Link between Meta Story and "1Q84"

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Abstract. *This article provides a comprehensive analysis of the metafiction (or meta-narrative) genre, using Haruki Murakami's novel "1Q84" as a primary example. It highlights how metafiction diverges from conventional storytelling by intentionally drawing attention to its own constructed nature and fictionality. The study meticulously examines core metafictional components within "1Q84," supported by academic illustrations. These elements include the presence of text embedded within the narrative (exemplified by the "Air Chrysalis" book), the inherent subjectivity and ambiguous portrayal of reality (manifested through the two parallel worlds of 1984 and 1Q84), the self-referential aspect and the author's subtle involvement (channeled through the character of Tengo, who is a writer), and finally, intertextuality (demonstrated by allusions to George Orwell's "1984").*

Key words: *metafiction, text within text, subjectivity of reality, parallel worlds, self-referentiality.*

Metafiction is a literary style or genre characteristic that directly or indirectly draws attention to its own artistic nature, meaning that it is a story, a fabrication, thereby emphasizing the storytelling process itself, its structure, and its conditional nature. The word "metafiction" consists of two parts: "meta" and "fiction." **"Meta"**: This is a Greek prefix that usually means "about," "higher," "beyond," "after," or "self-referential." In philosophy, for example, metaphysics is the study of being beyond or underlying the physical world. In computer science, metadata is information about the data itself.[1]
Fiction: Derived from English, this word refers to a work of fiction, meaning a non-real, author-created story, novel, novella, or similar literary genres.[2] So, when literally translated, "metafiction" means "fiction about fiction" or "a literary work about a literary work." Metafiction is a literary style or genre characteristic that directly or indirectly draws attention to the artistic nature of a literary work itself, meaning that it is a fabrication, a story.[3] This style encourages the reader to reflect on the creation process of the work, its construction, its conventionality, and the role of the author, rather than becoming fully immersed in the plot.

Simply put, metafiction is a work that acknowledges its own artistic nature; this means that a book, film, or other story doesn't just limit itself to narrating events, but "remembers" that it is a fabrication, a work of art created by an author, and reminds the reader of this. While an ordinary story tries to present itself as real events, metafiction does not hide its "created" nature. Metafiction focuses more on "how it is being told" rather than "what is being told." It compels the reader to reflect on how the story is written, how it is constructed, the author's choices, and their relationship with the characters. A book might remind the reader that it is divided into chapters, has page numbers, or even that some pages are left blank. This emphasizes that the story is an artificial structure built by the writer. This

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[1] Audi, R. (Ed.). (1999). *The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy*. Cambridge University Press.
[2] National Information Standards Organization. (2004). *Understanding Metadata*. NISO Press.
[3] Abrams, M. H., & Harpham, G. G. (2015). *A Glossary of Literary Terms*. Cengage Learning.

