Chapter II

Alien: Concept and Contexts

1. Introduction

Alien encounter with human is, as Freud states, the effect of ‘uncanny’. The concept of uncanny is the original of such formulations as ‘arresting strangeness’, ‘astonishment’ and ‘shock’. Freud proposes the ‘uncanny’ for whatever is unfamiliar, foreign, or alien. For a literary critic, the term uncanny signifies the sense of combined menace and grotesqueness derived from psycho-physical distortion of something that is familiar to human being. Besides, tracking the history of meaning attached to word ‘uncanny’, Freud postulates that we can collect all those properties of persons, things, sense-impressions, experiences and situations which arouse in us the feeling of uncanny. Freud concludes that uncanny is frightening precisely because it is not known and familiar. For the present study of the ‘alien’, we will consider the ‘uncanny’ that is not familiar and homely. Thus, the uncanny is in reality nothing new or alien, but something which is familiar and old-established in the human mind and that has become alienated. We are taking forward Freud’s view that the alien gives the sense of ambivalence with unusual characteristics exhibiting at least a few recognisable vestiges of human being in its appearance, speech, actions, and/or attitudes. It means, the term alien also suggests its difference from the human being. In Michael Beehler’s words,
The alien, in other words, always positions itself somewhere between pure familiarity and pure otherness, between the speech of the same and the speech of the other. Taking its place on the border between identity and difference, it marks that border, articulating it while at the same time disarticulating and confusing the distinctions the border stands for.¹

The alienation stated above, we believe, is prominent in Science Fiction and it is significant in combining the familiar with something which is unfamiliar. The focus of the thesis is to study the significance of alienity in Science Fiction. We consider the theme of alien as a novum with which a Science Fiction writer demonstrates something: a concept or a thing that is strange as well as grounded enough in reality to be readable.

2. Imagining Alien Worlds

Long before the alien became a prominent feature of Science Fiction, imaginative literature has been attracted and repelled by the possibility that human beings are not alone in the universe. Like the ancient Sumerian Epic of Gilgamesh, fantastic narratives present journey to Moon or the heroic protagonist’s search seeking out new worlds and strange new civilizations. Critics with this approach consider ‘scientific’ fictional elements in these narratives. We have noted earlier an example of a Syrian novelist, Lucian, who wrote in True History about the ship in which the narrator is sailing and is caught up by a hurricane to be hurled into the sky from where in sails on to Moon. One of the possibilities of
considering these narratives as roots of the Science Fiction is that they provide us with the myths with which our culture encounters difference like any other Science Fiction narratives of later days. An important aspect of these age old narratives is that a story of the hero who encounters monsters and supernatural activities gives us a basis of encounter with difference. Milton claimed that the purpose of establishing alienity in his narrative was to justify the ways of god to men and many people have read it as doing exactly that: praising god, attacking Satan, and laying the theology of Holy Scripture in a lucid fashion. According to this reading, this is a text that represents Satan as the alien and demonises it. In this regard, Adam Roberts in his book, *Science Fiction* locates the origin of Science Fiction not in Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* or in any other Romanticists’ work but in John Milton’s *Paradise Lost* claiming that Milton’s Satan is the original bug-eyed monster. According to Roberts, Milton allows his imagination to roam throughout the whole of the solar system; to wonder, for example, whether a race of aliens inhabits Moon. Much later, Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein*, starting with a quote from *Paradise Lost*, suggests having influences of Milton’s writing. Frankenstein’s monster even identifies himself with Milton’s Satan. The monster is brought into existence and then he is abandoned by his creator, who was so startled by the ugliness of his creation that he literally ran away and fell into a sort of amnesiac state. Interestingly, he manages to teach himself to read and, amongst the first book he reads is Milton’s *Paradise Lost*. “I read it”, he says, “a true history. It moved me to every feeling of wonder and awe.”

The Renaissance Europe saw rebirth of the classical learning
that led to the actual on the ground exploration of new worlds through contemporary literature and philosophical treatise. The discovery of new flora and fauna and newer systems of their classification rearranged older systems of looking at herbaria and bestiaries. The imaginative literature like Spencer’s *Garden of Adonis* remained no classical place, for infinite shapes of creatures as there “are bred / And uncouth forms which none yet ever know.”

In works like Peter Martyr’s *De Novo Orbe*, strange humanoids were reported. Needless to say, these were an extension of classical lore and oral expressions found in contemporary culture. But, these narratives, being a part of new knowledge system, challenged man’s sense of having a fixed place in the universe. George E. Slusser and Eric S. Rabkin make an interesting observation in this regard. They write,

In Chrétien de Troyes’ thirteenth-century *Yvain*, there is a beast-man. There is nothing fantastic about the Renaissance savage, however. He cannot say he is a man. His deformities are all the more troubling because he cannot compensate for them. Because he cannot speak, he must be caged, brought back to be studied. For the first time, created by this alien encounter where the alien is an image of himself, man has need of ‘anthropology’.

Further, the Renaissance was the source for two major attitudes toward the alien encounter: the excorporating and the incorporating encounter. The encounters set parameters for assessing Science Fiction’s meditations on the alien. The first major expression of the excorporating vision might be observed in Montaigne’s essay *Of Cannibals*. Montaigne introduced the
cannibal or savage, into the Renaissance debate to open up dialogue between art and nature. To reject the savage for lacking ‘art’, as Montaigne contends, is to embrace a static vision, and the vision is artificial because it holds man back from openly exploring the abundance nature offers us. In Montaigne’s opinion, the savage is not a degraded man, but rather another version of man, a version to be studied.

3. Encountering Difference

Historically, the concretisation of the encounter with difference provides a new perspective on Science Fiction which was also an encounter with difference as we have discussed while defining Science Fiction. One such encounter was revealed in Gothic fiction. The Gothic was a symptom of the larger literary and cultural phenomenon known as Romanticism and in particular, it was the primacy of notions of the imagination and the sublime associated with the Romantic writing that set the agenda for the development of Science Fiction. Not only romantic poets like William Blake and P B Shelley but also the writers of Gothic novels like Horace Walpole and Mary Shelley foregrounded the imagination as the key artistic faculty. And, it was with deployment of imagination, which we can read for our purposes as the creative entering into the possibilities of the fantastic, the unknown and the other than the everyday, together with the awe-inspiring encounter with difference – which is behind what we call ‘sense of wonder’ in Science Fiction. The Romantic literature produced roughly between 1780 and 1830 has much in common
with the subgenre of the Gothic fiction. Brian Aldiss argues, “Science Fiction was born from the gothic mode, is hardly free now. Nor is the distance between the two modes great. The Gothic emphasis was on the distant and unearthly.”

Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* is considered to be a landmark work of Romantic and Gothic literature. The main aspect in this novel is detailed manifestation of the strangeness of the monster and the way monster embodies Otherness: other than human being. The narrator encounters both Frankenstein and his ‘monstrous’ creation. Shelley’s novel has been important in the history not only because of its link with the Science Fiction genre but also literature in general. It is remarkable that, with *Frankenstein*, the clearly visible ‘true’ extraterrestrial alien, replete with its own physical and mental characteristics evolved in the nineteenth century. It could be seen that the birth of alien in literature is closely tied to the late nineteenth-century science, especially evolutionary theory, astronomy and, the plurality-of-world tradition. Mary Shelly’s alienated monster articulated the way science cuts itself off from the more organic processes of nature and, in turn functions as a symbol for a modern sense of alienated existence that was a product of industrial and modern society. Brian Aldiss sees Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* as the first Science Fiction text; the originary scientific fable about the power of the scientist to create, matched with the unforeseeable nature of the consequences of that creation.

