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Alternate History and the Normalization of the Traumatic
Past in Philip K. Dick's *The Man in the High Castle*, Len
Deighton's *SS-GB* and Their Television Adaptations

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Abstract

In spite of being a literary genre that has its basis on questioning the consequences of modifying the outcome of a given historical event — an activity that has traditionally been performed since antiquity —, alternate history was not properly defined as such until the mid-1990s, having finally achieved a mainstream status as of the second decade of the 21st century thanks to the popularization of various television adaptations that have alternate history narratives as their source. These novels and their adaptations make display of an ability to portray the way in which the historical events they alter are shaped within the human mind as well as how they are perceived in collective memory.

Consequently, the purpose behind this master's dissertation is to analyse the aforementioned ability in two alternate history novels that have received their own television adaptation in recent years, namely Philip K. Dick's *The Man in the High Castle* (1962) and Len Deighton's *SS-GB* (1978), as well as to study the evolution of the public perception of the historical event that both share as the focus of their divergence in their original narratives and their modern television counterparts: a Nazi victory in World War II. After introducing the essential theoretical framework behind the literary genre, this dissertation will proceed to analyse Dick's *The Man in the High Castle*, focusing on the features that identify it as an alternate history like the rupture of linear time and the reflection upon themes such as necessity, determinism and human agency, to then continue towards its connections with real-world history and the study of the normalization of the traumatic past while placing special attention on how its recent television adaptation has impacted on such process. Immediately afterwards, the same procedure will be applied to Deighton's *SS-GB* and its corresponding television series. Finally, the conclusions of this dissertation will highlight the process of normalization as an ongoing matter of discussion that is definitely enriched by new audiovisual adaptations, as well as alternate history's resourceful nature, that will likely guarantee its continuity as a genre regardless of the medium in which it is produced.

Keywords: alternate history, Nazi victory in World War II, *The Man in the High Castle*, *SS-GB*, television adaptations, normalization.

Index

1. Introduction	5
1.1 Research Statement and Objectives	5
1.2 Methodology and Structure	6
1.3 Theoretical Framework.....	7
1.3.1 Alternate History	7
1.3.2 Points of Divergence and the Rupture of Linear Time.....	10
1.3.3 Necessity, Contingency and Human Agency	13
1.3.4 Connecting Alternate History with the Past and the Present.....	15
1.3.5 World War II in Alternate History	16
1.3.6 Normalization	18
2. Philip K. Dick’s <i>The Man in the High Castle</i> (1962).....	22
2.1 <i>The Man in the High Castle</i> (1962)	22
2.2 The Rupture of Linear Time in <i>The Man in the High Castle</i>	23
2.3 The <i>I Ching</i> Beyond Causality and Linearity	25
2.4 Historicity and the Individual Construction of Reality.....	28
2.5 Free Will vs Determinism in <i>The Man in the High Castle</i>	31
2.6 Connecting <i>The Man in the High Castle</i> with its Past and its Present.....	34
2.7 Normalization and <i>The Man in the High Castle</i> ’s 2015 Television Adaptation ..	38
3. Len Deighton’s <i>SS-GB</i> (1978).....	43
3.1 <i>SS-GB</i> (1978)	43
3.2 The Rupture of Linear Time in <i>SS-GB</i>	44
3.3 A Less Complicated Form of Alternate History	46
3.4 Determinism and Free Will in <i>SS-GB</i> ’s “Great Men” and the British Resistance	49
3.5 Britain’s Past and Present: Its “Finest Hour” and the Fear of Occupation	52
3.6 Normalization and <i>SS-GB</i> ’s 2017 Television Adaptation	56
4. Conclusions	60
Works Cited.....	64

1. Introduction

1.1 Research Statement and Objectives

Among the various literary genres that deal with the creation of dystopian futures that have experienced a significant increase in popularity in recent years, perhaps alternate history has been the one to go unnoticed for the longest time, having received mainstream attention for the first time in recent years. Despite the fact that the volume of research dedicated to the genre has considerably grown over the last two decades, the alternate history field of study remains yet to be explored in depth. In consequence, the aim of this master's dissertation is to prove the value of the alternate history genre as a means of understanding and examining how history is shaped by the human mind as well as how the repercussions of past historical events resonate within collective memory. For this purpose, the dissertation will focus on one of the genre's most recurring themes, the victory of Nazi Germany in World War II, by providing a comparative analysis of Philip K. Dick's *The Man in the High Castle* (1962) and Len Deighton's *SS-GB* (1978). Both novels constitute examples of alternative histories that have achieved a mainstream status which has been reinforced by their television adaptations in recent years. Thus, we may distinguish the following objectives:

- First, this dissertation seeks to study alternate history beyond the realms of social criticism. Thereby, it expects to achieve a perspective that foregrounds the genre as not only a valid source for historiography that may lead scholars to question the ways in which the narrative of history is constructed, in this case by means of the creation of counterfactuals. As mentioned above, we will examine one of the most popular counterfactual scenarios, the hypothetical victory of the Axis Powers in World War II, through the analysis of Dick's *The Man in the High Castle* and Deighton's *SS-GB*.
- Consequently, a second objective involves studying each work in terms of the relationship between the historical and national contexts in which they were produced — the United States in the case of *The Man in the High Castle*, the United Kingdom in the case of *SS-GB* — and their distinct experiences with Nazism, as we consider how such relationship affects the normalization of the traumatic memories of World War II within collective consciousness.
- Lastly, this dissertation will focus once more on the aforementioned normalization and aestheticization of the traumatic past through the more recent television

adaptations of both novels before reaching a final conclusion where the values of *literary* alternate history as a suitable source for the study of memory and historical consciousness will be reaffirmed once more after considering all previous analyses.

1.2 Methodology and Structure

As it has already been stated, a relatively scarce number of scholarly studies have focused on the topic of alternate history, at least until the beginning of the twenty-first century. This dissertation will use several concepts and categorisations devised by some of the most prolific academics who have devoted their careers to the field of alternate history in recent years. Among those scholars we can draw special attention to Gavriel D. Rosenfeld, Professor of History at Fairfield University, Connecticut, and author of several books including *The World Hitler Never Made: Alternate History and the Memory of Nazism* (2005). Various key aspects of his work such as the “normalization” of memory — with special regard to the normalization of the Nazi past — will be essential for the analysis of the novels. Another fundamental work in the development of this dissertation is that of Karen Hellekson, author of “Toward a Taxonomy of the Alternate History” (2000) and *The Alternate History: Refiguring Historical Time* (2001), the first published book-length study of alternate history as literature that analyses the genre under the scope of historiography and the narrative of history. In addition to her own division of the four models of history — eschatological, genetic, entropic and teleological — and the categories of alternate history — nexus stories, true alternate histories and parallel world stories —, Hellekson’s study draws heavily on the work of specialists on fictional and historical narrative, namely Paul Ricoeur and Hayden White. As a result, the ideas developed by these authors will be of equal importance in this thesis.

On this basis, the dissertation will be structured as it follows:

After sections 1.1 (Research Statement and Objectives) and 1.2 (Methodology and Structure), section 1.3 will focus on the theoretical framework that surrounds this dissertation. Such theoretical framework will first cover the definition, history and development of the alternate history genre, as well as its close connection with the memory of Nazism through the use of allohistorical narratives whose basic premise is the victory of Nazi Germany in World War II. Additionally, the various concepts developed by scholars mentioned above will also be discussed in this section.

Chapters 2 and 3 will delve into the analyses of the novels. Philip K. Dick's *The Man in the High Castle* will be the first to be examined, followed by Len Deighton's *SS-GB*. These analyses will consist of a brief introduction to the novels, a breakdown of the relationship of the narratives with historical time, and a close examination of the connection between the historical context in which they were produced and the normalization of the traumatic past. At the end of both analyses, a brief section will be devoted to studying the role of their modern television adaptations in the current progression of the aforementioned normalization. Last of all, chapter 4 will present a final conclusion in which the previous analyses will be revised so as to prove that this dissertation fulfils the objectives proposed.

1.3 Theoretical Framework

1.3.1 Alternate History

In order to establish the theoretical framework for this master's thesis, it seems appropriate to begin by defining what "alternate history" means. However, if there is one thing that most scholars agree upon in this field of research, is that attempting to define and classify alternate history will almost certainly pose a truly demanding challenge. To start with, we may emulate Amy J. Ransom's choice of including Paul Alkon's 1994 definition at the beginning of her article "Warping Time" (258). In Alkon's original article, he states that alternate histories are "essays or narratives exploring the consequences of an imagined divergence from specific historical events" (68). This "imagined divergence" stems from what is most commonly known as "point of divergence", a key feature of alternate history that will be discussed later in this section. Nevertheless, achieving a proper definition for alternate history entails a much more complex examination of its particularities in contrast with other genres. One might even find it under different names depending on the author: "uchronias", "alternative histories", "allohistories", "alternate universes", "parahistories" or "counterfactuals" (Hellekson 3) are among some of the most widely recognized examples, although these terms might also prove problematic since they have intricacies of their own¹.

¹ A case in point is that of the apparently interchangeable adjectives "alternate" and "alternative". Karen Hellekson favours the use of the term "alternate history" over "alternative history" due to the fact that the latter is often used by critics so as to refer to "histories that approach their subject from a non-standard position" (3). Another controversial term would be that of "uchronia", which many academics and casual readers treat as an equivalent of "alternate history", whereas other scholars like Ransom consider uchronia to be a "broader category which includes the construction of past, present and future alternate chronotopes" within which alternate history can be found as a more limited subcategory (260).

For instance, “counterfactual” is often the preferred term to refer to this exploration of the consequences of an imagined divergence in terms of historiography. The question “What if...?” is undoubtedly one that has been asked since antiquity² so as to “establish causal connections and draw moral conclusions in interpreting the past” (Rosenfeld, *Hitler* 5). As a result, counterfactuals, also known within this context as “subjunctive conditionals”, have been used by many historiographers so as to identify such connections and their turning points, notably in cliometrics and economic history (Hellekson 16). Another noteworthy example is that of the applications of counterfactual experiments in the field of international relations, which is explored in depth in Richard Ned Lebow’s book *Forbidden Fruit: Counterfactuals and International Relations* (2010). Nonetheless, their inherently speculative nature is precisely the reason behind many historian’s distrust of counterfactuals as a reliable methodology (Lebow 30). This complex situation with regards to alternate history and its relationship with truth and facts will be further addressed in 1.3.2.

As it was mentioned before, the question “What if...?” has been asked for centuries: not only to be used as a tool for historiography based on speculation, but also for the construction of fictional narratives. In fact, Lebow traces the roots of allohistorical narratives as far back as Homer’s *Iliad*: “Exasperated by years of stalemate, the Greeks were preparing to go home, and would have, Homer tells us, if Hera had not sent Athena down from Olympus to instruct Odysseus to prevent their departure” (222). Since this study deals with the fictional narratives of *The Man in the High Castle* and *SS-GB*, it is fundamental to understand alternate history as a literary phenomenon as well. Published in 1836, Louis-Napoléon Geoffroy-Chateau’s *Napoléon et la conquête du monde 1812-1832, Histoire de la monarchie universelle* is regarded as alternate history’s first novel (Hellekson 13; Lebow 222). But in spite of the occasional appearance of essays and novels over the following decades, alternate history would not become a prominent literary genre until the second half of the twentieth century, once World War II was over and especially since the 1960s (Rosenfeld, *Hitler* 5). Other scholars such as Schneider-Mayerson establish 1995 as the birth year of the genre due to the creation of the Sidewise Awards for Alternate History, which “defined the alternate history as a literary category and became a mechanism to draw and police the borders of the genre”. Interestingly enough, these awards were created by Robert B. Schmunk, Evelyn Leeper and Steven H. Silver, of whom the latter two are well-

² Rosenfeld situates the origins of counterfactual thought alongside with the origins of Western historiography and refers to Greek and Latin historians Herodotus and Livy’s speculations about the possible outcomes of their contemporary historical events in order to exemplify this claim (*Hitler* 5).

recognised science fiction reviewers (64), whereas the “Sidewise” title clearly arose from Murray Leinster’s 1934 short story “Sidewise in Time”, one of the first stories to introduce counterfactual narratives to the world of science fiction (Hellekson 18). While alternate history is generally implied to be a subgenre of science fiction, such assumption may prove deceptive in several cases. Hellekson’s decision to classify alternate history as a branch of science fiction on the basis that “the authors of alternate histories tend to be established science fiction writers” (19) is a somewhat vague approach and has indeed been criticised by Kathleen Singles, who deems her logic “for all intents and purposes problematic” (14). Thus, science fiction should be considered as a distinct genre that may overlap with alternate history, since its narratives do not necessarily always fit the profile and may take the form of a fantasy or traditional novel instead (Schneider-Mayerson 65). This thesis’ second case study *SS-GB* provides a good example in this regard, as it is often identified as a spy thriller and was precisely written by Len Deighton, who gained international recognition as a writer due to his spy fiction novels.

The participation of internationally renowned authors like Deighton in the creation of allohistorical narratives is, according to Hellekson, one of the different manners in which alternate history’s movement towards the mainstream spotlight can be identified, alongside with the increasing publication of books and dissertations that examine the genre (11-12). A glance at the “Works Cited” section of this dissertation is enough to verify her claim, as the number of studies focusing on alternate history has only steadily grown since the publication of Hellekson’s *The Alternate History* in the year 2001. As for the involvement of renowned authors, the genre more than likely reached a peak in 2004 with the publication of *The Plot Against America*, written by multi-award winning author Philip Roth. The third aspect that Hellekson interprets as a sign of alternate history becoming more appealing to the general public is the development of “mass culture reworkings” such as television and film adaptations of its narratives (12). Proof of this can once again be found within this thesis, as the final sections of chapters 2 and 3 will focus on the recent television adaptations of *The Man in the High Castle* and *SS-GB* respectively. Additionally, other popular media that has made use of alternate history for creative purposes is the videogame industry, in which the *Wolfenstein*, *Assassin’s Creed* and *Fallout* series deserve a special mention together with single instalments like *We Happy Few* or *Freedom Fighters* (Stalberg).

In the end, Hellekson’s *The Alternate History* only seems to miss one more essential sign of the genre’s escalating popularity — which can be justified in terms of its relatively

early date of publication. The advent of the 21st century and the rapid spread of the Internet also intervened in the popularization of alternate history in the World Wide Web. It only takes writing “alternate history” in the Google search bar to be able to discover websites like *Uchronia* (Lebow 223), listing “more than 3400 novels, stories, essays, collections, and other printed material involving the “what ifs” of history”³ (Schmunk) or the *AlternateHistory.com* forums where thousands of members can enter all kinds of discussions related to the genre (Singles 1). Lastly, the YouTube phenomenon of the 2010s is neither a stranger to alternate history, since specialised channels such as *AlternateHistoryHub* continue to gather millions of views as of today thanks to their exploration of the “what ifs” that arouse curiosity among viewers.

1.3.2 Points of Divergence and the Rupture of Linear Time

The key to understanding alternate history — both as a tool for historiography and as a literary genre — and the manner in which it differs from other types of fiction related to history is its most distinctive feature, the “imagined divergence” that was previously referred to in Paul Alkon’s definition. In the words of Kathleen Singles:

The most significant claim common to virtually all secondary studies is that alternate histories feature a specific kind of deviation from historical record – what I am calling here the point of divergence: the moment in the narrative of the real past from which the alternative narrative of history runs a different course. The point of divergence is the common denominator and the trait that distinguishes alternate histories from other related genres. (7)

She later expands on this definition by adding that the existence of a point of divergence is not the exclusive defining trait of alternate history against other related genres. Such divergence is most commonly a permanent one; there is no ‘point of convergence’ later in the narrative (81). Thus, this dissertation will make use of the term “point of divergence”, since it is the most commonly used form in scholarly discourse. However, it should be noted that its name may vary depending on the source consulted, giving rise to other names like “Jonbar hinge”⁴ or “nexus point”. The latter is precisely the one used by Karen Hellekson in

³ This information reflects the number provided by *Uchronia* as of October 2020, thus updating Lebow’s 2010 statement (223).

⁴ The term “Jonbar hinge” is an allusion to Jack Williamson’s 1938 novel *The Legion of Time*. Hence the reason why Hellekson considers it an inappropriate designation, as people who are unfamiliar with the story will not be able to grasp its meaning in the first instance (6). Nevertheless, there are a number of fundamental resources which still favour the term — *Wikipedia* being the most popular among them — such as *The Encyclopedia of Science Fiction*, whose entry “Jonbar point” precisely addresses its former connection with Williamson’s novel (Langford, “Jonbar Point”).

