

**METAFICTION AND ITS ELEMENTS  
IN THE FRENCH LIEUTENANT'S WOMAN NOVEL BY JOHN FOWLES**

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**МЕТАПРОЗА И ЕЕ ОСОБЕННОСТИ  
В РОМАНЕ ДЖОНА ФАУЛЗА «ЖЕНЩИНА ФРАНЦУЗСКОГО ЛЕЙТЕНАНТА»**

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*Abstract.* Discusses metafiction, its influence and usage in postmodern literature. In the research the theoretical basis of metafiction and its practical functions are analyzed by bringing examples from The French Lieutenant's Woman novel by John Fowles. The analysis of the novel assists in the conceptual understanding of metafiction, its effective meaning, structures, the purpose and a widespread application.

*Аннотация.* Рассматривается метапроза, ее влияние и использование в литературе постмодерна. В исследовании теоретическая основа метапрозы и ее практические функции анализируются на примере романа Джона Фаулза «Женщина французского лейтенанта». Анализ романа помогает концептуальному пониманию метапрозы, ее действительному смыслу, структуре, цели и широкому применению.

*Keywords:* metafiction, postmodernism, The French Lieutenant's Woman, John Fowles.

*Ключевые слова:* метапроза, постмодернизм, Женщина французского лейтенанта, Джон Фаулз.

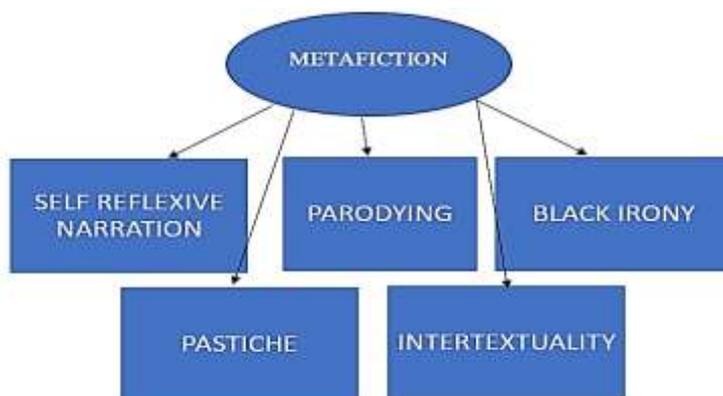
*Introduction:* The concept of "metafiction" signifies postmodern fiction by deliberately and methodically highlighting its status as an artifact in order to ask literary questions concerning the boundaries between truth and fiction. By providing a discussion of their own creative processes, these pieces of writing seem beyond only the basic structures of narrative fiction. A series of events presented orally is referred as narrative fiction. All of the narrative elements need to make a logical sense as a whole, even if the events are theoretical or could take place in any imaginable reality. They also analyze the possibility that the world outside literary fictional matter is fictional too.

William Gass is recognized as originating the term "metafiction" in the late 1960s to describe modern works of fiction that addressed fiction in a particular manner. Metafiction was first defined in the 1970s as a new form of fiction that was ironically self-distant and involved elements of self-consciousness, self-awareness, and self-knowledge. However, there are issues with the idea of metafiction that demand a different perspective. According to Canadian literary academic, Linda Hutcheon and her theories, radical metafiction belongs to a late stage of modernism, the meeting of metafiction and historiography produces a new kind of experimental writing uniquely capable of

fulfilling the “poetic postmodernism” [1]. The term “historiographic metafiction” was firstly used in the late 1980s by L. Hutcheon and this term is analyzed regarding three domains: theory, history and fiction. In her “Poetics of postmodernism”, she discusses the ways historiographic metafiction redefined the connection between literature and history, specifically by challenging the individuality of two discourses. The two types of discourses are argumentation and narration. Contrary to Belgian literary critique and theorist Paul de Man’s theory, Hutcheon argues that historiographic metafiction points at the continuing relevance of that opposition at the same time it highlights discursive principles common to him [1].

John Fowles, English novelist of international fame, critically positioned between modernism and postmodernism and one of the major authors in contemporary metafictional postmodernism, should be highly acclaimed for his novel “French Lieutenant’s Woman” with its metafictional elements in postmodern literature. Despite being set in the mid-Victorian era, the story belonging to that period, it is seen simultaneously through the perspectives and sensibilities of both the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries by making the “French Lieutenant’s Woman” an excellent example of historiographic metafiction. A study of historiographic metafiction as it relates to this novel would be thought-provoking and an intriguing research topic, as there has not been carried out sufficient amount of analysis that explores the book from this perspective. Our research, then, aims to examine the technical aspects of historiographic metafiction present in this book and its role in highlighting the freedom in a limited Victorian society.

