

Alternative History and World War II: Subversive or Conservative? A Case Study of Dick's *The Man in the High Castle*, Harris' *Fatherland* and Roth's *The Plot Against America*

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Alternative history and World War II: Subversive or conservative?

**A case study of Dick's *The Man in the High Castle*, Harris'
Fatherland and Roth's *The Plot Against America***

Travail de fin d'études présenté par DIVOY Aurore
en vue de l'obtention du grade de master en langues et littératures modernes,
orientation germaniques à finalité didactique

Promoteur : Prof. Michel Delville

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Contingency, uncertainty, chaos, were certainly words that I often encountered during the writing of this master thesis. Both literally, because of their obvious relevance to this field of research, but also in a more figurative light. Indeed, it took some time to take in all those new pieces of information, to analyse those novels and to, hopefully, succeed in writing a meaningful whole.

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For once, let us not ask the question “what if” and just contemplate the fact that there is my work, and that it is just here for you to appreciate, comment and criticize.

Can anyone alter it? he wondered. All of us combined... or one great figure... or someone strategically placed, who happens to be in the right spot. Chance. Accident. And our lives, our world, hanging on it.

Philip K. Dick, *The Man in the High Castle*

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1 Introduction

It all began with the reading of one peculiar novel: *All Our Wrong Todays* by Elan Mastai. It is through this specific novel, which includes three different universes at the same time all provoked by one divergence (a time-travel by Tom Barren, the protagonist); that I came to know what alternative history meant. Many questions then followed as I discovered the multiple implications of counterfactual thinking in general (and alternative history in particular) with concept such a chaos, contingency, determinism,...

If the theoretical outline of the genre/mode/device of alternative history was a primary source of interest, I soon became interested with a more practical view of alternative history. And namely, its concrete impact when allied with particular themes in fiction.

The aim of this thesis is to critically engage with a corpus of three different novels which can be encompassed under the (non-specific) label of “alternative history”. Indeed, Philip K. Dick’s *The Man in the High Castle* (1962), Robert Harris’ *Fatherland* (1992) and Philip Roth’s *The Plot Against America* (2004) imagine a world in which the Axis power is victorious. The questions raised in this thesis are the following: Is alternative history, more specifically set in the context of World War II, a subversive or conservative mode? What is alternative history’s meta-text? What are the implications of the theme of World War II?

The general structure of this master-thesis goes as follows: First, a long chapter of introduction which theorizes the genre as such. Then, a second chapter containing some piece of information on the genre meta-text (i.e. the common characteristics of a literary genre/mode which direct the expectations of readers) and on the corpus itself. The third chapter constitutes the case study of this thesis: the concrete and specific analysis of this corpus along four distinctive lines, namely the use of the paratext in the three novels, the metafictional character of the corpus, the concept of “banal nationalism” and of cultivation of culture, and finally the perception of history and authenticity in the corpus. This journey will finally lead to the conclusion of this thesis: to be able to determine if alternative history linked with the theme of World War II, and especially in this specific case study, is subversive or conservative.

The discussion will start with a brief examination of the “genre” classification of alternative history. Indeed, by comparing it first to its historical counterpart, i.e. historical

counterfactuals, the similitudes between alternative history in fiction and history will be shown. There will also be a discussion on the different critiques which are usually correlated with counterfactual thinking.

Then, the theoretical chapter will move on to alternative history's affiliation with other genres such as utopia, science fiction but also steampunk. Those considerations will lead to the classification of alternative history as a genre or a literary mode.

After that, greater attention will be devoted to the genre meta-text of alternative history. Namely its porosity and its metafictional character. This chapter aims at showing how alternative involve the reader in the creation of meaning and in critical thinking. In the same chapter, we will also look at the factors which determine the choice of a theme for alternative history, but also the popularity of World War II. The discussion will also turn to the cultural implications of alternative history, and the British and American image of World War II in relation with alternative history.

The section Corpus will encompass some notes on the authors such as some biographical details and references to popular themes and techniques. There will also follow a brief summary of each novel and a clear designation of their point of divergence.

The analysis of the corpus will focus on different major themes. First, we will look at the paratext of each novel. Drawing on Genette's theory, the content and influence of the peritext and epitext will be scrutinized. Second, the next chapter will have the concept of metafiction as principal motor. We will discuss the use of the *mise en abyme* and of the detective plot device. Third, the three novels will be looked at under the light of cultural nationalism. With the help of concept such as banal nationalism, cultivation of culture, civic and ethnic nationalism and typicality, we will look at the national images which are created in the different novels. Finally, we will determine the specific view held about history, historicity and concept of authenticity in the novels. The discussion will also generate a general reflection on the famous quote "history is written by winners", and the space that is left to write (or not) a history of "losers" and what it actually means.

The last part will answer the question of this whole thesis: through the specific analysis of this corpus, is it the case that alternative, correlated with the theme of World War II, is subversive or conservative?

1.1 The Genres of Alternative history

1.1.1 Alternative history – a broader context

What if I had missed my plane? What if I had not met this person in the first place? What if I had chosen this one instead of the other? As trivial and common as they might seem, these questionings are part of a common mechanism in the human brain: counterfactual thinking. This mechanism, consisting in the re-evaluation of a situation and the envisioning of different alternatives to past events, helps our brain to cope with situations in our daily lives. By means of what Roese calls a “contrast effect” some events are re-assessed as better and others as worse than the actual outcome (Wenzlhuemer 2009, 29). Roese also attributes a “preparative function” to counterfactuals that “may illuminate means by which individuals can prepare for the future and, accordingly, improve their lot” (Roese et al. 2009, 20). This ability of creating “what-if” scenarios has not only been studied in relation to its psychological impacts, but has seen many derivations in multiple disciplines. As Wenzlhuemer puts it “counterfactual thinking [...] can have very fruitful and worthwhile results in an everyday-life or in an academic context” (Wenzlhuemer 2009, 15). The importance of a multidisciplinary perspective is also underlined by Roese and Morrison, stating that “the exploration of counterfactuals has been initiated independently by scholars in diverse disciplines, including philosophy, history, economics, political science, linguistics [and] computer science.” (Roese et al. 2009, 17)

The focal point of this thesis is surely the literary form of alternative history, but it is nonetheless important to see how this mode¹ might be intertwined with variants grounding themselves in other disciplines. Alternative history is mostly associated with historical counterfactuals, therefore it is of great interest to compare on what matters alternative history and historical counterfactuals might differ from or converge with each other.

Let us first take a look at the notion of “counterfactual”. Etymologically speaking, the association of “counter” and “factual” refers to something which would go against an established version of events, i.e. fixed and acknowledged “facts”. A concrete example of counterfactuals would be the imagining of different possible outcomes to the French Revolution (a fact or at least an event recognized as part of history). Counterfactuals are intended to “demonstrate that there are always choices to be made, that there are alternatives and options, that there is no preordained pattern of progression.” (Schmid 2009, 79)

¹ More on the characterization of alternative history as a mode later on.

The use of counterfactuals as a scholar practice in historical research is relatively new. It has only gained recognition by the end of the 20th century. Historians use them to probe causal chains and to see which elements are decisive or not in a certain course of events. By “strengthen[ing] the historian’s distrust of simple causations and all too coherent master narratives (Fried 2004)” (Schiel 2009, 165); counterfactuals offer new grounds to explore. They give a chance to concept such as contingency and by the same token help to see history “as a living process” rather than “an abstract impersonal force” (Talbot 2009, 93).

However major dissention arises around the use of counterfactuals. A lot of criticism has been given to this technique, considered as a “parlour game” by the influential historian E. H. Carr (Wenzlhuemer 2009, 47). Alexander Demandt also follows the same trend, stating that there are no explanations to be found for some events that did occur, and therefore, the quest to understand and analyse an imagined course of events is vein (Wenzlhuemer 2009, 41)². He also claims that what did not happen has no cause nor consequences and cannot be of interest (Wenzlhuemer 2009, 41). Wenzlhuemer, however, demonstrates how counterfactuals can influence our perception of the past and the future and how they therefore have “very real consequences” (Wenzlhuemer 2009, 41).

Indeed, conservative historians see this method as unfit to analyse past events. To acknowledge the efficiency of counterfactuals and their usefulness as a tool, one must apprehend history as relative. Of course there are facts and patterns coming into play, but history can also be viewed as something more fluid and related to the act of creation and fiction itself given the fact that history always involve a narration of some sort. This open conception might therefore collide with assumptions made on the task of the historian. Counterfactual thinking can be criticized, arguing that the historian’s main purpose is to write “about what happened” instead of writing “about what might have happened” (Talbot 2009, 88).

When one uses counterfactuals, his/her definition of what history is (and what it encompasses) then broadens up and corresponds to more than a Rankean acceptance (i.e. tangible facts). If one adopts an inherently strict and fact-bounded view of history, the counterfactuals reside merely on non-realistic speculation on events. But if one is ready to accept the possibility it offers, new “pathways of enquiry” can be found (Wenzlhuemer 2009, 30).

² Translation and paraphrase from German to English of Demandt’s quote. Quote’s reference found in Wenzlhuemer’s article: (Demandt 1986, 11).

It may seem really transgressive to adapt one's view of history and consider it as less fixed and more contingent. Not to mention dangerous, in cases when adaptation rimes with revisionism and leads to dubious reasoning such as Holocaust- or Apartheid-denial. Talbot's take on this might be of great use thanks to his moderation on the matter:

The historian who gives due weight to both chance and necessity must inevitably consider the counterfactual possibilities. I do not wish to suggest that many narratives are all equally possible and equally valid in the manner of post-modernism. The historian's counterfactuals cannot be simply a matter of wishful thinking or fancy. They have to be securely rooted in the material conditions of the society in question. (Talbot 2009, 93)

Talbot reconcile both a more conservative and fluid conception of history, leading to the acceptance of counterfactuals in historical research. Of course, even when promoting their use in the historical enquiry, it is surely not a restrictive one. As Schiel puts it, counterfactuals are one tool available among many: "Counterfactual thinking needs to become incorporated into existing methodological approaches of modern historiography in order to be of any use" (Schiel 2009, 161).

This technique has been underscored as unique in its purpose, in the sense that it functions as a laboratory for the historian. While the historian cannot go back in time, counterfactuals allow her/him to manipulate specific parameters in order to draw conclusions on their impact. Counterfactuals then grant more "room for manoeuvre" (Wenzlhuemer 2009, 35). Wenzlhuemer characterized this notion by using the German concept of "Spielraum". He also highlights the component "Spielen" in this word, indicating the possibility "to play around and try out different things and ideas" (Wenzlhuemer 2009, 35). As a scientific method, counterfactuals permit creativity and "[re-install] a degree of outcome-openness in historical enquiry" (Wenzlhuemer 2009, 44). The exploration of "workings and consequences of non-linear interactions in open-ended systems" is surely distinctive and specific of this technique (Lebow 2009, 57).

Wenzlhuemer points out other benefits and bias underlying the use of counterfactual thinking. Indeed, "one of the potential dangers associated with counterfactuals in history" is that "they are conceived in a way that supports the ideological position of the author" (Wenzlhuemer 2009, 38). However, there is no such thing as objective neutrality and counterfactuals are surely not the sole and only vector of beliefs. Wenzlhuemer adds up that this can only be problematic when it is not acknowledged by the thinker. By using counterfactual thinking, one can be aware of one's own "positions and viewpoints" (Wenzlhuemer, 30). Phillipps even goes as far as to say that counterfactuals would not only bring the thinker's point of view into focus, but would also

reveal underlying ideologies concerning visions of the past. Counterfactuals then “induce critical reflection on the past and [...] highlight historical alternatives, thereby enabling the reassessment of prevailing interpretation patterns.” (Phillipps 2009, 203)

An issue surrounding the use of counterfactuals is its leading to judgments of blame (Wenzlhuemer 2009, 49). Studying the course of events and analysing causal relations might erroneously provoke “irrational attributions of blame” (Wenzlhuemer, 48). This theory is made clear by a trivial example: While heading back home, someone is attacked by a dog. Even if it is not clearly the victim’s fault, there is a tendency to blame the individual’s choice and speculate on how the victim’s choice might have led to a different outcome (Roese et al. 2009, 18). It is not difficult to see how this inference can be dangerous and help to propagate dubious reasoning.

Another ambivalent aspect of the method is defined by Neal Roese as “hindsight bias” (Wenzlhuemer 2009, 48). Roese and Morrison characterise them by an “overconfidence in predicting the past” (Roese et al. 2009, 20). By analysing events from a retrospective point of view, it is possible to consider events as overdetermined. It is easier to assess that something was bound to happen when it did already happen. Hindsight bias is not only proper to counterfactuals, and can also occur with historical research in general. However, counterfactual thinking examines causation and induces inferences, therefore making it even more prone to hindsight bias.

Schmid follows the same trend of idea going a step further. According to him, counterfactuals are deeply linked with expectance. Moreover, expectations are, themselves, “inevitably shape[d]” by “how past experiences are seen” (Schmid 2009, 86). Counterfactuals incorporate past, present and future. Giving that the past is “interpretatively modified in a way so that [it] can be harmonized with a longed-for immaculate ideation of the future” (Schmid 2009, 86); it can be then argued that counterfactuals answer the political agenda of brightening up the past to ease a nostalgic and national longing for the “golden age”³. How convincing as this might seem at first sight, this reasoning will be further discussed in 1.1.2.

The different dangers of counterfactual thinking are to be taken into account. However, if one is careful and aware of its bias, the technique has many qualities. “Counterfactuals have the potential to make us aware of the extent to which our deepest held assumptions about how the world works are themselves the result of inferences drawn from contingent outcomes”

³ Most detractors of counterfactual thinking do not view as a literal question of “what if?” but rather as a nostalgic “if only”.

(Lebow 2009, 57). “Contingent”, or rather contingency, is a key word in the study of counterfactual thinking. Lebow argues that the counterfactual method, demonstrating the underlying contingent forces at play in the sphere of our lives, can be very off-putting for some people. They can have difficulty in acknowledging the given of uncertainty. However, one must admit that contingency plays a role in history:

If major historical developments are so inevitable the pattern of events leading to them should not be so contingent. If events are overdetermined, the underlying conditions responsible for these events should have been apparent at the time to scholars and policymakers alike, making them – although not their timing and specific expression – to some degree predictable. None of the events in question were self-evident at the time. (Lebow 2009, 61)

He reinforces his theory by speaking about “non-linear” events which are the result of the interaction between “one or more variables where the effect is additive or multiplicative” (Lebow 2009, 62). The multiplicity of elements interacting together surely implies a part of chance or contingency. Obviously, this does not mean that we cannot make prediction and that actions have no consequences. “In a complex society, individuals, organizations and states require a high degree of confidence – even if it is misplaced – in the short-term future and a reasonable degree of confidence about the longer-term” (Lebow 2009, 62). Acknowledging this part of uncertainty only enables us to be more objective and open towards what the world has to offer (Lebow 2009, 66).

Now that the notion of counterfactuals, and its multiple implications for the historical discipline have been discussed, it would be interesting to see the parallels that can be drawn between counterfactuals and their literary counterparts.

Gavriel D. Rosenfeld argues that alternative history is “a subset of the former” (Rosenfeld 2014, 456). He views counterfactuals “as referring to the larger, and more purely “intellectual,” realm of speculative history thought” (Rosenfeld 2014, 456), while alternative history would be a more specific form of the latter including ““what if” tales in the form of dramatic novels, short stories, plays, films and the like” (Rosenfeld 2014, 457). Rosenfeld also adds that the separation between the two genres is tenuous:

The practitioners of counterfactual history usually pose “what if” questions in order to understand the origins of historical events, whereas the practitioners of alternate history seek to imagine the consequences of these events’ alteration. To cite an example, practitioners of counterfactual history would be more interested in exploring the “what if” question of Archduke Franz Ferdinand avoiding assassination in 1914 in order to understand the reasons

for the war's outbreak—for example, whether it was the result of contingent or structural factors and whether it would have happened even without the murder at Sarajevo. Practitioners of alternate history, by contrast, would prefer to focus on the consequences of the Archduke's survival and imagine the many ways in which history would proceed along a different path. The distinctions may be subtle and they are hardly absolute, but they may help in establishing a typological distinction between counterfactual history and alternate history. (Rosenfeld 2014, 457).

The difference between both of them lies primarily in their use and function. The alternative history genre offers more of an aesthetic and escapist experience, whereas historical counterfactuals are an analytical tool which might still provide enjoyment for the practitioner. This conception is in line with what Gallagher states in “War, Counterfactual History, and Alternate-History”. Namely that historical counterfactuals “imitate the historian's conventional expository style” (Gallagher 2007, 58), adopting a more “objective” tone diverging from the alternative history writer who “use[s] the characteristic narrative features of fiction”: “manipulat[ing] point of view and focus” and giving “full access to other consciousnesses” (Gallagher 2007, 58). This results in the creation of a richer background for the literary counterpart. The setting presents a detailed account of “the social, cultural, technological, psychological, and emotional totalities that result from the alteration” (Gallagher 2007, 58). This is of great importance to analyse how the characters can be affected by such a background. Alternative history might then allow to “layer personal and national history” in a way that counterfactuals in the historical field cannot (Gallagher 2007, 58).

Are both disciplines so different in their function and in the techniques they use? Schmid also takes position in the debate: “I do not really differentiate too much between scholarly counterfactuals and literary alternates: it is, as Hellekson just points out, widely a question of “[...] narrative techniques that fiction and history share.” (Hellekson 2001: 29)” (Schmid 2009, 88). The common ground between fiction and history would be found in “the constructedness and narrativity of history” (Hellekson 2009, 453).

Juliane Schiel emphasizes the link between history and fiction. According to her, the practitioners of the two disciplines face a deep challenge: the fact that multidirectional phenomena have to be discussed or retold in a fixed and “linear structure” (Schiel 2009, 163). She then advocates for the use of counter-narratives, namely narratives which would allow for more flexibility and go against patriarchal and normative retelling of events.⁴ It is only when the

⁴ An example that is quite representative of the political implications associated with counter-narrative is provided by Mads Mordhorst. In his article “From Counterfactual History to Counter-narrative History” he highlights how

form will be as complex and contingent as human life that “historical accounts of the past” will be convincing (Schiel 2009, 163). Schiel finds adherent in the figure of Iolanda Ramos. In “R.F. Burton Revisited: Alternate History, Steampunk and the Neo-Victorian Imagination” Ramos quotes Bertie Wells:

... we possess an in-built craving for narrative structure. We want everything to have a beginning, a middle and an end... I disagree with the philosophy of what you might term sequentialism. The problem, as I see it, is that we don't truly understand the nature of the past. We mythologise it. We create fictions about actions done to justify what we undertake in the present. We adjust the cause to better suit the effect. The truth is that the present is, and will always be, utter chaos. There is no story and no plan. (*Expedition* 153-4). (Ramos 2017, 596)

Wells talks about “chaos” and is really critical about how history is apprehended. She mentions how history is used as tool to answer political ends and agendas. As extreme as this might seem, there are still some interesting elements to be found in this reasoning. Namely the impact of politics and one's world view on the act of retelling. History and fiction share a deep connection in the fact that they both narrate events, which are themselves shaped by our vision of the world. Schiel's counter-narrative concept is thus the solution for the problem recognized by Wells. To plead for the use of counter-narrative is surely not something easy to consider. However, it is important to acknowledge how history and fiction are shaped by their narrativity.

Professor of journalism and media Matt Hills, as well as historian Richard Ned Lebow, hold the opinion that historical counterfactuals and alternative history would both share the same goal. One underlines the fact that “the arts, humanities, and the social science, while fundamentally different in their methods and often in the responses they invoke in us, should nevertheless be regarded as parallel projects leading greater understanding of ourselves and our world” (Lebow 2009, 67). Both disciplines feed one another and make it possible “to illuminate the actual historical contingencies and factors operating in and on “the past” as we culturally understand it” (Hills 2009, 434). Alternative history would only be more thorough in this enterprise, by coupling it with the “purposes of melodrama and narrative experimentation” (Hills 2009, 434).

“different narratives [can explain] the same events” (Mordhorst, 10). However these narratives are competing with each other and sustain different political agendas. The case that Mordhorst chose to investigate in his article is the following: “Danish Butter Production in the Late 19th Century and the Danish Take-off to a Modern Society”. In each different account the driving forces differ. In one case the impact of technology is put forward, in the other it is the influence of a co-operative movement,... The central question is not ‘What if something different had happened?’ but ‘What if other stories had been told?’ (Mordhorst 2008, 5). The link between counter-narrative and counterfactual is thus the idea of contingency. A shift from counterfactual to counter-narrative brings “the discussion from contingency in the past to contingency in the narratives representing the past” (Mordhorst 2008, 6).

It is naive to think that the debate surrounding the difference between history and fiction as well as fiction and fact could ever reach an end. However, Lebow's words seem convincing and can surely bring an answer. He stresses that this discussion is surely not new: "fact and fiction have always been intertwined in the human mind and share a common etymology in most Western languages" (Lebow 2009, 68) But, assuredly, there are reasons for this. Specifically that history "is only made meaningful by fictional emplotment" (Lebow 2009, 68-69). Alternative history as well as "historical counterfactuals have the potential to build bridges between history and fiction" (Lebow 2009, 69). Both alternative history and historical counterfactuals "may be used to interrogate and offer critical perspectives on history and social science or their intellectual foundations." (Lebow 2009, 69) He highlights once more how artificial the binary between fact and fiction is and that it "can creatively and usefully be bridged for analytical as well as artistic purposes." (Lebow 2009, 70)

1.1.2 Alternative history as a literary genre

1.1.2.1 Terminology: Uchronia, alternate history or alternative history?

There exist many terms to designate the literary counterpart of counterfactuals. One of the first word coined to illustrate this concept is Charles Renouvier's term "uchronie". The word appears in the title of his nineteenth century work: *Uchronie, l'utopie dans l'histoire*⁵ (1876). The creation of this term but also its implications with other genres and concepts are noteworthy and deserve to be discussed. The prefix "u" associated with "chronos" can be translated in English as "a time that does not exist" or more literally "no time". In other words, uchronias aim to demonstrate in an explicit way how what-if scenarios can envision another time and history. The component of history is also clearly stated in the rest of the title: "dans l'histoire". It is surely interesting to note that Thomas More's "utopia" serves as basis for the composition of the word uchronia.

⁵ The full title of the work is *Uchronie (l'utopie dans l'histoire). Esquisse historique apocryphe du développement de la civilisation européenne tel qu'il n'a pas été, tel qu'il aurait pu être*. Renouvier imagines the development of the "European civilization" in altered world where Christianity did not become the norm. The rate of progression of the world completely accelerates, as noted by the editor's note at the beginning of the work: "the Middle occidental encompasses the period from the first century to the fourth century of our era, and the occidental modern history encompasses the fifth to the ninth century." (II)

While “uchronie” is the preferred term in French literature, it is not so in the English-speaking world. One can see occurrences of terms such as “allohistory”, “parahistory”, “paratopia”, “allotopia”, “counterfeit world”, “counterfactual romance”, “what-if story”,... (Winthrop-Young 2009, 105). The prevailing ones being alternate history and alternative history. In this essay, the preferred term and more frequent one will be “alternative history”. According to Shippey, this denomination is more accurate:

The word “alternate” might well, however, seem to be a mistake. According to the Oxford English Dictionary, as first printed in the “A” volume of 1884 but still in the recent update of 1989, the root meaning of “alternate” as an adjective is always something “Done or changed by turns,” as in the term “alternating current.” The phrase “alternate histories” suggests, then, that the real world and its alternate other are somehow flashing on and off in pairs. The word intended, surely, is “alternative,” according to the OED again (sense B.4) “one of several courses which may be chosen” (Shippey 1997, 15)

The word alternative denotes a more open connotation, suggesting an opportunity to choose between many options (or many alternatives, as the term itself refers to). Both the notion of openness (many possibilities leading to more conceivable paths) and the concept of choice are really important. The practitioner of alternative history is not obliged to follow a certain trend. This gives a more nuanced point of view than notions such as “counter-history”, where the goal is to challenge normative and accepted views of history and historiography. Counter-history, for example, gives a chance for minority groups to retell their own stories. Yet, if counter-history goes against the hegemonic accounts of events, it only reverses (and therefore still sustains) the dichotomy between margin and norm, hegemony and minority. Therefore, counter-history is not in state to go against a binary system.

Other differences between the French and English-speaking academic studies around alternative history can be acknowledged. There are far more scientific essays and reviews on the literary “genre” of alternative history in French, whereas the English-speaking literary world concentrates on the historical counterpart of alternative history. This chapter will then include many references to French academics. For the sake of coherence and legibility, the quotes will be translated into and paraphrased in English.

1.1.2.2 Uchronia and utopia

More than the etymological link highlighted between “uchronia” and “utopia”, Renouvier defines uchronia as “a utopia in history”. Winthrop-Young also states that “utopian and fantastic

narratives were a prerequisite for the emergence of Alternate History” in the sense that they helped readers and writers to develop “the skills necessary to explore that which is not” leading then to possibility of “slowly [exploring] that which could have been but never was” (Winthrop-Young 2009, 102).

Winthrop-Young underlines a strong connection between uchronias and utopias, which is itself reinforced by their common etymological roots. If utopia, a genre that is broadly associated with the political, is brought closer to uchronias then it means that uchronias share political affiliations as well. Roman Katsman suggests that such a straightforward link between uchronias and utopias is not possible:

And yet a clear boundary exists between alternative history and utopia or anti-utopia. In a utopia, the political component is so dominant that the genre acquires an ethical, judgmental status. A utopia is a rigid ideological model that does not make an anthropological experiment possible, but rather presents an anthropological ideal or anti-ideal, as in Orwell’s *1984*. A utopia proposes an alternative that is not the result of a true historical bifurcation but is based on the creation of specific imaginary conditions. It is more like a greenhouse (or anti-greenhouse) than a laboratory, and therefore its value and its objective are moralistic and didactic rather than intellectual. Alternative history does not always contain an evaluation and judgment of actual history, nor is it usually itself depicted in black and white. (Katsman 2013, 32)

There is a strong sense that uchronias are less politically rigid and ideologically determined than utopias. This can clearly be linked with the term “Spielraum”, or room for manoeuvre, that was introduced in the previous chapter. Once again, Katsman stresses how uchronias function as laboratories. Uchronias allow readers and writers to experiment with and analyse the results of the interaction between spatial and historical factors and human beings, while utopias tend to present a specific functioning put in place in an imagined society as well as its benefits or on the contrary its limits. Uchronias are then more prone to negotiate between different views (of “actual” world and imagined world for example), whereas utopias expose a fixed ideal often geared towards the improvement of social and political relationships. That uchronias are less radical and extreme than utopias can be seen as negative. One can say that they do not fully commit to a specific political view, or at least that uchronias cannot acknowledge their underlying political affiliations. However, it is surely in their flexibility that they can be of great value. Katsman highlights the moralistic characteristic that is at the core of utopias, but does not go any further in the motives underlying uchronias. I would like to argue that uchronias can have different motives and these are numerous, as will be shown later on this chapter.

1.1.2.3 Alternative history's link with science-fiction

French author P. J. G. Mergey defines alternative history as based around the principle of historical divergence. The trigger is usually the different outcome of a peculiar event, leading to the more or less detailed exploration of a new world and society deriving from this divergence (Mergey 2005, 74-75). He also argues that this exploration can be made by means of a form that is more or less fictional (Mergey 2005, 75). Mergey's definition is voluntary large and does not truly outline the precise limits of a genre as such (Mergey 2005, 75). This broad definition, allowing alternative history not to be rule-bound to a genre, is surely linked with its hybridity. Mergey emphasizes that alternative history has many literary ramifications with other repertoires such as crime novels, adventure novels and even the fantastic genre (Mergey 2005, 75). But one of the most direct link established by many critics, is its alleged affiliation with science fiction. Mergey sees how the counterfactual method can be brought closer to the speculative method⁶ that is highly functional in science fiction (Mergey 2005, 75).

Indeed, the concept of speculative fiction, coined by Robert E. Heinlein is defined by Judith Merrill as "making use of traditional scientific method such as observation, hypothesis and experimentation to challenge a postulated state of reality" (Baudou 2005, 52). The parallel is more than evident with alternative history. The alteration constituting both a hypothesis (if element x changes, then there might follow this or this evolution) and providing a new case for observation and experimentation. The imagined changes lead then to societal and historical divergences, similarly providing a new environment that deeply influences the characters' reactions and perceptions (Baudou 2005, 52). It goes without saying that this new ground "challenge[s] a postulated state of reality". The pattern of the speculative method being imputable to alternative history, has convinced many that alternative history is only a subset of the science fiction genre.

Among many who consider that alternative history is a subset of science fiction, Ramos quotes Rosenberg and states that "this literary genre⁷ was promoted by science fiction, which in turn helped boost its allohistorical offshoot" (Ramos 2017, 599). In the same vein, French

⁶ "Science fiction, a term attributed to Robert Heinlein, in his first known use of the term in his essay, 'On writing of speculative fiction' in 1948 (Lilly 2002, p. 1), as a genre falls under an umbrella term, speculative fiction, which includes all forms of fantastic fiction, inclusive of science fiction, fantasy and horror, supernatural fiction, apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic fiction, utopian and dystopian, alternative history and magic realism." (Jackson & Freeman, 127) It is therefore important to note the direct link between Science fiction and Speculative fiction/the speculative method. Once again, as shown in this quote, alternative history is considered as subset of Science fiction.

⁷ More on this chapter about the classification of alternative history as a literary genre.

literature professor Mathieu Letourneux characterises alternative history as a “fictive modality of the historical discourse but also a sub-genre of science fiction answering to the different expectations of the SF aficionados” (Letourneux 2013, 123). Later on in his essay, Letourneux then formulates the following: “l’uchronie apparaît comme une modalité de la science-fiction” (Letourneux 2013, 124). The word “modalité” acknowledges the fact that alternative history is the child of science fiction, or at least a specific form of it. According to Letourneux and Ramos, this related link comes in the form of many key themes and elements⁸ that both science fiction and alternative history share such as “time travel” and “parallel worlds” that fulfil the goal of “[creating] plausible universes and alternate timelines” (Ramos 2017, 599). Hellekson highlights that the affinity between both comes from alternative history⁹’s ability to “[change] the past [in order] to change the future” (Hellekson 2011, 456).

