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**Introduction**

I wondered why the titans had not attacked Russia first; Stalinists seemed tailor-made for them. On second thought, I wondered if they had. On third thought I wondered what difference it would make; the people behind the Curtain had their minds enslaved and parasites riding them for three generations. They might not be two kopeks difference between a commissar with a slug and a commissar without a slug. (Heinlein 232)

This open hostility against Soviet Russia is not the work of overt political propaganda, but of the critically acclaimed writer Robert A. Heinlein, whose novel *The Puppet Masters* engages in wild and fantastic propaganda against Communism. Based on the assumption that this is no sole coincidence within the genre of science fiction literature, the following paper will be devoted to analysing how, and whether, the political climate of the Cold War period is reflected in the science fiction literature of the same era. We will be concerned with possible direct and indirect traces of the Cold War that might be attested within the respective literary field, in order to show whether the various Cold War discourses can to some extent be related to the discourses within science fiction.

At first glance, we are examining two distinct fields. On the one hand, we are concerned with the geopolitical phenomenon of the Cold War, with both its political as well as cultural manifestations, in a more or less fixed time-frame. Almost in opposition to the historical context, we deal with pure fiction in the form of science fiction literature, a genre primarily rooted in popular culture. Consequently, our goal will be to link the two discourses and to make a possible relation between science fiction literature and the political discourses of this specific historical era visible.

The historical period under examination is frequently referred to as the Cold War. While the nature of political interaction in the respective era is often classified according to two crucial factors – national identities and clash of social systems (Jervis 33) – the periodization of the phenomenon is quite challenging. As we will see in the subsequent sections of this paper, the Cold War constitutes a historical period that is difficult to define in many respects. For our purposes, however, we will be examining an era beginning at the end of World War II and lasting up to the collapse of the Soviet Union. Although the Cold War had, and still has, a political aftermath, our attempt at periodization follows widely acknowledged ‘breaks’ in history. The broad time-frame should thus enable us to show the development of a Cold War climate within science fiction literature, especially since we are tempted to assume that an event of this duration and global significance might have left traces in popular culture.
While the historical phenomenon of the Cold War has long entered the various historical sciences, science fiction and its subgenres, which are predominantly associated with popular culture, are to some extent underrepresented in academic discourse. Stockwell argues that this might be due to a lack of strategy in dealing with impossible fiction (Introduction 9). An academic strategy for dealing with this particular branch of literature had neither been fully developed nor desired. Only in the 1960s and 1970s, with a new generation of students entering the universities, science fiction was slowly accepted outside the realm of popular culture (Csicsery 51). At the same time, science fiction writers took teaching positions at universities, interdisciplinary analysis became common, and science fiction itself had undergone a change by aiming at two distinct target groups, “one that assumed an educated and critically sophisticated audience, and the other resolutely commercial and anti-intellectual, devoted to its niche status and its fan audiences” (Csicsery 53).

Meanwhile, a number of authors have devoted their work to examining the relation of Cold War discourses and science fiction literature. Therefore, our aim will be to unveil the, to some extent, shared discourses of both fields. Our study is based on the claim that literature essentially reflects the world. As no other than George Orwell coined and defined the very term Cold War in order “to deplore the worldview, beliefs, and social structure of both the Soviet Union and the United States, and the undeclared state of war that would come to exist between them after the end of World War II” (Westad 3), it is safe and sound to assume an almost inevitable connection between science fiction and the Cold War.

To make this connection visible we will be concerned with works that were published in the defined time-frame between 1945 and the collapse of the Soviet Union. We will primarily focus on three major works of science fiction literature: George Orwell’s Nineteen Eighty-Four, Jack Finney’s Invasion of the Body Snatchers and Pat Frank’s Alas Babylon. The three novels emerge from three entirely different fields that, as we will see in the course of this paper, all qualify as science fiction. Therefore, the challenge will be to show how the Cold War is reflected not only in this particular selection of novels, but in such a diverse genre as science fiction in general.

From this perspective, the particular works seem relevant because, first and foremost, they were written and published in the particular time-frame under investigation. If we assume that literature has the inert ability of reflecting on the discourses of a particular time, their date of publication is central to our argumentation. As we will see in the course of this paper, the works mentioned above are written, like all works of fiction, on the basis of personal
experiences, anxieties and expectations. They are thus manifestations of very particular personal situations. We may assume that it is exactly those most intimate and personal believes and feelings that serve as a vehicle for expressing the political, since every identity is, in return, embedded in regional and national political discourses and believes. Consequently, we might assume that these works reflect on the political and social climate of their time in relation to the national identities of their authors. Written in their respective cultural climates, we must assume that all the works that will be dealt with in this paper are biased to a large degree. The fictional thus can never be purely fictional.

With the exception of Orwell's Nineteen Eighty-Four, all the novels presented in this paper are of American origin – both in terms of their authors as well as their fictional setting. In terms of Cold War ‘bloc mentality’, however, they are culturally rooted in the Western sphere of influence. Apart from the often very personal content level of the respective novels, science fiction in itself is a particularly American phenomenon, since “much of the genre is written either by Americans or by authors who adopt the American idiom” (Priest 187). We might thus observe an ideological struggle within the genre of science fiction, especially since many apparently American science fiction writers are not American at all, and many of them have no desire to be associated with science fiction (Sutherland 162). While it is evident that (genuine) science fiction exists outside the United States, it is often considered a “clumsy” imitation of the American form (Rottensteiner 203). In the dichotomy of the Cold War it is finally not surprising that the Soviet Union was another major contributor to the genre. Although the Soviet Union produced a vast amount of science fiction, its nature was essentially different from American works of science fiction, in the way that it was more a genre of utopianism than of paranoia (Booker, Science Fiction and the Cold War 171).

As we are exclusively dealing with novels written from a Western point of view in general, as opposed to an Eastern point of view, and from an American perspective in particular, the genre under investigation is deeply rooted in the national history of a country that was heavily affected by the conflict of the Cold War both in terms of foreign and domestic politics, but that also contributed to the struggle towards ideological superiority. Based on the assumption that literature is informed by real-world experience, the listed works should serve the purpose of showing the relationship between the political climate and science fiction literature.

Our basic claim, therefore, is that science fiction, as a particular representation of popular literature, is tightly interwoven with the political phenomenon of the Cold War. Cold War
history and its underlying social, political and emotional implications are thus strongly reflected in the works of speculative fiction.

In this paper we will start by giving a brief outline of the Cold War and its particular relevance to popular culture. Secondly, we will focus on the genre of science fiction, in order to establish the relation between the genre and the Cold War, and try to relate it to particular Cold War phenomena. Finally, the main section of the paper will be concerned with examining specific manifestations of the Cold War climate, ideological implications and historical phenomena within the realm of science fiction literature. It is especially George Orwell’s *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, Jack Finney’s *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* and Pat Frank’s *Alas, Babylon* that are particularly suitable for an analysis on the basis of Cold War anxieties. We will thus be dealing with the suspected dangers of the system, ideology and finally nuclear war.
1. The Cold War

1.1. A definition and its problems

Since the term Cold War has entered our everyday language, our lexicons and encyclopaedias, we might assume that a basic concept of the term is shared by society. However, it seems crucial to examine the particular term in some detail and make part of its underlying discourse visible – the discourse that shapes the perception of the phenomenon of the Cold War and that we will be primarily dealing with in this paper. In the following chapter we will thus be concerned with clarifying both meaning and definition of the term Cold War. Since a vast number of political, social and ideological assumptions are not only associated, but neatly tied to this concept of a Cold War, terminology is of major significance.

Irrespective of our prior knowledge of this particular concept, ‘Cold War’ is first and foremost a word pattern consisting of two constituents – the noun ‘war’ and the additional adjective ‘cold’. Therefore, we can assume that ‘Cold War’ must refer to some form of violent interaction. The adjective ‘cold’ is then the crucial component in defining the nature of this particular war. The Oxford English Dictionary defines the Cold War as “hostilities short of armed conflict, consisting in threats, violent propaganda, subversive political activities, or the like; spec. those between the U.S.S.R. and the Western powers after the Second World War (1939–45)” (“cold”). According to this definition, ‘Cold War’ refers to the conflict between the Western powers, including the United States, and the Soviet Union after World War II. Similar to what has been stated above, Hammond argues that the Cold War is a very indistinct era which cannot be fully defined in terms of beginning and ending (Hammond 6).

While periodization thus cannot be a defining feature of the term, a widely acknowledged assumption is that the Cold War is a war that essentially lacks fighting and solely operates on the basis of political actions and threats. In the absence of a direct confrontation between the two superpowers the war is supposedly ‘cold’. This assumption is misleading in a number of ways, as the term ‘Cold War’ would then imply that the era was peaceful for the most part. However, if we speak about the Cold War we do not refer to a single war, but to a vast number of proxy wars that have not been ‘cold’ at all. Therefore, the term Cold War itself is biased by ideological assumptions.

By referring to the Cold War, we refer to a certain political phenomenon from a Western perspective. The very term Cold War was coined by George Orwell to describe his political assumptions and believes. In the late 1940s the term was adopted by mostly American historians, leading to a quite one sided perspective. “The Soviet Union waged Cold War
against the West (meaning, mostly, the United States and Britain), while the West was seen as defending itself and the values it believed in” (Westad 3). Thus the term only takes the perspective of the two superpowers into account, while at the same time assuming a Western superiority, and consequently renders our perception of the phenomenon. Although we cannot establish a fully objective terminology, our key insight is that political phenomena are part of a discourse – while they are never fully historical, they are negotiated on the basis of what we perceive as our reality.

For the sake of this paper, however, we need to arrive at a working definition of the term ‘Cold War’. When we speak about the Cold War we mean both the ideological struggles between the United States and the Soviet Union after World War II, as well as all the proxy wars fought under the umbrella of the respective political systems. Our concept of the Cold War, however, should also include the nuclear threat, the policy of nuclear deterrence and the fear of nuclear annihilation as defining features of the particular political era.

As we can see, we are dealing with a highly ideological field. Terminology suddenly turns into a problem of perception which drastically renders our point of view. In a next step we will aim at filling this highly ideological framework with a rudimentary ‘historical content’.

1.2. The political phenomenon of the Cold War

The term ‘Cold War’ indicates that we are dealing with a highly ideological conflict, rooted in political and social difference – an allegedly unsolvable situation that separated the two superpowers, and a condition that Winston Churchill finally termed ‘Iron Curtain’ (Engerman 35). After World War II the United States emerged as the most dominant nation in the world – eventually, it was the Soviet Union who was confronted with a powerful enemy (Graebner 27f).

After World War II not only the initial phase of the Cold War was started by the threat posed by nuclear weapons, but the nuclear threat determined the very nature of the conflict. Finally, the danger of atomic war gave the Cold War its unique shape. On the basis of the ideological dichotomy, the Cold War was essentially a history of rising tension and a struggle of avoiding escalation. Since actual superpower wars were not desirable, both sides were trapped between a political reality of escalation and détente. The latter “was not about achieving ‘peace,’ if ‘peace’ meant resolving the conflict itself. Rather, détente sought to achieve a relaxation of tension, mainly for political, but also for economic reasons” (Loth vii). After the Soviets were in possession of the atomic bomb, Communism could only be defeated at the price of nuclear
war. However, the end of monopoly on nuclear weapons did not lead to abandon them, but to the idea that there is a need for stockpiling those highly dangerous weapons (Whitefield 4f). Just as Orwell predicted, the nuclear threat led to a stalemate of this ideological conflict and thus to a Cold War (Koch 98). By the 1960s both superpowers were finally trapped in their ideologies and unable to ‘move’ (Gaddis 11).

While direct superpower confrontation was no longer possible, we can observe a struggle for forming alliances all over the world – the two superpowers got involved in regional conflicts that determined not only international policy, but also nuclear diplomacy. Immediately after World War II bloc formation took place, since both the US and the USSR created “spheres of influence” by means of the Marshall plan and by establishing Communist regimes with the help of the Red Army (Loth 11). Consequently, policies of alliance building turned into doctrines. The so called ‘Truman doctrine’ promoted the idea that if the United States lost certain countries, others would fall like dominoes (Graebner 25) – the policy of containment was born (Gaddis 8).

The division of Germany and Berlin finally became not only symptomatic for Cold War policies, but also one of the decisive topics concerning international relations (Loth 13), as it was related to the fear of an American withdrawal from Europe and the danger of Sovietization (Loth 15f). In relation to the ‘domino theory’, the ‘German question’ was neatly tied to international relations and conflicts. Finally, even the policy of disarmament was linked to the German question (Loth 37).

After initial fighting over post-war Europe, the countries of the Third World1 became the new battleground of the Cold War (McMahon 304). The primary goal of the United States was to hinder Soviet influence from the Third World, even if this meant supporting regional regimes (Jervis 34). Consequently, “civil wars became superpower proxy wars, multiplying in length, complexity, and destructive fallout of heretofore-local conflicts” (Engerman 43). When in June 1950 South Korea was invaded by North Korea, the idea of containment suddenly involved the United States in very peripheral conflicts (Gaddis 8). As a result of these conflicts and proxy wars, the Cold War gave rise to what we call the military-industrial complex (Engerman 43).

In the light of the policy of deterrence, direct superpower conflicts took the shape of ‘games’ involving constant bluffing. Finally, foreign relations merely aimed at plausibly presenting the

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1 The term ‘Third World’ must be read as a part of a Cold War discourse. While the First World refers to all the countries under Western influence, the Second World is then related to Soviet influence. The Third World countries, finally, are those who were not related to a particular political bloc.
own nation as “stronger” (Loth 10). The danger then primarily arose from the fact that neither side could be certain about the actions of the other, especially since “aggressive propaganda language” and mutual deterrence were the modes of political discourse. Thus each side had to implement “preventive security measures” (Loth 9), and as Loth argues, “[f]ear was a poor advisor, which often prevented each side from recognizing possibilities for an understanding” (221). As we can see, nuclear diplomacy, bloc formation and world politics were closely related.

Finally, this precarious political situation culminated in the so called Berlin Crisis of the late 1950s. The crisis might be seen as the by-product of various international developments. While plans for equipping Europe with nuclear weapons certainly deteriorated international relations, the Soviet Union claimed that “any attack upon the GDR [German Democratic Republic] would of course be regarded as an attack on the Soviet Union” (Loth 49). In the subsequent summits neither agreements on armament nor recognition of the GDR by the Western powers could be achieved (Loth 57). The Berlin question remained unsolved and the status quo was literally cemented in the form of the Berlin Wall (Loth 62-63).

When Kennedy finally took over presidency in the United States, not only the “biggest arms race in history, inevitably provoking the Soviet Union into matching the massive military build-up” (Whitefield 210), took place, but at the same time the policies of deterrence and mutually assured destruction “acquired the status of official doctrine” (McMahon 310). The United States had both developed new intercontinental missiles that allowed a first strike against the Soviet Union and at the same time stationed missiles in Turkey. This particular situation not only made negotiations with the Soviet Union extremely difficult, but also led to a dangerous confidence on the side of the United States (Loth 59-60). The military build-up under Kennedy finally resulted in a massive US superiority in armament with a 2nd strike potential as high as the Soviet Union’s 1st strike potential. In a speech in 1962 Kennedy even announced that the US was prepared to launch a first strike under certain conditions (Loth 66-67).

This tense international climate not only forced the Soviet Union into defence, but led more or less directly to the so called Cuban Missile Crisis. In order to strengthen the deterrence force of the Soviet Union, Khrushchev started replacing the conventional weapons in Cuba with nuclear warheads which would bring a drastic strategic advantage to the Soviet Union (Loth 68f). After discovering the missiles in mid-October, the United States soon realized that they were not an actual threat, since neither an effective first strike could be sufficiently carried out
with them, nor made it any difference from where warheads were actually fired. Since
Kennedy had previously warned that the US could not tolerate such measures (Loth 70f), the
problem was primarily of ideological origin. At the brink of a nuclear war, the two
superpowers agreed upon a withdrawal of the nuclear warheads, granted that the United States
will not invade Cuba and remove their missiles from Turkey (Loth 72f).

The horror of an almost nuclear holocaust finally led to a state of détente. After the crisis, in
1963 a test ban agreement was signed in 1963 (Whitefield 211). While the agreement was
only superficial, de-escalation was apparently the new trend. After the Cuban missile crisis
both powers aimed at reducing the risk of nuclear war (Gavin 400). Although Kennedy was
assassinated in 1963, and Khrushchev fell prey to a conspiracy, the policy of détente was still
continued (Loth 79-84). Towards the end of the 1960s both superpowers were aiming at
“cooling off the Cold War” (Gaddis 14).

Although international politics aimed at de-escalation, no consensus on an extensive
limitation of nuclear weapons could be achieved (Gavin 404f). A major problem was
proliferation, since more and more countries aimed at establishing nuclear weapons. Finally,
the prevention of proliferation lead to a build-up of nuclear weapons in the United States and
to the stationing of troops abroad, since the United States had to guarantee the security of their
allies. The United States thus got increasingly involved in regional conflicts (Gavin 413-414).

Despite the achievements in international politics, some members of the Warsaw pact started
to question the Soviet system. In the course of the Prague Spring the secret police was
abolished and a separation of party and state was achieved in Czechoslovakia (Loth 96). The
Soviet Union, however, reacted with an invasion of the country. Not only were the reforms
undone, but the Brezhnev Doctrine was established – claiming that the sovereignty of states
and self-determination are subordinate to a Socialist world system. The aftermath of the
Prague Spring finally had a drastic impact on other Warsaw Pact countries, who then
abandoned their reform programs (Loth 99). Not only had the suppression of the Prague
Spring negative effects on the process of détente, but constant armament also complicated
international relations. In 1972 the Soviet Union had finally built up a weapon arsenal
quantitatively comparable to that of the United States, which hindered disarmament
agreements (Loth 100). In the course of the ‘Strategic Arms Limitation Talks’ (SALT),
therefore, only limited settlements could be achieved (Loth 115).

The situation finally culminated in a war in Afghanistan where leftist officers gained power
with the help of Soviet advisors (Loth 158). When the Soviet Union started a military
intervention, US president Carter saw this as Soviet betrayal. Consequently, SALT II was postponed indefinitely and various exchanges between the superpowers ceased to take place (Loth 160-161). When Ronald Reagan finally became president of the United States, the perception of détente drastically changed. “In his view, détente was equivalent to Western weakness” (Loth 165). Consequently, Reagan announced a new defence system and thus fuelled the arms race (Loth 171) in his efforts to militarize space (Brünner 25).

However, by the 1980s the international situation had changed. In Poland the Solidarnosc union was accepted and the Soviet Union did not dare to set counter-measures like in Czechoslovakia (Loth 174f). Moreover, the Reagan administration proposed a solution for reducing the build-up of weapons that was finally accepted by the Soviet Union (Loth 180). Gorbachev, Brezhnev’s successor, ultimately engaged in a unilateral disarmament of the Soviet Union (Loth 194), gave the Warsaw Pact leaders more autonomy, and introduced the policy of Glasnost, a concept referring to transparency and openness. In his reform program Perestroika he then intended to restructure the Soviet Union to take on the form of a “democratic Communism” (Loth 198-199). Therefore, Gorbachev aimed not only at ending the Cold War, but also at reforming the Soviet Union in terms of economy and living standard (Brown 248). During Gorbachev’s presidency the developments within the Soviet Union – “the development of political pluralism, freedom of speech, and contested elections – meant that it was no longer meaningful to call even the Soviet Union Communist” (Brown 262).

The political changes under Gorbachev ultimately led to the dissolution of the Soviet Bloc. Due to Gorbachev’s reforms, many Warsaw Pact countries were finally able to develop nationalist tendencies. In 1989 the Hungarian government removed the barbed wire along its border to Austria, which led to thousands of refugees from East Germany flooding into the West. Ultimately, the announcement of easing travel regulations in East Germany lead to a sudden fall of the Berlin Wall (Loth 205-207). But not only developments within the Soviet Union encouraged the end of the Cold War. Also the West changed its course by distancing itself from the usage of nuclear weapons (Loth 213). In the light of these developments not only an agreement on a German reunification could be achieved, but also withdrawal of armed forces from Europe as well as a fifty percent reduction of strategic arms was made possible (Loth 214-216).

