

Research article

# The genre of uchronia through The Man in the High Castle: a literary and cinematic perspective

## El género de la ucronía a través de *El Hombre en el Castillo*: una perspectiva literaria y cinematográfica

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### Resumen:

**Introducción:** Este artículo tiene como objetivo definir los elementos que conforman la ucronía a través de la obra de Philip K. Dick, *El Hombre en el Castillo* (1962), y la serie homónima producida por Ridley Scott y Frank Spotnitz (2015-2019). **Metodología:** Se examinan los orígenes de la ucronía en el marco de la ciencia ficción, así como ciertas definiciones del término desde distintas disciplinas. Se ha realizado un análisis descriptivo de los elementos implicados en la caracterización ucrónica siguiendo la perspectiva semántico-sintáctica de Altman para la definición del género cinematográfico, transferida al ámbito literario. **Análisis y resultados:** La representación de figuras ficticias e históricas produce conexiones semántico-sintácticas, considerando los conflictos que introducen por su percepción sobre el mundo ucrónico. Una serie de objetos minoritarios conectan con la autenticidad en sus distintos ámbitos, uno de los temas principales del género. **Conclusiones:** A diferencia de otros subgéneros asociados, la ucronía plantea un mundo ficticio posible basándose en factores históricos. El contraste entre la novela y la serie exhibe la sólida conexión entre ambos formatos a pesar de su naturaleza distinta.

**Palabras clave:** literatura; audiovisual; ucronía; historia alternativa; género; presente alternativo; múltiples realidades; ciencia ficción.

**Abstract:**

**Introduction:** This article aims to define the elements which conform the uchronia through Philip K. Dick's, *The Man in the High Castle* (1962), and the homonymous series produced by Ridley Scott and Frank Spotnitz (2015-2019). **Methodology:** The origins of the uchronia have been examined among the science fiction framework, as well as some definitions of the term from various disciplines. A descriptive analysis about the implied elements in the uchronian characterisation has been developed, following Altman's semantic-syntactic approach to defining the cinematic genre, which has been transferred to the realm of literature. **Analysis and results:** The portrayal of fictional and historical figures produces semantic-syntactic connections, considering the conflicts that they introduce through their perception about the uchronian world. A series of minor objects connect to the concept of authenticity in distinctive areas, as one of the main themes that the genre examines. **Conclusions:** Contrarily to other correlated subgenres, the uchronia suggests a possible fictional world based on historical factors. The contrast between the novel and the series exhibits the solid connection between both formats despite their different nature.

**Keywords:** literature; audiovisual; uchronia; alternative history; genre; alternative present; multiple realities; science fiction.

## 1. Introduction

Nowadays, we can perceive that there is an inclination to adapt literary masterpieces to the audiovisual world. Such examples include classical works as Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* (1813), whose film adaptation was directed by Joe Wright (2005); or more recent novels like *The Handmaid's Tale* (1985), by Margaret Atwood, which was adapted as a series by Bruce Miller (2017). Overall, the fact that the majority of these cinematic versions are included in platforms such as *Netflix* or *HBO* has contributed to increasing the audience accessing these original literary works.

In consonance with this matter, it is not difficult to deduce that new contrastive methodologies have developed at the same time as these narrative adaptations to the audiovisual field. More deeply, even if the literary and cinematic formats operate in dissimilar manners, we can affirm that there are meaning connections between them. In fact, Zinnatullina et al. assure that this connection "leads to the formation of a difficult complex of relationships between corporation and authors, literature and cinema, the director and writer that directly reflects in the created texts and influence the addressee" (2019, p. 366). Essentially, this nexus can help us to interpret the elements that characterise a single genre, independently from the art expression in which it is presented.

What is more, we should consider another key concept in this research: *uchronia*, also known as *alternative history*. This term will be the centre of our research, and we will be approaching it from different perspectives. For instance, we will be addressing contemporary writers who have focused on the definition of the term and its major features, including Gallagher (2007). Furthermore, Lumbreras-Martinez registers the first approaches by Collins to a classification of the uchronia in the year 1990. On his side, Lumbreras-Martinez himself suggests a more recent division, which is based on the models of possible worlds proposed by Albaladejo-Mayordomo and which was amplified by Rodríguez Pequeño in the year 2008 (2023, p. 27). Moreover, other critics, including Thrall, have studied the notions that compose the uchronian atmosphere in the cinematic format, which can broaden the scope for a more accurate definition of the term from a multidisciplinary perspective.

Considering the points exposed, this piece of research aims to suggest a more concrete definition of the genre of *uchronia*, by way of interpreting the elements which make it differ from other science-fiction subgenres. More concretely, we will analyse the uchronian genre not only from a literary perspective, but also from a cinematographic one, taking as a reference the work *The Man in the High Castle*. All in all, it is also aimed to interpret the nexus between these two forms of expression to understand how the same narrative world can be transferred to different formats according to the language of each art.

