Introduction

1. Science Fiction and Aliens

The term alien means *alius* or ‘other than’ human being. Usually, the alien is considered as some form of ‘extraterrestrial’ but it can also be an individual or a group that human beings are not familiar with. The Oxford English Dictionary has shown that the word ‘alien’ was already in use in the fourteenth century as a noun for a person belonging to another family, race or nation or someone who is subject to another country than that in which he resides. In this sense, the alien is something different from what we consider as ‘our’. Human civilization has always been attracted to the alien and the alien has existed in different shapes and forms like Pliny’s mouthless Astomoi, dog-headed Kynokephaloï, Sirens, Cyclopes or Amazons. Also, mythological characters like angels, demons, avatars, fairies, and magical animals can be claimed as early avatars of the modern time image of the alien.

The alien is deeply sensed and largely consumed image in human imagination that it has evoked not only an intellectual but also an emotional response. Interestingly, it has played a key role not only in science or philosophy but also in imaginative forms like Science Fiction. The alien has been one of the enduring themes of Science Fiction. Alfred Kracher makes a point that

If we ever were to encounter real aliens, we might lose the luxury of adapting them to our own
ends. No doubt this would force many creators of imaginary aliens, whether in philosophy departments or in Hollywood, to change their conceptions of them.”

In this sense, when dealing with this subject we can claim formulation of the alien beyond generic classification of literature or film but that would be vast and out of the scope of present research. However, at the same time, the formation of the alien cannot be accounted simply by means of their description and classification within the domain of the genre of Science Fiction.

Then, the question is: Why do we humans need the alien in Science Fiction? Or what would a writer want to achieve exploring different forms of the alien and its unfamiliarity and difference from human beings? An answer to such question could be that the existence of the alien in creative forms enables studying ourselves. The existing literature on the debates about the existence of other worlds of the alien and of intelligent extraterrestrial beings have throughout the course of history been of significant help in advancing our knowledge and our understanding of human nature. Through a meeting between two alien beings and/or human world that is unfamiliar to human experience, a creative writer gives a serious exploratory thought to the human existential anxieties. The very idea of the alien allows fictional work limitless creativity; with an opportunity to imagine anything that is ‘not human’ to study what it is to be ‘human’. It also offers an excellent vantage point from which the notion of genre itself can be questioned, and from which the links between human selves and contemporary cultural manifestations can also be explored. Therefore, we think that it is necessary to consider the alien as a ubiquitous figure
present in different cultural manifestations rather than as a figure shaped by a particular genre.

Further, the vast ‘alien literature’ in Science Fiction demonstrates that this supposedly freely imagined strangeness of the alien is modeled on multilayered concerns of terrestrials, and especially marginalised status of a few like women, children, and non-Western individuals and societies. In this regard, in the present research, we are interested in analysing Science Fiction’s engagement with unfamiliar worlds to understand the multi-layered existential concerns. In this sense, the alien in Science Fiction is not a figure that leads an existence separate from humankind. They are creations of the human imagination arising from depths of the collective and the personal unconscious. Jung saw an analogy between man’s own psyche and the worldview in which ‘monster’ occupy such an important place:

How else could it have occurred to man to divide the cosmos, on the analogy of day and night, summer and winter, into a bright day-world and a dark night-world peopled with fabulous monsters, unless he had the prototype of such a division in himself, in the polarity between the conscious and the invisible and unknowable unconscious?²

Hence, the alien is not only the personality of an individual novelist to be studied but also of the collective anxieties of the reader and the society to who the alien is addressed. Thus, when we claim that the alien is reflection of the inner self of the humans, we position understanding of the alien within the context of specific historical and cultural factors.
The core of Science Fiction is narrating unfamiliar world of the alien. In Joanna Russ’s words, the unfamiliar world is ‘possible- but –not real’ and she defines it as a mode rather than a form (a form would be something like the sonnet, the short story, etc.). It is, basically, anything that is about conditions of life or existence different from either what typically is, or what typically was, or whatever was or is.

In this, narrative devices used to form new sets of norms for narrating fictional world, displacing spatially and temporally in structuring reading processes, and creation of unfamiliar world by dislocating human experiences in another context that would represent what is not possible in a realistic narrative frame are distinct features of Science Fiction. While creating ‘possible world’ through Science Fiction stories, a writer imagines new social orders or ways of being that differ radically from human existence as we know it. The alien is a core motif of Science Fiction to explore what is not ‘our’ and open up new social order or a different way of living.

