that “such divisiveness and despair” were not universal, since in his department of foreign languages at Åbo Akademi, Finland, attention was naturally given to linguistic aspects of literary texts (xii).

Shen has played a key role in the interface of linguistics and literary studies both in China and in the West. In terms of the former, apart from the division of language and literature in the same department in China’s universities, there is also a division of “foreign” and “Chinese” in different departments. And departments of Chinese have people doing “foreign literature” who rarely talk with literature people in departments of foreign languages and literature (Feng, “Foreign Language” 340-341). Under Shen’s leadership, China Association of Stylistics, since its establishment in 2004, has drawn literary linguists, discourse analysts, and literary scholars from both Chinese and foreign language/literature sectors together at national and international conferences. With persistent efforts, she has been leading stylistics in China to develop into an important part of the world’s map of stylistic study, and she has also played a significant role on the international stage by delivering invited key-note speeches attempting to bring linguistics, stylistics, and literary studies together, such as at the 2011 annual conference of Poetics and Linguistics Association (PALA) and at the International Conference “Linguistics & Literary Studies” (Freiburg, 2009).

Having kept pace with the ever-growing trends of stylistics, from formal, through functional, discourse, sociocultural, pragmatic stylistics to cognitive stylistics, she has substantiated the “narrative turn” in stylistics and the “stylistic turn” in narrative studies, and has considerably invigorated both stylistics and narratology.

### Connecting Narratology and Stylistics

The narratological study of storytelling structures and techniques is paradigmatically and methodologically different from the stylistic study of language features of literary texts with various linguistics models, although both disciplines are related to or motivated by structuralism and semiotics. Early linguistic-stylistic studies of fiction are a far cry from narratological studies. Norman Page’s *Speech in the English Novel* (1973) offers a pioneering study on a topic of common interest in linguistics and literature—the nature and function of fictional dialogue and its relationship to real speech and his analyses of literary texts are for discussions of “stylistic questions.” Leech and Short’s *Style in Fiction: Linguistic Introduction to English Fictional Prose* (1981) gives a broader stylistic inquiry into “the relation between language and artistic function” in fiction. But neither makes any reference to “narratology” or “narrative theory” in their first editions. Linguistic studies of the language of fiction was a reaction against Practical Criticism and New Criticism preoccupied with short poems, but the study of the universal structural patterns in narratives since the 1960s based on works of Vladimir Propp, Claude Lévi-Strauss, Roland Barthes, Algirdas J. Greimas, Tzvetan Todorov, Gérard Genette, etc. for a long time did not attract much of stylisticians’ attention.

Works on narratology, for example, Prince’s *Narratology* (1982) and Bal’s *Narratology* (1985) present different pictures with varying focuses. Prince deals with “signs of narrating” rather than “linguistic signs” and concentrates on certain traits “particularly pertinent to narrative texts.” Although he seems aware of Banfield’s “narrative style” and Fish’s “affective stylistics,” he declares his unwillingness to “discuss the problem of style” (Prince 134). In presenting a systematic account of the theory of narrative for use in the study of literary and other narrative texts, Bal does pay attention to linguistic and stylistic issues, but she has students of literature in mind throughout the four editions. It is noticeable that William Labov’s sociolinguistic discussion of narrative structure makes a loud sound in Prince’s narratology but remains silent in Bal’s.

Shen’s *Narratology and Stylistics of Fiction* (in Chinese and published in four editions from 1998 to 2019) is neither an introduction nor a textbook, but an in-depth account of relevant theories and methods of narratology and stylistics,

focusing on the complementary relationship between the two disciplines. Significantly, her work predates by nine years the second edition of Leech and Short's *Style in Fiction* which recognizes narratology as a discipline "probably the most notable for stylisticians interested in the study of prose fiction" (284) and makes references to works by major narratologists such as Bal, Chatman, Genette, Fludernik, and Prince for the first time in the last chapter. Rather than transplanting theories and methods of stylistics to narrative analysis, Shen analyzes modes of speech in novels, for example, with weightiness in both. Not only does she inquire into the modes' special manifestations in Chinese narrative fiction, but also into their transference from Chinese into English. Her book can be labeled "style and narrative structure in fiction" (in contrast to Leech and Short's title "style in fiction") and regarded as a theoretical complement to any work in stylistics attempting to draw on narratology and any work in narratology that finds stylistics useful. An abridged and updated version of the book translated into English, *Discourse and Style: What Narratology and Stylistics Can Do for Each Other*, is forthcoming from Routledge. Part of her updating work, in the shape of an article titled "Narratology, Stylistics, and Point of View: Partiality, Complementarity, and a New Definition" has just appeared in *Style*.