Though Shelley’s *Frankenstein* has been important in the development of Science Fiction, it was only in the end of the nineteenth century after the publication of Science Fiction of Verne
and Wells that, as Adam Roberts observes, “we see the actual growth of Science Fiction as a meaningful category in its own right, which is to say, as something more than the occasional single novel.” 7 John Clute in his Science Fiction: The Illustrated Encyclopedia writes while tracing the history of Science Fiction,

Before true aliens could exist in the minds of Science Fiction writers, two things had to happen: astronomers had to demonstrate that there really were other planets in the universe that obeyed the same natural laws that governed Earth; and Charles Darwin had to develop the theory of evolution. Other planes were necessary simply because aliens had to have a place to live. Evolution is more complex.8

Before Darwin, we tended to assume that the human bipedal big-headed shape came from god’s wish to make human being resemble him. Slusser and Rabkin describe it aptly as follows:

We see immediately, however, the standard by which his deformities are measured. His head is described as ‘horse-like’, his ears like those of an elephant. This makes his response all the more fantastic when, asked what manner of thing he is, the creature replies with civility: ‘I am a man’.9

The human being had no strong reason to think otherwise. The alien encountered by humans tended almost always, therefore, to be parodies of humans. At this stage, Evolution was necessary so that writers could begin to grasp the fact that different environments required different kinds of being. While giving reasons behind these changes, according to Peter Nicholls: 55
The century gave a defining science oriented characteristic to fantastic narratives. Science Fiction proper requires a consciousness of the scientific outlook and that cognitive, scientific way of looking at the world did not emerge until the seventeenth century and did not percolate into society at large…until…the nineteenth…There is no sense at all in which we can regard Science Fiction as a genre conscious of being a genre before the nineteenth century.\(^\text{10}\)

4. Modern Invention of the Alien

Science Fiction of the late nineteenth and the early twentieth century, consisting mainly of novels and short stories, was of different kind from that of earlier centuries. Its epoch-making newness and its vitality sprang from the meeting of literature, as said above, with the evolutionary ideas in biology were making an impact through Darwin’s work. It was the new era in astronomy which was inaugurated that time by Kirchhoff’s spectrum analysis. Science Fiction applied the new biological ideas to the life-forms of the other worlds in the universe which were themselves seen as undergoing physical evolution in accordance with the nebular hypothesis. The combination of these scientific developments in biology and in astrophysics offered writers a new field of undreamt-of possibilities in which to work. John Munro in his Science Fiction, *A Trip to Venus* wrote:

Science far from destroying, will foster and develop poetry….serve the poetical spirit by providing it with fresh matter…Consider the vast horizons opened to the vision of the poet by the investigations of science if evolution.\(^\text{11}\)
Science Fiction from the latter half of the nineteenth century to the mid-twentieth century was informed by scientific enlightenment. In this period, Science Fiction succeeded the historical novels of early nineteenth century registering, notes Fredric Jameson, “some nascent sense of the future and does so in the space on which a sense of the past had once been inscribed.” 12 Interestingly, the technological advancements allowed human beings to enter into a kind of dilemma. On the one hand, the human could possess the highest status on his planet and on the other hand, in the context of many inhabited worlds, he accorded at best a precarious intermediate rank in the development of species. This provocative dilemma has provided a continuing inspiration for those works of the literary imagination that participated in extraterrestrial explorations.

Though the nineteenth century saw an immense evolution and growth of Science Fiction, not all novels and stories seriously explored the theme of encounter with the alien or life forms that were unknown to human beings. In addition, the few novels of this period that might be classed as space literature are pitched at an extremely low intellectual level, as well as being scientifically anachronistic. They were more utopias, satires and mythological romances of the other worlds. They might be loosely connected to Science Fiction that later emerged. Jules Verne (1828-1905) in France began writing purely technological fantasies. That time, Napoleon had died in exile seven years before, but the revolutionary principles that he espoused still challenged hierarchical order and old religion through the discoveries of geology and theories of Darwin. The science generated
technologies were enormously found exciting by the contemporary writers like Verne. From the Earth to the Moon is Verne’s account of a lunar expedition. The novel starts with the deliberations of the Baltimore Gun Club, under the leadership of its President Impey Barbicane, as its members struggle to address the declining need for big artillery after the conclusion of hostilities between the North and the South. They have found the solution of the construction of enormous cannon, large enough to fire a projectile at Moon. The idea was so newsworthy and exciting that it has donations pour in from all over the globe to fund the project. In the heart of Florida, the great, volcano-like cannon Columbiad, its base sunk deep below the surface of Earth, fires the intrepid crew into space, where astonishing phenomena dazzle them. After orbiting Moon, they return safely to Earth. It is true that the alien does not figure prominently in this novel and also Verne never wrote a novel that made significant use of the alien. It might be interesting to see at his brief discussion of extraterrestrials in his novel Around the Moon that provides us with a clue as to why he never wrote ‘the alien novel’ as well as how well he was aware of astronomical innovations. However, what is interesting is Verne’s exploration into different world while placing the journey in the present context. The question of life on Moon, as one of the characters says, “requires a double solution. Is the moon habitable? Has the moon ever been inhabited?” Verne thought that Moon is not habitable because of “her surrounding atmosphere certainly very much reduced, her seas for most part dried up, her insufficient supply of water, restricted vegetation, sudden alternations of cold and heat, her days and heat, her days and nights of 354 hours.”

13
We can make a plausible case that, for Verne, it was a combination of his interest in extraterrestrials and his desire to see the improvement of terrestrial society.

Around the turn of the century, writings of Kurd Lasswitz (1848-1910) in Germany and H G Wells (1866-1946) in England were the first reflections of encounter with the Other World that mattered in industrialized society. The novels, *Two Planets* (1897) and *The War of the Worlds* (1898) written by Lasswitz and Wells respectively are, clearly, reflections on aliens. Kurd Lasswitz, a German novelist, scientist and philosopher has been called the father of German Science Fiction. His novel, *On Two Planets* (1897), is an encounter between the human and the Martian civilization. The novel shows the Martian race running out of water, eating synthetic foods, travelling by rolling roads, and utilising space stations. The Martian spaceships use anti-gravity, but travel realistic orbital trajectories and use occasional mid-course corrections in travelling between Mars and Earth; the book daringly depicts technically correct transit between the orbits of two planets. By employing both Earth and Mars as settings, Lasswitz used the situation to explore the relation between two cultures and the problems of the improvement of society. It is clear that Lasswitz was influenced by the plurality-of-worlds tradition.

H G Wells is, as Patrick Parrinder states, “the pivotal figure in the evolution of scientific romance into modern Science Fiction. His example has done as much to shape SF as any other single literary influence.”¹⁴ Wells has been the most important Science Fiction writer the genre has yet seen, although he has never called his work Science Fiction. The principle that informs Wells’ work
prominently from beginning to end, is the conviction that the human species, along with all other species, can be defined as an outcome of the process of evolution - that we are bound to time’s arrow. This profound awareness of the role of Nature, working in obedience to laws and rhythms beyond our immediate apprehension or control, defines the form of Scientific Romance and it is important to note here that Wells has always been central to that mode. With his fictional work, Wells led the fictional mode of alien invasion, that too in fine literary style. Nearly all his early stories concern men meeting strange life forms. The influence and appeal of the work are apparent not only in Science Fiction but also in innumerable imitations across different creative expressions that have followed in the years since. Wells’ *The War of the Worlds* (1898) is the first great Science Fiction novel about invasion from outer space. In this novel, alien Martians land in huge projectiles that cut great grooves in the countryside. The weapons are terrible, and the destruction is great. When in the end they are killed, germs save our skins, not human valour.