While it is frequently argued that the end of the Cold War was a victory of democracy and market economy, and thus a lack of efficiency of the Soviet system, Jervis argues that in reality the Soviet system was not failing in itself, but only in direct comparison to Western
During the Cold War era, the Soviet Union gradually adopted market economy as a guiding principle – the more Western consumer goods were banned in the East, the more desirable they were (Rosenberg 506). Westad argues that in retrospect the Cold War might be seen as a US ‘project’ for global hegemony, especially since US efforts by far exceeded the efforts of the Soviet Union in this global struggle (Westad 11). When the Cold War finally ended and the dualistic worldview ceased to exist, the United States was confronted with an identity crisis that led to a search for a new enemy (Lipschutz, Fantasies 191). George Bush Senior thus announced a ‘New World Order’ that was based on a shift of threat from superpowers to “rogue states” (Lipschutz, Fantasies 187).

1.3. Cold War culture vs. culture war

Under the all-embracing nature of this ideological conflict, the Cold War finally turned into a ‘culture war’ (Lipschutz, Fantasies 187). The political conflict not only took the shape of a military contest and a struggle for nuclear supremacy, but it was also extended to a cultural realm. The idea of a ‘culture war’ is based on the implicit assumption that there might be something like a specific Cold War culture. Whitefield argues “that the culture of the Cold War was by no means synonymous with the culture of the 1950s”. He thus differentiates between a “relatively free society” and a “political system with totalitarian tendencies” (12). What we can examine in the Cold War period, however, is a flourishing of culture, while at the same time the political climate also “narrowed and altered” the same in the United States (Whitefield 14). We might then call this area of tension between culture and the political climate a genuine Cold War culture.

To examine the cultural phenomena of the Cold War era, however, we first need to pin down what we understand as culture.

Culture constitutes the transmission of ideas, dreams, mores, traditions, and beliefs from one generation to the next, from one continent to another, from one group of people to another in the form of schools, galleries, orchestra halls, shopping centers, department stores, and information centers. A painting, a composition, a poem, or a film constitute part of culture when people receive, listen to, or look at it. (Gienow-Hecht 398-399)

Therefore, culture is essentially based on value systems that, in order to be accepted by society, must be shared to a certain extent. Consequently, culture serves two purposes. On the one hand, it is a medium for expressing group relationship by enabling the interpretation of the world with shared meaning (Hall, Introduction 2). The production of shared meaning, in
return, enables the reproduction of power relations. Accordingly, Jameson argues that all culture, and especially the “master narratives” are historically expressions of a ruling class (Political 85). Culture thus has the ability not only to reproduce class relations, but also to promote certain social or political situations while challenging them at the same time (Weldes 6).

Aside from conscious propaganda, culture possesses the inert ability to transmit values, including Cold War values, especially since “the Cold War was a war about two different Weltanschauungen, two ways to organize cultural life, two possibilities of defining modernity and grappling with its most daunting cultural challenge: how to preserve cultural tradition in the face of impending massive social change” (Gienow-Hecht 399). A culture war is thus essentially dominated by ideology (Caute 1). Culture itself, as expression of nationality and group membership, turned into a battlefield of the Cold War (Gienow-Hecht 400). The fact that in the 1950s and 1960s the CIA was concerned with the distribution of American culture around the globe finally shows how close culture and propaganda are related (Gienow-Hecht 409f).

The culture war of the Cold War era is deeply rooted in the impact of what we call the ‘Sputnik shock’. The launch of the Soviet satellite was arousing the irrational fear that the United States might lose their technological superiority both in the space race as well as in weapon technology (Hixson 123). One of the major concerns about Sputnik was not so much the loss of national prestige, but the very fact that the space program was closely linked to military programs, since rockets that could carry satellites might also carry missiles (Brünner 74f). The consequence of this supposed deficiencies were finally also felt on a cultural level. The launch of the Soviet satellite made clear that science was another battleground of the Cold War (Caute 1), and thus lead to a promotion of education on both sides (Westad 13). Another by-product of the ‘Sputnik shock’ was the space race between the United States and the Soviet Union that often served as a “surrogate for war”. Therefore, space activities were closely tied to political actions and ideological goals (Brünner 73-74). The space race finally culminated in the race for the moon. After the Soviets had successfully brought Yuri Gagarin as first human into outer space (Brünner 22), the United States made it their goal to land the first man ever on the moon (Brünner 158).

Space, however, was not the only battleground of the culture war. The areas of contest were also to be found in philosophy, literature, classical and popular music, fine arts, ballet, and film. Caute terms this diverse field of contest the “Cultural Olympics” (3). While ideology not
only enabled, but encouraged a culture war, we still need to examine which mechanisms made a fight on cultural ground finally possible. Consequently, Caute argues that it is especially the principles of Enlightenment that were shared by both superpowers and that enabled this fight based on mutually understood terms (4).

In addition to mutually acknowledged principles, a culture war was only possible by ensuring a widespread distribution of culture. The conflict on a cultural level was thus made possible by printing press, film, radio and television (Caute 1). They were “the guns, rockets, and smokescreens of this uniquely modern cultural warfare” (Caute 7). Those then relatively new forms of media are neatly tied to the rise of American consumerism. In the 19th century the United States had developed form a society of production into a society of consumption (Whitefield 71). Since the same companies that were producing for the military were also providing everyday consumer goods, we might attest a strong connection between the culture war and the actual Cold War on a domestic level – warfare and consumerism were thus closely linked. “What enhanced the home was not unrelated to what protected the homeland” (Whitefield 74).

If we speak about Cold War culture and its conscious distribution, our field of interest closely resembles propaganda as “[t]he systematic dissemination of information, esp. in a biased or misleading way, in order to promote a political cause or point of view. Also: information disseminated in this way; the means or media by which such ideas are disseminated” (“propaganda” def.3). Propaganda in media is rooted in World War II “screen propaganda” (Doherty 20) and initially had a mostly negative connotation. The Cold War climate, however, encouraged propaganda as a political tool. At the same time the nature of propaganda had changed – it developed from a journalistic practice into a military program (Parry-Giles 95). Consequently, propaganda was regarded as equally important as nuclear deterrence – a means to shape the world public opinion (McMahon 294f). A main goal was both to achieve a moral victory by showing that the other side is evil, while at the same time frightening the enemy abroad and within the country (Starck 3). As the enemy was suspected of infiltrating the own country, “fierce debates over the subversive influence of the popular media” (Doherty 21) were arising.

Particularly in the film industry we might examine the misuse of culture for the sake of propaganda, due to the “purging of communist-tainted employees and the production of anticommunist films” (Doherty 22). For various reasons propaganda might then turn into culture. Not only did artists throughout the 1950s show a certain degree of willingness to
cooperate with the government, but the latter exerted influence via censorship (Whitefield 63). Thus cultural goods were essentially tied to Cold War ideology – they had to fit or they could not be published. Consequently, we can state that culture is political not only by what is published, but also by what is not published. Therefore, the particular political climate of the Cold War era was a threat to especially left-wing popular culture (Whitefield 200).

As popular culture, in general, aligns with the mechanisms of Cold War ideologies, we can assume that we might find similar tendencies within the literature of the Cold War era. Although the socio-political climate did not favour popular culture, we can examine a rise of popular literature in the long 1950s, both in terms of production and consumption (Booker, Post-Utopian 101). This was made possible by the ‘paperback revolution’ that led to an increase in the consumption of popular literature (Sutherland 163) and, therefore, favoured the rise of popular genres such as science fiction. Therefore, the 1950s are frequently considered to be the ‘Golden Age of science fiction’ (Booker, Monsters 1f). As popular culture cannot be separated from popular thinking, we might thus attest a discursive relationship between culture and the world.
2. Science fiction and its political potential

In the light of the cultural developments described above, science fiction frequently serves as a mirror of society. The depiction of technological progress might then be interpreted as a means of celebrating national progress in various fields (Gienow-Hecht 415). At the same time science fiction might be linked to times of social instability, in which the future of man becomes a key agenda (Ketterer 24). It seems plausible that popular literature, and particularly science fiction, has the inert potential of reflecting on Cold War ideas, anxieties and hopes. Therefore, a dialectical relationship between science fiction and (socio-) political realities can be observed in many instances. While authors like George Orwell implicitly shape politics by describing certain phenomena, and thus influence their perception, the space race fuelled science fiction while simultaneously being fuelled by the same. Nicholls argues that only the popularity of space flight – as a theme in science fiction – enabled the government to spend enormous amounts of money on this particular endeavour (“Predictions”). Culture and literature thus propagate a certain world view not only by consciously distributing propaganda, but by mirroring the particular climate and anxieties of a certain era.

The subsequent section of this paper will be concerned with how works of science fiction, as mere fictional imaginations, might relate not only to the world but also to its immanent political discourses. We will first aim at defining the specific genre and its boundaries in order to show why science fiction is particularly capable of expressing Cold War discourses.

2.1. Science Fiction – defining the genre

2.1.1. A most basic definition

Weldes argues that genre is a crucial aspect in literature, since it provides context and fosters the production of meaning. Literary conventions help not only to establish intertextuality, but also to make underlying discourses visible (13). Consequently, Westfahl claims that in order for a genre to exist, someone has to declare its existence (Mechanics 12). In the particular case of science fiction Hugo Gernsback was the first to establish a “complete theory” of the genre (Westfahl, Mechanics 28) that was then further developed by John W. Campbell (Westfahl, Mechanics 181f). According to Campbell and Gernsback, science fiction encompasses adventure science fiction, juvenile adventure fiction, travel tales and utopian literature. Campbell finally added fable, parable and allegory to the list (Westfahl, Mechanics 215).
However, it is still to be examined why all those subgenres might classify as science fiction. The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines the genre as “[f]iction in which the setting and story feature hypothetical scientific or technological advances, the existence of alien life, space or time travel, etc., esp. such fiction set in the future, or an imagined alternative universe” (“science fiction” def.3). Westfahl, on the other hand, provides three criteria for the literary description of science fiction: works of science fiction are written in prose narrative, the use of language is according to scientific discourses while the text describes at least one not yet existing phenomenon (*Mechanics* 292-293).

According to these introductory definitions we claim that science fiction is first and foremost fiction, and in many instances part of popular culture. The key factor, however, is that science fiction is also speculative in its nature. It thus describes hypothetical advances based on science or technology that are set in a world that is essentially detached from the contemporary reality.

As science fiction, like any cultural product, is historically grown, we first need to examine its origins, in order to understand its underlying mechanisms that hold true for its various subgenres. Many critics agree upon the Gothic origin of the genre, especially since science fiction might be seen as literature of “demonic possession and monstrous distortion” (Brantlinger 31). Additionally, the genre is said to be deeply rooted in 19th century ‘scientific romance’ – thus in the idea that the world is under constant and rapid change on every level of society, economy, politics and personal life (Shippey, *Hard Reading* 25).

The crucial aspect, however, is that science fiction aims at rational explanation, which makes it distinct from fantasy (Hillegas 2). Consequently, we might argue that the crucial aspect is not so much the origin of the genre, but the very motor of transformation in all its preceding genres – the rise of science. It is thus science that is the core element of science fiction narratives. With new discoveries mankind was faced with new problems and its worldview was challenged to a degree where new paradigms had to be adopted (Slusser 36). Finally, taking this scientific stance into account, the genre might be also rooted in realist traditions (Sanders 146).

Science fiction not only emerged from a diverse field of genres, but also is in itself extraordinarily diverse. Its subgenres range from Utopia and Dystopia to alien invasion narratives, space opera, cyberpunk and hard science fiction. Considering this diversity of subgenres, we need to examine their shared features in order to learn what ties them to the umbrella concept of science fiction. Consequently, we will elicit some general characteristics
that hold true for a majority of its subgenres – and thus also for the works that will be discussed in this paper – in order to finally refine our preliminary definition of what science fiction actually is.

2.1.2. The science fiction world and its novum

On a most fundamental level, science fiction consists of two basic components. One the one hand, there is a world that, on the other hand, defines what is possible on the level of story. Therefore, science fiction cannot solely be analysed on the basis of its plot, as the plot often closely resembles that of realistic fiction (Malmgren, Worlds 6-7). One of the features that essentially shape the nature of the genre is the existence of a supposedly new phenomenon that differentiates the science fiction world from the real world. Science fiction thus always “contains some element known not to be true to the-world-as-it-is” (Shippey, Cold War 92). This so called novum is the most crucial element in science fiction narratives, since it both shapes the fictional world and “determines the whole narrative logic” (Suvin 70).

Based on this idea of a primacy of a new element, the novum can be seen as an instance of metonymy. It stands for the whole fictional universe and defines the particular world. Consequently, the story has a metaphorical or allegorical function (Roberts 13). The novum then “acts as symbolic manifestation of something that connects it specifically with the world we live in” (Roberts 16). In the history of science fiction the novum has undergone a paradigmatic shift. While it tended to represent scientific discourse, it now serves as a symbolic vehicle (Roberts 32) and thus makes science fiction clearly distinct from naturalist fiction (Suvin 3).

While the genre is characterized by those “new concepts and things” (Stockwell, Poetics 118), it is crucial to note that the novum, in the light of its allegorical function, is based on the experience of the world around us. When we encounter a story, we instantly recognize what is grounded on real world experience, but we also immediately grasp what is not entirely true – the novum, as “a discrete piece of information recognizable as not-true, but also as not-unlike-true, not-flatly-(in the current state of knowledge)-impossible” (Shippey, Hard Reading 13f).

While aliens, time travel and other almost-fantastic imaginations frequently serve as nova, society and social order can equally function as the new element (Malmgren, Worlds 17). This social novum developed during the 1940s and 1950s when science fiction turned away from being mere technological fantasy “to focus more on human and social issues” (Westfahl, Mechanics 209). Therefore, in alternate-society-science fiction the novum serves the purpose
of evaluating society (Malmgren, Worlds 77) by showing the struggle of the individual to find a place in this estranged social order (Malmgren, Worlds 79). The novum is thus a hypothesized extension of the present day reality (Amis 18) that aims at distancing the reader from his own world (Malmgren, Worlds 11).

In return, this novum is based on a number of literary strategies. As the alternate reality is only superficial and serves merely as a means of reflecting on our own social structures, modes of “defamiliarization” help to create supposedly other realities (Parrinder 149). Real world ‘things’ are slightly altered and thus moved to another realm – the ‘alien’ realm. Therefore, the ‘other’ only works in relation and in contrast to the ‘human’ and reflects our view of the world. Ultimately, we are unable to imagine something truly alien (Parrinder 150). Thus the way in which possible and “real-seeming” people and events are depicted in unfamiliar and estranged environments is crucial to science fiction (Priest 200).

The new feature, the ‘other’, is essentially based on the distortion of some basic human features, consequently creating the impression of otherness. As this otherness can only be superficial, as no such things as alien language can be truly imagined, the portrayal of the ‘alien’ is dependent on the literary strategy of cognitive estrangement. The features that are then attributed to this ‘other’ are never accidental – they are a mere construction that is neatly tied to the world of its author (Parrinder 155). Therefore, Science fiction is deeply rooted in “contemporary social and individual reality” (Maule 123). Consequently, cognitive estrangement enables the author to reflect upon a contemporary world by introducing new (estranged) perspectives, and thus allowing critical comments in the form of metaphors or allegories (Booker, Monsters 27) – it fulfils a social function (Suvin 3f) by not aiming at the identification with individual characters, but at the reflection on society (Sanders 133). The underlying literary mechanisms are thus that of metaphor and irony. While metaphors try to explore the presumably new element, irony serves the purpose of evaluation by playing with “beliefs or feelings about the topic” (Katz 4). Kerslake further differentiates modes of metaphorical representation. While descriptive metaphors are concerned with physical manifestations like landscapes, ideological metaphors focus on themes of “existence and conflict, of superiority and exclusivity” (61). It is the former that aligns with our general concept of the novum, the latter then serves as basis for what we termed a ‘social novum’.

According to Darko Suvin, cognitive estrangement is finally the defining feature of the genre (4). We might want to highlight his attempt at matching the terms ‘science fiction’ and ‘cognitive estrangement’. Suvin points out that “[t]aking the kindred thesaurus concepts of
science for cognition, and fiction for estrangement, I believe there is a sound reason for calling this whole new genre Science Fiction” (13). In this sense ‘cognitive estrangement’ can be interpreted as a more or less direct translation of the term ‘science fiction’.

Another literary mechanism that is closely related to cognitive estrangement is that of ‘forward looking statements’. Therefore, we might observe not only a distortion of present day reality, but also fictional acts of looking into the future. We call this processes extrapolation and speculation. Since the 18th century evolution is a core principle not only in science, but also in science fiction. The basic assumption is that there is a future that will differ from the present. We cannot know what this future will look like, but “a spectrum of possible futures” is not only imaginable (Malmgren, Worlds 4), but actually imagined in science fiction.

The real world is thus transformed into an imaginary realm by means of “extrapolation, creating a fictional novum by logical projection or extension from existing actualities” (Malmgren, Worlds 12). Similar to what is true of cognitive estrangement, the novum can only define the fictional world in contrast to the real world. Although set in the future, science fiction narratives might be seen as an extrapolation of the present day reality (Maule 110). Extrapolation can take place in any imaginable field – it takes place in the realm of politics and, crucial to science fiction, in the various fields of science and technology (Stockwell 5).

Particular examples of this literary strategy are utopian and dystopian narratives. “Utopias […] tell us something about what we hope the future will be, Dystopias something about what we fear it might be. Dystopias, of course, extrapolate negatively from contemporary trends. As a result, they often provide themes directly critical of contemporary world politics” (Weldes 10). Similar to what is true for cognitive estrangement, extrapolation enables social and political criticism.

As modes of metaphorical representation seem to be crucial to the genre, we may argue that science fiction favours theme over character. Sanders argues that the subversion of character in favour of other elements might reflect on the loss of identity in contemporary society (131-133). Utopias, for example, are more concerned with institutional frameworks than with characters (Wegner 80). Not the main characters are of prime concern, but the almost personified system that serves the role of a parent and frequently substitutes the main character (Hoffman 51). In this allegorical nature of science fiction, the novum creates tension between a ‘self’ and an entity that might be termed the ‘other’. While the ‘self’ is represented by the world of the reader, the ‘other’ is represented by the novum (Suvin 64). The
supposedly new worlds that are created with the help of a particular novum can only be understood in relation to the real world (Suvin 71) – they are thus dependent on the historical reality in which a particular literary work was written (Suvin 64).

2.1.3. The pretence of plausibility

In a fictional world full of allegorical representations, the reader is frequently aware of the impossibility of the depicted scenarios. While cognitive estrangement is an important factor in creating plausibility (Strowa 41f), by relating the novum to the real world, there are various other mechanisms that foster plausibility.

On the level of narration, fictional scenarios are frequently rendered plausible by using frame narratives or enclosed universe stories. The most irrational and implausible stories might be given a sense of authenticity by adding an additional layer (Stockwell, Poetics 29). In Isaac Asimov’s I, Robot the story is narrated by Susan Calvin. Although she is purely fictional, we might experience her narration as ‘testimony’ for the very fantastic developments throughout the novel. As the frame narrative is rooted in the world as we know it, and only makes reference to the imagined realm – thus creating distance – the narration finally becomes more plausible.

Being similar to the concept of frame narration, ‘enclosed universe stories’ help to increase plausibility. The particular literary technique creates a setting that is immediately recognized as being wrong. The reader realizes that the world of a narrative is divergent from the real world. Plausibility is then achieved by a form of ‘captain’s log’ in which a character shares our point of view and encourages our opinion that there is something ‘wrong’ with the fictional world (Shippey, Hard Reading 17). By creating this shared point of view, a sense of plausibility is created. An example of such an enclosed universe story might again be found in Isaac Asimov’s novel I, Robot. In one of the stories, a robot called Cutie questions his existence and is unable to believe that he is a product of human imagination (Asimov 70). As readers, we instantly recognize that Cutie is wrong. While the robot refuses to accept what we take for granted, our feeling is confirmed by reference to scientific books on the production of robots (Asimov 74). By relating the imagined universe to the world as we know it plausibility is created.