## 2. Theoretical framework

### 2.1. Defining *uchronia*: origins and perspectives about the term

#### 2.1.1. Origins

The 20<sup>th</sup> century became a transformative moment in many aspects, considering that the global society experimented the consequences of the major political conflicts occurring at the time, which include the First and the Second World Wars, or the Cold War. In this context, a series of literary genres started to gain prominence in the science-fiction area, including the *utopia* and the *dystopia*. On the one hand, utopia is the imaginative representation of a future society implying beneficial characteristics for human wellbeing (RAE, 2024). On the other hand, writers like George Orwell or Aldous Huxley appeared as reference authors of the dystopian genre, which depicts a futuristic world from a negative perspective. In fact, “there were many contexts which could and did provide Orwell the basic material for the situations imagined in the novel [*Nineteen-Eighty-Four*]” (Brannigan, 2008, p. 664), one of his most revealing works. Another example stands for Huxley’s novel *Brave New World*, which “possesses many of the typical aspects of the American society contemporary with [the author]” (Varrichio, 1999, p. 98). Overall, these genres have been examined from several perspectives, with suggestions implying the difficulty of identifying limits between them.

In this respect, we should highlight the appearance of *uchronia*, another genre which has usually been interrelated with the already-mentioned subgenres. Rosenfeld assures that few ahistorical traces started to be perceived in 19<sup>th</sup>-century post-Napoleonic France, including “scattered time-travel short stories published in pulp-fiction magazines and scholarly essays published in larger anthologies” (2002, p. 92). Nonetheless, “the scenario of the Nazis winning the Second World War, [became] one of the most popular themes in the entire field of alternate history” (2002, p. 94), so this was the time in which the major productions connected to the uchronian field started to arise. More precisely, the alternate-history novel began to appear in the USA during the 1950s and “has grown by increasing magnitude in each decade since”, as Gallagher confirms (2007, p. 53). In Spain, the first narrative to introduce the genre was Nilo María Fabra’s *Four Centuries of Good Governance*, which was published in 1883, but it was in the 20<sup>th</sup> when it started to be recognised among the works of other writers, who included Ricardo Baroja and Azorín, as Martín-Rodríguez suggests (2017, p. 295).

#### 2.1.2. Perspectives about the term

The term *uchronia* was firstly coined by Charles Renouvier, a French writer and philosopher, in his work *Uchronie, l’utopie dans l’histoire* in 1876. Actually, according to Mayo-Martin, Charles Renouvier perceived the uchronia as a philosophical exercise, which functioned as a device to examine the history of the European civilization (2011, p. 8). In this view, we can deduce that *uchronia* leaves aside the idealistic considerations of the fictional world compared to our own reality, contrarily to other contemporary genres, so it becomes “a complementary fictional tool to understanding history” (Del-Percio, 2008, p. 87). Hence, the uchronia allows

audiences to reflect on the premises of each society at different moments of history, creating an opportunity to achieve a critical approach in this field of knowledge.

In the case of literature, there are a series of authors that have established a classification of the genre based on the thematic sphere, as we commented on Lumbreras-Martinez's premises. According to this author, Collins constitutes four forms of uchronia, which are registered as follows: *pure*, *plural*, *infinite presents* and *time travel alteration*. In the pure uchronia, we can perceive that the world of alternative history exists automatically, whereas in the second kind, the alternative reality coexists parallel to the reader's world. In the infinite presents type we should include the stories of parallel universes, and the last one refers to an alternation of the present due to the action of past-travellers (2023, p. 24). Nonetheless, we can perceive that the same uchronian story might include all these distinctive elements at the same time, as we will be discussing further in this work. Indeed, we will consider these elements as principal to constitute the foundations of the uchronian characterisation.

Lumbreras-Martinez offers another division in which the reader's real universe is considered as ontologically privileged in contrast to the fictional world (Ryan, 2020, as cited in Lumbreras-Martinez, 2023, p. 27). He establishes three sorts of uchronia based on the premises of multiple realities, including *ucronía realista* (realist uchronia), *ucronía proyectiva* (projective uchronia), and *ucronía imposible* (impossible uchronia). The realist uchronia represents a world which has not any further extraordinary scientific developments nor supernatural elements included, so they follow the conventions of the reader's reality. The second kind introduces a *novum* -an innovative element such as time machines-, which establishes the limits among the real and fictional worlds. Finally, the impossible uchronia includes those projects that portray a world that could never exist, including fantasy elements like magic or supernatural creatures as points of divergence from the real world (pp. 28-29). In other words, in the realist uchronia we can observe a world which is similar to the reader's, whereas in the projective uchronia we find some kind of scientific artifacts that evidently set the limits between the real and the fictional worlds. Finally, in the impossible uchronia such elements are part of fantastic worlds. All in all, this hypothesis contemplates the existence of multiple realities, which we will be assessing as one of the main defining elements for the uchronian characterisation.

## 2.2. Philip K. Dick and his work

Philip K. Dick is considered one of the most influential science-fiction authors of the American society. His life was dedicated to write short stories, including *Beyond Lies the Wub* (1952) or *Beyond the Door* (1954); and novels which, in several cases, served as a font of inspiration for film directors. For instance, Novell-Monroy registers that *Total Recall*, the film produced by Paul Verhoeven in 1990, was inspired in Dick's *We Shall Remember It for You Wholesale* (2008, p. 64). Another story which has been adapted to the screen is *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* (1968), the work that inspired Ridley Scott's film *Blade Runner* (1982). Moreover, Thrall highlights the transgression of *The Man in the High Castle* (1962) into the cinematographic sphere, emphasising that the

Adaptation across the disciplinary boundary between written and visual formats provides a helpful interpretive lens for illuminating [Dick's] preoccupations. In particular, the series highlights Dick's foregrounding of issues of national and personal identity, the contingencies of history, and we might call the sacred power of certain texts to shape perception and hence, in a manner of speaking, reality (2018, p. 212).

