On the Essayistic Narration in *The Dream of the Rood*

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ABSTRACT: On the road to the theoretical foundation of poetic narratology, great efforts have been made by scholars who have been dedicated to the field of poetic narration in order to have a good understanding of the explicit and implicit narrative qualities and styles of the poetic narration in poetic narrative texts from various perspectives. As indicated in the established studies, a Chinese scholar named Junqiang Tan has continued a new study of it by emphasizing too much on not the essayistic narration but the lyrical narration of poetic narrative texts produced from past to present. Considering the perceptual insufficiencies in this respect, this essay will deal with the essayistic narration in *The Dream of the Rood* in terms of its essayistic narrative time, essayistic narrative discourse and essayistic narrative focalization in to quicken the theoretical construction of poetic narratology.

Keywords: essayistic narration; *The Dream of the Rood*; poetic narratology

1 INTRODUCTION

Indebted to the sustainable promotions of the explorations of narrative theories, the academic dedications of a variety of scholars throughout the world have contributed much to the major breakthroughs in this field as exemplified in their academic papers and monographs. In general, those breakthroughs have been characterized with the academic achievement they have achieved primarily in their narrative explorations of novelist narrative texts apart from that has respectively been achieved in the explorations of literary narrative texts like dramatic narrative texts and essayistic narrative texts, and non-narrative texts including media narrative texts, journalist narrative texts, semiotic narrative texts, visual narrative texts, graphic narrative texts, music narrative texts and the like. The studies in those respects have turned out to be remarkable enough to raise enough attentions of their academic readers or even average readers after the narrative turns from previous classic narratology to present post-classic narratology in the form of trans-discipline, trans-genre, trans-medium as well as trans-context after the successful transformation from being regarded as an implicit study to an explicit one that has been titled from novelist narratology, essayistic narratology, dramatic narratology, filmic narratology, music narratology, cultural narratology, rhetorical narratology, cognitive narratology, ethical narratology, graphic narratology, spatial narratology, natural narratology, Marxist narratology, feminist narratology, educational narratology, psychological narratology and so forth [5] (Jun Luo, 2014, p98-100).

What is pitiful is that although few scholars including foreign scholars (Mc Hale Brian, et., al) and Chinese scholars (Biwu Shang, Junqiang Tan, Jun Luo et., al) have become aware of the inadequate academic attentions paid to the narrative mechanism of poetic narrative texts and made efforts to promote it in some of their academic essays written to explore the narrative contexts, narrative discourses, narrative modes, narrative paradigms, narrative grammars, narrative structures of poetic narrative texts and the like [6] (Jun Luo, Guijun Li, 2017, p:68-73), a single monograph devoted to the studies in this respect haven’t cropped up, fewer of them have touched the poetic narration of lyrical poetic texts in line with the narrative phenomenon existing in them [4] (Junqiang, Tan, 2013, p125). Despite the outsets of the theoretical studies of poetic narratology, none of them have taken into account the essayistic narration in the poetic narration of poetic narrative texts, not to speak of that in Anglo-Saxon poetic narrative texts despite the brief academic mention of the essayistic beauty in poetry [8] (Yongnian Gao, p17). In this case, the academic proposition to be justified in this essay is inclined to be an original one.
that deserves extensive academic concern owing to its
tremendous potentiality or possibility to take lead in
the studies of poetic narratology and contribute to its
academic prosperity in the future in spite of being
temporarily and ubiquitously disinterested by the vast
majority of scholars who are interested in the narrative
studies of novelistic narrative texts.

Therefore, the exploration in this regard is of great
significance and practical value owing to the difficulty
in digging out the essayistic qualities of the An-
glo-Saxon narrative text mentioned above in compar-
ison with what has been exemplified in medieval po-
etic narrative texts, modern poetic narrative texts and
contemporary poetic narrative texts, for it is conduc-
ive for the scholars to find out the cutting-edge superiori-
ties of it, to raise the academic attentions to the gener-
ic properties of Anglo-Saxon poetic narrative texts
concerning its essayistic narration, to achieve remark-
able achievements to be manifested in the production
of their academic monographs and essays, to lay a
sound foundation for the theorization, systemization
and optimization of poetic narratology, and improve
the teaching effects of poetic education owing to the
practical application of academic achievements into
the teaching practices of Anglo-Saxon poetic narrative
texts, which is good for the students to broaden their
academic horizon and develop their academic interest
and literacy.

2 THE ESSAYISTIC NARRATION IN
ESSAYISTIC AND NON-ESSAYISTIC
NARRATIVE TEXTS

Before the exploration of the essayistic narration as
proposed above, it ought to be made clear that the
essayistic narration to be elaborated in this essay pri-
marily refers to the essayistic narration in essayistic
narrative texts and that in non-essayistic narrative
texts in accordance with the respective generic quali-
ties of those narrative texts.