The research paper is inclined to consider the following elements of metafiction in the novel to highlight the fact that this novel due to its metafictional elements might be regarded as the initial step towards postmodern literature [2].



Metafiction has its own features, as it mentioned earlier, and one of the main formal methods applied for continuing this novelization process is parody. Although it is easy to view novelization as an ongoing process in the West commencing in the late Middle Ages, it is more accurate to view it as a historical process in which various social orders discard and rediscover sacred or authoritative words. The former entails a parody of a particular work of art or literary work. In George Eliot’s novel “Middlemarch” — a novel not generally characterised by parodic playfulness – there is a scene in which Mr Brooke, who standing for election, has to take a speech to an unruly crowd. As he speaks from the balcony of an inn, an effigy of himself is displayed which, virtue of a ventriloquist’s skill, derisively repeats everything that Brooke says. As George Eliot writes, “the most innocent echo has an impish mockery in it when it follows a gravely persistent speaker, and this echo was not at all innocent: the crowd is amused, Brooke humiliated, and his political opponents score a victory [4]. Simon Dentith, the Professor of English at the University of Reading, UK, claims that this approach as an exemplary instance of parody, albeit a fictional one. Their

intonation exaggerated but their substance remaining the same, one utterance, Brooke's, is transformed by another, held up to public glance, and subjected to ridicule [3].

Another vital feature of metafiction is intertextuality. Intertextuality, a term produced by a Bulgarian — French philosopher and literary critic, Julia Kristeva, to explain the transformation of any literary or symbolic practice into another, has frequently had its meaning reduced to mean nothing more than a text's dependence on writing that came before it, or, more accurately, to mean little more than source analysis. Nearly all works, in Kristeva's opinion, make some kind of allusion to a previous work. Such as Shakespeare's "Hamlet" serves as the basis for Disney's The Lion King's main plot. Regarding the similarities of these works according to the conceptions of intertextuality might lead to some metafictional truth. There are many themes that the story of Simba, Mufasa, and Scar has with centuries-old tales, even though it was specifically written for the 1990s film that launched a major Disney franchise. There's no mistaking the deliberate parallels between The Lion King and one of Shakespeare's most well-known plays, such as The Tragedy of Hamlet, Prince of Denmark and it's not the only play from which it takes cues. The prince who has no father figures in both works. The main character of The Lion King, Simba, is the pride rock king Mufasa's son. Hamlet is also a prince, having been the son of the assassinated King Hamlet. The death of their fathers has a significant impact on the lives of both characters, and neither of the stories mentions any siblings. An uncle plays the villain in both Hamlet and The Lion King. The younger brother of Mufasa, Scar, schemes to have Mufasa and young Simba killed in order to usurp the Pride Rock throne; in the end, Mufasa perishes as a result of Scar's schemes. In Hamlet, Claudius, the prince's uncle, also murders his brother in order to usurp the throne and succeed his father. Both of their uncles die in the end, but Simba is kinder than Hamlet. One version of the Lion King's conclusion even featured a famous quote from Hamlet. When Minkoff stated that they ultimately tried to incorporate more Hamlet-related elements into the movie, he wasn't joking. Scar ends up killing Simba and wins in an earlier alternate ending that no one would have liked. The uncles of Hamlet and Simba persuade them to go into exile. After convincing Simba that it was his fault that his father failed, Scar banishes him into exile until he is an adult. With the intention of having Hamlet executed in England, Hamlet's uncle Claudius sends him there from Denmark with the intention of seeing Hamlet die there.

In postmodern metafiction, it would be mistake not to mention about reflexivity. "Reflexive" refers to thinking, consciousness, reflectiveness, and awareness accompanying action in addition to mirror structures (doublings, analogies, and frames). It is true that metafiction is reflexive fiction in that it employs mirrorings and reflexive structures as a means of reflecting on the nature of fiction, in addition to the presence of mirror images. An American literary critic and theorist Robert Scholes defines "a metafiction work as a fiction that, if it is "about" anything, it is about the possibilities and impossibilities of fiction itself" [1]. As stated by an American media studies scholar, Brian Stonehill, he is the author of "Self-Conscious Novel: Artifice in Fiction from Joyce to Pynchon" — a self-conscious novel — "an extended prose narrative that draws attention to its status as fiction", whereas Stanley Fogel, a professor of English at St. Jerome's College, University of Waterloo, views it as an "exploration of the theory of fiction through fiction itself" [1]. Both views might be effective in understanding metafictional approach of the postmodernists in fiction.

