

**Ksenija Kondali\***  
University of Sarajevo  
Faculty of Philosophy  
English Department  
Bosnia and Herzegovina

## REVISI(TI)NG HISTORY: JEANETTE WINTERSON'S *THE DAYLIGHT GATE* AND THE TRANSFORMATION OF HISTORICAL NOVELS

### Abstract

Since the 1990s, women's historical novels have received increased attention, largely due to their compelling rewriting of (particularly women's) history. Numerous authors—many of them women—have effected a transformation of the traditional historical novel by using this genre's creative space to re-imagine women's history. Anchored in relevant theoretical discourse and critical writing, this paper analyzes Jeanette Winterson's recent novel *The Daylight Gate* (2012) against this background. Similar to Winterson's previous novels, *The Daylight Gate* is committed to probing ways of representing the past. Combining narrative suspense, the style of the Gothic story, and different motifs, Winterson produces multifaceted writing that echoes postmodern concepts of historical narrativization, while also reflecting on gender relations and the formation of gendered identity. The discussion focuses on this novel as a medium of re-imagining and revising dominant historical narratives to voice women's experiences and oppositional perspectives, compelling us to consider the results of experimentation and transformation within this genre.

**Key words:** historical novel, women's experience, identity, history, narrative, power

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\* E-mail: [ksenija.kondali@ff.unsa.ba](mailto:ksenija.kondali@ff.unsa.ba)

## 1. Introduction

Although the genre of the historical novel has been around for a while, it gained new momentum in scholarship in the 1990s, which is still far from adequate considering the longevity, popularity, and variety of this literary production. It is evident that in the last decades of the twentieth century and into the new millennium the historical novel has become one of the most dominant genres of fiction, and an academically reputable one. The main reasons for such a standing lie in the increased literary output of this genre, the high creative accomplishments of its authors to respond to our attraction to the past, and the reworking of the past to create counter-narratives of history. Another prominent characteristic of historical fiction is the dominance of women's historical novels, focused on revisiting and (typically) revising history to include previously neglected or silenced voices from the past. This tendency has helped instill new notions about the centrality of the role of women in this genre, as Diane Wallace points out in the Preface to her book *The Woman's Historical Novel: British Women Writers, 1900–2000*. Wallace expresses the “belief that the historical novel has been one of the most important forms of women's reading and writing during the twentieth century” (Wallace 2004: ix). New and varied approaches to the subject of how contemporary women fiction writers use and reconfigure history in their work have been offered in scholarship, with the conclusion that “[n]umerous authors—many of them women—have effected a transformation of the traditional historical novel by using this genre's creative space to re-imagine women's history” (Wallace 2004: ix). This tendency comes as no surprise since, according to most feminist critical assessment, traditional historical narratives have consistently elided women from history, or presented them as mere attachments to men. Consequently, as history is retrieved and rewritten from the perspective of those who suffered (and predominantly lost) historical struggles for power, a reshaping of historical novels—particularly those by women authors, including Jeanette Winterson—has been effected, because such writers “have reinvested history's role in literature and literature's place in history with a new importance” (Heilmann and Llewellyn 2007: 1). The historical novel becomes a way of re-imagining and recasting the official history to incorporate the experiences of women, as well as oppositional views, imparting this genre with a fresh quality.