The former has been characterized with the essay-
sic qualities of the poetic narration of the essayistic
narrative texts that has been universally believed to be
composed of the essayistic origins, the essayistic gen-
res, the essayistic productions and the essayistic elab-
orations of narrative essays to find out a series of es-
sayistic mechanism in those essays concerning the
flexible language structures, the variable rhythmic
structures, the profound thematic articulations, the in-
genious transmissions of poetic emotions, the in-
purposeful development of poetic thinking to make an
menduous distinction from the narration of other
narrative texts by associating the language styles of
those texts with those of the vernacularism, the local-
isim or even the vulgarism of the folklore literature like
the specific ballads in a given region, combining the
narrative thought, emotion and thinking of those texts
with that of other texts in an explicit way, and getting
far away from the rhythmic, syllabic and music
mechanism of non-essayistic narrative texts, for the
essayistic properties as mentioned above have been
accepted as the most remarkable qualities of essayistic
narrative texts that ought to be distinguishable from
those of other narrative texts.

The latter has something to do with the essayistic
traits of the essayistic narration of the non-essayistic
narrative texts that have been considered to be distant
from the original or traditional rules they ought to
have followed in the specific construction of those
narrative texts ranging from the literary narrative texts
like dramatic narrative texts, novelistic narrative texts
as well as poetic narrative texts and many other
non-literary narrative texts, for those mechanical rules
have been viewed as the biggest barriers for the poets
to express their emotions and thoughts, to develop
their narrative imagination and associations, to better
their narrative skills and deepen the narrative themes
of their poems by means of getting rid of the rigid
rules that have been set for the textual production of
those non-essayistic narrative texts in order to high-
light the aesthetic, thematic and narrative values of
those texts in the essayistic configuration and con-
struction of them. Although the essayistic qualities of
those texts are not epitomized as profound and explicit
as those of the essayistic narrative texts in many a
regard, they have been distinguishable from what has
been exemplified in the essayistic narrative texts ow-
ing to their own essayistic singularities that have been
making a sharp contrast with their counterparts.

Given the academic compatibility of essayistic na-
raration with the specific academic proposition of this
essay, what ought to be focused on in the following
academic justification is neither the essayistic na-
raration in essayistic narrative texts nor that in all
non-essayistic narrative texts. What ought to be
stressed is the essayistic narration in poetic narrative
texts like Anglo-Saxon poetic narrative texts just as
what has been epitomized in The Dream of The Rood
according to the following analyses of this essay.

3 THE ESSAYISTIC NARRATION IN POETIC
NARRATIVE TEXTS

The perception and cognition of poetic narration being
highlighted in the process of poetic reading in spite of
the generic separation between novel and poetry7 (P.
Hühn, p17), poetic construction and poetic production,
scholars tends to have an increasing knowledge of the
internal narrative mechanism and the componential
rules of poetic narrative texts apart from the essayistic
mechanism and componential rules of them without
knowing that the overall understanding of those es-
sayistic qualities of poetic narrative texts is likely to
contribute to the epistemological progress of essayistic
narration of those texts and to the poetic revolutions
which have been playing an important role in helping poets to remove the language barriers, emotional barriers, aesthetic barrier, psychological barriers and ideological barriers on their roads to the fluent, eloquent and elegant articulation of their poetic thoughts, the correspondent representation of their poetic realities in consistence with the poetic images they have been picturing in their poetic production, the illuminative highlights of their poetic themes in the thematic construction of their poetic texts and the trans-disciplinary developments of their poetic thinking.

To this extent, what have been mentioned here are the major essayistic qualities of the essayistic narration of poetic narrative texts in the process of the poetic liberation and evolution from the previous narrative limitations of the poetic narration in those texts in terms of poetic thoughts, poetic images, poetic themes and poetic thinking in the methodological transformation of poetic narration that has been keeping in pace with the effective narrative absorption or introduction of the localized narration of vernacularism \(^3\) (Haiming Zhang, p152) in folklore literature, which has turned out to be very conducive for the poets to have a clearer essayistic design of their poetic narration and a better essayistic construction of the poetic stories in their poetic productions, and for the poetic readers to have a good understanding of the poetic plots of the poetic stories they have been interested in due to their easy access to the poetic language that has been more likely to be used to articulate the profound thoughts in their professional communication in a simple fashion.

In this case, the essayistic narration of poetic narrative texts have been quickening the narrative transmission from poetic scholasticism to poetic populism or even poetic vernacularism by articulating the profound poetic thoughts implied in relatively the simple poetic language that helps them to have no difficulty in having a good understanding of the conventional narrative rules that have been established in the pursuits of the rhythmic beauty of poetic narration rather than its essayistic beauty in the essayistic construction of the poetic beauty of poetic narrative texts owing to the consideration of the interaction and mutual permeation of poetic narrative texts and essayistic narrative texts in the potential textual communication between them despite the possible difference between them.

