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Past and Present as Dialogic Narratives in Postmodernist Novels: Jasper Fforde's The Eyre Affair as an Intertextual to Charlotte Brontë's Jane Eyre

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Abstract: *This article intends to delve into the intertextual use of a Victorian novel in The Eyre Affair (2001) by the British writer Jasper Fforde. In his intertextual novel, which features as a sequel to Charlotte Bronte's Jane Eyre (1847), Fforde shows that art is dependent on art and may integrate allusions to prior works. Since the research interest in the existing responses to Victorian narratives is considerably new, my paper aims to give a comprehensive reflection on one of these responses. It contributes to explore the reasons why the Victorian classics still fascinate postmodernist writers, while observing the changes these latter made to please the twenty first century reader. Its main focus is to determine the intertextual dialogue between the two novels focusing on important critical aspects in Jane Eyre such as point of view, the controversial ending, and the migration of characters, which become an inspiration for Fforde to bring Bronte's tale to life by carrying the idea of intertextuality in The Eyre Affair.*
Keywords: *Charlotte Brontë, intertextuality, Jasper Fforde, postmodernism, the Eyre Affair, the Victorians.*
Résumé : *Cet article a pour finalité d'explorer l'utilisation intertextuelle d'un roman dans The Eyre Affair (2001) de l'écrivain britannique Jasper Fforde. Dans son roman intertextuel, qui se présente comme une continuation de Jane Eyre, Fforde montre que l'art est tributaire de l'art et peut intégrer des insinuations à des travaux antérieurs. Étant donné que l'intérêt de recherche pour les réponses existantes aux récits victoriens est considérablement nouveau, mon article propose de donner une réflexion perceptible sur l'une de ces réponses. Il contribue à examiner les raisons pour lesquelles les classiques victoriens continuent à fasciner les écrivains postmodernistes, tout en s'attardant sur les modifications que ces derniers ont*

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apportées pour plaire au lecteur du XXIe siècle. Son objectif principal est de déterminer le dialogue intertextuel entre les deux romans en se concentrant sur des aspects critiques importants de Jane Eyre, tels que le point de vue, la fin controversée, et la migration des personnages, devenus une source d'inspiration pour Fforde. Ainsi, le récit de Brontë sera mis en avant à travers l'idée d'intertextualité dans The Eyre Affair.

Mots clés: *Charlotte Brontë, Intertextualité, Jasper Fforde, L'affaire Eyre, Les Victoriens, postmodernisme.*

1. Introduction

One of the features that characterize postmodern fiction is a recurrent interest in the past, especially in the Victorian period. Therefore, for various reasons, we witness a great fascination with and interest in the rebirth of the Victorian narratives. The revival of the Victorian tradition announces many intertextual references to famous Victorian novels. In contemporary literary vocabulary, the language of intertextuality has surfaced in many approaches to literary interpretations.

From Mikhail Bakhtin's theory of everyday language "dialogism" and "carnivalesque"[1] to Julia Kristeva's conception of the literary work as a mosaic of quotation, or Roland Barthes's representation of a text as a past citations tissue, intertextuality has come to have practically as many significances as users. Bakhtin was among many thinkers who ponder the importance of dialogues in human interaction as well as in the novel. For postmodernism, it is almost difficult to find a text that is not influenced by other intertexts. Hence, it is crucial to view postmodernism as a plural rather than a singular unity (Cornier Michael, 1996: 11).

The main peculiarity in the discussion of postmodernism is that cultural condition, theory/philosophy, and aesthetic practices are all interrelated and yet different and above all they are always plural and in change or development (ibid). Postmodernism, thus understood, gathers all aesthetical systems in the way that West and East traditions, old and new art thought, and popular and elite literature hold the same value in the postmodernist text. Postmodern literature offers the reader a space to participate in the creation of meaning and to grasp the dialogue among the texts existing before. Thus, the text instead is not the production of an author, but exists within a specific context of having a clear ending. it becomes open-ended and open to interpretations. In fact, the canon of postmodern literature is made of "works which depend upon the reader's prior knowledge of the narrative conventions which they exploit, parody, and subvert" (Hutcheon & Natoli, 1993: 523).