Another means of reinforcing plausibility is the implementation of a temporal distance between the narration and the actual events. Actions that are set in the future are thus frequently narrated as if they had taken place in the past (Stockwell, Poetics 35). Through this
temporal deixis plausibility is enhanced, but not fully established. The key problem of science fiction is that it is frequently set in the future, thus portraying events that have not happened. The solution is often to be found in a technological foregrounding against a background that is rooted in our everyday environment (Kerslake 123f).

The key mechanism in this process of technological foregrounding is the implementation of (pseudo-) scientific plausibility. We might argue that, aside from cognitive estrangement, scientific credibility is one of the most important features of science fiction. This seems by no means surprising, since the word ‘science’ is contained in the very term ‘science fiction’. Conforming to at least some basic scientific principles is thus a defining feature of the entire genre (Westfahl 187). Slusser argues that science fiction eventually ”is all about science. It is the sole literary form that examines the ways in which science penetrates, alters, and transforms the themes, forms, and worldview of fiction” (28).

Extrapolation and estrangement, and thus the novum, are made possible, and plausible, by (pseudo-) scientific explanations. However, it is of minor importance whether the science in science fiction is grounded on actual scientific knowledge. What is crucial is that the novum is “convincingly explained in concrete, even if imaginary, terms” (Suvin 80). Science fiction always must stay plausible in the way that “extrapolation demands a commitment to logic” (Ketterer 18). However, science in science fiction need not be ‘real’ science. It frequently takes on the shape of pseudo-science – the crucial aspect is thus the imitation of scientific discourses (Roberts 8).

Within this framework of pseudo-scientific explanation, science fiction can depict almost any phenomenon, even the seemingly impossible. While the genre frequently contains elements of fantasy, it is distinct in the way that the fantastic is handled through scientific plausibility (Kneale 156). Scientific plausibility is, in return, also subordinate to the mechanisms of the genre. Via extrapolation of scientific principles, almost anything is possible – as long as it is presented in a logical manner. Therefore, (pseudo-)scientific plausibility is a defining feature of the genre as it helps to tie up the speculative ends.

2.1.4. Definition revisited – Subgenres and loose ends

While Westfahl argues that subgenres are often artificially incorporated into a larger ‘umbrella genre’ (Mechanics 14), science fiction subgenres are numerous, ranging from dystopias and utopias to alien invasion narratives, cyberpunk and hard science fiction.
Therefore, we need to show how this diverse field of science fiction subgenres conforms to the mechanisms defined above, in order to arrive at a revised definition of the genre.

The literary genres that most easily classify as science fiction are those that foreground technological developments – most notably ‘hard science fiction’ and ‘cyberpunk’. Fuelled by the rapid technological developments of the last century, hard science fiction is primarily concerned with science. The determining feature of the genre is a visible scientific “thought process” (Westfahl 187). Similar to hard science fiction, cyberpunk is set in the not so distant future and presents a society in which technological advances did not lead to a better world (Booker and Thomas 10).

While hard science fiction and cyberpunk are widely acknowledged as being part of the genre, the relation between dystopias, utopias and science fiction is less obvious. As technological advances are not major literary themes in these genres, we need to locate the novum, as central element of science fiction narratives, elsewhere. And indeed, the novum in dystopian and utopian narratives is located in the realm of social sciences. The particular genres are concerned with a community and its political structures (Suvin 46). As they present a social novum, we can classify them as social science fiction (Suvin 14) that revolves around extrapolated social realities – “a radically different and historically alternative socio-political condition” (Suvin 49). While utopias describe a society that is essentially ‘better’ than our contemporary one, dystopias represent a society that is drastically worse (Wegner 81). Both subgenres thus possess the inert ability to criticise the contemporary world (Booker and Thomas 65), as present desires or fears are projected onto fictional worlds.

Like dystopias and utopias, alien invasion narratives are not necessarily based on technological advances either. Obviously, the ‘alien’, who can be, but need not, be an extraterrestrial, serves as the new element in these types of stories. Since we cannot imagine something truly alien, it frequently takes on the shape of an estranged human being. Due to the particular nature of this ‘other’, it requires a big leap of imagination to envision an alien creature – scientific plausibility is thus crucial to create plausible. As the ‘alien’ is in most cases a threat to our civilization, the particular narratives are frequently concerned with alien infiltration and the subsequent takeover of society. As aliens are merely estranged humans, alien invasion narratives often serve as allegories that reflect on “social and political issues” (Booker and Thomas 28).

Although different in nature, all those subgenres are tied together by the same basic mechanisms. Via cognitive estrangement of real world elements a novum is created that
allows for the construction of a world that is at least slightly different from our world. However, the novum might not only be of a technological origin. As we have argued above, in many cases we might attest a social novum, for example an estranged social order that eventually ties the genres of Dystopia and Utopia to science fiction. The mere existence of estrangement and extrapolation of real-world features into a novum is, however, not sufficient for a particular work to be considered science fiction. The underlying discourse must conform to (pseudo-) science. Regardless of how imaginary this science may be, it must follow scientific logic.

2.2. Science fiction and the political

As the estrangement of present day reality is a core mechanism of science fiction, we have stated that the genre is particular suitable for social criticism. Before we are able to attest any traces of the Cold War in science fiction, we will elaborate on how literature is related to the world and, consequently, how the world is mirrored in science fiction narratives.

2.2.1. Literature and the world

Literature and film not only reflect on the feelings of people at a particular time in history, but they also rely on ideas that were part of earlier works (Lipschutz, Cold War Fantasies 5). Therefore, literature is connected to the world by instances of intertextuality. Intertextuality might be attested on two levels. On the most superficial one, literature is in itself intertextual. Literature is either based on other literature or on the knowledge about the same and, consequently, incorporates prevailing literary themes and motifs. These themes and motifs might not necessarily be of literary origin, but may relate to human discourses in general.

Consequently, we claim that the nature of human discourses, including literature, is essentially based on intertextuality. Everything mankind produces is part of a discourse. “By ‘discourse’, Foucault meant ‘a group of statements which provide a language for talking about – a way of representing the knowledge about – a particular topic at particular historical moment … Discourse is about the production of knowledge through language” (Hall, Representation 44). Meaning then only comes into existence via discourse (Hall, Representation 44) and can only be established if it can be decoded by the recipient. Therefore, it is based on the knowledge of a shared code (Hall, Representation 62). Meaning, however, is never definite – it is subordinate to constant change (Hall, Representation 44). If
we later try to elicit some traces of the Cold War in science fiction, we must consider the possible meanings of the various narratives, as well as their literary themes and motifs at the time of their publication. What might have carried meaning in the post-war era might no longer carry meaning today.

Language, finally, is a key mechanism in the creation of meaning. Meaning is produced through language since it encodes “signs and symbols […] to stand for or represent to other people our concepts, ideals and feelings” (Hall, Introduction 1). Literature, as particular instance of language use, carries meaning by being based on social signs and symbols. Consequently, the reader is asked to interpret and decode the underlying discourses. Thus plot develops over time, as the reader has to reconstruct its meaning while reading (Brooks 12). The plot of a particular narrative is then essentially part of a discourse by being based not only on the world as it is (or was), and thus on instances of intertextuality, but also on the experience, knowledge and decoding ability of its reader. Therefore, it might be argued that the reader himself represents an instance of textuality. He is part of the discourse that makes the reconstruction of meaning possible (Brooks 18f). Finally, the author represents the other end of this meaning-making process (Brooks 223). Only by taking particular social phenomena, their encoding into a text by an author, and their decoding by the reader into account, we can grasp the full extent of the underlying discourse. Accordingly, we claim that every cultural good is part of a discourse. Intertextuality might be attested not only between literature, and not only between human discourses, but also between human discourses and literature. Therefore, art possess the inert ability to reflect on the world.

The mirror function of art is particularly visible in film and fiction, since both artistic forms are primarily language based. As the term mirror suggests, the projected images lack creativity – they are mere mirror images. It might thus be stated that “fiction is extremely conservative in form and content”. The key mechanism is then that of socialization, as the reader strives for a fulfilment of expectations. The fulfilment of expectations is not only a key feature of popular culture, but it is also the very mechanism that fosters the popularity of certain cultural products in the first place (Lipschutz, Fantasies 200). Texts are thus often based on “master narratives” as allegories of cultural traces that represent our perception of reality (Jameson, Political 34). While texts represent reality, reality, in return, is part of a discourse. History itself, in its oral as well as written traditions, is a text that has to be formulated (Jameson, Political 35).
Consequently, it is not only utterly impossible to read a text without its intertextual relations (Weldes 13), but each text is a particular representation of the discourses of a particular reality – the reality of the author. By sharing some fundamental knowledge of this reality with the author, the reader is finally able to interpret a particular narrative.

2.2.2. *The world and science fiction*

As a text cannot be read without taking intertextuality and human discourses into account, we must assume that this is also applicable to science fiction. We will now try to link the realm of science fiction to politics and the discourses of the Cold War. Weldes argues that “[i]f it is unusual for popular culture in general to be studied in connection with world politics, it is even more so for world politics and SF to be studied together” (5). However, we have examined not only that culture has the inert ability to mirror the world, but also that science fiction is particularly open to social criticism via its core mechanisms – cognitive estrangement and extrapolation.

Jameson argues that all literature is political, since it is informed by our construction of history and reality (Jameson, *Political* 70). The fictional then includes reality, as even language itself is a historically grown product, a process of reality, a historical – thus political – discourse (Jameson, *Political* 81). Mio argues that “political reality is created by images (metaphors) conveyed by political rhetoric” (129). Since metaphorical representations are based on well-established concepts stored in our minds and shared by society, those metaphors then appeal to underling emotions (Mio 130). As science fiction is a genre that, by definition, revolves around metaphors, we might argue that it is a genre that is particularly political.

And indeed, a wide range of science fiction narratives “begin with, make explicit reference to, and poach on politics, including historical and contemporary events, situations, and characters from world politics. The relations between SF and world politics, then, are more numerous and more complex than is generally assumed” (Weldes 4). By projecting ideas onto other worlds, science fiction allows the expression of often radical thinking. The genre thus often serves as an outlet for politically conservative as well as leftist writing (Booker 2-3). In more general terms, science fiction is closely connected to a basic set of human anxieties. Finally, reality, the world, and thus also society determine the topics in which those anxieties are expressed (Rieder 373).
However, from a historical perspective, science fiction not only reflects on the realm of politics, but it frequently is a more or less direct extension of the same. Jameson claims that "Utopia has always been a political issue" (Archaeologies xi). And indeed, both Utopia and Dystopia are almost by definition political. Utopia aims at the representation of a better world than that of contemporary society – it is based on the estrangement of prevailing socio-political phenomena (Wegner 79-80). While utopian narratives are often based on actual political realities, they tend to be estranged variants, transformed into an alternate world, in order to assert social criticism. Not only is the potential of criticising particular social orders a quality of utopian writing, but of science fiction in general (Wegner 80). The estrangement of reality and the assertion of criticism are frequently accompanied by ideological assumptions. Rieder argues that science fiction is only compelling if "ideological engagement" is also guaranteed (391-392).

While science fiction is particularly open to ideology, a look at some of its authors makes the connection between the genre and politics even more apparent. A vast number of science fiction writers not only have particular political leanings, but were actively engaging in politics. It is thus no coincidence that no other than George Orwell coined the very term Cold War. Since Orwell was a political journalist from 1936 to 1943 (Carter, Chronology xii), he was so deeply involved in political matters that all of his writing was directed against totalitarianism (Newsinger).

However, Orwell was no sole representative of politically engaged writers. Pat Frank, born as Harry Hart Frank, was a consultant for the American government, became the chief of the Washington bureau of the Overseas News Agency and, therefore, had detailed and most accurate first-hand knowledge about national and international politics. In a later stage of his career Frank got involved in propaganda by working as Assistant Chief of Mission at the Office of War Information. Only after World War II he devoted his life to writing. But even then he was concerned with political issues, especially in his non-fiction that primarily focused on nuclear technology and weapons (Hager, Pat Frank 317-318). As his expertise on “postholocaust living” was based on first-hand political knowledge, Frank finally worked as consultant for the American defence department (Hager, Pat Frank 320).

Lastly, Robert A. Heinlein serves as a prime example of a particularly political science fiction author. In the course of his life Heinlein not only became increasingly conservative, but also showed a high degree of patriotism. While initially liberal, Heinlein moved to the political right during the 1950s (Wooster). Not only was his entire family engaged in various wars of
the 20th century, but Heinlein himself entered the Navy. After serious illness, Heinlein started to engage in politics in the 1930s and “became an anti-Communist Democratic activist”. And only after political failures he finally began his career in writing (Wooster).

Examples of science fiction authors that were engaged in politics are manifold. Considering some of the ‘founding fathers’ of science fiction, it becomes evident that science fiction is highly political. Westfahl (272) notes “Campbell was a racist, a bigot, a sexist, and an anti-Semite”. While the scope this paper does not allow for a detailed examination of this tendency, we have provided some examples that show that science fiction is essentially a political genre.

As we have established, science fiction is informed by politics. However, as the genre is part of a larger discourse, we might attest a dialectical relationship between science fiction and the world. Consequently, we claim that the relationship is reciprocal. As we have established that any cultural good is by its very nature political, we assume that science fiction also has a direct influence on the realm of politics. We might link this to a ‘legitimizing function’ of popular culture in general. “In brief, one can formulate the proposition that, if literature reflects, then it also confirms and strengthens cultural norms, attitudes, and beliefs” (Albrecht 431). Accordingly, Lipschutz argues that “narratives of fear”, as political narratives, are particular means to reproduce power relations by strengthening the “autonomous nation-state, whose role and authority depend on maintaining the appropriate relationship between, on the one hand, citizen and state and, on the other hand, that state and its counterparts in the international ‘system’” (Terror 438).

Finally, there are a number of examples that make the influence of science fiction on the world, and thus the political realm, visible. Science fiction not only impacts reality by establishing future scenarios, but simultaneously legitimates those scenarios. On a technological level this tendency becomes visible in the work of Gernsback who “helped to ease public suspicions of technological innovation” (Graham 27). Additionally, the space race, which took place during the Cold War, could only be financed by relating it to the popularity of science fiction (Graham 27-28). Another example is then Ronald Reagan’s “Strategic Defense Initiative” for which a committee of science fiction authors – including Robert A. Heinlein – was founded, in order to develop a vision of the system and thus to advise the military. Therefore, authors like Arthur C. Clarke and Isaac Asimov stood in direct political opposition to right-wing writers like Robert A. Heinlein (Cramer 192-193).
In the course of this chapter we have established that every cultural good is part of a larger discourse. As political assumptions are reproduced in products of the culture industry, the very same products finally reproduce political and social structures. Science fiction, the world and politics are in a discursive relationship. Therefore, we might assume that political assumptions are omnipresent throughout the genre. While we have mentioned a number of connections between science fiction and the world, mostly on a technological basis, the following chapter will primarily deal with the interrelation of science fiction and Cold War ideology.
3. Traces of Cold War in science fiction

Booker claims that Cold War themes such as nuclear holocaust, alien invasion, and in a more general sense “Cold War pessimism” were major influences on science fiction literature in the years between 1946 and 1964 (Science Fiction and the Cold War 171). In the following pages we will thus try to explore this relationship between the realm of politics and science fiction literature.

When it comes to literature of the Cold War era we could make the following preliminary statement: after World War II a change in the political climate led to a change in literary themes. In the early stages of the Cold War the terrors and totalitarianism of World War II were a major focus of literature – a tendency that found its expression in works like Ray Bradbury’s Fahrenheit 451 as well as George Orwell’s Nineteen Eighty-Four (Sanders 135). However, during the early Cold War era not only the political climate and landscape changed, but an entirely different mind-set developed.

Totalitarianism gave way to technological developments that then created the basis for many science fiction works (Sutherland 164). As we will see in the subsequent chapters of this paper it was also fear – on the basis of ideology – that developed into a major literary theme of the era. It was then the ideological threat that fostered the expression of the danger of nuclear war in science fiction narratives, as science fiction is the literature that is most concerned with the nuclear threat (Cordle 65). In the course of the 20th century, the horrors of the Cold War were then more and more replaced by ‘cyberpunk’ realities – “the electronic invasion of privacy, tyranny by the media or corporate industry, organ transplant and overpopulation nightmares” (Sutherland 174) might be seen as an outgrow of the particular socio-political conditions of the era.

This change in the political climate left traces in the works of Cold War fiction, which we will discuss below. Before we attempt to uncover the traces that link particular literary works to a Cold War discourse, we need to be concerned with the very nature of those traces.

3.1. What leaves a trace?

A trace is defined as “[a] non-material indication or evidence of the presence or existence of something, or of a former event or condition; a sign, mark” (“trace” def.7). A trace is thus essentially an instance of intertextuality. Intertextuality is then “[t]he need for one text to be read in the light of its allusions to and differences from the content or structure of other texts”
(“intertextuality”). In its literary manifestation, and in a most general sense, a trace could then be a theme. The particular theme might not be overtly visible, but it could also take on the form of an allegory, or hide its meaning behind ironic representation.

We might thus distinguish traces on two levels. While science fiction might directly address political issues, it may also be informed by “political philosophy” (Macleod 230). Political traces might be estranged and incorporated into the mundane. It is the latter form of trace that requires extensive uncovering, thus modes of interpretation, on the basis of discourses prevailing at the particular time. Consequently, we will call those manifestations of Cold War in science fiction overt and covert traces.

Overt traces are then mostly obvious statements about the Cold War. Overt traces, however, are often only the tip of the iceberg. We might claim that they merely define setting and mood, ensuring that covert meanings are seen in the proper context and have the desired effect – they thus guide the reader in his way of thinking. Overt traces might for example be the numerous nuclear war scenarios in literature, a common starting point into dystopian narratives (Brians), as in Nineteen Eighty-Four, Alas, Babylon, Heinlein’s The Puppet Masters, or Moore’s Watchmen. Equally important are then time references as “‘indicators’ of non-fictionality” (Steiner 91).

Covert traces, on the other hand, do not make explicit reference to Communism or the Cold War. Such traces only become visible in the light of their respective political discourses – they are mere ideological manifestations of the Cold War. Covert traces thus frequently take on the form of allegories – “[a] story, picture, etc. which uses symbols to convey a hidden or ulterior meaning, typically a moral or political one; a symbolic representation; an extended or continued metaphor” (“allegory” def.2). This seems especially important since the real-world Cold War discourse itself is based on allegorical representations – metaphors help to simplify complex political matters and make them visible (Thompson 187). And even the very term Cold War is a metaphor in itself, encoding the entity of nearly half a century full of ideological struggle.

Especially early Cold War science fiction might thus be read as ‘tales’ about Communism (Strowa 36-37). When we speak about covert traces we, therefore, speak about a Cold War in disguise. A covert trace is a reference to a Cold War setting without necessarily making it explicit. Those covert traces often take on the form of underlying ideological assumptions. In Asimov’s I, Robot we may not find any traces of a Cold War on an overt level. Covertly, the book, however, revolves around the dualism of natural and thus ‘flawed’ man vs. perfectly
planned and centralized robot economy. This particular systemic problem might be related not only to the political anxieties of the Cold War era, but also to technological progress and the uncertainties accompanying it.

Uncovering those traces consequently means interpreting the narratives in the light of contemporary discourses. Interpretation is then an “allegorical operation in which a text is systematically rewritten in terms of some fundamental master code or ‘ultimately determining instance’” (Jameson, Political 58). As a text is essentially based on the experience of the reader (Brooks 216), the endeavour of uncovering traces of Cold War in science fiction narratives has to take the contemporary perspective into account. From our point of view an alien invasion narrative might simply be an alien invasion narrative. If we consider the political climate of the early Cold War period, however, it may turn into a powerful allegory about Communism. In the following sections we will thus be concerned with showing both overt and covert traces of the Cold War and Communism in the light of the literary mechanisms of science fiction – estrangement, extrapolation and the novum.

3.2. The ‘alien’ as central trace

In the following chapter we will be concerned with the ‘alien’ as manifestation of the dualistic value system of the Cold War era. We claim that the underlying core of alien invasion narratives is a very earthbound ‘us against them’ conflict. This chapter is thus devoted to the construction of enemies and enemy identities in popular literature. We will discuss the similarities in presenting aliens (extra-terrestrials and other non-humans) and manifestations of Communism, as well as their linguistic realization. Finally, we will establish the link between the threat of Communism and the ‘alien’ as a metaphorical device in science fiction.