Alternative history has also been compared to the concept of Steampunk, which is itself related to science fiction. Ramos gives more details on the matter:

Steampunk as a concept owes its designation to the development of steam technology in the Victorian Age [...]. As is commonly known, the perception of steam as a key factor in progress, innovation and creativity inspired the development of steampunk as a science fiction subgenre in the 1980s and 1990s. [...] the term itself [is] an analogy with cyberpunk, and it was used for the first time by the American writer K.W. Jeter to characterise his own works. (Ramos 2017, 591)

Indeed, as noted by Cory Gross in “A History of Steampunk”, the theme and setting of Victorian Era in Science Fiction was to become popular as early as the 60’s. This interest then decreased due to the societal context (and most specifically a more pessimistic view of technology in relation with catastrophes such as World War II and the atomic bomb). Nonetheless, “the romance of the Victorian Era could not be escaped in its entirety, and several threads were fermenting that would, by the late 70’s, mark the rebirth and eventual solidification of what would come to be known as Steampunk.” (Gross 2010)

In 1979, as K. W. Jeter enclosed the copy of his novel *Morlock Night* to *Locus*¹⁰, he made a comment on his belief of the yet to come (renewed) popularity of what he called “Victorian fantasies”. He also added that this popularity and legitimacy would only come to be

⁸ One of Science fiction basic feature is to imagine other possible worlds (Jackson & Moody-Freeman, 127). This is also the case with alternative history, even if the modalities and process at play to achieve this “other possible world” are different. Both technological devices and the presence of motifs such as time-travel, which are often related to science fiction, are also visible in alternative history.

⁹ which she defines as a subgenre of science fiction (Hellekson 2011, 453)

¹⁰ An American Science fiction and fantasy journal which included lists of the new sf or fantastic literary release.

if, they, with Tim Powers and James Baylock, could “come up with a fitting collective term”. He suggested “something based on the appropriate technology of the era; like ‘steampunks,’ perhaps...” (Gross 2010).

Gross then characterizes the genre of Steampunk as an “antiquated reimagining of Cyberpunk set 100 years in the past rather than 100 years in the future.” (Gross 2010) Steampunk is therefore retro-futuristic, as it both merges technological advance and a period of the past, namely the Victorian age. Gross mentions precursors “in the works of Ronald Clark, Christopher Priest, Philip Jose Farmer and Michael Moorcock.¹¹”

Most often, Wells and Jules Verne are considered as literary inspiration for Steampunk. But as John Clute “deftly noted [...] the inspiration [...] came not from Jules Verne so much as from Charles Dickens (and his later imitators, who wrote of industrialized urban London.)” (Gross 2010) Gross also quotes Peter Nicholls, co-author of the *Encyclopedia of Science Fiction*, which “articulated what this fantastic London signified for Steampunk authors” (Gross):

Victorian London has come to stand for one of those turning points in history where things can go one way or the other, a turning point peculiarly relevant to sf itself. It was a city of industry, science and technology where the modern world was being born, and a claustrophobic city of nightmare where the cost of this growth was registered in filth and squalor. (Gross 2010)

The reference to a “turning point” sets a clear parallel with alternative history. Indeed, as will be discussed later on this thesis, alternative history departs from a specific point of divergence, a specific event whose different outcome can create other plausible worlds. Other indications can be retrieved from this quote. Namely, that Victorian London is clearly idealized, and that there is also a limpid note of longing and nostalgia. Victorian London represents something magical, a place peculiarly charged of symbolism that cannot find a valuable counterpart in the actual era of the 1970’s. Steampunk is deeply nostalgic. Besides, it also accounts for the (unjustified) characterization of alternative history as so too.

As an emblematic work of Steampunk, Gross notes that “within the fandom [...] the most significant work of Steampunk fiction became the comic *League of Extraordinary Gentlemen*. Nothing before had created as much buzz or interest in the genre as this creation of writer Alan

¹¹ Gross precisely refers to Moorcock’s *The Warlord of the Air* (1971) which “began charting the territory, followed by his sequels in the collectively titled *A Nomad of Timestreams*”. (Gross 2010)

Moore and artist Kevin O'Neil. *League* featured a pastiche of various Victorian characters drawn together by the British government to defeat all threats against her.” (Gross 200)

If a general outline of Steampunk has been given, and some comparison has been made between it and alternative history, the discussion still needs to deepen. Indeed, what is it that makes Steampunk and alternative history so comparable? In the article “Steampunk: une uchronie à tout vapeur”, Dominique Warfa thoroughly analyses the link between both Steampunk and “uchronia”.

As made clear earlier on, Steampunk and alternative history both revolve around the different historical and societal envisioning of a peculiar period. (Warfa 2018) If alternative history can move through time, Steampunk is obviously fixated on the Victorian era. (Warfa 2018) The most significant differences are the following. First, in steampunk, there is rarely a reference to a unique and specific point of divergence. Indeed, the entire era is likely to change. The historical period as such is different, but there is not a singular and specific bifurcation which sets it apart from the world outside the diegesis. Warfa acknowledges that “authors of Steampunk are certainly not to be characterized as rich provider of explications. The world depicted is as it is, and the reader must accept it even if it contains strange technological devices such as machines which function thanks to ether.” (Warfa 2018) Whereas in alternative history, it is the precise and particular death of a certain figure, the different outcome of a war, an act preventing an accident,... which determine the further evolution of the world. Second, and also linked to what has been previously stated, Steampunk authors are less fond of the idea of plausibility than the alternative history authors. Steampunk aims first to trigger “fun” and a “sense of wonder” (Warfa 2018). In alternative history, the plausibility of the tale is of much importance. Technological devices or fantastical beings do not just appear without explanations. Warfa then states that Steampunk does not follow a code or a meta-text as restrictive as alternative history, and it is both its weakness and its strength.

Letourneux also characterised Steampunk as being part of a set of “tales adopting a uchronian tone.” (Letourneux 2013, 130) And it is obvious that they both share the counterfactual method (i.e. imagining another outcome for an event or an historical period), even if Steampunk is strictly set in the context of the Victorian Era (Ramos 2017, 592). Once again technology (here steam technology) comes in the equation and plays a role in the connection with science fiction. The parallel drawn between steampunk and alternative history accounts for the characterization of the latter as a subset of science fiction.

In this reflection to delineate the familiarity between alternative history and science fiction, it is of great use to look at Ruth Ronen's taxonomy of "possible worlds". As quoted by Matt Hills in the chapter entitled "Time, Possible Worlds, and Counterfactuals", the existence of possible worlds can be accounted for in three different ways. The first one, which is associated with "modal realism" underlines the co-existence of "the actual world" and the other possible world(s). Quoting Ronen's words: both worlds "are equally realized in some logical space where they possess a physical existence" (Hills 2009, 433). The second branch called "moderate realism", includes the possibility of other worlds "as abstract, hypothetical scenarios within our actual world. Here, possible worlds do not ontologically exist, but they can be imagined" (Hills 2009, 433). The third, "anti-realist" mode, "refute[s] the realism and relevance of "possible worlds" to the actual. If anything, this last view is contradicted by the "explanatory power" and critical energy that sf's counterfactuals can possess (Ronen 1994, 23)" (Hills 2009, 434). Hills is then a bit more specific in the impact that this can have for alternative history. He makes use of Stableford's distinction between alternative history where "characters can move between and experience different timelines or cultural geographies"¹² simultaneously (Hills 2009, 437) and others where the plot unfolds "almost [as] realist novels, but with the difference that they reimagined and proceed from a turning point in "actual" history" (Hills 2009, 437). As Hills points out "the former use time travel and other sf devices, whereas in the latter the only imaginative change is historical difference itself" (Hills 2009, 437). Alternative history, providing the existence of an altered universe, surely corroborates a position between modal and moderate realism. The importance of simultaneity (and co-existence of multiple universes) and time-travel versus an historical progression based on a specific turning point; only determines the specific influence of science fiction. It could then be argued that some works labelled as alternative history could be more related to science fiction than others.

While the previous authors and critics named earlier were quite categorical in their characterisation of alternative history as a subgenre of science-fiction, Roman Katsman, Professor of Literature, is more nuanced: "This genre is located at a crossroads, where historical, mythopoeic¹³ intellectual and science fiction literatures meet." (Katsman 2013, 29). The influences at play are then acknowledged as multiple and alternative history is more than the offspring of a definite genre. Winthrop-Young's words are also helpful to delineate the

¹² The coexistence of these different possible worlds is sometimes referred to as the multiverse (Hellekson 2009, 456).

¹³ Mythopoeic, or mythopoetic, designates the creation of a mythology (as the combination of "myth" and "poetic" suggests).

contribution of science fiction to alternative history: “Alternate History contains in rarefied essence the basic features of SF, though in this particular case it is less a matter of the subgenre reproducing the traits of the master genre than of Alternate History scholarship encapsulating SF criticism” (Winthrop-Young 2009, 103). There is still a reference to alternative history being a subgenre, but Winthrop-Young recognizes that the heart of the matter does not necessarily lie there. The assimilation or amalgam between science fiction and alternative history is strongly linked to its reception and academic consideration. Baudou also highlights the critics that have long been addressed (and still are) to the science fiction genre (and are then, up to a point, also addressed to alternative history). Indeed, one can make a list of SF criticism. First, even though science fiction has gained some recognition and is not only recognized as an example of low-brow literature, its strangeness still leads to some distrust for academics. (Baudou 2005, 54) Second, science-fiction is strongly underestimated through its envisioning of new worlds and technological advances that is still considered as a form of escapism rather than a societal critique. Finally, Baudou also states that science fiction is a collective literature. Many motifs and tools are considered as a common base for SF writers. This collective repertoire and fixed expectations, for example: space travel and space conquest, can give the impression that the genre does not let so much place for renewal and individuality. (Baudou 2005, 54)

1.1.2.4 A matter of classification

The question raised in the previous paragraphs was the following: What is the nature of the relation between science fiction and alternative history? Is the latter a subgenre of the former? However, the question that needs to be asked seems to be larger than this. One may ask if alternative history is a literary genre or a (literary) device as such. French Uchronia specialist, Eric B. Henriët notes that alternative history is rather a tool or a device than a genre (Henriët, 9-10). He uses the word “outil” (which can easily be translated as tool), and the word “procédé” (which will be here translated as device). Mergey also follows the same trend, arguing that alternative history is an “interesting tool” (Mergey 2005, 78). He also speaks about “le traitement uchronique” (Mergey 2005, 78). The use of “traitement” gives the impression that alternative history is a vector, a means rather than an end. However, Henriët does not restrict alternative history to a specific label: “The uchronia can possibly be an end in itself for the writer and therefore requires an entire text to be correctly developed. However, it can also appear in the form of a few-lines consideration in a study or in an essay; essay or study that does not make of

this consideration its focal point.”¹⁴ This “uchronian” thought or consideration, can then appear in texts belonging to other genres. This attests once more of how alternative history, or the counterfactual method in general, can be a fertile ground for thoughts regardless of the discipline. Katsman’s view fits with this conception of alternative history: “The logic of alternative history as a rhetorical figure or a mode of strategic-creative thought does not make it possible, however, to negate the existence of the dimension of alternative history even in works that do not belong to this genre.” (Katsman 2013, 49)

To conceive of alternative history as a device, rather than a literary genre, corresponds to Mergey’s broad definition of alternative history. A definition that does not want to conform to any “obvious classification” (Mergey 2005, 75). Singles’ take on the debate might also provide some food for thought. Citing Widmann’s study on the “characteristics and functions of counterfactual history in literature” (Singles 2011, 184) Kathleen Singles states that:

[Windmann’s] most valuable contribution to the study of alternate history [...] is first to establish convincingly that counterfactual history is not (only) a genre, but rather an operation between text-internal references and text-external knowledge by which an ‘alternative version of the common narrative of history’ [...] is produced [...] (Singles 2011, 187-188).

There are many elements that are of great interest in this quote. First, the reference to “an operation between text-internal references and text-external knowledge”. The implication of such a negotiation of meaning between the “actual world” and the diegetic world will be acknowledged in part 2.1 *Porosity and metafiction*. While pointing out the notion of “operation”, once more related to the idea of a device, she underlines a metafictional or porous character that is quite specific to alternative history and that could be described as a characteristic. Furthermore, the word “only” put between brackets is quite meaningful. One can examine this sentence from two different angles. First: “counterfactual history is not a genre”. As already made clear previously, alternative history is then only considered as a means rather than an end. But if one fully acknowledges the presence of only, the meaning changes drastically: “counterfactual history is not only a genre”. This suggests that it can be so that alternative history is a genre, but it need not be. The sentence with “only” takes us once more back to Henriët’s quote, arguing that alternative history can be more than a device at times.

¹⁴ Paraphrase and translation of the following quote : « Ainsi l’uchronie est possiblement une fin en soi pour l’écrivain et nécessite un texte complet pour être développée correctement mais peut surgir également sous la forme d’une réflexion de quelques lignes dans une étude ou dans un essai qui d’apparence n’en fait pas son propos premier. » (Henriet, 4)

In “Fallacies and Thresholds: Notes on the Early Evolution of Alternate History” Winthrop-Young analyses the origins and the evolution of alternative history. Tracing back the path taken by alternative history, he highlights the fallacy underlying its alleged coherent and solid literary tradition. Many critics used late nineteenth century work such as Renouvier’s *Uchronie, l’utopie dans l’histoire* and Louis Geoffroy-Chateau’s *Napoléon et la Conquête du Monde*¹⁵(1836) to attest that one can find traces of a common base of alternative history. However, Winthrop-Young sets forth that this “perceived genealogy” is only a highly subjective and motivated connection made “by 20th century writers of alternate histories” (Winthrop-Young 2009, 104). It serves to justify and create a real legacy, helping alternative history to further establish itself as a genre. Winthrop-Young asserts that: “We are dealing with an anticipatory fallacy that presents evidence of a tradition which in fact did not exist” (Winthrop-Young 2009, 103).

Indeed, those works are “only isolated elements” (Winthrop-Young 2009, 103). He argues that at this stage there was no “shared sense of writing (and reading) within and against a set of literary protocols that are the basis for the establishment of a genre” (Winthrop Young 2009, 104). To further outline his argument, He uses Wisseling’s definition of a genre. Namely that of a “[set] of expectations which steer the reading process (Wisseling 18)” (Winthrop-Young 2009, 107). Rephrasing Wisseling’s words, Winthrop-Young then characterises genres as “[fulfilling] an important role in the process of literary communication” (Winthrop-Young 2009, 107). Given that at the time there was no “genre consciousness” or no “genre meta-text”¹⁶, it is then absurd to talk about a long tradition of alternative history. (Winthrop-Young 2009, 107)

Winthrop-Young highlights another fallacy in his essay. Not only is this long-term genealogy a fiction, but also the genre (if only one can speak about a genre) has strongly evolved. Our actual vision of alternative history:

presupposes notions of historical plenitude, contingency and mutability, all of which are part and parcel of our postmodern sensibility. But that history produces far more than it ultimately consumes, that the past did not necessarily entail our present, that it easily could have [led] to a present very different from [...] the one that happened to come about, that history can be changed more importantly: that it is so sensitive that it can be changed at any point – these

¹⁵ In *Napoléon et la Conquête du Monde. 1812 à 1832. Histoire de la monarchie universelle*, as the title hints at, Geoffroy-Château’s reinvent the “destiny” of Napoléon and portrays its (counterfactual) victory in Moscow which further initiate a twenty years reign of conquest and “universal monarchy”. Alexander I and Napoleon’s war in 1912, through a victorious outcome for the French conqueror, alters the “known” state of event.

¹⁶ Set of rules and motifs that writers belonging to a same literary tradition share.

assumptions may characterize current alternate histories, yet how prevalent were they when Alternate History first emerged? (Winthrop-Young 2009, 101-102)

What Winthrop-Young characterises as a “post-modernist sensibility” was not a prerequisite for the early apparition of what we might now call alternative history. Quite the opposite, those early instances were greatly related to a nostalgia for the past and a longing to return to a lost Golden Age. Alternative history is deeply rooted in its context. The emergence of a concept or current (such as post-modernism), or even the evolution of the zeitgeist can have a significant influence on its development. If one is willing to define alternative history as genre rather than a device, one should nonetheless be aware of the major evolution of alternative history through time.

In the same vein, the shared meta-text or characteristics of alternative history have also taken different paths through the course of time. Winthrop-Young has shown how “the retroactive alteration of history” that is “linked [to] time-travel” was not necessarily obvious and present before 1940. While today, this mechanism is fixed in everyone’s mind and has become a “cultural cliché” (Winthrop-Young 2009, 108). He argues that there is a:

shift from the quandaries and technicalities of time travel to how, why and with what chances of success history may be changed as the result of such a chrononautical venture. In short, the evolution of the genre has reached a point where the device is superseded by the narrative it enabled. The next step – which would have been unacceptable just a decade earlier – will be to eschew time travel (and other functionally equivalent devices) altogether and present a scenario in which history changes all on its own. (Winthrop-Young 2009, 112-113)

The evolution described by Winthrop-Young correlates with Stableford’s distinction between alternative histories using means such as time travel to provoke an alteration and others where a different (but progressive) course of history is the cause of the alteration. Stableford’s theory seems to suggest a co-existence of both methods, whereas Winthrop-Young’s highlights “scenario[s] in which history changes all on its own” as part of the actual meta-text. Of course there might still be instances of alternative histories in which “quandaries and technicalities of time travel” are used, but one cannot overlook this development.

A common genre-awareness that is not so easy to pin down, a change in function through the emergent post-modern sensibility, or even a progressive evolution in the methods and meta-text at play; these are so many elements which do not allow an easy characterisation of alternative history in terms of a genre. More than this, if there really is a common tradition and a visible genre-awareness, the real interest should grow by focusing on the space that is allowed for heterogeneity and individual experimentation. As Shippey states: “writers can furnish an

extra dimension to the rule-book, and continually bring in the strange, the individual, and the unpredictable” (Shippey 1997, 23). The delineation of a genre or of common characteristics related to a device, provide a base to highlight those peculiarities that are personal to each alternative history writer/practitioner.

If each author employs a set of specific themes and expresses affinities to peculiar techniques and motifs, it can be very beneficial to discover the motives around the use of alternative history. In “Pourquoi écrit-on de l’uchronie?”¹⁷, Henriët gives an overview of the diverse objectives of authors who write alternative histories. He delineates six major motives, but maintains that alternative history is a device fruitful and fertile enough as to avoid being limited to so few applications. Henriët discerns the following uses: alternative history as experimental or historical laboratory; alternative history as a didactic tool or the vector of a message; nostalgic alternative history; parodic alternative history¹⁸; alternative history as pretext or excuse to settle a score; and negationist or propagandist alternative history. The first two are quite obvious and will not be explained in greater length as well as “alternative history as a pretext”, however the others will be further discussed.

As already mentioned, the first occurrences of texts using the alternative history mode revealed a strong sense of nostalgia. Nostalgic alternative history do not only focus on History with a capital letter, but also on the individual history of fictional and anonymous character who envisions what their life would have looked like if they had made other choices. This form is particularly popular in films¹⁹.

Parodic alternative history uses pastiche and irony as key motor. The event or the nature of the historical change is often made ridicule or considered as trivial. The humorous mood is a way to convey a critic and to set the reader to think. Henriët takes as example Jean-Pierre

¹⁷ “Pourquoi écrit-on de l’uchronie?” is Henriët’s contribution to Eric Vial’s and François Pernot’s collection *L’Uchronie : l’Histoire telle qu’elle n’a pas été, telle qu’elle aurait pu être*. However, I only had access to an online pdf file which encompasses Henriët’s article. The page numbers are thus those of this pdf file (see Works Cited), and do not correspond to those in Eric Vial’s *L’Uchronie* (Henriët’s contribution actually starts on page 27).

¹⁸ Henriët uses the term “entertaining” (“uchronie divertissante”) but its evident lack of specificity proves to be unsatisfying. Indeed, one can characterize many works as “entertaining” even though they are devoid of pastiche. Therefore, the preferred term will be “parodic”. Henriët clearly highlights that this humorous/entertaining form rimes with intelligence or cautionary tale, reminding us of the role played by parody.

¹⁹ Henriët gives some concrete examples such as the movie *Mr Destiny* in which the thirty-five-years-old Larry Burrow (James Belushi) wishes to see how his life would have turned out had he won during his high school baseball championship game. Mike, aka Mr Destiny, transfers Larry in the altered life he wished for. Noteworthy here is the fact that the hero often reaches to the same conclusion in this type of movie. Namely, that what he/she had wished for and considered as the best version of his/her life, is in fact deceiving. The hero’s current life is the best choice possible and the momentary alteration of events helps the hero to realize this. This also explains why alternative history is often considered as conservative.

Andrevon's short story *L'anniversaire du Reich de mille ans* (Henriet, 13). Following the often cited Nazi prophecy that the Third Reich would last one thousand years, Andrevon depicts the altered reality of a little French town in 2933. The inhabitants are about to celebrate the 1000th anniversary of the Reich, which might be the last following Hitler's absurd prophecy. One can see the irony lying at the core of parodic alternative history through this peculiar example. Henriet also assesses that this form can also exist with heroes of popular fiction and book or tv-series (Henriet, 14). In this case an episode presents a character in a completely different light (example of a superhero which turns into a villain) or a change in the known plot of the tv-series/book series. The presence of an ironic tone is a real added value to mark a contrast.

The purpose of this thesis is certainly not to adopt a prescriptive point of view and to make a list of elements or motifs that are decisive to distinguish between "good" and "bad" alternative history. However, it would not be critical to acknowledge propagandist and negationist alternative history as legitimate. They should be considered with great carefulness given their dubious nature. This form is, fortunately, not the most popular and fruitful one among the six cited above. Nevertheless, it is often this motive that comes to mind to people who consider alternative history as a highly conservative and political mode. Rosenfeld argues that alternative history can be used for political agendas (and it is the case with negationist alternative history), but inherently "counterfactual reasoning is politically neutral" (Rosenfeld 2014, 459) in the sense that it does not only assumes "right-wing forms". Rosenfeld then emphasizes that considering that alternative history has "automatic political implication" is a fallacy (Rosenfeld 2014, 459).

Henriet is aware that his classification is not definite and could be broadened up. It is also certainly the case that there is more than one unique motive at the basis of a specific instance of alternative history. The different forms can be mixed together, providing an even richer account of possibilities. Encompassing a more individualistic or nostalgic tone while reinventing History with a capital letter, or even using irony, this merging of motives reinforces once more the hybridity and flexibility that is constitutive of alternative history.

As alternative history tends to reveal and analyse the contingency at play in our world, its characterisation seems also unfixed and prone to change. If Henriet and Mergey advocated for a large definition of alternative history, I argue to view it as a spectrum. At one end of this spectrum, there would be the concept of genre and at the other the concept of tool or device. Alternative history would then find a place a little bit further away than the middle and in the direction of a device. Katsman's reference to a "mode of strategic-creative thought" (Katsman

2013, 49) is maybe an interesting compromise between the device and the genre. Indeed, there are some expectations and shared meta-text that do not exclude it from having some genre “qualities”, but on the whole, alternative history is malleable and can be likened to a device. In the little corpus of three books that will be analysed, there are namely differences in their tone, structure and affiliation to other genres. Alternative history’s classification is just as contingent as the outcome of the events it proposes.

2 Corpus and genre meta-text

Drawing on the conclusion made earlier on that there exists a specific meta-text which is common to most novels representative of the alternative history literary mode, here are some constitutive elements which will be considered thoroughly. First, the porosity which lies at the core of alternative history. Then alternative history’s use of “emblematic” characters and historical elements which are part of the collective memory but also its relying both on personal and national history. Moreover, attention will also be devoted to the specific implications of World War II when related with alternative history: its link with cultural and collective memory, and especially the national self-image of Britain and America.

In the section “Corpus”, the point of divergence at the heart of Dick’s *The Man in the High Castle*, Harris’ *Fatherland* and Roth’s *The Plot Against America* will be examined, and each plot will be briefly summarized. This section will also contain some information about each author.

2.1 Porosity and metafiction

Two characteristics that are specific to alternative history are its porosity and comparative nature. Indeed, alternative history implies a comparison between a rewritten and fictional form of history (as it might have happened); and the accepted historical account (or “real” history). The novels and works are porous in the sense that they cannot function without this external reference to a “common history.” As Baurin states “the effectiveness of alternative history²⁰ is based on its divergence from reality and cannot be apprehended without this relation.” (Baurin, 50) This “implied analogical lecture” then constitutes a profound paradox (Baurin, 50), as alternative history, while aiming to create plausible universe and worlds, openly reveals its fictional character. Alternative history is thus “overtly metafictional” (Baurin, 57).

²⁰ Uchronia in the text, this quote, such as others, has been translated into English.

Baurin, making reference to Saint-Gelais' concept of "jeux métافictionnels" or "metafictional games"; highlights that this comparative relation is a "playful reminder of historical divergence" (Baurin 2012, 50). Letourneux uses the same lexical field as he compares this "distinctive confrontation" to a game, on which the "pleasure of fictional uchronia relies" (Letourneux 2013, 125). "Playful", "game", "pleasure", it is clear that alternative history allows the reader to play an active role and to enjoy it. The reader even borrows the historical method while trying to reconstruct a chronology of events and making sense of different documents. Indeed, it is often the case that the alteration of history (and thus the settings of the tale), is "slowly revealed in the form of altered newspaper headlines, currency notes, discovered documents, snippets of dialogue, and the like" (Rosenfeld 2014, 456). Hellekson specifies that these "made-up primary texts [...] force the reader to infer a history from these fragments. As readers do this, they, like the author, share in the effort of creating meaning." (Hellekson 2009, 454)

According to Daněk, unlike "historiographic metafiction which strives to question our ability to know the real past", alternative history "relies on a straightforward or even simplified concept of history and [...] "neither the existence of a real past nor our ability to know it through history are called into question in alternate history." (Singles 61)" (Daněk 2016, 16) In other words, Daněk strongly distinguishes the purposes of historiography (the history of the historical discipline) and of alternative history. Yet, Wenzlhuemer-Young refutes this argument: "ironically, however, while alternate history revolves around issues that are of less concern to other genres, they are close to the concerns of historiography." (Wenzlhuemer 2009, 892) A concrete example to determine this yet unclear bound between alternative history and historiography will be given in section 2.2.3 Empires and Americas as well as in 2.2.4 World War II.

If the status of alternative history as deeply linked with historiography is neither easy to establish nor straightforward, it is clear that the alternative history mode can provide a critical perspective on history (besides being a source of enjoyment and playfulness). A concrete object of predilection for alternative history, is the way meaning is created through the recollection and assembling of different references which "emphasize the constructed nature of history: it is not found in these traces, but crafted by an active mind that seeks to make meaning from historical artifacts." (Hellekson 2009, 454). As one begins to reflect on the role of the historian to piece together an acceptable and plausible account of events, this leads then to further questioning: "Who brings about history? Is the historian a transcriber of facts or a site of synthesis? Can

anyone involved with making history be disinterested? What can be inferred from information?” (Hellekson 2009, 454) It is also the case that the value of artefacts, the concept of historicity and authenticity are recurring motifs in alternative history. Alternative history allows both for playfulness and the emergence of profound reflections on history and, at times also, on historiography (Winthrop-Young 2009, 114).

Hills goes as far as to say that alternative history brings about a reflection on epistemology itself (Hills 2009, 435). While alternative history relies on a dialogical relation between reality and the diegetic space; traces of the “real” world in the novel can act as disruptive elements. Thus elements from the “authentic” historical background function in the same manner as surnatural elements in fantastical tales, undermining the foundations on which the plausibility of the tale is based (Letourneux 2013, 126)²¹. Letourneux states that the presence of those disruptive elements creates a sense of floating referentiality as well as effects of dizziness and confusion (Letourneux 2013, 126). Hills even characterize this device as an “exercise in ontological disruption” (Hills 2009, 435) but also highlights its benefits. Namely that it “compel[s] readers to see the ‘real’ historical world in different, perhaps more critical ways.” (Hills 2009, 437) Baurin also agrees with this view, and claims that while the world depicted is “explicitly imaginary” it still has “a metaphoric scope upon the empiric reality” (Baurin 2012, 46). But more importantly, with alternative history “history-as-ontology or essence is characteristically displaced by ontological scepticism and contingency.” (Hills 2009, 436)

Gavriel D. Rosenfeld, evokes Evans’ fear surrounding counterfactual history.²² Namely that it might have “a dangerous impact upon historical consciousness” and that it “may be dulling our awareness of history by encouraging a flight into fantasy”, being nothing more than an “escapist impulse” (Rosenfeld 2014, 464). But as Rosenfeld claims, “it is doubtful that the consumers of counterfactual history” and alternative all the same, “regard it as surrogate for real history.” (Rosenfeld 2014, 466) On the contrary, it is because one knows the accepted version of history that one “can appreciate what might have happened” (Rosenfeld 2014, 466). Rosenfeld conclude that “we ought not fear that” alternative history and counterfactual history “will marginalize [traditional history].” (Rosenfeld 2014, 466) Alternative history does not only concern a public which possesses a great historical knowledge, but also pushes its reader to learn

²¹ In *The Man in the High Castle*, Mr Tagomi realizes that he is in a parallel universe or an altered version of his reality when he notices the Embarcadero Freeway (*The Man in the High Castle*, 223), an element which does not make part of the world in the diegesis but well of the reader’s own world, as noted by Letourneux. (Letourneux 2013, 126)

²² While directed at counterfactual history, these fears can be projected onto alternative history as well.

more in order to fully appreciate it. There is for example the technique which Baurin calls “*métaphore in absentia*” or “metaphor in absentia”: “the uchronian tale, while being based on the difference between a parallel and a real world, provide a vision of the real world in the same manner as a negative photo. The absence of an event or a personality paradoxically reinforces its presence.” (Baurin 2012, 54)²³ This technique can only be of interest if one is knowledgeable about a peculiar person or event. The metafictional nature of alternative history induces an active and creative role of the reader, rather than an “escapist impulse”, alternative history is thus in state to induce in the reader more awareness on historical facts and a subsequent critical gaze on them.