Thus, the fact that the Hugo Award-winning novel was launched as a screen version in 2015 supports the actuality of the social issues which are exposed on it, which makes Dick's legacy atemporal along history.

Most importantly, Dick innovates in his tendency to portray fictional worlds based on his own psychological experience. His metaphysical overview can help to understanding the complexity of his projects, since he upholds that "every individual accesses reality through their own individual perception, that the time nature of reality is not known or manifested to any conscious being, and that time and space are only constructs or mechanisms perceived by living organisms" (Jakovljević and Ćirković, 2023, p. 97). In this vein, it is not difficult to deduce that the author's works also reflect philosophical premises which include the empirical experience, theological uncertainties, and "autobiographical elements in the form of visions, dreams, voices, inexplicable insights into other worlds and multiple realities" (p. 96). On the whole, these aspects will interfere in the description of Dick's style, which establishes his own metafictional world.

Dick also innovates in the way he introduces the new worlds within the narrative, reformulating the proper stylistic devices of literary constructions. As Samantarai remarks, "while his contemporaries rely on the elaborate description of the outer world in question, Dick chooses to reveal information regarding the setting of his world by using his characters as mouthpieces" (2022, p. 185). In other words, in Dick's narrations we get to know the mechanisms of the central fictional universe throughout the characters' beliefs and choices, which introduces us into the thematic spheres from an introspective overview. As a matter of fact, the characters in the novels also experiment trips to other parallel realities. This point connects to Dick's personal experience and the concept of multiverse not only within the fictional universe, but also in relation to our own reality. We will be presenting all these ideas in depth by analysing *The Man in the High Castle*.

### **3. Corpus analysis: *The Man in the High Castle* (novel and TV series)**

*The Man in the High Castle* is a novel written by Philip K. Dick, whose first publication dates from 1962. In this book, the author portrays a reality in which the Axis powers win the Second World War, and America is divided into various parts: the Pacific States, ruled by the Japanese; the American Reich, governed by the Germans; and the Neutral Zone. All in all, we have several subplots in which we evidence that the destiny of each main character is influenced by their social status, as well as by the individual choices that condition them collectively.

More concretely, we can recognise five stories which reveal the concerns of the main characters. In the first line, we can observe Childan's attempts to maintain the American legacy through his collection of historical artifacts, while he also worships the Japanese leading force. Secondly, we are introduced Frank Frink's and Ed McArthy's experience, two workers at Wyndam-Matson's factory who start their own craftsmanship business. Furthermore, in the third story we connect to Mr. Baynes -truly Mr. Wegener-, a German spy who travels to San Francisco to warn a Japanese high-ranking leader about the possibility of a new conflict between the two ruling nations. The Japanese minister, Tagomi, becomes central in the fourth narrative, in which we observe his process of uncertainty about his identity in view of the new world order. Finally, the last plot line involves Juliana and Joe Blake, who start a trip to find the author of a book which represents another alternative history within the main alternative world: *The Grasshopper Lies Heavy*. Even though these subplots do not merge at any point, this novel-in-the-novel resource will be considered one of the major nexuses among them.

Furthermore, *The Man in the High Castle* was adapted to the cinematographic format in 2015, with the homonymous *Amazon Prime* series produced by Frank Spotnitz and Ridley Scott. In this version, some characters that include John Smith or Inspector Kido are introduced, who will engage us into the uchronian world from a different viewpoint. In general, the television series represents a free version of Dick's novel, although it shares the main subjects of the original work. In fact, Arteaga-Botello confirms that the cinematic production highlights some specific relations of dominance, through a story in which the world geography, the group identity and culture, hierarchies and social relationships are altered (2018, p. 301). Namely, the series focusses on actual sociological aspects, demonstrating the ability of the uchronia to make audiences evaluate alternative historical outcomes, which are based on a complex but rather recurring question: "what would have happened if...?".

## 4. Methodology

The present research follows a qualitative approach to defining *uchronia* through the work *The Man in the High Castle*, considering the different narrative elements within the literary and cinematic genres. More concretely, we will develop a content analysis, which will lead to a wider contextualisation of the uchronian genre in the social and humanistic fields. Overall, we will be describing textual and audio-visual data extracted from the novel and the Amazon series, respectively. Parallely, in the analysis we will be following Altman's semantic-syntactic approach to the characterisation of genres within the cinematic sphere, which he registers in his work *Film Genre* (1999). Due to the fact that this theory is linked to the functioning of texts, this will be considered a useful tool to identifying the depiction of uchronia not only in the screen version of our target work, but also from the literary perspective. In fact, we will be considering the study of film genre as an extension of the literary genre interpretation, following the author's premise (p. 13).

This theory acknowledges that cinematic genres usually obtain semantic characteristics from the texts, including themes, scenes, or sorts of characters; and syntactic characteristics, such as plot structure or relationships among characters, as Novell-Monroy examines in her work (2008, pp. 102-103). Therefore, in the upcoming sections, our content analysis will be focused on evaluating the elements which are shared by the literary and audio-visual formats, which include the sorts of characters and their relationships, as well as the main themes in *The Man in the High Castle*. Following Altman, we will argue that these elements incorporate semantic-syntactic coherence to the work and, consequently, they connect to the characterisation of the uchronian genre in the literary and cinematic fields.