As Adam Roberts observes, the encounter with difference in Science Fiction is “articulated through a novum, a conceptual, or a material embodiment of alterity, the point at which the SF text distils the difference between its imagined world and the world which we all inhabit.” A peculiarity of Science Fiction’s exploration of different world through the alien, then, is in the combination of strangeness and familiarity in its novum. This tension between the known and the unknown pertaining to creation of novum is at the heart of Science Fiction. Even when the reader is
not familiar with a new planet and its corresponding new technology being described, the social and personal issues within the narrative speak to our experiences.

2. Exploring ‘Alien Ways of Knowing’

The peculiar role of the alien raises a question: is it truly possible to imagine the non-human alien if the concerns are human? The existing scholarship on the alien follows two lines of arguments regarding nature of the alien and relations between the alien and human beings. One argument exacts the point that the alien in whichever form is never alien in real sense. The scientist Loren Eiselev observes that

In the modern literature on space travel I have read about cabbage men and bird men; I have investigated the loves of lizard men and the true men, but in each case I have laboured under no illusion. I have been reading about man, Homo Sapiens, that common earthling.5

Other argument believes in diversity and richness in depiction of the alien in Science Fiction. Critics in this line of argument propose various dimensions of relations between the alien and the human. For example, Gregory Benford claims that there is “probably no more fundamental theme in Science Fiction than the alien” 6 and goes on showing that the alienation is a spectrum. According to Benford, aliens are anthropocentric with their ‘exaggeration of human traits’ and unknowable features carrying essential strangeness for human beings. He proposes that the alienity is based on the degree of the alienity and human
experience is the decisive factor. Thus, on the one hand, a writer might set the alienity by extrapolating his other world from existing realities and on the other hand, she may speculate completely another world and create, to use Benford’s word, ‘unknowable aliens’. However, Benford also problematises the speculative encounter saying that ‘one cannot depict the totally alien’ and he makes an important observation that ‘important issues turn upon admitting alien ways of knowing.’ The present thesis is an examination of the ‘alien ways of knowing’ in Science Fiction.

The exploration of the ‘alien ways of knowing’ finds most vivid expression in the Science Fiction stories of aliens, meetings between the alien and the human being, space travels to alien lands of extraterrestrials and so on. Though not christened as Science Fiction till the early decades of the twentieth century, the daemon of Mary Shelley’s Frankenstein or H G Wells’ Martian invaders or a filmy version of creatures from outer space were fascinated with images of the alien. Since the early days, the alien has emerged in different forms and shapes throughout the history of Science Fiction. Like, the slimy bug-eyed monsters of pulp Science Fiction in the early twentieth century, the green slime monsters turned into androids and robots of the depression just before the Second World War, or the amoeboid extraterrestrials reflecting on the paranoia of the post-war time. Alien settings on distant planets, revolutionary technology, and futuristic time frame have enabled Science Fiction writers across generations to explore completely novel societies and cultures.

A major change in the depiction of the alien was introduced in the 1960s with the emergence of the new Science Fiction
especially through its interface with newer identities and societies. The alien was appropriated in recognition of establishing an identity based on race, ethnicity, gender, class and, sexuality. Particularly, under the influence of new social and political changes, the period saw new literary forms questioning the existing binaries like man/woman or human/non-human. The notion of identity that tended to be exclusive rather than inclusive, creating hierarchies and prejudice on the basis of class, race, gender, nationality and sexual orientation came under hammer. The New Wave fiction brought in radically new literary elements to the genre, and a review of relevant concepts within Science Fiction and socio-political ideologies. Science Fiction began recognising the multi-level implications of narrative forms that later percolated into the Science Fiction of the 1990s. It examined not only how identities are constructed in diverse contexts, but also what ‘identity’ means within different groups. The present research seeks to understand interconnections between contemporary socio-political changes and development of the alien theme in Science Fiction. Especially, we will focus on examining a selection of novels that has been the niche of the post 1960s literary culture where social and political discourses of post-colonialism and feminism find the meeting grounds. The research takes interest in understanding the chosen texts that focus on the alien world and offer perspectives on contemporary concerns around the relationship of coloured or gendered bodies to science and technology.

The study is not a comprehensive survey of representation of the alien in Science Fiction: it focuses on the context specific
relations between the alien and the select Science Fiction novels of Gwyneth Jones and Nicola Griffith. The crucial focus in the following chapters will be to analyse how phenomenal context, social changes, historical compulsions, political propellants are perceived and processed at the level of creatively imagining the alien and are given a new narrative form and substance in the select novels. Tracing historical and cultural variations, and accounting for the pragmatic, contextual dimensions of the genre’s discourse, the research constitutes a valuable topic for analysis and complements the analysis proposed in this thesis. The examination of features of the human-alien contacts —hypothetical, metaphorical, or imaginary as reflected in the novels—would help us shed light on why the alien is so helpful to the fictional enterprise of Jones and Griffith.