A war, even a ‘cold’ one, essentially consists of two parties. On the one hand, we have the home country, the place we feel culturally and emotionally drawn to. On the other hand, however, we have the ‘enemy’ – the foreign culture we do not and will never fully understand and that is alien to our values, morals and ways of living. It is then this term alien, with its multiple meanings, that should raise our curiosity, since it links the realm of foreign affairs with the sphere of science fiction on a semantic level. We might then claim that the ‘alien’ is our major metaphorical, thus covert, trace we might attest in all works of science fiction. We are then concerned with how this manifestation of ‘alienness’ touches our existence.

Before we further engage in the ‘alien’ realm we need to clarify what we understand under the particular term. The Oxford English Dictionary provides several definitions for ‘alien’. On the
one hand, it is “[a] person who does not belong to a particular family, community, country, etc.; a foreigner, a stranger, an outsider” (“alien, n.” def.1) and thus also “[a] person who is separated or excluded from a particular community, country, custom, etc.” (“alien, n.” def.2).

On the other hand, the ‘alien’ is defined as a being from science fiction narratives – an extraterrestrial (“alien, n.” def.5). However, the term ‘alien’ can also be used as an adjective meaning: “[o]f a foreign nature or character; strange, unfamiliar, different. Also: hostile, repugnant” (“alien, adj.” def.2).

From this selection of definitions we might draw a number of conclusions. First, the term ‘alien’ contains the idea of being ‘foreign’, thus not part of the community. In this sense it is also applicable to the science fictional alien which is essentially a foreign being. Secondly, the idea of something being alien carries a predominantly negative connotation – the ‘alien’ is hostile. In more simplified terms Lipschutz defines three basic meanings of the term. The alien might refer to a creature from outer space, to a foreigner, but also to the state of alienation (Aliens 80). Maule then argues that it is especially the latter that ties the multiple meanings of the term, and thus the concept of the ‘alien’, together (115). Consequently, the ‘alien’ can take on many forms, with the extraterrestrial being only one of them (Malmgren, Self and Other 16).

The idea of the ‘alien’ is based on three interrelated factors. On the one hand, there is the alien, either as state or being. On the other hand, there is the issue of identity. In the works we will examine in the course of this paper, identity is closely linked to the value system of the Cold War. This is not surprising, since identity is a crucial factor throughout the Cold War (Jervis 23). Finally, there is a relation between the alien and identity. The interrelation is then the crucial factor, as the alien, the foreign, the ‘other’, is only alien in contrast to the values of a particular society. Consequently we might claim that the ‘alien’ defines the ‘self’ (Hall, Spectacle 237) while at the same time the ‘self’ defines the ‘alien’. Hall refers to Saussure and argues that ‘difference’ is a key mechanism in constructing meaning (Hall, Spectacle 234-235). As alien narratives “explore the nature of selfhood from the vantage point of alterity” (Malmgren, Self and Other 16), identity is constructed in contrast to the ‘other’. The ‘other’, in return, must not be understood as truly alien being but as a metaphor for otherness within society or “between societies” (Cornea 275). The interrelation of ‘self’ and ‘other’, therefore, is closely related to prevailing prejudices. The ‘other’ serves as projection of our expectations – disregarding its real nature the ‘other’ is merely a representation of what we think it to be (Kerslake 8). In terms of science fiction, the ‘alien’ is thus not exclusively a means of
depicting the struggle of ‘self’ against ‘other’, but also a means of reflecting on identity (Dannenberg 40).

The ‘alien’ as defining factor of the ‘self’ consequently leads to a dualistic perspective. The familiar is measured against the alien and vice versa. This perspective might thus account for traces of Cold War in science fiction as manifestations not only of the ‘alien’, but also of the immanent conflict on the basis of a Cold War identity and ideology. This dualism becomes especially visible in the ideologies of the Soviet Union as well as the United States, since both states regarded their particular beliefs as “universalistic”, leading to forms of “messianism” on both sides (Engerman 23-24).

As Cold War politics turned into ideologies, and ideologies into doctrines (Westad 13), the opposition between ‘self’ and ‘other’ became increasingly important. In his Annual Message to the Congress in 1951 President Truman elaborates on this systemic opposition: “The threat of world conquest by Soviet Russia endangers our liberty and endangers the kind of world in which the free spirit of man can survive. This threat is aimed at all peoples who strive to win or defend their own freedom and national independence” (Annual Message). The particular value system is thus said to be based on “liberty” and “free spirit”. And in return, it is this system that is then endangered by the ‘other’. Consequently, the United States constructed their identity in direct opposition to the Soviet Union, as “differences […] were often exaggerated in the United States, especially at the start of the Cold War when differentiation was most necessary” (Jervis 27f).

While we have previously dealt with the Cold War and science fiction separately, we might wish to merge the two discourses on the basis of the ‘alien’, since at this stage we can no longer attest a notable difference between the concept of the ‘other’ in Cold War discourses and science fiction literature. Both discourses are organized around a dualistic perspective that contains a notion of superior against inferior. In all the major works that will be discussed in this paper, a dualistic (value-) system is directing the plot of the narratives. While George Orwell’s Nineteen Eighty-Four develops its plot along the dualism of love and hate, Jack Finney’s Invasion of the Body Snatchers is concerned with the most rudimentary dualism there is – that of ‘alien’ against ‘human’ – thus ‘self’ against ‘other’. In Pat Frank’s Alas, Babylon the narration starts with the most basic Cold War dualism – that of the United States against the Soviet Union. Eventually, the plot unfolds its utopian potential. The core dualism is then no longer situated in the large geopolitical structures, but in the small community of the fictional Fort Repose that is threatened by outside forces. Irrespective of what we want to
call those dualisms, they all revolve around the conflict of ‘self’ and ‘other’ – thus essentially a conflict between ‘love’ and ‘hate’, as we love what we know and we eventually hate what we cannot fully understand.

In both science fiction as well as Cold War discourses the ‘self’ is always ‘good’, unless the narratives are written from an ironic point of view or aim at criticising contemporary society. Similar to Truman’s speech, the particular protagonists, as representatives of Western values, regard the ‘self’, as Western concept of identity and liberty, as highest good. Since we are dealing with highly ideological narratives, this is not coincidental. Not only is American ideology deeply rooted in the idea of liberalism, but liberty and the ‘self’ are crucial factors (Engerman 20). Booker argues that “Americans in the long 1950s suffered from two principal fears: the fear of being different from everyone else and the fear of being the same as everyone else” (Monsters 19). This identity crisis then further heightened the tension between the ‘self’ and the ‘other’.

If we are the good, then the ‘alien’ is essentially bad. Being external to our own realm of existence, the ‘alien’ is something frightening (Whitehall 171). In alien invasion narratives the theme of bodysnatching, as an expression of a loss of identity by social processes (Botting 120), therefore, is a frequent one. This fear of ‘outside forces’ is mostly visible in times of social insecurity (Lipschutz, Aliens 85). The source of fear is not only the outside world, especially the Soviet Bloc, but also society and its “social, economic, and political problems” (Booker, Post-Utopian 2).

This unsolvable ideological conflict between ‘us’ and ‘them’ finally leads to Darwinian thinking that serves as a basis for both Cold War ideologies as well as science fiction narratives. The conflict often mirrors the Darwinian concept of the survival of the fittest. Any means to defend one’s position seems justified. Truman thus calls for violence “to keep our freedom and to prevent justice from being destroyed” (Annual Message). What is true for the Cold War conflict is then also true for the discourses we may examine in science fiction narratives. Especially alien invasion narratives like The Puppet Masters or Invasion of the Body Snatchers heavily rely on this ‘us’ against ‘them’ mentality.

Since we are aware of the fact that the other side, just like ourselves, is human, we might observe a call for violence – based on a Darwinian ‘us or them’ mentality – following a certain pattern that might be observed in both Cold War ideologies as well as science fiction narratives. We might want to call this pattern the ‘construction of evil’. In a first step, ‘stereotyping’, as a means of clearly distinguishing the ‘self’ from the ‘other’, takes place.
The process of stereotyping identifies the features of a certain group, reduces all members to those features in order to make explicit what is excluded by society. We are thus dealing with “symbolic violence” (Hall, Spectacle 258-259). The images that are created in this process of stereotyping are then shared among the whole population – from the common citizen to military officials (Silverstein 904). Silverstein claims that those images already manifest themselves in childhood. Children experience the enemy as threat to their values, threatening the safety of their own lives. When those children finally reach adulthood, those feelings tend to turn political (908).

The construction of fictional enemies does not differ from this practice. The ‘other’ is then not only defined as ‘not being us’ (Kerslake 9), but it is clearly distinguishable from a human being, since it must possess at least one negative feature (Kerslake 19). The result is then a somehow ‘degenerated’ alien society that is in many instances inferior to humanity, especially when it comes to the core values of our society. Jack Finney’s aliens in Invasion of the Body Snatchers are thus beings without emotions that do not care about their environment, their town or economy, but live in their own microcosm.

After the ‘other’ has been identified, the second step in this construction of evil is the assertion of monstrosity. The monster, although almost-human, is the result of a Darwinian process. It is not only a threat to our realm of existence, but the end result of “xenophobia and prejudice”, ultimately legitimizing violent action (Graham 53). Graham argues that the monster is an expression of post-humanity as it is no longer human, but “almost-human” (Graham 12). Monstrosity then becomes a key property of what has been identified as the ‘other’. And once again, the same mechanisms can be applied to the construction of Cold War identities. We might thus examine a form of “‘political demonology,’ in which the threat was exaggerated, intensified, and finally dehumanized” (Whitefield 15). While the Soviets were rendered as non-human, Communism was frequently presented as a disease (Seed, Yellow Peril 15f). Negative character traits were associated with the Soviets and propaganda was specifically designed to make the Soviet Union seem foreign and a “threat to the American way of life” (Booker, Monsters 9).

In both discourses the process of dehumanization leads to demonization based on the dichotomy of good against evil. It is then clear that from an American perspective Communism was perceived as ‘evil’ (Whitefield 2). It is frequently perceived as being destiny to fight against what threatens our realm of existence. “Once clearly identified as aggressive,
or implacable, or too ‘different’ to coexist peacefully with an enlightened humanity, then the Other becomes a legitimate target” (Kerslake 19).

Therefore, the theme of the ‘alien’, deeply rooted in the political realm, is central to science fiction. The ‘alien’ is a product of cognitive estrangement that might not only appear in personified forms, but might take on various shapes, as every aspect that does not conform with a particular society might be perceived as alien. For science fiction this means that even machines may threaten human identity (Sanders 139). In the light of a Communist threat even robots, as emotionless creatures, might serve as a means of expressing a loss of identity (Sanders 141). Strowa goes as far as to linking androids to the fear of a Communist invasion (45). This perspective is not surprising since technology was frequently perceived as something threatening during the 1950s. Not only does it provide various possibilities for the destruction of mankind, but many scientists were foreigners and thus seen as a possible threat (Booker, Monsters 134).

The aspect of the ‘alien’ then provides us with a means of linking the discourses of Cold War politics and science fiction. We might claim that the two fields essentially share the same underlying discourse, especially since the systemic conflict of a ‘self’ against something ‘other’ is prevalent in both realms. Therefore, the ‘alien’ is our central trace of Cold War ideologies in the science fiction literature of the era. As the ‘alien’ is exclusively used metaphorically, and thus never refers to a truly alien being, it frequently is a manifestation of contemporary fears and anxieties. In the Cold War era those fears are very often directed against Communism as a threat to our existence, values and ideologies. In the following chapters we will thus try to show how the Cold War discourse entered the realm of science fiction via the ‘alien’ – our red-thread throughout the various works of science fiction.

3.3. Manifestations of the Cold War

In this chapter we are finally concerned with concrete manifestations of both Cold War discourses, as well as dangers, within science fiction literature. Consequently, we will deal with three major threats that seem to challenge our selfhood. We will be dealing with the danger of the system, in the form of a totalitarian socialist system, as presented in George Orwell’s Nineteen Eighty-Four, in which revolutionary forces transform our society into a dystopian nightmare. Jack Finney’s Invasion of the Body Snatchers might then be read and interpreted as depicting the danger of ideology – and hence metaphorically dealing with the danger of Communist infiltration in the United States. In the light of what we defined as
‘alien’, Communism threatens the prevailing social order, since it is perceived as hostile by definition. It is “[a] political doctrine or movement based on revolutionary Marxism, seeking the overthrow of capitalism through a proletarian revolution, the social ownership of the means of production, and the creation of a classless society” (“communism” def.2). We will then try to show how this fear of Communism is estranged and thus transformed into an alien realm. Finally, almost antithetically to Nineteen Eighty-Four, Pat Frank’s novel Alas, Babylon depicts the ultimate consequences of the Cold War struggle between the ‘self’ and the ‘other’ – the nuclear holocaust.

3.3.1. The danger of the System – Nineteen Eighty-Four

3.3.1.1. Orwell, Dystopia and the System

In Nineteen Eighty-Four George Orwell is concerned with totalitarianism and its danger to societies and their particular value systems. When we speak about the ‘system’, we then mean the political structures of a particular society, and consequently its manifestations on a social level. In the light of the dichotomy of ‘self’ and ‘other’ established above, this danger of system might then refer to a clash between the liberal and democratic systems of the ‘West’ and the planned economy of the Soviet Union. As Orwell experiments with the fictional implementation of a ‘foreign’ system within our society, it is then inevitable that the ‘other’ is measured against our ideas of selfhood. In the light of the ‘construction of enemies’ the foreign system, regardless of how well established and fully functional it is, is then described and perceived as a threat. However, Orwell’s traces of a systemic Cold War conflict, as obvious as they might seem, are never fully overt. Although the political structures and characters presented in the novel are clearly estranged variants of their real-world equivalents, those manifestations are always hidden behind the fictional narrative.

In general, both dystopias as well as utopias are frequently linked to ideas of totalitarianism. This might be related to a form of utopian desire that serves as foundation for much of the world’s revolutions. Lowenthal argues that this is then also true of Communist regimes. One of the core elements of such a totalitarian regime is a political party that takes over “the monopolies of political decision, social organization, and all forms of information” (212). However, this party requires continuous ‘readjustments’ in the form of constant “revolutions from above” (Lowenthal 212). Totalitarian systems are imposed from above, disregarding the individual, and are thus an outside force threatening our identity while at the same time being
disguised as democratic organization of the state. By getting rid of undesirable social groups, all power is then held by the ruling party (Lowenthal 211-212).

In the linking of dystopian narratives and totalitarian ideas, the key element is then the loss of identity through conformism. The somewhat negative connotation of the term conformism is, however, misleading. Whether conformism is desirable or not, is very much dependent on our point of view. In our framework of ‘self’ against ‘other’, conformism to the value system of our own social structures is not only to some degree desirable, but necessary. Conformism, however, becomes problematic if we need to conform to something alien.

Unlike what we will observe in connection with the danger posed by ideology, dystopias are characterized by a willed transformation of the individual. Although we are able to see that the individual represents our understanding of the ‘self’, while the world he inhabits is actually alien, the fictional system then forces the individual either to cope with the nightmarish conditions, or ultimately to become the ‘alien’ himself (Williams 54). In the latter variant, the sole means of self-realization is the transformation of the ‘self’ into the ‘other’ (Malmgren, Worlds 80). Based on the monopoly of a party, as observed in connection with actual totalitarian regimes, dystopian narratives equally stress the process of (social) exclusion (Langer 185). Whenever there is exclusion, there must also be inclusion – social transformation is thus done willingly, leading to a worse life or a threatening social order with drastic consequences (Williams 52).

Orwell’s Nineteen Eighty-Four might then be read as a story about absolute conformism. By means of estranging the picture of a totalitarian regime and consequently projecting it onto our society, the dangers of an alien system are made visible. Orwell’s novel is then not only concerned with how a Communist system might endanger our way of life, but it is also what we might call a founding document in the fictional representation of the Cold War in science fiction related genres.

Nineteen Eighty-Four is the story of thirty-nine-year-old Winston Smith who is trapped in a world whose rules he cannot make his own. While the novel is set in post-war London, a state of Cold War led not only to the fossilization of international relations – primarily due to atomic deterrence – but also to the emergence of three superpowers. Meanwhile, society was transformed into a totalitarian regime that aims at controlling each and every aspect of human existence from physical activities to the most intimate human thoughts. With the Party – the single political instance in Oceania, apart from the abolished ‘Brotherhood’ – having a monopoly on literally everything, including the human mind, it has the ability to shape both
present as well as the past. Winston, the small, frail and “meagre” (Orwell 5f) anti-hero of the story, seems to be one of the few Party members who manage to keep track of ‘reality’. After meeting Julia, whom he loves out of the desire for rebellion, and joining the ‘Brotherhood’, an underground organization aiming at overthrowing the Party, we soon realize that *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is rooted in a dystopian nightmare that Winston cannot escape from. In the end, we discover the truly totalitarian nature of the Party, who seems to hold a monopoly even on subversiveness.

With its centralized ministries, the preceding revolutions and counter-revolutions that supposedly happened in the fictional past, with Oceania’s socialist class society, its surveillance machinery and secret police, scholars agree upon *Nineteen Eighty-Four*’s potential of criticizing the horrible totalitarian and nationalistic outbursts that got hold not only of large parts of Europe, but of countries all around the globe in the aftermath of World War II.

However, scholars take opposing positions as to which social system the criticism in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* was presumably directed at. Lange argues that one of the most important sources for Orwell was the British society after World War II – a time characterized by vast shortages, rationing of goods and bad housing conditions. The permanent war in Oceania might then refer to the German bombings in London and the regulation of economy to the victory of the Labour Party and its endeavours to introduce a centrally planned economy (71). From another point of view, however, *Nineteen Eighty-Four* depicts a fear of Stalinism (Lipschutz, Cold War Fantasies 34) as the Soviet Union was a key factor for Orwell’s ideas about centralization, planned economy, collectivization and totalitarianism – the Soviet Union was thus the central concept of the enemy (Lange 72). This is not surprising since Orwell previously, and even more overtly, dealt with the dangers posed by Stalinism in his novel *Animal Farm* (1945). While *Nineteen Eighty-Four* might of course be read as critique of post-war Britain, parallels to Soviet history should not be ignored. Finally, we might claim that the novel blends both perspectives by criticizing not only Stalinism, but at the same time Western societies (Booker and Thomas 196) as the perception of the ‘other’, and the dangers we assert to this threatening realm, always mirrors our society.

Not only did Cold War era science fiction favour dystopian tendencies (Booker, *Science fiction and the Cold War* 172), but ideas of Utopia were often closely linked to Stalinism (Jameson, *Archaeologies* xi). As utopian narratives are often based on ideas about system, systemic changes can frequently be related to Cold War paranoia. In this sense *Nineteen
Eighty-Four is by no means the sole representative of dystopian narratives based on Cold War discourses. Ray Bradbury’s Fahrenheit 451 is concerned with similar political tendencies. Its criticism, however, is directed at totalitarianism in general. While the influence of Cold War discourses on Ray Bradbury’s novel cannot be denied, the traces of Cold War and Communism in Nineteen Eighty-Four are overwhelming.

Taking into account that George Orwell foresaw the Cold War, coined the term and thus also defined it – Nineteen Eighty-Four is more than a mere novel. It might be seen a fictional history of a possible Cold War – a clever extrapolation of what is to come in the years following World War II, essentially negotiating a possible outcome of the Cold War. As drastic as this statement might seem, it is by no means far-fetched once we consider the actual political leanings of George Orwell, who was concerned with the theory of totalitarianism since the 1930s, long before the actual Cold War took its shape (Lange 27).

3.3.1.2. The science fiction in Nineteen Eighty-Four

Besides the stunning and detailed description of totalitarian features in Nineteen Eighty-Four, we are dealing, nevertheless, with a work of science fiction. We have pointed out that key mechanisms of science fiction are cognitive estrangement, extrapolation, as well as the existence of some form of novum, which help to distance the imagined realm from the world of the reader. While the whole range of those features is visible throughout the novel, the degree in which each of them contributes to the story drastically differs from other works of science fiction.