## 5. Analysis and results

### 5.1. Historical and fictional figures: their connection to the main themes

As we remarked in previous sections, the characters in Dick's novels introduce us to the characteristics of the fictional world, as well as the main topics that the author addresses in his work. As a matter of fact, Thrall comments that "characters in [Dick's] novel mingle references to familiar individuals and events with fictional 'might-have-beens' that constitute their history..." (2018, p. 216), focusing on questions regarding their personal or national identity, among others. Thus, in this section we will be focusing on how the characters' portrayal incorporates semantic and syntactic connections to the narrative, which will serve as a source to the uchronian characterisation. Besides, on the account that the uchronia is based on history, we must establish a clear distinction among the characters who are part of the fictional world, and the figures which have been part of the real sphere.

In the case of the fictional characters, Tagomi is presented as a Japanese commerce minister whose “attitudes had formed in the War Cabinet days” (Dick, 1962, p. 6). In general, his main goal is to maintain the classical values, as well as to persecute the truth and maintain justice, which he searches on his readings of the *I Ching* or *The Book of Changes*. In fact, Rieder remarks that Tagomi’s “heroism lies in his ability to retain his humanity against the pressure of the dominant political and social versions of reality” (1988, p. 223), which we observe in his attempts to avoid a new possible conflict between Japan and Germany. What is more, in both versions of the work Tagomi has a connection to other possible realities. Actually, Evans remarks that “the authenticity of [Tagomi’s] own world is also called into question. He is eventually transported back to his own world, but his vision of alternate realities changes his attitude toward his own reality” (2010, p. 374). In this vein, we can confirm that the character gets in conflict with his perception about the world, alleging in the last chapters that there are a series of “incredible unredemptive passions clashing in [his] breast” (Dick, 1962, p. 123). Briefly, Tagomi’s figure connects us to the question of authenticity, which he approaches from a political, historical, and spiritual perspective, and thus it adds semantic coherence to the thematic sphere.

In the series, Tagomi’s main goal is also based on maintaining balance within the world, and he gets to collaborate indirectly with the Resistance –the group which is in charge to spread some films portraying an alternative reality-, in order to avoid another global conflict. This goal is achieved along with Kido – the leader of the Kempetai, the Japanese police force-, and John Smith –a German high-ranking general-, both of whom stand as representative figures of their corresponding nations. These two characters highlight the most significant beliefs of the Japanese and Nazi regimes respectively but, at the same time, they primarily show the direct consequences of the rigid principles through their familiar experience. For instance, Thrall highlights that “Smith concocts an elaborate subterfuge to circumvent Nazi policies eugenics when his son, Thomas (Quin Lord), is diagnosed with an incurable illness that would categorise him a disposable ‘useless eater’” (2018, p. 215). We can witness that Thomas himself succumbs to the duties of the German leading force and decides to surrender to the regime given his health condition. In Kido’s perspective, his son, who appears in the last season, also suffers the consequences of the exigencies of serving the Empire, being psychologically affected by his experience in the war as a soldier. In both cases, we can deduct that the portrayal of Smith, Kido and their relatives introduces us to the issue of the globality of political justice, as well as the dissension of the high spheres about their regimes.

Abendsen is another key character in both versions of *The Man in the High Castle*. Most importantly, he introduces us to the question of authenticity through a major source: *The Grasshopper Lies Heavy*. In the same line as our target work, *The Grasshopper Lies Heavy* represents another parallel reality in which the Allies win the war, which stands as another uchronian novel within the main production. In this vein, our main character has been considered the reflection of Dick’s persona in the novel, as Evans remarks: “Abendsen is a kind of alternative (authentic? inauthentic?) Philip K. Dick” (2010, p. 378). Actually, the fictional author becomes a controversial figure because he makes other characters question the veracity of their social system, and there are variable stances regarding his creation. In fact, Abendsen and his work are mostly depicted by other characters’ dialogues and thoughts. For instance, Herr Reiss, one of the German representatives in the novel, deduces that Abendsen’s work is probably financed by contrary leading forces while revising a copy of the book: “Omaha, Nebraska. Last outpost of the former plutocratic U.S. publishing industry, once located in downtown New York and supported by Jewish and Communist gold” (Dick, 1962, p. 69). Other characters also judge him and his work according to their own personal viewpoints.

In the case of the series, *The Grasshopper Lies Heavy* is transformed into films that also register an alternative present. According to Abendsen, his creation is influenced by his personal experience: “This my castle right here, the conscious and unconscious mind, the psyche” (Scott et al., 2015-2019). All in all, the fictional author represents the power of the commonly unknown, and he also leads the choices of other characters in the screen version of *The Man in the High Castle*. In fact, in the audiovisual format he is captured by the Germans along with his wife, and he is forced to guide John Smith to control the *novum* we observe in the last season, which is a machine leading to other parallel realities. This scientific artifact is an illustration of another descriptive element for the uchronian characterisation, as we have considered following Lumbreras-Martinez’s hypothesis. Furthermore, Abendsen also accompanies other characters including Juliana, especially in her attempt to understand the message of the films, in which herself and other acquaintances appear, contrarily to the book format.