The Wellsian model did not establish a model alternative to the Shelleyan model of the alien but it definitely revised it. Wells’ Martians are vampires who descend on mankind like the Biblical plague and are defeated by the micro-organisms which god, in his infinite wisdom, has spread upon Earth. They are like a disease: the world is an organism and it finally rejects them. The Martians are a master race and they command a superior technology. They look like heads without bodies and move about sluggishly due to the stronger gravity of Earth, except when they enter their war machines. These machines give great metallic bodies to the
Martians’ malevolent brains; in their machines they stride masterfully across the landscape with extraordinary speed and devastating destructive capability. These aliens, like Shelley’s Frankenstein and his daemon are allegorical figures: they represent moral failing of the industrial society that has devoted itself to the dehumanised, militaristic imperialism. The society has given over itself to the machine, and they are undone, in Wells’ religious denouement, by the body’s revenge. The prefatory quotation in *The War of the World* indicates that he was fully aware of the debate of extraterrestrial existence: “But who shall dwell in these worlds if they be inhabited? …Are we or they the Lords of the World...And how are all things made for man?”

Wells in *The War of the World* takes an ordinary man, an especially ordinary place and then imagines the extraordinary erupting into it, in the form of a giant cylinder crashing onto Earth. His stress on bringing out contrast between ordinary and the alien is extraordinary in terms of technique and content. As Adams Robert notes, “Wells’ dialectical sense of interrelationship between sameness and otherness that gives this work much of its potency: the cognitive estrangement, in other words.” The effectiveness of the novel like *The War of the Worlds* depends partly upon the sophistication of its balancing of familiar representation and the strangeness of its *novum*; but that *novum* also relates symbolically back to key concerns of the society and culture out of which it was produced. Darko Suvin captures this as follows:

The Martians from *The War of the Worlds* are described in Goebbelsian terms of repugnantly slimy and horrible ‘racial’ otherness and given the sole function of bloodthirsty predators (a function that
fuses genocidal fire - power-itself described as echo of the treatment meted out my the imperialist powers to colonized peoples - with the bloodsucking vampirism of horror fantasies). 17

4.1 Pulp Fiction and Bug Eyed Monsters (BEMs)

Science Fiction in the Wells era was to coincide with the cheap magazine format known as pulp. Advances in the manufacture of paper out of wood pulp in the 1880s fuelled a boom in cheap publishing and a wide range of magazines grew up. The brightly coloured pulps crudely exhibited men in space-suits and women in less complete clothing being menaced by insectoid, apelike or otherwise monstrous aliens. The pulp magazines and stories gave Science Fiction its start as a popular genre, first through including it among other adventure stories then by promoting it specifically in dedicated titles through the lead magazine like Amazing Stories that was launched in 1926. Amazing Stories founded by Hugo Gernsback who was also a pioneering figure in attempts of shaping Science Fiction as a genre. He has written in his editorial that

Not only is Science Fiction as idea of tremendous import, but it is to be an important factor in making the world a better place to live in, through educating the public to the possibilities of science and the influence of science on life…Science Fiction would make people happier, give them a broader understanding of the world, make them more tolerant. 18
John Campbell, the other important name from Science Fiction magazine, *Astounding Science Fiction* published in 1937 shared his belief that Science Fiction should educate as it entertained and that it should be grounded in science and the celebration of science. Like other Golden Age of the Science Fiction pulp magazines, *Astounding Science Fiction* was vibrant place to publish the Science Fiction stories. Campbell insisted on realistic speculation, clean writing, and heroes with moderately plausible virtues. He played an important role into the early careers of the major writers like Asimov, Kurt Vonnegut, Robert Heinlein, de Camp, Simak and Sturgeon. Lester Del Rey gives full credit to John Campbell for his contribution in the history of Science Fiction as, he “almost single handedly the creator of modern Science Fiction.” Adam Roberts points at one of the important aspects of the pulp Science Fiction written in the post-Wells age that is relevant to our discussion on aliens. Writers in this period have repeatedly explored the Wellsian trope of alien invasion in order to celebrate the superiority of humankind over the unprovoked threat from an unspeakable alien menace.

The meta-literary interest awakened in the twentieth century seems to have stimulated the awareness about Science Fiction into voicing their own interest by the creation of popular forms of expression. This interest was given an outlet in the recognition of such genealogical variants as ‘scientific romances’ and ‘scientifiction’. So far as the text structures of these variants are concerned, they introduced some new motifs and narration methods; but, as a rule, they also followed the tradition of utopia, the Gothic novel, the fantastic story of adventure etc.
It was not until 1938 that the term ‘Science Fiction’ appeared in the title of *Astounding Science Fiction* and only as late as 1939 and the early forties that the recognition of the convention was confirmed by some other magazine titles as *Science Fiction, Future Combined with Science Fiction* and, *Science Fiction Quarterly*. These magazines soon began catering for specific markets, such as westerns, detective fiction and romantic love-stories. The magazines used their commercial approaches and mass appeal to shape the development of the genre. The awareness of the reading public is often one of the most important and noted historical facts for the Science Fiction in establishing the period in which the changes began to function as an element of the literary tradition. With this, Science Fiction began to work and getting identified as a literary system.

The bug eyed monsters (BEMs) became a popular character in Science Fiction when pulp magazines had begun flourishing. Following Wells’ Martians, the BEM became one of the most appropriated Science Fiction characters. The BEMs have been with the history of literature since stories were first told: Perseus and Gorgon, Thesus and the Minotaur and a multitude of other embodiments of the horrific side of nature, became more distilled in the post-Wells era. Although, all these BEM creatures didn’t behave in accordance with the natural laws which governed the animal kingdom of human world-they might fly or breathe fire or even turn their victims to stone- they were in general less intelligent than their human opponents, even if sometimes more cunning. The alien in Science Fiction was no less akin to the nightmares of our ancestral subconscious than those of classical
mythology. Wells’ novels which established a role for the Science Fiction aliens came of out of threat to the physical survival of human beings. At the same time, he anticipated the catalytic role to be played by the alien of later Science Fiction. In Wells’ *The War of the Worlds*, the alien is

A big grayish, rounded bulk, the size perhaps of a bear, was rising slowly and painfully out of the cylinder. As it bulged up and caught the light it glistened like wet leather. Two large dark colored eyes were regarding me steadfastly. It was rounded and had, one might say, a face. There was mouth under the eyes the lipless brim of which quivered and panted and dropped saliva. The body heaved and pulsated convulsively. A lank tentacular appendage gripped the edge of the cylinder, another swayed in the air.  

The BEMs across pulp magazines were accepted by the reading public for kinetic, fast-paced and exciting and exciting stories the BEM encounter with human being. However, Campbell has criticised marketing of BEMs in one of his editorials saying,

(Some of the) motives standard in the BEM-style Science Fiction can be dismissed quickly. Aliens aren’t going to invade earth, and breed human beings for meat animals. It makes a nice background for horror-fantasy, but its lousy economies.

In his novel, *Who Goes There?* (1938), Campbell’s aliens are discovered at Antarctica by a scientific research expedition. It is frozen solid and perfectly preserved after a presumed forced landing some 20 million years ago. The alien is hideous and “Three mad, hate filled eyes blazed up with living fire, bright as fresh-
spilled blood, from a face ringed with a writhing, loathsome nest of worms, blue, mobile worms that crawled where hair should grow.”

22 After a fairly sophisticated argument about the impossibility of an extraterrestrial organism contaminating an earthly one, the biologist Blair convinces his reluctant fellow scientists to let the creature thaw out. The alien in *Who Goes There?* does not only look like Medusa, they act like a vampiric Proteus, devouring its victim and then imitating them with atomic precision. A blood sample taken from an alien has a will of its own and its own instinct for survival. Thus threatening a test tube of the alien’s blood provokes the blood sample to flee and reveals the donor as an alien. Like Wells, Campbell is careful in paying more attention to scientific detail. However, *Who Goes There?* does not attempt to resemble the allegory of imperialism in *The War of the Worlds*. The setting of Campbell’s tale is isolated and a small scientific community attempting to contain a menace that threatens the entire world. In all cases, either Wells or Verne, the alien remained potential as a character in space adventure spanning the universe. Their subtlety is their uses in fiction in expanding areas of human thoughts like philosophy and religion. Their exploration also includes traditional issues of good and evil and the uniqueness or triviality of humanity.