In the article "The Stylistics of Narrative Fiction," Shen discusses two theoretical issues (point of view and speech/thought presentation) that have attracted the attention of both stylisticians and narratologists and analyzes different versions of a mini-narrative from both stylistic and narratological perspectives. It is the leading article of the longest section in *Language and Style* in honor of Mick Short that takes her title as the heading and "reflects the dominance of prose analysis within stylistics" (McIntyre and Busse 11).

Interdisciplinarily, Shen has considered the ways in which stylisticians can draw on narratology ("How Stylisticians") and what they can do for each other ("What Narratology and Stylistics," "Stylistics and Narratology") in the journal *Style*, Blackwell's *A Companion to Narrative Theory*, and *The Routledge Handbook of Stylistics*. Moreover, she has contributed five entries "diegesis," "mind-style," "mood," "narrating," and "story-discourse distinction" to the *Routledge Encyclopedia of Narrative Theory*, with "mind-style" pertaining to the field of stylistics. These efforts were made when narratologists and most stylisticians were working independently. Against the background of the superficial similarity of the dichotomies of "content and style" in stylistics and "story and discourse" in narratology and the subsequent equation of "style" and "discourse" as respective concerns of stylistics and narratology, Shen points out the essential difference between "discourse" in narratology and "style" in stylistics despite a certain amount of overlap, and reveals

the essentially complementary relation between them. When discourse stylistics and contextual stylistics were emerging and when postclassical theories of narrative were developing, she timely inquired into the mutually benefiting relations between contextual narratologies and formal narrative poetics (“Why Contextual”) and the nature of contextualized poetics and rhetoric (“Contextualized”), a discussion that is relevant to the relation between contextual stylistics and formal stylistic distinctions, such as that among different modes of speech.<sup>1</sup>

As a narratologist-stylistician, Shen is aware of how narratologists’ contributions can interest stylisticians and how the latter can help the former, and has offered insights to both disciplines by showing how they can intersect and collaboratively deepen our understanding of narrative presentation. Shen has also investigated the different ways stylisticians draw on narratology by offering a clear taxonomy with the distinction of three approaches: the “mild,” the “radical,” and the “parallel” (“How” 383). Shen reveals that due to the difference between the investigation of “style” in verbal and nonverbal media, and due to the fundamental differences between “style” in stylistics and “discourse” in narratology, an ambitious attempt to incorporate narratology into stylistics—what she terms the “radical” approach—may bring undesirable consequences: losing the footing and characteristics of stylistic investigation, while also departing from narratological investigation (“How” 385-390). What Shen advocates is the “mild” approach that uses narrative concepts or models as frameworks for stylistic analysis of linguistic patterning. The importance of her finding is not only that neither stylistics nor narratology can cover the other, but also that their concepts and frameworks can be applied in the analysis of the same text. Her proposal is to sustain the disciplinary distinction on one hand and to bring their complementary relation into full play on the other. Her approach becomes more systematic in *Style and Rhetoric of Short Narrative Fiction*, which had been cited, while it was still in press, as one of the two “specialist monograph-length treatments of narrative from a stylistic perspective” as “narrative stylistics” (Simpson, *Stylistics* 278).

Shen’s interdisciplinary stylistic-narratological analysis has helped her to reveal two types of “progression” in many narratives, the overt (the plot development) and the covert (what she terms “covert progression”). She has found that the “covert progression” or “hidden dynamic” parallels the “overt dynamic” throughout the text and that the two textual dynamics invite “dual response from readers” (“Covert

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1 Dan Shen also pays attention to the complementary relation among different schools in the literary field, as exemplified by her essay “The Future of Literary Theories: Exclusion, Complementarity, Pluralism.”

Progression” 2). Her exploration of dual narrative dynamics culminated in her *Dual Narrative Dynamics* (Routledge 2023) and her article “‘Covert Progression’ and Dual Narrative Dynamics,” the latter appeared as the “Target Essay” in a special issue of *Style* (51.1, 2021)<sup>1</sup> and was responded to by sixteen articles contributed by scholars from nine different countries, including eminent narrative theorists James Phelan, John Pier, Patrick Hogan, Susan Lanser, among others, followed by Shen’s 40-page “Rejoinder.” Pier sees Shen standing “at the crossroads of narratology and stylistics” and observes that the key to “detecting the relations between overt and covert progressions is stylistic analysis in conjunction with narratological analysis” (“Dan Shen’s Rhetorical Narratology” 29). Hogan writes that the idea of covert progression is “a worthwhile addition to what is called the ‘narratologist’s toolbox’” (48).