Many notions such as intertextuality, rewriting, quotation, imitation, pastiche, stimulation, double coding, and palimpsest became a landmark in postmodern literature. At this level, being a specific dialogue between texts, intertextuality ties texts from the past with the present as Allen writes that "[a]uthors do not create their texts from their original minds, but rather compile them from pre-existent texts" (2011: 35). An example of a revisionist and one of the most daring postmodern versions of *Jane Eyre* is Jasper Fforde's *The Eyre Affair*. Most critics have remarked upon *The Eyre Affair's* intertextual references to *Jane Eyre*. Fforde's novel indicates a vast semantic openness that invites the

[1] It originated as carnival in Bakhtin's *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* and developed in *Rabelais and His World.* A literary mode subverts and liberates the assumptions of the dominant style or atmosphere through humor and chaos.

reader to participate in the process of meaning-making. The chief concern of this study is to determine the intertextual dialogue with the text written in Victorian times and to assess its presence in Jasper Fforde's postmodernist novel. The question this article answers is why is there a need to return to *Jane Eyre* in the first place? And what is the nature of this return? Is it nostalgia or perversion?

2. Postmodernism: Re-Storying the Victorians

Cultural phenomena that defy simple definition or interpretation are certain to increase the appetite of scholars and excite the inquisitive minds of critics, especially if those theorists and critics belong to the historical domain of such phenomena. This is particularly true of the phenomenon: postmodernism. Postmodernism is an unstable concept known for its incoherence (Bauman cited in Munhall, 2012: 96). It is "typified by uncertainty, chaos, and variety to give opportunity to new voices to be heard" (Chaami & Grazib, 2019: 141). Basically, postmodernism displaced its search for stability in the creation of knowledge. Besides, it debated against totalization, foundationalism, and absolutism in the social science. Further, it rejected the primacy of reason as the main source of knowledge and challenged the stability of reasoning.

In fact, "postmodernism does not produce" (Docherty, 1999:15), but reproduces. The question of faithfulness to the original text is raised when talking about literary intertextuality or postmodern rewriting. The postmodern novel as a genre is intertextual and the rewriting of previous texts (sometimes parodic, sometimes paying homage) flourishes in postmodern literature to imply that literary texts depend on other texts. Adrienne Rich defines the concept of rewriting as "the act of looking back, of seeing with fresh eyes, of entering an old text from a new critical direction" (1972:18). Indeed, the rewriting of master texts does not rework or refashion a text from the past only, but the social as well as cultural values underlining that text. Besides, a rewriting does much more than filling the gaps perceived in the source text; rather, it enters into a productive critical dialogue. Peter Widdowson puts that "Canonic texts from the past […] have arguably been central to the construction of 'our' consciousness" (as cited in Wynne & Regis, 2017: 270). This means that the past plays an important role in shaping our understanding of the present. Of all the previous literatures and periods, the Victorian, in which the name is taken from Queen Victoria, is a category that seems to increase the appetite of contemporary writers to almost continually adapt and appropriate it in postmodern culture.

This culture has been marked by an "organized revision" (Baudrillard, 1994:12) of "rewriting everything" (ibid). The attraction to the nineteenth century literature raises the attention of many critics to devote more scholarly attention to postmodern intertextuality and to ask searching questions about the nature of the contemporary return to the Victorian. In fact, this period becomes one of the main areas in the academic discussions in the age of postmodernism. The return to the Victorian has been twisted so as to fit the postmodern literature and reflect not only the Victorian but the development of postmodernism itself. Kaplan has best reviewed this intricate fascination exercised by the nineteenth century literature over contemporary writers:

> The variety and appeal of Victoriana over the years might better be seen as one sign of the sense of the historical imagination on the move, an indication that what we thought we knew as "history" has become, a hundred years and more after the death of Britain's longest-reigning monarch, a kind of conceptual nomad, not so much lost as permanently restless and unsettled. (2007: 3)

The approaches taken by postmodern narratives that rework nineteenth century literature range from providing alternative versions, or filling the gaps of the original text to revisionary narratives that seek to give a voice to marginal characters previously silenced in the Victorian classics. Some other novels do not only rewrite the Victorian but also question the connection between the postmodern consciousness and the Victorian. Moreover, they interrogate the relationship between fiction and history by means of metafictional speculation on a given classic. However, what most of them share is the inclination towards revising and reassessing values and notions inherent from the Victorian era to tackle contemporary cultural issues.