implies that the events of the story are not absolute truth, but rather are created based on certain rules, conventions, or assumptions. The reader understands that they must approach this story with certain "rules of the game," for instance, accepting that supernatural events might occur. Based on the above analyses, this genre is an literary style that doesn't just tell a story, but rather acknowledges its own nature as a story and thereby encourages the reader to ponder questions about the artistic work's creation process, its form, and the nature of reality. It allows the reader to look at the story not from behind an "invisible wall," but from within the creative process. In performing arts, the "fourth wall" refers to the non-existent but conventionally assumed transparent barrier between the actors and the audience. The audience observes the lives of the play's characters as if watching another world through glass. The actors disregard the audience's presence, do not address them, and live in their own world. Similarly in literature, a traditional novel encourages the reader to fully immerse themselves in the plot, to forget the story's fictionality (what is called "suspension of disbelief" in English). The reader stands outside the story's world, looking at it as if through a window. Metafiction precisely breaks this "invisible wall." It reminds the reader that the story is not simply "happening," but rather "being created." Through this, the reader is not merely a consumer but also witnesses, and even becomes a part of, the creative process, such as how the story is constructed, how characters are created, and what choices the author makes. They gain the ability to see the mechanisms "behind" the story. In Murakami's novel "1Q84," the plotline surrounding the book "Air Chrysalis" (Aeroxrizalis) specifically helps to break this "invisible wall." In the book, Tengo has to rewrite the novella "Air Chrysalis." He alters this novella in such a way that it not only becomes unique but also influences the main reality of the novel. It is here that we delve into the creative process: *"He had put his heart and soul into rewriting Air Chrysalis. And had gotten used to the fact that whatever he imagined would quickly become reality. He thought he could move the story along just by writing it."[4]* Viewing from behind the "invisible wall" (Traditional approach): If this were an ordinary fantasy story, we would simply read the plot of "Air Chrysalis," accept the existence of its "Little People" as reality, and continue to believe in the events. We wouldn't think about how the story was created. Viewing from within the creative process (Metafiction approach): In the example above, Tengo realizes his role as a writer. He is not just writing "Air Chrysalis"; what he is writing is influencing the reality around him. His imagination is "quickly becoming reality." Here, we are reminded that the story is a fabrication, originating from the writer's imagination, but this imagination itself possesses a unique power. The breaking of the wall: The story Tengo is writing transforms his world (and Aomame's world) into the reality of "1Q84." This means the reader not only reads the story of "Air Chrysalis" but also observes how it was written and how this writing process is influencing its own world. There is also a subtle hint that the book itself (i.e., "1Q84") was created in a similar way. The reader no longer just reads the events, but indirectly analyzes the writer's creative choices, artistic style, and how the world he creates functions. It's as if they are looking over the writer's shoulder, seeing how he crafts words and how they create the world. In this way, "1Q84" allows the reader a glimpse into the story's creation process. It encourages them to look at the story not from the outside (from behind the "invisible wall"), but from within the creative laboratory, to feel the writer's pen movements. This deepens the reader's relationship with the novel and transforms them into a more active, critical reader.

It breaks the "fourth wall," removing the invisible barrier between the story and the reader.[5] Through this, the narrator can directly address the reader, comment on the writing process, or even ask the reader for the story's conclusion. The main purpose of metafiction is to critique literature itself, exploring its possibilities and limitations. It blurs the boundaries between reality and imagination, inviting the reader to reflect on how constructed reality itself is [6]. This genre often disrupts traditional storytelling methods, disregarding conventional rules regarding plot structure, temporal sequence, and character development. Examples include the presence of another book within a book (e.g., "Air Chrysalis" in Haruki Murakami's "1Q84"), the author presenting themselves as a character in the work (e.g., Kurt Vonnegut in "Slaughterhouse-Five"), or a story offering multiple alternative endings

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[4] Haruki Murakami. 1Q84. London. Great Britain. Vintage books, 2012. — P. 294.

[5] Waugh, P. (1984). *Metafiction: The Theory and Practice of Self-Conscious Fiction*. Methuen.

[6] Elam, K. (2002). *The Semiotics of Theatre and Drama*. Routledge.

(e.g., John Fowles' "The French Lieutenant's Woman") – all these are clear manifestations of metafiction[7]

In conclusion, metafiction is an intellectually rich literary style that challenges the artistic work to be perceived not merely as a story but as a work of art, encouraging the reader to analyze the text more deeply and critically. This genre encourages the reader to reflect on the construction of the work, the author's role, and the artistic representation of reality, rather than simply being fully immersed in the plot. The ideas of metafiction are not new in literature; its roots go back to ancient times. For example, early examples of metafiction can be found in Miguel de Cervantes' "Don Quixote" (1605-1615); in the second part of the book, Don Quixote learns that he is a character in a book that was written as the first part, which prompts the reader to think about the fictional nature of the story. Additionally, Laurence Sterne's novel "The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman" (1759-1767), with its unusual structure, temporal disruptions, and constant narrator commentaries, was also one of the earliest prominent examples of metafiction. However, as a genre, metafiction's heyday and widespread adoption occurred from the mid-20th century onwards, especially during the Postmodernism era. Postmodern writers sought to question traditional storytelling methods, blur the boundaries between reality and fiction, and analyze literature itself. During this period, writers like John Barth, Jorge Luis Borges, Vladimir Nabokov, John Fowles, and Kurt Vonnegut actively employed metafiction in their works. It's difficult to attribute the "founder" of the genre to a single individual, as it gradually evolved as a result of the creative explorations of various authors.