With the centrality of the academic proposition of this essay taken into account, the academic and logic justification of this proposition ought not to be concentrated on the systematic elaboration of the essayistic narration of middle-aged poetic narrative texts, modern poetic narrative texts and contemporary poetic narrative texts, for it is impossible to do so in a single essay in such a hurry, which will be likely to be blamed for its careless or purposeless mistakes caused by inadequate consideration. Therefore, the feasible justification part of this essay will primarily emphasi-
purposeful traces of temporal decoration in the logical transition and connections from one narrative detail to another of this event has been given, not to speak of its temporal consistence with the principles of the three unities of time, action and place.

It is the timelessness of this poem that makes it sharply distinctive from the regular temporal structure of most novelistic narrative texts as far as the narrative order, narrative frequency, narrative duration, narrative voice as well as narrative mood \(^2\) (Dan Shen, Liya Wang, p112-115) are concerned, for this timelessness has subverted the temporal regularities of this poem in a liberal way because this temporal subversion is just the very narrative effect that has been aimed to be achieved in this poem in the oblivion of the actual time this major event takes to go to an end and the actual time it takes to finish the actual observation of it.

In other words, the temporal traces and progressions of this poem have already been essayed to tell the temporal indifferences of the poet who have been preoccupied with the textual articulation of his poetic thoughts, poetic images, poetic themes and poetic thinking and the structural simplification of the poetic plot of his story in a philosophical and sophistical way for the aim of acquiring enough liberal spaces in his poetic production on the way to resist against the temporal preferences of other poets.

Therefore, the thematic preferences of the narrative time of this poem have deadened the temporal preferences of its narrative time in spite of the habitual beliefs in the temporal permeation in other poetic narrative texts, which is likely to suggest that the very factuality of the narrative events occurring in the dream is inclined to be untellable in the temporal progression.

4.2 The essayistic narrative discourse in The Dream of the Rood

As is opposed to the mechanical clumsiness of the narrative discourse of novelistic narrative texts, the narrative events, the narrative discourses and the narrative actions of this poem as to be analyzed below in three folds has been imprinted on its discursive liberty and flexibility that is in agreement with the liberal and flexible willingness of the poetic narrator who has turned out to be the poet himself.

Firstly, regarding the poetic story of this poem, what has been running through the storyline is that the poetic plot of this poetic story hasn’t been impressing the poetic readers of this poem by the ingenious and purposeful design of the narrative clues that have been believed to playing an important role in shortening the distance between the poetic readers and the poetic plots of poetic narrative texts owing to its narrative complexity. In essence, what the poetic plot of this poem has been touching its poetic readers is the very simplicity of it, which has been making the poetic story make its way from the outset to the end with no unexpected events that prevent the readers from having an overall understanding of the major narrative event of this poem. In this sense, it is the narrative simplicity throughout the textual configuration of this major narrative event that associates textual singularity of this poem with its readers’ reading interest, which has turned out to be one of the most important impetuses for the promotion or transmission of this poem, for it has been drawing on them very much upon their immersive preoccupation with it instead of estranging them from their effective acquisitions of the important message of the major narrative events of this poem. Therefore, the major narrative events of this poem tend to be essayed by populist simplicity.

Secondly, the narrative discourses of this poem that has been put down in either written or spoken form in the process of the poetic production of this poem has also tends out to be essayistic owing to its narrative scalability rather than rigidity, for the discursive coherence of this poem has not been confined by the dialogic narration whose progression has much to do with the established bilateral communication between the narrative characters of this poem all over the details in each section of this poetic narrative text in the harmonious association of one of them with another in the course of textual construction, for the only character of this poem is its narrator who have no opportunity to talk with any other character.

In this case, what he cannot but do is talk with himself in his dream in the form of monologue over what he has been thinking about or dreaming of in the daytime in response to what he has been seeking for on a daily basis rather than the pedantic or dogmatic interference of his daily chores in the form of direct speech or indirect speech regardless of the actual rebellion of the narrator of this poem.

In brief, the thoughts has been reflected in his dream are unlikely to be free from the hegemonic manipulation of other characters that have been designed to enrich and promote the narrative progression of the poetic story of this poem in the actual combination of the three major narrative events of this poem with his panoramic configuration of the discursive construction of this poem. To this extent, it can be seen that the narrative scalability of this poem and its freedom from external manipulation enable the narrator of this poem to essay every details of the narrative discourses in line with his own narrative willingness with no enforcements imposed on his own independent narrative awareness through the perceptual permeation of their narrative skills.

