

“METAFICTION AS A CROSS-CULTURAL NARRATIVE STRATEGY: A
COMPARATIVE STUDY OF WESTERN AND UZBEK LITERARY TRADITIONS”

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Abstract. *This article explores metafiction as a cross-cultural narrative strategy by analyzing its function and development in both Western and Uzbek literary traditions. Focusing on the works of John Barth and Khurshid Davron, the study investigates how metafiction operates as a self-reflexive technique that challenges conventional storytelling and redefines the relationship between fiction and reality. The research applies a comparative literary approach to examine similarities and differences in narrative strategies, thematic concerns, and cultural contexts. The findings demonstrate that while Western metafiction, as represented by Barth, emphasizes formal experimentation, intertextuality, and epistemological uncertainty, Uzbek metafiction, as seen in Davron's works, is more closely connected with cultural identity, historical memory, and philosophical reflection. The study argues that metafiction is a universal literary phenomenon that adapts to different cultural frameworks while maintaining its core function of self-awareness and narrative reflexivity.*

Keywords: *Metafiction, postmodernism, comparative literature, narrative theory, cross-cultural analysis, John Barth, Khurshid Davron, Uzbek literature.*

Introduction: The development of modern literary theory has significantly expanded the understanding of narrative techniques, among which metafiction occupies a central place.

Metafiction refers to a type of fiction that self-consciously reflects upon its own structure, thereby exposing the processes of its creation. This technique is closely associated with postmodernism, a movement characterized by skepticism toward grand narratives, fragmentation, and the rejection of objective truth. Traditionally, metafiction has been studied within the context of Western literature, particularly in the works of postmodern authors such as John Barth, Thomas Pynchon, and Italo Calvino. However, recent studies suggest that metafictional elements can also be identified in non-Western literary traditions, where they serve different cultural and ideological purposes. This article aims to investigate metafiction as a cross-cultural narrative strategy by comparing the works of John Barth and Khurshid Davron. The research seeks to answer the following questions: How does metafiction function in different cultural contexts? What are the similarities and differences in its application? And how does it contribute to the development of modern narrative forms? The methodological framework of the study is based on comparative literary analysis, incorporating elements of narrative theory and postmodern criticism. By examining representative texts from both authors, the study aims to provide a deeper understanding of metafiction as a global literary phenomenon.

Main Body: Metafiction is widely recognized as a narrative strategy that foregrounds the artificiality of literary texts and challenges the conventional distinction between fiction and reality.

According to Patricia Waugh, metafictional works are those that “draw attention to their status as artifacts” and question the relationship between narrative and truth. In this sense, metafiction is not merely a stylistic device but also a theoretical framework that engages with fundamental questions about language, representation, and meaning. John Barth was a prominent American author renowned for his influential contributions to postmodern literature. Born in 1930 in Maryland, Barth's upbringing on the Eastern Shore significantly shaped his writing landscape.

He initially pursued music before shifting focus to creative writing, earning both a bachelor's and master's degree from Johns Hopkins University. Barth's literary career flourished in the 1950s and 1960s with notable works such as “The Floating Opera,(1956)” “The Sot-Weed Factor,(1960)” and “Giles Goat-Boy,(1966)” which showcase his satirical style and exploration of narrative structure. John Barth's works exemplify the core characteristics of postmodern metafiction. His narratives are marked by fragmentation, non-linearity, and a high degree of self-reflexivity. In *Lost in the Funhouse*, for instance, Barth deliberately disrupts traditional narrative structures by incorporating multiple narrative voices, direct commentary on storytelling techniques, and playful manipulation of literary conventions. These strategies create a complex textual environment in which readers are constantly reminded of the constructed nature of the narrative.

Furthermore, Barth's use of intertextuality highlights the interconnectedness of literary texts. By referencing and reinterpreting earlier works, he challenges the notion of originality and emphasizes the idea that literature is a continuous process of rewriting. His reliance on irony and parody further reinforces the postmodern tendency to question authority and destabilize meaning.