The distinctive characteristics of metafiction manifest in several ways. Firstly, **self-referentiality** is a core feature; the work constantly reminds the reader of its nature as a literary construct. This is achieved through the narrator presenting themselves as the author, offering comments about the work's creation process, or emphasizing the conditional nature of the story. Secondly, the technique of **"breaking the fourth wall"** is widely used. Here, the narrator can directly address the reader, ask questions, or even solicit the reader's opinion on how the story should continue. This transforms the reader from a passive observer into an active participant in the work's creation process, blurring the lines between reality and the fictional work. Thirdly, metafiction often features the concept of an **unreliable narrator**. Such a narrator might mislead the reader, cast doubt on the truthfulness of their own story, or even openly admit that certain parts of the narrative are fabricated. This encourages the reader to critically evaluate the text. Fourthly, metafictional works place significant emphasis on the **form and structure of the story**. Disruptions of traditional narrative structure, fragmented narratives, mixtures of different genres, multiple ending options, or a book within a book (text within text) are frequently encountered elements. The aim is to draw attention to the storytelling process rather than just the plot. Fifthly, metafiction deeply explores the **relationship between reality and imagination**. It questions how literature reflects life, how it shapes our perception of truth, and how it influences our understanding. This genre encourages the reader to reflect not only on the events in the work but also on their own life and reality. Essentially, metafiction is a powerful tool for self-critique within literature and for testing its boundaries.

Haruki Murakami's "1Q84" is a prominent example of postmodern literature, skillfully employing many characteristics of metafiction. Metafiction implies that a literary work directly or indirectly refers to its own artistic nature, meaning its fictionality, thereby emphasizing the storytelling process itself, its structure, and its conditional nature. In "1Q84," these characteristics encourage the reader to deeply ponder the boundaries between reality and the fictional work. Below is an analysis of metafiction features in "1Q84" with original English examples and their page numbers (noting that page numbers may vary depending on the edition, typically based on Knopf or Vintage editions).

Text within text (Metadiegetic Narrative / Story within a Story): One of the most central metafiction elements in "1Q84" is the book titled "Air Chrysalis." This is a fantastical novella rewritten by Tengo in collaboration with the teenager Fuka-Eri, forming a core plotline of the novel. This, in itself, creates a story-within-a-story element and demonstrates both the creation process and the impact of the literary work itself. Example: In the novel, as Tengo reflects on the "Air Chrysalis"

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[7] Hutcheon, L. (1988). *A Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory, Fiction*. Routledge.

he edited, he ponders how realistic or fantastical it actually is: "He had put his heart and soul into rewriting *Air Chrysalis*. And had gotten used to the fact that whatever he imagined would quickly become reality. He thought he could move the story along just by writing it."[8] This passage reflects Tengo's role as a writer and the ability of the text he writes to "transform reality." The breaking of reality's boundaries by this novella within the novel hints that the novel itself might also change the reader's perception of reality. "Air Chrysalis" is not merely a plot element but serves as a metaphor expressing the creative power of the text, much like "1Q84" itself. The existence of the "Little People" also enters the other world precisely through this book, which further amplifies the influence of "fiction" on "reality."