3. Some Theories of Intertextuality

Mikhail Bakhtin's dialogism and carnivalesque give the first spark to the emergence of the theory of intertextuality as helpful devices to study the silences that destroy the monologic discourse of the canonical history. This history can be opened to "dialogism" which means the presence of different voices in a literary work to exist interactively and simultaneously. Dialogism is "author's speech in another's language, serving to express authorial intentions but in a refracted way" (Bakhtin qtd in Engeström, 2015: 20). Hence, words are shaped by intentions throughout time. To Bakhtin, such speech is a "double-voiced discourse" (as cited in Emerson & Morson, 1990: 150). Along with dialogism, there were many other concepts that may refer to the same idea like "polyphony"[2], "hybridization"[3] and "heteroglossia"[4].

Bakhtin analyzes discourses and utterances, and deconstructs languages to identify their existing relationships. For him, language "is shaped by dialogic interaction with an alien word that is already in the object" (as cited in Kwon, 2016: 31). Bakhtin wan among many thinkers who consider the significance of dialogues in human interaction as well as in the novel. Michael Holquist defines dialogue, whose aspects are speaking and exchange, as "synonym for conversation; the word suggests two people talking to each other" (2003: 39). Hence, Bakhtin's intertextuality is built on various contexts and words that convey worldviews, interpretations, discourses and dialogism. It offers every individual to make personal meaning and participate with his own point of view inside a particular cultural group instead of having a one universal truth.

Bakhtin uses the terms dialogism, polyphony and heteroglossia as characteristics of the novel as a genre. The departure from the Aristotelian single voice and unitary sense

[2] A term introduced by Bakhtin to talk about the simultaneity of points of view and voices within a particualr narrative plan.

[3] A concept by Bakhtin, which means the combining of two different social languages within the limit of a single utterance.

[4] A term introduced by Bakhtin to describe the coexistence of distinct varieties within a single language.

of the novel to the Galileon sense of pluralism has led to either monologism or dialogism. In this connection, Mikhail Holquist attests that "the novel is the characteristic text of a particular stage in the history of consciousness not because it marks the self's discovery of itself, but because it manifests the self's discovery of the other" (2003: 72). Therefore, the novel portrays people and their societies as well as the different languages spoken in that society and texts finds meaning only when they are in touch with other texts.

Bakhtin speaks about "polyphony" as a distinctive feature of the novel. For David Lodge, the polyphonic novel is "novel in which a variety of conflicting ideological positions are given a voice and set in play both between and within individual speaking subjects, without being placed and judged by an authoritative authorial voice" (as cited in Marino & Rogobete, 2019: 30). Bakhtin believes that Dostoyevsky's novels are the model of the polyphonic novel as they illustrate the presence of multiple autonomous voices. He goes further to argue that Dostoyevsky's intellect in creating the polyphonic novel resides primarily in his ability to think "not in thought but in points of view, consciousnesses, voice" (as cited in Good, 2006: 49). Polyphony recognizes other people, to be in constant dialogue where the writer is a voice among others, which means that characters can argue with the author who creates them.

Heteroglossia, in turn, puts the emphasis on the role of language in putting the speaker in different social situations and world views. These latter can be found in any culture where many opposing alternative meanings are present. Thus, texts are heteroglossic in the way that they recognize the existence of divergent and convergent realities. For Bakhtin, literature is just one among many languages where no voice including the writer's voice dominates like in the novel of Dostoyevsky. This is called by Bakhtin a "plurality of consciousness" (as cited in Whitlock, 2007: 125) in which the author and the character interact with each other dialogically as autonomous subjects. Hence, dialogism in the novel concerns the language of characters as well as that of the writer of the text. Bakhtin makes the point that the new position of the author with regard to the hero in Dostoevsky's polyphonic novel is a fully realised and thoroughly consistent dialogic position, one that affirms the independence, internal freedom, unfinalizability, and indeterminacy of the hero (as cited in Waugh, 2006: 225).