As a result, Barth's metafiction can be seen as both a critique of traditional narrative forms and an exploration of new possibilities for literary expression. Another significant aspect of Barth's metafiction is its epistemological dimension. His works often reflect a deep concern with the limitations of language and the impossibility of representing reality objectively. By exposing the mechanisms of storytelling, Barth suggests that all narratives are inherently subjective and constructed. This perspective aligns with postmodern philosophy, which rejects the existence of a single, unified truth.

Khurshid Davron (born January 20, 1952) is an Uzbek poet, historical fiction writer, and literary translator. His work often presents Uzbekistan and nearby Central Asia historical and cultural perspectives. The following is a list of Khurshid Davron's books of poetry (original works and translations included): (English titles in parentheses) “Qadrdon quyosh”(Dear Sun) (1979), “Shahardagi olma daraxti”(Apple tree in the city) (1979), “Tungi bog'lar” (Gardens of the Night) (1981), “Uchib boraman qushlar bilan” (I'm flying with the birds) (1983), “To'marisning ko'zlari” (Eyes of Tomiris) (1984), “Bolalikning ovozi” (Voice of the childhood) (1986), “Qaqnus” (Phoenix) (1987), “Dengiz yaproqlari” (Leaves of the sea) (1988). Khurshid Davron's use of metafiction demonstrates how this narrative strategy can be adapted to different cultural and historical contexts. While Davron incorporates elements of self-reflexivity and narrative experimentation, his primary focus lies in the exploration of cultural identity and historical continuity.

His works often blend fictional storytelling with historical themes, creating a narrative space where imagination and reality coexist. Davron's metafiction is deeply rooted in Uzbek literary traditions, particularly the rich heritage of oral storytelling and poetic expression. This influence is evident in his use of symbolism, allegory, and philosophical reflection. Unlike Barth's playful and experimental approach, Davron's narratives are characterized by a sense of purpose and cultural responsibility. His works seek to preserve and reinterpret national history, thereby contributing to the formation of cultural identity. Moreover, Davron's metafiction reflects a dialogic relationship between past and present. By revisiting historical events and figures through a metafictional lens, he creates a dynamic interaction between memory and imagination. This approach allows readers to engage with history in a more nuanced and reflective manner, highlighting the role of literature in shaping collective consciousness.

A comparative analysis of Barth and Davron reveals both convergences and divergences in their use of metafiction. On the one hand, both authors employ self-reflexivity, narrative experimentation, and reader engagement as key elements of their writing. On the other hand, their differing cultural contexts lead to distinct narrative priorities. Barth's metafiction is primarily concerned with formal innovation and philosophical inquiry, whereas Davron's approach emphasizes cultural meaning and historical awareness. These differences underscore the adaptability of metafiction as a narrative strategy. While its core function remains consistent—namely, to foreground the constructed nature of narrative—its application varies depending on the cultural and ideological context. This highlights the importance of adopting a cross-cultural perspective in the study of metafiction, as it allows for a more comprehensive understanding of its role in global literature.

Conclusion: In conclusion, the study confirms that metafiction is a versatile and dynamic narrative strategy that transcends cultural and literary boundaries. Through the comparative analysis of John Barth and Khurshid Davron, it becomes evident that metafiction can serve different purposes depending on the context in which it is employed. Barth's works illustrate the postmodern emphasis on formal experimentation, intertextuality, and epistemological uncertainty, while Davron's writings demonstrate the potential of metafiction as a tool for cultural expression and historical reflection. Despite these differences, both authors contribute to the expansion of narrative possibilities and the redefinition of storytelling.

The findings of this research suggest that metafiction should be understood not as a purely Western phenomenon but as a global literary strategy that adapts to diverse cultural environments.

Its ability to challenge conventional narratives and engage readers in critical interpretation makes it an essential component of contemporary literature.

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