As referred to earlier on by the “made-up primary texts” (Hellekson 2009, 454), elements from the reader’s reality make many incursions in the diegetic space. Maps, extracts of official documents or speech and the likes, be they made-up or “authentic”, are of great importance in alternative history. Indeed the paratext is “another device used to highlight the fact that the reader is engaging with an altered version of history” (Daněk 2016, 19). Daněk distinguishes two types (which are inspired by Singles) (Daněk 2016, 19):

The first type simulating history writing (fake historical documents and sources) is not exclusive to alternate history and can be found in many works of historiographic metafiction. (Singles 62) The other type is quite unique in its function, and it is not used outside the genre of alternate history (Singles 113), in the form of acknowledgements, introductions or author’s notes which often list events as they really happened or in another way allude or even directly state that what you are reading is an account of alternate history. (Daněk 2016, 19-20)

The distinction between those two types is quite representative.²⁴ However, it is reductive to speak of “fake historical documents” or “simulating history writing”. It is true that there are numerous made-up artefacts, but in *Fatherland* Harris makes use of what he calls “authentic documents” (*Fatherland*, 386) such as railway timetables or extracts from the Wannsee Conference.²⁵ The elements are thus not fake, they are just inserted into a different context and acquire a new meaning and purpose. Daněk underlines another paradox here. Namely that what he calls the first type of paratext serves to reinforce a sense of credibility, whereas the second type highlights that this is an “account” of alternative history. The uses of the paratext and the

²³ The original quote in French : « le récit uchronique, en reposant sur les différences d’un monde parallèle avec le réel, fournit une vision de ce dernier en négatif, l’absence d’un événement ou d’une personnalité renforçant paradoxalement sa présence. » (Baurin 2012, 54)

²⁴ This specific taxonomy is enough as an introduction statement in this section. However, in the specific analysis of the three novel, a more thorough conceptualization of paratext inspired by Genette will be used.

²⁵ Further information on the following chapter: 3.1 Paratext.

simultaneous “ironic admitting of their own fictionality” while “striving for authenticity [...] (Singles 61)” (Daněk 2016, 16) is once again a proof of the rich and paradoxical metafictional nature of alternative history.

Bréan states that the importance of the reader’s active role in creating meaning (by putting together different pieces of information) does not consist in the perfect delineation of the trajectory of this or that historical character. However, the focal point is the cultural evolution and collective mentality change in this other world, which could have been ours (Bréan 2013, 136). Indeed, it “urges [the reader] to conjecture an alternative cultural history.” (Bréan 2013, 136) Ramos, citing Mitchell, is also convinced that alternative history “prompts authors, readers and critics to confront the problem of historical recollection (3)” (Ramos 2017, 601). “Cultural history”, “historical recollection” or even collective memory, those are the terms which must be deeply correlated with alternative history and even so more when it is juxtaposed with the theme of Second World War, as will be shown in the next part.

2.2 World War II

As discussed above, alternative history might or not be related to science fiction. In some novels, such as *All Our Wrong Todays*, the tropes of science fiction are typically used: time travel and theory of a multiverse are heavily relied upon. In this specific case, the world has come to evolve at a much faster pace through the invention of the “Goettreider Engine” (*All Our Wrongs Todays*, 6) In this type of novels or short stories, the plot does not need specific cultural elements of collective memory to be sustainable. It functions on its own and encompasses a definite and personal sphere. In *All Our Wrong Todays*, Tom Barren travels across three different versions of his own reality to find the love of his life, Penelope Weschler. Each different universe results from its alteration of the present through his time travels. From his ideal world in which “no war, no poverty, no under-ripe avocados”²⁶ exist, Tom Barren then lands in a form of reality which is strongly imperfect and resembles our world, while his ultimate step is in a dystopic and post-apocalyptic version of our world. If the reader can derive a lot of pleasure and also critical engagement from the reading of this form of alternative history²⁷, it might well lack another

²⁶ Quote from the back-cover of the novel.

²⁷ Of course the use of “this form of alternative history” can seem quite reductive. I am aware of the divergences that may exist and of the peculiarities associated with each authors. This generalization only aims to distinguish between alternative history which contextualizes historical figures and great events and others where the relying on Sf tropes is clearer (as mentioned with Stableford’s and Hills’ distinctions, p 16-17).

layer. This layer, is also the distinctive element and is part of the metatext of alternative history: the presence of important figures or key events recontextualized in the diegetic space.

This section's objective is to show how the notion of collective memory is reminiscent of alternative history. But also how the narratives around World War II, in particular, deserve a deep analysis. To find some indications of popular themes of alternate history, I found an interesting point of entry through the online bibliography *Uchronia: The Alternate History List*. The website defines itself proposes a rich inventory of alternative history works²⁸. There are many criterions which one can use to find a peculiar type of alternative history. The websites also proposes a category "anthologies". Needless to say, anthologies, functioning as thematic collections of literary works; can help to give examples of popular themes of alternative history. I found an interesting one with Gregory Benford and Martin H. Greenberg's anthology. Divided in four different volumes, the title of each of them begins with *What Might Have Been?*; then follows the number of the volume and then different types of alternatives: *Alternate Empires*, *Alternate Heroes*, *Alternate Wars*, and *Alternate Americas*.²⁹ The four big themes here (empires, heroes, wars and Americas) are strongly related to theme such as History (with a capital letter) and even nationalism. The further discussing of this chapter will then make use of these topics to discuss the correlation between World War II and alternative history.

2.2.1 Heroes

As Henriët states:

Jésus-Christ, Napoléon, Hitler sont typiquement ces hommes providentiels qui créent l'événement et nombreuses sont les uchronies à avoir joué avec le destin de ces hommes prolongeant leur vie, les rayant de l'Histoire, ou modulant leurs influences sur leur entourage. (Henriët, 5)

Be it at the level of the classroom, the place of worship or even at home, there are figures who are mythologised and are definitely part of the cultural knowledge of certain groups. Not only are they known, but they are seen as influential and decisive in the occurrence of some events or the implementation of certain policies. They are therefore a major source of inspiration in works related with alternative history (Henriët, 5). The modification of their destiny, should it be by giving them a greater life-span, erasing them from history or modulating their influence on their

²⁸ In their introduction, it is said that "as of October 2018, the database was about 1.6 MB in size and included over 3300 entries." (Schmunk)

²⁹ I did not have access to these four volumes and could not consult them, but their title is quite indicative and can give us some information on the way alternative history is organized.

fellow-beings; is thus at the core of many works (Henriet, 5). Hitler, as cited above, is certainly one of the most prolific figure to be thematically used in alternative history. In most cases, it is not only the figure itself³⁰ which is of interest, but the broader context of Nazi Germany and the entire group of head-officials (such as Goebbels and Heydrich) is also of much importance.

However, as Henriet suggests, the presence of these “providential” figures raises deeper questions. Namely: “What is the significance of those great figures and which impact do they have when coming face to face with worldwide epidemic or historical contingencies?” (Henriet, 6). This questioning then constitutes an introduction to larger ones (and sometimes even metaphysical reasonings): “Is History made by a few men or women, or is it, on the contrary, History which makes some men and women?” (Henriet, 4). Stéphane Nicot and Eric Vial in “Les Seigneurs de l’Histoire” argue that History is both made by a few men or women and a driving force which influences the lives of men and women (Henriet, 5). However, if a concrete answer to this question is interesting, it is rather the continuous questionings about one’s environment and one’s impact on the world that should be considered as primordial. Of course, while this thesis will not offer a definite answer, it is once more the critical gaze and deep thinking provoked by alternative history that is considered as decisive.

As argued earlier on, alternative history is able to reconcile a national layer with a more personal layer, it is generally the case that the microcosm of the family and the individual is also studied in alternative history. Next to this great figures, the daily life of Mr or Ms Nobody is of great interest (more on this in 3.4.2 Losers and Winners). Those “nameless” people developed by the author are thus another way to carefully analyse the alternative society imagined (Henriet, 8).

2.2.2 Wars

Of course, great figures, due to their vivid remembering and perception in cultural and collective memory, are often convenient starting point for alternative history. In the same manner as these major personalities are a source of inspiration, History in the form of great events is considerably used:

l’histoire, arrière-plan ou sujet principal, se ramène à une suite d’événements saillants, les hauts faits de grands personnages, les inventions majeures, les crises et les catastrophes, les guerres et les épidémies. A la fois parce qu’ils produisent un récit [...] et parce que la plupart

³⁰ For example, *La part de l’autre* (2001) by Eric-Emmanuel Schmidt. In this novel, Hitler’s future involvement as leader of the NSDP drastically changes as he is accepted at the Academy of Fine Arts in Vienna.

de leurs lecteurs conçoivent le passé comme une grise chronologique chargée de dates significatives, les auteurs d'uchronies reproduisent le mouvement d'une histoire événementielle. (Bréan 2013, 135)

The idea of significant and influential factors is highlighted: for example the impact of a certain invention, a crisis or catastrophe, a war or an epidemic. Those events are both stimulating thanks to their ability to create a narrative (as they happen to be influential, their coming to existence is the trigger for numbers of changes) but also due to the way “readers conceive the past”. The aspect of cultural and collective history or memory is once again clearly emphasised.

These decisive events which can be used as the outset of a narrative, are usually referred to as nexus point (Hellekson 2009), bifurcations point (Lebow 2009 as well as Katsman 2013), or even points of divergence or pivotal events (Rosenfeld 2014). Gallagher defines it as a “crucial single moment which serves both as a nexus linking the accepted past with the hypothesized alternative and as a point of departure separating the true from the altered.” (Gallagher 2007, 59-60) Given its importance for the creation of a narrative, there are specific characteristics that need to be taken into account when choosing a bifurcation point. Henriët claims that the point of divergence should be plausible (realistic or likely to happen³¹) and interesting in its consequences and its further historical or literary development (Henriët, 5).

In the same way as Henriët defined some useful characteristics to choose a bifurcation point, Gallagher analyses how wars are perfectly adequate points of divergence:

Wars are believed to be full of unpredictable turning points, meeting the criteria of both contingency and plausibility; wars have long-range and wide-spread ramifications that affect all citizens in the nation, meeting the criterion of self-evident significance; and military histories themselves often stress not only the importance of contingency but also the vastness of the catalogue of alternatives used in planning. Add to these the obvious advantages that 1) most people know who won the major wars their countries fought, so readers will not become confused, and 2) readers are often attracted to histories with plenty of hectic and lethal action, and the predominance of military allo-histories seems almost inevitable. (Gallagher 2007, 57)

Gallagher's range of arguments is quite diffuse, and these arguments seem to have been mixed without further explanation. Nonetheless, those claims are convincing. Indeed, the outcomes of war are unpredictable. As Gallagher, citing Robert Cowley, notes: “Nothing is more suited to

³¹ Roman Katsman is also convinced that the plausibility of the point of divergence is a defining feature. He is even more specific: “it should assume the possible, not only with respect to the validity of the laws of nature but also with respect to its cultural plausibility. In other words, the author chooses a real historical (or personal) bifurcation point, at which events really could have proceeded in different ways, not just in his imagination. Due to certain circumstances, perhaps even accidentally, one specific possibility was realized and the others were lost. But at the point itself all the possibilities were plausible.” (Katsman 2013, 37)

“what if” speculation than military history, where chance and accident, human failings or strengths, can make all the difference. (Cowley, xiii)” (Gallagher 2007, 57). If chance is a determining factor in these wars, their consequences can also drastically change the face of the world and “affect all citizens in the nation”. Schmid also qualifies war as “the most notable and consequential “switches” where history might have taken another course” (Schmid 2009, 78). The factor of plausibility certainly concerns the fact that wars are (unfortunately) really common in history and are generally concrete points of departure for stories. Gallagher also draws attention to the notion of “self-evident significance”. Not only do wars concern entire nations, but they are usually taught at school and part of the collective knowledge. The last argument (that wars can offer “hectic and lethal action”) is maybe the least persuasive one. It might be the case that wars offer more action and adventures but it seems rather to be an added-value than a decisive factor in the choice of a bifurcation point.

Gallagher and Schmid’s claims also merge as they both state that wars “are amongst the best-documented clusters of historical facts and courses of events” (Schmid 2009, 78) and that “archives of modern wars, especially bulge with unused plans [...] meticulously prepared for, but never actualized” (Gallagher 2007, 55). Schmid also adds that even if there is so many documentation on wars “divergent readings, reinterpretations, all kinds of lingering confusions seem to persist. They indicate that there is much uncertainty, thus anxiety despite finally model clarity.” (Schmid 2009, 78-79) One can see the clear link between those archives as source of inspiration but also as useful tool for metafictional devices.

If History is full of wars and if one’s imagination can see how many more could have taken place, Silhol argues that alternative history does not fully look through and use its full catalogue. The reader is faced with a “mythologised history which is reduced to some famous events and few illustrious figures (Klein, 18)” (Mergety, 79) and that alternative mostly set its eyes on contemporary historical periods that are the most known by the wide public (Mergety, 79). However, Mergety claims that while this might be seen as a limitation, it shows the local and temporal preoccupations of the uchronian author, and consequently and a priori those of its readers (Mergety, 79).

2.2.3 Empires and Americas

In the previous section, we acknowledged how alternative history is the product of its context and how it might reveal societal and contextual concerns shared by a specific nation or

community. (Mergey, 79) This section will not be on “Empires” and “Americas” as such³². The two terms are rather seen for the connotation they have: they both denote an idea of nationality or national consciousness and geography. In practice, we will then discuss how alternative history is shaped by its context of production. More specifically, the focus point will be the link between alternative history and the United States but also alternative history and Britain.

As already made clear in earlier sections, “the author of alternative history is limited by its reading public’s perception of history rather than its knowledge. (Klein, 18)” (Mergey, 79). The way history is perceived in a certain national context deeply influence popular choice of themes but also the way they are treated. Wenzhuemer shares the same opinion while stating that “a good part of [the] power, of the meaning” of an historical event does not depend “on how it actually took place [...] but rather on how it is perceived, interpreted and remembered by the people.” (Wenzhuemer 2009, 34) It is therefore significant that alternative history in the USA mostly focus on the themes of Civil War³³ and the Second World War³⁴ (Gallagher 2007, 57).

Rosenfeld argues that “the defeat of Nazi Germany has become so integral to postwar American and British national identity that it has acquired an aura of inevitability in popular memory” (Rosenfeld 2005). In his article “What if the Nazis had won? / One fantasy imagines a more moderate Hitler³⁵”, he discusses in great length the impact of national image on the portrayal of Second World War and the depiction of Nazi Germany. According to him, both Britain and the United States have followed the same path: from a vindication of their role in the “positive” outcome of the war to a more nuanced point-of-view and less stigmatized vision of Nazi Germany.

In the United States, World War II, considered as a “good war” (Rosenfeld 2005), was reimagined in the light of American isolationism. The purpose was to show that the “American decision to intervene in the war” was a good choice and has prevented “the Axis to impose a reign of terror upon the conquered nations of the world.” (Rosenfeld, 2005). The shift would have then occurred in the mid-1970s as “new works of alternate history began to challenge the view that the American decision to intervene against Germany in World War II had been such a wise idea.” (Rosenfeld 2005) Rosenfeld characterized the nuanced depiction of the Axis power

³² Even though the Third Reich, the theme of the three novels, is an empire.

³³ A popular example is Harry Turtledove *Southern Victory* series.

³⁴ “Those [scenarios] in which Hitler won the war number sixty-three, with the United States proving the most prolific producer, having generated twenty-eight such works, including fifteen novels; Great Britain is then a close second, with twenty-seven.” (Smith 2006, 1132)

³⁵ As hinted at by the theme and most specifically the reference to «more moderate Hitler », one of Rosenfeld’s dedicated approach is the question of WWII normalization.

as “rosy representations of history as it might have been under Nazi rule”. The reason underlying this change is the context of the late 1970s and early 1980s, and America’s “national decline” (Rosenfeld 2005). This resulted in a critical doubt about the United States’ intervention in the war and namely a doubt that the “American victory in World War II [...] actually worked out for the best.” (Rosenfeld 2005) Rosenfeld also considers another shift that follows the pattern that has already made visible. Indeed “the return of national self-confidence during the 1980s – especially after the end of the cold war in 1989 – once more transformed the function of alternate histories from self-criticism back to self-congratulation, as accounts once more returned to older patterns of representing a Nazi wartime victory.” (Rosenfeld 2002, 95) America’s oscillatory movement from self-congratulation to self-critique is echoed in the depiction of Nazi victory.

As for Britain, the “main theme has been collaboration” (Rosenfeld 2005). World War II was at first considered as Britain’s “finest hour” and the British nation also adopted the “good war” myth. (Rosenfeld 2005) Britain’s decisive role in winning the war is here justified by an “unerring sense of moral virtue” (Rosenfeld 2005). However, “beginning in the 1960s and lasting up through the present day [...] a steady stream of alternate histories [...] cast doubt on the British people’s moral virtue by sceptically portraying them as collaborating with the Nazis for reasons of opportunism and ideological affinity.”³⁶ (Rosenfeld 2005) Once again, Rosenfeld finds an explanation for this change. He claims that those “pessimistic” alternative history³⁷ “reflected postwar Britain’s declining sense of national self-esteem after the loss of its colonial empire and its economic downturn after the early 1960s.” (Rosenfeld, 2005)

Rosenfeld also puts forward that this change of paradigm is a subject of controversy. Indeed, “Supporters of the good war and “finest hour” perspectives in the United States and Britain have vigorously criticized these alternate histories as implausible and unpatriotic.” (Rosenfeld 2005) Rosenfeld also employs the word “legacy” which is really interesting through its intimate connection with cultural memory. Which events deserve to be considered as legacy? How much place do the term “legacy” let for change and evolution? What is our responsibility for the actions which were perpetrated by our ancestors? These are so many questions that can also be asked.

³⁶ Rosenfeld makes a reference to *Fatherland*: “Robert Harris’ 1992 blockbuster novel (and later HBO film), “*Fatherland*” – [casts] doubt on the British people’s moral virtue by skeptically portraying them as collaborating with the Nazis for reasons of opportunism and ideological affinity.” (Rosenfeld 2005)

³⁷ In another article Rosenfeld gives more information on what can be qualified as a “pessimistic” alternative history: “A sense of national decline produced a pessimistic mood that transformed the function of alternate histories from one of triumphalistic self-congratulation to self-critique.” (Rosenfeld 2002, 97)

If the general atmosphere and zeitgeist of both national entities are so prevalent in the portraying of World War II, Rosenfeld justifies it by the fact that alternate history is resolutely presentist: “The primary function of alternate history – the answer to the question “why do we ask ‘what if?’” – is to express our changing views about the present.” (Rosenfeld 2002, 103) Rosenfeld even elaborates some general “rules” about the techniques used to convey those views: alternative history portrayed as fantasies “often tend to be liberal, for by imagining the [alternative] past turning out better than it did in reality, they implicitly critique the present and seek to change it.” (Rosenfeld 2014, 459). Whereas “nightmares [scenarios], by contrast, often tend to be conservative, for by portraying the alternate past turning out worse than it was in reality, they ratify the present as the best of all possible worlds and downplay the need for change.” (Rosenfeld 2014, 459) However, these two links, between nightmare scenarios and conservativeness on the one hand, and between fantasies and liberality on the other hand, should not be perceived as permanent and unchangeable. Indeed, alternative history and “counterfactual reasoning” in general “[are] politically neutral. [Counterfactual thinking] [...] assumes left-wing varieties as well” and next to “the form of fantasies —instances of “wishful thinking”” is also “the form of nightmares.” (Rosenfeld 2014, 459) Rosenfeld acknowledges the fact that there is often a correlation between the political and alternative history, but that this correlation does not per se exist.³⁸

In Rosenfeld’s “What if the Nazis had won? / One fantasy imagines a more moderate Hitler”, the discussion irremediably lends to Rosenfeld’s usual claims about normalization as hinted at by this quote: “the tendency to view a Nazi wartime victory as a fantasy rather than a nightmare suggests the slow emergence in the United States of a less demonized picture of the Third Reich in American memory.” (Rosenfeld 2005) Indeed, Rosenfeld refers to “a less demonized picture of the Third Reich”, suggesting that this specific portrayal of Nazi Germany as less representative of “evil” shows the process of normalization at hand. Another example in the same vein as the previous can be found in the following quote: the pessimistic “accounts [...] have diminished [Nazi wartime victory]’s sense of horror and portrayed it in much more normalized terms as relatively tolerable event.” (Rosenfeld 2002, 95) But how does Rosenfeld define normalization? What are the implications for the genre?

Rosenfeld argues that some specific national communities possess ““abnormal” historical legacies by virtue of the moralistic aura that comes to surround them. These legacies typically

³⁸ This means that alternative history is not per se conservative or liberal, but obviously the fact that it deals with cultural heritage and memory more than often implies a political connotation.

involve national successes or failures whose “lessons” are deemed necessary to remember (or never forget).” (Rosenfeld 2014, 461) One’s involvement in the Holocaust or in a colonial empire is thus such legacy. Rosenfeld notes that “over time, this aura of moralism tends to be eroded by various types of normalization.” (Rosenfeld 2014, 461) He discerns *organic normalization* which comes to being by the passing of time and the fact that older generations gradually and permanently disappear (Rosenfeld 2014, 461). Rosenfeld describes it as “a natural, if not inevitable, process.” (Rosenfeld 2014, 461) However, all forms of normalization are not “natural”, as Rosenfeld argues. It is also sometimes pushed forward “by people who are impatient with the lingering “abnormality” of a given past and seek to hasten its normalization.” (Rosenfeld 2014, 462) Rosenfeld argues that this come into being through the relativizing but also the universalizing of a national and specific experience, whose uniqueness³⁹ is erased (Rosenfeld 2014, 462). Another attempt can also be achieved through *aestheticizing* and namely “by subjecting [this past] to forms of representation that mute its moral dimensions” (Rosenfeld 2014, 462). Rosenfeld’s conclude that these “three strategies [relativizing, universalizing and aestheticizing] differ in their methods, but they pursue the common goal of overturning the sense of the past’s exceptionality.” (Rosenfeld 2014, 462)

In Rosenfeld’s light, the normalization of Hitler and a Nazi Victory through fiction (*aestheticizing*), an in particular alternative history, is thus seen in mostly negative light or at least for utilitarian purposes⁴⁰. Benjamins Aldes Wurgaft in his review of Rosenfeld’s *Hi, Hitler: How the Nazi Past is Being Normalized in Contemporary Culture*, shows the limitation of Rosenfeld’s approach. He criticizes the fact that Rosenfeld distinguishes such general tendencies in the portraying of World War II:

It would be more accurate to say that those histories have been in constant reinterpretation, a process reinvigorated as new archival materials are found, and as new ideological skirmishes flare up, usually around a provocative new book or essay. The notion that World War II had been a “good” war found early challengers among professional historians, such as Charles Beard, as early as the late 1940s (Wurgaft 2017, 435)

³⁹ About the Holocaust uniqueness: “What was peculiar or unique was the systematic and methodical fashion in which the extermination of men, women and children classified as members of a particular – undesirable – race was conducted over many years, and the enormous number of people involved in the perpetration of the murder in their various professional capacities. It is this peculiarity that renders insufficient the routine explanations of the Holocaust as another, even if extreme, case of racial and ethnic genocide.” (Bauman 2002, 46)

⁴⁰ Rosenfeld’s principal aim (in creating this dichotomy) is to “chart how views of the past’s exceptionality evolve” but also “tracking shifts in group memory and identity.” (Rosenfeld 2002, 462) Rosenfeld’s theory seems to be much more focused on the context than on the real impact on the reader and how this normalization might be used for subversive ends.

Indeed, it is never neutral (and therefore never truly accurate) to delineate a genealogy or a general course of actions. Wurgaft's claim is that Rosenfeld only sees reinterpretation of historical documents (and of history as such) in huge and contradictory waves and not as a constant process.

Wurgaft is also convinced that Hitler's and Nazi Germany aestheticization is not a true form of normalization. Wurgaft "argue[s] against many dimensions of Rosenfeld's account of normalization, particularly his claim that aesthetic normalization can undermine our moral judgments regarding the Holocaust." (Wurgaft 2017, 433) On the contrary, it seems that "humorous or humanizing representations of Hitler", while creating a gap between the "actual" figure and the way it is represented, "stresses the exceptional nature of the Holocaust and makes it an exemplary negative lesson." (Wurgaft 2017, 435). In this view, normalization functions as the same as irony or as a joke: only interesting through the paradox and the divergence that exists between the "authentic" and the imagined/the new version:

every effort to normalize the Holocaust, especially ones that work through humor and jokes [...], actually maintain the Holocaust's status as a series of historical events resistant to "normalization." If "normalization" is a process through which extraordinary, or morally charged, historical events lose their moral charge, then aesthetic efforts to normalize the Holocaust actually reinscribe the special moral status that Rosenfeld believes they erase. (Wurgaft 2017, 433)

The gap created by the new portrayal of Nazi Germany (thus depicted as something else than evil) "take[s] an existing structure and make[s] new sense of it, often discovering latent potentials both welcome and unwelcome" (Wurgaft 2017, 441) In this case, "moral content is not neutralized, but, rather, underscored through a compulsive return to the historical materials of the Nazi period, materials that are then reworked." (Wurgaft 2017, 439) Wurgaft also talks about a "double movement in which we cross lines but reinscribe them in the same gesture" (Wurgaft 2017, 436). Drawing on Wurgaft's claims, it might be said that "representation has not lost all moral limits; those limits have simply begun to function in new ways." (Wurgaft 2017, 438) Indeed, representations of cultural events, and in particular of the Nazi past, through alternative history "give[s] us readers an enlarged sense of the possibilities contained within those who were lost" (Wurgaft 2017, 441).

Rosenfeld's claims on normalization are far less convincing than Wurgaft's view of it as a critical and subversive gesture. Even if the ideas of "waves" and oscillatory movements between self-critique and self-congratulation were a bit too simplistic, they are still helpful in

their emphasizing of the role of the context of production. Indeed, if we look at alternative history carefully, “we can then learn more about ascriptions of meanings and symbolic value to certain events and processes.” (Wenzlhuemer 2009, 35) But also, be they fantasies or nightmare scenarios, alternate history gives us a “useful service by reminding us not to view the past with complacency” (Rosenfeld 2005).

2.2.4 World War II

As discussed earlier on, World War II’s popularity in alternative history might already be explained by its link with cultural perception and national identity, but also alternative history’s conception of a History of great events and illustrious figures. Needless to say, World War II in itself carries a specific value for most people and is still a common theme for most bestsellers or works of popular fiction. Winthrop-Young also explained that the constant recycling of this war can also be explained by Nazi Germany’s extensive use of propaganda (Winthrop-Young 2006, 879). Indeed, “no other [regime] tried so hard to shape the ways in which it will be remembered.” (Winthrop-Young 2006, 879) But as this aura of popularity inevitably surrounds World War II, Winthrop-Young nonetheless adds that in alternative history this theme “fulfil a different function and [...] there are, in many cases, fairly specific relationships between genre and historic material that go beyond the gratuitous use of a Nazi décor.” (Winthrop-Young 2006, 879)

In his essay “The Third Reich in Alternate History: Aspects of a Genre-Specific Depiction of Nazi Culture”, Winthrop-Young argues that an interesting point of research is to

explain not only why alternate history keeps returning to the Third Reich, but also why it tends to focus on particular aspects when engaged with Nazi culture. Why do certain themes keep reappearing? Do these themes evolve over time? What are the genre-specific dynamics that determine these depictions? (Winthrop-Young 2006, 880)

Another reason why alternative history “keeps returning to the Third Reich” is its “provid[ing] of an immediately accessible good-versus-bad set up with little need for further elaboration.” (Winthrop-Young 2006, 879) at a time when it has become “difficult to maintain a clearly identifiable evil collective” (Winthrop-Young 2006, 881). In this depicting of “absolute” evil, alternative history portraying a Third Reich victory, allows us to reflect on the notion of moral superiority. Indeed, a world where Nazi Germany, the perpetrator of an unprecedented genocide, is depicted as the winner of the war raises the following question: “If we defeat evil because we are good (and not the other way round), what does it say about us when we lose?” (Winthrop-

Young, 882)⁴¹. The device conjugated with the setting of World War II and Axis power victory, challenges “the Puritan obligation that all the members of the good side be innately good and not merely by virtue of association” (Winthrop-Young 2006, 883). The literary creation of alternative worlds where Nazis are victorious is therefore not a way to vindicate the crimes of the Nazi regime or to deny Jewish suffering, but a way to start a serious and deep reflection on our conceptualizing of good versus bad, but also the occasion to challenge the self-righteousness that is so often associated with “historical legacies”.