Juliana becomes a principal character in both versions of *The Man in the High Castle*. In the novel, she is described as an unstable woman, even though she gets more and more confidence when the narrative advances. On the contrary, in the audiovisual format she seems mostly determinant, being her mother the character who portrays the insecure features as a reflection of her inner self. In Juliana’s character, we connect to Tagomi’s persecution of the universal truth, so her purpose is related to reaching Abendsen to understand the content of *The Grasshopper Lies Heavy*. On the way, she is accompanied by Joe Blake, a Nazi spy who gets assassinated by Juliana herself when she recognises his real identity and the purpose of his mission, which is to kill the author of the alternative novel. What is more, she also consults the *I Ching*, which creates connections with Tagomi and Childan. In the case of the series, Juliana is immersed in the Resistance, on behalf of her deceased sister Trudi, who appears in the first chapters to introduce us to the concept of this group and their mission. Juliana is also linked to Tagomi in the sense that both are *travellers* or, in other words, people who can access other parallel realities. Both characters also connect in the world of the series, unifying the originals from the novel and those which are newly introduced in the audiovisual format. In this sense, they do not only add semantic value to the narrative, but they also serve as a link to the new structure of the plot.

There are other relevant figures which introduce us to the reality of the people who do not belong to the population of the empowered countries. In this case, we must mention Robert Childan, the owner of American Artistic Handcrafts Inc., an antique shop which recovers valuable objects from this society. In fact, Samantarai remarks that he “represents the category of American dealers thriving on the demand for American artefacts, living their life trying to please their colonisers” (2022, p. 187), and he even admires and imitates the manners of the Japanese. In both versions of the story, he gets involved in business with Frank Frink and Ed McArthy, who are dedicated to imitating antique guns. Frink is a Jew who was born in New York, and we get to know that “when the war ended there he was, on the Japanese side of the settlement line” (Dick, 1962, p. 8). His figure introduces us to the antisemitic system of the Germans, which forces him to live unnoticedly. It is his artisan soul which allows him to reshape the reality where he lives, which we will be discussing in the following section.

What is more, the historical figures we can examine in both formats are mostly connected to the leaders of the Nazi regime. More specifically, in the novel we can observe how the historical figures are protagonists within *The Grasshopper Lies Heavy*, and the characters within the main narrative depict them through their inner dialogues, as we can deduce from the following passage in which Juliana reflects about the future of the society if Hitler passed away:



Old Göring was off in his mountain palace. Göring should have been Fuhrer after Hitler, because it was his Luftwaffe that knocked out those English radar stations and then finished off the RAF. Hitler would have had them bomb London, like they did Rotterdam. But probably Goebbels will get it, she decided. That was what everyone said. As long as that awful Heydrich doesn't. He'd kill us all. He's really bats. The one I like, she thought, is that Baldur von Schirach. He's the only one who looks normal, anyhow. But he hasn't got a chance. (Dick, 1962, p. 43)

Regarding the Japanese high-government ranks, we have slight clues about them, but they are named in central moments like the meeting among Tagomi and Wegener. Thus, we can deduct from this fact that even if the Japanese had won the war in this fictional world along with Germany, they were somehow less powerful than the already-mentioned political power. Indeed, along the whole novel we can appreciate that the Japanese follow dissimilar values, as we can read in this part:

'The Emperor,' General Tedeki said, 'would never tolerate that policy. He regards the Reichs elite corps, wherever the black uniform is worn, the death's head, the Castle System – all, to him, is evil.'

Evil, Mr. Tagomi thought. Yes, it is. Are we to assist it in gaining power, in order to save our lives? Is that the paradox of our earthly situation?

I cannot face this dilemma, Mr. Tagomi said to himself. That man should have to act in such moral ambiguity. There is no Way in this; all is muddled. All chaos of light and dark, shadow and substance. (Dick, 1962, p. 101)

On the contrary, in the series, the historical figures play a more active role, and they interact in parallel with the fictional characters, becoming relevant within the primary narrative. For instance, in the first season we can see how Wegener faces Hitler directly. In the scene, this historical figure is watching one of the films which portrays the parallel reality which the leader reveals to be “what might have been” (Scott et al., 2015-2019). Following Heydrich’s orders –one of the Nazi’s real high-ranking man–, he attempts to kill Hitler. Meanwhile, John Smith is captured by the organisers of the attack and gets contacted by Hitler himself after Wegener’s failure. In this line, we can see that the relationships among the fictional and the historical characters underline the syntactic connection between the reality and the uchronian world, while they also introduce the theme of national identity.

## ***5.2. Minor artifacts and historical pieces: their relation to authenticity***

In *The Man in the High Castle*, we recognise a succession of minor artifacts and historical pieces which also give semantic coherence to the work, and thus, they need “a further analysis based on the uses to which they are put” (Altman, 1999, p. 210). Overall, we will analyse how these artifacts interact in both pieces in order to open further discussion on the question of authenticity, which is revealed as one of the main thematic constituents of the uchronian genre. In the first place, at the time of assessing the point of Childan’s collection and its value, we should consider that “‘historicity’ assigns authenticity to an object based on its perceived place in a fixed historical hierarchy, based on criteria of accuracy and importance, and rarity...” (Evans, 2010, p. 372). In other words, it is assumed that the authenticity is guaranteed by historical factors to be valuable for the uchronian society.

