

Thematic Studies on SHEN Dan's Academic Contribution: An Introduction

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SHEN Dan is one of China's most prestigious First-Class Professors in the humanities and social sciences and a Boya Chair Professor of English at Peking [Beijing] University. She is an internationally famous scholar, being on the advisory boards of the American journals *Narrative* (2012—) and *Style* (2011—), on the editorial or advisory boards of the British *Language and Literature* (1999—), *JLS: Journal of Literary Semantics* (2008—2021) and *The Translator: Studies in Intercultural Communication* (2001—2014), as well as a consultant editor of *The Routledge Encyclopedia of Narrative Theory*. She is also on the editorial or advisory boards of more than ten CSSCI indexed prestigious Chinese journals. Shen Dan is a leading figure in China's narratological and stylistic fields, having acted as the President of China Narratology Association (2005—2017) and the President of China Stylistic Association (2004—2012) and now being Honorary President of both associations. She has published more than one hundred essays in major international and Chinese journals and has published nine books (seven being single-authored and two with her as the first-author) and two collections of essays, the single-authored ones including *Style and Rhetoric of Short Narrative Fiction* (2016[2014]) and *Dual Narrative Dynamics* (2023) from Routledge. Her book *Discourse and Style: What Narratology and Stylistics Will Do for Each Other* is forthcoming from Routledge. Since 2014, she has been continuously listed among Elsevier's Most Cited Chinese Researchers, and she is on Stanford List of World's Top 2% Scientists 2022. In China, Shen Dan's works have enjoyed the most citation in the fields of narrative studies and literary studies.

Shen Dan has won international recognition in several fields, especially narrative studies and stylistics. This column devoted to the discussion of Shen Dan's research consists of one interview and four essays. In the interview, Ning Yizhong

asks Shen Dan a number of focused questions, and from her answers we can see her admirable contributions in terms of clarifying the relationship between different disciplines or approaches, in revealing the essence of key theoretical concepts, and, moreover, in proposing new theoretical concepts and models that have significantly promoted the development of the relevant fields.

The four essays following the interview are marked by a narrowing down of focus. The first one by Feng Zongxin, discusses Shen Dan's contribution to interdisciplinary research that involves narratology, stylistics, linguistics, literary criticism, and translation studies. Shen Dan took the lead in systematically revealing the complementary relation between stylistics and narratology, and her interdisciplinary study has been highly influential in both the stylistic field and the narratological field.

The second essay, by Hui Haifeng, focuses on Shen Dan's contributions to narrative studies. It more or less traces the diachronic development of Shen Dan's research, starting from Shen Dan's innovative discussion of classical narrative poetics in association with stylistics, to Shen Dan's contribution to postclassical narratological theory, then to Shen Dan's contribution to narrative criticism through discovering "covert progression," an undercurrent paralleling the plot development, and finally, to how Shen Dan proceeds to establish the new theory of dual narrative dynamics.

Of the different schools or branches in the field of narrative studies, Shen Dan has been largely engaged in the rhetorical one, and the third essay, by Wang Liya, concentrates on Shen Dan's research in rhetorical narrative studies. It discusses how Shen Dan pioneered a more comprehensive structure-style rhetorical analysis by linking narratology with stylistics, how Shen Dan put forward an integrated model of intratextual-extratextual-intertextual "overall-extended close reading." It also addresses Shen Dan's theoretical contribution in establishing her new theory of covert progression and further, that of dual narrative dynamics.

The last essay of this column, by Zhang Xin and Hong Yongliang, discusses the theory of dual narrative dynamics by Shen Dan from a fresh angle. The essay directs attention to the academic circumstances for the production of the theory and the application of the theory in different genres and media. But of course, it also addresses the theoretical framework of the theory, focusing on its eight dual models of narrative analysis.

From the discussions in this column of interview and essays, we can see that Shen Dan is a scholar with penetrating insight and strong problem awareness, evident, for instance, in her brilliant analysis of the concept of "implied author"

and Derrida's misreading of Saussure in the interview. She has published numerous original works in narratology, stylistics, and translation studies. In-depth research in each of these fields has enabled her to conduct fruitful interdisciplinary studies, which in turn has helped promote her research in each of these fields. Shen Dan's theoretical contribution culminates in her construction of the new theory of dual narrative dynamics, a theory that presents a major breakthrough beyond the Aristotelian tradition. The theory has become highly influential, being applied to the analysis of literary works in different genres and to that of media studies. As Hui Haifeng puts it in his essay, Shen Dan's achievements and world-wide recognitions constitute "a significant source of inspiration for younger generations of Chinese scholars."

Since Shen Dan has made a lot of achievements in multiple fields, what the authors of this column can possibly offer here is far from comprehensive. We sincerely hope that our discussions focusing on her major contributions can be beneficial as well as invitational so that more will join us in further study.