



Narrative Re-Architecture in Bilingual Self-Translation: A Genettean Analysis of “The Hound’s Devotion” and “Quan Xin Feng Zhu”

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Abstract

This article analyzes the bilingual lyric pair *The Hound’s Devotion* and *Quan Xin Feng Zhu* through Gérard Genette’s narratology to show how self-translation reshapes narrative form. Referring the work of Culler, Fludernik, Hühn, and Shen, the study demonstrates that lyric poems can sustain narrative situations and that self-translation can generate distinct narrative systems rather than parallel linguistic versions. The English poem in this research frames devotion as an externally observed moral emblem, whereas the Chinese poem as an interior, ritualized offering grounded in classical moral cosmology. The featured differences here support the view that self-translation functions as a form of rewriting that forms new narrative identities. The study contributes to narratology, translation studies, and comparative poetics by illustrating how bilingual self-translation can re-architect narrative design across languages.

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Introduction

Self-translation is often understood as a movement between languages, yet bilingual poets frequently reshape the narrative architecture of their works in the process. A pair of bilingual poems, “The Hound’s Devotion” and *Quan Xin Feng Zhu*, represent the phenomenon where two varying poems with different narrative situations, focalizations, temporalities, and functions can be built on the very same narrative core. The English version features the hound in emblematic imagery, while in the Chinese version, the hound is infused with devotional diction and classical moral cosmology. By narrative architecture, I refer to the underlying arrangement of voice, perspective, time, and function that shapes how a poem presents its world.

Nevertheless, there is limited research on how bilingual poetry alters the structure of narrative rather than the surface text. Even though the genre of bilingual poetry is already discussed in translation studies, the narratological aspects are not explored sufficiently. A narratological approach offers a way to examine how structural choices shift across languages. This paper addresses that gap by applying Gérard Genette’s narratology to a bilingual poetic pair. Despite the growth of research on bilingual poetry, very little work has examined how narratology can be applied to self-translated lyric pairs, leaving a gap in understanding how narrative structure shifts across languages.

To explore these differences, this study uses Genette’s distinctions between voice, mood, focalization, and narrative time [Genette, *Narrative Discourse*]. While Genette’s model is usually applied to prose fiction, scholars such as Culler, Fludernik, Hühn, and Shen have shown that lyric poems often contain narrative structures [Culler 23–45; Fludernik 12; Hühn 275–94; Shen 52–73]. This study builds on that insight and demonstrates how self-translation can produce distinct narrative systems across languages. This study focuses on narratological structure rather than lexical comparison, since Genette’s categories illuminate deeper narrative architecture.

This approach brings narratology into direct conversation with bilingual poetic practice, an area that has received little structural analysis.

For a long time, self-translation scholarship has insisted that the process of translating one's work is a creative act instead of the symmetrical linguistic transfer of an utterance from source to target. Grutman views self-translation as a space where authors rewrite their texts due to new cultural and literary environments; Hokenson and Munson proved that many bilingual poets create versions in different structures, tones, and narrators' standpoints because languages carry poetic and cultural expectations. Bassnett supports the same idea, arguing that translation serves as a form of rewriting with the potential for disrupting the narrative identity of a text. These studies draw on grounds for pursuing the claim that self-translation is a site of structural transformation. They also provide a basis for the current inquiry, in which narratology is used to outline how bilingual rewriting can generate different narrative architectures in different languages.

This study offers one of the first narratological analyses of a bilingual self translated lyric pair and shows that self translation can create distinct narrative architectures rather than parallel versions.

2. Theoretical Framework: Genette's Narratology and Lyric Narrative

Genette's narratology distinguishes between voice, mood, focalization, temporal order, duration, frequency, and narrative function [Genette, *Narrative Discourse* 212–62]. These categories apply to any text that constructs a represented world and an observing consciousness.

Even in very brief lyric forms, a poem often implies a scene, a perceiving position, or an experiential moment, which is enough to establish a minimal narrative situation

Culler argues that lyric poetry often contains implicit narrative situations [Culler 23–45]. Hühn identifies forms of narration that operate even in highly condensed lyric forms [Hühn 275–94]. Fludernik's concept of natural narratology supports the idea that narrative structures emerge whenever a text evokes experientiality [Fludernik 12]. Shen's work on covert progression reinforces the usefulness of narratology for compact texts [Shen 52–73].