In this line, the object that opens the discussion about authenticity in the novel is a Colt 44, a gun which was used by American soldiers in 1860 (Dick, 1962, p. 32). Nonetheless, a customer reveals that the gun was an imitation which was made recently. In such terms, the man asks Childan if “is it possible, sir, that you, the owner, dealer, in such items, *cannot distinguish the*

*forgeries from the real?"* (p. 32). By such declaration, Dick does not only make Childan question himself about the veracity of the pieces of his collection, but he also connects readers with the difficulty to distinguish reality from fakeness, considering that everyone can interpret distinctively due to their perceptions about the environment and their beliefs. More concretely, Childan had accepted throughout his observation of the Colt that it was a real artifact used in the war, considering the features of the gun and the history which was linked to it. On the contrary, the customer defends that the gun was fake throughout his empirical experience, which starts to be the accepted version of the authenticity of the object.

As such, this connects to Dick's theory on everyone's capacity to shape reality, assuming that there is not a single truth to be achieved. Being conscious of this fact, Childan joins Frink and Ed in a business on fake jewellery, which we notice in both formats of *The Man in the High Castle*. In a world in which forms of individual art are not accepted socially, this gesture suggests a rebellion against the doctrines of the system, as well as a "protest against the artefacts whose artists were not alive anymore" (Samantarai, 2022, p. 189), since the art pieces previous to the war were considered as immoral in the new organisation. In fact, the three characters attempt to "define a new, postcolonial authenticity" (Evans, 2010, p. 371), giving voice to the small, segregated communities among the major societies in power. In this sense, we can see that there is another perspective of the new world order which should be considered, standing for people who are not German nor Japanese, but who are willing to shape the new post-war reality.

What is more, other characters focus on the question of authenticity from a more spiritual approach. For instance, in the novel Tagomi searches for the truth through a piece of jewellery made by Frank, considering that it combines the elements of nature and that it unites the past with the present, as we can read in the following passage:

Metal is from the earth, he thought as he scrutinized. From below: from that realm which is the lowest, the most dense. Land of trolls and caves, dank, always dark. Yin world, in its most melancholy aspect. World of corpses, decay and collapse. Of feces. All that has died, slipping and disintegrating back down layer by layer. The daemonic world of the immutable; the time-that-was.

And yet, in the sunlight, the silver triangle glittered. It reflected light. Fire, Mr. Tagomi thought. Not dank or dark object at all. Not heavy, weary, but pulsing with life. The high realm, aspect of yang: empyrean, ethereal. As befits work of art. Yes, that is artist's job: takes mineral rock from dark silent earth transforms it into shining light-reflecting form from sky.

Has brought the dead to life. Corpse turned to fiery display; the past had yielded to the future. (Dick, 1962, p. 122)

This piece of jewellery transports Tagomi to the reality in which the Allies win the war, which confirms the authenticity of Frink's art, as Evans establishes (2010, p. 373). Furthermore, this experience is "the most obvious evidence of the existence of the multiplicity of realities, as revealed by the *I Ching*..." (Jakovljević and Ćirković, 2023, p. 106), which we have recognised as another component for the uchronian characterisation. In the series, Tagomi's trip to the other reality ends with the first season, and it is introduced by the observation of a piece of jewellery that, in this case, belongs to his deceased wife. In this line, we can comment that this piece does not only give semantic knowledge to the narrative, but also syntactical coherency to both pieces of work.

In the series, it is also throughout a photograph of his spouse that Tagomi has access to other parallel realities, which highlights the importance of connecting to the past to access the truth. Paradoxically, in order to establish a new concept of authenticity within the global society, the Germans start a campaign to eliminate historical and cultural bias, under the premise of *Jahr Null* (Year Zero). To be more precise, in the last chapter of the third season we see how the Statue of Liberty is destroyed, creating space for a new American reality defined by the Nazi laws and controlled by the Obergruppenführer John Smith. Furthermore, we see at numerous moments of the show that Childan's antique shop gets sabotaged by the Japanese authorities, which gives us another clue about the rejection of the past before the war, now from the point of view of the other empowered force. The fact that the shop is reduced to a small space and the statue is recognised in an open space also gives a perspective about the contrast of power among the two ruling countries.

The characters in *The Man in the High Castle* consult the *I Ching* at different moments of the narrative, including Tagomi, Childan, Frink and Juliana. In fact, Mountfort confirms that "the resulting twelve reported *I Ching* results illuminate the central concerns of Dick's protagonists, and also the subterranean fate lines that connect characters who never meet but whose actions affect each other in concrete ways [...]" (2016, p. 291). Following this statement, it is assumable that the *I Ching* also stands as a syntactic devise, uniting the different sub-narratives in the plot. In the case of the series, the consultation of the *I Ching* is reduced to Juliana and Tagomi, and it serves as a link to unify the stories of both characters and others which do not originally merge in the novel.