3. A Note on Novelists and Novels

Gwyneth Jones (1952), Manchester born British novelist, after undertaking jobs like writing scripts for television, chose to focus on writing fiction. She is the author of more than twenty novels for teenagers (Young Adult Fiction) that she has written using the name Ann Halam and several Science Fiction novels for adults. The Young Adult (YA) fiction she has written covers different forms of fantasy like ghosts and vampires, witches and ancient entities, time travel and genetic engineering. Gwyneth Jones’ first adult Science Fiction novel, Divine Endurance published in 1984 is the novel about adventures of the female android, and the eponymous cat after they get caught up on the
periphery of Big Events. In her next novel, *Kairos* (1988), the
eponymous drug alters consciousness by reshaping reality. Jones’
other publications to date include *Identifying the Object* (1993), a
collection of novellas; *Seven Tales* and *a Fable* (1995), a collection
of fairy tales; and *Deconstructing the Starships: Science, Fiction
and Reality* (1999), a collection of essays and reviews. Jones’
writing is published in acclaimed journals like *Foundation, Nature,
New Scientist, New York Review of Science Fiction, Paradoxa, SF
Eye, Science Fiction Studies, Solaris*, and *3SF.*

We are going to study Gwyneth Jones’ Aleutian trilogy: *White Queen*
for the present research. The trilogy covers centuries of the alien
encounter narrative starting from arrival of the alien-Aleutians on
Earth in 2038 till their departure from Earth 300 years later. *White
Queen* narrates the period of the first contact and deals primarily
with the misconceptions and misunderstandings that occur between
the humans and the Aleutians. Aleutians arrive on Earth under the
command of the three captains: Rajath, the trickster; Clavel, the
poet-the one they called the Pure One; and Kumbava, the engineer.
They are a small party of private adventurers. The world from
which they come is a ship lost in space, a wandering hulk that has
blundered into the solar system by chance. The people of Earth do
not know that. They welcome the visitors with delirious
excitement; hail them as superbeings, angels, saviours. One of the
Aleutians and the romantic young poet, Clavel falls in love with a
‘local’ journalist, Johnny Guglioli. Clavel believes that the humans
and Aleutians were one flesh, aspects of the same cosmic
WorldSelf. He recognises Johnny as his ‘trueparent’, his genetic
twin born in the previous generation and there, in the Aleutian mythology, his perfect, fated lover. But Johnny loves a woman called Braemar Wilson, the secret leader of the anti-Aleutian resistance group ‘White Queen’. Johnny is a friend to aliens and he refuses to join with Braemar’s plans of fighting with Aleutians. At some point then Clavel tracks Johnny down and, overcome by passion, rapes him. This incidence has loomed large in the Aleutian imagination especially because Clavel has otherwise spotless reputation. And it has changed Johnny’s mind. He and Braemar Wilson locate the Aleutian shipworld and somehow get themselves out there, determined to blow up Aleutians’ bluesun reactor. They are not successful as the infant Government of the World, convened to deal with the alien, has also located the ship. The humans decide to warn Aleutians and Johnny and Braemar were caught. Aleutians execute Johnny, Braemar is sent back to Earth.

The second novel in the trilogy, North Wind is set approximately 100 years after the first alien contact with the human. In this novel, Gwyneth Jones focuses on the hermaphroditic, seemingly telepathic Aleutians who have settled on Earth in the first part of the trilogy. The main character is Aleutian Good-looking aka Bella, a meek librarian who discovers hidden inner strengths after being rescued by Aleutians’ human translator, Sydney Carton, from a mass execution. The story follows the pair's adventures as they escape across lands ravaged by the Gender Wars-ongoing battles that pit Traditionalists (who believe in male superiority) against various Reformers. In time, Bella becomes the focal point in a deadly race to rediscover an instantaneous transmission device. This novel also recounts the
race between Aleutians and humans to recover the technology of the Faster than Light (FTL) travel which was discovered and hidden by the human character, Peenemunde Buonaratti in White Queen. It is ultimately revealed that Bella is the Aleutian person who has been created through genetic engineering from Johnny’s human tissue.