Together, these scholars provide a foundation for applying Genette's categories to bilingual lyric poems.

The reason Genette's model is particularly relevant to the present study is that it specifically singles out structural elements which remain constant despite variations in language and genre. The model of voice, focalization, and temporality provides a way to look beyond the word level and examine narrative structures in greater depth, which is the case in the present work. Other methods, including the use of stylistics or cognitive narratology, could be applied to describe the surface-level effects, but Genette's model is uniquely well-suited to tracing the influence of self-translation on narrative stance and perspective in particular. Even though narratology is most demonstrably associated with prose fiction, nothing stops critics, including this one, from applying it usefully with lyric poetry, especially if this can be demonstrated to build a scene, a point of perceiving, or an experience. The criticism on lyric narrative has already well established that even within very condensed poems, one can clearly perceive elements of organization that arrange

perception, time, and voice, which are demonstrably narrative elements. Thus, this study not only treats each poem as a narrative event but also organizes a perceived world and a point of viewing according to this model, applying Genette's terms not as a formula that seeks to impose narrative on lyric poetry but rather as a device that allows one to understand the placement each version confers on vision, voice, and temporality.

3. Narrative Analysis of the English Version: "The Hound's Devotion"

3.1. Voice

The English poem uses an extradiegetic and heterodiegetic narrator. The speaker stands outside the story world and observes the hound as a moral emblem ["Hound's Devotion"].

3.2. Focalization

The poem relies on external focalization. The hound's devotion is described from the outside, and the reader is not given access to its inner life [Genette, *Narrative Discourse* 189].

For instance, the poem describes the hound's posture and action from an observer's vantage point, noting its stillness and outward devotion without entering its inner thoughts.

3.3. Temporality

Time appears static. The poem freezes a single moment of devotion and functions as a descriptive pause [Genette, *Narrative Discourse* 94].

3.4. Mood and Distance

The narrative distance is high. The narrator maintains interpretive authority and emotional separation from the scene [Genette, *Narrative Discourse Revisited* 36].

3.5. Narrative Function

The poem performs an exemplary function. The hound's posture and action serve as a moral lesson [Genette, *Narrative Discourse Revisited* 116].

4. Narrative Analysis of the Chinese Version: Quan Xin Feng Zhu

4.1. Voice

The Chinese version moves toward a quasi-intradiegetic voice. Classical diction suggests shared spiritual interiority and invites the reader into the devotional atmosphere [Quan Xin Feng Zhu].

To understand this better, it can be said here that the term "quasi-intradiegetic" does not signify having the narrator manifest as a physical embodiment of a character within the story. There is no question of the narrator having access to language that creates such an invisible boundary between the two. The use of classical rhetoric and spiritual terms gives the tale a sense of shared spiritual space directly in the Chinese version of the story. This makes the presence of the narrator seem less like a matter of identity and more of a spiritual connection between the narrator and the subject and also the way the subject might relate to the reader themselves.

4.2. Focalization

The poem uses internal focalization. The reader is given access to the hound's moral consciousness and inner

intention [Genette, *Narrative Discourse* 189]. This use of internal focalization aligns with classical Chinese literary traditions in which animals are often depicted as moral agents within a larger cosmological order.

The Chinese version frames the hound's devotion as arising from an inner moral intention, describing its act as one of heartfelt offering rather than mere physical posture.

4.3. Temporality

Time is ritualistic, iterative; devotion is seen as continuous, not ephemeral [Genette, *Narrative Discourse* 114].

The difference in terms of time is necessarily related to the particular verbs employed in every translation. The definite article accompanying the static use of present tense verbs in the English translation creates a manner of pause, freezing the hound in space. The Chinese translation, on the other hand, makes use of poetic parallelism and employs verbs that bring a sense of being.

For example, the lack of time-specific subjects allows the action to seem as though it is being done habitually. Second, while the English text centers on the physical positioning of the animal, the language used within the Chinese text utilizes words related to ritualistic religious practice. It causes the seemingly instantaneous behavior to develop a sense of ritualistic repetition.

The words used imply a repetitive process, describing the hound's action within a continuous religious practice rather than a simple action.

4.4. Mood and Distance

The narrative distance is low. The poem creates a sense of intimacy and spiritual closeness [Shen 52–73].