Thirdly, the narrative actions of this poem has been essayed with the narrator’s indomitable resistance instead of his own intuitive narrative indecision against the narrative interferences of the external factors that have been likely to promote or prevent the narrative construction of the narrative events of this poem or the narrative discourses of its narrator in the form of voices, expressions and gestures.
In this situation, what the narrator of this poem has been trying to do is essay his narrative voice, his narrative expression and narrative gestures by means of having a good control over the validity and reliability of his own narrative actions at all costs, for this is favorable for him to maintain his own narrative subjectivity rather than his narrative submission to the decisive willingness of other narrators of this poem and the narrative confusion of his conservative own intuition. Seen from this analysis, it can be made evident that the narrative spirituality of the narrator of this poem has been playing an important role in essaying his narrative actions.

4.3 The essayistic narrative focalization of The Dream of the Rood

For the part of the essayistic narrative focalization of this poem, it ought to be kept in mind that its narrative focalizations have been essayed by the liberal transformation of the observation place of the narrator of this poetic narrative text based on the diversity and liberty of his observation in the narrative progression of the narrative events that have been considered to be vital components of the poetic story told in the actual narration of this poem. In accordance with the different observation of its narrator, the essayed narration exemplified in narrative focalizations ought to be elaborated in the following three folds including the essayed internal focalization in the observation and elaboration of the rood in the first narrative scene of this poem, the essayed zero focalization in the perception and cognition of Christ’s death in the second narrative scene of this poem as well as the external focalization in the reflection of this incredible encounter with Christ in the third narrative scene of this poem.

To begin with, in the first scene, the narrator has been serving as a speaker or in another sense a character of this poetic story, for he has been depending on his own thoughts and visions to take a good look at everything related to the existence of this rood, the beautiful image of this rood in his mind, and the glorious illumination of this rood with no external intrusion of other characters who have been turning out to be likely to have a certain impact of the narrator’s observation of everything around him. Seen from this analysis, it can be made evident that the narrative spirituality of the narrator of this poem has been playing an important role in essaying his narrative actions.

Next, in the second scene, the narrator has been translating himself into an omniscient observer of the cross by means of putting himself out of the narrative events because he has acquired from his careful observation of the cross and the tree that the enemy has come to cut down the tree and take it way, that the tree learns to be the crucified Christ rather than the bearer of the ignorant violence of man, and the personified tree has been characterized with unsurpassable persistence in standing still instead of falling down to show its incredible tolerance for the unforgivable sins of man and its indomitable reluctance to indulge the violence and impersonality of man for the aim of highlighting them at the cost of its sacrifice. And this personified tree is just the very religious archetype of the lord and the rood as a symbol of the unexpected tolerability of Christ. In the rumination of those narrative events of this poem, the narrator seems to bear everything in his mind in a carefree mood just as everything has been placed in his eyes.

Finally, in the third scene, the narrator has been serving as an external observer of his unbelievable dream. After looking at the resurrection of the rood and its decoration of glittering gold and silver, he has awoken from the dream, which makes him lost in the sudden retrospection of the glorious existence of God, the pride he has taken in Him, the hope of eternity he has been given in this dream as much as the strong motivation to get close to the rood again. What ought to be noted in this scene is that the narrator of this poem has been playing an important role in the observation of the rood and the God with no strong desire to have a good understanding of the inner minds of God because he is not allowed to do so from the perspective of narrative focalization.

To be short, the narrative focalizations of this poem have been characterized with essayistic traits that have been seen in the frequent transformation of the narrative identity of the narrator from the participants of the narrative events to the observer of them and vice versa in an unexpected and irregular way, which has to some extent been broadening the visual and acoustic spaces of this poem and thus essaying its narrative focalization time and time again.

According to the logical reference and justification of the academic proposition of this essay, it can be enlightened from the exemplary elaborations given above that the narrative time, narrative discourse and the narrative focalization of this poem has been evidently marked with a variety of essayistic qualities that have been distinguishing poetic narrative texts with essayistic narrative texts despite the frequent interaction between them.

5 CONCLUSION

Drawing on the essayistic transformations witnessed in the narrative construction of this poem, it is likely to be concluded that the narrative time marked with narrative timelessness, the narrative discourse in line with narrative events, narrative discourses and narrative actions, as well as the narrative focalizations including internal narrative focalization, zero narrative.
focalization as well as external narrative focalization have been inclined to be marked with a series of essayistic traces typified with liberty and flexibility. In the case of the academic implications of this study, it will be felt that it is likely to give a lot of valuable illuminations for the readers, the scholars and the theorists of poetic studies and narrative studies due to the progress it might make in the promotion and enrichment of poetic narratology. Despite various positive impacts of this explorative study, the very possible academic limitations of this essay caused by the insufficient accumulation and perception of the academic resources available for this study is unlikely to be avoided and will be expected to be broken through in further studies.

REFERENCES