The Alternate History, where she establishes a division of alternate histories based upon their points of divergence: the nexus story, which takes place at the moment of divergence, the true alternate history, which takes place after the divergence and the parallel worlds story, which implies the lack of a point of divergence since it is implied that all possible events have occurred (5). The theoretical framework of this thesis is expected to focus on the second type, true alternate history, since both of the novels that are the subject of study fall under this category. These stories focus on causal relationships, that is, they construct a world formulated on the effects stemming from the point of divergence (8). Interestingly, the construction and exploration of these scenarios constitutes one of the major differences between counterfactual history — alternate history as a tool for historiography — and alternate history as a literary genre, since whereas the former is composed of counterfactual statements, the latter creates counterfactual worlds (Singles 95). In other words: “alternate histories (...) not only suggest how the world would be different, but construct a world based on those differences” (92). According to Harry Turtledove, one of the most prolific writers of the genre in the past forty years, this process uses the same world-building technique as science fiction. However, instead of establishing a divergence in the present or in the near future and exploring its consequences in “the more distant future”, alternate history establishes the divergence in “the more distant past” and examines its result in the nearer past and the present (qtd. in Duncan 209).

This toing and froing between the past, the present and the future leads us to the essential notion of linear time. Hellekson relies on Hayden White’s concept of time as a continuum in order to establish the connection between alternate history and linear time: “the very claim to have distinguished a past from a present world of social thought and praxis ... *implies* a conception of the form that knowledge of the present world also must take, insofar as it is *continuous* with that past world” (qtd. in Hellekson 36). This linear conception of time perfectly fits the aforementioned true alternate history and its causal relationships as a rupture in the past creates the divergence from the “original” timeline. Catherine Gallagher represents such rupture in time’s arrow linking cause and effect by proposing the following structure for alternate histories:

Because allo-histories trace out, by some statistical or narrative process, the trajectory of untaken paths, their chronotope, their temporal pattern, resembles a bifurcating line — something like a capital Y. Time’s arrow points upward, through a unified root or trunk of historical development to a juncture at which a rupture occurs and the branches diverge; the juncture is the critical moment (sometimes called the nexus) imagined by the historian.

Branch A (actual history) is generally taken for granted as the implicit comparative ground against which Branch B (counterfactual history) comes into view. (56)

In her study, Singles argues that Gallagher's equation of counterfactual history and alternate history in this context is questionable, suggesting that in any case the 'capital Y' in alternate history would not refer to the world of the alternate history itself, but rather to "the attempt to model the relationship between history and the alternative version presented in the text" (96), or as she states in the following pages, "the reception of alternate history" — since the reader is the one to provide the "text-external narrative of the real past", and thus construct the bifurcation (98). As a result, what Gallagher refers to as 'actual history' in Branch A would instead be what Singles calls "history as the normalized narrative of the real past" (43).

Singles comes to the conclusion that the "'History' in alternate history (...) may be defined as a construct of the text, but one which also refers to and engages with a normalized narrative of the real past" (48). Thus, she argues that a distinction must be made between 'history' as the real past and 'history' as history writing, since the former can only be accessed through the latter. Our knowledge of history will always depend on our own experience of the past and specially on other 'readings' of history such as the ones we may find in textbooks, films, newspaper archives or even oral accounts (45) — that is the reason why the 'history' we find in fictional texts will always correspond to history writing (46-47). Consequently, she defines the 'normalized narrative of the real past' as "a consensus resulting from history writing, cultural memory as well as texts furnished by the alternate history itself" (47), which at the same time is "a culture- and time-specific construct" that implies that the events depicted in alternate histories are those which belong to the contemporary historical consciousness of the public in the place and moment of their publication (55).

In essence, the concepts of the 'normalized narrative of the real past' and 'history' as history writing are closely linked with the idea that fact and fiction often intertwine with each other in several aspects (Lebow 258). Fiction tends to rely on facts in terms of plausibility; in order to make sense to readers, the world of fiction establishes a connection with the real world by operating under the same laws that govern the latter (277). History, on the other hand, mostly relies on narrative; in the words of Karen Hellekson: "The historian, like the fiction writer, ultimately decides what kind of story is told" (20). These notions have been first explored by Paul Ricoeur and the previously mentioned Hayden

White, whose studies remain a benchmark for any scholar who wishes to focus on the relationship between narrativity, alternate history and ‘real past’ history. In his best-known work *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe*, White proposed that history writings “are constructed to tell a story (via narrative) and that the historian is complicitous in this storytelling, not an objective, impartial recorder of events” (Hellekson 25), a suggestion that was not well-received by historians themselves. Accordingly, he also suggested that the same techniques could be used in order to create and analyse both history and fiction (26). Meanwhile, Ricoeur considered that “there can be no thought about time without narrated time” (qtd. in Hellekson 26). Narratives often unfold in chronological order — consisting of beginning, middle and end — and so does history writing, therefore presuming the primacy of linear time while making use of literary conventions (Hellekson 27; Lebow 278).

Subsequently, alternate history’s unconventional representation of the past and its blurring of the boundaries between fact and fiction is attributed by many to the emergence of postmodernism, which has undeniably encouraged the approval of counterfactual thinking while weakening “the traditional dominance of an objectivist, scientific kind of historiography” (Rosenfeld, *Hitler* 7). Schneider-Mayerson acknowledges the role of postmodernism in the popularization of alternate history novels, but nonetheless argues that despite the fact that they display postmodern traits, such novels do not function as postmodern history. Even as they appear to challenge “traditional western notions of historiographical objectivity”, they do not provide a different version of history that clashes with the most authoritative readings — the normalized narrative of the real past — but rather offer a solid, permanent rupture that complies with those readings. In the end, what alternate histories do is to “tell a different story in a traditional way” (67).

1.3.3 Necessity, Contingency and Human Agency

In *Alternate History: Playing with Contingency and Necessity*, Singles precisely discloses yet another particular property of counterfactuals: its recurrent reflection upon the themes of necessity, contingency — and their equivalent “world-views”, determinism and free will respectively — as well as human agency, which are all closely related to the principles of cause and effect that pervade alternate histories. Whereas necessity and determinism admit one single outcome for a given event, contingency and free will focus on the various potential

outcomes for it, thus always admitting more than one possible consequence for the event in question (130). Subsequently, Singles comes to the conclusion that “[t]he point of divergence relies upon the principle of contingency, while the continuing variance from the normalized narrative of the real past — that is, the rest of the narrative — relies on the principle of necessity” (133). On the one hand, strict notions of cause and effect are essential in alternate histories so as to provide the alternative outcome with a solid linear path “to show that the alteration of the event truly produces a world different from the one that we know”; however, such approach clashes with the so-called ‘it-could-have-been-different’ standpoint of counterfactuals, which is unquestionably founded on the principles of free will⁵. Hence the reason why alternate history’s defining trait, the point of divergence, is the place where contingency may ultimately be found and where human agency indeed marks the difference (131).

In consequence, alternate history writers have a tendency to select wars and battles as their points of divergence due to their contingent nature. Gallagher argues that the primacy of the theme of war can be ascribed to the belief that wars are “full of unpredictable turning points, meeting the criteria of both contingency and plausibility” (57). In addition to this, Schneider-Mayerson alludes to the aforementioned tendency to choose historical events involving war as the point of divergence as he examines their recurrence in the winners and runner-ups for the Sidewise Awards from 1995 to 2007, forty-four novels in total. He comes to the realisation that of the 29 novels that fit the profile of a true alternate history, 24 feature a point of divergence that is “either a different outcome of a military confrontation or a decision made by a powerful (and still well-known) individual” (72). The latter example highlights the potential of human agency in alternate history, where conscious human actions reflect the principle of contingency and create the point of divergence (Gallagher 57), as well as the frequent association of counterfactuals with the so-called “great man theory”. This theory, which is believed to have developed in the nineteenth-century thanks to the Scottish philosopher Thomas Carlyle, assumes that “[t]he history of the world is but the biography of great men” (qtd. in Schneider-Mayerson 72), an idea present to a greater or lesser extent in the novels examined in this dissertation. These great men are often political and military

⁵ Rosenfeld argues that alternate history can indeed come to deterministic conclusions. He uses the question of whether or not the world would have been a better place under the condition that Hitler had never existed as an example: on the one hand, the absence of such figure may be regarded as an improvement in world history; on the other hand, there is the possibility of citing structural factors such as imperialism or nationalist movements deterministically to prove that a conflict of international dimensions would have happened nonetheless (*Hitler* 401n20).

figures that belong to a general historical knowledge that is present in the normalized narrative of the real past: Napoleon Bonaparte, Adolf Hitler, Winston Churchill or Franklin D. Roosevelt are among the most recurrent historical figures upon which the various points of divergence — as well as the possibilities of contingency and the future of mankind — rely (Singles 57).

1.3.4 Connecting Alternate History with the Past and the Present

Since wars are undeniably the preferred nexus in alternate histories due to their special relevance in the normalized narrative of the real past, there are specific alternative outcomes that enjoy a greater popularity than others. Gavriel Rosenfeld identifies three historical events as the most popular in the alternate history genre, namely “the Nazis winning World War II, the South winning the Civil War, and the American Revolution failing to occur” (“What If?” 94). The recurrence of these themes may be explained first by the primacy of the aforementioned events within the dominant Anglo-American tradition, as in spite of the fact that alternate histories of the Third Reich have appeared in most continents, the majority of works have been produced in only three countries: Great Britain, the United States and Germany. In fact, the former two have created the 80 percent of these allohistorical accounts, most likely due to the fact that they were among the victors of World War II (*Hitler* 15). Secondly, the “inherently presentist” character of alternate histories may also explain such recurrence. The qualifier “presentist” refers to alternate history’s ability to use the normalized narrative of the real past in order to offer a commentary upon the concerns of the present, thus reflecting the author’s own concerns about it. Rosenfeld consequently distinguishes two main scenarios that use historical events aiming to comment upon the present: fantasy scenarios — which tend to align with a more liberal political stance and “express a sense of dissatisfaction with the way things are today [at the moment of publication]” as they portray a version of the past that is noticeably superior to the present — and nightmare scenarios — which tend to align with a more conservative stance and “express a sense of contentment with the status quo” as they portray a version of the past that is inferior to the present. Whereas fantasy scenarios often convey anxieties about the present world and a desire to change it, nightmare scenarios reject such change as they praise the present. Yet this is not always the case, as Rosenfeld warns: “[n]ightmare scenarios can be used for the liberal purpose of critique, while fantasy scenarios can tend towards a conservative form of escapism” (“What If?” 93).

It must be noted, however, that despite sharing this strong connection to the present, alternate history is not isolated from the past by any means. In fact, besides its ability to comment upon the present, the genre is also able to demonstrate the evolution of historical memory since the “[s]peculative accounts about the past are driven by many of the same psychological forces that determine how the past takes shape in remembrance”. Since the end of World War II, most stories following similar patterns in their representation of the normalized narrative of the real past have appeared in waves during particular periods of time, consequently illustrating “*collective* speculative trends” that reflect how the past is regarded by society (93-94). It can thus be concluded that alternate history has the ability to reveal both the author’s views on the present and society’s memories about the past at the time of publication. This will be examined in more depth in the upcoming section, as well as in chapters 2 and 3 of this dissertation.

1.3.5 World War II in Alternate History

As it was previously mentioned in 1.3.1, alternate history experienced a notable increase in popularity during the second half of the twentieth century. Ever since then, the most studied theme both in counterfactual exploration and literary fiction has undoubtedly been a hypothetical Nazi victory in World War II. As a matter of fact, writers have speculated about the possibilities of this outcome even before the beginning of the war, being this the case of works such as Katharine Burdekin’s *Swastika Night* (1937), as well as during the war, like Douglas Brown and Christopher Serpell’s *Loss of Eden* (1940). It should be stressed, however, that this kind of fiction — commonly referred to as “future war stories” — does not belong to the realm of alternate history, since the novels were written during the event, thus implying the absence of the normalized narrative of the real past, and therefore the lack of a point of divergence⁶ (Clute, “Hitler Wins”).

In *The World Hitler Never Made*, Rosenfeld identifies four recurrent types of story within this theme:

[T]ales in which: 1) the Nazis win World War II; 2) Hitler escapes death in 1945 and survives in hiding well into the postwar era; 3) Hitler is removed from the world historical stage either before or some time after becoming the Führer; 4) the Holocaust is completed, avenged, or undone altogether. The predominance of these four themes is significant, for it not only

⁶ In the “Hitler Wins” entry of *The Encyclopedia of Science Fiction*, John Clute expressly criticizes Rosenfeld’s inclusion of future war stories in his examination of various hypothetical Nazi victories in *The World Hitler Never Made: Alternate History and the Memory of Nazism* (2005) for this very reason.

suggests their resonance within the Western imagination but enables us to impose some conceptual order on what otherwise would be a bewilderingly diverse range of works. (13)

As can be noted from this observation, the figure of Hitler is key in the establishment of at least two of these types of story and most likely a meaningful presence in the other two, thus acknowledging him as one of the “great men” belonging to general historical knowledge that were discussed in 1.3.3. Contrastingly, Richard J. Evans uses Stephen Fry’s *Making History* (1996) as an example of how Hitler’s influence in the course of history may be diminished by the author’s personal decision to “pin the blame on the German people” instead (ch.3). As it will be proved through the analyses of the novels in the following chapters of the dissertation, Hitler will not always be the main driving force of evil in a Nazi-dominated setting — for instance, the author might choose to question the collaboration of the people under occupation themselves like Deighton does in *SS-GB*, or make Hitler become an incapacitated puppet for the rest of the Nazi Party officials, like Dick does in *The Man in the High Castle*.

As for the reasoning behind the massive popularity of the theme of a Nazi victory, Evans begins by remarking the unique features that favour the interest on Nazism over other controversial ideologies such as Communism. Whereas supporters of Nazism have become “a tiny, publicly reviled minority” since the end of World War II, Soviet-style Communism remained in power, gathering mass European-wide support until the 1990s at the very least — thus making it pointless to explore an alternate past in which Stalin does not die in 1953 or invades Western Europe, since the post-war experience of Communism already allows the public to infer how the outcome would have been. As a result, Nazism has become the long-standing epitome of evil in Western consciousness, in Evans’ words “the most extreme example of so many things civilization deploras, from racism and genocide to international aggression, warmongering and dictatorship” (ch.3). Following these remarks, he examines the Anglo-American dominance that Rosenfeld had previously noted (*Hitler* 15), implying that the fact that both British and Americans were on the winning side of the war has provided the two of them with “a sense of excitement generated by reminders of how narrow their escape from defeat perhaps was, and what a Nazi victory might have entailed”. Evans also alludes to the worldwide prominence of the Hollywood film industry and the cultural influence of English-language literature, which have effectively allowed Anglo-American authors to unleash the scenarios created by the aforementioned sense of excitement. Furthermore, he also adds another reason: the British and the Americans, unlike other nations such as the French or the Italians, were not under enemy occupation during the war. This

leaves a space for speculation in Anglo-American fiction that is impossible to find in French or Italian fiction, as they experienced the horrors of a Nazi occupation “in the most direct possible way” (Evans ch.3).

Meanwhile, Rosenfeld once again attributes the subject’s popularity to alternate history’s presentist character as he studies the shifts in the representation of a Nazi victory in World War II over time, from fantasy to nightmare scenarios depending on the particular trends in Britain and the United States at the time of publication⁷. He locates the first alternate histories dealing with this theme during the late 1940s and early 1950s and almost exclusively in Britain, where the consequences of a Nazi victory were represented as nightmarish in order to foreground “the belief that the British people’s real historical resistance against the Germans constituted what Winston Churchill called their ‘finest hour’”. The first American allohistories that appeared in the late 1950s and early 1960s — coinciding with the trial of Adolf Eichmann, the event that brought international attention back to the crimes committed during World War II — also depicted such victory in a dreadful manner so as to support the government’s decision to intervene in the war. However, from the second half of the 1960s onwards the “self-congratulatory” trend shifted into a “self-critical” one after both Britain and the United States underwent crisis periods that changed the authors’ views on their nations. Consequently, the depictions of a Nazi victory became less gruesome in favour of the criticism of their corresponding nation’s decline. Then, during the 1980s and especially since the end of the Cold War in 1989, the inclination towards self-criticism would gradually disappear but not entirely, since the alternate histories published from that moment onwards would not follow any specific trend (Rosenfeld, *Hitler* 31, 32). According to Rosenfeld, these shifts in the role that alternate histories have played in the collective consciousness of Britain and the United States point towards a process of “normalization” (33), a concept that will be discussed in the following section.