4.5. Narrative Function

The poem performs a sacrificial function. Devotion is presented as an offering to a higher moral order [Venuti 12–15].

The poem can be recognized to have the function of a spiritual offering. The poem does not approach the subject of devotion as an abstract moral lesson, choosing instead to portray the concept as a gift to a higher moral order. This further enforces the move to interior focalization, with the actions of the hound no longer existing purely as an observable action.

5. Comparative Synthesis: Narrative Re-Architecture Across Languages

Together, these two versions demonstrate the creative ways in which self-translation can influence the narrative framework of a particular poetic instant. The English original presents the hound as a symbol at a distance, whereas the Chinese version places the reader within a pious setting, which appears personal and spiritual. The different narrative positions in these two versions provide a new way to experience an incident.

There is a difference in the tone from an external observer in the English translation to an internal element within the scene of devotion in Chinese translation. There is a difference in the focalization from an external observer's view to an internal

view which accesses the moral awareness of the hound through the scene. There is a difference in temporality from an instantaneous moment to a ritual process implying ongoing devotion to God. There is a difference in the mood from a distant view to an intimate view. There is a difference in the narrative function from moral edification to spiritual offering.

Taken together, these shifts show that self translation can reorganize narrative architecture rather than simply reproduce content across languages. The coordinated changes in voice, focalization, temporality, and function demonstrate that the two poems construct different narrative systems, which supports the view that bilingual rewriting is a structural act rather than a lexical one.

Although the focus of the analysis has been more centered on the shifts within the structure, rather than the biography of the author, the fact remains that the poet, as the original creator and also the re architect within the recreative narrative, remains a key element in the changes. In the process of self-translation, the author, instead of being a mere messenger, becomes a visionary with a certain level of authority to rearchitect the narrative voice within the text, by moving from the mere observation-based narrative voice created in the original text to the more intimate spiritual voice created in the translated text, thanks to the recognition of the original creator as the architect of the narrative voice within the texts. These structural differences affect the reader in important ways. The English text asks the reader to think about the theme of devotion as a moral symbol, while the Chinese text asks the reader to feel devotion as an action. The bilingual text also demonstrates the way that self-translation can involve cultural re-framing, as the English poem is of a type that would align with the idea of allegory, while the Chinese text aligns with classical morality. The difference between the English and the Chinese further demonstrates the way that self-translation is a process of narrative decision-making rather than translation for the purposes of linguistic similarity.

These findings also speak back to translation theory by showing that the structural shifts observed across the two versions confirm the idea that self translation functions as a form of rewriting. The bilingual pair demonstrates that narrative stance, focalization, and temporality can change in ways that support Grutman, Hokenson and Munson, and Bassnett in their claim that self translation produces new textual identities rather than parallel linguistic versions.

Figure 1 provided below is a side-by-side analysis of the narrative structures used in the English and Chinese versions. It demonstrates the way in which voice, focalization, temporality, and mood in each are structured and used in the narrative. The English version utilizes a spectatorial observer; focalization is singular and remote in emotion as the scene is narrated. The hound is presented as a symbol of morality. The Chinese version is closer in perception and invites the reader to share in the hound's intention. It treats the act as a ritual and a spiritual sacrifice. The figure itself demonstrates the differences at a glance and supports further the point mentioned above.

Category	English Version	Chinese Version
Voice	Extradiegetic, heterodiegetic	Quasi-intradiegetic
Focalization	External	Internal
Temporality	Static moment	Ritual, iterative
Mood/Distance	High distance	Low distance
Function	Moral emblem	Spiritual offering

Fig 1 : Comparative Table Illustrating Narrative Re-Architecture Across Languages in The Hound's Devotion and Quan Xin Feng Zhu

6. Addressing Critical Objections

A number of possible objections may arise from this analysis. But they can be answered through established work in narratology and translation studies. The addressed bilingual pair states that lyric poems are capable of carrying narrative structures. Thus self translation can create new textual identities that cultural traditions shape how interiority is formed in the Chinese version. These points indicate that the structural differences between the two poems are grounded in theory than the result of overinterpretation. They support the view that bilingual rewriting can reshape narrative architecture in meaningful and deliberate ways. This does not mean the analysis is immune to critique, but it does mean that the objections can be answered through established theory.