Shen’s stylistic-narrative studies have made use of, and enriched, both the narratological toolbox and the stylistic toolkits by adding a narrative dimension to stylistics and a stylistic perspective to the study of narratives which are linguistically (in the semiotic sense) describable and analyzable. To readers of authoritative reference books such as *A Companion to Narrative Theory*, Shen emphasizes the complementary relation between the two, trying to bring narratologists closer to the analysis of “style” as the central concern of stylisticians, and makes them aware of a semiotic level on which narrative techniques can be more adequately analyzed. Ruth Page asserts that Shen’s pioneering discussion of the difference and complementarity between stylistics’ style and narratology’s discourse has led to a tendency where a stylistics of micro-level features (such as lexis or syntax) and a narratology of macro-level structure (particularly plot and voice) can work hand in hand in analyzing the same text (95). Seen from the long-standing division of labor, lack of dialogue, and hostile relations between the language/linguistics sector and the literature sector, Shen’s academic venture in the integration of stylistics and narratology is very significant in helping remove the barriers between the two.

Like her academic leadership in stylistics in China, she has been concurrently leading China Association of Narratology. In reflecting, challenging, and contributing to the world’s narrative theory, she has also been leading Chinese narratology to the

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1 This special issue, according to the Editor’s Note, is the seventh since 2008 devoted to a type of format “found in several of the life sciences,” after Joseph Carroll’s “An Evolutionary Paradigm for Literary Study” (42.2 & 3, 2008), Alan Palmer’s “Social Minds in Criticism and Fiction” (45.2, 2011), Peter Rabinowitz and Corinne Bancroft’s “Euclid at the Core: Re-centering Literary Education” (48.1, 2014), Brian Richardson’s “Unnatural Narrative Theory” (50.4, 2016), James Phelan’s “Authors, Resources, Audiences: Toward a Rhetorical Poetics of Narrative” (52.1 & 2, 2018), and Richard Walsh’s “Fictionality as Rhetoric” (53.4, 2019).



world's forefront.

### Connecting Stylistics and Narratology with Translatology

Shen's studies in translatology are characterized with stylistic and narratological perspectives on the semiotic level. Modern semiotics and linguistics have provided important frameworks for analyzing and understanding meaning-making, but the long history of translation is full of mysticism and legends. Although translation was related to linguistics, literary criticism, and stylistics in the creative work carried out by Prague School linguists many decades ago (Nida, *Toward* 21), translators can do their work "without knowing anything about linguistics" (Nida, "Science" 483). Although the science of language cannot interpret any linguistic specimen "without a translation of its signs into other signs of the same system or into signs of another system" (Jakobson, "On Linguistic Aspects" 234), not many translators realize that they are involved in a semiotic activity. Even if some translators are conscious of the power of stylistics in poetic translation, very few are aware of the power of literary stylistics in fictional translation.

Shen's academic career started in fictional translation studies while doing her Ph.D. at Edinburgh University in the 1980s, when she courageously criticized Eugene A. Nida's influential theory of "formal equivalence." Her 1989 article "Literalism: NON 'formal-equivalence'" caught immediate international attention and she was invited to contribute a 5000-word entry "Literalism" to *An Encyclopedia of Translation*. Many ideas in her Ph.D. dissertation *Literary Stylistics and Fictional Translation* were further developed into seven independent journal articles (e.g. "Stylistics"; "Syntax"; "Aesthetic Function") that caught attention from both stylisticians and translation theorists.