1.3.6 Normalization

One of Rosenfeld’s main objectives in *The World Hitler Never Made* is to prove that a “normalization” of the Third Reich within Western collective consciousness can be observed through the evolution of such representations of the past in alternate histories. He gives a

⁷ He also studies this phenomenon within German allohistories, but those will not be addressed as they bear no specific interest for this dissertation.

basic definition for the term that refers to it as “the process by which a particular historical legacy (...) becomes viewed like any other”. On the basis that most periods of history are regarded by the public in virtually equal terms, he introduces the existence of “abnormal pasts”, that is, periods of history that resist normalization due to the incommensurate occurrence of their events within a collective consciousness (16). The Third Reich is considered to be among these abnormal pasts for a number of reasons, such as its presence in the very recent past and therefore its survival within “living ‘communicative memory’” — a term that “refers to the oral transmission and preservation of original eye-witness recollections of the past” (17), a possibility that is still plausible in the context of World War II —, as well as its extreme degree of criminality. Hence the call for morality that could be found in earlier examples of alternate history where Nazis were depicted as the purest form of evil (18). However, the later appearance of different perspectives over time leads Rosenfeld to distinguish two separate eras: the era of moralism — that lasts from the end of the War to the mid-1960s — which is characterised by its judgemental perspective and the era of normalization. The latter, lasting from the late 1960s to the present day, is characterised by the periods of social, political and economic crises that first overshadowed the Nazi past and whose favourable resolution then created a new sense of triumphalism and optimism that “further eroded the horror of Nazism in certain works of alternate history”, alongside with the tendency towards self-criticism that was already present in the genre; a dual phenomenon that is present at least until the turn of the century (23, 24).

This shift was not only provoked by organic normalization⁸ over time, but also by a series of particular motives. Rosenfeld draws attention to the change of focus that took place during the 70s and the 80s, which brought forward an “aesthetic interest in [the Nazi regime’s] bombastic style and a prurient interest in its lurid projections of sex and violence”, as well as a new streak of fascination with the figure of Adolf Hitler (18-19). Another prominent form of aestheticization is the representation of the Third Reich in terms of humour, a trend that has been undermining the previous moralistic perspective ever since the 1990s. In addition to the aestheticization of Nazism, Rosenfeld refers to the relativization of the high degree of criminality during the Nazi era in an effort to heal the German people’s sense of national identity (19) as well as to the universalization of its significance by scholars

⁸ A phenomenon driven by the passage of time, by which a normalized perspective of a certain historical event is born out of “the gradual disappearance of older generations that personally experienced certain historical events, and the slow maturation of new generations bearing a less personal — and thus potentially more indifferent — relationship to those events” (17).

attempting to “historicize” the period — a process that involves the placement of a historical event “in its larger historical context” and the use of generalizing theories so as to expose said event to rational analysis, thus neglecting its particularities as a historical event as well as its “unique German dimensions” (20, 21).

Nevertheless, not all scholars agree with these statements. That is the case for Kathleen Singles. Even though she agrees upon the fact that humorous representations trivialize the criminality and suffering brought by the Third Reich, she emphasises the differences between Rosenfeld’s concept of normalization and the concept of normalization that is to be found within her definition of the “normalized narrative of the real past”; for instance, the former gives special prominence to the “profanation and banalization of the history of the Third Reich” and the necessity to be aware of the striking emergence of this process in alternate history. Contrastingly, Singles claims the opposite: what alternate histories do is to “support traditional, if simplified, notions of the past” (47n65). On the other hand, Richard J. Evans also puts Rosenfeld’s assertions into question. He does, however, notice a shift in the representation of Germans from the mid-1960s onwards, propelled by a new mindset within the British post-war generation, as well as by symbolic events such as the Queen’s 1965 state visit to West Germany (ch.3). Furthermore, whereas Rosenfeld spoke of the “Hitler Wave” of the 1970s (*Hitler* 19), Evans identifies a correspondence during the same period between the tendency to humanize the Germans and a “widespread admiration (...) for the supposed German qualities of efficiency, hard work, and entrepreneurship that the British would do well to emulate” as a result of the pessimistic mood that afflicted Britain at the time.

Be that as it may, Evans stresses several flaws in Rosenfeld’s assertions. He overtly criticises the constant repetition of the argument of normalization and deems it “a massive oversimplification” which, for instance, ignores the “sharp deterioration of British attitudes toward Germany in the 1990s” that characterized Eurosceptic alternate histories during this period. Moreover, he also deems Rosenfeld’s concept of normalization as “fundamentally meaningless” because “what is ‘normal’ is normal only in a given historical context”, and also because it expects that once an event has become “normal” — thus abandoning its classification as an “abnormal past” — it will remain that way from that moment onwards, making it a “metaphysical” concept which cannot be tested by empirical investigation rather than a “historical” one. Lastly, Evans summarises his criticism of Rosenfeld’s argumentations by reminding the reader of his failure to set alternate histories “in their proper

historical context” in addition to the fact that such context could never follow the “single, predictable linear development toward the ‘normal’” as Rosenfeld would expect it to do; instead experiencing “unpredictable twists and turns” over time (ch.3). The reality of this phenomenon will be further addressed in the sections dedicated to the more recent television adaptations of *The Man in the High Castle* and *SS-GB* in chapters 2 and 3.

2. Philip K. Dick's *The Man in the High Castle* (1962)

2.1 *The Man in the High Castle* (1962)

The Man in the High Castle is an alternate history written by the American author Philip K. Dick, one of the most prolific writers in the history of the science fiction genre. Considered to be one of Dick's greatest works, it depicts a world in which the Allies lost World War II and the United States is occupied and divided by Nazi Germany, which now dominates the eastern side of the country, and Japan, which has taken control over the Pacific States, while a neutral buffer zone remains in the Rocky Mountain States. As it was noted in the previous chapter, before the foundation of the Sidewise Awards in 1995, alternate history had already experienced its first boost as a literary genre after the end of World War II, notably in the 1960s (Rosenfeld, *Hitler* 5). This precisely applies to *The Man in the High Castle*, which was published in 1962 — the same year in which the alternate history is set —, mainly receiving positive reviews and most importantly, being granted the highly regarded Hugo Award for Best Novel of 1962 at the World Science Fiction Convention (115).

The participation of internationally renowned authors in the genre has also been mentioned before as one of the most important proofs of alternate history's movement towards the mainstream (Hellekson 12), therefore making Dick one of the first and most paradigmatic examples of such phenomenon due to his status as an incredibly popular author within the realm of science fiction. Not only on the basis of the popularity of his own works per se, but also owing to the influence of his literary legacy in latter media — including audience favourite films like *The Matrix* or *Inception*, numerous webpages, fan sites and the creation of the Philip K. Dick Award to the best original science fiction paperback by the 'Philip K. Dick Trust' — the author has undoubtedly contributed to the establishment of alternate history as a popular genre through the creation of *The Man in the High Castle* (Singles 147). Perhaps the greatest example of the long-lasting aspects of his legacy lies precisely on the 2015 Amazon television adaptation of the novel, whose pilot episode became nothing less than Amazon's most watched program ever — as of July 2016, the date in which Mountfort's article was published (Mountfort 287). Furthermore, Kim Stanley Robinson appreciates Dick's decision to focus only on the topic of alternate history rather than adding various elements as he used to do before *High Castle*, thus identifying the novel as a milestone in Dick's career that supposed a "quantum leap in quality" from his previous

works (39). He also identifies other qualities that favoured this increase in quality, namely the fact that *High Castle* is longer than his earlier novels and has a noticeably reduced number of characters, consequently endowing it with a greater depth of characterization, as well as a shift from the author's previous tendency to have his characters overthrow the dystopia to a novel in which there are no "wish fulfilments" and characters may only aspire to "the holding action of keeping things from getting immeasurably worse". In addition to this, Robinson notes yet another key change, as in his previous stories "the scheme for the character system presented all of the characters in a circular fashion around the little protagonist, for what happened to him affected the whole world", but in *High Castle* the reader is presented with a plot that bears more resemblance to the paradigm of realism as it is distinguished by an interweaving of characters — such as Nobusuke Tagomi, Robert Childan, Frank Frink and Juliana Frink — who could be considered the protagonists of their own individual plots, which occasionally coincide with the other characters' plots (39 – 40). This interweaving of characters, one of *High Castle*'s most unique features, will be further discussed in the study of human agency in the novel.

2.2 The Rupture of Linear Time in *The Man in the High Castle*

Since Dick is best known for his invaluable contributions to the science fiction genre, it would be essential for this dissertation to identify the aspects of *The Man in the High Castle* that make it an alternate history in its own right. The novel's basic premise stems from the Axis powers' victory in World War II, but in order to be able to classify it as an alternate history, it is necessary to locate its actual point of divergence. According to Hellekson's classification of alternate histories in terms of their nexus points, *High Castle* is to be considered a "true alternate history", as it takes place in the "present" — an alternative 1962 — years after the event of its point of divergence, resulting in a thoroughly changed world (7 - 8). Interestingly, Hellekson later states that the novel may also be linked to the "parallel worlds story" as a consequence of the unique, personal constructions of reality present in it (64). This line of thought has also been supported by other scholars such as Paul Mountfort, who concludes that "aided and abetted by the ancient Chinese 'Book of Changes,' Dick produced what is perhaps the ultimate infinite uchronia novel" (306). But before this dissertation delves into the complexities created by the aforementioned "Book of Changes", it will focus on the most basic level at which the normalized narrative of the real past is disrupted in *High Castle*.

From the very beginning of the narrative, Dick provides the reader with a substantial number of evidences pointing towards a prior rupture of the normalized narrative of the real past that has produced a radically different scenario. Singles notes that the fact that the world depicted in *High Castle*'s 1962 differs from that of the 1962 in which the novel was published becomes obvious from the very first sentence of the novel, as the “Rocky Mountain States” are mentioned. Immediately afterwards, Robert Childan’s submissive behaviour towards his Japanese customers, in this case Mr. Tagomi, presents further evidence of a different society. Moreover, as the narrator begins to reveal more information about Childan, the reader is equally provided with more evidence pointing towards, in Singles’ words, “the otherness of the fictional world” (149): “He was thirty-eight years old, and he could remember the prewar days, the other times. Franklin D. Roosevelt and the World’s Fair; the former better world” (Dick 2). This reference to Roosevelt constitutes a first clue about the point of divergence, although *High Castle* presents such events in a subtler manner that goes beyond the explicit narration of the event, as instead of portraying the divergence directly, Dick offers glimpses into the main character’s lives interwoven with various illustrations of their world’s current concern — the power struggle for the chancellery of Nazi Germany that is being caused by Führer Martin Bormann’s imminent death (Singles 148 – 149).

The reader eventually discovers that in the world of *High Castle*, unlike in his/her world, Giuseppe Zangara’s assassination attempt on Franklin D. Roosevelt in 1933 proved successful, as confirmed by Rita and Wyndham-Matson’s conversation in chapter 5: “One of those two Zippo lighters was in Franklin D. Roosevelt’s pocket when he was assassinated” (Dick 54), “If Joe Zangara had missed him, he would have pulled America out of the Depression” (56). Subsequently, this assassination unleashed a series of upshots such as the United States never recovering from the Depression and establishing an isolationist government, which ultimately resulted in the Allies’ capitulation in 1947 (Dick 6). Thus, the death of one man becomes the cause of a radically different outcome of World War II, producing a rupture with the normalized narrative of the real past and clearly complying with the “great man theory” that was discussed in 1.3.3 (“Necessity, Contingency and Human Agency”). Additionally, Robinson observes a second change, “one that is not contingent upon the first, so that it takes two shifts to alter history in the way Dick has”. This change involves altering Hitler’s former decision of bombing the cities during the Battle of Britain — a small but decisive choice according to many historians — so that in *High Castle*'s 1940

Herman Göring succeeds in convincing him to let the Luftwaffe bomb the radar stations and eliminate the RAF instead (Robinson 42; Dick 66). This second divergence was likely inspired by the counterfactual scenario of a Nazi invasion of Britain that William L. Shirer included in his international bestseller *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich*, which Dick explicitly mentions among the Acknowledgements in *High Castle* (Spedo 126 – 127; Dick *High Castle*).

2.3 The *I Ching* Beyond Causality and Linearity

Even though the novel complies with the linear narration and the notions of causality that pervade true alternate histories, Dick was able to find “often-subtle ways of playing with time” within that linearity (Van Wyk, “Cold War” 218), as well as to introduce certain elements that add new complexities in terms of the structuring of reality in the novel. The element in *The Man in the High Castle* that has undoubtedly sparked the most interest among scholars is the *I Ching* or “Book of Changes”; in fact, an examination of its role within the novel is virtually mandatory in every analysis due to the great impact it has in both the structure and the plot. In “The *I Ching* and Philip K. Dick’s *The Man in the High Castle*” — an article that is dedicated in its entirety to the analysis of the impact of the oracle in the novel — Paul Mountfort acknowledges it as “the device that, literally and figuratively, unifies the stylistic and philosophical dimensions of the novel, leaving us with a sophisticated postmodern fiction that explores the boundaries of text and world, their overlappings and multiplicities” (287). Therefore, in order to disclose *The Man in the High Castle*’s intricacies in the best possible manner, this section will approach the particularities of the *I Ching*.

The *I Ching*, also known as the “Book of Changes”, has been a predominant item in Chinese culture for over 3000 years, serving a wide range of purposes, from the administration of state affairs during the Zhou dynasty (1100-400 BCE) to “self-cultivation” during the Warring States Period (500-200 BCE); it eventually became one of the most influential Chinese classics of all time — in spite of its fading away in its country of origin after the Cultural Revolution —, especially in the Western world after Richard Wilhelm produced the first European-language translation in 1927 and, most importantly, Cary Bayne’s English translation, which was based off Wilhelm’s and published in 1950 (Mountfort 289-290). In the world of *High Castle*, the *I Ching* is already a part of daily life

for citizens living under Japanese control in the Pacific States, not only for those of Asian origin but also for many of the Americans that formerly lived in the area. In fact, the first character to be shown using the Book of Changes is Frank Frink, who consults the oracle so as to know how to approach his boss Wyndham-Matson “in order to come to decent terms with him” as well as to know whether he will see his ex-wife Juliana again (Dick 9-10). A fact that most scholars consider fascinating is Dick’s own use of the text; indeed, it is known that the practices involving the *I Ching* were notably popular in the San Francisco Bay area counterculture during the late 1950s (Mountfort 289), and Dick was seemingly aware of it since he chose to arrange his own novel in accordance with the oracle, posing the pertinent questions “at various critical junctures” in the writing process of *High Castle* so as to apply the results to the character’s own consultations and following movements (291).

The mechanisms employed by the *I Ching* might seem too complex to be understood at first, however, in order to clarify how the oracle is used, Mountfort offers the following explanation:

When a questioner consults the *I Ching*, he or she will receive one of its 64 hexagrams, six-line graphs generated according to a randomizing mechanism (traditionally the manipulation of yarrow stalks and, later, the so-called “coin oracle” method of tossing three coins six times). In any given consultation, the questioner may receive from one to six “changing lines.” These changing lines, which carry staccato divinatory verses of an oracular nature, are read as supplementary commentaries to the general text associated with the hexagram, and also “transform” the original hexagram into a “secondary” one that represents the likely outcome of the situation. If there are no changing lines (and thus no secondary hexagram), the situation is said to be “static,” with no change in the foreseeable future (290).