6.1. "Narratology cannot be applied to lyric poetry."

Culler, Hühn, Fludernik, and Shen all show that lyric poems often contain narrative situations [Culler 23–45; Hühn 275–94; Fludernik 12; Shen 52–73]. Their work supports the use of Genette's categories in lyric analysis.

6.2. "Animals cannot have internal focalization."

Focalization concerns access to information rather than biological realism [Genette, *Narrative Discourse* 186–90]. Classical Chinese poetics often attributes moral interiority to animals, which makes internal focalization culturally coherent.

Classical Chinese literature commonly ascribed moral awareness, even intentionality, to animals: consider Buddhist animal exempla featuring animals acting in ways that are said to be motivated by ethical intention; stories of loyal dogs from Ming and Qing morality tales, where devotion is considered an inner moral virtue; and the extensive tradition of fox spirits whose interiority is crucial to narrative function. The notion of shoudao, the animal realm in Buddhist cosmology, further contextualizes animals as partaking in a moral order rather than strictly as instinctual creatures. Such traditions render it instinctive for a poem to attribute an inner moral stance to a hound.

6.3. "Differences between versions are stylistic rather than structural."

Genette defines voice, focalization, temporality, and function as structural categories. The bilingual pair shows systematic shifts in all four areas, which indicates narrative re-architecture rather than stylistic variation.

7. Limitations and Future Research

This investigation offers a structural framework for analyzing bilingual lyric poetry, yet it will remain a specialized investigation of narrative architecture. Recognizing such boundaries offers a guideline for future researchers who might seek to expand on this knowledge as a whole.

7.1. Broadening the Corpus

The analysis here focuses on a specific bilingual pair by a single author and is best treated as a proof of concept rather than a universal rule. To test the generalizability of these findings, future research might study whether this shift from 'spectatorial' English to 'intimate' Chinese focalization is a systemic result of the English-Chinese linguistic boundary or part of a wider phenomenon of self-translation. Researchers may check if similar narrative re-architectures take place across bilingual combinations that are constructed with different cultural distances, such as Romance or Slavic languages, which would then confirm whether an 'intimate' shift is triggered by internal mechanics within the Chinese language or if it is an act of mild agency executed by a bilingual author who wants to navigate dissimilar cultural requirements.

7.2. Cognitive and Reception Studies

The focus of this research is more on the "narrative event" in the text than on the effect on the audience, which is where future research could take this study, perhaps in an empirical fashion regarding how this type of shift is perceived by the bilingual reader. That is, does the "ritualistic" time in the Chinese text in fact create a different level of psychological state in the reader than does the "static moment" of English text?

7.3. The Role of Digital and AI Translation

One of the key areas for further research concerns how self-translation interrelates to the modern translation technologies. For instance, it will be exciting to see whether AI-assisted self-translation maintains the "narrative re-architecture" discovered in this study or pulls it back to "linguistic symmetry."

7.4. Historical and Biographic Contexts

While the current work focuses more on the structure and not the history of the author, a useful continuation step would be to incorporate the historical context of the poet as well. This benefits from the knowledge of the author's creation process

to see if these changes in the story were part of the conscious or subconscious mind when transferring to a target language.

8. Conclusion

In this respect, the bilingual pair "The Hound's Devotion" and Quan Xin Feng Zhu reveals that self-translation is capable of creating different narrative architectures. By applying the theory of Genette in narratology, this paper has elaborated that the English version narrates devotion as an observed moral emblem while the Chinese version narrates it as an embodied spiritual offering. The findings of this paper contribute to narratology, translation studies, and comparative poetics by exposing how bilingual self-translation creates narrative plurality across languages. Further, this research tends to indicate that self-translation warrants higher visibility as a site of narrative innovation. Eventually, the bilingual pair suggests how poetic self-translation can uncover the narrative possibilities that come with the passage of a single creative vision across linguistic and cultural borders. This study offers a methodological contribution by showing how narratology can be used to reveal structural transformations created through bilingual self-translation. The approach used here may also be applied to other bilingual or self-translated works, opening further possibilities for structural analysis across languages.

The analysis also contributes to translation theory by showing that the structural changes across the two versions support the view that self translation operates as a form of rewriting that produces new narrative identities rather than parallel linguistic copies.

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