While technology-based nova are manifold, they are, unlike in other science fiction narratives, never central to the story. The major novum in Nineteen Eighty-Four, however, is what we have defined as social novum. While most technology-based nova, which are described in the novel, have lost their significance in today’s terms, the social novum still is key to the entire narrative structure and, therefore, must be assigned major significance. By taking a clearly socialist regime and extending its features to our Western society, a novum is created by means of cognitive estrangement. All technological nova – telescreen and Newspeak, among many others – are clearly subordinate to the social condition Orwell describes. They might thus be regarded as mere extension of this social novum. The telescreen, for example, serves as a means of population control, as people can not only enjoy television, but they can be seen and heard at the same time. The device essentially contributes to the total control the Party asserts throughout the novel. And, accordingly, the fictional language ‘Newspeak’ has the
sole function of asserting control over reality. Consequently, we might claim that these types of nova are merely extrapolations of our core novum – the estranged social system.

The social novum finally possess all major attributes that have been defined for science fiction nova. The new element, the social system that drastically differs from our environment, is then contrasted with our realm of existence based on our culture specific understanding of certain social values. Throughout the novel, the Communist system is therefore constantly measured against the (fictional) ‘good old past’. Not only does Orwell’s protagonist approach an elderly Prole to gain information about history, but he is also particularly fond of historical artefacts.

Additionally, extrapolation is to be considered as equally important as the literary strategy of cognitive estrangement in Orwell’s narrative. *Nineteen Eighty-Four* might then also be interpreted as extrapolation from contemporary totalitarian tendencies and experiences and, consequently, as reference to the horrors of the 20th century. As experience of a particular historical time is projected onto a fictional reality (Maule 109), the fictional events gain plausibility. Although a society like in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* may be impossible, it is described as if it were possible (Howe 6). Howe argues that writers of anti-utopian fiction “can afford at most a few steps beyond our known reality, but he is likely to achieve his strongest effects precisely at the moment when the balance teeters between minimal credence and plummeting disbelief. For at such a moment we ask ourselves: Can things really go this far?” (8). In *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, much like in other works of science fiction, this effect is then achieved by contrasting the known to the unknown.

While cognitive estrangement and extrapolation create the basis for the particular social novum, the novum, in return, has to be presented in a credible manner. Narration is then a key factor in rendering the fictional world, its inhabitants and the events that take place throughout the story plausible. The plot unfolds through the third person limited narration of Winston Smith. Although he is a small, frail, meagre character with fair hair and rough skin (Orwell 5-6), thus no hero at all, we closely share Winston’s view of the world. Based on the mechanisms of science fiction, we are able to identify the social novum – a society that is not yet possible. We feel attached to the protagonist by sharing his point of view on the particular social order – there is something wrong with this estranged and extrapolated social condition. Through the eyes of Winston we are drawn into the nightmarish visions of the novel while at the same time plausibility is achieved (Lange 56).
Plausibility is then further enhanced by not one, but two books within the book. While *The Principles of Newspeak*, presented in the appendix of the novel, creates a sense of scientific plausibility, Goldstein’s *On the Theory and Practice of Oligarchical Collectivism* explains the historical details about the revolutions that took place in the fictional past. Although both texts do not contribute any essential details to the plot of the narrative, they provide a historical background that could not be established in such a detailed manner within the main text (Lange 35f), and consequently make the narration seem more plausible. While the former operates on the basis of scientific plausibility within science fiction narratives, the latter serves the function of a ‘captain’s log’ in an enclosed universe story – neither we nor the protagonist Winston Smith are able to fully grasp the world of the novel. By presenting Goldstein’s narrative, as book within the book, we learn that it is not Winston who is wrong, but the system. Therefore, our point of view is confirmed and plausibility created (Shippey, *Hard Reading* 17f). By finally narrating the story as if it were past, plausibility is then further reinforced. Orwell (184) states that “by the fourth decade of the twentieth century all the main currents of political thought were authoritarian”. While referring to the decade the novel was published, extrapolation on the basis of present-day reality is presented in the form of completed developments.

3.3.1.3. *Nineteen Eighty-Four and the Cold War*

The estranged social condition and the extrapolation of a Cold War setting, which is presented throughout the novel, is clearly rooted in Orwell’s well informed ideas about a beginning Cold War dualism. Set in the United Kingdom, now called Airstrip one, some decades after World War II, the world is divided among three superpowers – Oceania, including Great Britain and the United States, Eurasia and Eastasia – who are all governed by totalitarian regimes.

Orwell’s world is described as being set in a time of immense depression, leading to poverty and substandard living conditions. Not only does the general population lack everything from electricity to soap and razorblades, but slums are a common phenomenon even in London. While only about forty percent of the population is able to read, the Party, nevertheless, claims that illiteracy is at a low. Indeed, shortages were a major problem not only in post-war Europe but also in the Soviet Union, where especially the implementation of a centrally planned economy increased the problem of supplying the population with the most basic consumer goods from bread and other food to matches and clothing (Fitzpatrick 42-44).
Fitzpatrick argues that “[t]his reflected […] the state’s production priorities, which were strongly weighted in favor of heavy industry” (Fitzpatrick 44).

Confronted with a lack of everything, the protagonist is concerned with the past in which all was apparently ‘better’. This feeling is then especially related to consumer products (Lange 41). Speaking about past, we are referring to the time before the initial revolution of the fictional 1950s, when capitalism gave way to a socialist way of life. As the majority of revolutionary leaders were gotten rid of in the ‘great purges’ of the 1960s, subverting the initial revolution, only ‘Big Brother’ and ‘Goldstein’ remained (Orwell 69). A comparison between the fictional historical developments, the Russian revolution and Stalin’s terror regime finally seems inevitable, especially since the era of Stalinist terror matches many of the developments described in Nineteen Eighty-Four. In a first step, Soviet Russia abandoned capitalism while collectivizing agriculture, followed by the implementation of a terror state in the late 1930s (Cohen 7) in which the leaders of the initial revolution were then publically sentenced in show trials (King 41). Thus the revolution in Nineteen Eighty-Four might be read as estranged Russian revolution. Similar to the developments within Soviet Russia, the initial revolution in Oceania failed and is now, due to the omnipresence of the most powerful Party, no longer possible. Additionally, Newsinger argues that the revolution within Nineteen Eighty-Four is possibly based on Orwell’s experiences in the Spanish revolution, in which not only the initial developments were “sacrificed in the interest of Russian foreign policy” but where the revolutionary party was banned and its members arrested.

However, not only the revolutionary developments might be related to real-world politics, but also their leading figures. From this perspective, Emmanuel Goldstein’s fictional manifesto might be read as estranged version of Trotzki’s The Revolution Betrayed (Lange 37). Goldstein, his ideology is referred to as “Goldsteinism” in the novel (Orwell 51), might then be interpreted as representing Trotzky and his “historical materialism” (Avishai 57). The character of Emmanuel Goldstein might be related to Trotzky on an additional level, as the expulsion of the latter form the Soviet Union was accompanied by a number of unjustified accusations such as the conduction of counterrevolutionary activities, founding of an illegal anti-Soviet party that aimed at the production of anti-Soviet speeches and armed resistance against the Soviet Union (King 112). As the same accusations hold true for the fictional Goldstein, we might consider the particular character as estranged variant of Leo Trotzky. Parallels between Oceania and the Soviet Union can thus be drawn not only in connection to the works of Trotzky and Nineteen Eighty-Four’s Goldstein and his fictional work On the
Theory and Practice of Oligarchical Collectivism (Lange 73), but also in connection to the historical developments surrounding the character.

Apart from Goldstein, the second major revolutionary figure in Nineteen Eighty-Four is then ‘Big Brother’, the leader of the Party. While we are presented with neither name nor full biographical details of ‘Big Brother’, Orwell offers some basic character description. Being around forty-five years old, having a heavy black moustache and “ruggedly handsome features” (Orwell 5) ‘Big Brother’ is often interpreted as estranged version of Josef Stalin. However, Lange argues that Orwell lacks personal experience with life in the Soviet Union. From this perspective, the figure of ‘Big Brother’ might be seen as a synthesis of various authorities (72). Nevertheless, the political developments in both the Soviet Union as well as the fictional Oceania are very much alike. Therefore, Stalin’s struggle against the ‘old’ revolutionaries might be related to Big Brother’s fight against Goldstein, as last survivor of the initial revolution.

As the revolution in Oceania closely resembles that of Soviet Russia, the character of Big Brother not only might be said to be based on Josef Stalin, but also fulfils a similar role in the novel. While Stalin was relatively unimportant during the Russian revolution – he was thus hardly ever shown in photographs of the Bolshevik leaders – Trotsky was celebrated as a hero (King 76). Later, Stalin tried to establish a leader cult based on the same principles as described in Nineteen Eighty-Four. By means of forgery, and thus the revision of history, Stalin first tried to establish his political significance (King 84) – a practice that is thoroughly described in Orwell’s narrative. In a final phase, Stalin then aimed at making the party his own. Not only did he get rid of the old revolutionary leaders, but he also replaced hundreds of thousands of party members (King 95). A possible relation between the purges depicted in Nineteen Eighty-Four, in which the old revolutionaries were replaced and a renewal of the ‘old’ society took place, and the developments within the Soviet Union seems to suggest itself. In both cases the new society is based on a totalitarian socialist state. Consequently, Oceania might reflect the Stalinist approach to socialism. However, in the novel Orwell claims that “the Party rejects and vilifies every principle for which the Socialist movement originally stood, and it chooses to do this in the name of Socialism” (Orwell 195). We might then relate this quotation to Orwell’s personal involvement in the Spanish Revolution. On the basis of what he had experienced, he approved socialism and working class struggle while he strongly opposed Stalinism (Newsinger).
The socialist Oceania is then based on what Orwell termed “Ingsoc”, a term expressing the idea of “English Socialism” (Orwell 35). While Orwell’s political structures are fictional, parallels to the Soviet Union are manifold. Not only are Party members addressed as ‘comrades’ and the principles of personal possessions abolished, but the political system in Nineteen Eighty-Four is also based on a three-year-plan. We are then tempted to relate this to the Soviet Union where in the years from 1929 to 1932 the first five-year-plan was introduced (Fitzpatrick 4). In Oceania’s thoroughly planned society, the “Ministry of Truth” finally controls all information, including cultural goods. In return, this tendency could also be observed within the Soviet Union where, in an attempt to stop cultural infiltration, culture related matters were centralized (Hixson 7).

In this planned economy it is then no longer revolutionary ideas, but merely the institutionalized system that is of major importance (Howe 13). As Orwell claims that “[e]ven the Catholic Church of the Middle Ages was tolerant by modern standards” (184), referring to the everyday political condition in Oceania, it seems evident that the particular fictional system has no space for personal freedom and liberty. To guarantee its seamless operation, this system is then not only totalitarian, but highly militarized, making use of a hierarchical structure and secret police. The regime in Nineteen Eighty-Four thus contains all elements of a totalitarian society at the time Orwell wrote and published the novel. By means of collectivism and centralization, the Party holds a monopoly on news and information as well as military operations. Therefore, ideology is a key feature of the particular state (Lange 36f).

The thought police, a form of secret police, are one of the core institutions that guarantee political order in Oceania. Avishai then relates not only the brutality of the organization, but primarily its “talent for euphemism” to the secret police operating within the Soviet Union (57). Additionally, both the forced confessions in Nineteen Eighty-Four, as well as the attempt of regulating the freedom of thought, are argued to be informed by Soviet trials (Lange 42). From this angle the ‘Ministry of Love’, which is primarily concerned with torture of political prisoners, might be related to the headquarters of the secret police in Moscow that was concerned with death sentences (King 122).

Apart from interrogative practices it is especially the show trials that closely relate the fictional to the historical. Fitzpatrick argues that in the Soviet Union “public scapegoating” was a “key process of terror in the Great Purges” aiming at collectively identifying enemies of the party (199f). For this purpose ‘sessions’ were held, for example at the workplace, in order to identify such enemies.
The outcome was not generally predetermined; the implicit requirement was only that a scapegoat should be found, and that he should not be an insignificant person whom the institution could easily sacrifice. Tension could mount intolerably in these sessions just because of the uncertainty about who the ultimate victim(s) would be. (Fitzpatrick 200)

What reads like a purely fictional passage was finally actual political reality within the Soviet Union. Also in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* not only political ‘crimes’ are of major importance, but public hanging is commonplace. It is thus the political confessions of the old revolutionaries that might especially be related to the Soviet show trials of the 1930s. Comparable to the trials in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, show trials in the Soviet Union were broadcast, filmed and published in press (Fitzpatrick 203). This militarized society is then reflected not only in the actual military apparatus, but in the structure of society in its entity. The fictional society shows the utmost degree of organization, as even children are incorporated in the political mechanisms of the Party by denouncing family members to the thought police. Consequently, private life turns political – a phenomenon that is further reinforced by political rallies and physical drills.

The key factors in retaining power in Oceania are finally the state’s self-sufficiency as well as the Party’s monopoly on information. As no information from outside Oceania can spoil its ideology, the state can operate as closed entity that is fully self-sufficient. Similar tendencies might be observed within the Soviet Union where in 1938 “the Soviets began turning away U.S. tourists and condemning Western culture as part of an anti-foreign propaganda campaign” (Hixson 6). The first five-year-plan was thus characterized by a tendency of “isolationism”. War hysteria and war scare were finally used as means to justify this walled-off political entity (Fitzpatrick 5). In return, war hysteria is then also a major social factor in Orwell’s society. Not only is war hysteria further heightened by trials and public scapegoating, but war in general is seen as a privilege. When Orwell writes that “[w]e don’t all have the privilege of fighting in the front line, but at least we can all keep fit” (Orwell 36), he certainly refers to the high degree of obedience that such a political system demands of its citizens.

Not only are parallels between the Soviet Union and the society in Oceania manifold, but we might also observe a general Cold War discourse throughout the novel. As we have initially stated that no other than George Orwell coined the very term Cold War, this seems by no means surprising. Therefore, the novel is set in a time after a nuclear holocaust. The atomic war that is said to have taken place in the fictional 1950s is then no prominent theme throughout the novel. However, we learn that the atomic war finally lead to an arms race.
After the war no more nuclear weapons had been used, while they were still produced and stored (Orwell 176). Despite some childhood memories of our protagonist, the particular phenomenon is scarcely featured and only serves as a means of justifying the outcome of the socialist revolutions.

In a setting that closely resembles the Cold War three superstates emerged in the aftermath of this nuclear war. While Europe was incorporated into Russia, the British Empire was included into the United States. Finally, a third superpower in the form of Eastasia, consisting of the south of China and Japan, came into existence (Orwell 167f). Orwell’s narrative is thus based on the common fear that Europe might be incorporated into the Soviet Bloc. Orwell then claims that besides their overt differences, the three superstates are quite similar as there is no genuine ideological difference. Oceania, Eurasia and Eastasia are then three dictatorships founded upon the same social system and “pyramidal structure” (Orwell 178) that is made possible through self-contained economies (Orwell 169).

Almost overtly, Orwell describes a state of Cold War, since Oceania, as representation of the West, is in constant war with either Eurasia or Eastasia. This permanent war might then be interpreted as a Cold War. Orwell makes this clear by coining the Party slogan “war is peace”. Consequently, permanent peace equals permanent war (Orwell 180). Apart from a few bombings and drastic shortages, this war is barely felt in the “centres of civilisation” (Orwell 168). Referring to this permanent war, Orwell argues that “when war becomes literally continuous, it also ceases to be dangerous. When war is continuous there is no such thing as military necessity” (Orwell 179). Orwell then continues to elaborate on the nature of this war:

The war, therefore, if we judge it by the standards of previous wars, is merely an imposture. It is like the battles between certain ruminant animals whose horns are set at such an angle that they are incapable of hurting one another. But though it is unreal it is not meaningless. It eats up the surplus of consumable goods, and it helps to preserve the special mental atmosphere that a hierarchical society needs. War, it will be seen, is now a purely internal affair. (Orwell 179)

_Nineteen Eighty-Four_ thus clearly depicts a Cold War scenario by describing a permanent conflict between highly ideological superpowers without “military necessity”. Finally, Orwell argues that this particular type of war is in reality no war at all. “It would probably be accurate to say that by becoming continuous war has ceased to exist” (180). What is intended as a work of fiction then proves to be an almost historical account of the political developments in the aftermath of World War II. Within this very accurate theoretical framework about a Cold War, many actual political actions are mirrored. Tucker, for example, argues that the constant
switch of alliances in Nineteen Eighty-Four might be related to the non-aggression pact between Germany and the Soviet Union (95).

As war loses its actual purpose of gaining territory or regulating external conflicts, Orwell develops the idea that wars might simply be fought for furthering ‘domestic issues’. In a number of instances the idea that there might not even be a war at all, but that the government fires bombs in order to control the population (Orwell 139) is introduced. Consequently, war not only justifies drastic measures against citizens (Seed, American 69), but also creates employment through the production of weapons and the destruction of supplies (Orwell 172f). In Nineteen Eighty-Four war is thus one of the key mechanisms to ensure a fully functioning society.

As the atomic bomb prevents direct superpower conflicts only Proxy wars are then possible in the world of Nineteen Eighty-Four. Although there is an ongoing and constant war, there is also an equilibrium of power. Therefore, the goal is no longer the conquest of territories, but of resources. Crick thus claims that Nineteen Eighty-Four is “an attack on the division of the world by the great powers at Yalta and Potsdam” (Crick 16). Since Orwell was born in India (Newsinger), and therefore had direct contact with colonialism, it is not surprising that the novel also includes fairly imperialistic perspectives in the form of a scramble for Africa, India, the Middle East and the Antarctic (Orwell 179).

3.3.1.4. Literary themes and their political implication

While the particular setting of Nineteen Eighty-Four is based on numerous overt traces of the Cold War, covert traces might then be observed in the literary themes employed throughout the novel. The first theme we can observe is that of ‘Social Darwinism’, based on a strict division of society in Inner Party, Outer Party and Proles. While the Inner Party lives a more or less luxurious life, there is no wealth within society in Oceania as wealth would not allow for the strictly hierarchical organization of society.

The Proles not only constitute a parallel society to the Party, enjoying many freedoms that Party members are rejected, but they are not perceived as fully human beings and, therefore, have no access to politics in Oceania. What might be observed is thus a form of Social Darwinism. Proles are not only regarded as not being conscious (Orwell 65), but they are degraded to mere animals when Orwell presents the slogan “Proles and animals are free” (Orwell 66). As our protagonist claims that, in sharp contrast to Party members, “[t]he proles had stayed human” (Orwell 150), Orwell develops the idea that they are the only truly sane
human beings in the particular society. Thus a reversal of this Darwinist perspective is presented – while the proles are human, society in Oceania is not (Orwell 150). Finally, only the proles are truly free, as Party members are constantly threatened and suppressed by the all-controlling system.

This Darwinist perspective is then extended to all enemies of the Party. Based on the dichotomy of ‘self’ against ‘other’, the enemies of the Party represent absolute evil (Orwell 33). While some enemies are external to society in Oceania, they are predominately internal – mainly in the form of revolutionary leaders within society. It is then this particular tendency that might be related to political practices within the Soviet Union where “[i]ncreased suspicion of foreign enemies […] was matched by a sharp rise in hostility to ‘class enemies’ at home” (Fitzpatrick 5).

On the basis of this most fundamental Cold War dichotomy of good against evil, we claim that ‘loss of identity’ is one of the key literary themes in Nineteen Eighty-Four. On the most overt level, identity in Oceania is actively suppressed by exerting censorship and restricting the freedom of speech. Winston Smith claims that “[f]reedom is the freedom to say that two plus two make four. If that is granted, all else follows” (Orwell 74). Orwell then extrapolates from this particular idea and extends it to ‘freedom of thought’. By criminalizing certain thoughts, the Party is asserting control over the most basic human properties. This extrapolated idea might then be related to secret police activities within the Soviet Union where citizens were arrested for “expressing a particularly egregious anti-Soviet opinion” (Fitzpatrick 169).

