

Abstract

Nineteenth and early twentieth century theorists believed that history was based on actual facts traced by written evidence which justified those facts' apparent objectivity. Later theorists, under the influence of the poststructuralists' ideas of textuality of reality, doubted those concepts assuming that the historical data cannot be perceived objectively. This led to the further assumption that history is a construct, a discourse created by the historian who narrates it to the others. Consequently, in the Postmodern understanding, history is a subjective rather than an objective concept.

Under those fairly new concepts the historical novels evolve into another form, a new kind of "fictional history". According to Linda Hutcheon, this form of Postmodern historical novel can be called *historiographic metafiction*. She uses that term to describe fiction which is both metafictional and historical: it is a specific form of metafiction that "draws attention to its status as an artefact" in order to pose questions about the relationship between fiction and reality. Those fictions "situate [themselves] within historical discourse" while still claiming to be fictitious. Thus, they problematize the very distinction between history and fiction by showing the parallels between writing literature and writing history, suggesting that both are acts of construction that do not represent reality but reinvent it from subjective point of view.

Jeanette Winterson is usually named among those whose works can be called historiographic metafiction. Both Winterson's early novels *Sexing the Cherry* and *The Passion* fit Hutcheon's category by problematizing history in some similar ways. Firstly, they undermine "grand narratives" by narrating history from subjective perspectives; they problematize linearity of time and chronology. Secondly, both novels elevate the marginalized female versions of historic events. And lastly, they mix mystery and reality. Therefore, the aim of this work is to read two novels by Jeanette Winterson as examples of historiographic metafiction. The general features of this form will be tested on the specific cases with regard to their treatment of genre and history, the main focus is to be at the mutual interplay between theory and literary practice.