Holquist sums up Bakhtin's idea of dialogism and heteroglossia as follows:

> Heteroglossia governs the operation of meaning in the kind of utterance we call literary text, as it does in any utterance […] All utterances are heteroglot in that they are shaped by forces whose particularity and variety are practically beyond systematization. (2003: 67)

In his lately revised introduction to intertextuality, Graham Allen, admits that "Intertextuality as a concept has a history of different articulations which reflect the distinct historical situations out of which it has emerged" (2001: p.57). In fact, there is no authoritative definition for both the term as well as the approach to the texts. Chronologically, the birth of intertextuality parallels the birth of postmodernism. Julia Kristeva absorbs the ideas of Bakhtin and introduces the term intertextuality in her essay, "Bakhtin, le mots, le dialogue, et le roman". She admits that "the poetic word, polyvalent and multi-determined, adheres to a logic exceeding that of codified discourse and fully comes into being only in the margin of recognized cultures" (as cited in Meaney, 2010:

76). The late 1960s was a period of change in Paris moving beyond the previously imposing structuralist influence to poststructuralist. For her, every text "is constructed of a mosaic of citations, every text is an absorption and transformation of other texts" (as cited in Moyise & Oropeza, 2016: 110).

Instead of dialogism, Kristeva attempts to offer a literary tool to deal with textual and cultural transformation. According to her, intertextuality is no more than "a permutation of texts" (as cited in Allen, 2011: 35) so that "in the space of a given text, several utterances, taken from other texts, intersect and neutralize one another" (ibid). Kristeva gives the text an ahistorical dimension. She declared, "every text is from the outset under the jurisdiction of other discourses which impose a universe on it" (as cited in Chandler, 2017: 252). Kristeva's intertextuality comes in conversation with structural linguistics, Marxist political theory, feminist criticism, and Freudian psychoanalysis. Thus, her theory is itself a mosaic of varied theories and concerns. Kristeva considers the literary text as product of a given society included in each other in a network. Kristeva, mentioning and revising Bakhtin, argues that writing and reading are in a permanent dialogue where "each word (text) is an intersection of other words (texts) where at least one other word (text) can be read" (as cited in Walchester & Kinsley & Forsdick, 2019: 133). So, the presence of voices is what shapes the text's meaning.

Intertextuality, both as a term as well as a theory, keeps holding an influence on those who followed the theoretical heritage of Bakhtin and Kristeva like Roland Barth who borrowed the term to announce his notion of the "death of the author". In this essay, Barthes goes far to eliminate the authors when analyzing a text. For him "to give a text an author is to impose a limit on a text, to furnish it with a final signified, to close the writing" (as cited in Dasenbrock, 2010: 107). Barthes believes that what matters for us is the text not the author, and the reader must find a meaning to the text. The meaning of intertextuality to Barthes surpassed any possible literary influence:

> We know that a text is not a line of words releasing a single "theological meaning" (the message of the author-God) but a multidimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and clash. The text is a tissue of quotations drawn from the innumerable centers of cultures. […] [the writer's] only power is to mix writings, to counter the ones with the other, in such a way as never to rest on any of them. (as cited in Brooker, 2012: 06)

Like Kristeva who believes that a text is a mosaic of quotation, Barthes conceives the text as a tissue of quotation. For him the death of the author is a must, but he speaks metaphorically meaning the so-called "author- God/Goddess" not the writer or the scriptor whose writing is the "tracing of a field without origin- or which at least, has no other origin than language itself" (as cited in Roger & Roger, 2017: 05). Barthes's idea of the death of the author appears to challenge the authority of the author and to attack the idea of stable ultimate final meaning that needs to be decoded. He concludes that the reader "is simply that someone who holds together in a single field all the traces by which the written text is constituted…the birth of the reader must be at the cost of the death of the author" (as cited in Allen, 2011: 73). Besides, Barthes makes use of the word intertext to say: "any text is an intertext; other are present in it, at varying levels, in more or less recognizable forms […] any text is a new tissue of past citations" (as cited in Pagan, 1993: 43). In this

respect, what most postmodern linguistic theorists have argued for is that all texts exist in a network shell and none of them can be read as an autonomous text, but must be set in dialogue with other texts.