In the previously mentioned quote, Winthrop-Young also makes a reference to a set of reoccurring themes and their evolution through time. Winthrop-Young mostly elaborates on the idea of technology and urban setting. Indeed, drawing on Jacques Boireau theory “that authors of alternate histories are faced with the basic choice of either accelerating or decelerating history (Boireau, 35)” (Winthrop-Young 2006, 886), Winthrop-Young further outlines the idea that our actual timeline can be altered either through a movement of acceleration which he characterizes as tachychronia, or a movement of deceleration which he calls bradychronia. The specific sector that determines the “overall rate of social change” and therefore induces a different speed of evolution, is the sector of technology (Winthrop-Young 2006, 886). As for the way the theme of technology is represented in the case of a victorious Nazi Germany and its evolution through time, Winthrop-Young traces a general development. At first, there was a “tendency of early alternate histories to depict a victorious Third Reich as resolutely antimodernist, if not downright medieval” (Winthrop-Young 2006, 885) World War II in alternative history, and more specifically the Axis power victory, followed the lines of bradychronia. Indeed, during the period of the 30s to the late 50s a faster pace of evolution was considered as positive and “good times [were equated] with fast times”⁴² (Winthrop-Young 2006, 886). Later on, however, as technology came to be considered as something dangerous and raising far more ethical questions, texts began “to locate Nazi victories in worlds which subsequently evolved noticeably faster than ours.” (Winthrop-Young 2006, 885) In its later form, Nazi Victory was thus encompassed in a tachychronia.⁴³ Winthrop-Young then notes that “within alternate history, the victorious Third Reich has embodied both extremes of historical tempo: inescapable deceleration to the point of

⁴¹ Winthrop-Young goes as far as to say that “the not-so-hidden message of several narratives seems to be that the democratic societies losing to the victorious Third Reich are lacking in moral force and fiber.” (Winthrop-Young 2006, 882)

⁴² Winthrop-Young gives the example of *Lest Darkness Falls* (1939) by L. Sprague de Camp, in which “a time-traveler prevents the decline of the Roman Empire into the eponymous darkness of the Middle Ages and thus sets the stage for an improved rise of the West cleansed of the pernicious influence of the medieval Roman Catholic Church.” (Winthrop-Young 2006, 886)

⁴³ *The Man in the High Castle* and *Fatherland* are both forms of tachychronia.

stand-still⁴⁴ as well as pathological acceleration to the point of impending self-destruction.” (Winthrop-Young 2006, 887)

The convergence of the theme of technology and World War II is certainly not a hazard. It has now become public knowledge that the Second World War is a profoundly modern war⁴⁵. If the depiction of Nazi Victory was at first represented in the form of bradychronia, it is certainly because “to a certain extent [...] the writers of earlier alternate history shared [...] the bias of influential historians who, in the first decades after the war, tended to present Nazi Germany as an outburst of irrational energy that amounted to a decisive break with the “normal” development of modern societies.” (Winthrop-Young 2006, 892) As World War II progressively became seen as the excess and dangerousness of an “extreme form of modernization” (Winthrop-Young 2006, 890), then it encompassed the form of tachychronia. Winthrop-Young insists on this point and states that the Third Reich is

so appealing to contemporary SF writers⁴⁶ [because] [...]it represents the inverse as well as the extreme of the conventionally accepted relationship between technology and culture; it is the nightmare of science, the dark other of the commonly accepted uniform progress of science and society.” (Winthrop-Young 2006, 890)

Through the words “society” but also “accepted (which implies an acceptance by someone and therefore a “human” agent), the cultural aspect which has previously been discussed is once more highlighted. Its conflation with science adds something deeper and opens a new field of inquiry.

Wenzlhuemer adds more down-to-earth factors to explain why alternative authors invoke Third Reich victory. He characterizes World War II as a war which possess a strong “closeness”. He defines its closeness by referring to World War II’s “duration, intensity and particular fierceness”. One might also argue that closeness can also be seen in a literal sense, of a war that happened not so long ago. Those factors also helps to explain why World War II is so popular

⁴⁴ Winthrop-Young nonetheless highlights that technology was still present in bradychronias and that in this case other social domains “suffered” much more from this deceleration than the technological one. (Winthrop-Young 2006, 887) Indeed, Winthrop-Young describes technology as an “assembly of fancy gadgets in the service of an extremely backward society” whereas in later text “technology start[ed] to impose its own logic on society” (Winthrop-Young 2006, 887)

⁴⁵ “This paramount strategy, aimed at simultaneously marginalizing the crime and exonerating modernity, is the interpretation of the Holocaust as a singular eruption of premodern (barbaric, irrational) passions, as yet insufficiently tamed or ineffectively suppressed by (presumably weak or faulty) German modernization.” (Bauman 2002, 47) However, the “ultimate taming of the inherently chaotic natural forces and by systematic, and ruthless if need be, execution of a scientifically conceived, rational plan” (Bauman 2002, 51) is in total accordance with “the modern spirit, [...] [which] urge[s] to assist and speed up the progress of mankind toward perfection” (Bauman 2002, 51)

⁴⁶ Winthrop-Young considers alternative history as subset of science fiction, this is why he makes reference to science-fiction here.

in alternative history, but are clearly not enough. And surely, as Winthrop-Young reminds us, it “is far too simple to dismiss popular fiction” or at least alternative history “as parading Nazi props merely for entertainment purposes.” (Winthrop-Young 2006, 893)

The “persistence of the Second World War as a cultural touchstone” (Granieri 2007, 340) is not a satisfying solution to explain the extent to which World War II is used in alternative history. Indeed, World War II, due to its link with modernity and its good-versus-bad inherent set-up, is in state to induce critical thinking and deep reflections on the pertinence and nature of morality but also on the influence of technology.

2.3 Corpus

The corpus of this master thesis is composed of three different novels: Philip K. Dick’s *The Man in the High Castle* (1962), Robert Harris’ *Fatherland* (1992) and Philip Roth’s *The Plot Against America* (2004). Both Roth and Dick’s are Americans authors⁴⁷, while Harris is British.

There will be no detailed discussion on the biography of each author, but perhaps is it interesting to highlight some information about each of them. Philip K. Dick was born in Chicago in 1928 and died in Santa Ana (California) in 1982. In the *Gale Contextual Encyclopedia of American Literature*, Dick’s is described as “one of the most original and thought-provoking writers of science fiction.” (Hacht, A et. al 2009, 401) Prolific as both a novelist and short-story writer, Dick has gained great recognition among science-fiction writers and scholars. Dick argues himself in an interview that he is interested in “present[ing] the concept of a multiverse rather than a universe.” (Hacht, A et. al 2009, 402) As recurring themes which can be found in his work are the following: “the delicate balance between illusion and real” (Hacht, A et. al 2009, 401), “bleak futuristic landscapes, oppressive government bureaucracies, and the destructive potential of advanced technology, especially mechanical or electronic simulations of organic life.” (Hacht, A et. al 2009, 403) Dick is also known for his broad use of simulacra.⁴⁸ (Hacht et. al 2009, 403)

Fatherland is Robert Harris’ first novel. Harris was born in Nottingham in 1957. As far as his career is concerned, he evolved from columnist to political editor and has made a

⁴⁷ Their characterization is, of course, not so easy and straightforward. I mainly want to refer to the fact that they were both born in the USA and that they both lived their life there. This characterization, and all the problematisation that comes with it, is also interesting as James-Forger comments on the fact that Roth “came to be termed a “Jewish American writer””, this gives Roth the dubious and unwanted status of a representative or spokesperson.

⁴⁸ Quick reminder, the simulacra is “a question of substituting the signs of the real for the real.” (Baudrillard) Once again, I only had access to an online version of the work, therefore the title pages are missing.

contribution to different newspapers such as the *London Sunday Times*, the *Daily Telegraph* and *The Observer*. In the “critical perspective” section of the British council online biography of Harris, he is said to “[give] narrative form to his preoccupations, and, while providing well-crafted entertainment, [to invite] serious reflection on contemporary matters of significance”. Harris’ fiction is even referred to as being “engaged.” Noteworthy here, the mention to “entertainment”. Indeed, Harris’ novels are usually labelled under the term “popular fiction” and he has even won the Popular Fiction Award⁴⁹ in 2013 for *An Officer and a Spy*. *Fatherland* is then described as “a brilliant exercise in alternative history which both made the author’s reputation and allowed him to make the transition from political journalist to novelist.” (British Council)

Philip Roth, born in 1933 in Newark (New Jersey), is often catalogued as a Jewish American author as mentioned earlier. His works succeeds in “combining comedy and social criticism” (Hacht, A et. al 2009, 1396), as reported by the *Gale Contextual Encyclopedia of American Literature*. Roth also shows a lot of interest for the “relationship between fiction and reality.” (Hacht, A et. al 2009, 1396) His novels often deal with the “[exploration of] Jewish family life in the city and the conflicted characters that it creates.” (Hacht, A et. al 2009, 1398) Roth’s focus on the Jewish family life divides as much as it pleases. Indeed, he is “generally considered one of the most important American novelist of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries” but has often been critiqued to incite anti-Semitism⁵⁰. As will be shown later on, Philip Roth’s “autobiographical gestures” (Jaffe-Foger 2013, 133) are fairly known. *The Plot Against America* does not escape the rule, as the narrator’s parents are named Bess and Herman Roth (the exact same name as Roth’s parents). In the *Gale Contextualized Encyclopedia of American Literature*, Roth is acknowledged as an important figure “among the leading contemporary American authors through his careful scrutiny and biting satire directed at post-World War II America.” (Hacht et. al 2009, 1398)

As for the three novels, each of them envisions a Nazi Germany victory. However, the points of divergence or bifurcation points leading to this Nazi victory are different. There is also much variety in the tones and moods of each novel, and their different affiliations with other genres.

⁴⁹ This award was renamed “Fiction Book of the Year” in 2017. This new denomination maybe shows an evolution in the consideration of popular fiction. It would be interesting to give greater attention to this phenomena, however the debate around high-brow and low-brow literature will only be superficially touched upon in this thesis.

⁵⁰ “Roth has received [much] criticism from those who feel his characters elicit anti-Semitism from non-Jewish readers” (Hacht, A et. al 2009, 1398)

The Man in the High Castle won the Hugo Award winning price in 1963. This price is awarded to the best science-fiction and fantasy works, and given Dick's link with science-fiction, it is often argued that *The Man in the High Castle* is a science-fiction novel. Eric Brown's introduction to the 2001 Penguin Classics edition also follows this classification as he recognizes the power of this novel to "[give] us a *what if* glimpse of another world, a reality we are invited to compare with our own" "like all great SF." (*The Man in the High Castle*, xii) *The Man in the High Castle* is the oldest of the three novel, and the technological progress Dick described (as early as 1962) draw the reader's attention in a more significant way than in the two other novels. The tone is also much more fatalistic in this novel.

The divergence point seems to be Franklin Roosevelt's assassination: "If Joe Zangara had missed [Franklin Roosevelt], he would have pulled America out of the Depression" (*The Man in the High Castle*, 68). In this other possible world, Roosevelt died and the further Presidency terms are successively taken by Garner and by Briker. The reader comes to know the divergence point through the comparison between the world the characters inhabit and the one envisioned in a novel within the novel, the alternative history *The Grasshopper Lies Heavy*. Comparing the world of *The Grasshopper* with the one she inhabits, the character Rita highlights that "instead of an Isolationist like Bricker, in 1940 after Roosevelt, Rexford Tugwell would have been President" (*The Man in the High Castle*, 68). This quote shows how the account of history depicted in *The Grasshopper*, while envisioning a defeat of Nazi Germany and Allied victory, still differs from our "actual world" (where Roosevelt was still in power after 1940). Another major difference between *The Man in the High Castle* and our actual history, is the prevention of Reinhard Heydrich's assassination (*The Man in the High Castle*, 149). The following divergences are then part of a causal chain thoroughly implied by the two events mentioned above. Bricker's isolationist policy implied that Germany did "come to Japan's help in 1941" (*The Man in the High Castle*, 68), so that the Japans were able to take Hawaii at Pearl Harbour (*The Man in the High Castle*, 15). Bricker's term also led to the "defeat of the British and Australian army under General Gott at the hands of Rommel and his Afrika Korps." (*The Man in the High Castle*, 81) Indeed, in this new reality the Germans have taken Malta and Churchill did not stay in power, neither did he guide England to victory. (*The Man in the High Castle*, 70) But also, through the death of Churchill, German's eastward advance into Russia was not stopped (obliterating the "mythical" Stalingrad battle). (*The Man in the High Castle*, 70) The final outcome of this war, after Capitulation Day in 1947 (*The Man in the High Castle*, 15), is thus the ultimate division of the world between the two winning powers: Germany and Japan (*The Man in the High Castle*, 84).

The plot of *The Man in the High Castle* centres on the 1962 United States, which is now divided in three zones after Germany's and Japan's Victory: the Pacific States of America (or P.S.A.) under the ruling of the Home Islands (Japan), the neutral zone called Rocky Mountain States and then the South which is under the influence of the German Reich. There are numerous characters both in San Francisco (P.S.A.) and Canon City (Rocky Mountain States) which comes into contact with each other and face different issues and problems in this peculiar societal context. Those characters are Mr R. Childan, the owner of American Artistic Handcrafts Inc., who aspires to be considered by the Japan and higher-class couple of the Kasouras (Betty and Paul). Childan comes into contact with the Jew Frank Frink and its ex-co-worker and actual partner Ed. McCarthy, with whom they have created a Jewellery business. Both partners were, in their previous job, under the leading of Wyndam-Watson. The "W.-M. Corporation" being both "an iron foundry" and involved in the business of "forgeries of pre-war American artifacts." (The Man in the High Castle, 51), is Childan's supplier of (forged) U.S. Civil Colt -44. Frank Frink's connections also include his marriage with Juliana, who is now gone in the Rocky Mountain States (the circumstances of this separation are unknown). There, Juliana encounters the mysterious and dangerous fascist Joe Cinadella with whom she decides to meet the popular author of *The Grasshopper Lies Heavy*, Hawthorne Abendsen (also known as The Man in the High Castle). Through his business, Childan also get in touch with the Japan Head-Official Mr Tagomi, who has been chosen as the third party of a meeting between the under-cover spies Mr Baynes and Mr Yatabe (respectively Mr Rudolf Wegener and Mr Tedeki). Those two spies, or Abwher, are researched by the Head of the German Consul: Herr Kreuz Vom Meere's subordinate, Hugo Reiss. These numerous and varied characters interact, meet and are connected through objects (in peculiar books). It is their "ordinary" life which is at the heart of the novel, however another and more subtle layer is given by the underlying political drama: the death of the Führer successor's Herr Bormann and the resulting fight for power between Herman Göring, Goebbels, Heydrich, Baldur von Schirach and Doctor Seyss-Inquart.

The main protagonist of *Fatherland* is Xavier March, a divorced, 40-year-old German Kripo-investigator⁵¹. The plot is set in the architecturally improved Berlin of the Greater Reich

⁵¹ In *Fatherland*, the German police is strictly and hierarchically divided into three organs. The Ordnungspolizei (or Orpo), the Kriminalpolizei (the Kripo) and the Security Police (the Sipo). The Orpo is the division of "the ordinary cops" (*Fatherland*, 11). They take care of things such as drunk people, "speeding tickets", arresting people,... (*Fatherland*, 11). The Kripo "is somewhere between the other two, and blurring into both" (*Fatherland*, 12). "They investigated straightforward crime, from burglary, through bank robbery, violent assault, rape and mixed marriage, all the way up to murder." (*Fatherland*, 12) The Sipo "embrace[s] both the Gestapo and the Party's own security force, the SD" (*Fatherland*, 12) and deals with "terrorism, subversion, counter-espionage and 'crimes against the state'." (*Fatherland*, 12) This strict division between the three organs show the bureaucracy in place. This bureaucracy plays a major in the Nazi Germany regime (as the characters are often characterized through their cars,

in 1964, and the story takes place from Tuesday 14 April to the Führertag, Monday 20 April. The starting point of the plot is Xavier March's investigation to solve the case of the murder of Josef Buhler. There are obvious traces of the detective novel, but the characterization of *Fatherland* in terms of genre is not so easy (as will be further discussed in the section 3.1 Paratext). This investigation will finally lead to the discovery of a much greater crime: Germany's involvement in the Final Solution of the Jews. On the background of this investigation, the Führer and the President of the USA, Joseph Kennedy, are supposed to meet and ease the political relations between both nations under the auspice of operation "détente". This alliance of American and German people is also echoed on a more personal level; i.e. between the characters of March and Charlotte Maguire, the young American journalist now residing in Berlin. Charlotte becomes both March's partner and lover during the investigation.

As for the point of divergence, it is less clearly elaborated in *Fatherland* than in the two other novels. The reader receives some form of indications but is only on page 230 that the reader gets a more precise picture: "July 1942. On the Eastern Front, the Wehrmacht launched Operation 'Blue': the offensive which will eventually win Germany the war. America is taking a hammering from the Japanese. The British are bombing the Ruhr, fighting in North Africa. In Prague, Reinhard Heydrich is recovering from an assassination attempt." (*Fatherland*, 230) Just as in Dick's novel, Heydrich is not assassinated in *Fatherland*. However, the reader does not come to know what the implications of this "Operation blue" are. The reader also learns about Germany's victory over Russia in the spring of '43 (*Fatherland*, 85) and the major turning point taken by the war through the peace treaty with the British in '44 (*Fatherland*, 85). This same peace is provoked by Germany's evil plan: "Picking off merchant shipping" as to starve England into submission (*Fatherland*, 85). Leading then "Churchill and his gang of war-mongers[']" flight to Canada. (*Fatherland*, 85) Then the decisive and last event ensuring Germany's victory: peace with the Americans in '46 (*Fatherland*, 85). As this war ends, the Cold War begins but this time it is not the well-known conflict between the USA and Russia that is so emblematic in our actual world, but "guerrilla conflicts at the fringes of the new German Empire" (86). Except for the reference to Operation Blue and the survival of Heydrich, this list of three events "decisive" to the Third Reich's victory are resumed in one page and there is not much detail about how or where the victory over Russia happens. The divergence in this case is more interesting for its consequences than to be analysed on its own.

the wearing of a uniform,...). It is also interesting to note that Xavier March is not "anyone", and has made his way to a post with higher responsibility.

In *The Plot Against America*, the divergence is more readily identified, as the plot and storytelling begins before the bifurcation actually takes place and chronologically follows the unfolding of the alternative universe: Lindbergh wins the 1940 presidential election and becomes President of the United States instead of Roosevelt. Lindbergh's presidency signs the beginning of anti-Semitic policies. Rabbi Lionel Bengelsdorf, head of the Office of American Absorption (the O.A.A.) constitutes an essential element in the implementation of ostracizing measures (which intend to alienate the American Jews). As these events happen at a national level, the focal point of the story is a specific Jewish family, the Roths. The different members composing it: Bess and Herman Roth, whose sons Sandy (the older brother), and Philip will be forced to age much faster through the unstable national context. Other members of the family are Herman's nephew Alvin and Bess' sister Evelyn. Injustice, fear but also sometimes excitement: this is the journey taken by the Roth family in a small city of the United States under Nazi influence. If the title refers to a plot against America as unique and distinct (*The Plot against America*), there are in fact many instances which are blamed and considered as being at the head of a plot.

"Culprits" can be found at the level of the citizen and the personal, namely Alvin and Herman, who are under surveillance from the FBI and accused to be traitors "plotting [...] to assassinate President Lindbergh" (*The Plot Against America*, 173). However, the finger can also be pointed at a much larger scale, as FDR states that

If there is a plot being hatched by anti-democratic forces here at home harbouring a Quisling blueprint for a fascist America, or by foreign nations greedy for power and supremacy – a plot to suppress the great upsurge of human liberty of which the American Bill of Rights is the fundamental document, a plot to replace American democracy with the absolute authority of a despotic rule such as enslaves the conquered people of Europe – let those who would dare in secret to conspire against our freedom understand that Americans will not, under any threat or in the face of any danger, surrender the guarantees of liberty framed for us by our forefathers in the Constitution of the United States. (*The Plot Against America*, 178)

Vidkun Quisling is a Norwegian politician which did collaborate with the Nazis. Roosevelt accuses Lindbergh to adopt the same behaviour as Quisling, i.e. a position of collaboration with the "enemy". Under the heading of "foreign nations greedy for power and supremacy", the reference to Nazi Germany is more than evident. Roosevelt goes on to state everything that is important to him and emblematic of America⁵². The words of Walter Winchell echoes those of Franklin D. Roosevelt as he utters his rallying cry against Lindbergh: "The Hitlerite plot against America must be stopped – and stopped by you!" (*The Plot Against America*, 260) As riots

⁵² More about this form of *civic nationalism* in chapter 3.3.2 Propaganda, absorption and assimilation.

against Jews begins to emerge in the USA, followed by the assassination of Walter Winchell, Lindbergh disappears on board of his plane. It is then President Wheeler who takes the lead and whose presidency term is characterized in the Part 9 of the novel as one of “perpetual fear”. The Jewish people is considered as the one to blame for the “kidnapping” of Lindbergh and “the warmonger Roosevelt” is accused of having masterminded a plot against Lindbergh (*The Plot Against America*, 309). Rabbi Lionel Bengelsdorf is also “taken into custody by the FBI under suspicion of being “among the ringleaders of the Jewish conspiratorial plot against America.” (*The Plot Against America*, 316) There is a strong belief in a Jewish conspiracy, the Jews being considered as the “very group responsible for the disorder and plotting to take control of the federal government.” (*The Plot Against America*, 315) This blaming of the Jews generates once more a reaction from Roosevelt who recognizes that there is a plot afoot, but that “the forces propelling it” are “hysteria, ignorance, malice, stupidity, hatred, and fear. [...] Falsehood, cruelty, and madness everywhere, and brute force in the wings waiting to finish us off.” (*The Plot Against America*, 315)

At the end, there is a final condemnation of Nazi Germany on the ground of “poisoning” the USA with “this sinister nonsense” about Jewish conspiracies. (*The Plot Against America*, 315) Indeed Germany’s “plot has failed, liberty and justice are restored” as Roosevelt is re-elected as President of the USA and decides to take action and to participate in the Second World War (leading to the outcome that is part of our “actual” history). Bengelsdorf argues, however, that the German plot might be more complex than a general incitement to racial hatred. Indeed, according to him the Nazi are the ones who kidnapped Lindbergh’s son and did so in order to be able to blackmail him. Lindbergh’s coming to power as well as his involvement in discriminatory and anti-Semitic policies, would thus be motivated by the hope of seeing his son again (*The Plot Against America*, 321).

If there is no certainty about the identity of the real “plotter” and about the nature of the real plot, one thing is certain: the plot has failed as the USA retrieves its autonomy. Lebow notes that “toward the end of the novel, Roth introduces a deus ex machina to return history to its actual course once the alternate world he creates has served its purposes.” (Lebow 2009, 70) Wenzlhuemer argues that “counterfactuals that return to the real timeline after allowing only a small disturbance of the natural course of history hint at a philosophy of history featuring at least some degree of determinism and orderedness.” (Wenzlhuemer 2009, 46) I argue that in this case, Roth’s purpose is much more intricate than to show that however the divergence, history will fall back on its track, or even that determinism is the major force at play in our world and does

not allow for chaos or change. Indeed, what is important in *The Plot Against America* is the perception the reader gain access to. The reader experience this crucial moment as an insider and takes interest not so much on History with a capital letter, but on the every-day life of human beings which are traversed by dramatic events. The characters' struggles against fear and a perpetual questioning about the next evolution of the situation convey the sense of contingency. To them nothing is pre-ordained, they can only make assumption about what is coming next and they have no certainties. Rather than establishing a "degree of determinism and orderedness", the reader is able to experience the chaos on a more profound and human level.

On the whole, the three novels adopt different techniques and relate to other genres than the mode of alternative history on its own. Science-fiction for *The Man in the High Castle*, similitudes with the detective novel for *Fatherland*, and a much more specific point-of-view relating to a coming-age-of-story for *The Plot Against America*. The tone is bleak and there is a profound sense of fatalism in *The Man in the High Castle*, but this coupled with a well-crafted irony. The use of irony is also heavily relied upon in *Fatherland*. Whereas in *The Plot Against America*, the reader is propelled in a realistic world where indignation, frustration and anxiety are overpowering. If their point of divergence varies, the three authors imagine what a world under Nazi Germany hegemony would look like. Their individual peculiarities give a more profound depth to the altered worlds, as the three novels relate to topics such as metafiction, reality, nationalism and history.

3 Case study

3.1 Paratext

Earlier on, we distinguished two types of paratext which were inspired by Daněk and Singles. The first type, was concerned with the "simulation of history writing", and namely (fake) "historical documents and sources" which are introduced in the literary text (Daněk 2016, 19). Whereas the second type was considered as specific to alternative history and took the form of "acknowledgements, introductions or author's note" alluding to the difference between the novel and the actual historical records. (Daněk 2016, 19-20)

If Daněk's theory is interesting because clearly linked to alternative history as a mode (besides being already vulgarised and therefore practical and accessible to most readers); it certainly lacks specificity. Indeed, Daněk underlines the contrast and paradox of this two forms

of paratext but does not analyse them on their own. Likewise, he also does not examine paratext as such, as well as its purposes and the actual effect it can have on readers. By contrast, Sedlmeier's revisiting of the concept of paratext in "The Paratext and Literary Narration: Authorship, Institutions, Historiographies" can offer some precise and determining insights to our analysis of the three novel's paratext. This chapter will therefore make use of Sedlmeier's article and Andrea Del Lungo's "*Seuils, vingt ans après. Quelques pistes pour l'étude du paratexte après Genette*" which are both inspired by Genette's *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretability*.

To precisely outline a definition of paratext is not easy. Indeed, Genette's definition of it is voluntarily vague. The paratext, is often opposed to what constitutes the text (i.e. the narrative as such). Yet, as hinted at in Genette's work title: the paratext is equated with a threshold. A threshold is, per definition, a space of transition. Del Lungo compares it to a fringe without exact limits whose function is to allow a transition from the 'hors-texte' (what is considered to be outside the text) to the text and vice versa (Del Lungo 2009, 99). The paratext is therefore not a concrete boundary which separates different elements, but a threshold which ensures some mediation or transition between those elements (Del Lungo 2009, 99). If the paratext is commonly defined as what surrounds the text at its beginning or at its ends, it is also the case that the paratext appears at other gaps such as between two chapters.

This diffuse definition of paratext does not make it always obvious "whether these productions are to be regarded as belonging to the text (Genette, 1)" or not. However, "in any case they surround it and extend it, precisely in order to *present* it, in the usual sense of this verb but also in the strongest sense: to *make present*, to ensure the text's presence in the world, its 'reception' and consumption in the form (nowadays, at least) of a book" (Genette, 1)." (Sedlmeier 2018, 66). Del Lungo specifies this functional characteristic of the paratext which is related with the reception of a peculiar book and he speaks of the "programmatic function of the paratext to orient the reading, to determine the genre and, in other words, to create a pact of reception"(Del Lungo 2009, 100). He does not refer to the concrete instances which are involved by this pact. However, it is certainly so that the reader, the author as well as the publisher are all concerned by it. The idea of reception and consumption is also to be found in Sedlmeier's article title: "The Paratext and Literary Narration: Authorship, Institutions, Historiographies." The concrete implication of this economical-related function of the paratext will later on be exposed through the analysis of the paratext of the three novels.

The programmatic function of the paratext implies that it is deemed to have an effect on the reader (Del Lungo 2009, 101). Thus the paratext would not be an object as such, but the vector of an effect. This vision, while proving to be interesting (indeed the paratext conditions the following reading) is not completely adequate. As Sedlmeier suggests:

the paratext can be more than a supplement that secures the existence of a text in the format of a book. It can be an integral part of the repertoire of narrative techniques. When paratextual elements are part of the literary narrative and have the status of forms of narrating—no matter whether they are placed on the fringes of the book or woven into the fabric of the text itself—they become self-referential devices. As such they hold the potential of exposing the tensions between institutionalized conventions and singular texts, between the strategies of marking and marketing and the practices of narrating, which a specific text deploys. (Sedlmeier, 70)

Sedlmeier thus acknowledges the role of the paratext as “a formal element that constitutes a practice of narrating.” (Sedlmeier 2018, 71) Paratext maintains a form of self-referentiality, but also, as Sedlmeier emphasizes, the tension created between the paratext and the text itself bears meaning and involves readers in dialogical practices.

As for the previous distinction between types one and two of paratext, it also finds a (at least somewhat) similar counterpart in Genette’s taxonomy. Genette distinguishes on the one hand the *peritext*, which is close to the text and is constituted by ““such elements as the title or the preface and sometimes elements inserted into the interstices of the text, such as chapter titles or certain notes” (Genette, 4-5)” (Sedlmeier 2018, 68). On the other hand, one can distinguish the *epitext*. The epitext concerns “all those messages that, at least originally, are located outside the book” (Genette, 5) (Sedlmeier, 68) It can take the form of interviews or book praises for example (Sedlmeier 2018, 68). If the peritext is mostly concerned with the author’s choice, the epitext also reverberates editorial and publishing markers. Sedlmeier then further dissociates this difference in actors involved (still following Genette’s taxonomy) by referring to *autographic* paratexts in the case of paratexts “that can be ascribed to the author”, and *allographs* ones “i.e. those that can be ascribed to other cultural players such as editors and publishers (Genette, 8-9)” (Sedlmeier 2018, 69).

The discussion on the corpus will thus be divided into two big categories. First, an analysis of the peritext and then an analysis of the (allograph) epitext.

3.1.1 Epitext

The first element which can be labelled as epitext in the three novels is the presence of a biography of the authors. In *The Man in the High Castle*, this biography, while giving some

information on the life of the reader (such as when and where he was born, or the University he attended), mostly focusses on Dick's other notable works. Besides, *The Man in the High Castle* is brought into the spotlight by the following sentence: "*The Man in the High Castle* (1962), perhaps his most painstakingly constructed and chilling novel, won a Hugo Award in 1963." (*The Man in the High Castle*) This comment on Dick and on his notable works (and specifically *The Man in the High Castle*), is also followed by a word on the writer of the introduction: Eric Brown.

In the biography at the forefront of *Fatherland*, Harris is immediately referred to as "the author of eleven bestselling novels." As those novels are named, a work in particular is set apart from the rest: "*An Officer and a Spy*, which won four prizes including the Walter Scott Prize for Historical Fiction." It is also mentioned in this biography that "several of [Harris'] book have been filmed." Of course, the reference to the director Roman Polanski is also apparent. The rest of the biography also attests of Harris' success: the fact that "his work has been translated into thirty-seven languages" and his membership as "Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature." (*Fatherland*) However, the last phrase seems to be completely random in the context of the previous sentences: "He lives in West Berkshire with his wife, Gill Hornby." (*Fatherland*) It later becomes clear why this "trivial" fact is set against Harris' glorious catalogue of works: the book is dedicated "To Gill." This biography is therefore self-referential and alludes to another element of the paratext.

