

## FUNCTIONS OF RETROSPECTIVE PLOT

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## RETROSPEKTIV SYUJETNING VAZIFALARI

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**Abstract:** In narratology, plot denotes the arrangement of narrative events, as distinct from the chronological sequence of events (fabula). Originating with the Russian Formalists (Propp, Shklovsky), this concept emphasizes the artistic construction of a story’s order. This article surveys plot and its varieties—chronological, non-linear, concentric, associative, circular with comparative examples from Uzbek and world literature. It then focuses on the retrospective plot, a plot structure that begins with a present or culminating moment and then “looks back” to earlier events.

**Keywords:** deepening characterization, frame narration, narratology, plot, plot structure, retrospective narrative, Uzbek literature, structural coherence, contextualizing the present.

**Аннотация:** В нарратологии под сюжетом понимается художественно организованное расположение событий повествования, отличающееся от их простой хронологической последовательности (фабулы). Данный теоретический подход был впервые разработан русскими формалистами (В. Пропп, В. Шкловский) и подчеркивает эстетическую и функциональную значимость структуры сюжета. В настоящей статье рассматриваются различные типы сюжета—хронологический, нехронологический, концентрический, ассоциативный, кольцевой на основе сравнительного анализа примеров из узбекской и мировой литературы. Основное внимание уделяется ретроспективному сюжету, который начинается с конечного или текущего момента и развивается через “взгляд в прошлое”.

**Ключевые слова:** углубление характеристики, рамочное повествование, нарратология, сюжет, структура сюжета, ретроспективное повествование, узбекская литература, структурная целостность, контекстуализация настоящего.

**Annotatsiya:** Hikoya janrida syujet – bu hikoya voqealarining sanab o‘tilgan ketma-ketligidan (fabula) farqli o‘laroq, ular qanday tartibda joylashtirilganini anglatadi. Bu tushuncha dastlab rus formalistlari (Propp, Shklovskiy) tomonidan ilgari surilgan bo‘lib, hikoya tartibining badiiy qurilishini ta’kidlaydi. Ushbu maqolada syujet va uning turlari — xronologik, noxronologik, konsentrik, assotsiativ, aylana shaklidagi syujetlar, O‘zbek va jahon adabiyotidan keltirilgan misollar asosida ko‘rib chiqiladi. Shuningdek, maqolada retrospektiv syujetga; hozirgi yoki yakuniy holatdan boshlab o‘tmishdagi voqealarga “nazardan o‘tkazuvchi” syujet tuzilmasiga ham e’tibor qaratilgan.

**Kalit so‘zlar:** obrazni chuqurlashtirish, ramkali hikoyalash, narratologiya, syujet, syujet tuzilmasi, retrospektiv hikoya, o‘zbek adabiyoti, tuzilmaviy yaxlitlik, hozirgi vaqtni kontekstlashtirish.

## INTRODUCTION (БЕДИЕНИЕ/KIRISH).

The retrospective plot is a narrative design where the telling of the story is oriented backwards from a present or culminating moment. In such plots, the narrative often begins in the “now” (or near the climax) and then recounts earlier events from the protagonist’s perspective or through memories. The term *retrospective* (from Latin *retro* “back” + *specere* “to look”) literally means “a looking back” into the past. As Rahimov and Gulomov summarize, retrospective narration can turn the current state of affairs into a springboard for exploring a character’s history[7].

## MATERIALS AND METHODS (ЛИТЕРАТУРА И МЕТОД/ADABIYOTLAR TAHLILI VA METODLAR).

Formally, a retrospective plot often *frames* the story. One common structure is the **frame narration**: the narrator at time  $T$  tells us about the events that occurred at earlier times  $T-n$  ( $n > 0$ ). If placed at the **beginning** of a work, the flashback material can drive the plot forward by providing key information or foreshadowing developments. Conversely, a retrospective section can *slow down* the present action to expand the narrative’s temporal scope. In the latter role, the plot’s momentum seems paused as the past is explored in detail, shifting the focus to internal states and context. Both uses plot-expanding and plot-retarding underscore that retrospection is a flexible device. The theorists note that “*the retrospective part at the beginning of the work serves a plot-developing function*,” containing information that shapes the narrative to come but inserted mid-narrative, it can enlarge the story’s “artistic space” by reflecting on the protagonist’s history.

## DISCUSSION(ОБСУЖДЕНИЕ/MUHOKAMA)

Importantly, retrospective narrative is well-suited to explore characters’ inner worlds. As Rahimov and Gulomov observe, in modern novels retrospection is “a means of examining the inner world of the protagonist”. By revisiting the past, authors provide insight into a character’s memories, emotions, and personal history. This psychological function is often the purpose of the device: for instance, a character might be narrating or recalling life events from an older viewpoint, imbuing even simple actions with deeper meaning.

### Functions of retrospective plot

From the above, we see several literary functions of the retrospective plot:

**Contextualizing the Present:** By starting with a current situation and then disclosing how it came about, retrospective narration places present action into a larger context. The reader gradually assembles the background, which can create suspense or dramatic irony. This method is often used when the story’s equilibrium is already disrupted at the outset, and the narrative goal is to explain that disruption. For instance, in Kadyri’s novel *O’tkir Kunlar* (“Bygone days”), the meeting between Otabek and the sage Alim is presented as a flashback that clarifies Otabek’s later predicament. The retrospective episode ties together past events with current motivations, effectively linking narrative parts.