4. The Eyre Affair as an Intertextual to *Jane Eyre*

Many contemporary reworkings of *Jane Eyre* critically deal with the ending of the novel in various ways and, thus, examine the protagonist's abandonment of her defiant character in favor of the apparently conservative choice of getting married. Andrea Kirchnopf copes with some rewritings of *Jane Eyre* and explains their endeavor to "Correct" (as cited in Kosti & Šnircová, 2015: 06) the "Implausibilities of the [novel's] Victorian ending" (ibid). Hence, before coming to a detailed comparison of the novels, it is worthwhile to have a brief taste of both of them.

Jane Eyre is about true love that faces many problems but manages successfully to overcome them to fulfill destiny. It is the story of title character from her childhood and her growth, a young orphan girl, who was taken away from the only family left to her after the death of her parents to stay at a school of orphans. It is narrated in the first person by Jane, and the setting is in north of England. The story starts from Jane's childhood at Gateshead Hall. Jane is raised by her rich and cruel aunt, Mrs. Reed. This latter and her three children John, Eliza and Georgiana, always mistreat her emotionally and physically. A servant named Bessie is kind to Jane in the way that she tells her stories and always sings songs to her.

Later on, Jane goes to Lowood School, which had a cruel, rude and devious headmaster. While staying at Lowood School, she suffers a lot, but she acquires friends, religion and also strong opinions about her being equal to everyone. She becomes a teacher there. After that, she goes off to work as a governess at a manor called Thornfield, where she blossoms into a young woman, who takes care of her master who was an impassioned man named Rochester. The Latter has a Byronic character in this novel with whom Jane finds herself falling secretly in love. One night, she saves his life from a fire. Finally, beyond Jane's expectation, Rochester proposes to her and she accepts that disbelievingly.

In the wedding day, a man named Mr. Mason claims that Rochester has already a wife and he introduces himself as the brother of that wife whose name is Bertha. Therefore, the main source of trouble in this novel is this woman, who was Rochester's insane first wife. After hearing this fact, Rochester takes the wedding party back to Thornfield, where they see Bertha growling, like an animal there.

Although Jane loves Rochester, she refuses to betray the God-given principles and chooses to leave there, miserable and penniless. Bertha is locked in the attic of his country house, Thornfield Hall. Eventually, Bertha escapes and burns Thornfield to the ground, and tragically commits suicide by jumping from the roof. Rochester saves the servant's life but lost his eyesight and one of his hands. When Jane hears about this event, she goes to Rochester and at last, romantically at Ferndean, they rebuild their relationship and marry. Finally, Rochester recovers his sight and can see their first child.

The Eyre Affair (2001) is the first novel of the Thursday Next series, named after the heroine of the novels following her adventures as a literary detective. The literary detectives, or "Liter Tecs" are qualified detectives who deal with different kinds of literary crimes from plagiarism to thefts of manuscripts and literary subjects. The novel centers

on the character of Thursday whose mission is to protect literature from acts of vandalism. Its actions are set in the late twenty century England, in an altered post-Orwellian 1985 where England and imperial Russia are in a prolonged Crimean War. In this novel, the world to which we are introduced is both contemporary and different from our own. Much of the history that we know is explained differently since time travel entails the possibility of intervention in the past and thus changing history. In this world "animal cloning is a hobby, dodos abound…time travel is possible, and werewolves and vampires are actual criminal problems" (Hateley, 2007: 1027) and the reader will be "catapulted in and out of truth and imagination' […] *The Times"* and should forget "the rules of time, space, and reality" […] *Sunday Telegraph*" (Wolf & Bernhart, 2006: 343).

The central tool for Fforde's novel is this concept of alternative world. The plot of *The Eyre Affair* depends on the concept of time travelling and intertextual traveling. The writer skillfully works with the idea of time travel that signals the science fiction genre convention. From the very first beginning, we are introduced to an unacquainted world where Thursday Next has been familiar with time travelling since an early age. She introduced her father as an expert time traveler: "My father had a face that could stop a clock. I don't mean that he was ugly or anything; it was a phrase the ChronoGuard used to describe someone who had the power to reduce time to an ultra-slow trickle. Dad had been a colonel in the ChronoGuard" (Fforde, 2001: 01). Fforde extrapolates events that previously happen in *Jane Eyre* and uses the act of rewriting to tell an alternative ending of the latter novel. His novel contains fictional representation of the textual world and a different 1985 world where characters can have a literary journey between the real world and the book world, namely to *Jane Eyre*. Similarly, characters out of *Jane Eyre* can enter the twentieth century world and act together.