The first sentence of Roth's biography in *The Plot Against America* is the following: "In 1997 Philip Roth won the Pulitzer Prize for *American Pastoral*." The tone of praise is set from the first sentence onwards. There are some mentions of other awards which Roth received, such as "the highest award of the American Academy of Arts and Letters." (*The Plot Against America*) Except for *American Pastoral* cited earlier on, the only other reference to one of Roth's work directly concerns *The Plot Against America*: "In 2005, *The Plot Against America* received the Society of American Historians Award for "the outstanding historical novel on an American theme for 2003-2004.'" (*The Plot Against America*) It is interesting here to note how *The Plot Against America* is perceived: both as a "historical novel", but the reference to an "American theme" is also noteworthy.

In *The Man in the High Castle*, the biography is followed by another element which seems to be part of the epitext, an introduction by Eric Brown. If this introduction is certainly a form of allograph paratext (i.e. the presence of the introduction results from a choice made by the editor), this element rather seems to fall under the category peritext. Indeed, this introduction

fully participates in the meaning making of the novel. Critical remarks about Dick's style and favourite themes, a summary of the novel and its labelling (as part of the genre of Science fiction) but also some analysis of it: all these elements can be found in this introduction.

The last component which can be encompassed under the term *epitext* in *The Man in the High Castle*, is a compilation of suggestions of works the reader might also like. Indeed, just after the text, 13 other works are mentioned. Such as *Animal Farm* and *Nineteen Eighty-Four* by Orwell, *Tropic of Cancer* by Henry Miller, *The Feminine Mystique* by Betty Friedan.⁵³ There is no specific genre label to these works which might give an indication whether or not they are in the same vein as *The Man in the High Castle*. The structure of these suggestions mostly goes as follow: the title of the work and the author, a one-sentence quote from the book (this step is not followed in all suggestions), a summary of the work and a praise or critical comment with the source (newspaper or person).

In *Fatherland*, the two pages following the biography consist of "praise for *Fatherland*". Indeed, there are not less than nineteen positive comments and praise about *Fatherland*. After the praise (between quotation marks), the name of the press or person which uttered this praise is also mentioned. The *Yorkshire Post* makes a reference to the fact that *Fatherland* "was initially turned down by every German publisher until even they could no longer ignore its commercial appeal." (*Fatherland*) In this case, the reference to the literature market and the reception and publishing process of the book is clearly mentioned.

An interesting element to note from this praises, is a repetitive reference to *Fatherland* as a "thriller" by Sheridan Morley, the *Mail on Sunday*, the *London Review of Books* and the *San Francisco Chronicle*. The *Washing Post* also emphasizes the "carefully wrought suspense" of the novel. This introduce another genre affiliation that one could attribute to this novel and this confirms, once more, than in this case alternative history is less a genre on its own, than a mode or a device.

This section of praise is followed by another: "also by Harris", under which there are, obviously, other works by Harris. Those works are divided between fiction and non-fiction.

⁵³ Complete list in the same order as in the book: *Animal Farm* and *Nineteen Eighty-Four* by Orwell. *The Fountainhead* Ayn Rand. *Things Fall Apart* by Chinua Achebe. *Alone In Berlin* by Hans Fallada. *A Clockwork Orange* by Anthony Burgeress. *Tropic of Cancer* by Henry Miller. *Invisible Man* by Ralph Ellison. *The Hearing Trumpet* by Leonora Carrington. *Heroes and Villains* by Angela Carter. *The Driver's Seat* by Muriel Spark. *The Complete Cosmicomics* by Italo Calvino.

There is no precision whatsoever around the genres encompassed under “fiction” or the nature of the “non-fictional” works.

In *The Plot Against America*, the last element of epitext to be found is a list of “books by Philip Roth”. Those works are classified as followed “Zuckerman Books”, “Roth Books”, “Kepesh Books” “Miscellany” and “Other Books”. Zuckerman, Roth and Kepesh refers to some series in Roth’s work. Indeed, Roth often uses the same family names (and sometimes even genealogically related character) and is usually self-referential in a lot of his novels. The difference between the heading “Miscellany” and “Other Books” is, however, not so clear.

One can draw some conclusions on the presence of the different elements cited above. Indeed, the biography, the praise section or even the introduction are intended to give a peculiar status to the book:

winning or being shortlisted for literary prizes, being picked as “a notable book,” everything that James English names “the economics of cultural prestige” (4)—could be considered allographic epitexts rendered peritexts. They would not only situate the book within institutions that award literary valence; they would also mark the material object “book” as an institution.” (Sedlmeier 2018, 69)

Sedlmeier alludes to a not so clear boundary between allographic epitexts and peritexts, as peritext is mostly concerned with “a textual format that indicates the public dissemination of a text, and that expresses processes of canonization and censorship.” (Sedlmeier 2018, 69) And of course, this definition perfectly fits to the previously quoted comment on the publishing of *Fatherland* in Germany, and the praises to the authors which establish their works as part of the literary canon.

It is also interesting to note that the elements of paratext cited earlier on “expose[d] the institutionalized conventions of publishing and reading; they may, either by affirmation or by negation, affiliate themselves with different markers of genre than the assumed ones.” (Sedlmeier 2018, 71) In *Fatherland*, the praise section affiliated the novel with the genre of the thriller. *The Man in the High Castle* both in the introduction and in the biography, was alluded to as part of science fiction. And lastly, the comment on *The Plot Against of America* being a “historical novel” really obscures its characterization.

If these forms of peritext clearly situated those works in the literature market, the praise section in *Fatherland* acquires a peculiar meaning when compared to the status of *Fatherland* as a work of “popular fiction” or as a best-seller. The comment on the “commercial appeal” does

not reverberates any “literary” qualities whatsoever (such as well-crafted plot, a lively style,...). There is also a comment of the *Independent on Sunday* which is really surprising: “I picked it up at an airport bookstall the other day, and couldn’t put it down. Its depth, invention and characterisation lift it well into the realm of literature.” It is as if this whole section, by pointing at the literary institution, was trying to prove that *Fatherland* fits into “the realm of literature”. This willingness to “prove” something and to make of *Fatherland* a novel worth reading, precisely re-asses its alleged status of being part of a form of “low-brow” literature. I will not go much deeper into this consideration, but I leave to the reader the possibility to further elaborate on the implications of this claim.

Lastly, it might also be important to note that this epitext, whose existence is attributable to the publisher, is truly unfixed. As Del Lungo puts it, the paratext (and maybe most specifically the epitext), possesses a transitory status (Del Lungo 2009, 102). “To the opposite of the text, which is (at least some exceptions put aside) relatively fixed, the paratext can differ from one edition to the next. The character essentially non-fixated of the paratext implies that it also involves the responsibility of the critique, next to that of the author and editor. The paratext is therefore a privileged space of judgment.” (Del Lungo 2009, 102)

3.1.2 Peritext

Sedlmeier distinguishes the peritext from the epitext as follows: “Titles, epigraphs, and authorial prefaces, by contrast, would rather be autographic peritexts. As such, they would be the elements most likely to comment on and even be part of the literary practice itself.” (Sedlmeier 2018, 69) If elements from the epitext completely situate the work in the larger context of the literary world, the function of the peritext has much to do with the actual text itself.

I will not devote my attention to the cover of the different novels. It is clear that their iconography highly proves to be of interest as to the symbols that are represented on these covers (swastikas, flags, statues,...) but also the importance of the colours and their symbolic value. However, it is a conscious choice that I make to focus on the other parts which are encompassed in the peritext. The same goes for the title of each novel, which will be dealt with on a more transversal scale (See 2.3 Corpus for the title of *The Plot Against America*, 3.2.3 Mise en abyme for the title of *The Man in the High Castle* and 3.3 Banal nationalism and cultivation of culture for *Fatherland*).

The section peritext is divided into two sections: “At the interstice of the text” and “author’s note, acknowledgements”. Indeed, in this particular case, the analysis of the peritext

will bare much more resemblance to Daněk's distinction between types one and two of paratext. The first subdivision will focus on documents which are inserted in the text or its the margin/interstices. The section "at the interstice of the text" (partially) correlates with type one. In the section "author's note, acknowledgements" much attention will be devoted to the analysis of the author's references to alternative history itself (and thus to matters related with type two).

3.1.2.1 At the interstice of the text

From the three novels, it is certainly in *The Man in the High Castle* that elements of paratext are the scarcest. Indeed, except for the "acknowledgment" which will be discussed in the other division of this chapter, traces of peritext only appear in the form of excerpts from novels. The most obvious examples are to be found in the form of extracts coming from the novel within the novel, *The Grasshopper Lies Heavy*. When the characters are said to be reading the novel, quotes from the "original" text are often inserted. There are also references to the *I Ching* (or *Book of Changes*), and two poems. Those three other sources of incursion, as well as those from *The Grasshopper Lies Heavy*, happen at the expanse of the layout. Indeed, those excerpts are often distinguished from the text due to their typography: different font size and the presence of margins. One might argue that they induce a pause or even a break in the reading. It is also noteworthy to acknowledge the fact that except for *The Grasshopper*, whose existence is thoroughly linked to the text (this novel exist within the realm of the novel only); the other sources come from a space which is exterior to the diegesis. One could also argue that the *I Ching* excerpts and the waka and haiku are mostly forms of intertextual references rather than part of the peritext.

In *Fatherland* the reader is extensively confronted with materials, documents and peritext in general. Situated just before the two epigraphs at the beginning of the text, are two maps of Berlin. Those maps are directly related to the world that is created in the text. Their titles give a major indication on their content: "Hitler's Berlin 1964" (Map 1 in Annexes) and "The Greater German Reich, 1964" (Map 2 in Annexes). Those maps represent both an alternative Berlin and an alternative Europe. Those maps are thus "part of the literary practice itself" (Sedlmeier 2018, 69) as they constitute a direct representation of the space setting of the novel.

Piatti and Hurni highlights the importance of cartography related to alternative history. Maps imply a particular reading and an active role of the reader, as "maps are invitations to imaginary journeys by being non-sequential forms of representation, 'i.e. the information on the

map can be read in whatever order one likes. (Ljungberg 2003, 159)''' (Piatti and Hurni 2009, 338)

While reading those maps, the reader is immediately forced to initiate an "interplay between real and unreal." (Piatti and Hurni 2009, 339) The reader, based on its knowledge of the "actual" world, compares it to the one that is created in the novel. In this case, the first map represents a version of Berlin which is completely modernized and encompasses Hitler's ideal (based on Speer's plans)⁵⁴. The second map shows the extension of The Greater German Reich in the East (there is notably a marked boundary which emphasizes the grandeur of the Reich). Poland, Russia, Lettonia, and many more nations which are known as independent in the reader's mind and world, are here all part of a larger territory under the domination of Nazi Germany. Piatti and Hurni also states those maps can be read "along the lines of vastness of scale and gigantomania." (Piatti and Hurni 2009, 336)

It is also important to note that those maps have a "confusing intermediate status: they are by no means totally imaginary worlds, but altered ones." (Piatti and Hurni 2009, 340) Indeed, the reader recognizes element which are part of his worlds for example the Tiergarten or the Reichstag in map 1, and the name of great cities such as Krakau or Moscow in map 2. It is clear that those maps "function as permeable membranes between our world and a slightly alien world in which familiar objects and sites – among them whole buildings and entire cities – are still recognisable to a certain extent." (Piatti and Hurni 2009, 340) Moreover, if the object on the maps are recognizable, it is also the case that the technique and means of representation are also those at work in our "actual" world. The map conventions currently in use in Europe are also noticeable: for example a legend at the border of the map signalling the map scale as a certain stripe is likened to a certain number of kilometres. Maps in alternative history are an important vector of porosity.

If it may be easy to underestimate the importance of geography as "a simple backdrop within the fiction" (Piatti and Hurni, 340); Piatti and Hurni claim that "the different settings [...] have almost protagonistic qualities." (Piatti and Hurni 2009, 340) Indeed, those maps also "support the historical alternative." (Piatti and Hurni 2009, 333) They show how the world has changed in terms of "newly drawn political borders" and also display the transformation of

⁵⁴ As referred to in the author's note at the end of the book: "The Berlin of this book is the Berlin Albert Speer planned to build" (*Fatherland*, 386)

“urban and rural spaces” (Piatti and Hurni, 333); maps therefore “play a significant role.” (Piatti and Hurni 2009, 333)

Maps are also a useful tool as they “supply the fiction with some authenticity, as their style resembles press or information maps which are widely used today in newspapers, magazines or in non-fiction books.” (Piatti and Hurni 2009, 336) Piatti and Hurni state that in the specific case of *Fatherland*, Harris “uses the maps as proof of a ‘fictional authenticity’” (Piatti & Hurni 2009, 341). This function of as supplier of “authenticity”, is particularly visible with Map 3 (see Annexes): a map of the concentration camp which is inserted inside the text. This map, entitled “Sketch of Installation by Martin Luther” represents the geography of the camp Auschwitz-Birkenau. Piatti and Hurni’s claim is that “an overwhelmingly rich store of collective images [...] will be recalled at the sight of the small map.” (Piatti & Hurni 2009, 336) While proving to be fictional material (this map was confectioned by Harris even if intended it to be the most authentic as possible), this map is evocative of the reality of the Holocaust. A reality which is part of the knowledge of the reader: “Suddenly, the reader knows much more about the horrifying reality than March and Charlie do.” (Piatti & Hurni 2009, 336)

Map 3 is, however, not the only “proof of ‘fictional authenticity.’” In part 5, there are numerous documents incorporated in chapter five and chapter six. A secret state document consisting of an “Account of conversations with Ambassador Joseph P. Kennedy, United States Ambassador to Great Britain”, another document of the “Central Construction Office” of Auschwitz, an handwritten list of all the concentration camps and their localisation, “a railway timetable – badly printed on yellowing wartime paper” (*Fatherland*, 315), the minutes of a conference “on the final solution of the Jewish question” (*Fatherland*, 319), but also some “notes on a visit to Auschwitz-Birkenau by Marthin Luther” (*Fatherland*, 322), and finally “a circular” from the SS Economic Administration Main Office on the utilisation of cut hair (*Fatherland*, 327)⁵⁵. Those documents are clearly part of the text and of those two chapters. They both are a proof and the only way for the reader, as well as for March and Charlie, to retrieve the information necessary to understand the Final Solution initiated by the Nazi regime. There are, of course, many references and the amount of documents is also rendered visible: the circular on the utilisation of cut hair is described as “one of a dozen or so scraps of paper stuffed at random

⁵⁵ The content of this specific document points at the utilisation of “all human hair cut off in concentration camps” which are to be used as “thread to make socks for U-boat crews and felt stockings for the railways.” This note is the one which upsets March the most as he was himself part of the U-boat crew. The documents enclosed earlier on pointed at a large-scale reality. This peculiar circular concerns March in a particular way. If it “easier” to recognize evil at a great scale, it is much more difficult to recognize the atrocities of some facts when you are directly linked to them. March is deeply distressed by this note and wonders: “Would he ever be clean again?” (*Fatherland*, 327)

into a torn folder” (*Fatherland*, 326). More than the abundance of documents, they also gain a true materiality by means of indications on their aspect. Most files are labelled as “handwritten” and the railway timetable is said to be “badly printed on yellowing wartime paper.” The peritext here has gained the status of text and is indispensable for the reader (and even the characters in the text) to create meaning and to suffuse a sense of authenticity.

Next to this use of maps and snippets of documents, numerous epigraphs are to be found in *Fatherland*. There are for examples two epigraphs just before the actual beginning of the text, but also, in the front page of each new part.

The first epigraph at the beginning of the novel is by Hugh Trevor-Roper (in *The Mind of Adolf Hitler*) and completely sets the tone for the rest of the novel:

The hundred million self-confident German masters were to be brutally installed in Europe, and secured in power by a monopoly of technical civilisation and the slave-labour of a dwindling native population of neglected, diseased, illiterate cretins, in order that they might have leasure to buzz along infinite Autobahnen, admire the Strength-Through-Joy Hostel, the Party Headquarters, the Military Museum and the Planetarium which their Führer [would] have built in Linz (his new Hitleropolis), trot round local picture-galleries, and listen over their cream buns to endless recordings of *The Merry Widow*. This was to be the German Millennium, from which even the imagination was to have no means of escape.

Indeed, there are numerous references to this “brutal” installation of the German power, notably through an ever-going war in the Urals. (*Fatherland*, 5) The reference to Autobahnen, the Party Headquarters or the Military Museum and the Planetarium are evocative of the process of cultivation of culture (which will be treated in greater depth in chapter 3.3 Banal nationalism and cultivation of culture). The reference to “endless recordings” and the fact that there is “no means of escape” to this overpowering German control, is also deeply referred to in the section 3.3.2 Propaganda, absorption and assimilation. The “new Hitleropolis” is also in direct dialogue with the map 1 which is situated two pages away from this epigraph. The second epigraph is a quote from Adolf Hitler dated 29 August 1942. One can find another allusion to inescapability and endlessness as Adolf states that “Germany will remain in a state of perpetual alertness” and that he is “delighted at the prospect” (*Fatherland*).

Fatherland is divided into seven parts, which are themselves subdivided into chapters. Each part represents a day from the week chronologically leading to the Führertag. The front page of each part includes the symbol of an eagle on a swastika, the date but also an epigraph. The epigraphs usually convey a particular atmosphere, such as the SS Oath of part one

(*Fatherland*, 1) or Adolf Hitler's quote in part three "When National Socialism has ruled long enough, it will no longer be possible to conceive of a form of life different from ours" (*Fatherland*, 127). The epigraphs also give some information on the content of the chapter. For example the front page of part two encompasses a dictionary entry of the word "détente" (*Fatherland*, 43). The word, refers both to the "relaxation, loosening, slackening (of something that is taut); relaxing (of muscles)" and the "easing (of political situation)" (*Fatherland*, 43). The word is poly-interpretable and the reader is left to decide in anticipation which definition will be the most appropriate to the content. In this case, the word refers both to the name of the operation between the USA and the German Reich (the easing of a political situation), but also to a "one-word note" on the bottle of Glenfiddich that Charlie and March will eventually share (and which corresponds to the idea of relaxation as they take a pleasurable break together) (*Fatherland*, 199). Part four contains a quote from Reinhard Heydrich: "The Gestapo, the Kriminalpolizei and the security services are enveloped in the mysterious aura of the political detective story." (*Fatherland*, 215) This quote is both a reflexion of the situation, i.e. March is betrayed by Jaeger and the target of Globus's scheme against him. The Kriminalpolizei is thus an important setting for the actual development of the plot. One could also read a metafictional comment through the reference of a "political detective story" which one could see as a form of genre allusion. And of course, the actual investigation on the crime, will results in the political unveiling of Germany's involvement in the Holocaust. The epigraph of part five is a quote from Heinrich Himmler on the notion of history.

The status of the epigraph of part 6 is, however, a little more obscure in meaning. Its contents directly refers to what is happening in the text at the precise moment:

However this war may end, we have won the war against you; none of you will be left to bear witness, but even if someone were to survive, the world would not believe him. There will perhaps be suspicions, discussions, research by historians, but there will be no certainties, because we will destroy the evidence together with you. And even if some proof should remain and some of you survive, people will say that the events you describe are too monstrous to be believed: they will say that they are the exaggerations of Allied propaganda⁵⁶ and will believe us, who will deny everything, and not you. We will be the ones to dictate the history of the Lagers. (*Fatherland*, 329)

⁵⁶ This recalls Dwight David Eisenhower's famous quote: "I made the visit deliberately, in order to be in position to give first-hand evidence of these things if ever, in the future, there develops a tendency to charge these allegations merely to 'propaganda'." (Shira Feliks Content and Production LTD)

This quote points at the strategy of (historical) denial which is completely thematic of this novel. There is also a reference to “the evidence” which are inserted in the previous part, but also in the epigraph of part 7 (which encompasses an excerpt about the railway trajectory to Krakau and some information on Auschwitz (*Fatherland*, 329)). As pointed at by the epigraph, the victory is not in the outcome of the war as such, but in the hegemony gained in the writing of History and the dictating of a peculiar world view that is available to the winning side⁵⁷. It is obvious that this epigraph participates in creating meaning, a meaning which is directly related to the text. However, this quote comes from *The Drowned and the Saved* by Primo Levi. This collection of essays, which is part of our “actual” world, has been published in 1986. This text-eternal reference clashes with the date in the diegesis (Sunday 19 April 1962). With some research the reader can be easily aware of this clash and this porosity of the epigraph. It is also important to note that the last sentence in part five goes as follows: “Afterwards, [March] lay with his arms dangling over the sides of the tub, his head tilted back, staring at the ceiling, like a drowned man.” (*Fatherland*, 327) Once again, there is a clear emphasis on the fact that the text and the peritext are one and the same entity, as they constantly refer to one another.

In *The Plot Against America*, the remaining elements which could be considered as peritext, are the table of contents and titles of the different sections. The novel is divided into 9 sections (and followed by a postscript as will be noted in “author’s note, acknowledgments”). Each section represents a specific time. The entire storytelling encompasses the period from June 1940 to October 1942 and develops in a chronological order). Next to this time indication, a title is given to each section. This title is representative of the content of the section. For example, the section one “Vote for Lindbergh or Vote for War”, alludes to Lindbergh isolationist policies and his speech during the election campaign. “Loudmouth Jew”, the title of section 2, refers to the anti-Semitism which befalls the family (and the eventual name-calling perpetrated on Herman Roth and qualification as a “loudmouth Jew”). The other sections are entitled, respectively: “Following Christians”, “The Stump”, “Never Before”, “Their Country”, “The Winchell Riots”, “Bad Days” and “Perpetual Fear”.

3.1.2.2 Author’s note, acknowledgments

The page just before the text in *The Man in the High Castle*, takes the form of “Acknowledgments”. Those acknowledgments rather serve as a bibliography or a short

⁵⁷ More about it in 3.4.2 Losers and winners.

inventory of the references and sources used both in the novel and in the making of it, than a true personal place and expression of feelings. Dick mentions a few of intertextual references which are to be found in the text such as: the *I Ching* (or *Book of Changes*), a *haiku* by Yosa Buson and a *waka* by Chiyo (there is of course a little commentary on the different version used of the book and poems). He then mentions the works which have proved to be useful to imagine the world he created in this novel. Those works are mostly books on the Third Reich (such as *The Rise and the Fall of the Third Reich*, *A History of Nazi Germany*, *Hitler a Study in Tyranny*,...). And finally he expresses his thanks to the writer Will Cook “for his help with material dealing with historic artifacts and the U.S. Frontier Period”. This acknowledgments part is thus rather straightforward and is not so much a direct mode of communication with his readers.

In Harris’ novel the part “Acknowledgments” conforms to the codes of the prototypic “acknowledgments” section, i.e. to thank the people without whose help the work will not have come to being. He is namely grateful for the staff of the Wiener Library in London, as well as David Rosenthal and Robyn Sisman.

It is the “author’s note” which constitutes a significant representative of type two of paratext. In it, Harris states the following: “Many of the characters whose names are used in this novel actually existed. Their biographical details are correct up to 1942. Their subsequent fates, of course, were different.” If the reader did not pick up the information, by this note Harris signals that the point of divergence is to situate in 1942. It is also interesting to notice that the part is entitled “author’s note”, the address from the author to the reader is therefore specific and diverges from the address from the narrator to the reader. Harris then pursues his note by giving some information on the fate of great figures which are involved in the story. Such as Wilhelm Stuckart, Martin Luther, Odilo Globocnik, Reinhard Heydrich or Arthur Nebe. He then goes on by specifying the authenticity of some documents used (as paratext of type one this time) or some facts which are also to be read in his fiction. For example the fact that “Alfred Meyer committed suicide in 1945” or that “those named as having attended the Wannsee Conference all did so.” (*Fatherland*, 385) Those are “authentic” or “real” elements, drawn from the reality of the author’s life. He finally explains that “where [he] has created documents, [he has] tried to do so on the basis of fact” (*Fatherland*, 386). He finally mentions the inspiration of Albert Speer for the Berlin imagined in this book and the actual fate of the painting which is mentioned in the novel. It is also interesting to note that this direct address to the reader, which invites the reader to set a dialogue between the reality of the diegesis and that his/her own world, is numbered.

In *The Plot Against America*, the reader is left with a postscript which is nearly thirty pages long, just after the storytelling ends. Under the heading postscript comes four lines: “Note to the Reader/ A True Chronology of the Major Figures/ Other Historical Figures in the Work/ Some Documentation.” The attention to the reader is there fully specified, and the active role he/she has to play is therefore highlighted. The second title, which encompasses the second section of this postscript, is a little more dubious with its reference to a “true chronology”. We have already discussed the fact that Roth was intrigued by the “relationship between fiction and reality.” (Hacht, A. et al. 2009, 1396) One can have reasons to doubt if the use of “true” is considered as ironic and another clear reference for the reader in the style of: “you have read my novel, you know that the idea of truth is problematic and that there is no such thing as ‘the’ truth. Therefore, you know that “truth” is here used in this specific light, as a final and ironic remainder.” Or it could also be that Roth did not acknowledge the term “truth” as problematic⁵⁸. At any rate, this title is intriguing and raises a lot of questionings on the part of the reader. In this “Note to the Reader”, Roth states the motives of this postscript: “This postscript is intended as reference for readers interested in tracking where historical fact ends and historical imagining begins.” (*The Plot Against America*, 364) He also refers to the sources which he used to make this postscript and give a detailed overview of the cited historical figures.

In the section “A True Chronology of the Major Figures” the reference to the “major figures” is here obvious and encompasses Franklin D. Roosevelt, Charles A. Lindbergh, Fiorello H. La Guardia, Walter Winchell, Burton K. Wheeler, and Henry Ford. This second part is much more detailed and each figure⁵⁹ receives a lot of attention (and obviously a chronologic account and retelling of their life). Those regrouped under the heading “Other Historical Figures” are people such as Herman Göring, Joseph Goebbels, Meter Ellenstein... The comments on each figure is here only a few lines long. In the part “Some Documentation” he added a version of Lindbergh’s speech “Who Are the War Agitators?”

The observations made from the following paratext of type two allows us to draw some conclusions, or at least to raise some questions. First, there is a clear evolution in the length, nature and level of specification encompassed in the three different paratexts. This can be explained by two factors.

⁵⁸ Del Lungo highlights that most authors are aware of the coded aspect of the paratext. Exactly because of this coded aspect, the paratext implies a double conception: a space of persuasion and affirmation, but also a place of denial and illusion/trickery. The reversal from one to the other would mostly come to be through the use of irony (Del Lungo 2009, 105).

⁵⁹ It may be interesting to note that there are only male figure acknowledged in this part.

There is first a possibility that this evolution is linked with the establishment of alternative history through time. While being more known by scholars but also the public, in 2004 than in 1962, there could be argued that there exists a greater awareness among authors of the metatext of the alternative history mode. Therefore, the presence of this paratext is more elaborate in the later novel(s) from this corpus. However, the specific case study of this thesis is really small and definite. It might also be the case that the three authors just simply have different styles and different purposes.

It is also notable that *The Man in the High Castle* is the shortest of the three novels (249 pages) whereas *The Plot Against America* and *Fatherland* are nearly 400 pages long. Dick also used to write short stories. One could therefore argue that he has the tendency to write condensed works and that a detailed paratext is not of great interest to him. This second hypothesis might contain some truth, but is less convincing and could easily (and rightfully) be considered as an overgeneralization. It would be necessary to analyse a greater corpus to confirm or not the first claim. Del Lungo's argument can also enlighten us as to the length of the paratext and its impact. He states that the spatio-temporal size of the paratext is variable from one work to the next and this size is clearly not defined in absolute terms as a code to follow (Del Lungo 2009, 102). The space devoted to the paratext then varies between two forms: the absence of paratext, whose function is to exhibit the boundary with the text and to erase the transition between text and paratext, and an enormous space given to the paratext which blurs the boundaries and renders the passage visible (Del Lungo 2009, 103).

Nonetheless, the analysis of these paratexts can help us to formulate one argument, which is directly related to the debate between Rosenfeld and Evans mentioned earlier. Indeed, Rosenfeld, in response to Evan's fear of the "dangerous impact" of counterfactuals "upon consciousness" (Rosenfeld 2014, 464); claimed that: "it is doubtful that the consumers of counterfactual history" and alternative all the same, "regard it as surrogate for real history." (Rosenfeld 2014, 466) These specific examples of peritext under the heading "author's note or acknowledgements", make a clear reference to alteration of history but also to the "actual" state of events and fate of the historical figures. Evans' fear was thus groundless. Besides, these paratexts, being direct addresses to the reader, once again highlight the active role that is given to him/her.

As for the relation between paratext and alternative history, it might also be interesting to recall Del Lungo's words that the "paratext (and in particular the peritext) has not the same status nor the same function according to the different literary genre" in which it appears (Del

Lungo, 103). Indeed, the “implied analogical lecture” (Baurin 2012, 50) between the altered state of reality and the “actual” ones is strongly visible in the peritext, be it through the author’s note or the “authentic” documents which are re-contextualized in the text and acquire a new meaning. The epitext also proves to be worthy of consideration due to its link with the literary market, and its leading to debate on the classification of alternative history as a genre as such or not.

3.2 Metafiction

In the chapter 2 Corpus and genre meta-text, the “overtly metafictional” character of alternative history was acknowledged. This new chapter aims at showing concrete example of the metafiction at play in the three novels.

This chapter is inspired by Linda Hutcheon’s *Narcissistic Narrative: The Metafictional Paradox*. She defines metafiction as “fiction about fiction – that is, fiction that includes within itself a commentary on its own narrative and/or linguistic identity.” (Hutcheon 2013, 1) The reference to “narcissist narrative” which is to be found in the title “is not intended as derogatory but rather as descriptive and suggestive” as it is used “to designate this textual self-awareness” of the texts (Hutcheon 2013, 1).