### 4.2 Development of the Alien Theme

The pulp literary culture also produced a few interesting writers like Edgar Rice Burroughs and E E ‘Doc’ Smith. Although Burroughs has been best known as the inventor of *Tarzan* (1912),
he has also written ten volumes of the exploits of John Carter, battling or befriending various Martian life forms in the context of Martian culture in the series of novels. In the first of the series, *The Princess of Mars* (1917), John Carter is whisked to Mars by magical means; Burroughs did not bother with an examination of antigravity propulsion mechanism. On Mars, the alien setting is established immediately on arrival of Carter and he watches Martians hatching from giant eggs before it is captured by six-limbed green giants who ride huge ‘throats’. In this novel, there is little serious examination of either the alien nature or the alien psychology and morality. All is subordinated to the story, which at times borders on fantasy. *The Princess of Mars* is an example of early ‘space opera’ which was invented by his contemporary E E ‘Doc’ Smith (1890-1965). Space opera in Science Fiction is a subgenre that emphasises romantic, often melodramatic adventure, set mainly or entirely in outer space, generally involving conflict between opponents possessing advanced technologies and abilities. Burroughs was one of the pioneering novelists in the genre. He combined it with the Wellsian trope of alien invasion in order to celebrate superiority of humankind over the unprovoked threat from an unspeakable alien menace. In a way, Burroughs’s writing was addition in a kind of space opera that was used for adventure purpose. It hovers between two extremes: the alien essentially good and the monstrous aliens always invade.

David Lindsay’s *A Voyage to Arcturus* (1920), Stanley Weinbaum’s *A Martian Odyssey* (1934), and John W Campbell’s *Who Goes There?* (1938) demand attention here because they have demonstrated varied possibilities of showing alien in the ‘core’
alien ways that is non-human ways. David Lindsay placed his aliens on the distant planet called Tormance, orbiting Branchspell, the larger of two stars in the double star system known on Earth as Arcturus. *A Voyage to Arcturus* is one of the best examples of imaginative characterization of alien life forms, and thus in giving the reader a feel for the truly alien. This is carried out in part by additional senses that Lindsay gives not only his aliens but also the Earthling (Maskull), who on landing on Tormance finds himself sprouting new organs that extend his perceptions of his new environment. With these continually developing new senses, Maskull interacts with the inhabitants of Tormance, whose skin is opalescent. According to Loren Eiseley,

> These physical descriptions are only the setting for a plot that surpasses adventure and is at once philosophical, theological, and moral. The events surrounding Arcturus were not ‘superficial tale of odd beings with odd organs on a planet remote from our own. This is not a common story of adventure. Rather, it is a story of the most dangerous journey in the world, the journey into the self and beyond the self. 23

Stanley G Weinbaum’s *A Martian Odyssey* was one more step towards continuing potential of new themes in the old Martian setting. A remarkable aspect about Weinbaum’s fiction was good use of his scientific background in his fiction. A remarkable feature of the writings of Weinbaum is that he brought in high degree of scientific authenticity in creating other worlds and avoided them from the realm of the fairy tale. In this regard, he remains a respected writer among the followers of hard Science Fiction for
his emphasis on polished writing, otherworldly psychology, philosophy and stronger characterization in his ‘true Science Fiction’. Weinbaum’s portrayal of aliens is considered breakthrough because the Martians he depicted were not simply transported terrestrial monsters but truly alien beings, intent on living their own lives rather than invasion. Another writer, John Campbell, apart from his contribution to Science Fiction as editor, he is also known for his story *Who Goes there?* appeared in *Wonder Stories* in 1938. It demonstrated the original use of the monstrous in the Wellsian sense. He featured the alien that is unfrozen even after 20 million years at the Antarctic base camp. In this novel, aliens come to life after being brought back to the camp for examination and they have the ability to insinuate themselves into the bodies of humans while imitating their behaviors. As the camp members gradually realise this, classic mutual suspicion arises, and medical tests are devised to determine whose body has been invaded. Finally, all traces of the monster are exterminated. With this, Campbell gives the reader a sense of fragility of life on Earth in the face of powers that may be much more highly evolved. Howard Fast (1914-2003) is one of such writers who criticises more overtly the aggressiveness of Man to other species in particular his tendency to shoot first and ask questions afterwards. In *The Large Ant* (1960), the hero sees a giant ant at the bottom his bed, instinctively lashes out with a gold flub and kills it. It is later demonstrated to him that it was in fact highly intelligent creature, with a little built in case of tools, and a visitor from another world. All the other giant ants have been similarly killed in panic and the reader is left with an uncomfortable certainty as to what this
intelligent species must think of Man and its likely reactions to him.

C S Lewis has played a significant part in breaking the traditional concept of aliens in his trilogy: *Out of the Silent Planet* (1939), *Voyage to Venus* (1943), *That Hideous Strength* (1945). Disenchanted with the current fiction of the late 1930s Lewis decided to write Science Fiction. He explores alternate realities to show how the world could differ if humans would make different choices. The hero of *Out of the Silent Planet*, for instance, dreads his encounter with life forms of Mars. His universe peopled with horrors such as ancient and medieval mythology could hardly rival. No insect-like vermiculate or crustacean abominable, no twitching feelers, rasping wings, slimy coils, curling tentacles, no monstrous union of super-human intelligence and insatiable cruelty seemed to him anything but likely on an alien world. Lewis repeatedly tried to break the ways of looking at aliens by assuming superhuman intelligence must go hand in hand with monstrosity of form and ruthlessness will. He tried a number of possibilities of creating aliens by using a cosmic scale, to put Man, in what he thinks, in Man’s proper place, and deploys all sorts of tricks to do so. His depiction in the novel goes:

They were much shorter than any animal he had yet seen on Malacandra, and he gathered that they were bi-peds, though the lower limbs were so thick and sausage-like that he hesitated to call them legs. The bodies were a little narrower at the top than at the bottom so as to be very slightly pear-shaped, and the heads were neither round like those of Hrossa nor long like those of the Sorns, but almost square. They stumped along on narrow, heavy-looking feet which they seemed
to press into the ground with unnecessary violence. And now their faces were becoming visible as masses of lumped and puckered flesh of variegated colour fringed in some bristly, dark substance….Suddenly, with an indescribable change of feeling, he realized that he was looking at men.  

Following Lewis’ use of superior aliens to bring home the deficiencies of Man, several Science Fiction writers are concerned to reflect on Man’s general, as opposed to moral or technical superiority. An interesting aspect of Lewis’ aliens is that they become a symbolic tool for him to show multiple sides of the human way of thinking. In all, it is important to note here that it was C S Lewis who in his cosmic trilogy used allegory and symbolism in the extraterrestrial settings to convey more conventional religious viewpoints. This was particularly important in the background that aliens during the pulp era were looked upon as a piece of populist entertainment.