This analysis examines Jeanette Winterson's 2012 novel *The Daylight Gate* as an illustration of how history and fiction work in both powerful and problematic ways. Winterson's commitment to explore the nature of history and the relation of fact to fiction has been a strong feature of her writing since her earliest novels. In her *oeuvre*, Winterson recurrently deconstructs the binaries of fact and fiction, history and fiction, and history and story, but "not to play one narrative mode off against the other in an endless postmodern deferral of meaning, but rather to assert the importance of one over the other, inserting a differing hierarchy of value, placing story and imagination, art in fact, over history" (Makinen 2005: 4). In the process of reclaiming history and raising historical consciousness, authors such as Winterson refuse to work within the confines of the conventional boundaries of reality and magic, truth and lies, and reason and rationality. They suggest the fluidity of gender binaries, and introduce the magical and fabulous. Thus *The Daylight Gate* exemplifies innovations in the historical novel: a level of the women writer's hybridization of this genre, "cross-fertilising with romance, fantasy, the Gothic, the adventure story and the detective novel" (Wallace 2004: 3). Critical assessment on the genre of historical writing has clearly recognized the historical novel's affinity for fantasy and romance. The use of such elements in this particular novel subverts and modifies the conventions of the earlier tradition of the "realist" historical novel, simultaneously incorporating aspects previously left out and repressed, such as superstition, the irrational, and desire. In *The Daylight Gate*, Winterson explores ways of representing the past and weaves a compelling gothic tale of magic, witchery, superstition, necromancy, alchemy, and gory murder, combining, to use Linda Hutcheon's words, different "registers of discourse" (Hutcheon 1996: 4). This novel initiates the reader into the past from oblique perspectives through a wide range of issues and characters, many of whom are marginal figures, whose unrecorded historical contribution is presented thanks to their *petits récits* (Jean-François Lyotard 1984). *The use of this and other narrative strategies encourage* "an incredulity toward metanarratives" (Lyotard 1984: 175)—specifically those grand narratives of British history dominated by heroic imperialism—while at the same time challenging the constraints of fictional realism.

## 2. Straddling boundaries: history, story, and historical novels

The subversion of previous, traditional fictional norms in recent historical novelistic production is intertwined with tensions between history and story that are, in turn, related to the connection between historiographic and fictional practice. Concurrently, the transformation of historical fiction is largely derived from conceptual changes within historiography since the 1980s, following the linguistic turn in twentieth-century philosophy and historical theory. The ensuing substantial and complex debate has elucidated the role of linguistic norms in shaping the narrative representation of historical events, dispelling previously held beliefs of the narrative as a neutral and clear method of representing historical reality, and writing authentically about the past, emphasizing the role of imagination in creating a specific approach to understanding it. As a critic summarizes, “narrative has cognitive implications all its own, which imposes a specific shape on historical reality before the latter can become an object of historical inquiry and representation. Thus, properties such as causality and teleology which were previously thought to inhere in historical reality are now conceptualized as linguistic phenomena” (Wesseling 1991: 128). This perspective on historical representation connects issues about the truth (and fictiveness) of history and about the fictiveness (and truth) of literary texts, implying a dependence of historiography on fictional narrative techniques. The relationship between historical writing and imaginative literature has therefore been acknowledged, and in the last few decades historiography has increasingly recognized the “story” element of history and the contentious character of historical accuracy. But the main critical undercurrent arises in terms of exactly what types of accuracy or authenticity the historical novel can offer, if it should provide any at all. But “[i]f history is itself discursive, textual, fragmentary and uncertain, and, like fiction, driven in unrecognized ways by our own individual and cultural preoccupations and desires [...], then to set up the debate on the presumption that history is true and fiction must obey its rules would be naïve in relation to both” (Hodgkin 2007: 16). In order to explore how scholarship on the interrelation between history and story have evolved—particularly concerning historical fiction in general, and its contemporary aspects illustrated in the novel *The Daylight Gate* specifically—it is constructive to provide a brief outline of essential categories and texts that contribute to this discussion.