### ***5.3. Childan in the Kasouras' home: contrast between the written and audiovisual formats***

In chapter 7 of Dick's work, we can appreciate Childan's connection with a Japanese couple, the Kasouras, who invite him to dinner in their home. This fragment of the novel is dedicated exclusively to this plot narrative, contrarily to others in which multiple subplots are intercalated. Parallely, in the Amazon Prime series this scene also belongs to chapter 7 in the first season ("Truth"), although in this case we visualise Childan's experience in four distinctive moments of the episode. More precisely, the first sequence in the chapter (08:25-09:33) is related to a phone call in which Childan is invited to dinner. Meanwhile, the second part (29:27-31:44) introduces another passage from the novel which originally belongs to another chapter, and which is related to the authenticity of the Colt 44 we have commented in section 5.2. Nonetheless, in this format the scene is developed from a different viewpoint. The third part of the sequence in the chapter (33:37-35:58) is linked to the original mealtime of the novel and finally, the ending of the passage stands as conclusive part of Childan's experience, which we observe in both formats. Overall, the importance of this scene is related to the fact that "Childan and his visit to the Kasouras' reveal to us how he uses the concept of human authenticity in his mind" (Samantarai, 2022, p. 191), as we will be examining in this section.

The chapter of the book introduces through the narrator's voice that Childan has been invited to the Kasouras' home, showing delight on his part. In the series, we presence directly the phone call, in which Betty Kaoura assures that dinner is out of business issues. In this line, Childan asks if the invitation has a friendly purpose, to which the woman answers with neutrality. On the contrary, we perceive at the end of the passage that the invitation of the Japanese is merely experimental, considering that the couple itself is also trying to understand the reality of the Americans, without any intention to get involved with other ethnicities which they consider inferior. Actually, when Childan extends a proposal for a next meeting, Paul Kasoura adds that the experience had been instructive, to which the former replies with serious expression: "Of course. Well, I hope I've proved a useful research opportunity. *Arigato* for your hospitality" (Scott et al., 2015-2019). In this sentence, we can recognise that Childan

accepts his inferior condition, somehow being a character that perpetuates the “imposed ethnography of colonialism” (Evans, 2010, p. 370).

In the second part of the series passage, we are again revealed the issue of authenticity through the Colt 44. In the audiovisual format the gun belongs to Paul, and it is Childan who makes this secondary character question about the authenticity of the artifact, by asking “how do you verify what’s real from any fakes?” (Scott et al., 2015-2019). To this respect, Paul suggests that he has a “practiced eye” (Scott et al, 2015-2019), and in this intervention we can identify the arrogance of the Japanese culture in the uchronian world, suggesting that their *practical eye* is superior and closer to the truth. Contrarily to the book version we have previously explored, Childan identifies that the gun is truly an imitation, which empowers him to reshape the concept of authenticity in the new world’s organisation. In such case, we should mention Rieder, who acknowledges that “it is not at all obvious that ethical possibilities are supposed to be grounded in objective knowledge. Quite the contrary: the characters’ constructions of meaning can be taken as projections of their various ethical situations” (1988, p. 220). In fact, the low angle we perceive in figure 3 (p. 15) stands as a clue on this matter, which suggests Childan’s ethical superiority at this moment. Furthermore, in figures 1-4 (p. 15) we can see that he has the light behind him, which we will consider to be representing the truth, in contrast to Paul’s side on the shadow. Nonetheless, Childan decides to continue facing the shadows or, more specifically, the imposed authenticity. In this vein, we can admit that Childan is “both collaborating and subverting” (Evans, 2010, p. 370) the reality of the fictional system.

In the third part of Childan’s experience within the series, we acknowledge the moment of the meal itself. In the novel, the three characters appear “seated on the soft carpet with their drinks” (Dick, 1962, p. 57), imitating the Japanese traditions. Nonetheless, in the series they are sat around a table, which we are introduced throughout small cuts of characters’ medium close ups that are used to “get intimate in a subject” (StudioBinder, 2020, 9:16). Additionally, the cutaways are edited under shot-reverse shots, which are used in conversations to “maintain scene geography and clarity” (StudioBinder, 2022, 4:51). This sequence is combined with master shots, which clarifies the characters in action and “where they are in relationship to each other” (StudioBinder, 2020, 2:59). In this case, we can deduce that the mixture of these kinds of shots gives us semantic information, also considering the main themes which are issued during the conversational stage (see figures 5-9, p. 15-16). In fact, we can see that the series imitates the book’s procedure, touching some of the major controversial issues: music, language, literature and politics. In the novel, the conversation among the three characters is integrated with Childan’s inner thoughts, which in the series are replaced by silences.

Another point to highlight is the contrast of the ending of the passage, which also reveals semantic information about the narrative. In the novel, after a blank space which normally separates different scenarios along the novel, we are transmitted that “when he left the Kasouras’ apartment at ten o’clock, Robert Childan still felt the sense of confidence which had overtaken him during the meal” (Dick, 1962, p. 63). In fact, he even considers the experience as instructive as good, as we revealed contrastively on Paul’s intervention at the end of the audiovisual format. Separately, in the series Childan rebels against the Japanese, creating an antithesis between the gratitude expression that we mentioned before, and the anger he shows at the end, which conducts him to the business on fake jewellery along with Frink and Ed. In such situation, we can deduce that the experience with the Kasouras impulses the catharsis of the character, even if the situation may seem mundane. Above all, the contact with the superior force -namely, the Japanese-, makes Childan realise that he has accepted an imposed truth, which is broken after his own empirical experience.