By restricting the freedom of speech and thought, finally, censorship is an important mechanism in controlling reality. Not only is Winston Smith unable to remember his past (Orwell 7), but all records end in the late 1950s (Orwell 31). As no records of the past exist, it can be easily altered, since “[t]he past is whatever the records and the memories agree upon” (Orwell 192). In Oceania people thus frequently disappear without any form of trial and, consequently, have never existed – they are “unperson[s]” (Orwell 42f). The idea of censorship as a means of reality control is then also reversed – not only are people eradicated from history, but previously non-existing people are entirely made up.

What might seem as impossible fiction that is deeply rooted in dystopian traditions, however, is closely tied to real-world politics. Thus the idea of censorship in Oceania closely resembles the political reality in the Soviet Union. Consequently, the great purges of the 1930s not only led to the physical extermination of Stalin’s opponents, but they were also removed from any other form of evidence, and even paintings in museums were altered and whole series of
certain works had to be destroyed (King 9). In 1936 the central committee of the Soviet Party ordered that all works written by Leo Trotzky had to be removed from all Soviet libraries (King 10). We might then relate this practice to the subversive nature of Goldstein’s fictional narrative in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. Similar to the destruction of evidence concerning revolutionary leaders, Soviet citizens were asked to cut out an article about an executed chief of secret police in the *Great Soviet Encyclopedia* and replace it with a text on the Bering Strait (Ross 233).

The constant alteration of history is then a means of retaining the all-encompassing power of the Party, which can never be wrong, and so cannot be its predictions and forecasts. Orwell creates a particular instance in which he points out that “every quarter astronomical numbers of boots were produced on paper, while perhaps half the population of Oceania went barefoot” (Orwell 39f). It is then such instances that are mirrored in the actual politics of the Soviet Union. Soviet economic goals have always been “fulfilled and overfulfilled”, a phenomenon that might be referred to as “rhetorical gigantomania” (Young 150).

In order to guarantee the utmost control of the Party apparatus in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, censorship is not only common practice, but a mere necessity. As every aspect of life is controlled and neatly regulated, we are presented a quasi-fictional society in which the Party has total control that goes beyond the distribution of propaganda. As the Party is omnipresent and in control of history lie consequently becomes truth: “The past was erased, the erasure was forgotten, the lie became truth” (Orwell 69). Orwell thus once more uses estrangement to transform actual political reality into a fictional realm.

Finally, language is another core mechanism in controlling the mind. In Oceania the official language Newspeak is a means “to narrow the range of thought” (Orwell 49) and, therefore, to control reality by reducing the words and consequently the thoughts of people. Young argues that Newspeak is a satire on totalitarian language as used by both Nazis and Communists (Young 3). Language control in Nineteen Eighty-Four thus serves the purpose of “constricting the universe of discourse” (Philmus 22). The Party slogan ‘War is Peace’ is then not paradoxical, but merely an example of the workings of Newspeak – the opposites make each other meaningless (Philmus 24). The idea of narrowing thought by controlling language is then found not only in Orwell’s narrative, but also in other works of science fiction such as Ray Bradbury’s *Fahrenheit 451* in which a totalitarian state restricts thought by being in control of literature.
Similar to what we have examined with aspects of censorship, the idea of language control also has historical predecessors. Thus newspeak resembles Communist rhetoric and discourse to vast extents. Young deducts a certain narrowness of Communist language as “the politically significant terms of Communist discourse each carry precisely one authoritative meaning. From this formal and officially sanctioned definition, which reflects at all times the current Party line and the latest approved interpretations of Marxist-Leninist teaching, there may be no deviation in any direction” (189). Therefore, Communist discourse is said to be based on lies and “elastic terminology” (Young 207).

What leads to a loss of personal freedom in Soviet Russia, also leads to uniformity of society in Oceania. The “blue overalls of the Party” (Orwell 76), as symbolic equalization of all party members, the regulation of thought via Newspeak and thus ultimate means of censorship diminish the ‘self’ to a mere cog in the works of a larger political body. Therefore, the core theme of Nineteen Eighty-Four might be said to be the loss of identity on the basis of alienation.

While the ‘self’ is hollowed out by using means of reality control, it is further threatened by observation and physical control. Orwell thus describes the emergence of a surveillance state, as the thought police make use of technology in order to observe the citizens of Oceania. While hidden microphones endanger the freedom of speech, it is almost made impossible by technological surveillance in the form of the ‘telescreen’ – a two-way communication device that can only be switched-off by members of the Inner Party (Orwell 153). Lange claims that these mechanisms of technological control over society are based not only on political practices within Soviet Russia, but primarily on industrialized society in the West (Lange 76).

However, surveillance was a key issue in the Soviet Union, since the “regime was wary of allowing citizens to express uncensored opinions about matters of public import in public. At the same time, it was extremely anxious to know what people were thinking” (Fitzpatrick 164).

In this state of all-encompassing surveillance it is then almost impossible to establish an identity. Consequently, the absolute control of the ‘self’ becomes a necessity. For citizens of Oceania it is thus most crucial to blend in. Julia advises Winston accordingly: “Always yell with the crowd, that’s what I say. It’s the only way to be safe” (Orwell 111). In this state of subverted identity, the ‘self’ has finally turned into the ‘other’. Kerslake then claims that the only culture that was suppressed is the own (46). This state of total control and self-denial ultimately leads to the isolation of the individual that becomes primarily visible in the
protagonist Winston Smith who claims that “[y]ou did not have friends nowadays, you had comrades” (Orwell 46). In this state of isolation, Winston is then confronted with sincere self-doubt, wondering whether he himself was the lunatic: “At one time it had been a sign of madness to believe that the earth goes round the sun: today, to believe that the past is unalterable” (73). Isolation of the individual then quite paradoxically takes place within the community, as “ownlife” – the state of being alone – is not a desirable condition in Oceania’s society. Accordingly, even the role of the family, as a place where the individual is safe, is subverted. “The family had become in effect an extension of the Thought Police. It was a device by means of which everyone could be surrounded night and day by informers who knew him intimately” (Orwell 122).

The ‘self’ is thus threatened by the revision of history, by control over speech and thought via language and finally also by active surveillance leading to the emptying out of the ‘self’ and eventually its destruction as autonomous free-willed human being. After Winston’s arrest, O’Brien, his antagonist, explains to him the full extent of the subversion of the ‘self’:

Never again will you be capable of ordinary human feeling. Everything will be dead inside you. Never again will you be capable of love, or friendship, or joy of living, or laughter, or curiosity, or courage, or integrity. You will be hollow. We shall squeeze you empty, and then we shall fill you with ourselves. (Orwell 232)

The individual is reduced to an empty vessel that can be filled with the ideology of the Party and, therefore, humanity is confronted with a loss of identity and the erasure of the ‘self’ – the “hollowed-out filled with alien spirit” (Sanders 142f). This idea of ‘human remaking’ is then by no means new to history. Soviet ideology favoured this particular theme in the 1930s, since it was based on the idea that crime is a disease that can be cured through “labour and membership of a work collective” (Fitzpatrick 76). In more general terms, society was sought to be renewed as a whole (Fitzpatrick 15).

The control asserted by the Party is so total that the actions of the protagonist are irrelevant. As his behaviour, in an almost nightmarish manner, no longer makes any difference (Miller 26f), politics transform life into a “public dream” (Miller 40). Individuality finally presents itself as mere self-deception. As we have elaborated in great detail, the ‘self’ is inseparable from its respective society. In George Orwell’s novel the ‘self’ of Winston Smith is the supposedly ‘other’, the outside force that cannot and is not willing to conform to the prevailing social rules. Although we are ensured that Winston Smith is on our side and stands up for the right causes, the momentum of alterity in ‘Nineteen Eighty-Four’ is thus reversed. We are presented with the only ‘sane’ character deeply stuck in a dystopian nightmare. Since
all subversion is part of the system, we are finally made to realize that Winston was not so ‘alien’ after all. In the end, Winston has not only lost all his initiative, but his identity is fully functionalized and subverted by the Party – his acts of going astray are thus merely part of the larger systemic structures. As individual and state are inseparable entities, the loss of identity might then be linked to the nature of totalitarianism as a system of “impersonality” in which ideology is prior to personality. “There are no persons doing things. There is, briefly, an ‘it,’ totalitarianism, which does things through persons to persons; but the subject of the action is the ‘it’” (Tucker 91).

Consequently, the Party apparatus functions as substitute for almost every aspect of human life – the Party is a substitute for the ‘self’ and all its manifestations. As official religions were abandoned and churches secularized, the Party also serves as a substitute for religion, both for the individual as well as the social apparatus as a whole. Not only is it heresy to speak or act against the Party, but even a variant of creationism has been established in Oceania. Consequently, the Party is said to have invented and constructed everything of significance, from airplanes to the majority of buildings in London. This particular tendency is then once again rooted in totalitarian practices. While Communism is without religion, it developed into a form of “surrogate faith for the masses” (Young 164) in which religious emotions were turned into leader cult (Young 166). In return, it is particularly this leader cult that Orwell describes in Nineteen Eighty-Four. Superlatives are thus an important means of expressing superiority. Not only take government buildings the form of monuments, but they “dwarf the surrounding architecture” (Orwell 7).

The leader cult is further reinforced by the usage of slogans that are in many instances, most prominently in the slogan ‘two plus two makes five’, based on Communist rhetoric. The slogan refers to the populist idea of carrying out the “Five Year Plan in Four Years”, also referred to as “2 + 2 = 5”. “These slogans expressed the desire to the soviet Communist party, or at least its leader, to accelerate its drive to meet industrial and agricultural goals, but they also suggest its willingness to flout logic and to dare the impossible” (Young 1f). The slogans in Oceania, much like the rest of its society, often contain a vast degree of euphemism, ranging from “War is Peace” to “Freedom is Slavery” (Orwell 7). Since everything the Party produces is said to be truly great and a sign of victory, the particular leader cult is then furthered by these euphemistic tendencies, which are particularly expressed in the “Victory” brand that is prevalent throughout the novel.
While the Party and its leader cult entirely replace religious feelings, they also serve as substitute for the most intimate human emotion – love. Therefore, the Party not only decides on the relationships of its members, but also holds the monopoly on love. *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is thus based on the duality of love and hate, which are constantly described as being interrelated. Consequently, love is never presented as being fulfilling, while it is simultaneously contrasted with deeply negative emotions. When Winston and Julia thus hold hands, they directly stare into the eyes of a prisoner (Orwell 107). Once they make love, it is not an act of pure emotion, but contrasted with annihilation: “she had torn her clothes off, and when she flung them aside it was with that some magnificent gesture by which a whole civilisation seemed to be annihilated” (Orwell 114). Throughout the novel love never takes place for its own sake, it is always a political act. Since sexuality between Winston and Julia is then merely a form of protest, the individual is further alienated.

As everything is thoroughly controlled by the Party there is no physical place for resistance. Although revolution can only take place in the most intimate moments, Winston cannot participate in it because revolution means certain death. Therefore, he develops the idea that feelings and thoughts might be indestructible: “The Brotherhood cannot be wiped out because it is not an organization in an ordinary sense. Nothing holds it together except an idea which is indestructible” (Orwell 159). *Nineteen Eighty-Four* thus depicts a society that is without a true identity – once again, the ‘alien’ threatens our existence. Only slowly the characters develop a basic form of identity by subverting the political system with love, which Winston believes to be a form of active resistance. “Not merely the love of one person; but the animal instinct, the simple undifferentiated desire that was the force that would tear the Party to pieces” (Orwell 114).

However, the dualism of love and hate finally resurfaces. When Winston is arrested he had almost forgotten about Julia. In the Ministry of Love² “you could not feel anything except pain and the foreknowledge of pain” (Orwell 216). Eventually, even the concept of love is subverted – the only love that is possible is that for the Party. In Freudian terms this refers to the love of a child to the father – similar to “the attraction of the group to the leader of the Church and the army” (Hoffman 55). The unconditional love for Big Brother, as sole ideal of the Party, refers not only to absolute conformism, but to the unquestioning acceptance of the political system. Identity is thus entirely prescribed by the Party, and the Party itself is the

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² In the name of the ministry not only the dualism of love and hate becomes visible, but also the importance of euphemistic expressions throughout the novel, as the ‘Ministry of Love’ is exactly the opposite of what it claims to be.
motor of subversion. Not only did it come to power by making use of subversion, but it constantly subverts each and every aspect of human life. The all-encompassing power of the Party finally lies in the subversion of subversion (Miller 34).

As there is no space whatsoever where a truly genuine ‘self’ can exist, we are finally tempted to ask which measures a society might tolerate in order to ensure its seamless operation. While the Proles are unconscious and thus live freely and happily, Party members are controlled in each and every aspect of their lives. Consequently, the individual turns into the ‘other’ and faces strong opposition by the almost personified ‘self’ of the system. As the ‘self’ aims at self-preservation, the alien ‘other’ is singled out and finally eliminated – the proper functioning of the political body is ensured. This tendency of alienation might then also be observed in connection with other science fiction narratives – most notably in Alan Moore’s Watchmen, in which the key question is whether the destruction of New York can be justified in the light of an end to the Cold War. Like the protagonist in Nineteen Eighty-Four, the superheroes in Watchmen are disempowered by the system. Not only does the dichotomy between good and evil vanish in the course of the narration, but one of the Watchmen is eventually also the evil mastermind who sacrifices New York to end the Cold War. The other heroes are then ideologically trapped and forced to watch the impending disaster. Like the individuals in Nineteen Eighty-Four they become obsolete in relation to the system (Walbrühl 34).

3.3.1.5. Reception and the importance of discourse

A central issue concerning Nineteen Eighty-Four finally is its reception and the exploitation of its highly political content, especially in terms of political discourse. Besides the actual content of the novel, it is both its influence on American literature as well as its reception that neatly tie it to a Cold War discourse. In the light of Cold War ideology it is by no means surprising that the reception of Orwell’s novel was entirely different in both East and West. Seed argues that Nineteen Eighty-Four defined American post-war dystopias and helped to support the hostility against Stalinism (Seed, American 70). Consequently, the fear of a Soviet attack was an important theme even before such an act of violence became feasible in actual political reality (Seed, American 94). The novel thus enjoyed great popularity, especially with anti-Stalinists in Europe and the United States (Kroes 86). In the United States Nineteen Eighty-Four was primarily read in the light of anti-Communism. It was celebrated as severe critique of Stalinist terror (Lange 8). Furthermore, the novel was also adapted to fit this
particular reading. Reader’s Digest thus published a condensed version that suppressed the idea that hope lies in the Proles. Another illustrated version was published in the magazine Life – a version that represented the American reality of the Cold War (Lange 10). After the publication of Nineteen Eighty-Four in the United States it soon became clear that the novel provided vast potential for functionalization in terms of conservative ideas (Lange 69).

In the East, however, the reception of Nineteen Eighty-Four was entirely different. Young claims that in the Soviet Bloc the novel became the equivalent to the fictional manifesto written by Goldstein. Not only was it secretly distributed and read, but it is also said to have inspired various uprisings. Consequently, the “Soviet customs police” was concerned with the confiscation of Nineteen Eighty-Four, mirroring the actions of the thought-police, and thus making the novel a self-fulfilling prophecy (5f).

As we have examined in the course of this chapter, Nineteen Eighty-Four not only depicts a more or less realistic Cold War scenario, but it also mirrors ideological and political practices that might be related to the Stalinist regime. Anti-Communist forces could easily relate those methods depicted in the novel to the Soviet Union (Lange 43). However, Seed argues that the novel might also mirror the “militarisation and centralisation” in America to a point of almost totalitarianism (Seed, American 69). Finally, it seems crucial to note that the division of the world in Nineteen Eighty-Four into three blocks cannot be attributed to the Soviet Union alone. The novel should therefore also be read as a description of the Western perspective and thus as implicit critique of American consumer society (Lange 75f).

We are finally tempted to argue that Nineteen Eighty-Four entered a dialectical relationship with Cold War discourses in general. Not only was its author deeply involved in politics, but he also defined the framework in which we now review the political events of the Cold War era. As many of Orwell’s ideas were incorporated into Nineteen Eighty-Four, the novel not only depicts a fictional Cold War scenario, but also influenced the very nature of the Cold War.

3.3.2. The Danger of ideology – Invasion of the Body Snatchers

In the light of a systemic conflict, ideology was perceived as one of the major threats during the Cold War era – a phenomenon that is to a vast extent mirrored in science fiction narratives of the period. Ideology then manifested itself in a feeling of distrust and fear, which was particularly prevalent during the 1950s. In terms of periodization, Booker argues for what is called the ‘long 1950s’, a period ranging from 1946 to 1964 (Monsters 3), encompassing
almost two decades. This assumption is based on the underlying paranoid condition that dominated the particular historical era – “beginning soon after World War II and ending sometime around 1964, when nuclear and anti-Soviet paranoia in the United States began noticeably to decline” (Booker, *Monsters* 3). Not only are the long 1950s characterized by the fear of nuclear annihilation, but also of Communism, consequently resulting in a mentality revolving around the notion of ‘us-or-them’. Malmgren then suggests that the “Us-or-Them mentality” of American science fiction reflects on the paranoia and fears of the particular society (Malmgren, *Self and Other* 17f).

Both science fiction and Cold War politics are then concerned with alien infiltration. While Cold War America is anxious about infiltration by Communists, the science fiction literature of the respective era often focuses on the ‘extraterrestrial’, or other alien forms of apparently non-human origin. However, we will argue that those alien infiltration narratives are mere allegories about Communist infiltration, in many cases thus ‘Communist hysteria in disguise’. For both realms aliens are threatening for various reasons. They not only live undetected among us and ‘spoil’ the established morals and values of society, but they are also said to attempt a takeover of our beloved home country and inevitably bring about the destruction of society.

### 3.3.2.1. McCarthyism and the fear of alien infiltration

In a most general sense we are concerned with the theme of alien infiltration. As people change into aliens, either body or mind may be invaded by outside forces (Langer 182). Therefore, the idea of invasion is central to science fiction narratives. By invasion we refer not only to invasion in a physical sense, but also to the invasion of mind. Strowa, elaborating on “android personalities”, coins the term “colonization of the mind” (11) and consequently relates science fiction to colonialism and colonial literature (Strowa 40). Rieder then argues that the most prominent science fiction topics – “enslavement, plague, genocide, environmental devastation, and species extinction following in the wake of invasion by an alien civilization with vastly superior technology” – are *not* to be seen as nova, since those topics are closely related to colonization and not genuinely new (Rieder 373). However, in contrast to colonial history, it is not the dominance by another ‘race’ that is the primary threat, but the loss of the ‘self’ – thus the transformation of society and culture (Rieder 386f) that endangers humanity.
In case there is no physical invasion, but only an invasion of minds, aliens often look like ‘us’. As aliens are either indistinguishable from humans, like in *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* or *The Puppet Masters*, or merely estranged human-like creatures, the ‘alien among us’ theme is particularly crucial to science fiction (Lipschutz, *Aliens* 80) and might be interpreted as a manifestation of Cold War paranoia. The fear of the ‘alien’ might thus be understood as a transformed fear of Communism.

In the years following World War II, this fear was particularly fuelled by the paranoia caused and promoted by what we call the ‘McCarthy era’. The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines paranoia as “any unjustified or excessive sense of fear; esp. an unreasonable fear of the actions or motives of others” (“paranoia” def.2). Once again, the ‘other’ is the key factor in terms of paranoid tendencies. As we have stated above, whenever there is an ‘other’, there is also a ‘self’ that is characterized by fear and distrust of the unknown, of the ‘alien’.

Under Senator McCarthy the United States were particularly open to ideas of paranoia, which were then projected onto Communism (Strowa 20). McEnaney argues that although McCarthyism and the Cold War are interwoven, they are separate phenomena (424). However, the political climate with its immanent dualism of fear and patriotism (Strowa 22), and consequently the dichotomy of “good and evil” (McEnaney 423), might be claimed to have fuelled fears about Communism. These fears then culminated in the idea that Communism must be fought not only abroad, but also at home (Lipschutz, *Cold War Fantasies* 37).