One of the leading advocates for the reconsideration of historical narratives, Hayden White, contended the relevance of “metahistory”, denoting the “historical work as a verbal structure in the form of a narrative prose discourse” (White 1973: ix). Its importance to literary criticism and practice is indisputable, as he refutes the claim to truth in history, “foregrounding the artificial and inescapably ideological nature of historical narrative. [...] In this climate, contemporary historical fiction can ambitiously aspire to granting imaginative apprehension of the past just as effectively as historiography” (Makinen 2005: 7). According to White’s other crucial text in the debate on history as narrative—his study *Tropics of Discourse: Essays in Cultural Criticism* (1978)—there is a correspondence between histories and novels, meaning that history “is no less a form of fiction than the novel is a form of historical representation” (White 1978: 122). The ideas on the interdependence of history and fiction and their foundation in narrative put forward by Hayden White in the field of historiography correspond to those by Linda Hutcheon in literary theory and criticism. Although not fully and clearly identifiable as postmodern historical fiction, *The Daylight Gate* demonstrates some of the features of a category of novel Hutcheon describes in *A Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Fiction, Theory* (1988) as “historiographic metafiction,” a phrase that refers to “those well-known and popular novels which are both intensely self-reflexive and yet paradoxically also lay claim to historical events and personages” (Hutcheon 1996: 5). Given that Winterson’s historical novel can be interpreted as a desire to expose “history as a shaping force (in the narrative and in human destiny)” (Hutcheon 1996: 113), it echoes questions about the nature of history, representation, and narrative championed by White and Hutcheon. Both scholars refuse the earlier understanding of the truthfulness of history and decline to draw a clear line between historical fact and fiction, affirming their reliance on narratives. As Hutcheon proclaims, “both history and fiction are discourses, human constructs, signifying systems, and both derive their major claim to truth from that identity” (Hutcheon 1996: 93). This dismissal of the very notion of historical truth and insistence upon discursiveness in history and literature is matched by a related development in historical writing and novelistic production. A recurring trait in recent historical novels, including Winterson’s *The Daylight Gate*, is the challenge to “the old past” and traditional or mainstream historical narrative rooted in causal association. Contemporary historical novels therefore revisit and revise conventional

historical fictional writing in an attempt to incorporate previously silenced or erased historical events and subjects. These novels depart from earlier historical fictions in their resistance to traditionally held certainties about what happened and why, no longer subscribing to the role of “an essentially escapist form of literature with a predominant interest in the romantic” (Heilmann and Llewellyn 2007: 1), but evolving “into a genre at the cutting edge of postmodern conceptualizations of the past and of contemporary worlds” (Heilmann and Llewellyn 2007: 1). These changes to the historical novel require us to consider the relationship between traditional historical novels and the results of experimentation and shifts within the genre.

One of the most influential scholars of historical fiction, Avrom Fleishman, established in his 1971 study *The English Historical Novel: Walter Scott to Virginia Woolf* the key features of the historical novel, deriving from retrospection (its leading formal characteristic), and related to a double dimension of time in which such fiction functions: the present, i.e. the time of writing, and the past, i.e. the time of the setting. Fleishman identifies this dual frame of reference that characterizes the historical novel as “both an entry into the past [...] and a coherent interpretation of that past from a particular standpoint in the present” (Fleishman 1971: 24). Similarly, in Georg Lukács’s *The Historical Novel* (1937)—which was the leading early theoretical examination of the historical novel as a genre—the historical novel is praised for the accuracy of its representation of the past’s reality as the “prehistory of the present” (Lukács 1983: 53). Lukács also recognizes that the benchmark historical novel by Sir Walter Scott introduced some attempts to blur the borders between reality and fiction by including various prefaces and postscripts. It appears, therefore, that historical fiction as a genre has exhibited a tendency to make use of conventions and elements characteristic of other genres, resulting in a form of hybridization. However, contemporary novelists (particularly women writers) frequently depart from the conventions of realistic novel writing to produce alternate historical narratives, such as this novel by Jeannette Winterson. Winterson ranks among those novelists whose innovative literary output qualifies as “the New Historical Fiction”, a designation proposed by Martha Tuck Rozett. According to her 2003 study *Constructing a World: Shakespeare’s England and the New Historical Fiction*, such writers “tend to blur the boundaries between ‘research’ and imaginative extrapolation to produce fantastic and disorienting transformations of the past” (Rozett 2003: 2-3). The novel supports the revisioning of a particular “history” (most notably that of

Shakespeare's England), providing "instances of divided and destabilized societies, characterized by political and religious tensions, high ambitions, and rapid social and cultural change" (Rozett 2003: 10). Since conventional historical narratives have traditionally omitted women due to their male-focused and heteronormative orientation, recent historical novels subvert this, building different, more inclusive and even oppositional histories. According to Ann Heilmann and Mark Llewellyn, "it is by interrogating the male-centred past's treatment of women at the same time as seeking to undermine the 'fixed' or 'truthful' nature of the historical narrative itself that women can create their 'own' (counter-)histories" (Heilmann and Llewellyn 2007: 2-3). In this vein, the discussion will now turn to the analysis of Jeannette Winterson's *The Daylight Gate*, taking into account the imbrication of gender and narrative in this historical novel.