## 6. Conclusions

Contrarily to the utopian or dystopian subgenres to which the uchronia has usually been associated, this genre leaves aside the ideal perspective, and it focuses on a hypothetical alternative present based on historical factors. Thus, the literary and the cinematic expressions are transformed into a medium to analyse sociological attitudes, allowing us to reflect on the beliefs which we have developed about certain communities and collectives which are historically recognised. For this reason, it has been necessary to reflect on how different resources interact so as to involve readers in the uchronian atmosphere, without falling into the paradox of factualism and fictionalism.

In brief, *The Man in the High Castle* has been considered a representative masterpiece of the uchronian genre both in its literary and cinematic format, so we have evaluated the elements that connect us to this sort of fiction having this work as the main reference. More concretely, Altman's semantic-syntactic approach to the definition of genres has allowed to recognise the main features that contribute to the uchronian characterisation. Firstly, we have deduced that we get immersed within the uchronian world throughout the characters' inner thoughts and dialogues. Actually, each character represents the question of authenticity from different points of view, according to their role within the society. For instance, Juliana's mission is based on finding Abendsen's intentions about *The Grasshopper Lies Heavy*, which is revealed to portray the authentic ending of the Second World War in the uchronian narration. Furthermore, in Childan's figure we recognise that the theme of authenticity is examined not only from a historical point of view, but also from a colonial perspective. Namely, he intends to preserve the American history from his colonised position, while he also contemplates the possibility of reshaping a new reality along with Frink and Ed. The historical figures, on their side, provide semantic-syntactic coherence, regarding the fact that they help readers to contextualise the historical moment in which the uchronian production is based, and they also interfere in the limits that separate reality from fiction.

Secondly, there are minor objects and historical pieces that become central to the depiction of the uchronian genre, since they also issue the term of authenticity in its various forms. For instance, the Colt 44 opens another counterfactual conflict, since the discussion about its originality reveals the difficultness to distinguish reality from fakeness. The *I Ching*, stands as another source to this respect, since it examines the question of authenticity from a spiritual point of view, and it becomes a syntactic devise which unites the characters' stories indirectly. Finally, we can confirm that another element for the depiction of the uchronian genre is the possibility of the existence of multiple realities, which the characters experience in the creations belonging to this field, as we have perceived with Juliana's and Tagomi's figures in both versions of *The Man in the High Castle*.

In order to conclude this piece of research, it is aimed to open further discussion on a topic which is still worth examining. Overall, considering the amount of works which are connected to the alternative history field, it is still necessary to offer other possible classifications of the uchronia based on the thematic spheres, or the correlation of the genre to other possible realities. In such case, a wider scope to defining the term of *uchronia* can be opened, which can help to distinguish it from other genres whose limits are still uncertain.

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## 8. Figures



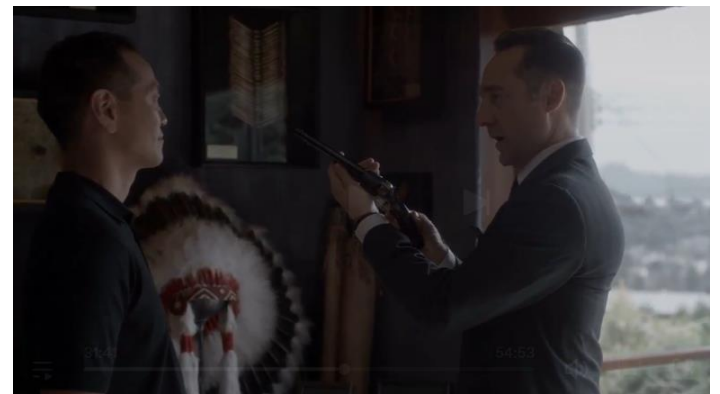
**Figure 1.** Paul gives Childan the gun.



**Figure 2.** Childan examines the gun.



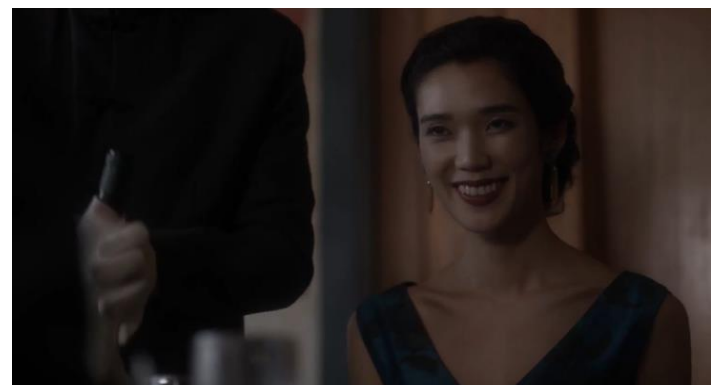
**Figure 3.** Childan understands it is an imitation and asks Paul "How do you verify what's real from any fakes?" (Scott et al., 2015-2019).



**Figure 4.** Contrast between Childan, who is closer to the light and Paul, who stands mostly in the darkness.



**Figure 5.** Childan as subject A (shot-counter shot).



**Figure 6.** Betty Kasoura as subject B.





**Figure 7.** Betty looking at her husband



**Figure 8.** After another cut, subject A again.



**Figure 9.** Master shot. It marks the position of the characters. Paul in the middle, who is in charge of the conversation. Childan and Betty at both sides, less empowered.

All the frames have been taken from the Amazon Prime Series *The Man in the High Castle*.

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