The particular historical era finally became known as the (second) Red Scare or McCarthyism. The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines McCarthyism as “the policy of identifying (suspected) Communists and removing them from government departments or other positions, spec. as pursued by McCarthy in the United States in the 1950s. In extended use: any form of persecutory investigation likened to that conducted by McCarthy” (“McCarthyism”). Thus the term does refer not only to the political practices by McCarthy, but to the total of political practise. “McCarthy, the great ogre of Cold War America, who as noun and adjective earned his dictionary entry as part of the language. […] Little wonder that today Joseph McCarthy seems more ‘-ism’ than man” (Doherty 13). McCarthyism is thus merely a term describing the political tendencies described above.

Whitefield argues that McCarthy “had nothing to do with defeating Communism, but he had much to do with defining it. He made its demonization central to Republican arch-conservatism” (39). While the fear of Communism within American borders diminished
during the late 1950s, it did not disappear. On the contrary, it moved further to the political right, so that even the president and the CIA were accused of being Communists by political organizations like the John-Birch society (Whitefield 41) and the House Committee on Un-American Activities that devoted their work to exposing Communists in notable positions (Doherty 15). McCarthyism was thus zeitgeist.

The particular historical era was then dominated by the fear of a Communist infiltration. Edgar J. Hoover was particularly anxious about an infiltration of the United States by Communists: “They are seeking to weaken America just as they did in their era of obstruction when they were alined [sic!] with the Nazis. Their goal is the overthrow of our Government” (119). Consequently, the threat to the ‘self’ and to Western morals and values is foregrounded. Hoover thus claims that “[t]he Communist movement in the United States […] stands for the destruction of our American form of government; it stands for the destruction of American democracy; it stands for the destruction of free enterprise; and it stands for the creation of a ‘Soviet of the United States’ and ultimate world revolution” (Hoover 114).

Hofstadter is concerned with the phenomenon of paranoia and argues that paranoia in our terms is not so much relevant as a phenomenon in medical terms, but more as a phenomenon that is able to spread to “more or less normal people”. This differentiation seems especially important when discussing paranoia in politics – the paranoid politician sees “a nation, a culture, a way of life whose fate affects not himself alone but millions of others” endangered. This supposed threat leads to the moral duty of defending the political entity against outside forces (4). Therefore, the nature of paranoia had changed. While in the 19th century the fear of infiltration from abroad was prevailing, the contemporary paranoid idea is that America is threatened from within (Hofstadter 24). The paranoid politician then regards all historical events as conspiracies, “set in motion by demonic forces of almost transcendent power, and what is felt to be needed to defeat it is not the usual methods of political give-and-take, but an all-out crusade. The paranoid spokesman sees the fate of this conspiracy in apocalyptic terms” (Hofstadter 29). Consequently, the ultimate conflict is that between good and evil, leaving the paranoid without options. “Since the enemy is thought of as being totally evil and totally unappeasable, he must be totally eliminated” (Hofstadter 31). Almost like the ‘alien’ in science fiction, the evil ‘other’ is essentially based on the ‘self’ – “both the ideal and the unacceptable aspects of the self are attributed to him” (Hofstadter 32). Thus right wing groups, like the John Birch Society, closely resemble the image of their enemy (Hofstadter 33).
The Cold War manifestation of paranoia becomes especially visible in the fear that the American government has been infiltrated by Communist agents (Hofstadter 25f). In this particular climate of heightened paranoia, fear and actual political reality are not in accordance. Whitefield thus argues that the danger posed by Communism was drastically exaggerated. While Communism was a danger on a global scale, it was hardly dangerous within the United States and the costs for repressing Communism in America were in no relation to the actual danger – the price was a loss of civil liberties (Whitefield 3-4). Therefore, anti-Communism developed “into a seductive national doctrine that created and sustained the country's Cold War mentality” (Graebner 23). What Americans actually feared was not Soviet military expansion, but an ideological one – a contest that was fought without arms and thus regarded as primarily dangerous (Graebner 21f).

This heightened fear of Communism and the danger of Communist infiltration then lead to an open crusade against Communism. In order to preserve the prevailing social order, defence seemed inevitable and the foregrounding of conservative values necessary. Since the Soviet Union was in possession of the atomic bomb, and a preventive nuclear strike thus no longer possible, defensive energy was projected onto fighting Communism within the country (Whitefield 9). America had to be cleansed of Communism. “The language of psychosis and pathology – hysteria, witch hunt, paranoia, plague – leaps readily to the lips” (Doherty 250).

The particular political climate thus resulted in various measures against Communism, almost resembling witch-hunts. During the McCarthy era a variety of legislations were passed that legitimated actions against Communist organizations and persons associated with Communism (Whitefield 46 and 49). Among them was Truman’s Executive Order 9835 from March 1947 that enabled the removal of employees in federal institutions due to “disloyalty” (Truman, Executive Order 153). Since the 1930s the FBI also gathered lists of people suspected to be Communists, in order to “roundup these individuals in case war with the Soviet Union broke out. However, both the Index and the plan were illegal” (Underhill 140).

Additionally, public hearings in the form of televised media events were conducted during the McCarthy era (Doherty 21). As the accused individuals were asked to denounce fellow Communists (Doherty 32), the trials were frequently compared to the “Salem Witch Trials” (Doherty 130f). As a consequence, those measures against suspected Communists finally lead to a silencing of liberals who opposed those practices (Underhill 154). The prime fear was then no longer the fear of Communism itself, but the fear of being accused of being a Communist (Strowa 22). Very similar to Orwell’s society in Nineteen Eighty-Four, everyone
was potentially suspicious of being a Communist, even family or neighbours (Strowa 23). As blacklists were informed by “rumor, supplemented by innuendo, and littered with transcription errors” (Doherty 25), they included everyone from real Communists to liberals and reformers (Doherty 28f).

Anti-Communism thus deeply entered the domestic realm. Not only were artists advised to actively engage in anti-Communism (Whitefield 10), but paranoia entered school books and students were taught that the United States were infiltrated by Communists (Whitefield 33). In this time of collective and all-encompassing paranoia we are able to examine the rise of paranoid tendencies even in the realm of science fiction. The climate of fear and domestic paranoia was then transformed to fictional narratives, depicting the political tendencies to a point where fictional and historical realms are barely distinguishable.

3.3.2.2. A McCarthyist tale

The simultaneous rise of alien invasion science fiction and the so called Red Scare was no coincidence, especially since science fiction is particularly open to ideas of paranoia. We might argue that the genre is essentially based on literary predecessors that are primarily concerned with ideas of paranoia. It might thus be claimed that paranoia in science fiction is rooted in the Gothic tradition and its way of showing that human beings can never be safe (Nicholls, “Paranoia”). However, the genre is not only rooted in the Gothic idea of ‘terror’ – in the form of anxieties about change and progress (Botting 112) – but Gothic and science fiction share the mechanism of the estranged human body (Botting 119). The Gothic monster is now the ‘alien’ – a human being estranged to the point where it can function as a novum – and bodysnatching, as another possible link between the two genres, is frequently featured in both science fiction as well as Gothic literature. Finally, both genres try to break with the safety of our everyday life and challenge our knowledge and worldview (Botting 120). While science fiction is historically rooted in a tradition of paranoia, the era of McCarthyism had further impact on the genre.

As science fiction narratives frequently fulfil an allegorical function, McCarthyist paranoia might be seen as a driving force behind alien invasion narratives. By taking the real-world threat and estranging it into an alien realm, a novum is created that possess the inert ability of criticising present-day reality. While alien invasion narratives are manifold, we are primarily concerned with Jack Finney’s *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*. Not only was the novel published in an era of intense social unrest, but it mirrors the particular political climate of the
1950s. However, Finney’s book is only one of many examples of this allegorical transformation of fear and paranoia. Robert A. Heinlein’s *The Puppet Masters* follows similar plotlines as *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* and thus shows the relevance of the ‘us-against-them’ theme in science fiction literature. Originally published in instalments, *Invasion of the Body Snatcher* (1954) is a classic alien invasion novel. Being narrated by 28 year old Miles Bennel, a doctor from Mill Valley, California, the story describes the takeover of humanity by an alien life form. By coincidence, parasitic alien ‘pods’, interstellar seeds that have the capability of transforming into any organic life form, arrive on Earth. Gradually, the alien life form almost entirely replaces the population of Mill Valley. Since the aliens are then no longer distinguishable from the humans, animals and plants they impersonate, the ‘threat’ can live undetected among the population of the small town. Finally, the few remaining humans have no choice but to team up and fight against this alien invasion. In a later stage of the novel, we learn that not only Mill Valley, but the entire Earth was affected by the alien takeover. However, all over the planet mankind fights the alien ‘evil’ in a Darwinian struggle of life-and-death, finally forcing the alien life form to abandon Earth.

Published during the time of McCarthyism and the so called second Red Scare we might thus read *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* as allegorical rendering of the political climate. It is therefore not surprising that Booker argues that *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* closely resembles American Cold War propaganda (Booker, *Monsters* 9). As we are dealing with a work of science fiction, allegorical representation is made possible by a novum. While Orwell’s *Nineteen Eighty-Four* develops its plot around a social novum, this is not the case in *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* - not the social structures but human beings serve as a basis for cognitive estrangement.

In *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* we are thus dealing with an alien novum in the form of quasi-seed pods that possess the ability to transform into humans and other organic life forms. In an almost Gothic like manner the human body becomes “something terrible” (Finney 41). Unlike nova in other science fiction narratives, we might argue that the novum in Finney’s novel is not very convincing, especially in terms of scientific plausibility. Without any preliminary explanation the alien pods suddenly appear as they are drifting down from the sky (Finney 146). What reads like pure fantasy is then gradually enriched by superficial explanations. The seed pods are systematically distributed by already ‘transformed’ individuals who place them into their neighbours’ and friends’ basements where they are
waiting to continue their transformation. When the few remaining inhabitants manage to drive the pods away, the alien threat takes off into the sky. While Finney does not provide enough information to establish full scientific plausibility, Invasion of the Body Snatchers nevertheless conforms to basic mechanisms of the genre.

Therefore, plausibility is created by at least pretending to conform to scientific principles. In the particular case, Finney makes use of theories known from biology and neurology in order to create parasites that then literally transform into estranged human beings. This transformation is said to be possible via ‘waves’, comparable to brainwaves, that are sent out by the human body – each human body thus contains a unique pattern that is received and reconstructed by the seed pods (Finney 175-176). However, we are tempted to argue that it is primarily the narrative techniques that particularly render the novum plausible.

What is most striking about the narration in Invasion of the Body Snatchers is that it makes use of simple narrative strategies that constantly reassure us that the story is ‘true’. Since the story is narrated by the first person narrator Miles Bennel, we might argue that the narration is not reliable but subjective. However, Miles Bennel seems to be aware of the fact that he is an unreliable narrator, and he consciously points out that there are many “loose ends and unanswered questions. It will not be neatly tied up at the end […]” (Finney 7). As the protagonist is no expert and, from the point of view of the reader, clearly one of ‘us’, this particular strategy very much contributes to the implementation of plausibility. Plausibility is then further enhanced by the fact that Miles Bennel is a doctor, a person whom people usually trust. Jack, one of the characters, addresses our protagonist: “We called you, Miles, because you’re a doctor, but also because you’re a guy who can face facts” (Finney 38). Therefore, plausibility is created not only by Miles Bennel being a doctor, but also by rendering the events as facts. Consequently, we are tempted to believe the narrated events. Additionally, plausibility is created by constantly repeating that the story is true. Our protagonist not only constantly repeats that he is not crazy, but he states that: “I’ve got something to tell you that’s very hard to believe, but it’s true, and I want you to realize that” (Finney 107).

The established plausibility is then further reinforced by appealing to the human senses. Our protagonist thus claims that “I felt […] utterly certain I was right” (Finney 39). Therefore, we might argue that human senses serve as important means of confirming the fictional reality, since what can be seen cannot be wrong. “And now I didn’t know it any more. Unchanged to the eye, what I was seeing out there now – in my eye, and beyond that in my mind – was something alien” (Finney 103). Not only human senses, but the total of human experience
then accounts for plausibility throughout the novel. Although the novel is set in a future 1976, it is narrated as if it already were past. Thus we can observe a projection of present fears into future scenarios that are legitimated by presenting them as facts.

Besides those basic narrative techniques, the novel constantly tries to imply that a paradigm shift is necessary in order to understand what is happening. By blurring our idea of what is knowable, the fantastic events are tied to some basic scientific thoughts. The character of Jack thus claims that “[w]e hate facing new facts or evidence, because we might have to revise our conceptions of what’s possible” (Finney 83). By conforming to some basic scientific principles, the fictional aliens are finally rendered possible, particularly because they cannot be disproven. At the same time, we might read the novel as a stance against science, especially since science is presented as being limited and thus cannot account for what is happening in the world. Therefore, we might argue that the novel also includes quasi-religious ideas.

The plausibility created by narration is then further reinforced by instances of intertextuality. The most striking intertextual reference is the explanation of some basic mechanisms of science fiction. Budlong, a character in the narration, asks: “what do imaginary men from Mars, in our comic strips and fiction, resemble? Think about it. They resemble grotesque versions of ourselves – we can’t imagine anything different!” (Finney 173f). By crudely referring to the very mechanisms of the genre itself, the novum is finally made plausible.

However, intertextuality also helps to relate the alien threat to Cold War discourses. Especially striking are numerous colour references in the beginning of the novel where the protagonist is literally surrounded by ‘red’. The only colour reference that is not red, are Miles Bennel’s blue eyes. It almost seems as if our protagonist is confronted with a ‘red nightmare’. From this perspective, Invasion of the Body Snatchers might be read as an allegory about a Communist infiltration of the United States. We are tempted to argue that the ‘alien’ in the novel is thus synonymous with ‘Communist’. While the novum is not very convincing, Jack Finney makes use of a number of mechanisms that help to establish plausibility.

3.3.2.3. Literary themes: alien infiltration and the loss of identity

The discrepancy between human and ‘alien’ is finally the central driving force of the narrative. Similar to what we have examined in Nineteen Eighty-Four, we might claim that the story revolves around the theme of identity, or the loss of the same. As the ‘alien’ in
*Invasion of the Body Snatchers* takes the shape of particular individuals, it is indistinguishable even from the closest relatives. Therefore, identity, which is necessarily formed in contrast to the ‘other’, is threatened to its utmost degree. While identity is constantly decreasing throughout the novel, uniformity is increasing. Uniformity in the novel is expressed not only in the shared knowledge of the alien beings, but also in the “blue-and-yellow Jubilee button” that the aliens are wearing towards the end of the narration (Finney 161f). Consequently, those buttons help to identify and arrest non-members. It is therefore quite safe to assume that the alien-as-human metaphor is based on McCarthyist paranoia and the fear of a Communist invasion.

The paranoia of an alien invasion can thus be related to the contemporary Red Scare and the paranoia caused and reinforced by McCarthyism. Therefore, the fear of the ‘other’ is the principle emotion in alien invasion narratives, as exemplified in *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* when Miles Bennel points out: “I was looking at the world in fear and worry” (Finney 90). Humans are then frequently described as being helpless against the external threat: “how helpless we were against whatever was ruling this town” (Finney 152). Danger is not only external to society, but it is suspected everywhere, and even technology is perceived as something threatening: “sometimes I think we’re refining all humanity out of our lives” (Finney 50). *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* is thus clearly based on prevailing conceptions of a social order and its underlying values.

The major theme of the novel is then the idea that the ‘alien’, even if it is imaginary, threatens our proper (American) way of life. In regard to the feared alien infiltration of Mill Valley – the term ‘alien’ is at this point interchangeable with the term ‘Communist’ – society is not only threatened from within, but it is in danger of losing its human values. Throughout the novel, setting then helps to depict the loss of these values. When our protagonist thus talks about the “ordinary basement” (Finney 33), in which the alien is supposedly waiting, he implicitly contrasts the known with the unknowable. Since the basement, as part of the most intimate place – the home, is “ordinary”, the ‘alien’ then clearly is not ordinary. As more and more people finally turn into aliens, more and more values are lost. Not only are civil duties abandoned – “no one cared whether the store was ever rented again” (Finney 89), but Mill Valley is increasingly isolated: “the road had deteriorated, no repairs made for some time now, and it was scattered with sharp-edged little chuckholes, and occasional bigger ones that could break an axle if you hit them too fast. Mill Valley is isolated, only a few ways into it, and this was happening to all the roads“ (Finney 118). The now deserted, dirty and
inaccessible town was cut off from the rest of world “[a] little at a time” (Finney 123) – it had been subverted by Communism.

Finally, not only the loss of social values is a threat to society, but the United States is in danger of being taken over. We face a fictional threat so big that it cannot be solved by the individual (Lipschutz, Aliens 84). Thus even the highest government authorities are finally involved in fighting the ‘alien’ and solving the crisis. The willingness to fight the ‘other’, or at least contain its influence, is rooted in the political climate of the respective historical period – especially in the United States. The xenophobic nationalism that became particularly visible during the era of McCarthyism serves as a blueprint for many science fiction narratives. The major difference between fiction and reality, however, lies in the measures taken. While real-life politics conform to established legal practices, fictional narratives unleash the most horrid political desires – ideally, the ‘other’, the ‘alien’ must be erased.

Consequently, the aliens in Invasion of the Body Snatchers are seen as a major threat to American society, as national emergency that requires the help of higher authorities. Jack thus claims: “I have a terrible urge to ... call the President at the White House direct, or the head of the Army, the FBI, the Marines, or the Cavalry, or something” (Finney 41). When Miles Bennel calls the FBI and the line is dead, it is clear that even the highest government positions are controlled by the aliens. Once the police have turned into aliens, the government is consequently acting against its citizens – a fear that is then deeply rooted in McCarthyist paranoia. As we have established above, the fear of infiltration of the highest authorities not only is very common in the American Cold War discourse, but neatly translates into the realm of science fiction. The theme of alien infiltration is thus also prevalent in other science fiction narratives, most notably in Heinlein’s The Puppet Masters. “Much of the book reads like pure McCarthyite fantasy, especially when the slugs work to infiltrate the highest levels of the US government and military as part of their takeover plan” (Booker, Science Fiction and the Cold War 177).

Consequently, ideas about the infiltration of government positions lead to a questioning of authorities, who are often presented as being weak. While they are important in dealing with the crisis, they often do not believe in the threat as much as some courageous individuals do and thus only act when it is already too late. Once the authorities fail and the responsible citizens can no longer rely on their government, a new authority on the basis of prevailing values has to be established. Finally, the moral of alien invasion narratives is that every single citizen has to contribute in fighting for a free America and for American values. As the aliens
are not driven away by the government, it is personal initiative that is required. Jack then claims “that this is a time to do something more than to call the police” (Finney 40). In an interior monologue Miles Bennel finally recites a wartime speech, reminiscent of Cold War rhetoric: “We shall fight them in the fields, and in the streets, we shall fight in the hills; we shall never surrender. True then for one people, it was true always for the whole human race, and now I felt that nothing in the whole vast universe could ever defeat us” (Finney 214). Once again, it is the ‘self’ that is superior and that must be rescued. Therefore, the alien must be fought with all possible means.

3.3.2.4. The ‘alien’ as a disease

Since the ‘alien’ in *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* is a parasite, the notion of the alien-as-disease is prevailing throughout the novel. Although intelligent viruses are impossible (Nicholls, *Science* 58), it is a frequent theme in science fiction narratives. Nicholls argues that the representation of parasites – almost in the form of vampires or demons – is biologically not convincing, especially since parasites need to adapt to their hosts, eventually not even harming them (Nicholls, *Science* 60).

However, the idea of the ‘alien’ as a disease is made possible via the science fiction novum and the mechanisms that render the same plausible. The crucial element, however, is that the alien-as-virus or the alien-as-disease theme is a mere estrangement of a particular social condition that has its root outside the realm of science fiction. In a metaphorical sense we might thus interpret the alien-as-disease theme as Communism-as-disease. In his Speech before the House Committee on Un-American Activities J. Edgar Hoover, director of the FBI, first introduced the “communism-as-contagion-metaphor” (Underhill 149). Hoover made the following statement: “I do fear so long as American labor groups are infiltrated, dominated, or saturated with the virus of communism” (Hoover 119). Hoover’s position and ‘expertise’ then lead to a rapid circulation of the speech (Underhill 140).