Hutcheon wants to show how metafiction has come to re-forge the perception of literature (Hutcheon 2013, 3). If there is no clear-cut and definitive shift, there is, at least since the apparition of the “nouveau roman” and of modernism, a new focus on the level “of the imaginative process (of storytelling), instead of on that of the product (the story told)⁶⁰. And it is the new role of the reader that is the vehicle of this change.” (Hutcheon 2013, 3) Indeed, Hutcheon highlights this role of the reader which constitutes a defining feature of metafiction: “In the earlier texts, the main interest is in the writing process and its product. The focus today broadens to include a parallel process of equal importance to the “concretization” of the text—that of reading.” (Hutcheon 2013, 154)

“The metafictional paradox” hinted at in the title is thus defined in this manner:

the reader lives in a world which he is forced to acknowledge as fictional. However, paradoxically the text also demands that he participate, that he engage himself intellectually, imaginatively, and affectively in its co-creation. This two-way pull is the paradox of the reader.

⁶⁰ Hutcheon expresses it as follows: “Rather than positing a break in novelistic self-consciousness in the last century and then a modern revival of it, this literary dialectic would suggest a continuum but a gradually evolving one that has logically culminated in metafiction.” (Hutcheon 2013, 5)

The text's own paradox is that it is both narcissistically self-reflexive and yet focused outward, oriented toward the reader. (Hutcheon 2013, 7)

The metafictional paradox is thus double and concerns both the text and the reader. During his/her reading, the reader is both confronted with elements which draws his/her attention on the fictionality of the text, however these fractures are not supposed to entail a complete dismissal of the diegesis. The reality in the text is created as a new world which, while even claiming some kind of authenticity, responds to its own code and is supposed to refer to itself but at the same time to be meaningful for the reader. Hutcheon then stresses that this system “demands of the reader new freedom – and new responsibility” (Hutcheon 2013, 20), and that the reader is then considered as a partner (Hutcheon 2013, 30).

Hutcheon then distinguishes two types of text in relation to this responsibility and freedom which is demanded of the reader: “In overtly narcissistic texts, the emphasis is upon bringing both this liberty and this duty to the reader's attention. In the covert form, however, it is assumed that he knows his duty and will respond accordingly.” (Hutcheon 2013, 30) She sees

significant differences between metafictional texts that overtly thematised the role of the reader or the ontological status of the text through parody, allegory or the mirroring *mise en abyme*, on the one hand, and those that covertly internalized structural devices (detective plots, fantasy, games, the erotic; or on the level of language, riddles, jokes, anagrams, puns) that pointed to the text's self-referentiality. (Hutcheon, xi)

I do not find this typology between overt and covert types of metafiction as clear as Hutcheon intended it to be. Indeed, if a reader is thoroughly and deeply conscious of the metafictional character of a work, even if it is itself a covert form, then does it become an overt form? While designed to characterize the role of the reader, this dichotomy between overt and covert form is much more related to the text itself than to the actual perception of the reader. Hutcheon's distinction division between overt and covert types of metafiction will not be taken as such, but however the attention drawn to the *mise en abyme* and the detective plot is of much interest for this case study.

3.2.1 The detective plot

Hutcheon characterizes the detective story as a “very self-conscious literary form” (Hutcheon 2013, 31). Indeed, the detective is “based on the general pattern of the puzzle or the enigma” (Hutcheon 2013, 31) and therefore “the reader of a murder mystery comes to expect the presence of a detective-story writer within the story itself” (Hutcheon 2013, 31).

Hutcheon asserts that the detective plot “has extremely strong and obvious structural conventions. There is a crime; it will be solved because of both the characters’ psychological consistency and the detective’s slightly superior powers. The incriminating evidence is within the text; some details might seem in the end irrelevant to the plot, but they are all functional, even if only in leading the reader astray.” (Hutcheon 2013, 31) If, indeed, March initially investigates on the crime of Josef Buhler and that “the strong convention of order and logic in detective fiction” (Hutcheon 2013, 72) is well-respected in *Fatherland*, it might be said that *Fatherland* still aims at subverting the detective plot codes.

The investigation starts with Josef Buhler’s crime, but soon March will find a trail that connects Buhler to Stuckart and to Martin Luther. Globus wants to trick March into believing that those three characters are solely involved in the large-scale robbery of art treasures and paintings directly imported from Poland. If their involvement in this robbery is real, Globus only wants to incriminate them because they are the last surviving witnesses of the conference on the Final Solution of the Jewish Question. This participation of the three characters, and of many others which have already been executed, is the motif that led to their being killed. March’s suspicions and intelligence (as any prototypical detective) allows him to see beyond what Globus wants him to see and to learn Germany’s involvement in the Holocaust.

It might be argued that the investigation is therefore not the real focus of the plot as such, but the revelation constitutes a true starting point: as March and Charlie, are now more than ever, targets to get down. However, if there are already two possible trails mixing together that March must solve, I argue that the real investigation that March is carrying out is really about the Weiss family.

As March’s divorce from Klara Eckart forces him to move in a new apartment, he finds a photograph of the family who lived there before him: “A sepia portrait, all misty browns and creams, dated 1929, taken by a Berlin studio.” (*Fatherland*, 37) This photograph triggers a profound desire to know what has become of them and who they were: “Who were these people? What had happened to the child? For years he had wondered, but hesitated – he always had plenty at the Markt to stretch his mind, without finding mysteries to unravel.” (*Fatherland*, 38) What intrigues March the most about the Weisses is that “none of the young people in the landlord’s office remembered [them]. They had vanished. Weiss. White. A blank.” If it takes the testimonies of the other people in the same building for March to acknowledge that the Weisses have been forgotten, he admits that he:

knew the truth – perhaps had always known it – but he went round one evening with the photograph even so, like a policeman, seeking witnesses, and the other tenants in the house had looked at him as if he were crazy even for asking. Except one. (*Fatherland*, 38)

This specific quote already alludes to the fact that the real crime that March is investigating on is in fact the Jews' fate during World War II. If March knows "the truth", there is a major difference between knowing it and really admitting it: "They were Jews" [...] Of course. The Jews had all been evacuated to the east during the war. Everyone knew that. What had happened to them since was not a question anyone asked in public - or in private either, if they had any sense, not even an SS-Sturmbannführer." (*Fatherland*, 38)

March's "desire to know" what happened to the Jews is constantly echoed throughout the novel

In police work, there was always another junction to reach, another corner to peer around. Who were the Weiss family, and what had happened to them? Whose was the body in the lake? What linked the deaths of Buhler and Stuckart? It kept him going, his blessing or his curse, this compulsion to *know*. And so, in the end, there was no choice. (*Fatherland*, 95)

In this case, it is also clearly shown that the Weiss family case is as important and considered in the same manner as the Buhler and Stuckart case. Even when he is said to "[take] a last look" round his apartment and "closing the broken door behind him" (*Fatherland*, 180) (a symbol for his never going back to this same apartment) before his going to Switzerland, the only symbolic object that March takes with him on his trip is the photograph of the Weiss family. He even claims that if "he was stopped and searched, he would say they were his family." (*Fatherland*, 180-181) The affiliation between March and the Jewish family is strongly noticeable.

The importance of the fate of the Reich family is therefore hinted at throughout the novel. It thus requires "active participation of the reader" to "[follow] clues" and interpret them "to answer of a given problem." (Hutcheon 2013, 72)

It might be said that the role of the reader is conform to the one expected of him in any detective plot. And it also true that the codes of logic are really present: the plots is narrated in a chronological order (and the date of each parted are carefully provided), March is assiduous in his note-taking and registering of every new detail: for example he notices that "twenty minutes out of thirty-five are unaccounted for" in his witness' statement (*Fatherland*, 16),... There are nonetheless elements which are truly particular in *Fatherland*. Namely the fact that there are in fact three crimes which are solved through the same investigation: the three men's involvement in the robbery, Germany's past and the fate of the Weiss family. It is also interesting to note that

those crimes also have a symbolic value as they interrogate the reader and the narrator on questions about denial and the acceptance of the truth.

3.2.2 Narrative and storytelling

This section will be devoted to the analysis of narration and the act of storytelling in the three novels. The discussion will be based on Genette's taxonomy as explained in Spinoy's class "Théorie Littéraire: introduction" at the Université de Liège in 2016 and in "Narratology" by Lucie Guillemette and Cynthia Lévesque.

In the section 2.3, named Corpus, it was clear that many characters interacted with each other in *The Man in the High Castle* through the short summary of the plot. Not only are there multiple encounters and meetings, but also a heterodiegetic narrator whose focalization shifts from chapter to chapter and sometimes even in the same chapter. Indeed, the reader gets access to the point of view of many characters: Mr R. Childan, Frank Frink, Wyndam-Matson, Juliana Frink, Mr Tagomi, Mr Baynes and Hugo Reiss. If most of the time the narrative mood is characterized by a relative proximity as reported speech is heavily employed, the last form of distance can be totally erased through the use of immediate speech⁶¹. Indeed, immediate speech can be characterized as the total emancipation of narrative patronage, there is no declarative introduction preceding the actual thought of the character. (Spinoy 2016, 31) The access to the character's thought is therefore immediate (as characterized by the name *immediate speech*). In general the time of narration can be said to be simultaneous: "the narrator tells his/her story at the very moment it occurs" (Guillemette and Lévesque) even if there are sometimes some ellipses.

The narration at play in *The Man in the High Castle* serves different purposes. First, through the relative lack of distance and the reliance on many different internal focalisers, the reader is able to get a thorough view of the world depicted. The characters are well-developed and have a deep singularity. When the reader assembles those subjective accounts together, he gets a clear and realistic picture of the universe portrayed in the novel.

What is more, the shifting focalization of the novel also echoes an important topic in the novel: that of interconnectedness. Frank and Juliana Frink, Mr Tagomi and Abendsen are all

⁶¹ In the introduction of the novel, Eric Brown refers to the "use of monologue interior" (*The Man in the High Castle*, ix). However, following Genette's taxonomy, the preferred term will be immediate speech (based on its "discours immédiat").

linked to one another through their use of the *I Ching* (the oracle). Childan's store is also an important place of encounter, there Childan meets Frank Frink and Ed McCarthy, Mr Tagomi (whose visit is motivated by the buying of a present to Mr Baynes) and the Kasouras. The novel within the novel (more on this in the next section, 3.2.3 *Mise en abyme*) forms also an important cluster. This interconnectedness also stimulates questioning in the character's mind, and especially in Frank Frink's: "It had never happened to him before, good fortune and doom mixed together in the oracle's prophecy; what a weird fate [...] Hell, he thought, it has to be one or the other; it can't be both. You can't have good fortune and doom simultaneously. Or... can you?" (*The Man in the High Castle*, 54)

In *Fatherland*, the narration is also characterized by the use of reported speech. The heterodiegetic voice retells the story from the perspective of Xavier March. It is however, not so easy to situate the narrative in time. When thinking about the body of Buhler found in the lake, it is said the following: "It was all so *normal*. Later, that was what would strike him most. It was like having an accident: before it, nothing out of the ordinary; then, the moment; and after it, a world that was changed forever." (*Fatherland*, 8) The intriguing element from this quote is the "Later". The reader is not told when exactly it did occur to March to think that this was "so *normal*". This time status is also unclear at some other point in the novel. March notes his son's passion for the Pimpf (a Nazi youth movement):

Until you were a Pimpf you were nothing, 'a non-uniformed creature who has never participated in a group meeting or a route march'. You were allowed to join when you were ten, and stayed until you were fourteen, when you passed into the full Hitler Youth. (*Fatherland*, 27)

The ending of the novel let the reader suppose that March is dead or at least that he will not see his son again due to his final escape. However, this particular quote makes a reference to Pili, March's son, being fourteen. As a matter of fact, Pili is ten while the events unfold. The reader is then left to wonder if he really understood the clues left in the ending and if in fact March is still alive to see his son becoming fourteen. There is another passage which leaves the reader wondering if the story is actually being told after the events took place and not simultaneously:

"How odd it is, thought March afterwards, to live your life in ignorance of the past, of your world, yourself. Yet how easy to do it! You went along from day to day, down paths other people had prepared for you, never raising your head – enfolded in their logic, from swaddling clothes to shroud. It was a kind of fear. Well, goodbye to that. And good to leave it behind – whatever happened now." (*Fatherland*, 214)

This excerpt is also in italics in the text. This quote comes from part four, when March and Charlie were not aware, or at least not truly aware, of the Holocaust. The “ignorance of the past” refers to the yet not-knowing about the Final Solution of the Jews. Those “other people” are all the German bureaucrats who are truly in favour of the repressive measures against the Jews and others, in order to sustain Germany’s hegemony. The name of Globus can therefore easily be equated with this “type” of people. March says his final goodbye to denial, and is ready to embrace the truth as atrocious as it might be.

The fact that the narrative focalizes on March is decisive for the telling of the ending. As March and Charlie’s paths separate (and this due to March’s imprisonment), the reader only gets access to what March supposes is happening to Charlie: “In his mind March had built a wall. Behind it he placed Charlie in her speeding car. It was a high wall, made of everything his imagination could collect.” (*Fatherland*, 356) It is only “in his mind” (*Fatherland*, 379) that Xavier March sees Charlie checking out of the hotel and getting away from the German territory. The reader is thus left to decide if he wants to believe or not that it is true.

Another remark that can be made on *Fatherland*, is that the reader also gets access to other people’s mind through the documents on the Holocaust. For example, the notes on Auschwitz-Birkenau by Martin Luther. They look like a personal diary, as impressions are written on a daily basis with a specific mention of the date of writing (and sometimes even a more precise indication of the hour is even specified). At the beginning, Luther’s notes are made of long and well-crafted sentences: “My first impression is of the sheer scale of the installation, which measures, accordingly to Hoes, almost 2 km x 4 km. The earth is of yellowish clay, similar to that of Eastern Silesia – a desert-like landscape broken occasionally by green thickets of trees.” (*Fatherland*, 322) Those long and well-crafted sentences, however, gradually disappear as Luther discovers how Jews are mass-killed in the camp. The style then frenetically records the murderous characters of the place. The impressions are reduced to a group of words and even sometimes intelligible sentences: “Doors open. The bodies are piled up at one end [illegible] legs smeared excrement, menstrual blood; bite & claw marks. [...] Corpses slippery. Straps around wrists used to haul them to four double-doored elevators.” (*Fatherland*, 325) This specific style is here to show, just as the content, how distressing the reality of the camp is. March also notes that “that same year, according to his wife, Luther had suffered a breakdown.” (*Fatherland*, 326)

From the first sentences onwards, it is clear that an autodiegetic narrator is going to tell its childhood memories in *The Plot Against America*: “Fear presides over these, memories, a perpetual fear. Of course, no childhood is without its terrors, yet I wonder if I would have been

a less frightened boy if Lindbergh hadn't been president or if I hadn't been the offspring of Jews.” (*The Plot Against America*, 1) It is the much older Philip who narrates what happened during the two years from June 1940 to October 1942. In June 1940 the narrator and main protagonist is seven. This novel, next to the evolution of the United States under the presidency term of Lindbergh, focuses on the personal layer and the microcosm of the family Roth whose anecdotes “generate a child's first cohesive mythology.” (*The Plot Against America*, 5)

The story is thus retold from the perspective of an older Philips which narrates the memories of his childhood. Philip is seven as the events begin to unfold, his childhood memories are therefore sometimes distorted. Indeed, his world perception is deeply forged by his age: “the concept of opportunism was barely familiar to me at the age of nine” (*The Plot Against America*, 182), “I asked this as guilelessly as a child could and with all of a child's cunning” (*The Plot Against America*, 183), “I didn't have the capacity in 1942 to decipher all the awful implications.” (*The Plot Against America*, 295) The reader does not know for sure how old Philip is now and how much time has passed since the events happened. He/she is only left with some indications which are given gradually and which are by no means explicit. For example from this peculiar reference it is possible to infer that the narrator is at least fifteen years old as he retells this story: “and when I came to study Greek and Roman mythology in freshman high school class and read in the text-book about Hades, Cerberus, and the River Styx, it was always our cellar that I was reminded of.” (*The Plot Against America*, 139) The active role of the reader in creating meaning is highlighted, and his/her desire to know is often played with. Indeed, it is only at the end of section eight of the novel that he/she is given a more precise indication on the time that has passed from the occurring of the events to their actual retelling:

What made the death of Walter Winchell worthy of instantaneous nationwide coverage [...] [was] that the murder of a mere candidate for the presidency was unprecedented in America. [...] it wasn't until twenty-six years after Winchell's assassination that a second presidential candidate would be gunned down – that was New York's Democratic senator Robert Kennedy, fatally shot in the head [...] on Tuesday, June 4, 1968. (*The Plot Against America*, 272)

Through this peculiar excerpt, the reader comes to know that the narration takes place at least after 1968. It is also interesting to note that the assassination of Robert Kennedy is an element of our “actual” world while also being part of the world of the diegesis.

Most of the time the narrator, while being subjective, seems reliable as direct quotes from the characters are used instead of a retelling in indirect speech. This example clearly shows it:

This was the very traitor whom my father, usually so respectful of the Jewish clergy, had accused aloud of making “a stupid, lying speech” in behalf of Lindbergh at Madison Square Garden, the “Jewish fake,” according to Alvin, who’d guaranteed Roosevelt’s defeat by “koshering Lindbergh for the goyim,” and so it was puzzling to witness the lengths to which we were going to feed him.” (*The Plot Against America*, 102)

Philip retells both his father literal world “a stupid, lying speech”, and those of his cousin Alvin: the “Jewish fake.” The reference to the “authenticity” of the statements is also sometimes explicitly conveyed: “publicly extolling (in words written by Aunt Evelyn)” (*The Plot Against America*, 184) However, if the narrator tries to be truthful to the words of each character, sometimes he cannot but admit its own unreliability: “I have no memory of seeing the orphans in a group anywhere else” (*The Plot Against America*, 160), “the land was worked by a resident German farmer called Thimmes – unless I’m remembering incorrectly” (*The Plot Against America*, 161). It is also plain to see that his child mind is still pervious to adult opinions and assimilated them. This is clearly visible when Philip refers to the Christians: “A swarm of [orphans] would have discomfited me no less than did the unsettling appearance of the nuns, primarily because they were orphaned but also because they were said to be both “neglected” and “indigent.” (*The Plot Against America*, 160) Philip believes everything that he is told:

At our public elementary school less than a mile away it was rumored that the nuns who instructed the orphans in class routinely smacked the stupidest of them across the hands with wooden rulers and that when a boy’s offense was so gross as to be intolerable the monsignor’s assistant was called in to beat him across the buttocks with the same whip the farmer used on the swaybacked pair of lumbering workhorses that pulled the plow for the spring planting. (*The Plot Against America*, 161)

The utilisation of the “it was rumoured” is quite interesting, as well as the fact that those rumours that Philip picked up portray Christians, and nuns in particular, as evil figures.

One can mention two other elements which are worth discussing on the narrative in *The Plot Against America*. On page 96, there is a sudden shift, and the storytelling borrows some codes of the play. There is first a mention to the setting which reminds the reader of stages directions “*In bed, one hour later. The lights are out all over the house. We whisper.*” This part consists mostly of dialogues which seems to be representative of the immediate speech (as there are no reference such as “Sandy says:...”). There are also no quotation marks to introduce each speaker’s utterance, and they are only separated by a blank space. In this more or less three-pages-long passage, it is mostly Philip who asks question and Sandy who answers. The content of the discussion is trivial but marks Sandy’s break from the family as he confesses having eaten

sausage (and therefore “stuff from a pig”) (*The Plot Against America*, 98). The status of this peculiar and creative section is not really known to the reader. Is it so that the narrator is trying to experiment while telling his story? Or should the reader attributes it to the author? This specific part which can be more or less encompassed under the heading “play” arouses the readers’ curiosity. This specific sections still achieves one goal: to show how history is created and how all acts of retelling are crafted by a subjective mind.

Section eight and nine of *The Plot Against America* have both October 1942 as time indication. Section eight is entitled “Bad days” whereas the title of section nine is “Perpetual Fear.” Those two sections encompass more or less the same events, but their style and retelling are completely different. The two titles already significate much about the two sections: they both encompass elements with a negative connotation. However, “Bad days” is more generic (bad is not specific to the nature of negativity at play) whereas “perpetual fear” signifies a deeper emotional distress and state. In “Bad days”, on page 301, there is a major shift as the events from Tuesday October 6, 1942 to Friday October 16, 1942 unfold through the very formal tone of the “Archives of Newark’s Newsreel Theater” (*The Plot Against America*, 301) The reader is left with a retelling of events which focus on the national and global scale, and which does not refer to the Roth family as such. The individual account and personal layer of the events will then be rendered through section nine, in which Philip Roth recalls the “perpetual fear” of the situation. However, Philip’s account only start on the twelfth of October, leaving a gap. The closeness of the two sections in the text, accentuates the difference between a personal narrative and a narrative in the form of newspapers or archives documents. This specific technique highlights how *The Plot Against America* aims to show an altered world at the level of the family.

3.2.3 Mise en abyme

Hutcheon claims that the mise en abyme is “one of the major modes of textual narcissism” (Hutcheon 2013, 4) and one of the “most frequently used literary devices” (Hutcheon 2013, 53) of metafiction. Of course, the mise en abyme is a technique which can be considered as the constant mirroring of an element, a “replica of itself” (Hutcheon 2013, 55). The concept of mise en abyme can be found in the three novels. As Hutcheon suggests, it is “also important to note the position of the mise en abyme in the text, and the direction in which it points, for it can direct the reader to future events, yet unread, or to past ones, both within and preceding the text.” (Hutcheon 2013, 56) The following section then aims at showing on what level the mise en abyme are created in those novels as well as to highlight the reader on their function.

3.2.3.1 *The Grasshopper Lies Heavy*

As noted by Eric Brown in the introduction: “*The Grasshopper Lies Heavy* is the novel within the novel, a work of science fiction⁶² by Hawthorne Abendsen detailing an alternative world in which the Allies won the Second World War.” (*The Man in the High Castle*, xi) This novel within the novel, appears in the text through material snippets and quotes, but also constitutes an important subject matter for each characters.

The novel within the novel is entitled *The Grasshopper Lies Heavy*, but its author, Hawthorne Abendsen, is referred to as the man in the High Castle: “I heard someone say that he’s almost a sort of paranoid: charged barbed wire around the place, and it’s set in the mountains. Hard to get to. [...]he wrote the book there. His place is called- [...] The High Castle. That’s his pet name for it.” (*The Man in the High Castle*, 89) This pet name is the actual name of the novel. The greater whole (*The Man in the High Castle*) encompasses the novel which exists inside its borders (*The Grasshopper*), however, the greater whole is reduced to the place where the writer of *The Grasshopper* lives. The mise en abyme is thus double in this case.

The Grasshopper Lies Heavy is “banned through the United States. And in Europe, of course” (*The Man in the High Castle*, 67) as Rita, Wyndam-Matson’s lover, notes. Indeed, the ending of *The Man in the High Castle* reveals that the content of *The Grasshopper* is actually real and that German’s victory is only propaganda. *The Grasshopper*, through its unveiling of the general hoax people live in, is therefore a threat to the Nazi regime. However, its dangerousness can be much more subtle. The novel is also a threat to the Nazi regime because it sets the characters into thinking. Those characters and readers are led to ask the general question: “What if things were different?” and therefore to refuse the self-evidence of the established order.

This novel within the novel is also interesting because of the literary considerations it induces. Wyndam-Matson for example believes the novel to be “popular fiction” (*The Man in the High Castle*, 67) or “one of those love stories” (*The Man in the High Castle*, 68). Rita also acknowledges the “fiction form” of the novel: “Naturally, it’s got a lot of fictional parts; I mean, it’s got to be entertaining or people wouldn’t read it. It has a human-interest theme; there’s these two young people, the boy is in the American Army. The girl- well, anyhow” (*The Man in the*

⁶² Of course, as pointed at in the beginning of the thesis, this straightforward classification of alternative history as “a work of science fiction” is not so simple.

High Castle, 69). It is notable here that the literary quality of the novel is of the same importance to Rita than its actual content.

The Kasouras also debate the status of the novel, as Childan asks if the novel is “a mystery” (*The Man in the High Castle*, 109):

‘Not a mystery,’ Paul said. ‘On contrary, interesting form of fiction possible within genre of science fiction.’ ‘Oh no,’ Betty disagreed. ‘No science in it. Not set in future. Science fiction deals with future, in particular future where science has advanced over now. Book fits neither premise.’ ‘But,’ Paul said, ‘it deals with alternate present. Many well-known science fiction novels of that sort.’ (*The Man in the High Castle*, 109)

The discussion opens up on the status of alternative history as subset of science fiction or not, but also on the characteristics of science fiction as such. Indeed, Betty defines science fiction as “set in future”, a future which encompasses technological advancements. The mise en abyme is in this case deeply metafictional as it induces reflection on literature and on genre classification. This also serves another purpose: this concrete example shows that Dick was already aware of the difficult genre characterization and reception of alternative history.

The discussion between the Kasouras and Childan moves on to the conception of high- and low-brow literature. Paul argues that “one cannot judge by book being best seller” (*The Man in the High Castle*, 110). The beginning of the sentence leads the reader to think that Paul is a strong supporter of popular fiction. However, Paul falls prey to the trap of equating popular fiction with mediocrity: “We all know that. Many best sellers are terrible trash. This, however – he faltered.” (*The Man in the High Castle*, 110) Hugo Reiss also acknowledges this novel as “cheap popular fiction” (*The Man in the High Castle*, 124). Yet, his case is ambivalent. Hugo Reiss is the Head of the German Consul, and as such, a representative of the Nazi regime. However he seems to be completely transfixed by his reading of *The Grasshopper*:

It did not appear that he would be interrupted for a little while now, so from his briefcase he took the book he had been reading, opened to his placemark, made himself comfortable, and resumed where he had been forced to stop. (*The Man in the High Castle*, 123)

The reading of the Grasshopper is a private matter from which Reiss derives much pleasure. He uses a place mark to be sure to resume his reading where he left it. There is an explicit reference to him being “forced to stop”, this also clearly points to the fact that he did not want to stop. He is completely baffled by the effect of fiction and the quality of this novel: “How that man can write, he thought. Completely carried me away. Real. Fall of Berlin to the British, as vivid as it had actually taken place.” (*The Man in the High Castle*, 124) This “power of fiction”, is

according to him one of the reason why the novel is banned within Reich territory (*The Man in the High Castle*, 124). Nonetheless it is completely inconceivable for him to stop his reading: “But too late; must finish, now.” (*The Man in the High Castle*, 124) Even when he comes to the part of the trial of Hitler, which upsets him, it is no merely because of Hitler’s downfall but because of the fact that “the *death* of Adolf Hitler, the defeat and destruction of Hitler, the Partei, and Germany itself, as depicted in Abendsen’s book... it was all somehow grander, more in the old spirit than the actual world. The world of German hegemony. How could that be? Reiss asked himself. Is it just this man’s writing ability?” (*The Man in the High Castle*, 126-127) Reiss once more highlights how dangerous this book is: “If Abendstein⁶³ should be found dangling from the ceiling some fine morning, it would be a sobering notice to anyone who might be influenced by this book. We would have had the last word. Written the postscript.” (*The Man in the High Castle*, 127-128) The reference to the postscript in this quote can directly be linked to the previous discussion on the epitext and the editorial choice, in this case Nazi Germany would certainly censor this dangerous work.

Juliana approaches *The Grasshopper* in a very specific manner. She is much more interested in the relation between the reader and the author: “I wonder – do you suppose a man who writes a best seller, an author like that Abendsen... do people write letters to him? I bet lots of people praise his book by letters to him, maybe even visit.” (*The Man in the High Castle*, 159-160) She also develops a reader superiority-complex: that of believing that she is more ready to comprehend the alleged author’s intention than Joe is: “There’s so much more in it than [Joe] understood. What is it Abendsen wanted to say? Nothing about his make-believe world. Am I the only one who know? I’ll bet I am; nobody else really understands *Grasshopper* but me – they just imagine they do.” (*The Man in the High Castle*, 238) This desire to know what “Abendsen wanted to say”, will lead to her eventual meeting with the author. If Juliana had many expectations, these are completely deceived as she encounters Abendsen:

‘Everyone has – technical secrets. You have yours; I have mine. You should read my book and accept it on face value, just as I accept what I see-’ [...] ‘Without inquiring if it’s genuine underneath, or done with wires and staves and foam-rubber padding.’ (*The Man in the High Castle*, 243)

At first, Abendsen is not willing to give an answer, but hearing of Juliana’s murder of Joe in order to save his life, Abendsen eventually admits the influence of the *I Ching* in the writing of

⁶³ Reiss consciously transforms the name Abendsen into Abendstein because he is persuaded that the author is a Jew.

his book. The encounter will then end on the final revelation: the reality depicted in the book is true.... Or is it as simulacra?

The novel within the novel, while generating numerous debate on another outcome of the war, also allows for the revelation of hindsight bias. As a reminder, this term was introduced in section 1.1.1 Alternative history – a broader context. Hindsight bias implied that by analysing events from a retrospective point of view, it is possible to consider them as overdetermined. It is easier to assess that something was bound to happen when it did already happen. Wyndam-Matson falls prey to this hindsight bias when he states that:

“Japan would have won anyhow. Even if there had been no Pearl Harbor. [...] They would have taken them anyhow; their fleet was superior. I know the Japanese fairly well, and it was their destiny to assume dominance in the Pacific. The U.S. was on the decline ever since World War One. Every country on the Allied side was ruined in the war, morally and spiritually.”
(*The Man in the High Castle*, 69-70)

This quote is exceptionally ironic when compared to the actual state of events known by the reader. Indeed, Wyndom-Matson sees the event as overdetermined and obviously lacks of good faith when he is willing to share (or rather impose) his point of view:

‘No strategy on earth could have defeated Erwin Rommel,[...] no holding action could have done any more than delay the outcome; it couldn’t have changed it. Listen. *I met Rommel*. [...] Actually, he had only seen the Military Governor of the U.S.A. at a reception in the White house, and at a distance. ‘What a mean. What dignity and bearing. So I know what I’m talking about,’ (*The Man in the High Castle*, 70)

Wyndsom-Matson fairly believes that it is impossible for history to be otherwise. His conception is not grounded in fact, but rather on his belief of determinism and on his disdain for contingency. He even completely creates a fiction to support his opinion: that of his encounter with Rommel.