Thursday next, the novel's protagonist is a Crimean war veteran and special operative cadre. Her main job is to find and bring Jane Eyre to her fictional world and "investigate forgeries, thefts, misrepresentations, and interpretations of those literary texts deemed valuable by society" (Hateley, 2007: 1029). Actually, Thursday is almost killed in a shootout by a master literary thief named Acheron Hades, who has the capacity to change shapes and stays invisible on film. Edward Rochester, a character out of *Jane Eyre* saves her.

Later on, the heroine thinks to transfer to her hometown Swindon to be a literary detective. Acheron Hades kidnaps and murders characters from Charles Dickens's *Martin Chuzzlewit* [5] and then abducts Jane Eyre from the pages of the book to the socialist republic of Wales to hold her ransom. After many confrontations, Thursday manages to free Jane and pursues Hades in the fictional world of Brontë's novel. In this latter, she collaborates with Rochester and finally succeeds in dispatching the criminal with a silver bullet and encourages Jane to return to Rochester, instead of accompanying St. John Rivers to India. As a reward, Rochester unites Thursday with her lover Landen.

Besides inquiries, shootouts and chases, Thursday takes care of her pet dodo, fights against vampires, ends the Crimean War and holds a brief conversation with her time

[5] *The Life and Adventures of Martin Chuzzlewit* commonly known as *Martin Chuzzlewit* is written by Charles Dickens and considered the last of his picaresque novels. It was originally serialized between 1842 and 1844.

travelling father, who illegally interferes with history to rearrange it in Britain's favor. The cast also includes her genial uncle MyCroft, who invents a device to transport people into any literary text; his wife, who, consequently, finds herself face to face with Wordsworth in the poem "I wonder lonely as a cloud."[6] Spike Stoker, an eccentric vampire hunter, and Jack Schitt of the unscrupulous Goliah Corporation, who seizes the so called Prose Portal for sinister, but it outwits and locks into Poe's "Raven"[7] instead.

In fact, Fforde rewrites and refers to *Jane Eyre* in noticeable plots. Charlotte Brontë's novel is organized as a literary artifact that can be read and physically entered in his 1985 alternative world, a thing that some critics read as a simple postmodern parody. From its mysterious title, we already notice the presence of Brontë's heroine. However, in spite of Jane Eyre's appearance in the novel's title, she is the least prominent literary character if compared to Fforde's popular cast list of borrowed literary heroes and heroines. We notice Jane in brief in *The Eyre Affair* as the writer does not want to put many words in her mouth and attributes only few lines to her. By doing so, Fforde seizes Jane from his novel making her intrusion in the first person narrator impossible. Throughout the novel, Jane and Thursday have brief occasions of communication and collaboration. Jane remains a silent presence, influencing and informing Thursday's character.

In fact, the title suggests crime and espionage, the nineteenth century romance is turned into an action-packed thriller full of shoot outs, fast cars and investigations, and Brontë's heroine is reinvented as an adventure heroine. Critics maintain that Fforde pays homage to the original story as well as to characters. Instead of attacking *Jane Eyre*, *The Eyre Affair* is an elaborate tribute to it. In this regard, Juliette Wells writes that Fforde "pays tribute to the boldness and originality of Bronte's fictional creation" (Wells qtd in Kirchknopf, 2013: 168). In fact, Thursday shows notable similarities with Jane and Landen resembles Rochester in many aspects. The intertextual relationship between both novels is mirrored in the portrayal of their heroines. Fforde supplies Thursday with many of the qualities of Bronte's heroine, from physical to temperamental. Actually, both heroines are not physically beautiful nor do they show a feminine display. In character too, Thursday Next apparently bears resemblance to Jane as an autonomous and opinionated woman, who goes after her own mind. She is described by her professional partner, Bowden Cable, as "everything a woman should be, Strong and resourceful, loyal and intelligent" (Fforde, 2001: 171). The life of Thursday Next, a modern action woman, shows undeniable parallels to Jane's fate, mainly in her anxious relationship to her war-disabled lover about to marry another, uncongenial woman, and in her dilemma between liberation and domesticity.