Additionally, Mountfort refers to a complementary text, the *Ta Chuan*, which describes the *I Ching* as “a living document, a microcosm that encompasses the universe and its macrocosmic cycles”, which contain “the tropes of human history”. As a consequence of the inclusion of such tropes, the oracle’s mechanisms are derived from not a linear, but a cyclical notion of time, “in that archetypes of key, formative events or situations are seen to repeat themselves through recurrent patterns of change” (290). Furthermore, the text would display a synchronistic view of time and history as well (291), an idea that is shared by Karl van Wyk, who at the same time draws on the ideas developed by Hellekson and Ransom to foreground the presence of these cyclical and synchronistic notions of time in *High Castle* itself (“Cold War” 220). On the one hand, Hellekson states that “[a]lternate histories work by dissociating the text from repetition, which means that memory does not help us make sense of events” because in this case the existence of a point of divergence prior to the moment of narration implies that Dick has invalidated the function of memory with which

alternate history essentially fiddles (67). Consequently, the repetition that is born out of the alternative outcome of a historical event does not reassess the past but instead refigures it (68). At the same time, Van Wyk considers that Hellekson's examination of temporality in *High Castle* complements Ransom's views in "Warping Time", where she applies Frederic Jameson's suggestion that the reigning notion of diachronic causality in alternate history is threatened by the inherent synchronicity of postmodern thought to the *uchronie québécoise*, a variant within alternate history that she identifies as particular to Quebec from the 1980s to the early 2000s (Ransom 262). Subsequently, in the same manner as Ransom applies the idea to her *uchronie québécoise*, Van Wyk deems it suitable to *High Castle*, in which the aforementioned disruptions create an overall uncertainty with regards to the novel's sense of causality ("Cold War" 220).

Therefore, the *I Ching* serves as the main source of this uncertainty in *The Man in the High Castle*. It is not until the final chapters of the novel that the reader is able to realize that its influence goes beyond simple predictions or decision-making; in fact, the oracle participates in Dick's questioning of reality. As Mountfort notes, the hexagram sixty-one, also known as 'Chung Fu'/'Inner Truth' appears twice in the last consultations made by Tagomi and Juliana, both at critical moments in which their sense of reality is revealed as extremely fragile (303). First, Tagomi consults the oracle after his brief slippage into an alternative San Francisco —the reader's San Francisco, as it is seemingly proved by the presence of the Embarcadero Freeway⁹ (Dick 204) — and later, only after having his heart attack is the answer revealed: "Inner Truth" (212). Secondly, once Juliana arrives at the Abendsens', the truth about *The Grasshopper Lies Heavy* — the metafictional book in *High Castle* where the Allies do win World War II, nonetheless resulting in a completely different outcome from that which the reader knows since the United States and the British Empire (instead of the Soviet Union) come to power, with the latter ultimately conquering the former — comes to light. Abendsen, in an act that clearly mirrors Dick's own procedures (Singles 157), wrote *The Grasshopper* by making thousands of choices following the oracle's answers (Dick 225). Having confirmed her suspicions, Juliana resorts to the *I Ching* in order to ask the oracle itself why it wrote the book, also receiving the 'Inner Truth' hexagram as a response, which she interprets as a sign that reveals *The Grasshopper* as the "real" world.

⁹ Dick confirmed it to be "our" world in a letter to Peter Fitting in 1974 (Mountfort 307n9).

Thus, the universe of *High Castle* is the fake one, meaning that Japan and Germany lost the war (227).

The *I Ching*'s revelation creates a set of different realities. Umberto Rossi first classifies them by distinguishing three textual levels, “the *fictional* reality described (or built) in the novel, the *hyper-fictional* reality that is alternative to that fictional reality, and the reality of the reader”, to which he applies the designations used by Carlo Pagetti: primary text, secondary text and zero text, respectively (403). In the case of *High Castle*, Rossi identifies the primary text with the main narrative of the novel in which Germany and Japan were the victors of World War II; the secondary text therefore corresponds to the hyper-fictional world of *The Grasshopper Lies Heavy* in which the British Empire and the United States defeat Nazi Germany (406). What the *I Ching* does, if Juliana's interpretation is to be considered as the truth, is to split the zero text into two, producing what Rossi calls the “‘accepted’ zero text — history as known by the reader, with the United States and the Soviet Union winning World War II — that the oracle declares false, and an “alternative zero text” — that coincides with the secondary text — which is “endowed with the ‘inner truth’” (407). In the end, Dick provides the negation of all three histories, as the ‘Inner Truth’ negates the reality of *High Castle* as well as our own, whereas the reader's knowledge of *The Grasshopper*'s hyper-fictional nature can only regard the oracle's response “in negative form” (Lison 60). However, Van Wyk remarks the mistake made by Juliana, which the reader should also take into consideration while reading *High Castle*: that alternate history “serves as a commentary on, not a denial of the world they inhabit” (“Cold War” 236).

2.4 Historicity and the Individual Construction of Reality

It comes as no surprise that Dick has been referred to as “the poet of alternate (and illusory) realities, of altered states of consciousness, of simulacra and fakery”, since the author had an obvious interest in the various forms of simulation, which are present in most of his works (Rossi 399). The fake and the real have a tendency to intertwine in his narrative, and *High Castle* is not an exception. As Giampaolo Spedo points out, in a world characterized by uncertainty such as the one of Dick's novel, the characters' identities and their allegiances are constantly shifting in order to protect themselves or to accomplish their secret goals — e.g. General Tedeki's incognito name “Mr Yatabe” (Dick 162) as well as Rudolf Wegener's “Mr Baynes” (35), “Joe Cinadella” being the undercover identity of a Swiss agent of the

Nazi secret police (183), Juliana being identified as “Mrs Cinadella” (218), or characters like Frank slightly modifying his surnames from “Fink” to “Frink” in order not to reveal their Jewish ancestry (53) — whereas some make display of “complex, ambiguous and mirroring cultural attitudes” (Spedo 130). However, one of *High Castle*’s most noticeable ways of playing with the fake and the real is what Rossi identifies as its particular form of simulation: forgery (399).

In the novel, many of the main characters are connected through the manufacturing and purchasing of objects: namely Americana artefacts which are produced by the W.-M. Corporation, for whom Frank works, in order to be sold in the wholesale art object market through shops like Childan’s ‘American Artistic Handcrafts Inc.’ to Japanese collectors such as the Kasouras or Mr. Tagomi. As a result, most of the fake objects can be found circulating in the market alongside the real ones without sellers and collectors noticing the difference (Dick 40). Hellekson notices that what forgers are doing is to “replicate and repeat the past” without a purpose since their contextual content is lost in the process, while Japanese collectors could never be able to engage in such repetition of the past, as they belong to a different milieu. Moreover, she adds the following:

The Japanese living in America and the tradesmen who meet their needs want authenticity. They wish to own a piece of the past that existed while that past existed. They wish to have a piece of the past in the present. Fake artifacts (...) link the present and the past in that something is made in the present in order to evoke the past. This parallels the characters’ interest in owning, but not necessarily understanding, the past. Japanese investors desire the history that goes along with the object; however, the history is not implicitly present in the object but constructed by the beholder, often using input learned from another source. (68-69)

Subsequently, Dick discusses the matter of authenticity through the words of Wyndham-Matson, the owner of the corporation that manufactures the fake artefacts. He introduces the reader to the concept of “historicity”, which is described as “[w]hen a thing has history in it”, a hypothetical “aura” that surrounds the pieces that belong to the past. In order to illustrate his claims, Wyndham-Matson presents two identical Zippo lighters whose only difference stems from the fact that one was allegedly placed in Franklin D. Roosevelt’s pocket at the moment of his assassination while the other was not; however, there is no way to prove such claim except for a document proving its authenticity — which ironically has the same potential to be fake as the Zippo lighters (Dick 54). In George Slusser’s words, “[t]he lighter, then, makes historical claims to a world whose sense of history is dubious at best” (192). In addition to the idea of historicity, Dick introduces yet another concept that is to be found within EdFrank’s modern, original jewelry: “*wu*”. Slusser notes that history in

The Man in the High Castle “is made to function so as to undo its own fixity”, since when a thing is fixed, it is then allowed to replicate; it is during this process of replication that an object loses its authenticity (194). EdFrank’s jewelry is therefore different from Wyndham-Matson’s replicas, because the pieces have what Paul Kasoura defines as “*wu*”, an ethereal value that lacks historicity, as well as artistic or aesthetic worth (Dick 154). Nonetheless, Hellekson argues that the jewelry possessing *wu* will indeed possess historicity too, due to “the pieces’ intrinsic quality” to which she adds John Huntington’s words: “the value of the artifact with *wu* exists absolutely and needs no certification” (qtd. in Hellekson 71). That is why Robert Childan ultimately rejects Paul Kasoura’s offer to mass-produce the pieces to be sold as good-luck charms for the people of Latin America and the Orient: massive replication will ruin the objects’ authenticity infused by the work of American artisans (Dick 161).

However, what Dick was trying to convey through the concept of historicity goes beyond simple forgery, as historicity also exposes the power of the human mind to create meaningfulness and to produce history, time and space (Hellekson 72, 73). The essential key characters in this case are Hawthorne Abendsen and Mr. Tagomi. On the one hand, Abendsen has “embraced the world of replication” (Slusser 197). When Juliana obtains the “Inner Truth” hexagram as a result of consulting the *I Ching*, she understands that *The Grasshopper* is the real world while theirs is the fake one; however, as Slusser notices, Abendsen refuses to “commit himself as author to history” and asks Juliana whether she wants him to sign her copy of the book, offering historicity by placing his unique signature on the mass-produced object (Dick 227; Slusser 197). In the end Juliana ignores his offering, as she seeks to establish a connection with historical time — a connection that Abendsen will reiteratively neglect (198). On the other hand, Dick’s notion of world as a construct of the human mind is undoubtedly manifested through Tagomi’s slippage into the reader’s 1962 San Francisco, which is ironically prompted by his contemplation of the silver triangular piece of jewelry that he bought from Robert Childan — one of EdFrank’s creations, infused with *wu* — as he is sitting on a bench in Portsmouth Square (Dick 203). Hence the potential existence of more than one single world in *The Man in the High Castle*, a series of worlds that would be available to the characters via the power of the human mind instead of through time-travel or other science-fiction conventions as it is proved by Tagomi’s extraordinary experience (Singles 165). Another key moment for Tagomi is that in which he shoots two S.D. men with his collector’s item Colt. 44, which happens to be one of Wyndham-Matson’s

fake forgeries (Dick 174). Slusser refers to Dick's *High Castle* as “not a world of great men and monuments, but of artisans and tinkerers”; in the same manner that new realities are constructed by the human mind, Dick's artisan, in this case Mr. Tagomi, imparts a vector to an object by manipulating it through his own actions (198). The fact that it is a replica and not a historical object leads him to change the course of events “not because of something in the gun, but because of something he puts in the gun” (199). Thus, *High Castle*'s characters are shown to have the power to instill new values into objects that lack the desired historicity through their individual actions, and, more importantly, to access new realities through the human mind — to a certain extent, Dick goes beyond the normalized narrative of the real past and allows them to write their own version of history.

2.5 Free Will vs Determinism in *The Man in the High Castle*

The aforementioned capabilities that allow the characters to access their own layers of reality certainly add a new dimension to what Singles considers the central dilemma of *The Man in the High Castle*: “finding a *sane* balance between free will and determinism” (154). As it was previously explored in 1.3.3, she comes to the conclusion that in alternate history, the point of divergence will rely on the principle of contingency while the rest of the narrative relies on the principle of necessity (133). In the particular case of *High Castle*, she proposes that one decisive moment in history is to be contingent — that is, Giuseppe Zangara's attempted murder on Roosevelt in 1933, in which the success of a shot could have produced a radically changed outcome of the events — while the rest of the narrative following the point of divergence is governed by the principle of necessity because “it *has* to be different from our history” (155).

But once again, Dick goes beyond the expected scheme of an alternate history by playing with the complexities offered by the *I Ching* and *The Grasshopper Lies Heavy*. In his study of the novel, Spedo quotes John Wilson so as to remark the duality of the oracle, whose apparent reliability “suggests metaphorically that beneath the seeming chaos of human experience there lies a meaningful order”, whereas its enigmatic nature and the exhaustive interpretations and verifications demanded by its results suggest that “human access to this immutable order will remain incomplete, always subject to distortion” (qtd. in Spedo 128). Consequently, the determinism implied by the existence of such meaningful order will always potentially be disrupted by “the randomness of coin-tossing” (128).

Furthermore, Van Wyk notices how several characters in *High Castle* indeed depend on the *I Ching* in search of certainty and predictability of the future “as causes yield foretold effects”, whereas their interest in *The Grasshopper* — especially in the case of the former American citizens — often stems from the challenge that the text poses to the notion of causality, implying that other effects could have been produced by other causes.

As a result, the characters mainly use the oracle in an attempt to control the uncertainty of the world of *High Castle*, but at the same time they seem to aim for the disruption of cause and effect by reading *The Grasshopper* as an “act of rebellion” (“Cold War” 224), while some of them — namely Juliana and Mr. Tagomi — are even able to grasp the potential existence of realities beyond their own. In fact, as it has already been discussed, *High Castle* focuses on the power of individuals; not only the so-called “great men”, but also relatively ordinary people like Frank or Juliana. This view matches Robinson’s impression of the alternate history genre, according to which history is presented as not reliant on determinism, rather assuming that it is “a collection of persons with free will, some of whom are in strategically important positions” (42). Even though the novel’s point of divergence inevitably assumes that the role of one man, Franklin D. Roosevelt, can unquestionably change the course of history — therefore adhering itself to the nineteenth-century’s “great man theory” (Singles 149) —, the major part of the narrative depends on the interweaving of characters that, as Robinson claims, is closer to the tradition of realism and therefore lacks the “superhero plot” that characterized Dick’s previous works (40). This interweaving will be reflected in the consequences of the characters’ free will (Singles 155), which in one way or another may affect the entire assembly. In the words of Patricia S. Warrick: “all movements are connected, often not directly, but the vibrations of an event occurring in one part of the narrative network will be felt by the whole” (qtd. in Van Wyk, “Cold War” 219), even if the characters are unaware of their potential.

For this reason, the central dilemma — finding the balance between free will and determinism — has a continuous presence in the characters’ thoughts and conversations. According to Singles, their reactions towards the metafictional alternate history *The Grasshopper Lies Heavy* often reveal their genuine attitudes with regards to free will and determinism (155). She provides the example of Wyndham-Matson, who after hearing the *The Grasshopper*’s counterfactual premise judges the book as nonsensical upon the belief that Japan would have achieved control in the Pacific anyway (Dick 57) and that Nazi general Erwin Rommel, who he claims to have met in 1948, would have been undefeatable

in any case (58) — a series of deterministic values based on convictions that derive from the “great man theory”. However, he clearly underestimates the implications of such assumptions, because if one single man is capable of exerting such an influence, any other might as well do the same (Singles 157). Something similar occurs to Joe Cinadella, who is likewise critical of *The Grasshopper*. An avowed admirer of Benito Mussolini, he refers to his belief in the “Principle of Leadership” or “*Führerprinzip*” — which is noticeably similar to the “great man theory” — as he discusses the role of Winston Churchill in the book with Juliana (Dick 141). Interestingly enough, his true objective — assassinating Hawthorne Abendsen for defying the Nazi regime by publishing *The Grasshopper* — visibly parallels Giuseppe Zangara’s¹⁰ assassination attempt on Roosevelt, thereby positioning Abendsen as another “great man” with the capacity to change the course of history (Singles 159-160). Juliana, on the other hand, does not share Joe’s ideas and finds his fanatic enthusiasm laughable; to her, Abendsen does not represent anything beyond a mere author of fiction, as she tells Joe “Why should we be intimidated? He’s just a man like the rest of us” (Dick 144; Singles 160).

Overall, human agency is also one of the greatest themes in the narrative, being present in the characters’ dialogues and, most remarkably, in their behaviour. With regards to the notion of human agency in *The Man in the High Castle*, Singles introduces yet another particularity of the novel and distinguishes two ideologies that clash with each other: fascism and Taoism. According to her, “fascism stands for action and the greatness of the individual; Taoism stands for passivity and determinism”, both of which are reflected in *High Castle*’s current political situation, where Nazi Germany is preparing to launch an attack on the Japanese Empire that is “earnestly prioritizing diplomacy”. Moreover, two characters seem to embody each extreme: Joe Cinadella, one of the few characters who does not rely on the *I Ching*, has fully embraced fascism whereas Wyndham-Matson, in spite of not being dependent on the oracle at all, makes display his deterministic attitude by holding on to the beliefs that were previously mentioned in this section and remaining unaffected by the counterfactual premise of *The Grasshopper Lies Heavy* (Singles 166). The five main characters may be found somewhere in between fascism and Taoism; although Wegener seems to be the only one that has found a balance between both as he shows a deterministic while also pessimistic view of the political scenario but nevertheless decides to provide the

¹⁰ Singles also notes the unlikely coincidental fact that both share the same name, as Giuseppe Zangara is also referred to as “Joe Zangara” (159).