Childan is also victim of the hindsight bias. He does not acknowledge the book as a true possibility offered to dream about different outcomes, but as a tale which reassesses the value of the world he lives in: “Interesting book, he thought. Odd nobody thought of writing it before. He thought, It should help to bring home to us how lucky we are. In spite of the obvious disadvantages... we could be so much worse off. Great moral lesson pointed out by that book.’ (*The Man in the High Castle*, 118) His conservatism is obviously pointed at when Robert Childan states that “out of this”, i.e. the victory of Nazi Germany, “are coming great things, such as the colonization of the planets.” (*The Man in the High Castle*, 118)

3.2.3.2 Literature and the act of writing

Each novel contains at least one reference to literature and to the act of writing. Sometimes the reflection is on a meta-level and focus on the specific analysis of a novel, at other times the discussion around literature is merely a way to convey Germany's hegemony on all spheres of life. This is clearly visible in this peculiar example when March talks to Jost, a former literature student who has been enrolled as a soldier against his will:

“What were you studying?”

“Literature.”

“German?” “

“What other sort is there?” Jost gave one his watery smiles. “I hope to go back to the university when I have served my three years. I want to be a teacher; a writer. Not a soldier.” (*Fatherland*, 15)

Once again the inescapability of the influence of the regime is highlighted through the sentence “What other sort is there?” Jost acknowledges the fact that to be a teacher or a writer is more powerful than the weapon of any soldier.

Xavier March is often said to be writing: “He began to type” (*Fatherland*, 51), “He lugged the typewriter across to his desk and inserted a single sheet of paper.” (*Fatherland*, 237). And even the others notice this habit: “I see you’re a great one for writing. Forever taking notes, compiling lists.” (*Fatherland*, 352-353) If notes help to organise his thought and to solve cases more rapidly, March is also deeply conscious of the implications of the act of narration: “It was not where to start, he thought, but where to end.” (*Fatherland*, 146) As Globus asks about the elements he has gathered on Buhler’s case, March is aware that he should censor his tale. This censorship occurs at some other point in the novel. As March sends a report to Artur Nebe about the content of a box, he decides not to mention that there was a painting in it:

4. On inspection by myself, the box was found to contain

The thought of that painting in the hands of Nebe – dumped into his collection of bombastic, syrupy Schmutzlers and Kirchners – was repugnant, even sacrilegious. Better to leave her at peace in the darkness. He let his fingers rest on the typewriter keys for a moment then tapped:

nothing. (*Fatherland*, 237-238)

Through this report, and more specifically the act of writing, March is able to have a direct impact on reality. In this case he mentions that the box contains nothing. He erases the presence of the painting so as to protect it. Writing is therefore referred to as a performative act which can change the face of the world.

When March is visiting Luther's wife, he clearly sees that: "a romantic novel lay open, face down, on the embroidered cushion next to her. *The Kaiser's Ball* by Barbara Cartland." (*Fatherland*, 157) As Reardon notes, this novel *The Kaiser's Ball* is a "tiny [alternative] history surpris[e]" (Reardon). In the diegetic universe of the novel "Barbara Cartland isn't writing her romance novels about British royalty" as she does in her "real" universe. This reference induces a re-contextualization and a transformation of a "true" author in the new diegetic space. Besides, it is also important to note the impact of a cultural atmosphere on the literary production. Barbara Cartland, who is mostly referred to as an author of popular fiction, follows the trend of the market and is therefore more prompt to use a theme which might please the German audience.

In *The Man in the High Castle* there are also references to literary works. In this case, Nathanel West's *Miss Lonelyhearts*, a "novel from the 1930s by a U.S. author" (*The Man in the High Castle*, 113), really exists outside of the diegesis. Paul Kasouras did read the book but wonder how to interpret it:

'I have read it with enjoyment, but do not totally grasp N. West's meaning. [...] It is a tiny book. Tells about a man who runs column in daily paper; receives heartache problems constantly, until evidently driven mad by pain and has delusion that he is J. Christ. Do you recall? Perhaps read long ago. [...] Gives strange view about suffering. [...] Insight of most original kind into meaning of pain for no reason, problem which all religions cope with.' (*The Man in the High Castle*, 113-114)

Paul Kasouras directly addresses Robert Childan as he says "Do you recall?" Unfortunately, Robert Childan has not read the book and is unable to enlighten Paul about "N. West's meaning". Moreover, Childan's reaction to this special request is dismissive: "They read an American book and want me to explain it to them; they hope that I, a white man, can give them the answer. And I try! But in this case I can't, although had I read it, I no doubt could." (*The Man in the High Castle*, 115) Childan is persuaded that had he read the book, he could interpret it and give a meaningful answer to Paul Kasouras. However, the paragraphs preceding this exact utterance, leads the reader to think that Childan is not able to sympathize with people, nor with fictional characters and that the meaning of the novel would certainly allude him, especially if it refers to suffering. Indeed, Childan's remarks on the Kasouras are completely extreme and full of racism: "*These people are not exactly human. They don the dress but they're like monkeys dolled up in the circus. They're clever and can learn, but that is all.*" It becomes clear that this alleged ability on Childan's part to understand the novel, had it read it; is a source of mockery for the reader who realizes that the Kasouras' sensibility and empathy is more prone to really perceive the nuances of the reading than Childan's conservative, racist and deterministic mind.

Literature implies a lot of controversy in *The Plot Against America*. And Bengelsdorf *My Life Under Lindbergh* does not seem to escape the rule. *My Life Under Lindbergh* is a

550-page apologia published as an insider's diary just after the war by Rabbi Bengelsdorf and dismissed then in a press statement by a spokesman for the Lindbergh family as "a reprehensible calumny with no basis in fact, motivated by vengeance and greed, sustained by egomaniacal delusion, invented for the sake of crass commercial exploitation, and one that Mrs. Lindbergh will not dignify a further responses." (*The Plot Against America*, 326)

The status of this book is therefore not easy to establish. The reader does not know for sure if Bengelsdorf is telling the truth about the Nazi's plot against the Lindbergh family, or if he is true to his character, a collaborationist without scruples who always seeks to achieve his own ends. There is also a clear mention of the "commercial exploitation of the book". And indeed,

My Life Under Lindbergh remained at the top of the American bestseller lists along with two personal biographies of FDR, who had died in office the previous year, only weeks before the unconditional surrender of Nazi Germany to the Allies marked the end of World War Two in Europe." (*The Plot Against America*, 327)

It is interesting to note that this extracts points at the "surrender of Nazi Germany to the Allies" and thus "the end of World War Two in Europe." If history seems to have reversed back on the tracks of the world we know outside the diegesis, the traces of the alteration are still visible through the writing of this peculiar novel. This novel functions in the same way as a remaining element in a fantastical novel. The novel *My Life Under Lindbergh*, acts as the proof that even if the final outcome of history did not change, they are still some cracks and traumas visible from this divergence.

3.2.3.3 Counterfactual thinking

There is another micro level at which the mise en abyme can happen. Indeed, more than a reference to a novel within a novel, or to literature; there are also many instances of counterfactual thinking. Many characters express "what if" thought at the level of their lives. They live in alternative world, and wonder about other alternatives, the mise en abyme is rather clear.

Mr Baynes is one of the characters who reflects on the implications of his choices, as he regrets having paid a visit to an agent in order to know when Mr Yatabe was due to arrive: "A shame I broke down and made contact with that agent [...]. If I had waited only one day more... But probably no harm's been done. Yet he was supposed to return to the department store today.

Suppose I don't show up? It may start a chain reaction" (*The Man in the High Castle*, 162-163) Mr Baynes does not know what consequences his action will have, however he is well aware that one event "may start a chain reaction."

Frank Frink also wonders "What should we have done? Made what instead?" (*The Man in the High Castle*, 188). Of course, his enterprise with Ed McCarthy is a complete fail. Nobody buys from them and they have invested a lot of money on the material to make jewellery. The same jewellery is a source of questionings for Mr Tagomi: "What if I had bought one of those odd, indistinct items?" (*The Man in the High Castle*, 218). Those sentences seem insignificant or trivial, however they constitute a *mise en abyme*.

It is also interesting to clearly note the difference between "what if?" where the realm of possibilities is still open, and "if only" which denotes a clear regret or wishful thinking. Philip follows this "if only" trend as he utters the following concerning Alvin: "If only the times were different, if only he had been smarter..." (*The Plot Against America*, 298). Philip goes much deeper in this reflection process:

"Jesus Christ, who by their reasoning was everything and who by my reasoning had fucked everything up; because if it weren't for Christ there wouldn't be Christians, and if it weren't for Christians there wouldn't be anti-Semitism, and if it weren't for anti-Semitism there wouldn't be Hitler, and if it weren't for Hitler Lindbergh would never be president, and if Lindbergh weren't president..." (*The Plot Against America*, 120)

It is clear from this specific example that the reasoning has gone too far and is too deterministic to be true. This peculiar chains of events rather echoes Philip's profound loss of stability than a clear and sensible reflection. Herman is much more aware than Philip of the contingency at play in the world: "But what if Roosevelt is president again? Then there would be a war," I said. "Maybe and maybe not," my father replied, "nobody can predict that in advance." (*The Plot Against America*, 124) Indeed, many characters fall prey of hindsight bias as they consider the events as overdetermined. This hindsight bias is also unveiled on a much larger scale: "Though on the morning after the election disbelief prevailed, especially among the pollsters, by the day after that everybody seemed to understand everything, and the radio commentators and the news columnists made it sound as if Roosevelt's defeat had been preordained." (*The Plot Against America*, 53) Frank Frink also refers to this problematic quality of the future: "That is the trouble; later on, when it has happened, you can look back and see exactly what it meant. But now —" (*The Man in the High Castle*, 102-103)

At the beginning of *Fatherland*, it is rather clear that the Nazi regime impacts this counterfactual thinking: “It was not quite seven and Berlin was alive with possibilities the day had yet to dull.” (*Fatherland*, 45) Berlin makes those possibilities disappear through the self-evidence that is given to the Third Reich. March’s trip in Switzerland is thus the perfect reminder of the other alternatives possible: “It had been sufficient to know that the possibility of another life existed; one day of it had been enough.” (*Fatherland*, 227) However, March cannot help himself but ask what would have happened had he not been on the crime scene in the first place: “Krause mixed up the rotas, ordered me to Schwanenwerder instead of you.” (*Fatherland*, 375)

As March wonders what impact his particular absence on the crime scene would have had on his life, Frank Frink also realizes that everything is interconnected and mixed together:

the moment in which he lived, in which his life was bound up with all other lives and particles in the universe. [...] He, Juliana, the factory on Gough Street, the Trade Missions that ruled, the exploration of the planets, the billions chemical heaps in Africa that were now not even corpses, the aspirations of the thousands around him in the shanty warrens of San Francisco, the mad creatures in Berlin with their calms faces and manic plans – all connected in this moment of casting the yarrow stalks to select the exact wisdom appropriate in a book begun in the thirtieth century B.C. (*The Man in the High Castle*, 19)

If this sense of harmony between good and evil would rather seem to be positive in one’s mind; in this case, an aura of fatality surrounds this description. There are many more references to “evil” than to groups or events whose function is to push mankind in the “right” direction, down a path of brotherhood/sisterhood and unity. Indeed, the “exploration of the planets”, the treatment of the African populations and the “manic plans” of the “mad creatures in Berlin” denotes how German’s use of technology and imperialist convictions has led to a disastrous state of events. Frank Frink further questions the purpose of this interconnectedness principle: “It’s the fault of those physicists and that synchronicity theory, every particle being connected with every other; you can’t fart without changing the balance in the universe. It makes living a funny joke with nobody around to laugh.” (*The Man in the High Castle*, 55) Far from conveying more possibilities, alternative history and its interconnectedness in this case, seems to be doomed to failure through the continual mixing of good with that of human “evil” character.

As Mr Baynes thinks that “the crucial point lies not in the present, not in either [his] death or the death of the two S.D. men; it lies – hypothetically – in the future. What has happened here is justified, or not justified, by what happens later.” (*The Man in the High Castle*, 194) This also tells us a lot about the status of alternative history. If the future continuously exerts its influence on the past, then it is important to analyse alternative history and the way it reads the past through

a particular lens. As Joe also says, “it’s all darkness. [...] Nothing is true or certain. Right?” (*The Man in the High Castle*, 159). However, this uncertainty should not push us to succumb to a too simplistic and determined world view or to continuously perpetuate instances of wishful thinking.

3.3 Banal nationalism and cultivation of culture

This part aim at showing how cultural elements are used to create a national image. Due to its envisioning of new national borders but also new “nations”, alternative history cannot be completely retrieved from considerations around nationalism. But also, as acknowledged before, alternative history is able to reveal the contingences at play in our world. It shows how the different outcome of one particular event could have changed the entire face of the world. I would like to add, that alternative history, and especially set in the context of Nazi Germany victory, can make strong statements about the self-evidence attributed to national identity and reveal how nations are given a natural and unquestionable status, when in fact, their existence is motivated and cultivated.

The two major source of inspiration for the analysis of the three novels will be Joep Leerssen’s concept of ‘cultivation of culture’ (or *cultivering van culture*) and Michael Billig ‘banal nationalism’ (as defined in Joep Leerssen’s *Elementaire Deeltjes 23: Nationalisme*). Joep Leerssen claims that nationalism is deeply related with cultural factors. According to him, the word “public” in “public space” is synonymous with “national” (Leerssen 2015, 85). Indeed, the public space is used as a national-collective space of identification and this is, of course, not random or unmotivated, but a process of conscious creating of national self-image (Leerssen 2015, 82). He highlights for example how statues are a powerful way to measure the appropriation and identification of the public space. Dictators and monarchs receive a prominent and significant place in the public space (the greater the statue, the greater the importance), whereas the end of their reign signifies the disappearing of the statue (Leerssen 2015, 82). Another example is the impact of the political climate in the naming of streets. (Leerssen 2015, 82) The cultivation (happening through an acquired visibility or through the retrieving of elements from the historical past) of culture (in this example the statues and streets names) is used as a “propagandist proclamation” used to “suffuse the public sphere with a sense of collective national identity” (Leerssen 2006, 571).

Through the “symbolic fight” for attention in public sphere (Leerssen 2015, 81), the legitimization of national identity is at stake. However, most of these emblems (a flag blowing in

the wind, a statue, the name of a street based on a historical figure,...) go unnoticed. This is what Michael Billig calls ‘banal nationalism’:

in the established nations, there is a continual ‘flagging’, or reminding, of nationhood. The established nations are those states that have confidence in their own continuity, and that, particularly, are part of what is conventionally described as ‘the West’. The political leaders of such nations – whether France, the USA, the United Kingdom or New Zealand – are not typically termed ‘nationalists’. However [...] nationhood provides a continual background for their political discourses, for cultural products, and even for the structuring of newspapers. In so many little ways, the citizenry are daily reminded of their national place in a world of nations. However, this reminding is so familiar, so continual, that it is not consciously registered as reminding. The metonymic image of banal nationalism is not a flag which is being consciously waved with fervent passion; it is the flag hanging unnoticed on the public building. (Billig 1995, 8)

Indeed, what is most striking is that this continual reminding is not registered as reminding. The fact that this banal or trivial form of every-day life nationalism becomes so invisible, attests of the enormous success of nationalism as an ideology. (Leerssen 2015, 91) Because of the triviality of this form of nationalism, a sense of self-evidence is implied. Nationalism is what we cannot notice anymore, the things which cannot be imagined as different or contingent. The emphasis on its “continual” character is thus of great importance. Leerssen then points out the following: “The paradox: it is everywhere and it is unnoticed. However the big question is: is it meaningless?” (Leerssen 2015, 93). The answer to this question is, of course: “No, it is not meaningless.” Even when unremarked (or at least not consciously remarked) the light shed upon these cultural artefacts and products is able to create a sense of familiarity. The name of this figure or that or this beer, restaurant,... will sound familiar when presented in another context because of their presence in the public sphere (Leerssen 2015, 94). Leerssen finally states that this informal, unconscious reproduction of culture surrounding nationality is one of the greatest, although occult, power reserve of the nation-state in a time of globalization and multiculturalism (Leerssen 2015, 95).

This cultivation of culture is an important topic in *Fatherland*, but is also visible in *The Plot Against America* and in a lesser extent in *The Man in the High Castle*. It is also noticeable that the word “Fatherland” is immediately connoted with nationalism.

3.3.1 Namings, statues and portraits

One of the first example of naming encountered in *Fatherland*, and surely one of the most important event in the novel, is the Führertag. Indeed, the Führer's birthday has become a public holiday: "since 1959, children had been given a week off for the Führer's birthday, rather than for Easter."⁶⁴ (*Fatherland*, 27) The scale and importance of this day is such that it is said to be "impossible to drive across Berlin at this time of year without encountering a similar rehearsal. In six days' time it would be Adolf Hitler's birthday – the Führertag, a public holiday – and every band in the Reich would be on parade." (*Fatherland*, 10) The Führertag, the deadline for March to prove his worth to the Kripo department and avoid being killed, is also the date he finally chooses to escape Nazi Germany with Charlotte Maguire. March and Charlie's plan to run away clearly takes into account the Führer's speech: "Nine is the hour when the beloved Father of the German People leaves the Reich Chancellery to travel to the Great Hall. It's month since he's been seen – their way of building excitement. You may be sure the guards will have a radio in the customs post, and be listening to it." (*Fatherland*, 333-334) March is sure that during this speech the guards will be distracted and thus the crossing of the border will be easier. This certainty is based on the fact that not a single German would miss the Führer's speech, but also by the fact that the speech is itself inevitable as no matter what channel one listens to, "if it's nine they'll all sound the same." (*Fatherland*, 380)

The cult of the Führer is of great importance. However, Adolf Hitler is not the only figure which is cultivated. And naming can also be used at the scale of a place. For example Schwanenwerder (the place where the body of Buhler is found), "had been named after the famous colonies of swans which lived at the southern of the Havel. It had become fashionable towards the end of the last century." (*Fatherland*, 65) There is here no peculiar historical figure or events involved. Cultivating of culture appears at a more subtle level, that of the specific surroundings of the place (which are considered to be typical of the Havel). What is interesting is the reference to "the end of the last century". Leerssen notes that the 19th century marks the beginning of a prominent era for the cultivation of culture in Europa (Leerssen 2006, 559). This mention of a particular era is thus deeply related to the social and contextual "reality" of Germany. In this example, the origin and purpose of the naming can be retrieved: the presence

⁶⁴ Joep Leerssen also refers to the concept of nationalism as a secular religion (Leerssen 2015, 85). Indeed, as Leerssen suggests, commemoration and public holidays originally emanate from religious habits and the religious calendar. The secularisation process undergone by our (Western) society leaves a void which the symbol of the nation is able to fill. It is visible in *The Plot Against America* as the statue of Abraham Lincoln is "the most hallowed possible amalgamation – the face of God and the face of America all in one." (*The Plot Against America*, 63)

of the swans. However, a good example of Banal nationalism, and by the same token a loss of meaning of the cultivated element, is found when Marthin Luther, Buhler's previous associate and one of the last remaining witness of the atrocities committed by the German regime, visits a concentration camp. Martin Luther is asked by Weidemann, a young German who works at the camp, if he would like to visit the part which is called Canada. When Luther asks "Why Canada?" Weidemann answers that "nobody knows" (*Fatherland* 325). This shows how the public sphere's cultivation become so self-evident and unnoticed, that it can lose its entire meaning for people. And the most striking of this process, is that it happens without being further questioned.

The actual outcome of the war, and the fact that Germany is on the winning side, has also a lot of influence in the naming and on the geography. There is for example a mention of "the Arch of Triumph" whose construction commenced in 1946 (i.e. after the end of the war), but also the "Avenue of Victory" whose name explicitly refers to the outcome of the war: a victory for Germany. When finding his way through the city, and therefore visualizing a map of the different roads, March states that: "In the early 'fifties, in the flow of victory, the roads had been named for generals: Student Strasse, Reichenau Strasse, Manteuffel Alle." (*Fatherland*, 340) This renaming and change of geography, while intended to propagate the joy linked with the victory and therefore supposed to have a positive or mnemonic impact on people, is disconcerting for March. March is said to "always [be] confused" and to doubt as to where the streets lead. The greater grip of the national regime on the social space is confusing and does not provide stability for March.

The cultivation of those figures which have made their contribution to the party, also happen in more enclosed space in *Fatherland*. For example in the Kripo-building, there are numerous statues and "garlanded busts of the Führer and the Head of the Reich Main Security Office, Reinhard Heydrich, [stare] at one another with blank eyes." (*Fatherland*, 11) Todt, "the creator of Autobahnen" (*Fatherland*, 109), who contributed to the technological improvement of Germany is also given a visible place through an "absurdly heroic statue." (*Fatherland*, 109) The presence of the statue is also emphasized through the setting. Indeed, as the fourth floor is in darkness, "Todt's statue [is] floodlit" (*Fatherland*, 109) The same technique is used when Philip and his family visit Washington D.C.: "the base of the statue, which was lit so as to make everything about Abraham Lincoln seem colossally grand. What ordinarily passed for great just paled away, and there was no defence, for either an adult or a child, against the solemn atmosphere of hyperbole." (*The Plot Against America*, 63)

In the Gestapo headquarters March and his partner Jaeger notice how the corridor is “lined with swastikas and marble busts of the Party leadership – Göring Goebbels, Bormann, Frank, Ley and the rest – modelled after Roman senators.” (*Fatherland*, 131) But later on, in the interview room the portrait of Reinhard Heydrich is said to be “in a cheap plastic frame.” (*Fatherland*, 131) The grandeur of the Roman statue is now lost. There is no nobility in the material that surrounds Heydrich. Following the notion of Banal nationalism, this frame normally is not supposed to stir a lot of attention and would normally go unnoticed. However, in this case the frame is noticeable for Jaeger and March. The portrait is almost real and Heydrich’s presence palpable, as March “could feel Heydrich’s eyes drilling into his back. He tried to ignore it, failed, and turned to confront the picture. A black uniform, a gaunt white face, silver hair – not a human countenance at all but a photographic negative of a skull; an X-ray.” (*Fatherland*, 135) This noticing sets him to think deeper on Heydrich. He comes first to the conclusion that Heydrich is not as important as one would like to make him believe. Besides, the portrait sets him to think on the way Heydrich is represented in general (and therefore on the use that the party makes of the propaganda): “The press portrayed him as Nietzsche’s Superman sprung to life. Heydrich in his pilot’s uniform [...] Heydrich in his fencing gear [...]. Heydrich with his violin.” (*Fatherland*, 135).

From those example, it is clear that Germany’s nationalism and cult for the fatherland is activated through the cultivation of portraits of great figures and the renaming of streets and quarters. The activation of this national self-image obviously occurs through the diffusion of emblematic items and the use of clichés (Leerssen 2015, 97). The building of this national self-image is helped through the phenomena of “typicality” (or typicaliteit) as Leerssen calls it (Leerssen 2015, 97)

As a matter of fact, the nation describes itself using characteristics that are supposed to be unique and proper to the nation itself. This ‘branding’ of the nation gives it recognition and allows for a contrast between a specific nation and another. (Leerssen 2015, 97) This typicality specifically works when contrasted with another land. (Leerssen 2015, 100) This phenomenon is highly noticeable during the bus tour of Berlin in *Fatherland*. Intended as a touristic visit of Berlin, this tour aims at showing the specificity and typicality of Berlin. In doing so, the monuments are always compared to other ones. For example The Great Hall of the Reich is characterized as the “largest building in the world” (*Fatherland*, 28) and the guide insists that “St Peter’s in Rome will fit into [The Great Hall dome] sixteen times.” (*Fatherland*, 28). March also makes a comment on this tendency to always compare Germany with other countries:

“Higher, longer, bigger, wider, more expensive... Even in victory, thought March, Germany has a parvenu’s inferiority complex. Nothing stands on its own. Everything has to be compared with what the foreigners have...” (*Fatherland*, 25) As March notices, Germany’s grandeur and value is only acknowledged when “compared [to] what the foreigners have”.

This typicality is also rendered ridicule as the guide highlights another specificity of The Great Hall: “the breath from this number of humans rises into the cupola and forms clouds, which condense and fall as light rain. The Great Hall is the only building in the world which generates its own climate...” (*Fatherland*, 29) Of course, the fact that human breath is transformed into rain due to condensation is not a wonder as such, but rather a grotesque (and maybe disgusting) image. This is not the only time that Germany’s “uniqueness” is rendered ridicule: “The dome of the Great Hall rose above the trees. Berliners joked that the only way to avoid seeing it was to live inside it.” (*Fatherland*, 171) Germany’s desire to be “typical” and quest to create a perfect self-image is rendered completely absurd.

However, even if this extreme form of cultivation of a national ideal is so absurd, it is not always entirely visible for the German inhabitants. When March arrives in Switzerland a sudden flash of revelation comes to him: “No Great Hall, nor marching bands, no uniforms. For the first time in – what was it – a year, at least – he was away from the iron and granite of Berlin. So. He held up his glass and studied the pale liquid. There *were* other lives, other cities.” (*Fatherland*, 199) Being away, March realizes the insidious form of banal nationalism at play in Germany. All this cultivation of culture has given a status of self-evidence to his belonging only and solely to Germany, but of course Germany is not the only choice. Even though the exacerbated forms of reassessing of national-image made him think the opposite, other alternatives are open to March; and indeed “there [are] other lives, other cities”.

3.3.2 Propaganda, absorption and assimilation

The cult of the Führer and the massive relying on propaganda are two of many characteristics which can be put forward when talking about Nazi Germany. These two characteristics are directly related to the cultivation of culture, and are made visible in *Fatherland*. When March walks in the corridor of the mortuary, he observes the walls which have been decorated:

In an effort to lighten the gloom, someone had stuck up tourist posters given away by the Deutsche Reichsbahn Gesellschaft: a night-time view of the Great Hall, the Führer Museum at Linz, the Starnberger See in Bavaria. The poster which had hung on the fourth wall had been torn down, leaving pockmarks in the plaster, like bullet holes.” (*Fatherland*, 55-56)

There is a reference to a Museum which is entirely dedicated to the Führer, answering once more to the trope of the cult of the national leader. But there is also a poster of the Starnberg lake, which embodies Germany's natural reservoir of beauty through its rural and magnificent landscape, and shows how Germany is an interesting place of (inner) tourism. The subtext is therefore the following: one does not need to go abroad to find interesting touristic spot, Germany can provide everything that is needed. The third poster portrays The Great Hall and its emblematic grandeur⁶⁵. If these references to Führer or locations represent the national glory, the last poster has been "torn down." And the marks the posters leave in the plaster are compared to "bullet holes." Propaganda is like a weapon and has a powerful impact which can threaten people's lives. March also states that the preparations for the Führertag "looked more like the preparations for an artillery bombardment than for a celebration." (*Fatherland*, 177) Throughout the novel, there are numerous mentions to a young generation who is conscious of the deadly power of propaganda and the way Nazi officials use it to exclude and kill: "Dahlem was a student quarter. [...] some of the women wore jeans – God only knew where they got them. White Rose, the student resistance movement which had flowered briefly in the 1940s until its leaders were executed, was suddenly alive again. 'Ihr Geist lebt weiter' said the graffiti: their spirit lives on." (*Fatherland*, 155)

Hitler's birthday is thus the perfect occasion to posit a revolutionary gesture in the form of graffiti. Next to the praise to "guide and first comrade Adolf Hitler" is thus written in white paint that "ANYONE FOUND NOT ENJOYING THEMSELVES WILL BE SHOT."⁶⁶ (*Fatherland*, 236) This graffiti, proving the devastating nature of propaganda, and to a larger extent of the regime, cannot stay there and "a couple of anxious-looking brownshirts" are said to be "trying to clean it off." (*Fatherland*, 236)

The Nazi regime is also dangerous in *The Plot Against America*. Hitler's blackmail on Lindbergh, implies the creation of new segregating rules. Those rules serve to mark the Jews as a different group which does not truly belong to the American nation. This specific exclusion and inclusion dynamics is rendered possible through the type of nationalism that is at play.

Indeed, at the beginning of the novel, as the Roth family visits Washington DC, we can see that their patriotism is deeply anchored in societal values. This is also visible in FDR speech when he acknowledges "the human liberty of which the American Bill of Rights is the

⁶⁵ In section 3.1.2.1 At the interstice of the text, we have already acknowledged the "vastness of scale and gigantomania" (Piatti and Hurni 2009, 336) of this New Berlin designed by Speer.

⁶⁶ The lay-out (capital letters) comes from the text. The use of capital letter is surely intended to bring a sense of authenticity by giving the impression that the phrase on the page is inscribed in the same as the words on the wall.

fundamental document”, “American democracy”, American “freedom” and “the guarantees of liberty framed for us by our forefathers in the Constitution of the United States.” (*The Plot Against America*, 178) Citizenship does not exist in terms of race as such, but rather on the basis of moral values like justice or freedom. This non-exclusionary type of nationalism, which rather encompasses great values than specific ethnic characteristics, is defined by Leerssen as a *civic* form of nationalism. (Leerssen 2015, 45) On the other side of the spectrum, there is a form of *ethnic nationalism*. Nazi Germany, in its belief in deep and ancestral cultural roots, and its racial criteria (namely the belief in an Aryan ideal and superiority, its eugenic doctrine, and the dismissing of Jews), follows the principle of ethnic nationalism at its extreme. And that is precisely because of this change in nationalism, that the Jewish people, and more specifically the Roth family, comes to be excluded and considered as others.

The many initiatives under the Office of American Absorption (or OAA) are thus so many examples of an alleged racial and inherent difference. Philip’s brother, Sandy, namely participates in Just Folks. This “volunteer program” is intended to “introduce city youth to the traditional ways of heartland life.” (*The Plot Against America*, 84) The alleged purpose of the different programs implemented is to “encoura[ge] America’s religious and national minorities to become further incorporated into the larger society” (*The Plot Against America*, 85).