The last novel, Phoenix Café is set in another 200 years in future. Over this time period, relations between Aleutians and the humans have become increasingly strained. Aleutians find themselves in the position of colonizers; as the result of their superior technology, they have usurped many of Earth’s political powers. Catherine, the main character in the novel, is ‘made’ from the genetic material of the (alien) Aleutian, Clavel (‘the Pure One’), which was altered in vitro to make her biologically human (and female). Catherine’s friends call her ‘Miss Alien-in-Disguise’ and she thinks like an Aleutian. She is the reincarnation of Clavel in a human body and through her an attempt in the novel is to overcome the damage of the rape incident that has taken place in the first part of the trilogy. Besides, other two main narrative threads in the novel cover the attempts of the human to use Aleutian organic weapons technology in their gender war and the discovery of the faster than light (FTL) travel that is accessible to human by a human character. Phoenix Café ends with Aleutians leaving Earth from their own land of Aleutia.

Nicola Griffith (1960), another novelist in discussion, is a British novelist and some of the novels she has written are Ammonite (1993), Slow River (1995), The Blue Place, (1998), Stay (2002), and Always (2007). Besides, she is also the co-
editor of the *Bending the Landscape* series of original short fiction. Her short fiction and essays have appeared in different journals, including *Nature*, *New Scientist*, and *The Huffington Post*. Her recent book is a multi-media memoir, *And Now We Are Going to Have a Party: Liner Notes to a Writer's Early Life*. She has received awards like James Tiptree Jr. Award, Nebula Award, World Fantasy Award, and Lambada Literary Awards for her contribution in Science Fiction and Fantasy writing. Her debut novel *Ammonite* created quite a stir when it was first published as a Del Rey Discovery in 1993. It won the Lambda Award and James Tiptree Jr. Award and it was nominated for the Arthur C. Clarke Award and the British Science Fiction Award.

In the present research, we are going to examine two novels: *Ammonite* and *Slow River*. *Ammonite* is a story of an anthropologist, Marghe Taishan who is sent to the planet Jeep to be the guinea pig for a new vaccine. Generations ago a killer-virus has wiped out the men and eighty percent of the women colonists from Jeep before it was quarantined. Marghe’s employers, the otherwise nameless ‘Company’, have new plans for settlement on Jeep and they want to check workability of vaccine. Marghe leaves the Company's base on Jeep to explore the all-female cultures that have evolved from the colony's first survivors. Captured by upland savages of Jeep, she escapes to find refuge and love in a more civilized society. There she stops taking the vaccine, exposing herself to the virus in hopes of surviving to become integrated into the community of Jeep she has grown to love. Meanwhile, the commander of the base’s security force struggles to protect her troops from Company’s treachery. These plot-lines converge at the
dramatic conclusion: Marghe is called upon to try to rescue the base-staff, and to convince rampaging tribeswomen to leave their doomed warpath and join the larger population of Jeep against Company.

Another novel in discussion, *Slow River* is a story of Frances Lorien van de Oest, a daughter of the wealthy van de Oest family, who grew up with a life of privilege and luxury. It is a novel about alienation of Lore Van Oesterling, daughter of one of the world's wealthiest families. She is the victim of a kidnapping, now abandoned by her abductors. The novel opens with Lore escaping from kidnappers following a three month period during which they have issued very public ransom demands. Later in the novel, Lore gets to know that her family did not try to deal with her abductors and get her relieved. Instead of returning to her parents, Lore inexplicably chooses to remain with the minor criminal Spanner, who has saved her from abductor. Eventually, it becomes clear that her family took a major part in the kidnapping. Shocked by her family’s conspiracy, Lore has decided to stay with Spanner, who teaches her intoxication of life on the wrong side of the law. Then, depressed by and bored with this new ways of life with Spanner, Lore strikes out on her own, using the fake identity of a dead woman. One day, inside the drainage system in which she has started working, a terrible accident takes place. By the end of the novel, Lore recognises how her former life of privilege who dependent upon the abjection of the very people like Paolo Cruz among whom she has found friends to love and respect. In the end, Lore disavows her former life to begin working as a worker in a water processing plant.
4. The Plan of the Research: Chapter Scheme