**Deepening characterization:** When characters themselves are the narrators or focalizers, retrospection gives voice to their subjective recollection. The narrative becomes interwoven with a character’s memories. In Uzbek examples, critics note that many Soviet-era novels use this: for instance, in Abdulla Kadiri’s *Mehrobdan Chayon* (“Scorpion from the Altar”), chapters often recount characters’ reminiscences. Hamid Olimjon’s epic “*Zaynab and Omon*” also uses extended flashback scenes to reveal the lovers’ past. In such cases, retrospect allows authors to examine ideals and conflicts through characters’ eyes. Even Soviet writers like Gafur Gulyam and Abdulla Qahhor employed framing retrospection to introspectively analyze social issues via individual memory [4].

**Thematic emphasis and foreshadowing:** By juxtaposing the present and past, a retrospective plot can highlight themes such as fate, memory, or the passage of time. The technique often emphasizes cyclic or inevitable patterns: what happened before invariably influences what happens now. For example, Marquez’s *Chronicle of a Death Foretold* famously reveals from the opening page that Santiago Nasar will be killed, making the rest of the story a retrospective investigation of motives. This structure underscores themes of honor and inevitability. Similarly, Faulkner’s *The Sound and the Fury* (though not overtly about memory) uses past events as narrated by various characters to show

how the Compson family's legacy haunts the present.

**Structural coherence:** As Rahimov notes, retrospective episodes can “unify the components of the work”[7]. In *Utkan Kunlar*, Otabek's recollection of Master Alim provides a turning point that knits together early and later parts of the narrative. The flashback acts as a hinge that makes the overall composition cohesive. Critics like Fedorova even distinguish functions of retrospective segments in structuring the plot: one function propels the story, the other seemingly halts action to expand narrative time. Thus, retrospection can be integral to the architecture of a novel or story, carefully calibrated by the author to balance suspense with explanation.

## RESULTS

**(PE3YJBTATY/NATIJALAR).** Uzbek literature, with its rich traditions of storytelling, provides many examples of retrospective plot. Already in early 20th-century works, we see uses of flashback and memory. As noted, Abdulla Kadiri's *Utkan Kunlar* (1925) frames historical events of the late 19th century largely chronologically, but it also incorporates retrospective passages. The memoir-like sections of Otabek recount his earlier life after major turning points, effectively employing a retrospective narrative. Similarly, Chulpon's novel *Parizod* (1931) includes extended recounting of the heroine's past to explain her decisions in the present.

Modern Uzbek narratives often mix retrospective modes with other techniques. Gulhayo Isabayeva points out stories like “*Dashtda kurgulik*” in which the linear plot is intercut by two retrospective storylines, thereby broadening the story's span[5]. In that tale, the base chronological narrative is woven with retrospective episodes that reveal the origins of the protagonist's romantic and familial conflicts. The Uzbek short story “*Iltijo*” (1960s) illustrates associative retrospective narration: the narrator does not relay sequential events but instead describes a father's stream of memories about his lost child in a single uninterrupted flow.

Other modern novels similarly foreground memory. Gabriel García Márquez's *No One Writes to the Colonel* uses the older Colonel's recollections of better days as the core of the story. His novella *Chronicle of a Death Foretold* frames the investigation of a murder retrospectively, presenting events after the known outcome. Virginia Woolf

employed retrospective elements in several novels: *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925) spans one day but frequently dives into characters' pasts to reveal motivations, and *To the Lighthouse* (1927) famously recounts years in the lives of the Ramsay family, with the central Part Two (“Time Passes”) itself being a retrospective summary of intervening years [2].

William Faulkner's work provides striking examples. In *The Sound and the Fury* (1929), sections narrated by Benjy and Quentin are essentially prolonged retrospections; both protagonists mentally relapse into past memories, making the chronological order highly non-linear. Quentin's section (Part II) in particular is a stream of consciousness filled with flashbacks to his youth. Faulkner thus uses retrospective and associative plot to immerse the reader in the characters' inner turmoil. Even *The Great Gatsby* (1925) can be read retrospectively: Nick Carraway narrates Gatsby's story after the events, framing the New York summer of 1922 with reflective hindsight[8].

In film and theatre as well, retrospective plots are common (e.g. *The Graduate*, *Slumdog Millionaire*), but the literary antecedents are clearest in these authors.

## CONCLUSION

**(ЗАКЛЮЧЕНИЕ/XULOSA).** In sum, *plot* is a key concept in literary theory that addresses how a story is told. This article has outlined its definition and highlighted the variety of plot types found in Uzbek and global literature – from straightforward chronological plots to complex non-linear, concentric, and associative structures. Among these, the retrospective plot stands out for its backward-looking composition: by opening narrative time-lines and connecting past with present, it fulfills functions of explanation, characterization, and thematic unity. Uzbek authors like Abdulla Kadiri and Hamid Olimjon have long used retrospective techniques to enrich their storytelling, just as international writers like García Márquez, Woolf, and Faulkner have. Theoretical insights from Propp [6], Bakhtin[1], Genette and others help us recognize that retrospective narration is not a mere stylistic quirk but a deliberate compositional strategy – one that deepens the reader's understanding of characters and events by making memory itself a part of the plot. In comparative perspective, studying such plot forms illuminates both universal narrative patterns and distinctive national styles.

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