The family is also concerned by another initiative of the OAA. Indeed, the Roths are chosen to participate in the Homestead program “which is designed to give emerging American families a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to move their households, at government expense, in order to strike roots in an inspiring region of America previously inaccessible to them” (*The Plot Against America*, 204) but also to “[steep] in [the] country’s oldest traditions” (*The Plot Against America*, 204) and finally “enrich their Americanness over the generations.” (*The Plot Against America*, 205) There is a clear reference to the “country’s oldest traditions” or “roots” and an inherent “Americanness.” The link with ethnic nationalism cannot be denied. The Jewish people is designated as an “anomaly”, a people which does not fully and inherently represent the new values of America and who therefore needs to be “absorbed”, “incorporated” or “merged” into the so-called ‘true’ American culture. Philip’s father clearly sees the official and real purpose of the OAA programs: to destroy Jewish communities and to ostracize them, preventing thus a community-based strategy and alliance forces against Lindbergh. But on a larger scale, Philip’s father “object[s] strenuously to what the OAA’s existence implie[s] about [their] status as citizens.” (*The Plot Against America*, 84)

As mentioned earlier on, Xavier March has until the day of the Führertag to prove his case and escape condemnation (and thus death). Indeed, his investigation on Josef Buhler will lead him to discover greater Party secrets (and ultimately Germany's involvement in the Final Solution of the Jews). If Arthur Nebe, the head of the Reich Kriminalpolizei, recognizes March's intelligence and expertise, Obergruppenführer Odilo Globocnik (whose affiliation to Heydrich is evident) wants to get rid of March and to prevent him from revealing the terrible truth that had stayed hidden to many Germans: the sordid and cruel faith reserved to the Jews in concentration camps.

Needless to say, Globus is also involved in the Final Solution, and the execution of March would not only be beneficial to the state but also to his own reputation. Globus makes use of a file on March to threaten his life. If March was perceived as "glittering" example before 1946, from then on "it all start[ed] to go wrong" (*Fatherland*, 149):

No police promotions for ten years. Divorced, 1957. And then the reports start. [...] Party officials at Werderscher Markt: persistent refusal to join the NSDAP. Overheard in the canteen making disparaging comments about Himmler. Overheard in bars, overheard in restaurants, overheard in corridors... [...] Christmas 1963 – you start asking round about some Jews who used to live in your apartment. Jews! Are you mad? There is a complaint here from your ex-wife; one from your son... [...] The point is, Sturmbannführer, that this file has been ten years maturing in the Gestapo registry [...] growing like a tumour in the dark. And now you've made a powerful enemy, and he wants to use it. (*Fatherland*, 150)

In this quote the "you" obviously refers to March. Indeed, Nebe exposes to the Kripo-investigator how his numerous actions and his behaviour are not representative of what is expected from a "true" German citizen who values the Nazi regime. The culmination being indeed his asking about the Weiss family. This file is of course dangerous and a threat to March's life. But it also reports his development. March feels less and less concerned with the ideology of the regime and distances himself from what is expected of him. For example, following a government statement (which, under new theory at the Propaganda theory, "is received communally, in a comradely spirit" in order to let "no opportunity for private scepticism or defeatism" (*Fatherland*, 84)) all the staff members and colleagues of March recite the party slogan. If March's "lips moved in conformity with the rest" during this slogan and praise to the Nazi cult, "no sound emerged." (*Fatherland*, 87)

More than those rebellious gestures, March is now aware of the impact of propaganda:

When he thought of [America], his brain reached automatically for the images Doctor Goebbels had thoughtfully planted there. Jews and Negroes. Top-hatted capitalists and

smokestack factories. Beggars on the streets. Striptease bars. Gangsters shooting at one another from vast automobiles. Smouldering tenements and modern jazz bands, wailing across the ghettos like police sirens. Kennedy's toothy smile. Charlie's dark eyes and white limbs. America. (*Fatherland*, 278)

March is conscious that those images have been "thoughtfully planted" in his mind. Those images, obviously, are intended to give a biased and evil portrait of America: a place where "capitalists" rule, where the individual is of much more importance than the greater good and where one can see "beggars on the street." But also a place of debauchery where one's search for pleasure is more significant than to work hard and to move up the ladder by acquiring a top-position place at one's job. However, the last image is Charlie's (an image that has nothing to do with the ministry of propaganda) and completely destroys the assumptions March was made to accept. Charlie defies the clichés and helps March to "pick his way around the propaganda..." (*Fatherland*, 119)

March's final and last blow against the propaganda, is his unmasking but also acknowledging of Germany's secrets surrounding the genocide of the Jewish people. There is some similarity in both the ending of *The Man in the High Castle* and *Fatherland*, in the sense that Juliana also comes to realize that the world she has accepted (i.e. a world under the governance of the two winning super powers: Japan and American), is only the result of propaganda. The "real" history of their world is different, and is told in the novel *The Grasshopper Lies Heavy*, as Juliana comes to know through her encounter with Hawthorne Abendsen:

Juliana said, 'Oracle, why did you write *The Grasshopper Lies Heavy*? What are we supposed to learn?' [...] 'It's Chung Fu, [...] Inner Truth. I know without using the chart, too. And I know what it means.' Raising his head, Hawthorne scrutinized [Juliana]. He had now an almost savage expression. 'It means, does it, that my book is true?' 'Yes,' she said. With anger he said, 'Germany and Japan lost the war?' 'Yes.' (*The Man in the High Castle*, 246-247)

If Abendsen is described as talking with anger, it is surely because to him this piece of news is not easy to face. To accept it means to reject all certainties. And even though Frank Frink can be considered as one of the most passive character, always relying on the oracle to make decision and mostly anxious about every choice he has to make, he was one day sure that the reality he inhabited was a hoax: "Strange. Looking back to the early days... it had seemed such an obvious fake, then. Empty propaganda." (*The Man in the High Castle*, 16)

3.4 History

As obvious as the word “history” is itself apparent in the name of the mode “alternative history,” there is no denying of the importance of history in the three novels. Historical changes constitute the background for the further development of a new world and the experience of the characters which are in immediate contact with this new environment. It is undeniable, history is a major point of departure for the plot of each novel.

Besides being the means by which this transformation come to be, history is also discussed as a theme or a motif in itself. Numerous are the characters which have a peculiar affinity with history such as Mr Taylor, described as “the solemn little encyclopedia” (*The Plot Against America*, 82) in *The Plot Against America*, or Rudolf Halder, March’s friend who works at the archives in *Fatherland*.

History is then seen in different, competing, but also merging lights. History with a capital letter set against history of the nameless and every-day people. History as a way to ascertain hegemony and to propagate reasoning and ideology. History as material, and encompassed in objects as a marker of historicity. History as authentic and bounded in facts, or history “a version of events, as valid as any other.” (*Fatherland*, 231) In those two remaining sections, we will look at the way history is used as topic in the three novels.

3.4.1 Historicity

In the previous section, we highlighted how the use of propaganda could distort the character’s view of society. Charlie is the only one March trusts in his search for answers. She gives her access to pieces of information which are usually inaccessible to him because of the German propaganda:

‘And the Jews?’ said March. ‘What do the Americans say we did to them? [...] Please. The truth.’ ‘The truth? How do I know what the truth is?’ Suddenly she had raised her voice, was almost shouting. [...] ‘We’re brought up to think of Germans as something from outer space. Truth doesn’t enter into it.’ (*Fatherland*, 209)

However, as Charlie points out, “How [does] she know what the truth is?” The cultivation of culture and the deep influence of the propaganda has rendered the concept of authenticity and truth useless.

This question of authenticity and replica is also a relevant theme in *The Man in the High Castle*. Childan's entire business rests on historical artefacts and their alleged authenticity. The buyers are ready to give huge amount of money to acquire trivialities such as bottle caps "from the days before the wars when milk had come in glass bottles" (*The Man in the High Castle*, 32) or a Mickey-mouse watch, which are supposed to be representative of the true American culture and fulfil the "Japanese craze for Americana" (*The Man in the High Castle*, 32). But as Wyndam-Matson states, authenticity is not palpable in the object itself. Wyndam-Matson, while talking about two lighters, concludes that the concept of historicity is mostly conceptual:

'Look at these. Look the same, don't they? Well, listen. One has historicity in it.' He grinned at her. [...] 'Don't you feel it?' he kidded her. 'The historicity?' She said, 'what's "historicity"?' 'When a thing has history in it. Listen. One of those two Zippo lighters was in Franklin D. Roosevelt's pocket when he was assassinated. And one wasn't. [...] Can you feel it?' [...] 'You can't. You can't tell which is which. There's no "mystical plasmic presence", no "aura" around it.' [...] 'it's the same as if it hadn't, unless you know. It's in here.' He tapped his head. 'In the mind, not the gun.' (*The Man in the High Castle*, 66)

There is no "mystical plasmic presence" or "aura" to the object. To prove authenticity, one would have to produce "some sort of document. A paper of authenticity. And so it's all a fake, a mass delusion. The paper proves its worth, not the object itself!" (*The Man in the High Castle*, 66) The paper proving the worth, and not the object itself, also echoes Baudrillard simulacra as one "substitutes the signs of the real for the real." (Baudrillard) This mass delusion is greater than the lack of value of a specific object such as this lighter, indeed it is a general condition that can be encompassed at the level of the universe: "the word 'fake' meant nothing really, since the word 'authentic' meant nothing really." (*The Man in the High Castle*, 66)

The Kasouras, in their worshipping of American culture are said to be "doing [their] best to be authentic..." Betty namely points at the fact that she is "carefully shopping in teeny-tiny American markets down along Mission Street. Understand that's the real McCoy." (*The Man in the High Castle*, 113) Betty uses the expression "the real McCoy", to refer to the idea of authenticity and being genuine. If the use of this expression as such can be considered as ironic (because Betty also strives to sound "American"), Childan's reaction to it surely is. When he praises Betty's culinary talent, he confirms that "what they say is true: your powers of imitation are immense." (*The Man in the High Castle*, 113) As Betty and her husband try to be genuine, their quests for authenticity take the path of imitation and merely consists in a replica of what they considered to be "real".

Childan's business is completely set in danger with this question of authenticity as soon as he discovers that the Civil War colt guns he bought were forgeries. It is not only his business that he starts to doubt, but the authenticity of each individual at the personal level: "As if, he thought, question might arise as to authenticity of our birth certificate" (*The Man in the High Castle*, 141)

Those paranoid thoughts on the possible 'fakeness' of the objects in his business, leads Childan to rely on the Edfrank jewellery business. Indeed, these jewels value has nothing to do with matters of historicity, and yet, even without "artistic, aesthetic worth [...] [they] partake of some ethereal value" (*The Man in the High Castle*, 171) As Paul states: "Just precisely because this is a miserable, small, worthless-looking blob; that, Robert, contributes to its possessing wu." (*The Man in the High Castle*, 171) Once again, Dick's resort to irony is strongly visible. The piece is described as being "miserable, small" and a "worthless-looking blob" and still, there is a spiritual aura of wisdom and comprehension that surrounds it.

However, the last blow and paroxysm of the irony comes from Paul's suggestion to mass-produce the pieces. Of course, this apparent enlightening idea would only reduce these jewels to replica and would make their "ethereal value" disappear. (*The Man in the High Castle*, 177) The entire relation between the Kasouras and Childan reverberates these paradox of being considered as an imitation while trying to be authentic. Nonetheless, in this specific example, there is a subtext which clearly criticizes the use of technology. Indeed, it is mass-production that destroys the concept of originality or authenticity, just as the mass-production⁶⁷ of Civil War gun forgeries preceded the downfall of Paul's store. Technological progress has come to erase the line between real and unreal, fake and original.

Mr Tagomi did also bought one of the gun forgery in Childan's store. Those guns, as mentioned earlier, have no material link with the American Civil War. They do not possess any historicity and are only replica. That is exactly why Childan cannot take those guns back: as historical artefact they are worthless. However, when Mr Tagomi decides to return the gun to the store, it is not because it is a forgery, but precisely because of the subjective history it now carries: Mr Tagomi did kill two men with this gun. This historicity is of course, related to Mr

⁶⁷ It is also interesting to note the correlation drawn between mass-production and mass-death that Bauman puts forward: "In his recent study of the American practice of capital punishment Stephen Trombley (1993) has shown beyond reasonable doubt that the setting which in modern society renders mass or regular killing possible is indistinguishable from that which makes mass production and unstoppable technological rationalization possible." (Bauman 2002, 60)

Tagomi only and “no one else can experience it from the gun”, it is “within [Tagomi’s] psyche only.” (*The Man in the High Castle*, 215)

Through this visit that Mr Tagomi intended to do in order to return the gun, he eventually chooses to buy a piece of Edfrank jewellery and does not realize that this “worthless” object, gives him access to another world, i.e. the world depicted in *The Grasshopper*:

Mad dream, Mr Tagomi thought. Must wake up. Where are the pedecabs today? He began to walk faster. Whole vista has dull, smoky, tomb-world cast. Smell of burning. Dim grey buildings, sidewalk, peculiar harsh tempo in people. And *still* no pedecabs. (*The Man in the High Castle*, 223)

The pedecabs, so emblematic of the world of the diegesis, are gone. Mr Tagomi discovers a completely different world where the “Embarcadero Freeway [...] stinks up the view” (*The Man in the High Castle*, 222-223), where “cars like brutal big crushers” are “all unfamiliar in shape” (*The Man in the High Castle*, 223). What he considers as a “mad dream” from which he must wake up, or even an “idiotic daydreaming of a fugal type” (*The Man in the High Castle*, 224) is maybe more authentic than what he has ever lived. Just as Paul Kasouras pointed, the object did possess *wu*: a form of revelation. And this understanding is the following: history, just as reality, is a hoax and nothing is authentic.

3.4.2 Losers and winners

In a blog article entitled “Bad Historical Thinking: “History is Written By the Victors””, Nick Sacco argues that:

One of the most unfortunate and widely-accepted ideas about historical thinking is that “history is written by the victors.” This talking point asserts that the truth of the past is not shaped by reasoned interpretive historical scholarship or a factual understanding of the past, but by the might of political and cultural leaders on the “winning” side of history (Sacco 2016)

Reardon’s claim is that even though “ “winners” have the power to shape historical narratives through school textbooks, public iconography, movies, and a range of other mediums”, “it is a mistake [...] to assume that only the “winners” of history have the power to manipulate the past to attain their present-day goals.” (Sacco 2016) He then refers to the use of counter-narrative to claim other visions of the past. His major argument is that “history is written by everybody, not just the “winners.”” (Sacco 2016). To assume that only the “winners” will write history, only leads to a political laissez-faire and a final acceptance of the winners’ hegemony. Sacco also

states that this “argument [...] is usually deployed in the absence of historical evidence to defend claims about the past.” (Sacco 2016)

Sacco’s point of view is deeply representative of what is happening in *Fatherland*. March suggests that through the documents Charlie and him have found, they will be able to change the history created by the winners. As March doubts as to people will believe it or not, Charlie answers to the question “Isn’t [this version of history] unbelievable?”:

‘No, she said, with great certainty, because now they had facts, and facts changed everything. Without them, you had nothing, a void. But produce facts – provide names, dates, orders, numbers, times, locations, map references, schedules, photographs, diagrams, descriptions – and suddenly that void had geometry, was susceptible to measurement, had become a solid thing. Of course, this solid thing could be denied, or challenged, or simply ignored. But each of these reactions was, by definition, a *reaction*, a response to some thing which existed.’” (*Fatherland*, 334-335)

With those facts, the reality of the Holocaust becomes undeniable, or at least, as Charlie puts it, this denial of history constitutes a reaction to it. And this is exactly because it generates a reaction that it becomes real.

As mentioned previously, Charlie’s succeeding in the propagation of the documents is not certain. The focalization on March does not allow the reader to know what happens when they take two different paths. However, the “loser’s” history will be revealed, no matter what. And this attested by March’s discovery. Indeed, March’s mother was “a firm believer in ghosts” and “used to tell him that brickwork and plaster soaked up history, stored what they had witnessed, like a sponge.” (*Fatherland*, 293) While Globus spits in the face of March and argues that there is “not even a brick” where the concentration camps used to be and that “nobody will ever believe it” (*Fatherland*, 364), March’s arrival on one of the site of the concentration camp proves the opposite. As March finds a brick, it symbolically shows that the history of the “losers” will be known: “He had his eyes on the ground. There must be something. [...] And then he saw it. Almost buried at the base of a sapling: a streak of red. He bent and picked it up, turned it over in his hand. The brick was pitted with yellow lichen [...] But it was solid enough. It existed.” (*Fatherland*, 381-382)

Alternative history not only re-contextualizes big events and major figures. It also encompasses “tiny lives” (*The Man in the High Castle*, 35) and gives the “losers” the chance to express themselves and to be remembered. Indeed, as Herman highlights:

“Because what’s history?” he asked rhetorically when he was in his expansive dinnertime instructional mode. “History is everything that happens everywhere. Even here in Newark. Even here on Summit Avenue. Even what happens in his house to an ordinary man – that’ll be history too someday” (*The Plot Against America*, 180)

Herman’s claim is that history is what is happening to them at this precise moment. History is also those insignificant moments and traces of human experience. What is happening as they talk, they “[will] one day remember as history worthy of passing on to [their] own children.” (*The Plot Against America*, 180)

Although history accounts for the experience of every-day men and women, one thing it will not be able to convey and that is best transmitted by fiction is the terror of the unforeseen, as shown in Philip’s words:

And as Lindbergh’s election couldn’t have made clearer to me, the unfolding of the unforeseen was everything. Turned wrong way round, the relentless unforeseen was what we schoolchildren studied as “History”, harmless history, where everything unexpected in its own time is chronicled on the page as inevitable. The terror of the unforeseen is what the science of history hides, turning a disaster into an epic.” (*The Plot Against America*, 114)

As Sacco said, “we must do away with this fiction that history is only written by the winners.” (Sacco 2016) But more than that, we should acknowledge that the leading figures and emblematic events of history are never worth forgetting the “tiny lives” of Mr and Mrs Nobody.

4 Between subversive and conservative

The questions raised in this master thesis were numerous: Is alternative history a genre as such? Is World War II a mere artifice or a real-added value as theme in alternative history? Through the particular case study of the three novels *The Man in the High Castle*, *Fatherland* and *The Plot Against America*, is it possible to claim that alternative history encompassing the theme of Nazi Victory is subversive? Or is it rather conservative?

There are many elements which can point at alternative history, and this specific corpus, as being conservative. Indeed, this choice of corpus and “the general one-sidedness of studies written in English [...] fosters the impression that alternate history is a phenomenon primarily of the English-speaking world” (Singles 2011, 183), or even that it is a “Western” mode resolutely set apart from other and largest considerations (such as World Literature for example).

Furthermore, while there are some references to the colonization and imperialistic tendencies of the German Reich, the “colonized” characters are not given a proper voice in the three novels. Of course, *The Man in the High Castle* emphasizes the multiplicity of experience through its use of many every-day and singular characters. However, the historical or major figures alluded to are also mostly (if not all) “males”, as I already pointed through a look at Roth’s postscript. This lack of progressivity and lack of encompassing of diverse forms of experience is also rendered visible through many clichés in the novels⁶⁸: “Thick brown paper, neatly wrapped and taped. Indeed *professionally* wrapped [...] it must have been wrapped by a woman” (*Fatherland*, 82), “In Hollywood, I think, it is traditional for the man to rescue the girl.” (*Fatherland*, 167) It can thus be argued that alternative history still focuses on a very heterogeneous and limited choice of human experience.

It might also be said that the fatalistic message encompassed in *The Man in the High Castle*, or the general blurring of facts and fiction in the whole corpus, is rather a proof that alternative is not in state to bring new possibilities and yet only generate more chaos; and even instances of wishful thinking. If Baynes’ reasoning is supposed to characterize the Nazi regime and its extremes, it can also be viewed as a metaphor for mankind in its entirety:

“They want to be the agents, not the victims, of history. They identify with God’s power and believe they are godlike. [...] They are overcome by some archetype; their egos have expanded psychotically so that they cannot tell where they begin and the godhead leaves off. It is not hubris, not pride; it is inflation of the ego to its ultimate – confusion between him who worships and that which is worshipped. Man has not eaten God; God has eaten man. What they do not comprehend is man’s helplessness.” (*The Man in the High Castle*, 45-46)

As noted by Tagomi, “We have entered a Moment when we are alone.” (*The Man in the High Castle*, 214) We are marching long a path that is doomed to lead to failure and “hopelessness”, and the quest for many possibilities, which can take the form of alternative history, is thus just as hopelessly vain.

Others might also claim that while deeply influenced by the concept of metafiction and porosity, alternative history stays conservative due to its sticking to the convention of plausibility. Indeed, the parts/sections/chapters of the three novels all follow a chronological development that is duly referred to. And if historical documents merge with narrative, it is not in the hybridized and extreme form which is so representative of Caribbean literature or even

⁶⁸ However, it might be argued that those “clichés” are representative of the not yet so progressive context of the period just before the 60’s. One might also argue that those “clichés” are intended as a parodic gesture to show how those reasoning are out-dated.

post-modernism. Alternative history, while being overtly metafictional, is not subversive in the sense that the experiments made with language and the merging of materials are limited and measured.

In the section 3.3, it was clearly noticeable how *Fatherland* was able to critically analyse the harmful mechanisms at play in the creation of a self-image and in the totalitarian use of propaganda. Xavier March, the German protagonist, gradually took the position of an outsider whose awareness about the “evil” nature of Germany grew as the plot unravelled. However, as Winthrop-Young highlights “the German protagonist [is] noticeably un-German⁶⁹” and “clearly fits the mold of the critical, somewhat detached, and ultimately ethically superior British observer usually deployed in British novels about the Third Reich. (Schaffeld 251)” (Winthrop-Young 2006, 893) Winthrop-Young thus states that “it is necessary to pay greater attention to the very specific agendas, interest, and concerns that fuel” (Winthrop-Young 2006, 879) the circulation of alternative history encompassing the theme of World War II. In this specific case, and still according to Winthrop-Young, *Fatherland* “bears more than a superficial resemblance to the Europe of the early 1990s: an isolated Britain that is a mere shadow of its former glory, a Soviet Union in ruins, and a continental hegemony exercised by a Germany unable to face the crimes of its past.” (Winthrop-Young 2006, 884-885) It is interesting to note that Winthrop-Young pointed at “a Germany unable to face the crimes of its past.” If we follow the logic of Katsman, *Fatherland* thus proves a need for Britain to “find the guilty party,” more than to reassure itself about its moral and ethical values:

“The “error” approach is based on a very strong psycho-cultural need to explain, justify, accuse etc. Finding the error implies finding the guilty party. The “error” model reveals the complex that possibly drives ever alternative history – the victim complex. Alternative history stages the rite of sacrifice, atonement, purification. A rite demands and justifies certainty of knowledge, of the causes, of the one who is responsible or guilty (Katsman 2013, 51)

More than a way to vindicate its past (in the case of Britain, the role played by Churchill and the British army to help win the war), alternative history would thus also focus on finding the ones whose actions generated a dramatic course of event. As Katsman summarizes: “In such a case the alternative history's objective is not to justify the past but, to the contrary, to accuse and mend.” (Katsman 2013, 50).

⁶⁹ “Even his name, “Xavier March,” is almost unpronounceable to Germans; if he really were one, he would more likely be called Xaver März.” (Winthrop Young 2006, 893-894)

All those elements indicate how alternative history cannot completely overcome some conservative features that are deeply linked with its motives or its metatext. However, how convincing and indeed based on concrete elements a theory such that of Katsman and Winthrop-Young are, it reminds me of the Wenzlhuemer principle of “irrational attributions of blame” (Wenzlhuemer, 48). If indeed, alternative history and counterfactual thinking can lead to irrational attributions of blame to the perpetrator of events; but more generally if alternative history can encompass dubious reasoning and serves to propagate certain agendas, the true answer to combat its conservativeness and its fatality is a greater awareness. If one is aware of all the bias that comes with it, alternative history stays a significant and useful tool to create new worlds which tell so much about our own, as well as to experiment in the same manner as in a laboratory and most of all, alternative history allows the reader to play.

This aspect of playing, and more significantly, the need of a participant is what gives alternative history its subversive status. The reader is involved, as I attempted to show, through the paratext, the use of *mise en abyme* and even sometimes to a lesser extent, the narrative techniques. Its role is “to use Cohen’s metaphor, [...] to exercise “a kind of balance in the chaos”” (Hutcheon, 157). A chaos which is representative of all the possibilities surrounding an alternative course of events. The reader faces deeper assumption which also correlates with his own world such as the status of history and the concept of authenticity. Besides, alternative history correlated with the theme of World War II, due to its significant place in the collective memory and in the imagination of a nation, also tells us on a bigger scale about “meta-ideology” (Leerssen 2015, 52) such as nationalism.

As for the status of World War II, and specifically the Holocaust, I admit that there are always deep and contradictory assumptions about the use of events charged with such intensity and their representation/remembrance in and through fiction. I will not engage in much greater debate on the general depiction of Holocaust in fiction, but rather highlight Wurfgat’s claim that Hitler’s and Nazi Germany aestheticization is not a true form of normalization, unlike Rosenfeld’s suggestion. I will also once more quote Wurfgat’s inspiring argument that “representation has not lost all moral limits; those limits have simply begun to function in new ways.” (Wurfgat 2017, 438)

Counterfactual thinking as such is part of our every-day lives, and it might be possible that some of us already falls prey to hindsight bias or irrational attributions of blame. So this specific use of counterfactual thinking incorporated in literature, an art which has proven to draw

people closer together and to tackle difficult issues through both an emotional and intellectual prism, is what makes alternative history so rich and powerful, and eventually, subversive.

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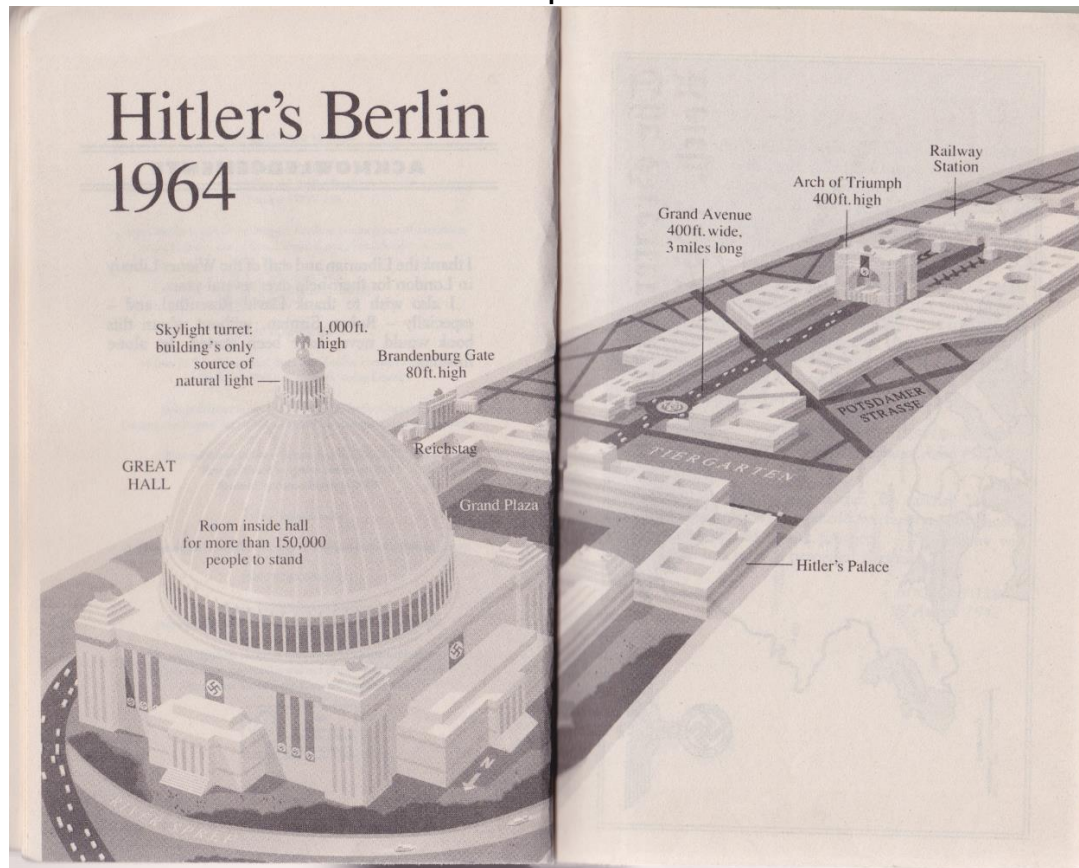
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ANNEXES

Map 1



Map 2

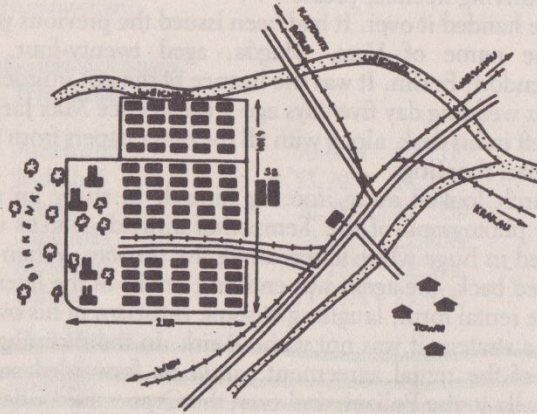


Map 3

ROBERT HARRIS

SKETCH OF INSTALLATION BY MARTIN LUTHER

[Dated 15 July 1943; handwritten; 1 page]



THE lobby of the Prince Friedrich Karl was deserted: the guests were out for the night. As they passed through it towards the stairs the receptionist kept her head down. They were just another of Herr Brecker's little scams – best not to know too much.

Their room had not been searched. The cotton threads hung where March had wedged them, between door and frame. Inside, when he pulled Luther's case out from beneath the bed, the single strand of hair was still laced through the lock.

CHARLIE stepped out of her dress and wrapped a towel around her shoulders.

In the bathroom at the end of the passage, a naked