In addition, both texts are narrated through the first person perspective, giving their readers the opportunity to share the subjectivity of the main characters in their paths towards shaping their personalities. Like Bronte's Jane, who is well aware about the process of narrating her story but saying nothing about writing it, Thursday recites without

[6] William Wordsworth's most famous lyric poem. It was Written between 1804-1807 and first published in 1807 then revised in 1815.

[7] "The Raven" is a narrative poem by the American writer Edgar Allan Poe. First published in January 1845, the poem is often noted for its musicality, stylized language, and supernatural atmosphere.

ever declaring her authorial identity. Moreover, the mirror scene is revealed in the first chapters of both novels, where the concepts of self- realization and the quest for autonomy are stressed. Like Jane, who is punished and locked up in the red room where she noticed "a fascinated eye towards the dimly gleaming mirror" (Bronte, 1992: 11), Thursday distances from herself to see her own image. Her appearance is captured in a glance in the mirror using the personal pronoun "she". She says: "I opened the drawer of my desk and pulled out a small mirror.

A woman with somewhat ordinary features stared back at me …She had no cheekbones, to speak of her face, I noticed, had just started to show some rather obvious lines" (Fforde, 2001: 19). In the same way, it was only after having stayed in Thornfield Hall and watched Jane and Rochester's relationship, that she recognizes her emotions for her ex-lover Landen Park-Laine. This means that the world of books serves as a mirror image for her relationship with Landen. At this level, we can say that, in the world of Fforde, the mingled relationship between reality and fiction blurred the boundaries between the real world that he calls "outland" and the fictional one. In fact, the flexible barrier between reality and fiction becomes more captivating in the novel to the point that "the barrier between reality and fiction are softer than we think; a bit like a frozen lake. Hundreds of people can walk across it, but then one evening a thin spot develops and someone falls through; the hole frozen over by the following morning" (ibid, p.206). However, the bookworld is much more important than the outland, which is simply a foreign country.

Fforde's plot spins far away from that of Bronte's novel, and characters re-envisioned from other fictional works take up much more space on his pages than do those from *Jane Eyre*. Nevertheless, Jane is never far away, since many of her signal characteristics and experiences, including that long separation from a beloved, reappear in Thursday. Much like Jane, who rejects to travel abroad with a man, whom she does not love, the manifestation of St. John Rivers (a character from *Jane Eyre*), is obvious when Thursday receives a proposal from her colleague Bowen Cable. Another similarity that Thursday shares with Jane is the seemingly supernatural intervention when she was in the hospital room and ultimately convinced to go back to her hometown. Then, it was there where she is finally married to her crippled lover Landen. This reminds us of Jane's extrasensory communication with Rochester in Moor House and her marriage to Rochester after many obstacles. In this connection, Hateley points out that supernatural intervention has similar effect on her as it does on Jane:

> As she lies in the hospital bed, she sees herself arrive in the room and tell her to accept a job in Swindon, her hometown. This has obvious corollaries with the "clairvoyant" episode in Jane Eyre when Jane hears her name being called across the moors. Ultimately, Thursday is reunited with her crippled lover after years of separation, and they are married. (2007: 1026)

Throughout the novel, Fforde attempts to remind us of Jane's artistic identity. He leaves us to our own interpretation whether Thursday paints or not in a scene when she replies to her colleague Paige Turner that she has "lots of hobbies [among them] painting" (2001: 60-1). Nonetheless, we do not really know whether she paints or not as no further

explanation is given. Thursday shares a signal characteristic with Jane too in terms of family history. Both of them are motivated by loss. Jane loses her parents and her uncle Reed at an early age. She is always seeking for a loving and caring family as well as for a social status that she needs. In turn, Thursday, who is not orphaned and does have a father, is affected by loss to regain a damaged reputation, that of her dead brother Anton, who died in apparent infamy during a battle experience. Her uncle Mycroft, who introduces her to the book world, is similar to Jane's uncle John Eyre, who provides her with perfect social position.

Jane Eyre has always been regarded as one of the great feminist classics. The continuous struggle of the poor plain governess to assert her autonomy against the patriarchal society is commonly seen as a model for the development of a feminist consciousness. Actually, patriarchal authority is represented in the characters of John Reed, Rochester, and St. John Rivers.