Subjectivity and Ambiguity of Reality: The core idea of "1Q84" is built on the concept of parallel realities (the "1984" and "1Q84" worlds). The reader constantly questions which reality is more authentic due to the supernatural changes in the novel (the appearance of a second moon in the sky, the existence of the "Little People"). This situation is characteristic of metafiction, as it questions the constructedness and subjectivity of reality. **Example:** After Aomame gets out of a taxi and descends an emergency staircase, she senses that the world has changed. Later, she notices the presence of a second moon in the sky. "Two moons. One large, perfectly round, shining brightly. The other smaller, distorted in shape, and a pale greenish color, like a rotting fruit. It was hanging in the sky diagonally from the first moon, clearly visible to the naked eye."[9] This depiction immediately signals to the reader the work's departure from ordinary reality, meaning that this story contains events that would not occur in the real world. The title "1Q84" itself (due to the phonetic similarity between "9" and "Q" in Japanese) reminds the reader that this is a different, altered reality. Through this metaphor, Murakami demonstrates that reality is not objective but rather multifaceted and perception-dependent, which raises questions about the "authenticity" of the literary work itself.

Self-referentiality and the Author's Role (indirect): In "1Q84," direct address from the author to the reader is rare. However, through the portrayal of Tengo as a writer and his reflections on the writing process, the author's own (Murakami's) position as a writer and his creative process are reflected. This implies a relationship between the writer and the reader. **Example:** As Tengo is editing "Air Chrysalis," he reflects on the complexities of writing and may even allude to literary critics: *"If an author succeeded in writing a story 'put together in an interesting way' that 'carries the reader along to the very end,' who could possibly call such a writer 'lazy'?"*[10] This passage indicates that through Tengo, Murakami himself is reflecting on the difficulties of writing a literary work and how it is received. This means the novel itself contemplates the act of writing and the art of storytelling. This dialogue within the book encourages the reader to consider that the novel is a product of the authorial act.

Intertextuality and Literary References: Intertextuality, meaning the inclusion of references or excerpts from other texts, including literary works, enhances metafiction. The title of "1Q84" also plays a significant role in this regard. The title of the book – "1Q84" – is a direct reference to George Orwell's famous dystopian novel "1984." In Japanese, the number "9" is pronounced "kyu," which sounds similar to the English letter "Q." This choice of title compels the reader to think about themes associated with Orwell's work (totalitarianism, surveillance, manipulation of reality). Although Murakami's world differs from Orwell's, these references place "1Q84" within the context of literary traditions and encourage the reader to seek intertextual connections. This emphasizes that the story itself is an artistic construct, inspired by and referencing other stories.

Emphasis on the Storytelling Process and the Reader's Role: Murakami constructs his narrative slowly, sometimes with repetitions, paying close attention to details. This draws attention not only to the plot but also to how the story is being told. The supernatural and inexplicable events in the story also compel the reader to engage with their "suspension of disbelief." The novel features many small,

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[8] Haruki Murakami. 1Q84. London. Great Britain. Vintage books, 2012. — P. 294.

[9] Haruki Murakami. 1Q84. London. Great Britain. Vintage books, 2012. — P. 43.

[10] Haruki Murakami. 1Q84. London. Great Britain. Vintage books, 2012. — P. 165.

everyday details, such as Aomame's exercise routine or Tengo's cooking, described in meticulous detail. These details sometimes do not directly influence the main plot but create the overall atmosphere of the novel and set the pace of the narrative: *"Aomame got up early and went out for a run. After stretching, she did three sets of twenty sit-ups and forty push-ups. Then she took a long, hot shower."* Such detailed descriptions create a realistic foundation for the story, even though the plot is rich in supernatural elements. Murakami encourages the reader to believe in the story without forgetting that it is "written." This is an attempt by the writer to demonstrate his own artistic skill and the art of storytelling. The reader not only observes the events but also participates with the writer in the process of creating this world.

In conclusion, "1Q84" is not merely a novel with an interesting plot, but a work of metafiction that offers profound philosophical reflections on reality, the storytelling process, and the nature of literature. Through his unique style, Murakami transforms the reader from merely a consumer of the story into an active participant who analyzes the text and strives to understand the construction of the fictional world.

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