### **3. *The Daylight Gate* as (new) historical fiction**

This short, intense novel is centered on the Pendle witch trial of 1612, the most notorious and largest of its kind in England. At the opening, we are transported to the misty moors of northern England, the county of Lancashire, where the witch-hunt centers on a group of destitute women (and a couple of men) who have found shelter in a run-down building, near Pendle Hill, on land owned by the noble widow Alice Nutter. Following accusations of witchcraft, they are held for months in Lancaster Castle's dungeon, in conditions so appalling that some are barely able to stand trial. In the end, Alice is also implicated in the proceedings, and is similarly accused and sentenced. Winterson (2012: vii-viii) notes in her introduction that this novel draws on extensive material from the trial itself (it was the first witch trial to be documented), recorded by lawyer Thomas Potts, author of "The Wonderfull Discoverie of Witches in the Countie of Lancashire". It can therefore be argued that this novel meets most of the criteria Diane Wallace deems necessary for a historical novel to be "historical"; apart from the particular historical period for the setting and the historical moment at which it was written, the text is a historical novel "in its relation to the personal life history of the writer herself; and in its relation to literary history, most obvious in the *intertextual use of earlier texts*" (Wallace 2004: 5, emphasis added). Potts, as King James' government agent, is intent on capturing the Lancashire-born Catholic

Christopher Southworth, who was involved in the Gunpowder Plot of 1605 and thrown in a dungeon, where he was viciously tortured. However, Southworth manages to escape, and Potts imprisons Christopher's sister Jane, hoping that he will return to England to rescue her. Potts, portrayed as "a proud little cockerel of a man; all feathers and no fight" (Winterson 2012: 19), serves as an illustration of the paranoid reign of the Anglican King James I (1603–1625). As Southworth says in the novel, "They will not stop till all of the Gunpowder Plotters are dead. King James has set his sights on Lancashire, [...] He believes that this is the county of England where he has the most to fear—from Catholic traitors or from witching hags." (Winterson 2012: 61–62) Because of his conviction that he had been targeted by witches, James I attended witch trials personally, and even wrote a book called *Daemonologie* (1597), supporting witch hunting. One of the very first acts following his accession to the throne was to pass The Witchcraft Act of 1604. The character of Potts voices the then typical and unequivocal position of the authorities to those accused of witchcraft that rendered Catholicism equivalent to sorcery and crime: "Witchery popery popery witchery—all the same thing." (Winterson 2012: 101)

The very opening of this novel sets the atmosphere and depicts Pendle Hill as a remote, wild, and haunted site:

The hill itself is low and massy, flat-topped, brooding, disappeared in mists, treacherous with bogs, run through with fast-flowing streams plunging into waterfalls crashing down into unknown pools. Underfoot is the black rock that is the spine of this place.

Sheep graze. Hares stand like question marks.

There are no landmarks for the traveller. Too early or too late the mist closes in. Only a fool or one who has dark business should cross Pendle at night. (Winterson 2012: 1-2)

Pendle Hill's ominous landscape is synonymous with the mysterious and untamed, but a peddler by the name of John Law takes a shortcut through its thick forest late one afternoon, trying to make haste as the daylight fades: "Soon it would be dusk; the liminal hour—the Daylight Gate. He did not want to step through the light into whatever lay beyond the light" (Winterson 2012: 3). Suddenly his path is blocked by Alizon Device and her grandmother Old Demdike who ridicule and curse him. Terrified, Law rushes to an inn, where he collapses, dying: "His lips were foamy.



