

The dissertation focuses on the contemporary British fiction discussing books that in a certain way reflect the changing perception of history and the relationship between historiography and fiction. Several thematic aspects of this reflection are examined, namely, attitudes towards the Victorian era, city, country, archive (relation between fictional narrative and historical sources — meta-textuality) and history as a “palimpsest”, i.e., as a set of multiple, mutually permeable layers of text. The changing attitude to the past, which finally leads to doubts on strict division between historiography and literary fiction, is mostly discussed in books published mainly in the last thirty years, the only exception being John Fowles’s *The French Lieutenant’s Woman* which the author of the dissertation perceives as a book of major importance for the subsequent re-evaluation of the attitude to history. Iain Sinclair, Peter Ackroyd, Alan Moore (London), Michel Faber (the Victorians), Graham Swift, Bruce Chatwin and Adam Thorpe (country), Salman Rushdie, Zadie Smith (novel and history), A.S. Byatt and Julian Barnes (archive, literary heritage) are also discussed.

For the authors of historical fiction, history is, above all, a rich source of stories. These stories are told and retold, they are rediscovered and adapted for new purposes. The study shows that the historical narratives are not only being rewritten but they are changed at the same time; the author tries to show that the very act of overwriting (or inscription) reveals the former “history” as an interpretation, i.e., as something that is not authentic *per se* but is, rather, the result of various cultural, power and societal vectors. By these interpretations, the study aims at a conception of history as a palimpsest, a multi-layered file of texts which are of different age and readability, a system that is, by its very essence, hybrid and open to new interpretation.

Key words: history, contemporary British fiction, novel