The plan in this thesis is to analyse Science Fiction by explaining what it is and what it does; and how are the alien worlds created in Science Fiction? Such questions, as the thesis will show, are closely related, and the two parts of this study are seen as aspects of the same basic issues. The first part deals with broad and general speculations on the nature of the alien in Science Fiction and, the second with the textual aspects of the select novels and specific reflected in the novels in creating the particular alien worlds. The major challenge will be to define Science Fiction. Traditionally, there have been two different approaches emphasised in Science Fiction criticism. One approach stresses on the point that Science Fiction is a type of fantasy or fantastic literature in which events are based on scientific accuracy; and a ‘functional’ approach stressing the purposes and goals of Science Fiction and further, its use to speculate on ‘different’ worlds from the human world. The second half will be extended to demonstrate a key role of the alien in shaping Science Fiction. This thesis will examine nature and function of the alien in the select Science Fiction of Gwyneth Jones and Nicola Griffith. We will demonstrate that the alien has been a crucial theme in the chosen novels of Jones and Griffith. Further, we seek to show that significant instances of the alien in the novels go beyond the creation of physical world of the alien. It will be our attempt to study how each novel has different ways of going beyond established narratives of the physical of the alien. Our focus will be to analyse the genre specific features of
Science Fiction narration, its characteristic ways of evoking with the alien, and the alien ways of knowing the human world.

The thesis will begin with the examination of the existing theoretical framework of Science Fiction within the historical context. Accordingly, Chapter 1 lays out the generic and theoretical background for the close readings of the select Science Fiction novels. We will analyse evolution of Science Fiction and the significance of the concept of ‘difference’ in shaping the genre of Science Fiction. The primary focus here will be to analyse the genre specific features of Science Fiction narration, its characteristic ways of evoking with the alien, and the alien ways of knowing the human world. While tracing the philosophical and literary developments that contributed to evolution of Science Fiction, the formation of peculiar form of Science Fiction will be explored and read against the intellectual and emotional needs in the contemporary discourses to define human beings within the broader framework of the universe. The formation of peculiar form of Science Fiction will be explored and read against the intellectual and emotional needs in the contemporary discourses to define human beings within the broader framework of the universe. To investigate the role of ‘difference’ in locating Science Fiction against other forms of literary genres, we will discuss concepts like ‘cognitive estrangement’ and ‘Structural Fabulation’ proposed by Darko Suvin and Robert Scholes’ respectively.

Chapter 2 will offer discussion of the alien as a novum through the detailed discussion on how it gets evolved and, what different concerns that a writer would address through the alien. In order to provide a specific on this site, we will examine scientific
developments, technological innovations and development of the theme of alien. This will be followed by tracing history of the theme of alien within the cosmological understanding which made it possible for the theme to develop as it did and shaped the twentieth century Science Fiction. So pervasive did the theme become that our approach cannot be encyclopedic. Instead, what follows in the chapter is an examination of the broad patterns in the development of the theme of alien in Science Fiction. Conceptually, the discussion of the alien will see an extension of the idea of difference and build an argument of the alien as a novum appropriated by Science Fiction writers to contest the established construction of identity within the ideological concerns of Jones and Griffith. We will focus on the argument that the alien evolves constantly through changes brought about by social, historical and cultural forces. In this regard, what makes interesting is to claim that alienity is a fluid cultural construction in a constant state of change, permeating important areas of contemporary culture in which it occupies a central position.

Chapter 3 and Chapter 4 will endeavor to understand significance of the alien in select fictional works of Gwyneth Jones and Nicola Griffith respectively. Primarily focusing on five novels of Jones and Griffith, these chapters will examine the writers’ demonstrations of the relationships between the alien and the human, our basic proposition will be that the novum of alien helps Science Fiction in maintaining balance between the radical ‘Otherness’ and the familiar sameness enabling an experience of ‘cognitive estrangement’. Furthermore, the experience of ‘cognitive estrangement’ enhances the formal potential of Science
Fiction to enable thinking among ourselves away from the contexts of action and the mundane realities in which we are constrained to think and act. With this, we would like to raise a question that would allow us further interrogation of Science Fiction of Gwyneth Jones and Nicola Griffith. How does a choice such as the alien affect meaning and form of the fictional narrative? The interrogation will not be set out to systematically cover the entire contents of all novels chosen as they are extensively wide. Instead, what is sought in this thesis is to study various points of views in appropriation of the alien such as the ways Gwyneth Jones and Nicola Griffith choose to depict the alien, create a sense of unfamiliarity and difference, and offer the post-colonial and the feminist perspectives to address their concerns through establishing a novum.

In Chapter 5, we have critically reflected on similarities and differences between the fictional works of Gwyneth Jones and Nicola Griffith and their responses to the concept of alien. Though the writers work with different forms of the alien through their respective concerns, a link that bonds the novelists’ diverse work, as the research proposes, is that they assign broad function to science and technology in their novels to speculate on human world and explore issues that have been dubbed controversial and taboo in the society. Broadly, our aim will be of locating the novels in the light of various perspectives of the alien and the Other discussed in the earlier chapters.