Men loosened his clothes. He held up three fingers and said one word: *Demdike*” (Winterson 2012: 5). What is obvious from these quotations is that Winterson builds up narrative suspense with the elements of the Gothic story and the occult while introducing outcast women and rewriting them into history. In order to recuperate the history of such women and write into the fissures of official versions of history, the author embarks on an imaginative recovery of the past by mingling it with a factual source, such as Potts’ account of the Pendle trial. However, Winterson further points out in the introduction to the novel that she has chosen her own narrative approach to the historical elements: “The characters are real people, though I have taken liberties with their motives and their means. My Alice Nutter is not the Alice Nutter of history [...]. The story of Alice Nutter and Elizabeth Southern is an invention of my own and has no basis in fact” (Winterson 2012: viii-ix). This method of combining historical and invented story components is what defines historical novels as a genre, as Ann Rigney explains, because “[a]s *historical* novels, [...] they also link up with the ongoing collective attempts to represent the past and invite comparison with what is already known about the historical world from other sources. [...] they also call upon prior historical knowledge, echoing and/or disputing other discourses about the past” (Rigney 2001: 19).

While the techniques of fictional narrative in *The Daylight Gate* exhibit the reliance on historiography, they also offer a perspective on the representation of the past which challenges the officially recorded history. At the same time, the novel reflects on gender relations and the formation of gendered identity and therefore fits the category defined by Diane Wallace because of the “use of a historical setting in order to explore issues of gender, and a desire to rewrite history from a point of view that centralises women’s concerns” (Wallace 2004: 5). Signaling the straddling of the borders between history and story, Winterson’s text also indicates that the realm of historical representation is marked by uncertainty, ambiguity, and the multiplicity of “truths” in any representation of past events. Following Linda Hutcheon’s words, narrative conventions are “installed and subverted”; the narration is disrupted and denied closure, and the speaking subject lacks “confidence in his/her ability to know the past with any certainty” (Hutcheon 1996: 121–22, 117). These features mark the shift from traditional or “classic” historical fictions toward new, transformed approaches to the historical novel. Additionally, this literary text suggests the method toward the representation of the past defined by

Hayden White and other theorists of history that foregrounds the role of narrative in constructing our perception of the past. These representations of history mirror “their relation to the structures of power, not least those of gender” (Wallace 2004: 204), exemplified in *The Daylight Gate*. Winterson aligns religious intolerance with sexual abuse and institutionalized brutality at times of harsh competition for limited resources as in early 17<sup>th</sup> century England when people were anxious and helpless against those who could easily abuse and dehumanize others. Among the characters accused in the Pendle witch trial, the intriguing personality of Alice Nutter is the most interesting illustration of these tendencies. An intelligent and high-born Catholic woman, Alice is also one of the region’s richest landowners who made her fortune thanks to the invention of a striking magenta cloth dye, which was favored by Queen Elizabeth. But Alice’s affluence, independent nature, intelligence and strangely youthful appearance despite her age cause suspicion and envy, revealed in the following words: “Here was wealth. Her wealth. And she had not been born to it nor had she inherited it. Her fortune had come through the invention of a dye; a magenta that held fast in water and that had a curious dark depth to it [...]” (Winterson 2012: 6). Recognizing her rise in economic and social standing as a blessing and a bane, Alice comments on her fate: “My wealth increased. And then the dark came” (Winterson 2012: 69). Hence, during the trial when the justice asks a child witness about Alice, her statement discloses the intertwining of economic, social and ideological repression: “She has a falcon who is a spirit. She has a pony who can jump over the moon. *She has food and drink and money and jewels*. She is the most powerful of them all.” (Winterson 2012: 215, emphasis added). However, Alice’s reputation of mystery and unconventional behavior does not seem unfounded: in her past she was a lover to both Christopher Southworth and Elizabeth Southern and an associate of John Dee, an astrologer, alchemist and expert in the “dark sciences”. All of them are protagonists who dare the dominant social norms, structures, and ideologies through their own opposition to personal and social identity constructions. Amid all these turbulences and the anxiety of such circumstances, Alice maintains her integrity and dignity, undermining the prevailing social and gender relations, evident in the impression she makes on Potts: “He had been curious to meet Alice Nutter but she made him nervous. Something about the way she looked at him made him feel less important than he knew himself to be.” (Winterson 2012: 97). The subjugation of women in history and the potential to

explore gender as historically contingent rather than essential have worked their ways into the historical novel written by women as it “has been one of the sites where women writers have had most freedom to examine *masculinity* as a social and cultural construction. The act of reading and writing *across* gender has been central to the woman’s historical novel right through the twentieth century” (Wallace 2004: 8). Thus this novel corresponds to features of Rozett’s definition of “the New Historical Novel” as it contributes towards the revising of the traditional record of the past, specifically a historical period plagued with political and religious strife, upheavals and desperation.