Japanese with information about the “Operation Dandelion” in the hopes of changing the course of events (Dick 164; Singles 167). However, what *High Castle* ultimately does is to remark the influence of their decisions in the course of events:

[C]hance and accident have little to do with the fates of the various characters. Rather, much depends on the decisions of individuals – whether they realize it or not: Wegener successfully relays the information to the Japanese government, but only because Tagomi took the initiative to shoot the SD men (with the Colt .44 that Childan had allowed him to keep); Frank Frink has the courage to start the jewellery business, but his business retains its integrity only because Childan (uncharacteristically) refuses to sell out; Frank Frink survives only as a result of Tagomi’s refusal to sign the authorization for his custody by the Reich; Abendsen survives, but only because Juliana murders Joe Cinadella (167).

Through this interweaving of characters, Dick offers a favourable perspective towards the potential of free will that alongside his display of power of the human mind to access different realities reinforces Christopher Palmer’s idea of *The Man in the High Castle* being “a thoroughly ‘humanist’ novel” (qtd. in Singles 168).

2.6 Connecting *The Man in the High Castle* with its Past and its Present

In sections 1.3.4 and 1.3.5, this dissertation focused on the relationship of the alternate history genre with the past and the present (at the time of each work’s publication). *The Man in the High Castle* is, unquestionably, a novel that provides its readers with many of the American and worldwide concerns that were particularly relevant during the early 1960s — most of them revolving around World War II and its consequences. To start with, the first part of this section will explore *High Castle*’s connections with its present, that is, its commentaries upon the world surrounding the novel and its author in the year 1962.

Rosenfeld, who emphasizes alternate history’s inherently presentist features, distinguishes fantasy scenarios that are most often used to criticize the current situation — expressing the author’s concerns and therefore a desire to change the way things are at the moment — and nightmare scenarios that are mostly self-congratulatory — thus conveying a sense of satisfaction with the present; however, he also notes the possibility of using any of the two scenarios for the exact opposite goals (“What If?” 93). Once again, *High Castle* proves its tendencies towards unconventional storytelling since the various layers of reality in the novel provide a much more complex scenario. In the first instance, the world of *High Castle* would most likely represent a nightmare scenario for most people. Since the first chapters of the novel, the reader is already provided with information about the disastrous

consequences of the Axis victory: Japan is setting the Brazilian jungles on fire so as to build apartment houses for its ex-headhunters, whereas the Nazis have conquered Africa, where they are conducting atrocious experiments on the remaining population (Dick 8). Later, Childan's thoughts reveal yet even more information about the alternative 1962, like the completion of Project Farmland — which consisted in draining the Mediterranean Sea and turn the area into tillable farmland via atomic power —, the extermination of Jews, Gypsies and Bible Students or the Slav exodus (19-20). Under normal conditions, such approach would correspond to the period in the late 50s and early 60s that Rosenfeld identifies as the one in which a series of international events revived the interest in “the wartime image of Nazism as the epitome of evil”, therefore triggering the appearance of a greater number of alternate histories that celebrated the United States' decision to intervene in the war (*Hitler* 100). Nevertheless, *High Castle*'s nightmare scenario is not limited to criticizing the past; as a matter of fact, it does not regard its present time as necessarily superior.

For instance, Dick explores the possibility of an alternative Allied victory through the metafictional *The Grasshopper Lies Heavy*, a novel that is a mirror image of the author's own world, according to Robinson. He notes that the characters regard *The Grasshopper*'s counterfactual premise “with the same fascination and unease” with which readers regard the possibility of an Axis victory. Moreover, he comes to the conclusion that as a result of “[r]ecognizing the mirror-facing-mirror effect, we are forced again and again to contemplate the very idea of history, and, as a sort of by-product, our notions of whether it has gone well or ill since 1945” (43). An example of this is provided by Joe's explanation of the way the British treat the Chinese in *The Grasshopper*, creating “detention preserves” (Dick 141), that is, concentration camps that clearly resemble the hardships endured by thousands of Japanese Americans who were forced into internment camps during World War II (Spedo 143). However, the most direct reflection upon Dick's normalized narrative of the real past is Tagomi's slippage into his 1962 San Francisco, the “chaotic, polluted and noisy version” that features the Embarcadero Freeway (Dick 204; Spedo 139). Robinson observes that Tagomi's horrified reaction towards the ‘real’ San Francisco resembles what Darko Suvin refers to as “the great utopian tradition of treating the return to the real world as a vision of hell”, therefore establishing *High Castle*'s alternative San Francisco as (partly) a utopia (44). Thus, Dick subverts the situation and turns his own world into the true nightmare scenario through Tagomi's eyes. Be that as it may, the world of *High Castle* is not only depicted as either a utopia or a nightmare scenario against which Dick's world is defined, but also

includes enough analogies so as to consider it a direct reflection that allows for more criticism. It has indeed been noticed by many scholars that Dick makes use of such analogies in order to address concerns pertinent to the real world, particularly on the ongoing affair that was attracting worldwide attention and essentially overshadowing the memory of Nazi crimes at the time: the Cold War (Lison 50; Rosenfeld, *Hitler* 96).

Being one of the most recurrent themes in science fiction in the prolonged aftermath of World War II, particularly in the form of the nuclear paranoia of the 1950s, it comes as no surprise that Dick would create a space for such topic in his narrative — especially taking into account the fact that he had previously explored it (at least metaphorically) in 1953's "Impostor" (Langford, "Cold War"). Many authors have studied *High Castle* as a commentary on the Cold War, one of the latest examples being Van Wyk's "Philip K. Dick's *The Man in the High Castle*: The Cold War and the Suspension of and in Time". In the article, Van Wyk states the following:

Throughout Dick's novel, there is the threat of nuclear warfare both in and around the novel, both in its content and in the space and time in which characters and readers reside. In its deceptively linear form, and especially through the alternate-history mode in which it is written, *The Man in the High Castle* describes the individual's time, the characters' and readers' movement from past to present to future, as one suspended in the lurking threat of nuclear devastation. As a consequence of this configuration of time, history, the narrative of one's experience in time, is likewise compromised and always about to be cut short in the nuclear age. (221)

Immediately afterwards, he mentions other authors that have considered *High Castle*'s nods to the Cold War, including Slusser, Winthrop-Young and Rossi, who points out the similarities between the division of Germany after 1945 and the division of the United States in the novel, which has lost both political and economic independence (qtd. In Van Wyk 221-222). In the same manner, Lison notices further analogies such as Japan's occupation of the Pacific States of America, which is characterized by being "that of a relatively tolerant empire nevertheless riven with racial tension and ideologically conditioned by its occupiers' notions of propriety and social place" and presumably evokes postwar America's worldwide cultural influence (49). But most importantly, Rossi, Van Wyk and Lison remark the importance of the revelation that undoubtedly corresponds to the Cold War era's atomic anxiety regarding a third World War: Operation Dandelion, Nazi Germany's plan to launch a surprise nuclear attack of enormous proportions on the Japanese archipelago (Dick 164; Lison 50; Van Wyk, "Cold War" 222).

Having delved into Operation Dandelion's presentist concerns, it is also possible to connect it to Dick's criticism of the past in his representation of the Nazis as the epitome of evil. As a matter of fact, it should not be forgotten that alternate history also concerns itself with the way in which the past "takes shape in remembrance" (Rosenfeld, "What If?" 93). After all, *The Man in the High Castle*'s premise has its basis in a hypothetical Axis victory in World War II. As it has already been mentioned in this section, the world of *High Castle* is clearly a nightmare scenario on the surface, thus coinciding with the tendencies that Rosenfeld identifies in the period that lasts from the late 50s to the early 60s. According to him, it is precisely during this time that alternate histories based on a Nazi victory in World War II reappear after a period of absence in the US since the end of the war, this being a consequence of a reignited interest on the Nazi war crimes — which was mainly propelled by, among other events of international repercussion, the Eichmann trial at the turn of the decade. Additionally, Rosenfeld finds two main functions in the alternate histories that are published in this new wave: "the didactic function of preserving the Germans' crimes in memory and of vindicating America's historic decision to intervene in World War II against them" (*Hitler* 100). When it comes to the latter, the fact that *High Castle*'s point of divergence is Zangara's successful assassination of Franklin D. Roosevelt, which leads to an isolationist government and consequently to the Axis victory and conquest of the United States, reveals ample evidence of Dick's interventionist convictions. Despite not being fully self-congratulatory, the novel's apparent nightmare scenario celebrates President Roosevelt's ultimate decision (106).

Nonetheless, identifying the ways in which Dick fulfils the function of preserving the Nazi crimes in memory is surely an almost effortless task to achieve, as his portrayal of their occupation of the United States and the various international policies that have already been addressed at the beginning of this section undoubtedly serve as proof of such function in the narrative. Therefore, the list of atrocious actions committed by the Nazis that clearly make a nightmare scenario out of *High Castle*'s world serve as a demonstration of how they are portrayed as the epitome of evil in Western consciousness, in and out of the novel. Moreover, Dick juxtaposes both powers, Japanese and German, in order to remark the Nazi's brutality in comparison to the former. In contrast, the Japanese "treat occupied America in traditional imperialistic fashion, exploiting it economically but refraining from overt acts of terror or violence" (106-107). Rosenfeld highlights the figure of Tagomi, who clearly repudiates the practices that conform to the beliefs of antisemitism at the same time that he

expresses a feeling of aversion towards the ruthlessness of the regime unlike other characters such as Childan, who is a great admirer of the Nazi policies (107). Likewise, Singles states that in the novel, Germany is reduced to the mere image of “evil, totalitarianism and death” (qtd. in Singles 152), making clear who the ‘bad guys’ are at all time. She notices the significance of the absence of a Nazi point of view within the interweaving of characters in the narrative, with the exception of Freiherr Hugo Reiss in only one chapter (152); in the 2015 television series this approach will change, creating a space for Nazi characters to express their emotions — a decision that will be discussed in the following section as it is mainly concerned with the phenomenon of normalization. Moreover, Singles draws attention to Juliana’s thoughts on Adolf Hitler and the Third Reich during her first appearance in the novel, which once more provide a portrayal of them as the epitome of evil. She speaks of incest being committed in Hitler’s family: “his mother and father were cousins. They’re all committing incest, going back to the original sin of lusting for their own mothers”. Subsequently, she refers to Bormann’s upcoming death and Hitler’s confinement in a sanatorium as “God’s sardonic vengeance” upon their acts, which have metaphorically infected the German Empire with their “evil spores” and the final results are madness, blindness and death (Dick 30; Singles 153).

In the end, Dick’s own research led towards the desire of preserving the memory of Nazi brutality. As Rosenfeld claims, Dick spent seven years reading documents and conducting research in order to write *The Man in the High Castle*, which culminated with the author becoming a fervent detractor of Nazism (*Hitler* 108). At the end of his analysis of the novel in *The World Hitler Never Made*, he includes the following statement by the author: “I thought I hated those guys before I did the research. After I did the research ... I had created for myself an enemy that I would hate for the rest of my life. Fascism. Wherever it appears ... it is the enemy” (qtd. in Rosenfeld 108).

2.7 Normalization and *The Man in the High Castle*’s 2015 Television Adaptation

As it was presented on 1.3.6, Rosenfeld is very concerned about a tendency towards the normalization of the Third Reich within Western consciousness, especially since the mid-1960s. Having analysed its relationship to the past in the previous section and taking into account the fact that it was published in 1962, *The Man in the High Castle* undoubtedly belongs to what Rosenfeld refers to as the “*era of moralism*”, in which such tendency would

not have been considered a problem (*Hitler* 23). However, the novel has received recent mainstream attention as a result of its 2015 television adaptation for Amazon's streaming service Amazon Prime Video, which is not the first screen adaptation of an alternate history but it is likely the most popular one so far, also being followed by other alternate history adaptations such as *SS-GB* (2017) and *The Plot Against America* (2020). In a sense, this renewed interest of the 2010s could be said to validate Evan's claims that there is not a predictable linearity pointing towards normalization like Rosenfeld fears but rather a series of "unpredictable twists and turns" over time, also proving that the memory of the Third Reich crimes is strong enough to return and resist normalization even seventy years after the end of the war (ch.3). However, before examining Len Deighton's *SS-GB*, it would be interesting to study *High Castle*'s television adaptation from the perspective of normalization, especially considering the fifty-three years that separate it from its source material.

To start with, it should be noted that Amazon's *High Castle* could be regarded as a faithful adaptation in essence; however, it features several major differences from the novel that are worth mentioning, apart from the obvious inclusion of elements involving social concerns that are relevant to the twenty-first century target audience, such as the representation of LGBTQ+ relationships — like Frank's business partner Ed becoming involved in a relationship with another man in the buffer zone ("Sensô Kôï") — or the black people's struggle for equality — which does not appear in the novel, but becomes a major subplot during the fourth season with the appearance of the Black Communist Rebellion. For instance, the *I Ching* is notably less relevant for the plot, only being used by Tagomi in a few occasions — and also by Juliana after she learns how to use it from Tagomi himself during the third season —, but never receives the same level of prominence as in Dick's novel. On the other hand, *The Grasshopper Lies Heavy* becomes one of the films belonging to a series of newsreels¹¹ containing footage of alternative universes. Thus, its function is maintained to an extent, but the high number of different timelines featuring alternative versions of *High Castle*'s characters, as well as the existence of the so-called 'travellers' and the creation of the *Nebenwelt* ("The New Colossus") — a quantum tunnel that allows people to access these alternate worlds —, turn this adaptation of *High Castle* into a story

¹¹ The show's creator, Frank Spotnitz, stated the following: "That was actually the first thing that popped in my mind when adapting it for television, which was that instead of a book, it should be a film — because it's a visual medium" (Anders).

that bears more resemblance to a parallel worlds story than to a true alternate history (Hellekson 5).

With regards to the representation of Nazism as the epitome of evil that characterized the novel and the “era of moralism” in which it was published, Amazon’s *The Man in the High Castle* is similar to its source material to a great degree. The Nazis are clearly “the bad guys” in the series, and that is portrayed through their horrifying actions just like in the novel. In the very first episode, “The New World”, the audience learns of their burning of what they consider “useless people”, that is, disabled people and people with chronic diseases. Their obsession with achieving ‘racial purity’ is made clear through the evidence of the Lebensborn program — through which Joe Blake, Joe Cinadella’s counterpart in the series, was born — (“Duck and Cover”), or the need for genealogy records certifying Arian ancestry within the Nazi-dominated area. Other disturbing projects include the ‘Year Zero’ project that aims to erase American history and national pride by erasing iconic landmarks such as the Statue of Liberty and the Liberty Bell (“Sensô Kôî”, “The New Colossus”, “Kasumi”), the Nebenwelt trials that expose human subjects to the possibility of being burned alive in the process¹² (“Jahr Null”) or the so-called “Operation Crossfire” involving new concentration camps (“Fire from the Gods”). The tension between Nazi Germany and the Japanese Empire is also present in the series, although their differences are even more highly accentuated by the fourth season after the bombs detonated by the Black Communist Rebellion damage the latter’s main access to oil, forcing them to withdraw from the Japanese Pacific States (“No Masters but Ourselves”).

However, despite such a disparaging portrayal of the Third Reich, Amazon’s *High Castle* also shows evidence of the diluting effect of organic normalization. One of the few things Evans and Rosenfeld agreed upon was the shift in the representation of Germans from the mid-1960s onwards, with a tendency to humanize them (ch.3). Although Evan’s claims had their basis on a noticeable change in the British postwar generation mindset, that tendency may also be observed in Amazon’s *High Castle*. For instance, while Singles remarked the significance of the absence of a Nazi point of view in the novel with the exception of Hugo Reiss (152), the series gives great prominence to many characters involved with the Third Reich like Joe Blake/Cinadella — who is given a much deeper backstory — or the series-exclusive character John Smith and his family. The case of the

¹² It does not come as a surprise, since the one in charge of the experiments is precisely the series’ counterpart of the infamous Nazi doctor Josef Mengele.