Against the background that the principles of literary translation criticism are subjective and impressionistic under the influence of traditional literary criticism, Shen found that stylistic analysis can lay bare the delicacies in the text and is therefore a powerful tool for translation studies. In her pioneering efforts to apply theories and methods of literary stylistics to fictional translation, Shen points out some problematic areas and addresses important issues in cross-lingual transfer. Her insistence on taking into account "both expression and content" (*Literary Stylistics* 31) manifests a semiotic principle that "language expresses" and "style stresses" (Riffaterre 155). While Riffaterre takes style as "an emphasis (expressive, affective or aesthetic) added to the information conveyed by the linguistic structure, without alteration of meaning" (155) in the same language, Shen conceptualizes style as a cross-language parameter and points out that, in translating prose fiction where

the translator tends to focus on content, insufficient attention to style can easily result in what she calls “deceptive equivalence” or “deceptive correspondence” marked by not only the loss of aesthetic effect but also the distortion of the original message (Shen, *Literary Stylistics* 90-124; Shen and Fang, “Stylistics”). She calls for the production of “functional correspondence” and “expressive identity.” For the translator to avoid “deceptive” correspondence, it is necessary to enhance stylistic competence; and for the translation critic to uncover this phenomenon, it is necessary to carry out stylistic analysis (*ibid.*).

Upon her insightful observations on the translator’s “emotional involvement” and “detachment and impartiality” (*Literary Stylistics* 128-129), Shen asserts that “any notable change by the translator in authorial evaluation may have a significant bearing on characterization” (130), a point that she convincingly backs up with stylistic analysis. She cautions translators against what Wayne Booth defines as “practical interests” since the translator should assume the role of the original author rather than the reader if the aim is to transfer the original faithfully rather than to fulfil various pragmatic ends (Shen, “Fidelity”). With her discovery that “what is conventional is objective and what is personal is subjective,” she asserts that “[o]bjectivity [...] is a matter of conventionality” since the concept “can be best construed” as such in the social reality of language (“Stylistics, Objectivity, and Convention” 221). In translation, both the original author’s encoding and the translator’s decoding are based on the conventional meaning of language. To be objective, the translator need try to get free of the influence of his or her personal inclinations and social positioning and to understand fully the original author’s purposeful utilization of the conventional signs in specific textual and sociocultural contexts. Shen calls for “the translator’s objectivity” (“Objectivity in the Translation” 132; *Literary Stylistics* 128) by extending a semiotic and linguistic principle to cross-linguistic analysis of translation. This principle is theoretically significant in solving “the myth of objectivity in literary scholarship” (Bassnett, *Comparative Literature* 66) and providing a qualified objective term in place of the “unqualifiedly objective terms for the reader of SL and TL text” (Bassnett, *Translation Studies* 84) in both literary and translation studies.

Human interpretation of language is essentially intuitive and subjective, and individuals’ interpretations of the same text may be different. Objectivity in humanities is only a relative term compared against objectivity or verifiability in social and natural sciences. Ronald Carter points out that textual analysis and interpretation are guided by the individual’s subjective intuitions and again limited by them; and an individual commentator’s intuitions may or may not be shared by

others and “a measure of inter-subjective agreement” can help since “inter-subjective intuitions are more reliable” than the purely subjective (64). Shen’s theory of conventionality and objectivity precedes Carter’s and is more explicitly stated. Her discussion of translator’s objectivity shifts the critic’s attention from the translated text to the translating process and calls on the translator to respect the original author and cater for the target reader in unbiased and unprejudiced ways if the basic stance of translation is fidelity to the original. She has highlighted the responsibility of the translator who are in fact “discursive participants” (Feng, “Literary Discourse” 45) and “partners in joint-venture projects in translation” that have contributed “substantially to the literary history of target-language literatures” (50). Shen’s theory also has semiotic implications on other types of objectivity in translation, including the objectivity of the reader and the critic. Her theory is paradigmatically and methodologically significant not only for translation and stylistics, but also for a number of other disciplines in the humanities and even social sciences.

Shen’s stylistic study of translation has solidly justified “literary stylistics as a touchstone for literary translation criticism” (Feng, “Literary Stylistics” 40). Her approach predates all other relevant studies, e.g. Boase-Beier’s *Stylistic Approaches to Translation* (2006), Baker’s “Towards a Methodology for Investigating the Style of a Literary Translation” (2000), and Malmkjaer’s “Translational Stylistics” (2004). Theoretically, her cutting-edge views on “validity” vs. “fidelity” and “loyalists” vs. “pragmatists,” etc. on more general levels (Shen, “Fidelity”) have challenged, redefined, and invigorated classical principles of translation (such as “faithfulness,” “transparency,” etc.). Practically, she has offered scientific and aesthetic guidelines and requirements to translators and translation critics.