The new inclination of women’s historical novels to examine the male-focused understanding of women and imbue it with a feminist perspective is illustrated through Alice, coupled with a strong economic angle on inequality and hypocrisy. Thus when Alice is questioned about her sympathy to Elizabeth Device who “prostitutes her own children”, Alice retorts: “And what of the men who buy? Tom Peeper rapes nine-year-old Jennet Device on a Saturday night and stands in church on Sunday morning.” (Winterson 2012: 55) The subjugation of women and prostituting of children were common features of early 17<sup>th</sup>-century English society and Winterson recuperates these lesser-known aspects in her clearly “critical or ironic re-reading of the past” (Hutcheon 1996: 23). Alice’s fierce rationality and critical attitude on this issue do not get clouded by her affection for Southworth, as evident in a scene when he advises her not to risk herself “for that broken family of vagrants and thieves they call the Demdike.’ Alice drew away from him. ‘Are you like all other men after all? The poor should have no justice, just as they have no food, no decent shelter, no regular livelihood? Is that how your savior Jesus treated the poor?’” (Winterson 2012: 62-63). Her sharp insight in and exposure of the context which rendered these women social outcasts indicates that she can see through the grand narrative of the violent English male world. Alice to one of the jailors: ‘You have neither manners nor charm nor looks nor brains nor skill, and yet you are alive, while many women who did nothing but spin and weave and do their best have been hanged or burned.’” (Winterson 2012: 147). She further elucidates her economic-feminist position on the dominant understanding of witchcraft: “If they think they are witches does that make them so?” she asks. “Such women are poor. They are ignorant. They have no power in your world, so they must get what power they can in theirs.” (Winterson 2012: 55) These words serve as Winterson’s

historical and social commentary on the phenomenon of witchcraft and witchcraft persecution, but they also make it plain that exploited women strive to assert themselves through some access to or delusion of power. The resentment to tyrannical male figures and male-dominated power structures in this novel is most evident in the character of Potts, who is the quintessential example of Winterson's self-centered hypocritical men, driven by repressed desire. Potts exercises his willful authority and deplores the period when there is "not a single broomstick to be seen on Pendle Hill" (Winterson 2012: 96-97), but he also represents an epitome of those who shape official discourse and record of what happened in the past in a process of selection, presentation, and distortion on account of particular standpoints and ideologies. Thus any claim to truthfulness of history is dispersed as Potts utters these words while discussing his role in this historical event with no other than William Shakespeare: "There has been nothing as sensational until now. The Lancashire witch trials will be the first trials to be written as record. A great advantage in the pursuit of Diabolism.' 'Will you be doing the writing?' enquired Shakespeare. 'In my legal capacity, yes. I have written plays also, you know.'" (Winterson 2012: 111). The illusion of the possibility of an objectified history, in which facts could be arranged of their own accord, in a way, without any external "employment" (Hayden White 1973) is thus dispelled, further demonstrated in the following scene describing the documenting of the witch trial: "Potts was pleased with himself; he was writing a book. 'Shakespeare,' he thought as he scribbled away. 'Foolish fancy. This is life as it is lived.' 'Do you have to write a book?' asked Roger Nowell, who was sick of it all. 'Posterity. Truth. Record. Record. Truth—'" (Winterson 2012: 210). Unambiguously, Winterson's *The Daylight Gate* exposes the abuse of power, failure of justice and exploitation of the most marginalized and vulnerable in the community – "a pack of desperate miserable spoiled lives" (Winterson 2012: 110) – targeted by the mainstream due to competition for survival or more secure social standing. The strain of these conditions is conducive to turning people against each other, an operative imperative also of witch hunts. *The Daylight Gate* affirms Winterson's interest in challenging the patriarchal view of history and women's roles within it. Some other characteristics that support these fictional strategies of her narrative are the structure and narrative voice of the novel. Written in condensed and impressionistic chapters based on precise, bold and pared-down sentences that have a pithy and solemn effect, the narrative