Smiths is particularly interesting, as they express a duality: on the one hand, as Rufus Sewell — who portrays John Smith — has stated, “[h]e represents the great majority [of Americans, who] have just normalized. It’s become normal life, under the Reich” (Anders). He embraces Nazi values as a form of survival, and as he acquires more power within the Reich, his morality eventually becomes more and more questionable. But on the other hand, the Smiths also portray the way in which the Nazi ideology can also damage its own perpetrators as the family breaks over Thomas’ — John and Helen’s son — sacrifice (“Fallout”), a death that the audience may foresee from the moment he is diagnosed with a chronic disease (“End of the World”) due to the Reich’s policies. Moreover, the members of this family have become very popular among the public and the critics, acquiring more prominence as the series progresses as well as earning their respective actors various nominations for awards.

Another noticeable change is the addition of a Resistance, which Juliana joins from the first episode since she trades her identity for her sister’s, who was a former member of the organization (“The New World”). Scholars like Spedo noted “the absence of an active, organized American resistance to occupation” in Dick’s novel that mirrored Japan’s surrender in World War II as a result of the nuclear attacks on Hiroshima and Nagasaki (143), which Rosenfeld identified as a sign of the Nazis having conquered the United States not only physically, but mentally (*Hitler* 107). Meanwhile, the series’ counterparts of many characters like Juliana, Frank and Abendsen are clearly more prone to action than their novel’s selves as they show more confidence in their agency and become involved with the Resistance’s activities. In fact, the series’ rather confusing ending — which features Abendsen walking into the *Nebenwelt* portal as many ‘travellers’ enter *High Castle*’s world through it —, despite being equally ambiguous in a Dickian fashion, could be regarded as less bittersweet than that of the novel, offering a beacon of hope to those opposing the Nazi regime.

Finally, it would be interesting to focus on the aestheticization of the Nazi era for commercial purposes, which Rosenfeld considered another form of normalization that undermined the moralistic perspective of alternate history (*Hitler* 25). The series’ highly praised cinematography and special effects could be said to fit in such aestheticization trend as they feature eye-catching scenarios decorated with Nazi imagery, from the shocking opening shot showing an alternative Times Square filled with Nazi propaganda (“The New World”), to the demolition of the Statue of Liberty — which was first shown in several official posters wearing a red band with the *Reichsadler* while performing the Nazi salute —

("Jahr Null") or Christmas trees with an illuminated Swastika on top ("Hitler Has Only Got One Ball"). Nonetheless, Evan's objections to Rosenfeld's claims of a linear path towards normalization could be validated once again if the public's reactions beyond the series were to be examined. Despite captivating audiences with the previously mentioned imagery, Amazon's *High Castle* advertising campaign was subject to a lot of controversy due to the use of Nazi symbolism in various places of the city of New York, notably on subway cars, which were deemed offensive by many citizens including Mayor Bill de Blasio ("Man In The High Castle' Subway Ads..."). In the end, the backlash received by Amazon, which forced the company to remove the advertisements, can be used as proof that the memory of the Third Reich still resists normalization in the twenty-first century.

3. Len Deighton's *SS-GB* (1978)

3.1 *SS-GB* (1978)

The main focus of the third chapter of this dissertation is *SS-GB* — also known as *SS-GB: Nazi Occupied Britain 1941*—, an alternate history written by the British author Len Deighton. In this case, the setting of the story is located in an alternate England during the year 1941, which has been occupied by Nazi Germany after the British were forced to surrender due to the success of Operation Sea Lion in the course of the Battle of Britain. The story follows the events surrounding the life of Scotland Yard detective Douglas Archer as he is assigned a murder case in Shepherd's Market that will lead him towards a greater case involving the production of an atomic bomb. This therefore marks a significant difference with regards to *The Man in the High Castle*, as instead of an interweaving of characters that are connected to each other to a greater or lesser extent, the reader only gets access to one single storyline, which is Douglas'. By no means does this imply that *SS-GB* is a less sophisticated novel, as the story is also recognisable for its representation of the internal conflicts among the various branches of the Nazi's armed forces, and most particularly the rivalry between Douglas' SS superiors Fritz Kellerman and newcomer Standartenführer Oskar Huth. It must be noted, however, that *SS-GB*'s reduced complexity has resulted in a commensurately lower number of critical approaches to the novel, which has likewise affected the length and depth of this chapter in contrast to the second chapter of this dissertation.

As it has already been discussed a few times, Hellekson emphasized the creation of alternate history by mainstream writers as a sign of the genre's growth. Philip K. Dick was indeed a representative example of the phenomenon, but it must be noted that Deighton was the example that she explicitly mentioned in *The Alternate History* alongside with Robert Harris, author of the well-known alternate history novel *Fatherland* (12). Deighton is, undoubtedly, a very popular and influential author, as proven by the many film and television adaptations of his books, from the 1965's film version of *The Ipcress File* to the most recent 2017 television adaptation of *SS-GB*. Moreover, he has a considerable fanbase that has produced significant projects which are entirely dedicated to the author's life and works, most notably *The Deighton Dossier* website — as well as its sideblog and social media — that was created by Deighton aficionado Robert Mallows in 2008. However, unlike Dick,

Deighton is not known for writing science fiction but for his spy thrillers, history books and, most interestingly, his popular ‘cookstrips’ featuring his own illustrations — which were first turned into “visual cooking guides for readers” thanks to his friend Ray Hawkey from *The Observer* newspaper, and later compiled in *Len Deighton’s Action Cook Book* (1965) (Mallows, “The Famous Cookstrips”). Nonetheless, the appearance of a number of elements of speculative fiction in novels such as *Billion-Dollar Brain* (1966), the fourth instalment of the ‘Secret File’ series — involving an “indeterminate Near Future” setting, a super-computer and “a private preventive war launched on Russia across the ice from Finland by a mad tycoon” — or *SS-GB*’s exploration of alternate history have earned him an entry on the *Encyclopedia of Science Fiction* (Clute, “Deighton, Len”).

Regardless of its speculative fiction elements, not every alternate history should be expected to belong to the realm of science fiction, as it was already mentioned in 1.3.1 (“Alternate History”). As a result, *SS-GB* is the perfect example to illustrate such claims, since in this case Len Deighton uses alternate history as the foundation of what is his best-known speciality: a spy thriller. A recent article by Iolanda Ramos that focuses on genre blending in steampunk and dieselpunk stories also studies *SS-GB* as a dieselpunk narrative — a term that was reportedly coined in the year 2001 by game designer Lewis Pollak so as to designate a speculative fiction subgenre that draws on “the grease of fuel-powered machinery and the Art Deco movement, (...) and questioning the impact of technology on the human psyche” (qtd. in Ramos 5). She considers the novel as a dieselpunk narrative because it creates an alternate history “that includes a noir style storyline in which diesel fuel and nuclear power replace steam power”. Furthermore, Ramos notices the importance of the historical component in both dieselpunk and alternate history literature, as the majority of narratives belonging to both genres have a tendency to make World War II-related events their main focus (5). Deighton’s *SS-GB* is not an exception, as it will be explored in further sections of this chapter.

3.2 The Rupture of Linear Time in *SS-GB*

As it was mentioned in the previous section, there are many essential differences between *The Man in the High Castle* and *SS-GB*, with the latter being less complex — or, in other words, more straightforward — in several aspects. Many of these differences stem from Len Deighton’s lack of involvement with science fiction, including the manner in which it depicts

the rupture of the normalized narrative of the real past. In essence, both *High Castle* and *SS-GB* could be classified as “true alternate histories” according to Hellekson’s criteria, as they portray “radically changed world[s]” after the occurrence of their corresponding nexus events (7); although *High Castle*’s case is noticeably more extreme due to the fact that a longer amount of time passes between Roosevelt’s assassination and the narrated time. Additionally, as it was mentioned in the previous chapter, some of *High Castle*’s particularities — which were likely a product of Dick’s close connection to science fiction — could link the narrative to the parallel worlds story, which is definitely not the case for Deighton’s novel. In *SS-GB*, the narrated time is to be found just months away from the point of divergence, as the first paragraphs of the novel reveal: “He thumped the rubber stamp into the pad and then on to the docket, ‘Scotland Yard. 14 Nov. 1941’” (Deighton 1). Nonetheless, this does not prevent the United Kingdom from having experienced a dramatic shift in such a short time span since the beginning of German occupation, prompting a series of changes that will be addressed later in this chapter.

Another way in which Deighton is shown to be more straightforward with regards to the rupture of linear time in his novel is the fictional document that is reproduced immediately before its first chapter: the English version of the ‘Geheime Kommandosache’, — dated “18.2.41” — which “signals the official end to Germany’s conflict with, and defeat of, Great Britain” and, as the first point confirms, “the surrender of all British armed forces in the United Kingdom and Northern Ireland including all islands and including military elements overseas” (Van Wyk *Alternative Times* 29; Deighton xiii). Thus, the author makes the reader aware of the existence of a point of divergence, establishing the novel as an alternate history even before the start of the narrative. However, the motivation behind the creation of the aforementioned document, the actual point of divergence, is not explicitly mentioned within it. In this case, the narrative diverges from the normalized narrative of the real past due to the success of Operation Sea Lion, which is listed by Nick Ottens as one of the most common ways to change the course of history within the alternate history genre. As Ottens outlines, Operation Sea Lion “was the codename for the planned German invasion of Great Britain (...) [which] was abandoned as early as September 1940, when the Germans realized that Britain had both air and naval superiority”. The awareness of such a plan indeed became a recurrent point of divergence in most works that portray a Nazi occupation of Britain, from the 1964 film *It Happened Here* to Norman Longmate’s *If Britain Had Fallen* (1972) (“How To Change World War II”). In the Introduction to *SS-GB*, Deighton mentions

that the main catalyst for the novel was a conversation with Ray Hawkey and his editor Tony Colwell, in which the latter stated “*No one knows what might have happened had we lost the Battle of Britain*”, thus inspiring Deighton to revise the material concerning the German plans to invade Britain that had already been published at the time — culminating with the writing of the *SS-GB* (Deighton vii). Even so, the narrative itself does not refer explicitly to the event but to its aftermath; in fact, one of the closest references to the point of divergence is probably Sir Robert’s confirmation of Winston Churchill’s execution (Deighton 118), which in the end is yet another consequence of Britain’s defeat.

Another change which is noticed by Elana Gomel is that “Hitler avoided what many historians consider to be his crucial mistake, the invasion of the USSR and honoured the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, invading and conquering England instead” (107). In this manner, the success of Operation Sea Lion in *SS-GB* implies the abandonment of another plan that was indeed launched in the reader’s 1941: Operation Barbarossa. As a result, the friendship between Nazi Germany and the USSR is often portrayed throughout the novel, mostly due to the highly anticipated celebration known as the “German-Soviet Friendship Week”. The event, which is supposed to be “celebrated in all parts of the two vast empires” also takes place in London where special locations such as Whitehall and Parliament Square are being decorated with flags and “heraldic shields bearing entwined hammer, sickle and swastika surmounting a small Cross of St George which had now replaced the Union Flag for all official purposes in the occupied zone” (Deighton 70). This celebration will also lead to one of the key events of the novel, the exhumation of Karl Marx’s mortal remains from Highgate Cemetery in Chapter Twenty-Four.

3.3 A Less Complicated Form of Alternate History

After having delved into its point of divergence, it is once again necessary to emphasize the differences between *SS-GB* and *The Man in the High Castle* that make the former an alternate history in the most straightforward sense. The absence of elements adding new complexities — as well as uncertainty — to the novel’s plot and structure like the *I Ching* oracle, the metafictional *The Grasshopper Lies Heavy* or science fiction-ish episodes such as Mr. Tagomi’s slippage between alternative realities remove Deighton’s novel from the possibility of becoming ambiguous enough to pose as a parallel worlds story. Consequently, a fewer number of scholars have made it the focus of their studies in comparison with *High*

Castle; but at the same time *SS-GB* supposes a much clearer example of the features of alternate history that were described in the theoretical framework of this dissertation.

Since the novel does not hint at the potential existence of parallel realities outside its own, its structure directly resembles Catherine Gallagher's representation of the rupture of time's arrow. The bifurcation that originates in the point of divergence — the success of Operation Sea Lion — separates the normalized narrative of the real past from Branch B (56), the alternative world of *SS-GB*. In this United Kingdom that has been occupied by a Nazi Germany which maintains good relations with the USSR, King George VI has been imprisoned by Himmler in the Tower of London (Deighton 1), the Queen and the Princesses have escaped to New Zealand (136) and Winston Churchill has been tried and executed (118). Several areas of London are in ruins as a consequence of the conflict, including iconic landmarks that remain standing to this day in the reader's world such as the Palace Theatre (176), the Victoria Palace Music Hall — near the Victoria station, which is decorated with “gigantic portraits of Hitler and Stalin” — (221) and Buckingham Palace (344). Moreover, the British population have become second-class citizens in their own country, with many men like Mrs. Sheenan's husband working in POW camps (62) whereas the rest of people live under a rationing system, including further limitations such as travel restrictions and finance control (259). Subsequently, if Umberto Rossi and Carlo Pagetti's terms were to be used in order to classify *SS-GB*'s different realities, there would be no secondary text — as an element of the magnitude of *The Grasshopper* does not exist within this narrative — but only the reader's reality (or zero text) and the fictional reality (or primary text) of the Nazi-occupied Britain (403). Unlike *The Man in the High Castle*, Deighton's novel does not display a synchronistic view of time; therefore, *SS-GB* only depicts the linear, causal relationships expected in alternate history — the emerging cause of a Nazi victory in the Battle of Britain will lead to effects unseen in the reader's reality where such event did not occur.

As for the blurring of fact and fiction, *SS-GB* provides the reader with a series of examples in this regard. In *Alternative Times*, Van Wyk outlines the false document that confirms Britain's surrender as one that was deliberately constructed by Deighton so as to provide the obviously fictional alternate history that follows it with a sense of legitimacy (29). Thus, the author acts in accordance with the claims made by Lebow that were discussed in 1.3.2 (“Points of Divergence and the Rupture of Linear Time”), by which fiction makes

use of real-world conventions to create an atmosphere of credibility (277). Additionally, Van Wyk notes a second meaning behind the document facsimile:

While doing so, we are also faced with a simultaneous undermining of the faith placed in such scraps of paper tinted by an air of officiousness. Deighton's pastiche of the fake document comes to stand as a warning of the validity of such aesthetically appropriate records. (29)

In a similar manner to what Dick did with the trade of fake Americana artefacts in his novel — although less vehemently—, Deighton demonstrates how deceitful appearances can be and how they might be used so that what is false may be perceived as real, creating a replica that therefore causes the real to lose its apparently inherent authenticity. But even if Deighton is not as playful as Dick when dealing with themes such as the nature of reality, his mastery of spy thrillers — a genre that has traditionally included deceitful elements for the sake of mystery — allows him to introduce certain features of a questionable nature. For instance, the beginning of Douglas' new case takes place at an antique shop in Shepherd Market, where a man named Peter Thomas has been murdered (Deighton 25). Despite the fact that the presence of an antique shop like Robert Childan's in this novel does not trigger a discussion about forgery and historicity like the one of *High Castle*, the location does nonetheless reflect how things are not necessarily what they seem to be in *SS-GB*. In fact, neither Peter Thomas nor the shop itself are what they appeared to be at the beginning of Douglas' investigation. To start with, Peter Thomas' body is discovered to belong to Dr. John Spode's brother William, who was also involved in the development of the atomic bomb and had no apparent connection with the shop (79; 102). Later, during a conversation in a private drinking club it is revealed that Peter Thomas is “just a front for the Resistance” that were using the antique shop “as a way of handling money, and paying people and so on” (101-102). Furthermore, the world of *SS-GB* is also one of shifting allegiances in the same fashion as *High Castle*; however, the idea here seems to be more closely linked with the theme of loyalty rather than with that of survival as in Dick's novel. As it will be further explored in forthcoming sections, the division between those who collaborate with the British Resistance and those who are subservient towards the new regime within the English population is one of the novel's major themes, with Douglas' true allegiance being the subject of constant debate.

On the other hand, Hayden White's ideas about the constructedness of history writing and the subjectivity of historians are also discussed in *SS-GB* to an extent. After the disastrous outcome of the operation at Bringle Sands that was intended to escort King

George VI to the ship that would allow him to seek refuge in North America, Douglas learns from Huth that Colonel George Mayhew had orchestrated the entire plan in order to effectively kill the King instead of rescuing him —from his perspective, the King’s pitiful condition would have made him a burden for his nation rather than a symbol of freedom. Douglas concludes that “It was Mayhew playing God. It was Mayhew writing the future history books. It was Mayhew making sure that the King died in battle alongside his American allies” (373). In this plot, Mayhew undoubtedly plays the role of the historian writing history, a role that will be discussed in more detail in the following section as it focuses on agency.