Objectivity is associated with reliability and subjectivity with unreliability, a hot topic in the field of narratology. As the author of the 5000-word entry “Unreliability” in the second edition of *Handbook of Narratology* (De Gruyter, 2014), Shen has contributed to translation studies with her narratological-stylistic investigation of this issue. In “Unreliability and Characterization,” she reveals that in translating prose fiction, some translators are inclined to objectify characters’ subjective and unreliable perceptions and judgments and that such efforts to increase reliability often lead to “the loss of the characters’ individuality as found in the source text” (300). With her admirable narratological-stylistic analysis, Shen persuasively shows that unreliability as intentionally encoded by the original author “may have a significant role to play in revealing or reinforcing narratorial stance, in characterizing a particular consciousness, or in more general terms, in fulfilling the work’s thematic and aesthetic goals” (309) and thus it should be preserved in translation. Shen’s narratological-

stylistic investigation as such not only sheds fresh light on translation and adds a new dimension to translation criticism, but also enriches stylistic analysis with narratological models such as focalization and the distinction between the narrating and experiencing selves (306-308) and with translation as a new area for stylistic investigation of unreliability. Moreover, her extending the discussion of unreliability to fictional translation and to characters versus narrators has also contributed to narratology. Ansgar Nünning, in “Unreliable, Compared to What?” appreciates Shen’s essay as the only one addressing the relation between unreliability and characters’ traits, an issue that calls for more investigation (59). Indeed, Shen’s pioneering exploration of “the function of unreliability found in a character as a reflecting versus a speaking entity” (op. cit. 300) breaks a new path in all the three fields in question.

What is more, Shen’s narratological-stylistic investigation of dual narrative dynamics has enabled her to promote translation studies from a fresh angle. In her second book from Routledge, *Dual Narrative Dynamics*, Chapter 5 is titled “How Dual Dynamics Challenges Translation and How to Meet the Challenge.” Dual dynamics in the shape of a covert progression paralleling the plot development in many literary narratives is a phenomenon that has eluded the attention of narratologists, stylisticians, and translators/translation critics alike. In translating a text with dual dynamics, a translator may unwittingly undermine it because what is satisfactory or desirable as regards the transference of the plot development may prove to be undesirable or even fatal to the covert progression in the original. Seen in this light, this literary phenomenon presents a great challenge both to translators and to translation studies, calling for the relevant transformation of translation theory, criticism, and also the teaching of translation. With substantial exemplification, Shen convincingly shows that, to uncover the dual dynamics, one needs to carry out an in-depth narratological-stylistic analysis, and these examples taken from inter-lingual translation can help enrich both narratological and stylistic investigations.

Shen’s translatology, as I am inclined to term it, is not a mere combination or a willful trespassing from stylistics and narratology into translation but a battery of interdisciplinary inquiries in a field that is ontologically linguistic, semiotic, literary, and cross-cultural. In blazing the trails in pinpointing problems of translation and proposing remedies from stylistic and narratological perspectives, she has justifiably developed translatology in the senses of “translation studies” as well as “Translation Studies” and demonstrated the usefulness of stylistic and narrative analyses for literary translation with unquestionable philosophical significance and semiotic importance.

## Conclusion

The term “interdisciplinarity” prototypically refers to the transfer of methods from one discipline to another. While it denotes an overflow of disciplines, its goal still remains within the framework of disciplinary research. Shen’s interdisciplinarity is not an approach, but approaches that do not simply combine two different or neighboring disciplines together by applying stylistic methods to narratological analysis or vice versa, or impose stylistic and narratological terminology on the study of fictional translation. Instead of taking stylistics and narratology as tools for analyzing literature, or taking literary texts as the data for stylistic-narratological analysis, she explores issues in one discipline from the perspective of others, trying to show how one can shed light on another or how the different disciplines can draw from each other. In so doing, she has not only brought different disciplines together but also offered insights that can illuminate further interdisciplinary perspectives.

Put another way, Shen’s academic venture is neither a stylistic scholarship that borrows from narrative studies nor a narratological scholarship that borrows from stylistics nor a translational scholarship that borrows from the other two. Her approaches to any one of these are multi-leveled and multi-dimensioned, each actively drawing on and retroactively contributing to the others, and are stylistic, narratological, and translational at the same time. Shen’s stylistics seamlessly combines analysis of lexical-grammatical features and associated structural features of narratives without overlooking what is inaccessible to stylistic methods; her stylistic narratology is more accommodative than many other narratologists’ work; and her stylistic-narratological translation enterprise has reshaped some fundamental principles of translatology.

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