The practice of general parody is very close to pastiche, and indeed in both forms writers can move into and out of a satirical or ironic distance from the manner imitated. When it comes to the term pastiche, it has been given particular currency by Fredric Jameson in the essay "Postmodernism, or The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism", in which he distinguishes pastiche from parody on the grounds that pastiche takes no critical distance from the material it recycles: pastiche, in fact, is "blank parody". Parody mainly included to strictly criticising whereas pastiche

serves as a neutral position of the author to that specific type of character. The French word *pastiche* has now largely replaced the Italian *pasticcio*, but in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries the latter was actually the more usual term. In Italian, the word denotes a pie made of various ingredients; by metaphorical extension principally to art and music criticism, *pasticcio* or *pastiche* denoted a musical medley or *pot-pourri*, or a picture made up of fragments pieced together. It is in painting that the term began to take on the meaning of imitation of another style without critical distance, and it is this meaning that has come to dominate in contemporary usage of the term. In literary usage, *pastiche* denotes the more or less extended imitation of style or manner of another writer or literary period [6-10].

The last feature is a black irony, is about people using blackness as a text to narrate on and perhaps critique or reconfigure it. There is noticeable irony in finding comfort in Darwinism, according to John Fowles in “French Lieutenant’s Woman”, because its implications reduce the importance and dignity of man in the overall scheme of things. It is through Smithson, the amateur scientist and champion of Darwin, that Fowles makes these concerns explicit in the novel. Charles, the main character and a follower of Darwinism, uses his insider’s knowledge of the then very recent theory of natural selection as a refuge from his vague fears of a misspent life and entrapment in a sterile social order. As the quoted passage would suggest, there is considerable irony in finding solace in Darwinism, for its implications reduce the importance and dignity of man in the overall scheme of things. Moreover, there is dramatic irony in an awareness shared by the narrator. Through Smithson, the self-taught scientist and supporter of Darwin, Fowles expresses these worries in the book. Charles, the primary character and ardent Darwinist, seeks solace from his nebulous concerns of a wasted life and being trapped in a sterile social structure through his insider knowledge of the then-recent theory of natural selection. Finding comfort in Darwinism is highly ironic, as the passage that was quoted suggests, as its implications diminish the significance and worth of humans in the grand scheme of things. Furthermore, the narrator shares a stark irony in this awareness and reader but absent in Charles: that the near-extinction of Smithson's own social class in our century can be explained by the general extinction theory of Darwinism. Best-selling Scottish crime writer Ian Rankin observes that Charles is forced to make a difficult decision to become a social outsider and an existentialist ahead of his time by his own self-evaluation process. Charles first thinks incorrectly that his way of life and social standing is approved by unchangeable natural laws, and that he has been innately chosen as the fittest to survive [5]. He perceives life according to debunked Linnean principles as a set order in which his own place is fixed, misinterpreting the entire significance of evolution [5]. Taxonomy, a system of classification used in the natural world to standardize species names and arrange them according to their traits and relationships with one another, was one of Linnaeus’ contributions to science. This tendency is portrayed in the book as typical of the time period, and the narrator portrays it as life-denying despite the solace found in its iron certainty [5].

In the research paper it is inferred that postmodern metafiction is a reflexive form of fiction that uses mirroring and reflexive structures to reflect on the nature of fiction. It has been assumed by investigating several notable literary critics’ positions that metafiction has its urgent role in postmodern literature because it is defined as a fiction that explores the possibilities and impossibilities of fiction itself. As a result, we highly assert that in “French Lieutenant’s Woman”, John Fowles explores the irony of finding comfort in Darwinism, as it reduces the importance and dignity of humans. The main character, Charles, seeks solace from his fears of a wasted life and entrapment in a sterile social order. Although the narrator shares a stark irony with him, Charles’s self-evaluation process leads him to misinterpret the significance of evolution and taxonomy, which is typical of the time period.

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