3.4 Determinism and Free Will in *SS-GB*’s “Great Men” and the British Resistance

If *The Man in the High Castle*’s inclinations towards the parallel worlds story — with the aid of the intricacies provided by the *I Ching* and *The Grasshopper Lies Heavy* — inevitably brought the novel to a constant debate between free will and determinism, *SS-GB* once again proves more straightforward in terms of its formation as an alternate history. Devoid of elements such as the earlier mentioned “randomness of coin-tossing” implied by the *I Ching* (Spedo 128) or the open possibility of the existence of an “alternative zero text” implied by *The Grasshopper* (Rossi 407), Deighton’s novel is limited to the distribution proposed by Kathleen Singles, discussed in 1.3.3 (“Necessity, Contingency and Human Agency”): the success of Operation Sea Lion during the Battle of Britain is the moment in history that relies upon the principle of contingency, whereas the rest of the narrative is governed by necessity (133). Therefore, *SS-GB* also complies with the claims that battles are often chosen as points of divergence as a consequence of their contingent nature; in fact, the author relies on contingency to the point of not providing readers with further information about the event apart from the fact that in this alternative fiction the United Kingdom lost.

Even though it might seem that the lack of information about it may prevent the reader from identifying the “great men” in the alternative outcome for the Battle of Britain in the first instance, by no means does it suggest that *SS-GB* is exempt from them. To begin with, the public who is expected to be familiarized with the normalized narrative of the real past should be able to assume that there are at least two key figures involved in the point of divergence: Adolf Hitler and Winston Churchill. Classed as some of the quintessential

examples of “great men”, their actions during this battle are considered to be decisive regardless of whether the outcome favours the British or the Germans. The allusions to both in the novel only seem to reinforce this idea, as Hitler — the victor in this alternative world — is referred to as “the supreme controller of civil power and supreme commander of the armed forces” (45) and is shown in gigantic portraits alongside Joseph Stalin throughout the city of London (221). The stark contrast between *SS-GB*’s and *High Castle*’s Hitler is remarkable, as the former remains relevant to the current political scene in the novel whereas the latter is isolated in an asylum as he suffers from syphilis (Dick 30) — a sexually transmitted disease that the author uses as a device to vilify his health condition and masculinity while portraying him as the root of all evil, as it was studied in 2.6 (Connecting *The Man in the High Castle* with its Past and its Present). On the other hand, Winston Churchill serves as symbol of resistance for the British people; despite the fact that he is defeated and taken hostage in this world, he is still regarded by the population as the embodiment of unity against the German enemy. As it is proven through the narrative, some people refuse to believe the rumours that he has been executed (Deighton 191), and even those who already know the truth such as Sir Robert Benson want to believe the version in which Churchill, wearing the RAF uniform, “refused the blindfold, and held up his fingers in a V sign” (118).

Nevertheless, there are two characters in particular that could be highlighted as the “great men” in *SS-GB* due to their relevance in the plot. The first one, King George VI, lacks agency in his current state. Yet, his figure is important enough to make a large part of the novel’s plot — as well the British Resistance’s plans — revolve around him. In the same fashion as Churchill, the King is a strong symbol of unity for the British population; in fact, his being confined by Himmler in the Tower of London (1) is a matter of great concern that mirrors the decaying spirit of the occupied country. His presence as monarch would give the people the strength and confidence that were lost at the Battle of Britain, and that is why his rescue becomes a cause of utmost importance for the Resistance. Among other reasons, his authority could undermine Nazi Germany’s control over the country by confirming Rear-Admiral Conolly’s status as the leader of ‘Free Britain’ and dishonouring the SS after escaping from the Tower of London (124-125). The fact that what Douglas finds when he meets the King is not the handsome man he recalled but a “pathetic figure, sitting with his shoulders hunched and head tilted forward over the thin clenched hands” (344) could indeed jeopardize the image of the entire nation. This depiction of King George VI undoubtedly

clashes with the collective remembrance of the king that remained a leading figure during World War II and restored the monarchy's popularity among the British people during one of the Empire's most notable times of crisis.

However, the second “great man” in the story, Colonel George Mayhew, is aware of the situation and uses the influence of the King as a key element in his plan to defeat the Nazis. Despite being a fictional character that is absent from the normalized narrative of the real past, Mayhew's actions acquire significance to the point of changing the course of events in the direction he desired by the novel's conclusion. As it was discussed in the previous section, Douglas notes that through his actions, Mayhew is writing history (373), echoing his own words back in Chapter Twenty-two: “The Escape of the Royal Family is going to be in every history book ever written” (232). He chooses to send the King into an ambush knowing beforehand that he will be killed because, as Douglas concludes, “[f]ar better that, than an infirm and pathetic exile King in Washington, butt of the cartoonists' cruelty, darling of the hostesses and constant reminder of the infirm and pathetic Britain occupied by the victorious Germans” (373). In the end, his free will creates a point of inflection at Bringle Sands, in the words of Winthrop-Young: “Dead Americans and a dead king will rally neutral Americans and despondent Englishmen in their fight against Nazism” (882). Consequently, he pushes the Americans — formerly reluctant to enter any conflict— into a war that they will likely win according to Huth, who believes that everything will be over once they are able to make the atomic bomb for which they have obtained the research (Deighton 371).

With regards to the attitudes towards agency and determinism from the rest of the characters, we find a less pessimistic view in comparison to *High Castle*. Even though they do not make display of extraordinary abilities to enter different realities, most characters show a greater degree of confidence in their own actions. As it happens, the presence of an active British Resistance conveys a ubiquitous belief in agency in spite of the limitations imposed by the Nazi regime. Some people do remain sceptical about the future like Sydney Garin, who tells Mayhew that they cannot “beat the Germans by next weekend (...), it's going to be along, uphill struggle” (308); but those involved with the Resistance, from higher positions like Mayhew and Sir Robert Benson to ordinary citizens like Sylvia Manning and Harry Woods still harbour the hope to defeat the Nazis. In his analysis of the TV series¹³, Joseph Brooker comments on the “staging of relations (...) representing different levels of

¹³ Despite the fact that the focus of the article is the TV adaptation, most features discussed by Brooker are common to both the series and the novel.

the state” that can be applied to *SS-GB*, as Douglas, “ordered by the Nazis to solve the case, can walk into a German army camp seeking to make an arrest and be told that ‘civil police’ have no remit here as they did in the days of the British Army” (“Joseph Brooker on *SS-GB*”).

Thus, one of the novel’s most recurrent themes is indeed agency, what can and cannot be done in a Nazi-occupied Britain. In a militarized world like the United Kingdom of *SS-GB*, a higher position will most likely imply more agency; in fact, that is the reason why the protagonist is a Scotland Yard detective — according to Deighton, the story “had to be told from the centre of power (...) [and a] man who solved crimes and hunted only real criminals could have contacts at the top and yet still be acceptable as a central character” (viii). Nonetheless, another recurrent theme in the novel is the clash between those who are in power, since a great part of the plot “turns on the rivalry between the SS and the German Army, which the British Resistance hopes to exploit” (“Joseph Brooker on *SS-GB*”). Indeed, it is precisely the visible clash between those powerful institutions that will give the supporters of the Resistance faith in the power of free will to challenge the status quo and bring into effect plans such as the detonation of a bomb during Karl Marx’s exhumation ceremony (240) and persuade people that were formerly in an ambivalent position like Douglas to risk their lives in order to rescue the King (231).

3.5 Britain’s Past and Present: Its “Finest Hour” and the Fear of Occupation

In a similar manner as *The Man in the High Castle*, *SS-GB* makes display of several features within its narrative that establish a connection between the novel and the past and present times at the time of publication (1978 being the present time in this case). Even though the novel’s concerns may not be of as much international concern as the ones of *High Castle*, they do reflect the struggle of Deighton’s home country at the time. The 1970s were a period of crisis for the British people, and that is certainly translated into the pages of *SS-GB*. Accordingly, this section will follow the same pattern as section 2.6, focusing first on the novel’s relationship with its present time to then move forward towards its relationship with the past.

To start with, the inherently presentist character of alternate history and therefore of *SS-GB*, constructs what would be classified as a nightmare scenario according to Rosenfeld. The novel’s divergence clearly creates a world — or at least, a United Kingdom — in which

a gloomy atmosphere pervades without leaving the possibility for any kind of utopian approach. Generally, a nightmare scenario would be attributed to a sense of contentment with the present, presenting a tendency towards a conservative view that rejects any need for a change. However, as it has previously been mentioned, authors may choose the opposite option and make use of nightmare scenarios “for the liberal purpose of critique” (“What If?” 93). That is indeed the case for *SS-GB*, which depicts a Nazi-occupied Britain where the domestic population is also shown to participate in the corruption of its own country. This follows Rosenfeld’s explanation of how the social context of the 1970s affected the post-war portrayals of British alternate history, as he notices a shift from their earlier triumphalist undertones — supporting Churchill’s myth of their “finest hour” — to a more self-critical view from the mid-1960s onwards as a result of the periods of crisis triggering the nation’s decline (*Hitler* 31). Among the various events that resulted in an escalating pessimistic mood that clearly had an impact in the 1970’s British society, Rosenfeld highlights the following:

The humiliating foreign policy setback in the Suez Crisis of 1956, along with the large-scale abandonment of overseas colonies in the Middle East and Africa during the late 1950s and throughout the 1960s, confirmed American Secretary of State Dean Acheson’s observation that “Britain has lost an empire and has not yet found a role [in the world].” The sense of a nation adrift was expressed in British culture by the “Angry Young Men” of the late 1950s and early 1960s, who criticized the emptiness of contemporary British life. This sense of directionlessness intensified by the late 1960s, as Britain’s economy fell behind that of rival European nations (most notably Germany) in productivity. Meanwhile, Britain’s entry into the EEC in 1974, after long internal and external resistance, heralded a loss of sovereignty to growing numbers of concerned Britons. Finally, by the late 1970s, worsening unemployment, inflation, and labor unrest, as well as new anxieties about political “devolution” and the “break-up of Britain,” sharpened the overall sense of malaise. (50-51)

Subsequently, this accumulation of unfortunate conditions took a toll on the British confidence and national sense of pride as well as on their alternate histories’ depiction of the people as heroic resisters. During this new era of historical revisionism and self-critique, authors begin to question Britain’s moral superiority by portraying the population as susceptible to collaboration at the same time that they start to represent the Germans as humanized beings (52). In the words of Winthrop-Young, “If we defeat evil because we are good (and not the other way round), what does it say about us when we lose?” (882).

Thus, the world of *SS-GB* is a nightmare scenario for which the Nazis are to blame; after all, they are the ones who have occupied the territory, destroyed the city of London alongside with many of its most iconic landmarks (Deighton 144, 176, 221, 344), turned the British into foreigners in their own land (35), established a system of rationing (63) and a series of restrictive policies (65, 259). But the British also have their share of guilt as they

are often shown collaborating with the enemy; for instance, neighbours are supposed to report were they to see any fellow citizen skipping the imposed curfew (22). Another example is the headmaster of Beech Road School, who assures Huth that he has helped German officers “in every possible way” so as to locate Spode, to which he adds that he used to go on holidays to Germany before the war as he declares himself a great admirer of the German system (84-85). In Chapter Twenty, Barbara Barga tells Douglas that “people are depressed and nervous (...) [t]his lack of self-confidence makes them devious and unreliable” (182). For that reason, Rosenfeld stresses the fact that *SS-GB* paints “a more complicated picture of collaboration by stressing its moral ambiguity”, placing particular attention on the main character, Douglas Archer, whom he describes as “caught between his careerist desires to cooperate with his SD bosses and his yearning to preserve his own self-respect and the respect of his young son” (*Hitler* 66). As much as he believes that his professional duties are indeed oriented towards the protection of the British public, the ambivalence of a position where he is shown to collaborate openly with the Germans will lead Douglas to become a target of those who oppose the Nazi regime — to the point of facing an assassination attempt at the hands of the Resistance (Deighton 184-185).

Interestingly, Rosenfeld also notes how the portrayal of the Resistance itself is quite nuanced. On the one hand, a fully committed member such as Harry Woods is revealed to be Kellerman’s informant by the end of the novel, serving as a collaborator and betraying his own moral values in order to protect Douglas and his son (*Hitler* 66; Deighton 374-375). On the other hand, Rosenfeld refers to the “amoral pragmatism” displayed by Colonel Mayhew, who proves capable of committing ruthless acts as severe as sacrificing the King in favour of his personal plans to defeat the Nazis (*Hitler* 66; Deighton 373). This general lack of morality within the Resistance is in fact shown several times throughout the novel, as they are responsible for the bomb detonation at Karl Marx’s exhumation ceremony in Highgate Cemetery (Deighton 240), Douglas’ assassination attempt at the London Underground (178) and Jimmy Dunn’s torture and subsequent death, upon whose body they hang a piece of cardboard that reads: “I was an English hunting dog, working for the German hunters” (148). As a result, such behaviours allow characters to be judgemental about the possibility of a different outcome despite lacking a metafictional depiction of an alternative world like *Grasshopper*, as Harry himself comes to admit that he has wondered whether the British would have been as bad as the Germans should the former had won the Battle of Britain and occupied Germany instead (298), ostensibly addressing the Allied occupation

policies in Germany after World War II. Additionally, it should not be overlooked that a secondary connection between *SS-GB* and its present time might be established through the prominence given to the Spode brother's atomic research at Bringle Sands and the Cold War nuclear Paranoia, which has been already addressed in 2.6 (Connecting *The Man in the High Castle* with its Past and its Present).

Having discussed the novel's concerns with its present, this section will proceed to focus on its relationship with the past. After all, *SS-GB* is an alternate history that depicts a Nazi victory and therefore should also express the author's vision of that possibility. It is not by chance that the point of divergence stems from the United Kingdom being first defeated at the Battle of Britain and then occupied by the Germans, as Rosenfeld argues that this line of thought was not uncommon for the British, who "[u]nlike the French, who no longer had any reason to speculate along these lines after their calamitous collapse in June 1940, and unlike the Americans, who never faced any immediate threat of German invasion", had real reasons to fear a seaborne assault (*Hitler* 34). Despite not being depicted as the root of all evil like they were in *The Man in the High Castle* or in the early post-war years in Britain, the Nazis remain a callous and unethical regime overall. They represent a source of despondency for the domestic population and most particularly for those who are caught in an ambivalent position like Douglas, who had succumbed to depression since their arrival as a result of the efforts of "trying to reconcile his job as a policeman with the repressive, death-dealing machinery of the Nazi administration" (Deighton 234). In addition to the property damage and restrictive policies that have already been mentioned, they are also accountable for episodes of brutality like the shooting of dozens of innocent civilians after the Bringle Sands event, as well as the incarceration of hundred-and-sixty-two people to be sent into forced labour camps (366), or the series of mass arrests known as 'the night of the buses' — which in fact lasts for a total of three days (253). During the latter, Harry Woods is taken and subjected to torture in the form of cold baths and sleep deprivation, which Kellerman deems as "the standard routine in the German army" so as to disregard the cruelty of the acts (292). It is also worth noting that despite Colonel Mayhew being responsible for the King's death, Douglas and Harry had already found him in a wheelchair, unable to speak a word, most likely due to the impact of a concussion caused by the bomb that hit Buckingham Palace (335).

And last but not least, is the fact that as a consequence of its occupation Britain becomes yet another scenario for xenophobia and the Holocaust, from the existence of

yellow-painted segregated benches that are marked “for Jews only” (301) to Douglas’ dawning realization that many of the Jewish families that were arrested during “the night of the buses” will never arrive at the interrogation centres and be sent to a concentration camp instead (265). As the narrator states in Chapter Thirty-three, “There was always enough money and labour for hatred” (301). Rosenfeld states that being aware of Deighton’s personal experience with regards to World War II alongside his military service in the RAF, “one might have expected him to adopt a traditional, patriotic view of the recent past”, in accordance with the representation of the Nazis as the epitome of evil. Nevertheless, his working-class background and his belief that “a writer should destroy clichés and make people rethink assumptions” make him an author that goes beyond the traditional (*Hitler* 66). As a result, the 1970s tendencies towards self-critique may overcome the need to criticize the past, creating a more humanized version of the enemy, as it will be explored in the following section.