4.3 War and Post War

The ‘alien tradition’ remained strong in the Science Fiction magazines together with the grotesque and lurid magazine covers. There are some good, enjoyable Science Fiction adventures featuring BEMs, but the main line of development has been away from the alien as a problem in human survival towards the aliens as a problem in communications, psychology and even sociology. Science Fiction saw maturity and complexity above all in sheer quantity in featuring aliens during the 1940s and 1950s. This period is known as ‘the Golden Age’ in Science Fiction which is
also related to popularity and forms of pulp publishing. The period includes a striking wealth and diversity of writing talents: Isaac Asimov, Clifford Simak, Theodore Strugeon, Robert Heinlein and A E Van Vogt, to name a few. In the period, as Adam Roberts observes, ‘the energy and self-confidence of practitioners and fans of Science Fiction were extraordinary.’ Isaac Asimov was one of the major writers who started writing in this period. The unidentified flying objects (UFO) were seen in the nineteenth century when they were shaped like airships. However, the first real craze of UFOs came in the 1950s, with the addition of the alien pilots. Huge number of people began believing that Earth has been visited by aliens piloting some sort of UFO, and almost as many people think that they have observed a flyover or a landing. In the second half of the twentieth century, two developments characterised the coming of age of alien in Science Fiction.

The period marked further elaboration of the old Wellsian alien theme, however, the really new aspect was the increasingly intimate relationship between science and Science Fiction in exploration of aliens, and the adaptation of varied themes at the accelerating pace to the visually stunning and emotionally intense media of film and television. Science Fiction produced a wide-range of literature in this period. On the one hand, it was a literature of giving cosmic perspective as given by Arthur Clark and scientifically informed work of Hal Clement, Fred Hoyle and Stanislaw Lem. On the other hand, it was the theme of contact with extraterrestrial that led Science Fiction of the period and the contact theme also became the dominant expression. Arthur C Clark handled the theme of alien encounter to place humanity in
perspective while steeping in an adherence to the scientific tradition. After writing a series of short stories dealing with the alien theme, Clark published *Childhood’s End* (1953) which is considered to be a classic of alien literature. In this novel, Earth itself is visited by aliens possessing a bodily form resembling the devil, who attempts to incorporate humanity into the scheme of universal sentience. The novel is set in the immediate future as humanity is about to journey to Moon. The context in the novel is of Soviet Union and United States fighting for their sovereignty. Fifteen years after *Childhood’s End*, Clark once again sought to explore the alien in his novel *2001: A Space Odyssey*. Most of his novels, as said above, seek to give a perspective on humanity. He wrote in 1972 that

> The idea that we are the only intelligent creatures in a cosmos of a hundred million galaxies is so preposterous that there are a very few astronomers today who would take it seriously. It is safest to assume, therefore, that they are out there and to consider the manner in which this fact may impinge upon human society.\(^{26}\)

The eminent astronomer and a novelist, Fred Hoyle explored a different kind of alien than his other contemporaries like Hal Clement or Clark. Fred Hoyle was among the first astronomers to champion abundant solar systems and the implied possibilities of life. His first novel, *The Black Cloud* (1957) reflected his concerns by demonstrating that while science could inform fiction, it need not keep a tether on imagination. The alien intelligence in this book takes on the form of a cloud interstellar matter, some half billion years old, with which initially caused chaos and threatened
destruction of Earth, is convinced to retreat, showing the potential benevolent character of intelligence.

In the late 1950s, the British and American society started feeling heat of paranoid of the Second World War that had ended a few years back. Especially in America, a paranoid campaign against communism led by Senator Joe McCarthy for embracing ‘American values’ affected the society. This climate of political paranoia, with its fearful conformity and obsessive focusing on the ‘Alien as Enemy’ fed directly through into Science Fiction imaginations. For instance, Jack Finney’s *Body Snatchers*, written in 1955, depicted a small American town invaded by alien spores from space that grow into exact copies of individual human beings while destroying their originals. The period also saw Science Fiction becoming a mass phenomenon. According to Edward James it was during the 1950s that Science Fiction experienced a ‘boom in America’ which led to an explosive ‘growth of Science Fiction readership.’ James thinks that this readership was ‘inspired perhaps by worries about the future (for the cold war fostered paranoia of all kinds).’

There was also a shift in the economic dynamics of publishing during the 1950s and 1960s. Publishers realised enormous possibilities in paperback productions of Science Fiction novels. By now, Science Fiction began moving smoothly with newer publishing houses like Gnome. However, at the same time, publishing house Shasta was shaking due to competition from larger trade houses like Ace, Ballantine and Doubleday. Modestly established writers like Fredrik Pohl began to take fire and reach new heights of popularity and new writers like Philip K Dick began
to define the new age. It was the time of introspection, wild humour, paranoia and a newly realistic interest in exploring the solar system. The Cold War, which was in full swing in this period, found reflections in Science Fiction writing in portraying the fall of rigid dictatorship across the galaxy.

In the early sixties, the Science Fiction magazines saw gradual decline in their popularity while more novels were getting published. Under editors H L Gold and then Frederik Pohl, *Galaxy*, a journal specialised in publishing Science Fiction stressed a more literary form of Science Fiction that took cues from more mainstream literature. It was less insistent on scientific plausibility than Campbell's *Astounding*. The rise of *Galaxy* signaled the end of the Golden Age Science Fiction that pressed on need of scientific facts in Science Fiction. However, most of the Golden Age writers were able to adapt to the changes in the genre and keep writing although major writers like Isaac Asimov and several others began to write scientific fact almost exclusively. In the end, it should be noted here that the Golden Age was challenged by the later generations for its underlying assumptions about culture and society and particularly it was critiqued for being Euro-centric and male dominated.

5. **Breaking Grounds**

For our discussion on the alien, the 1960s are important as a new Science Fiction emerged in this period through its interface with newer identities that had begun forming in the recognition of the difference based on race, ethnicity, gender, class and, sexuality.
As much, the 60s recognised the multi-level implications of the Science Fiction genre that later percolated into the Science Fiction of the 1990s and examined not only how identities are constructed in diverse contexts, but also what ‘identity’ means within different groups. The reasons for these changes were rooted in the contemporary social and political situations. In the following section, we will try to understand changed context in Britain and its impact on contemporary Science Fiction.

Britain in the sixties brought together discussion of culture, society and politics. The British society had already begun to experience new changes in the 1950s. This was partly because of the economic controls and restrictions, such as rationing, that followed the war had now been loosened or broken. New processes and controls in industry and entertainment industry were altering the patterns of life. However, the main reason for the change in atmosphere was that New Generation was emerging, which had only known life since the end of the war. The four major developments can be seen coming forth in this period. Firstly, the modern consumer economy was established, reaching across the social and generational divides as never before and transforming popular culture; secondly, the growing preoccupation with individual autonomy changed the ways in which individual and civil rights were understood; thirdly, the full impact of the post-war New Commonwealth immigration began to be felt, and many found it uncomfortable; and finally, Britain turned away from Empire and moved towards Europe. Progressive legislation of the British government of the 1967 Sexual Offences Act which decriminalized homosexual practices between consenting adults;
the 1967 Abortion Act, which extended the ground on which women could legally seek termination; and the 1969 Divorce Reform Act, which relaxed the conditions surrounding the ending of marriage. Racial discrimination in housing and employment was outlawed, although in practice the legislation proved largely ineffective. Progressive legislation and the new liberalism in society brought with them new freedoms but also new responsibilities, as moral judgments were shifted from the State to the individual. Newly emerging groups and individuals began pressing for their own collective group with strong need of separate identities on the basis of their political analysis and action. In the early period, these collectives or groups had increasingly revealed futility of political engagement with the society without any solutions, and a compelling model of a society they dreamed for. As a result, many progressives retreated into a focus on their own ‘self’ and into specific cultural and ideological identity groups which made rights, status, and privilege claims on the basis of a victimised identity. These groups included ethnic minorities such as African-Americans, Asian-Americans, Native Americans, religious groups, lesbian women and gay men, deaf and other disabled people. New Generation liberated and the enlightened class shared similarities in terms of their predominantly political stands and concern themselves with the struggle against oppression and injustice, like, the forms of feminism or post-colonialism. Both rejected the established hierarchical, patriarchal system, and denied the supposed supremacy of masculine power and authority. They began questioning the ideological process by which ‘man’ and ‘woman’ are placed in separate, oppositional, categories, and may,
indeed, seek to destabilize the notion of the autonomous subject (gendered or otherwise) altogether, thus rendering the development of any kind of overarching meta-theory impossible.