In *The Eyre Affair*, despite the possibility opened of both Jane and Thursday achieving an implicitly feminist level of autonomy, the novel shows a conservative rather than revolutionary understanding of feminine subjectivity in relation to cultural capital. In addition, while the novel presents a discourse of female knowledge and authority, it suspiciously includes no desires potentially readable as feminist. It frequently highlights feminine subordination to masculine knowledge via romance plots whereby conservative gender roles are validated under the guise of comedy. The female protagonist of *The Eyre Affair* appears to live what popular culture does to Charlotte Brontë and *Jane Eyre* in conflating her with her best known character: gesturing towards feminist discourse while eventually propagating and supporting conservative romantic endings in the service of patriarchal society.

One of the many deviations in *The Eyre Affair* from *Jane Eyre* concerns the ending of this latter. The final romantic union between the blind Rochester and Jane in Brontë's novel does not please Fforde, and pushes him to attribute another ending to *Jane Eyre*. According to Fforde's fictional version, Brontë's novel ends with Jane accompanying St John Rivers to India. Thursday's departure with St. John Rivers to India as his helper means that she does not find love but only a job, the thing that effectively discounts the romantic narrative of Brontë's novel and, in turn, privileges the feminist aspect. By revising the ending of *Jane Eyre*, Fforde's version seems to be the original one and that of Brontë is already an alternative one in the way that "the alternative version of *Jane Eyre* turns out to be the original and our original is depicted as an alternative version" (Berninger & Thomas qtd in Rubik and Mettinger-Schartmann, 2007: 186).

Jane Eyre is interpreted as a gothic romance, a bildungsroman, a feminist novel, a social novel, or an autobiography of Brontë herself, while *The Eyre Affair* displays a postmodern feature that is the blending of genres. It shows similarity to comedy and film scripts that reveal themselves in Fforde's style and plot. It is believed to be a genre busting as it combines elements of the Gothic, realism, romance and fairy tale, as well as detective and science fiction. In fact, in spite of Forde's use of humor and comedy in his novel, his narrative pattern is quite similar to that of Brontë and the rewrite and the source text interweave to the degree that they can rewrite each other. Fforde's comic detective fiction is decidedly postmodern: packed with invented literatures, histories and elements of

popular culture, containing references to the English classics, and subversively using science fiction and fantasy fiction themes.

At last, the permeability between fiction and reality in Fforde's novel can be perceived as a manifestation of the reader's participation in the creation of meaning. In this world, there is a close link between texts and readers who can, and do, mark a change within their chosen literary sphere. *The Eyre Affair* invites the reader to observe how imagination works during the reading process to the point that we can say that the narrative is neither Fforde's nor Thursday's, it is the reader's turn to rewrite it and create meaning.

5. Conclusion

All in all, the recurring interest in this period in particular confirms that Victorian dilemmas are deeply rooted in the contemporary world. In fact, the rewriting of the Victorian seems to mean that "Contemporary fiction seems marked by the imperative of the eternal return. [I]n contemporary fiction, telling becomes compulsory belated, inextricably bound up with retelling" (Connor cited in Moraru, 2001: 03) and that "there is no originality in literature and any literary work can be a repetition, continuation, or mixture of previous texts" (Herischian, 2012: 73). Indeed, the genre has been interpreted both as a kind of postmodern subversion of canonical texts and a new return to these narratives as Harold bloom says "the mighty dead return, but they return in our colors, and speaking in our voices" (1997: 141).

Hence, if contemporary novels revive the Victorian, they do so in a self-reflexive manner recognizing their indebtedness to their Victorian predecessors and appropriating them to expose an echoing relationship between then and now. Truly, the wide gap between the Victorian period and Fforde's alternative 1985 Britain would seem to set obstacles to recreate a fictional past in the fictional present and to trace the similarities between both novels. However, through having a brief study of both novels in terms of plot along with the main character, we could observe that there are many common points, and it is possible to explore the past to address the present. By confirming as well as revising the Victorian original at the same time, Fforde's novel is perceived by most critics as an entertaining tribute to *Jane Eyre*, which reinforces the canon. The attributable ending to Brontë functions as a kind of homage raising the profile of the historical author and offering even more space for speculation concerning authorial meaning, originality, and creativity.

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