3.6 Normalization and *SS-GB*’s 2017 Television Adaptation

Regarding Rosenfeld’s concerns about a process of normalization of the Third Reich in Western consciousness, *SS-GB* once again proves radically different from *The Man in the High Castle*. Not only because of geographical reasons — belonging to a British context in contrast with *High Castle*’s American background —, but also due to the periods in which they were published. As it was mentioned in 2.7, *High Castle*, having been published in 1962, belongs to what Rosenfeld called “*era of moralism*” in which normalization is not yet considered to be a problem. However, *SS-GB* was published in 1978, after the shift in the mid-1960s that gave way to the “*era of normalization*”. After the shift, alternate history increasingly became more popular but less judgemental towards Nazi Germany as a consequence of the pessimistic mood triggered by the steady decline of the British Empire and the delicate economic situation at the time (*Hitler* 23-24). Overshadowed by current events, the atrocities of the Third Reich were pushed to the background as greater prominence was given to historical revisionism and self-criticism. Thus, the British stopped being portrayed as heroic resisters and became collaborators of the Nazi regime — in which “good” Germans and evil Nazis were now often distinguished (51-52). As a matter of fact, Rosenfeld states that *SS-GB*, the most prominent alternate history to be published during the 1970s, was also the one that “went the furthest in narrowing the distance between the British and Germans” (65).

Following the steps of *The Man in the High Castle*, *SS-GB* obtained its own adaptation in the form of a television mini-series produced by the BBC in 2017, two years after the release of Amazon's adaptation of Dick's novel. Once again, it would be interesting to mention Evans' claim that normalization does not follow a linear path towards oblivion (ch.3), since the idea of the crimes committed in World War II failing to be forgotten seems to be reinforced by this growing interest in releasing new material depicting a Nazi victory. Nonetheless, BBC's *SS-GB* presents a couple of drawbacks in this regard: first, it received less promotion — and therefore went unnoticed — in comparison to Amazon's *High Castle*, along with less positive reviews and a series of complaints regarding mumbled dialogues (Weaver). Secondly, it is a shorter adaptation — a mini-series consisting of only 5 episodes — of a considerably longer book; whereas the four seasons of Amazon's *High Castle* were mostly faithful to their source's essence while being able to expand its content in many aspects, BBC's *SS-GB* represents a much more limited adaptation that adjusts itself to Deighton's original content without allowing for much expansion or modification. Even its nature as an alternate history remains the same, displaying features of genres such as the spy thriller, detective fiction and even war film ("Joseph Brooker on *SS-GB*"), but always within the frame of the true alternate history — unlike Amazon's adaptational approach to the parallel worlds story. As a consequence, it does not offer as much novelty as *High Castle* does, and therefore the proofs of normalization that are present in the series will be analysed alongside those of the novel since both head in a similar direction.

The previous analysis of *The Man in the High Castle* first delved into the representation of Nazis as the epitome of evil that was translated from the novel into the series, to then focus on the impact that organic normalization had on the latter. Since *SS-GB* belongs to the "*era of normalization*", the influence of organic normalization must be presumed to be found within the source material to begin with. In contrast with *High Castle*, the Resistance is already an essential part of the plot of the novel and the Germans are established characters with constant presence; as part of the tendencies of the "*era of normalization*", Deighton de-heroizes the British in his writing whereas the Germans are humanized. They are referred to as "bureaucrats" beyond the cruelty of their acts (Deighton 278), and they are even allowed to defend their position as civilized beings, as Captain Hesse

states: “We Germans are not barbarians, Mr Woods” (327; “Episode #1.4”¹⁴). In Rosenfeld’s words:

Deighton's novel featured well-developed German characters - such as the genial but scheming SS-Gruppenführer Fritz Kellermann and the icy but brilliant SS-Standartenführer Oskar Huth - who compete with each other as much as they cooperate in implementing German policy. Indeed, while the novel did not feature any "good" Germans per se (as in *Swastika Night*), its focus on the intense Wehrmacht-SS rivalry (...) showed the Germans in a more complex light than previous works had done. Unlike other narratives that depicted the German occupation as a ruthlessly efficient program of brutal domination, Deighton rendered it as plagued with prosaic internal bureaucratic turmoil. (*Hitler* 65)

In the same fashion as the Smiths in Amazon’s *The Man in the High Castle*, Oskar Huth — portrayed by German-born actor Lars Eidinger in the BBC adaptation — has become one of the most popular characters despite portraying a Nazi of an antagonistic nature. In the novel, his backstory is explored in more depth than many characters, as readers are able to learn more about him than about many other characters, including information about his family background and his education at Oxford, which also establishes a link with Douglas, who studied at the same university years afterwards (Deighton 42). As Douglas notes, he is not “one of those Germans who went through the ritual of saying ‘Heil Hitler!’” at the end of a meeting (260) — he stands out among the Germans. Moreover, he is allowed to show his emotions, particularly after the Karl Marx exhumation ceremony, where his friend Professor Max Springer dies (257).

In fact, his grieving is intensified in the series, as Spring is shown dying right in front of his eyes (“Episode #1.4”). But his greatest display of humanity is to be found in Episode #1.5 — which adds a number of changes to the novel’s original ending — such as Huth offering Douglas the opportunity of arresting him before Kellerman arrives so he can save his life and his son. One of the final scenes shows Douglas hearing the shot that put an end to his life as he runs away, establishing a parallelism between the more heroic duo Huth/Douglas and the successful but amoral Kellerman/Mayhew. The distance between British and Germans is further narrowed in the series as one of the novel’s most saddening moments, the revelation of Barbara Barga’s death (Deighton 348) is avoided, showing her alive and determined to find Douglas by the end of the final episode. On the other hand, the British Resistance’s actions are constantly portrayed throughout the series, which precisely begins with a Resistance fighter shooting Luftwaffe officials at the beginning of the German-

¹⁴ Since the episodes are not given specific titles, the naming used in *SS-GB’s IMDb* page will be applied to the citations.

Soviet Friendship Week (“Episode #1.1”). Furthermore, the explosion at Karl Marx’s exhumation ceremony does have a particularly dramatic effect when watched onscreen, in addition to the aforementioned scene of Professor Springer’s death (“Episode #1.4”). And even during the confrontation against a group of British collaborators in the journey to Bringle Sands, Douglas, who otherwise remained neutral in the novel, is shown shooting a man dead in the Resistance’s unethical fashion (“Episode #1.5”).

With regards to the process of normalization that involved an aestheticization of the Nazi era, which according to Rosenfeld poses a threat to the moralistic value of alternate history (*Hitler* 25), BBC’s *SS-GB* is able to offer examples beyond the content of its original source due to its audiovisual disposition. As it happens, the shooting of the series around London attracted the attention of many people that gathered near Buckingham Palace as the opening scene of the series was being filmed (Davies). The scene is as impactful as the opening shot of the alternative Times Square seen in Amazon’s *The Man in the High Castle*, especially given that the Palace — adorned with several banners and swastikas— is now in ruins (“Episode #1.1”). An interesting addition to this list is another scene of the first episode, in which a naked Sylvia wraps herself in a Nazi flag and faces the street from a balcony as a way of mocking its symbolism. Like in *High Castle*, many of the scenarios are signalled by the presence of Nazi imagery, with the uniqueness of an alternative event as unlikely as the German-Soviet Friendship Week producing decorations in which the hammer and sickle symbol merges with the Nazi swastika (“Episode #1.3”).

In the end, although Evans’ rejection of the linearity of normalization has found proof of its validity as it was discussed in 2.7, it does not account for *SS-GB*’s focus on self-criticism. In the same manner that the novel was connected to the downfall of the British Empire and the subsequent period of crisis that affected Britain in the 1970s, its television adaptation has also been related to the Brexit, which virtually coincided with its release (O’Toole), once again overshadowing the portrayal of the crimes of the Third Reich. After all, both the novel and its adaptation convey Deighton’s universalistic conclusion: “that fascism was not unique to Germany and “could happen here”” (Rosenfeld, *Hitler* 66).

4. Conclusions

The main objectives of this master's dissertation included proving the value of alternate history as a means of understanding and examining how history is shaped by the human mind as well as how the repercussions of past historical events resonate within collective memory. The prior analyses of Philip K. Dick's *The Man in the High Castle* and Len Deighton's *SS-GB* have proven that regardless of the various literary genres with which it may overlap — be it science fiction or spy thriller in this case—, alternate history does undoubtedly fulfil such standards. As true alternate histories, both novels highlight one specific event in history, Roosevelt's assassination in the case of *High Castle* and the Battle of Britain in the case of *SS-GB*, and change its outcome, provoking a rupture in the normalized narrative of the real past that creates a divergence in which the Nazis eventually emerge as victors of World War II, at the same time producing a radically changed world from that of the reader's. The fact that these events were chosen as points of divergence in each story therefore emphasizes their historical relevance and a reliance on the principle of contingency that reveals one of the genre's core concerns: defying causality so as to examine the constructedness of history.

This constructedness of history — within the human mind as well as within collective memory — is indeed explored in various manners. *The Man in the High Castle* introduces two key elements in this respect: the metafictional alternate history *The Grasshopper Lies Heavy* which depicts yet another Allied victory that is different from the one the reader is familiarized with, and the *I Ching* oracle which serves as a source of uncertainty that denotes the existence of more than one possible reality. Consequently, the latter establishes three different textual levels — including a split zero text that features the version accepted by the normalized narrative of the real past and the alternative version suggested by the *I Ching*, the world of *The Grasshopper Lies Heavy* (Rossi 403). Dick's way of studying how history is shaped by the human mind involves enabling characters like Juliana or Mr. Tagomi to access the aforementioned levels of reality aided by the power of their own consciousness; at the same time, it also involves exposing how individuals can introduce new meanings and values into objects lacking historicity through their agency and free will. On the other hand, *SS-GB* provides its readers with a series of characters that show a greater degree of confidence in the capabilities of their agency to change the course of history from the beginning, including an active Resistance that is willing to do everything in its power to defeat the German enemy that has occupied their nation in this alternative outcome of the

events. But most importantly, Deighton portrays the construction of the narrative of history through Colonel Mayhew, who makes the greatest display of agency in the novel by successfully executing a plan that involves sacrificing the King of England — so that his degrading situation does not come to light—, turning him into a martyr and allowing the Americans to obtain the atomic research that will change the course of the conflict, hence becoming a “great man” that just like those who came before him, is capable of shaping collective memory.

Both novels have also been studied in terms of the relationship between the historical and national contexts in which they were produced. *The Man in the High Castle* showcases some of the concerns that are specific to the United States in the early 1960s, whereas *SS-GB* does likewise with the late 1970s in the United Kingdom. Both novels create nightmare scenarios as a way of criticizing the past and the horrors of the Nazi regime, but also to criticize the present situation. In Dick’s case, he portrays a world in which the Nazis have taken control through a series of immoral policies and projects, thus reflecting his support for Roosevelt’s decision to intervene in World War II. He also introduces two extra nightmare scenarios — that of *The Grasshopper* and Tagomi’s slippage into our world — which function as a negative commentary upon the normalized narrative of the real past, in addition to the Cold War analogies in the novel resulting from the nuclear paranoia of the 1950s. Meanwhile, the Nazis are also to blame for the nightmare scenario in *SS-GB*, a world that is tormented by the shadow of atomic power as well. However, Deighton’s main goal was undoubtedly to capture the crisis that Britain was undergoing at the moment by challenging the myth of the ‘finest hour’ and picturing a part of the British population as susceptible to collaboration with the enemy. Despite having the same kind of scenario as their basis, both works are capable of displaying the particularities of each stage in the evolution of the trends in alternate history: from an overall self-congratulatory vision of the United States’ intervention in the war during the 1960s to the self-criticism and consequent undermining of the British’ confidence by the end of the 1970s.

Finally, this dissertation has focused on the phenomenon of the normalization of the traumatic past, paying close attention to the portrayal of the crimes of the Third Reich in the novels and their respective television adaptations. According to Rosenfeld, each one of them would identify with a different period in the path towards normalization: *The Man in the High Castle* would belong to the “era of moralism” in which the Nazis are still regarded as the epitome of evil in Western consciousness, whereas *SS-GB* would correspond to the “era

of normalization”, where the Germans start becoming more humanized as other problems overshadow the memory of the Third Reich (*Hitler* 23). Nonetheless, the television adaptations that have brought both novels to the spotlight in recent years have proven double-edged. On the one hand, they suppose a defiance to organic normalization as they have reinvigorated the interest in the potential damage that could have been caused by an Axis victory in World War II, reinforcing Evans’ belief in a non-linear normalization that allows the memory of Nazi crimes to return and resist forgetfulness (ch.3) — a reasoning that could also be supported by the general reaction to some of Amazon’s *The Man in the High Castle* advertisement campaigns that implied the exhibition of Nazi symbolism in public areas. But conversely, among other evidences of normalization they have provided Nazi characters with a voice — that was even absent from the original source in the case of *High Castle* — to the point of making them the most appreciated members of their ensembles, which is the case for John Smith in *High Castle* and Oskar Huth in *SS-GB*. And most noticeably, their condition as audiovisual media has prompted the fascination and aestheticization of Nazi imagery, featuring morbid, eye-catching scenes of well-known locations such as Times Square or Buckingham Palace being filled with swastikas and propaganda.

As of 2005, the year in which *The World Hitler Never Made* was published, Gavriel Rosenfeld believed that alternate history remained within an “era of normalization”, following a linear, normalizing trend with regards to the memories of the Third Reich — which means that, according to him, the genre should find itself even further away from the “era of moralism” at the moment. Even though this does not mean that the crimes of Nazi Germany are now completely forgotten or overlooked by the general public, Rosenfeld insists upon the fact that the views on the memory of Nazism have grown more and more polarized, while the overall tendency of World War II alternate histories is to show a lesser interest in moralistic judgement. Above all, organic normalization has been a constant in Western consciousness for a long time alongside with the universalization, relativization and aestheticization of the regime (24-25). But as it has been explored in the dissertation, the discussion about normalization that Rosenfeld started in 2005 is still ongoing to this day, as some scholars such as Singles or Evans have contributed to the subject by proposing some objections in more recent publications. Furthermore, World War II continues to be one of alternate history authors’ preferred topics — the website uchronia.com lists examples that have even won Sidewise Awards in recent years, such as C. J. Sansom’s *Dominion* (2012)

or Harry Turtledove's "Zigeuner" (2018) — therefore providing new materials to add to the discussion. In his book, Rosenfeld also analysed audiovisual media including films, television episodes and comedy sketches, showing the equally valid worth of such format in alternate history beyond the pages of a novel or a short story. The presence of the television adaptations for *The Man in the High Castle* and *SS-GB* in this dissertation intended to broaden the spectrum as they belong to the decade of the 2010s, one that was completely revolutionary in terms of the way in which we consume television, from the boom of streaming services like Netflix or Prime Video to the massive productions of original content. As a result, the release of these television adaptations in such a remarkable period also adds a new dimension to the discussion on normalization and alternate history.

As a matter of fact, this new trend of alternate history adaptations that followed Amazon's 2015 *The Man in the High Castle* — including the most recent example featuring one of the most popular alternate histories, HBO's 2020 adaptation of Philip Roth's *The Plot Against America* — certainly provides the genre's scholars with new, enriching content to be examined from a contemporary perspective. There is no doubt that in the not-too-distant future, this form of audiovisual storytelling will be regarded on equal terms with former novel narratives; not only considering book-to-screen adaptations, but also original and refreshing stories seeking to supply entertainment while portraying essential concerns about the way in which construction of collective memory has been determined to this day. That is the case for Apple TV+'s *For All Mankind* (2019), BBC One's *Noughts + Crosses* (2020) or Netflix's *Hollywood* (2020), for instance. Furthermore, alternate history has been, is, and will be a resourceful genre at its core since it encourages authors and public alike to defy the established notions of their memories of the past and introduce connections with the present, having an inexhaustible source of inspiration as time and history advance. Each new year owns the potential to offer new events that will acquire enough relevance to become points of divergence in forthcoming narratives. Events of the dimension of the COVID-19 pandemic, United Kingdom's withdrawal from the European Union or Donald Trump being elected as the 45th president of the United States are among the strongest contenders in recent years — with the latter having already been explored in *The Good Fight*'s 2020 episode "The Gang Deals with Alternate Reality". After a year as turbulent as 2020 has been in terms of politics, economy and social unrest, it can be safely said that alternate history is prone to become a well-recognized genre in mainstream fiction: whatever the form, be it audiovisual or print, alternate history is here to stay.

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