emulates old-fashioned storytelling. The mingling of courtroom reporting, witness testimony, blunt statements, clipped narration and sermonic quality are both horrifying and strangely seductive, exemplified in the matter-of-fact depiction of rape: “Tom Peeper raped Sarah Device. He was quick. He was in practice” (Winterson 2012: 12). Through this innovative variation on “old” historical novel-writing, through discourses about the past that reverberate with ambiguity and multiple “truths” in representing past events, Winterson’s novel demonstrates new qualities of the historical novel that effect a modification of this genre’s earlier conventions.

#### **4. Conclusion**

Since the last decade of the twentieth century, the genre of historical fiction has become increasingly popular and prominent. Among the numerous contemporary practitioners of historical novel-writing women authors have considerable representation, broad reception and critical acclaim. The appeal of the genre for both writers and the public has afforded authors (particularly women writers) an opportunity to depart from conventional historical narratives and historical novelistic practices privileging men’s experiences and heteronormativity in order to create alternate interpretations of history. Although Jeannette Winterson is not typically labeled a historical novelist, her literary output has continuously exhibited tendencies of re-examining the ways in which the past is represented in fiction. This awareness of history does not, however, equal an absolute acceptance of one interpretation of events, as Winterson’s work demonstrates. This paper analyzes her 2012 novel *The Daylight Gate* as an example of how traditional historical narratives can be destabilized and reimagined in order to include the voices of the marginalized and subordinated who were left out from the official accounts of the past. This literary text embarks on an imaginative reworking of the widely known 1612 Pendle witch trial and focuses on the recuperation of the narratives of the most vulnerable people who have been written out of or misrepresented in previous historical narratives. The historical novel has proven an important genre that has allowed women authors such as Winterson to transcribe traditionally neglected historical voices and to reinvent the unrecorded or partially presented lives of the oppressed, especially women, the peasant and working classes. Such literary endeavors testify to both Winterson’s

and the readers' need to renegotiate the past, challenge the definiteness of historical actions and interrogate the authority of history. These critical views are largely inspired by the examination of intersections between history and fiction in the wake of the theoretical challenges stemming from the linguistic turn. A number of scholars in historiography (including Hayden White) have implicitly or explicitly questioned the nature of history and the relationship between what we refer to as history and fiction, history and story, thus deconstructing the division between them. These approaches have hailed the destabilization of a single truth in favor of multiple "truths" as recognition of the subjectivity and the uncertainty in recounting past events. In a related vein, Linda Hutcheon and other authors have discussed historical narrativization in literary theory and criticism, probing the methods of retrieving the past, linking up historical events and converting them into narratives, while acknowledging the straddling of the borders between the discourses of history, story, and historical novels. These views of history and their use of narrative radically depart from representations in the "classical historical novel" or "old historical novels", such as those by Walter Scott in the early nineteenth century idealized by the Marxist critic Georg Lukács in his study *The Historical Novel*. In Winterson's work, the subverting of historical reality through narrative suspense, Gothic story elements, fantasy (in addition strategies related to historiographic metafiction) allows for the introduction of new voices and an oppositional critique into the master narrative of English history. Thus *The Daylight Gate* revises the earlier European tradition of the historical novel with the purpose to challenge versions of history established by hegemonies and to focus on the lives of the economically and socially marginalized, those who were elided from the pages of history. Accordingly, the use of experimentation and hybridization has resulted in new approaches to the historical novel that suggest a desire for writing receptive to the remarkable and complex ways in which our world and our perception of it have changed. By analyzing Winterson's *The Daylight Gate*, a perspective has been offered into the ways she has reinvigorated the genre and contributed to its development as a vehicle for recovering and rewriting the past indicative of the historical novel's transition from tradition to transformation.

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