Against this background, Science Fiction began experiencing major shift after the 1960s. As John Clute observes,

There was a stretching and shifting of boundaries, and loosening of ties. In 1960, it began- although not quite as precipitately as it might have seemed at the time – to look as though Science Fiction were at the cusp of becoming the true literature of the late 20th century. The childhood and adolescence of the American genre had passed, and after many squabbles and triumphs, Science Fiction appeared, finally to have grown up. It was the right time to bestow a major literature of change upon the world, and to change that world.  

28 Until the 1950s, Science Fiction was concerned with speculation about the division of geopolitical space but this traditional perspective on space has led Science Fiction toward the pitfall of reductionism. A tendency among Science Fiction writes was to make the universe too familiar. Even the best writers can be seen making the cosmos an excessively cozy place. For instance, Isaac Asimov’s famous *Foundation series* (1944–86) depicts the inhabitants of the twenty-five million inhabited worlds of the Galactic Empire zipping merrily about from planet to planet, going from Trantor to Siwenna to Terminus much more easily than a citizen of Rome could have gone from Naples to Alexandria. In this, the series reduced interstellar travel to the level of a trip on the New York subway system.  

29 The same flaw is also to be found in Frank Herbert’s ‘Dune books’ (1963–87). New Generation’s
response to the reductionist approach was that of dissatisfaction particularly with the ordinary idea of space that was so highly privileged in the mainstream of the field. In this period, for the first time, the new literature was addressing, as Adam Roberts observes, a larger critical unease about Science Fiction of the golden era of the 1950s. Science Fiction in this time didn’t provide readers with many of things that serious literature does with, for instance, beautiful or experimental writing styles, detailed and subtle analyses of character or psychological analysis.

From the sixties onwards, it became commonplace to speak of Science Fiction as a ‘contemporary mythology’, a phrase which hints at the underscoring aspects other than ‘science’ in Science Fiction. The Science Fiction critic Patricia Warrick defines myth as “a complex of stories which a culture regards as demonstrating the inner meaning of the universe and of human life.” In this book, Warrick claims that the scientific model of the universe itself functions as the special province of writers and artists. Le Guin saw mythmaking as the special province of writers and artists. Le Guin argued on Jungian grounds that storytelling connects scientific methods and values to our collective dreams and archetypes. She claimed that it is Science Fiction, not science itself that deserves the title of ‘modern mythology’. In practice, once Science Fiction became consciously mytho-poetic, it began to indulge in generic self-repetition and a growing carelessness towards scientific facts. The imaginary space age universe crossed by magical faster-than-light spaceships and full of lifelike robots and contactable intelligent aliens remained a staple of Science Fiction long after it ceased to resemble a plausible scientific future.
The early 1960s saw a revolution in content and form of the Science Fiction imagination. The deep influence of modernist movements such as Dadaism and Surrealism, the British writers like J G Ballard, Brian Aldiss, and Michael Moorcock inaugurated the New Wave Science Fiction movement, by radically questioning the American sense of space and replacing the then dominant concept of ‘outer space’ with their new concept of ‘inner space’. For these writers, Earth was the one and only alien planet, and the one which they believed true Science Fiction should explore. In his famous manifesto for the New Wave Science Fiction writers, *Which Way to Inner Space?* released in 1962, Ballard poignantly criticised the popularity of American space opera, and insisted that Science Fiction should turn its back on space, on interstellar travel, extraterrestrial life forms, galactic wars, and the overlap of these ideas that made up the subject matter of nine-tenths of Science Fiction magazines. Amidst changes, Science Fiction became more and more involved in using its themes to experiment with theoretical and cultural perspectives. As a result, there emerged newer and distinct forms of fictional narratives. The writers became more skeptical of technology, more liberated socially, and more interested in stylistic experimentation. Although, British fiction, particularly Science Fiction, had seen signs of changes in 1960s with the contemporary writing coinciding with the colonial and feminist movements. It was a response to the western Science Fiction literature from mainly white, male, heterosexual genre towards reconceptualising the existing power relationships. Not only female authors but also male authors such as Samuel Delany, Brian Aldiss, Thomas Disch, and Philip Dick transformed Science
Fiction by dramatically improving literary quality thorough narrative experimentation and the crossing of genre lines inspired by a growing postmodern influence in mainstream literature. Science Fiction began to reflect and address the changes prompted by the civil rights movement and the emergence of a counterculture. It allowed Science Fiction, as Brian Aldiss claimed, “to discover the present and future was increasingly regarded as a metaphor for the present.”

Aldiss and Ursula K. Le Guin among others have frequently asserted that the genre’s portrayal of the alien, the future of space travel, alternative societies and alternative life-forms is at the bottom of metaphorical expressions. The new writing began addressing these concerns with newer experimentation leaving behind stereotyped depiction of the alien. With this, the Science Fiction genre and the use of alien emerged as a ‘symbolist’ aspect in the fictional exploration. The novum of alien seen as a symbolic manifestation of something that connects it specifically with the world we live in. As Samuel Delany sees, Science Fiction began to be perceived as “a symbolist genre, because it seeks to represent the world instead of reproducing it.”

At the same time, people started looking at Science Fiction as a potential form in search for viable new myths. In retrospect, the exploration of new value systems in Science Fiction writing seems most apparent in the New Wave search for new literary techniques and the popularity of newer themes that focused on individual aspirations. While a major avatar of Science Fiction has been embodiment of novum through encounter with difference, the novum created after the 1960s gave voice to otherness of marginal experiences of women and colonial subjects. It introduced radically
new perspectives of describing the alien and became a powerful site to have come up with new voices, new visions, and new commitments emerged and continued to reshape human identities profoundly and excitingly throughout the rest of the century.

6. New Wave Writing, the Alien and the Other

On the one hand, Science Fiction has conventionally been a popular literary form whose assumptions are formed by its appeal to larger reading groups. The reader demands a certain level of comfort through her experience of reading that is fulfilled by ‘formal’ functions of the genre. The formal functions of the Science Fiction genre include belief in technological progress, voyages and expansions into space and world, the puzzle-like situation that advanced human being would imagine solving through a magic of technological innovation and so on. In responding to the popular appeal of the reading public, the literary expression has been seen as a commodity to be bought in the market to fulfill demands of certain social groups. In this regard, majority of Science Fiction has been predominately ‘formal’ in terms of its market-oriented approach. It has been instrumental in spreading individualistic values without paying attention to their dialectic relationship with the contemporary context. In this, a writer’s approach is not to address broader concerns of conflicts between dominance and subordination or exploitation existing within contemporary society.

On the other hand, with the convergence of Science Fiction and contemporary ideologies, the writers in the post 1960s began
looking at it beyond just a personal space of entertainment. It became a way of presenting the results of a speculation as opposed to Science Fiction that was used as an ‘end’ in itself with delight and fascination with the technique of Science Fiction. Conventionally, Science Fiction included the standard properties of spaceship, time travel, galactic battles and alien worlds, the supposed common ‘realism’ of Science Fiction’s outer space and future. Now, it became a medium for presenting an opinion on something outside itself in the present world and a host of varied ‘realities’ created for specific purposes. In conventional sense, hypothetical world of Science Fiction is like a form without content. In new speculative sense, the form is only a means by which a particular attitude is presented. As we have demonstrated in earlier chapters, the speculation refers to the flexible nature of Science Fiction with its quality of experimentation, thought-experiments- like the practicality of scientific theories which are important for their use-value and not for their ‘truth’. This experimentation with ‘local circumstances’ is opposed to the ‘universal’ assumptions of the conventional future-scenario to the cosmic view of a particular social group’s interests. After the 1960s, Science Fiction found multiple truths in a variety of alternative social realities. In this regard, it is not merely a physical appearance of a thing, surrounding or a literary device but an idea of ‘alien’ that is critical to understanding of contemporary Science Fiction. Therefore, although aliens are used colloquially to refer to living non-human; mostly a semi-earthly character, they are not limited to that particular role in a story. Moreover, a suggestive significance of the alien corresponds to a writer’s broader
intentions of reflections on her changing surrounding. The speculative and extrapolative nature of the Science Fiction genre of literature essentialises cutting through physical properties alien-ness and constructs a conceptual space that might be unfamiliar to human experience. Over and above, physical property and conceptual space do not come for the sake of just giving an unfamiliar look. The sign system that a novum / nova carry operates as a suggestion of something that re-connects readers with the world they live in. As a work of Science Fiction, it might suggest for something else like, the alienated existence of contemporary human life. As such, an appropriation of the alien in Science Fiction emerges as an attempt of reflecting on culture and society. Thus, the theme of alien in Science Fiction is, we can argue in Samuel Delany’s words, ‘a play of codic conventions’34 helping the reader to locate aliens within the broader perspective. The codified conventions of aliens open up the Science Fictional discourse to the level of metaphorical understanding of older or existent knowledge.

Though the history of metaphor is located within the history of language, it has been pervasive in all forms of expressions. The theme of alien in Science Fiction potentially falls within the scope of metaphorical expression. As the Cambridge International Dictionary of English defines, metaphor is “an expression which describes a person or object in a literary way by referring to something that is considered to possess similar characteristics to the person or object you are trying to describe.”35 Science Fiction has its own way of being metaphorical where ‘reality’ is suspended and metaphor becomes a bridge to connect fictional world and real
world. A difference between a metaphor explored in Science Fiction and non-Science Fiction is that the Science Fiction metaphorical formation is rationalised as the result of scientific research in Science Fiction. For example, arguably, when H G Wells shows an ‘invisible man’ and his alienation, as many critics have claimed, it stems from his own personality, which in turn is an expression of the way science denies common nature and humanity. In addition, the manner in which Science Fiction depict metaphors is different from ways the other realistic fiction might do it. Damien Broderick concludes his analysis of the contemporary Science Fiction defining it:

Science Fiction is that species of storytelling native to a culture undergoing the epistemic changes implicated in the rise and supersession of technical-industrial modes of production, distribution, consumption and disposal. It is marked by (i) metaphoric strategies and metonymic tactics, (ii) the foregrounding of icons and interpretive schemata from a collectively constituted generic ‘mega-text’ and the concomitant de-emphasis of ‘fine writing’ and characterization, and (iii) certain priorities more often found in scientific and postmodern texts than in literary models: specifically, attention to the object in preferences to the subject.36

Within the metaphorical construct, a Science Fiction writer may devise relationship to tap into cultural or personal values of which they might be unaware. The application of metaphors is remarkably worked out in Banks’ ‘Culture’ texts. Iain M. Banks uses the term ‘the Culture’ to denote the central society in many of his narratives, a term which signifies not only his vision of a complex future humanity, elite and fascinating, but also the place of this group in
relation to all other protagonists or groups in his texts. To be of the Culture is to be possessed of desirable qualities, both in the realms of Banks’ novels and through the word’s contemporary metaphoric connection with a lofty state of existence. To be outside the Culture is to be barbaric. Banks cleverly makes use of the metaphor through all its connotations with narrative significance. As a cultural and social construct, a metaphor reveals many details about human being. Much of the success of H G Wells’ *The War of the Worlds* (1898) was due to his uncomfortably apposite metaphors. For instance, he perfectly intimated the ascendant possibilities of the violently expansionist and terrifyingly alien Martians through the use of the eerily metaphoric phrases as ‘minds that are to our minds as ours are to those of the beast that perish.’ With typical subtlety, the Martian aliens in Wells’ novel establish a metaphor where ‘thinning’ is the mark of superiority and renders humanity into a herd. The *novum* of aliens becomes a decisive factor in metaphorising: to create a feeling of estrangement which is about showing difference between two or more worlds.

In the process, aliens are appropriated not only to create unfamiliar and unknown world but also to create a form that has political and ethical motivations to “show us who we are, and where we are, and what choices face us, with unsurpassed clarity, and with a great and troubling beauty.” 37 As we have made the point in our previous discussion, the political and ethical views of the revolutionary period have determined choices of a Science Fiction writer. One of such choices has been alien. Writers referred aliens as not only extraterrestrials from outer space but also as a metaphor to give an expression to the self-reflective inner space.
The New Wave period allowed writers writing Science Fiction to claim an interest in inner space instead of outer space and to call their work ‘speculative science fiction’ instead of fantasy or Science Fiction.

A major development in the post 1960s was the increase in number of women writers of Science Fiction as well as authors of colour saw a growth to challenge the totalising assumption of the earlier golden period of the 1950s Science Fiction. They became bold about explicit sexual references and more sympathetic to reconsiderations of gender roles and the social status of minorities at the margin. Fully imbibing the atmosphere of Women’s Liberation, the writers questioned the difference between male-centric and female-specific inner spaces, creating their own idea of the gendered space. Reinvention of woman as the greatest alien in civilization encouraged these writers to rediscover and reexamine and establish women’s own nation. These changes and increased participation of women in literary culture offered the genre of Science Fiction an opportunity to be explicitly political and explore what was only just becoming available to women in the contemporary society. It opened doors to many more women who had previously been denied, or thought that they were denied, access to the genre because of their sex. Writers such as Joanna Russ, Ursula K. Le Guin, Anne McCaffrey, Octavia E. Butler, Suzy McKee Charnas, Eleanor Arnason, Kate Wilhelm, Vonda N. McIntyre and many others wrote different representations of women that hadn’t appeared in earlier Science Fiction. Women writers in this period used the alien encounter to focus on gender concerns. They strategically appropriated ‘male territory’ of
Science Fiction. Joanna Russ expresses her views that “one would think Science Fiction that perfect literary mode in which to explore (and explode) our assumptions about ‘innate’ values and ‘natural’ social arrangements.”

The New Wave Science Fiction writers’ exploration into inner space was followed and reinterpreted by women writers’ rediscovery of the Other hiding within human consciousness. This was, in fact, to coincide with an impressive wave of imaginative writing by women who were already questioning women’s roles and the relationships between men and women. After the predominantly masculine culture of the 1950s Science Fiction, the 1960s gave confidence to women writers in voicing their concerns. For example, Doris Lessing brought out her highly influential *The Golden Notebook* in 1962 and completed her autobiographical five-volume Martha Quest series, *Children of Violence* in 1966; Sylvia Plath’s novel *The Bell Jar* came out in 1963 and her posthumous volume of poetry, *Ariel* in 1965; Jean Rhys’ most famous book, a prequel to Jane Eyre, *Wide Sargasso Sea*, was published in 1966, and Angela Carter’s first four novels, including *The Magic Toyshop* in 1967 and *Heroes and Villains* in 1969, had all appeared by the end of the decade. Besides these four writers, there was a range of other women publishing in the sixties: Margaret Drabble, A S Byatt and Edna O’Brien brought out their first novels, and Nadine Gordimer, Iris Murdoch and Muriel Spark, who had begun writing in the fifties, and Mary McCarthy, whose first book came out in the forties were publishing regularly. As Margaret Drabble was to comment,
The large amount of fiction written by women in the last decade . . . bears witness that a lot of women started to worry about the same things at the same time, and turned to fiction to express their anxieties.\[39\]

Although the degree to which the women writers were explicitly engaged in the questioning of gender varied, there is no doubt that these writers helped to make it possible for their readers, especially women, to recognise the dilemmas of their own lives and to make feminist theory thinkable. The early novels of Margaret Drabble, which include *A Summer Birdcage* (1963), *The Garrick Year* (1964) deal primarily with the dilemma of educated young women caught between the conflicting claims of maternity, sexuality and intellectual and economic aspirations. *A Summer Birdcage* concerns two sisters who are well educated but face the prospect of not being able to get suitable jobs, and of having to work out an attitude toward the bird cage of marriage. Women readers could recognise their own situation in Drabbles novels. Her heroines are aware of all the traps but uncertain about the new possibilities open to them; on the brink of liberation, but no means free. *The Golden Notebook* (1962) by Dorris Lessing was hailed as a landmark by the emerging women’s movements. It is a lengthy and ambitious book in which sections of conventional narrative, ironically entitled ‘Free Women’, enclose and intersperse the four experimental notebooks of writer Anna Wulf, who is struggling with crisis in her domestic and personal life as well as with ‘writers’ block’. In each notebook, she approaches experience from a different angle, reflecting on her sense of fragmentation and need to keep aspects of life in separate compartments. Taken
together, the novel presents a critique of the sex war, women’s liberation, commitment to political action, socialism in England, art and mental breakdown.

Newer possibilities of creating forms of expressions that would reject the established hierarchical, patriarchal system, which was dominated by the hegemonic white male, and vehemently deny the supposed supremacy of masculine power and authority were being explored. The oppressed ‘Other’ human being became in this sense akin to the colonized subject. Essentially, on the one hand, post-colonial discourse began reacting against colonialism in the political and economic sense and on the other hand, women writers came up with rejection of colonialism of a sexual nature. As a result, writing by women, for example, was described as ‘feminism(s)’ in an attempt to be inclusive of the diversity of theoretical positions that fall under various discourses at a time. These positions reflected not only the individual perspectives of women or men but also the different cultural and social constructions of ‘femininity’ that confined them. This took over experiences of oppression of the Other outside the realm of the sameness and therefore outside being universal because being human could not be separated from age, class, race, religion, education and sexual preference. For instance, the feminist utopia which we are going to discuss in detail in the one of the forthcoming chapters was one such form.

7. Aliens and Identity Politics

The very scope and diversity of debates about aliens, human and Science Fiction in the post 1960s suggest that the ‘identity’ of
human being has been called into question. Interestingly, the concept of alien initiated an exchange of propositions and counter-propositions of identities through dialogues between the human and the non-human and in the exchange, it constantly allowed participation of individuals to redefine themselves in the given context. The theme of alien opened up a range of debates around contemporary cultural discourses and was able to discover dynamic of the genre that contributed to knowledge and awareness about cultures. In the various forms of the alien formation, the dominance of human as the master identity in the universe has been challenged by the growth of new forms of ‘alien’ fiction. Obviously, functioning with manipulation of identity is deeply considered purpose of the various ‘alien’ texts. Furthermore, the alien became a metaphor to challenge basic perception of human identities that are often defined in terms of our ‘place’; their relationship to others and, their position within the network of power. The logic of classification is based on binary opposition which defined and constructed socio-economic class, our gender, our nationality, our race, or other abstractions. Human beings are defined, and their sense of Self is determined by their membership in certain groups, or by our ‘coordinates’, in other words, by the space which we occupy. The cultural baggage of context with practices, habits, rituals, and performances of varied types become a cultural text. The text acts as a producer of meaning, knowledge that defines certain parameters for individuals, groups and their relationships to form their identities. The network within the cultural baggage created bonds among participants and give them feeling of
belongingness. The proposition here is that Science Fiction’s trope like alien challenges the binaries.

The theme of aliens interrogates into the established process of forming bi-polar identities and proposes the dialectic relationship between the alien and the human or humans and non-humans. It functions as both a tool for articulating Self and as a conduit through which cultural meanings shape the identity and context. In this regard, the term ‘identity’ might take on different connotations depending upon the context within which it is deployed. One thing is potentially clear from our review of theme of aliens is that the act of construction of identity achieves centrality in Science Fiction facilitating rethinking and reconstitution of the categories like ‘man’, ‘woman’, ‘black’, ‘white’ and, ‘community’. Through newer understanding of identity Science Fiction writers have been able to create a new model of society which does not insist upon framing the Self through repudiation of the Other. The model premised on the deconstruction of the boundaries between the human and the alien. Breaking of boundaries between the Self and the Other in Science Fiction becomes ultimate exercise in Science Fiction as we turn to experiments with hybridity and polyvalency when cultures meet and coalesce. As Adam Roberts says, Science Fiction first emerges as the underside to this set of cultural dominants; as in a sense, the dark subconscious to the linking mind of Imperialism which has involved in praising the Same and demonizing the Other. That Other can be many things: history has given us the Other as Jew, as Black, as Arab, as East Asian (‘the Yellow Peril’), and as Woman.\textsuperscript{40}
The idea of human and the issue of Otherness have received a prominent place in the ‘alien novels’. Traditionally, Science Fiction is a genre which repeatedly depicts the encounter of humanity with the Other — the Other of humanity. The Other, in Science Fiction, can be aliens, robots, bug-eyed monsters, for instance, many Science Fiction novels have depicted the threatening Other that visits Earth from outer space, such as H G Wells’ classic novel, *The War of the Worlds*, Arthur C. Clarke’s *Childhood Ends* (1953), Steven Spielberg's *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* (1977) and Roland Emmerich's *Independence Day* (1996). The non-human Other in these popular Science Fiction novels are called for by the society to demarcate the boundary or the limits of human community. This common, recurring rhetoric of the encounter of human with the Other in Science Fiction genre partly comes from the genealogical affinity of the Science Fiction genre with the contemporary ideologies of feminism and post colonialism. Wendy Pearson claims that

Post colonial theory and Science Fiction seem as if they are two sides of same coin. Both, after all, rest upon and are to some sense consumed by the idea of the alien, the other, the Other. The ability of Science Fiction to reflect directly, as opposed to metaphorically (as with Frankenstein's monster-as-alien), on the colonial creation of racialized, gendered, and sexualized alterity underwrites one of SF's most important first works.  

Further, ‘Alien’ Science Fiction comes to the forefront in the light of “a veritable discursive explosion” of identity. In this, as Stuart Hall observes, “The deconstruction has been conducted
within a variety of disciplinary area, all of them, in way or another, critical of the notion of an integral, originary and unified identity”. With this, the issues of deconstructing unified identity became more grounded in explorations of aliens allowing varied critical perspectives on relationships between human and aliens. It is on such grounds as those explored above that it has been argued that while

[S]cience fiction is perhaps one of the most innovative of popular forms; [it] is also one of the most critical. The representation of new worlds involves a process of reflection and comparison with society as it now.44

At the core of Science Fiction is, as we discussed, a novum. Our proposition is that a novum helps Science Fiction in maintaining balance between the radical ‘Otherness’ and familiar sameness enabling an experience of cognitive estrangement. Furthermore, the experience of cognitive estrangement enhances potential to think 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 put forth the following question that would allow us to interrogate into Science Fiction of Gwyneth Jones and Nicola Griffith in the following chapters: How does a choice such as alien affect meaning and form of the fictional narrative? The interrogation will not set out to systematically cover the entire contents of all novels chosen as they are extensively wide. Therefore, what is sought in the following chapters is to study various points of views in appropriation of the aliens, such as the way Gwyneth Jones and Nicola Griffith choose to depict aliens
to create a sense of unfamiliarity and difference or the socio-political concerns of post-colonial and feminist perspectives they offer in establishing a *novum*. 