The idea of alien possession thus closely resembles Cold War propaganda. In the film *Red Nightmare* (1962) people transform into Communists and the town is gradually taken over (Sanders 142). In Jack Finney’s novel traces of this allegorical representation of a supposedly Communist threat are manifold. The seed pods that came drifting down from space are described not only as being parasitic, but as “the perfect parasite” (Finney 173). They are the “parasites of the universe, and they’ll be the last and final survivors in it”, as they spread over the entire world (Finney 184). The parasites then have no particular purpose except their
reproduction by means of invading the human body and other life forms. They are thus the ultimate threat to mankind. Once particular humans have been duplicated, they lack emotions and act in a collective manner (Sanders 142). The lack of emotion might then be related to what we defined as ‘construction of evil’ – aliens are essentially inferior to truly human beings.

Stories revolving around the ‘us against them’ theme are in their very nature closely related to ideas of Darwinism, since the ‘us’ – referring to the value system of society – is usually regarded as superior. Our believes, values and consequently our political systems are then the norm against which the ‘other’ – the inferior – is judged. While novels like Invasion of the Body Snatchers or Robert A. Heinlein’s The Puppet Masters regard the values of our own culture as superior, Arthur C. Clarke’s 2001, A Space Odyssey places humanity on the other end of the evolutionary scale. Although Clarke’s novel is not overtly concerned with the threat of Communism and the dangers of the Cold War, the book clearly reflects the political climate of the respective period. While alien invasion is also a key topic in the novel, it is the reversal of power relations that is crucial – humanity is inferior to the ‘alien’. Similar to Invasion of the Bodysnatchers, the aliens also take on parasitic forms – they live on the transformation of other races into alien beings. Although non-violent, the struggle is of a Darwinian nature since “primitive races have often failed to survive the encounter with higher civilizations” (Clarke 210). While alien beings are quasi-godlike, humans are merely higher developed apes – we are thus the inferior race.

However, a far more common practice in alien invasion narratives is the foregrounding of the ‘self’. Consequently, the ‘self’ and thus our culture are superior to ‘alien’ civilizations. Jack Finney, therefore, follows an entirely different line of thought. The aliens are described as having lost the most important human qualities. After stereotyping, they are dehumanized and action against them is legitimated. Finally, they are described as ‘empty vessels’: “There is no emotion – none – only the pretense [sic!] of it” (Finney 21). They thus fall prey to subjectification – they are deprived of their right to be human. This becomes especially clear when Uncle Ira’s identity is questioned: “With this – this Uncle Ira, or whoever or whatever he is, I have the feeling, the absolutely certain knowledge, Miles, that he’s talking by rote” (Finney 21). Uncle Ira is thus not only no longer himself, but he is subjectified.

Before the aliens finally take on a distinct human shape, they are mere blanks. The face of the alien body is described as “formless, characterless” (Finney 37). While the face is one of the most important human features, it is made clear that the aliens have no true identity, since
they even lack fingerprints. Once the transformation is completed, the aliens are distinguishable from humans only in terms of their emotions: “her face going wooden and blank, with an utterly cold and pitiless alienness. There was nothing there now, in that gaze, nothing in common with me; a fish in the sea had more kinship with me than this staring thing before me” (Finney 129). Eventually, Finney makes clear that the aliens are not human: “they were not human beings at all, and I was very nearly sick” (Finney 136). In a final step, the aliens are assigned monstrosity, since their way of parasitic life is “the nature of the beast” (Finney 185).

Once the aliens have been denied their humanity, they are placed in direct opposition to the remaining human beings. “The men, women, and children in the street and stores below me were something else now, every last one of them. They were each our enemies, including those with the eyes, faces, gestures, and walks of old friends” (Finney 167-168). The aliens are thus not only enemies, but they are likely to bring about the destruction of society. In this opposition the ‘other’ is not only subjectified, but it is the major opponent in a Darwinian struggle. While the sole purpose of the pods is their survival, so it is humanity’s purpose. Finally, the use of violence is inevitable, since “the will to survive cannot be denied and I know we’d fight, that we had to” (Finney 180).

Once again the fictional is barely distinguishable from the actual political reality, especially due to the life-or-death struggle that is prevalent in both science fiction narratives as well as Cold War paranoia. In the final words of his speech, Hoover thus elaborates on the nature of Communism: “Communism, in reality, is not a political party. It is a way of life – an evil and malignant way of life. It reveals a condition akin to disease that spreads like an epidemic and like an epidemic a quarantine is necessary to keep it from infecting a Nation” (Hoover 120). Consequently, Hoover operates according to the mechanisms of stereotyping and dehumanization in order to justify actions against Communists. Not only is Communism classified as evil, but by presenting it as a virus it is deprived of its human qualities. By all means the nation must be protected – ultimately only survival counts.

No imaginative leap is necessary in order to read Invasion of the Body Snatchers and other Cold War alien invasion narratives as allegories about an ideological struggle based on the dualism of ‘good’ against ‘evil’. Booker thus argues that the aliens are directly based on prevalent stereotypes about Communists (Booker, Monsters 127). Consequently, we might assume that the ‘alien’ actually refers to Communism and the threat of a possible Communist invasion of the United States. While the aliens are a threat to our way of life, we are hardly
able to distinguish them from human beings, as they resemble ourselves in minute detail. Therefore, the question arises whether society could be infiltrated by Communism without being conscious about it (Lipschutz, Cold War Fantasies 37). However, the transformation into the ‘alien’ is finally not only presented as defeat, but repeatedly also as being pleasant – individuals cease to be individuals, but they are part of a larger collective ‘being’. Booker then relates this to “seductions offered by Communist Utopianism” (Booker, Science Fiction and the Cold War 179). In this allegorical reading of alien invasion narratives many parallels between Cold War discourses and Jack Finney’s novel become visible. Ultimately, both Communists and the fictional aliens are described as the worst possible threat to mankind.

While Invasion of the Body Snatchers might be interpreted as a metaphorical representation of the struggle between Communism and the ‘American way of life’, it might also be read from another angle. Although this alternate reading of the novel is still revolving around the particular climate of fear and paranoia, the book might also be seen as a critique of American society and the policies of McCarthyism. Therefore, some interpretations of the novel propose the theme of loss of identity through “conformism” (Clute, “Finney, Jack”). The actual threat is thus not from outside, but from within society.

Finney elaborates on the idea that there might not be aliens after all, and thus accounts for the mechanisms that allow the construction of enemies based on fear. Although the novel almost reads like right-wing fantasy, it nevertheless holds the potential to criticize society. When Finney writes that “the panic leaped from us to them like a contagion” (Finney 112), he consequently offers us an alternative reading of the contagion metaphor. The transformation into aliens might then be understood as collective delusion. As alien beings cannot be distinguished from humans, we might argue against the existence of those aliens. There is thus the slight possibility that they are merely products of a collective paranoia. Therefore, the book could also be read as a critique of the American politics of the particular era – uniformity in Invasion of the Body Snatchers might then refer to uniformity within American society. The idea of a collective delusion is then also frequently addressed throughout the novel, as people are accused of having a delusion or suffering from an identity crisis. Aliens are thus said to exist “only in your mind” (Finney 74), since “the human mind exaggerates and deceives itself” (Finney 216).

The real ‘diseases’ might then be the fear of Communism within the United States. From this perspective, the aliens might represent conformism in American society in the form of McCarthyism and its practices (Booker, Monsters 127). Similar to George Orwell’s Nineteen
Eighty-Four the truly sane citizen is threatened by a paranoid political system. The alien pods might then refer to the ‘McCarthyist spirit’ spreading among the population and spoiling American society and its values.

3.3.2.5. They are all over science fiction: large scale alien infiltration

As we have pointed out, Invasion of the Body Snatchers is not a sole example of the transformation of political anxieties into fictional realms. A number of alien invasion narratives provide the reader with even fewer alternatives for interpretation. The alien-as-Communist metaphor was thus well established and widely used. Apart from Invasion of the Body Snatchers, Robert A. Heinlein’s The Puppet Masters almost resembles anti-Communist propaganda. “Though ostensibly set in 2007 (after a third world war has failed to settle the differences between the United States and the Soviet Union), The Puppet Masters is one of the quintessential alien-invaders-as-allegory-for-Communism texts of the 1950s” (Booker, Monsters 49).

Not only is Heinlein located in the political Right of the science fiction realm (Booker, Monsters 48), but he “has been labelled conservative, radical, militaristic, iconoclastic, populist, anarchist libertarian, and fascistic” (Franklin, Heinlein 5). Heinlein’s political stance is thus quite clear throughout the novel. In terms of literary themes The Puppet Masters closely resembles Invasion of the Body Snatchers. However, traces are not only covert, but Communism is attacked more openly as “World War III had not settled the Russian problem and no war ever would. The parasites might feel right at home behind the Curtain” (Heinlein 169). Similar to Finney’s novel, the alien-as-Communist metaphor, and consequently the Communist-as-parasite metaphor are important elements of the narration. Heinlein’s novel, however, differs from Invasion of the Body Snatchers in depicting the dichotomy within a country shaken by the Cold War. Similar to what has been observed for Nineteen Eighty-Four, The Puppet Masters addresses the impact of the Cold War dualism on social organization – America is divided by the Cold War conflict.

However, not only alien invasion narratives are heavily dependent on ideological assumptions. Similar to the allegorical function of aliens, superheroes might serve as vehicles for conveying ideological ideas. Similar to the aliens in Invasion of the Body Snatchers and The Puppet Masters that are not just aliens, Moore’s superheroes in his graphic novel Watchmen are not just superheroes – they are hardly more than vehicles for the transmission
of certain values. If we consider the prevailing blueprint for superheroes, we are tempted to argue that Moore’s Watchmen represent an estranged variant of the same. Hughes argues that the ‘classic superhero’ is not ideological (Hughes 546f). The superheroes in Watchmen, however, closely represent contemporary society – they are highly ideological (Hughes 548). The superheroes, as representations of a particular ideology, are thus themselves a threat to their society.

Therefore, science fiction can be seen as a highly allegorical genre in which estranged human beings serve as a means of conveying ideology. In our particular cases these are the ideologies of the Cold War. While identity and the own ideological believes are usually favourable, the ideology of the ‘other’ threatens our way of life and our existence. Alien invasion narratives thus possess the inert ability to reflect on politics, but they are simultaneously open to propaganda, while at the same time depicting the threat of the same – the exaggeration of dangers for a particular purpose. Consequently, alien invasion narratives often take on the form of allegories about a Communist threat within the United States. Therefore, they closely resemble propaganda texts, as they try to convey a message about our value system, and more importantly about the danger of the ‘other’. In all the novels discussed in this paper, the us-against-them theme allows two divergent interpretations. Roberts thus argues that, depending on the point of view, Invasion of the Body Snatchers might be read as a satire either supporting or criticizing the climate during McCarthyism (Roberts 80). From either perspective, the novel closely resembles the political discourse of the Cold War era and exemplifies the dichotomy between ‘self’ and ‘other’.

3.3.3. The danger of nuclear war – Alas, Babylon

While nuclear holocaust was one of the most popular literary themes in science fiction (Nicholls, “Holocaust and after”), the subject of nuclear war was mostly avoided after World War II due to two reasons. First, Communism was regarded as the greater danger – the atomic bomb was thus merely considered a strategic advantage. Consequently, the first Soviet atomic bomb created “a hysterical search for the villains who had sold them our atomic secrets” (Brians). Secondly, science fiction, as only genre that featured the theme of nuclear war, only played a marginal role (Brians).

Science fiction was then primarily concerned with the escalation of the Cold War on various levels. While nuclear war was hardly a topic outside science fiction, atomic war is an integral part of the genre. This is especially due to the fascination it caused throughout the genre.
Campbell was fascinated by “things atomic” and encouraged the publication of such stories in ‘Astounding Science Fiction’ (Brians). However, if the escalation into nuclear war was addressed, it often played only a marginal role, such as in Orwell’s *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (Brians).

### 3.3.3.1. The theme and its impossibility

Since times of crisis are particularly open to the portrayal of catastrophic visions of the future, while at the same time showing a high degree of patriotism, the theme of nuclear war is closely tied to ideas about crisis and escalation. Booker thus argues that nuclear holocaust fiction became particularly popular during the Cold War climate of the 1950s (*Monsters* 56), when the danger of the Cold War turning into an actual war between the superpowers became increasingly relevant. The fear of such a ‘hot’ war was then closely connected to the fear of a nuclear holocaust, causing a permanent state of fear (Westad 19). However, a large scale nuclear war had never happened – it is a purely fictional scenario. What *did* happen were Proxy Wars, which were fought by countries on the side of the United States and the Soviet Union. Finally, paranoia changed its form when the United States was involved in the war in Vietnam (Nicholls, “Paranoia”). Not only is the term Cold War misleading, but a ‘hot’ war always contained the possibility of escalating into a nuclear war.

Especially after the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945, atomic power and nuclear holocaust developed into major themes in science fiction literature (Brian, “Nuclear Power”). However, a nuclear holocaust had never happened. Science fiction authors are thus confronted with the problem of expressing the very same. Rowland argues that nuclear holocaust can only be described by extrapolating from the present-day reality of the author to near-future scenarios and, therefore, by imagining what the outcome of such a catastrophe *might* look like (80f). It is then actual wars that might have influenced the genre of nuclear holocaust narratives. Proxy wars are thus more likely to have influenced literature, since they have actually taken place. The Vietnam War, for example, had a drastic impact on science fiction in the late 1960s. As a consequence, even science fiction magazines published advertisements for or against the war – each side supported by science fiction writers and editors (Franklin, *Vietnam* 341) – and in his work *Glory Road*, Robert A. Heinlein favours the idea to use nuclear weapons in Indochina (Franklin, *Vietnam* 344).

While nuclear war in fiction is based on war stories, the underlying mechanisms are entirely different. Nuclear war is a paradox in itself, as “the entire point of nuclear war is its own
prevention” (Brians). While conventional wars try to conceal strategies, Cold War conflicts must make them overtly visible, since deterrence is part of their very nature (Brians). While the extrapolation from actual wars might thus be crucial on the level of plot, we might claim that it is not so much war stories that influenced nuclear holocaust fiction, “but the narrative of a great catastrophe: fire, flood, plague” (Brians). Therefore, nuclear holocaust fiction might be influenced by apocalyptic literature. Ketterer then argues that the theme of apocalypse had finally moved away from the realm of religion, as “the atomic bomb completed the process of secularization that apocalyptic thinking has undergone since medieval times” (94).

Apart from its apocalyptic roots, nuclear holocaust narratives were fuelled by the technological developments of the Cold War period. Those developments found expression in “simple ‘extrapolation’ of present into future which was in practical terms exemplified by the ‘arms race’ – A-bomb, H-bomb, cobalt bomb, strategic bomber, submarine missile, ICBM, and so on” (Shippey, Cold War 93). The Sputnik shock was thus closely linked to the nuclear threat – if rockets could send a satellite into orbit, they also could carry nuclear warheads across the globe (Brians). In the wake of this Sputnik shock, a common cause for a nuclear war in science fiction is a Soviet first strike. It is thus not surprising that works that focus on such a scenario were predominately written throughout the late 1950s (Brians).

### 3.3.3.2. Alas, Babylon and the Cold War

Pat Frank’s *Alas, Babylon* is finally one of the most popular novels in the genre in the 1950s (Booker, Monsters 85f). Written and published right after the Sputnik Shock, the novel represents a near future adventure type story about the inevitability of a nuclear war between the United States and the Soviet Union and the subsequent nuclear holocaust. Set in the aftermath of the Korean War, the international political situation culminates into nuclear war that destroys vast parts of the United States and the world. Although located in an area that was a primary target, the inhabitants of the fictional Florida town Fort Repose not only survive the nuclear strike, but by some miracle also manage not to be affected by the side-effects of the nuclear war – most notably radiation. While civilization, as we know it, comes to an end, the characters around protagonist Randy Bragg manage to rebuild their own utopian society. In an almost frontier-like manner, the population of Fort Repose not only rebuilds a fully functioning social order, including basic infrastructure and laws, but even improves social life by carefully preserving the supposedly most fundamental values of pre-holocaust society. In the end of the novel, the population of the small town is offered the choice of
returning to ‘civilization’, thus to the unaffected areas in the United States. However, all of the main characters prefer to stay in their newly built utopian society.

While Alas, Babylon is a military novel, it may, nevertheless, be classified as science fiction. Westfahl argues that military novels “present scientific language in connection with a modest scientific advance that is either already on the drawing board or clearly feasible by current standards. And these works are often accepted by science fiction readers” (Mechanics 304). While mostly being a near future adventure story, Alas, Babylon extrapolates from the present-day reality. Although nuclear holocaust is thus a novum, we are tempted to argue that it is in fact not the single most important feature that classifies the novel as science fiction – it is merely a starting point into the utopian developments that unfold throughout the narration. Similar to Orwell’s Nineteen Eighty-Four, we might claim that Alas, Babylon revolves around a social novum – the reconstruction of an improved social order after an apocalyptic event.

Our novum is then made plausible by strategies that are common in science fiction. Since the novel classifies as military adventure fiction, a vast amount of technical details create a sense of plausibility. Frank thus makes reference to various types of aircraft, but also to the very procedures of how to possibly deal with a nuclear war. Intertextuality is then another important mechanism in achieving plausibility, as it links the unknowable horrors of a nuclear holocaust to the world as we know it. Since the novel refers to a wide range of literary and non-literary fields, the importance of intertextuality becomes clear from the very title of the novel. Thus “Alas, Babylon” not only is a quote from the bible, referring to the city of Babylon that was burnt down within one hour (Frank 15), but it serves as a metaphor for disaster and for the particular nature of a nuclear war. While Babylon was burnt down within one hour, the nuclear war in Alas, Babylon was over within a single day: “It seemed incongruous to call The Day a war – Russo-American, East-West, or World War III – because the war really was all over in a single day” (Frank 123). Consequently, it is referred to as ‘The Day’. We are tempted to argue that ‘The Day’ might serve as intertextual reference to important historical days, such as the ‘D-Day’ in World War II.

Plausibility is finally further reinforced by reference to historical events and places – both real and fictional. For example, Frank makes reference to the Sputnik Shock of 1957 and 1958: “It all sounded bad, but familiar as an old, scratchy record. He had heard it all before, in almost the same words, back in ’57 and ’58” (Frank 22). By making reference to actual historical incidents, while at the same time comparing them to the fictional events of the narration,
plausibility is achieved. The same finally holds true for historical places – while Fort Repose is merely fictional, Fort McCoy in Wisconsin and the Syrian port of Latakia are actual places that carried significance during the particular era of the Cold War.

Since *Alas, Babylon* can be considered a work of science fiction that makes direct reference to the outbreak of a nuclear war, the novel might be considered a prime example of nuclear holocaust fiction. On an overt level, the Cold War is thus a major theme throughout the novel. Unlike Orwell, Frank is less concerned with the systemic problems of the underlying ideological struggle, but with the nature of an actual nuclear war that is described as entirely different from previous wars – it is a new kind of war, as “nobody in the Western Hemisphere ever saw the face of a human enemy. Very few actually saw an enemy aircraft or submarine and missiles appeared only on the most sensitive radar screens. Most of those who died in North America saw nothing at all, since they died in bed, in a millisecond slipping from sleep into deeper darkness” (Frank 123). With new weapon systems, war had changed its nature: “War was no longer an instrument of national policy, only an instrument for national suicide. War itself was obsolete” (Frank 236). War is thus not only obsolete, but – according to prevailing Cold War theories – impossible, in case the own destruction is to be avoided. Consequently, Frank elaborates on the Cold War strategy of deterrence: “It takes two to make a peace but only one to make a war. So all we could do, while vowing not to strike first, was line up our lead soldiers” (236). The Cold War thus takes on the form of a ‘game’ that is compared to playing chess: “The Russians are great chess players. They rarely make the same mistake twice” (Frank 31).

Based on common Cold War strategies, Frank’s novel is then relying on the idea of the ‘domino theory’, as introduced in the Truman doctrine. Russia not only has bridgeheads in the Mediterranean, but

> [t]hey have Turkey ringed on three sides, and if they could upset the Turkish government, and force capitulation of the Bosporus and Dardanelles, they would have won the war without fighting. The Med would be theirs, Africa cut off from Europe, NATO outflanked on the south, and one by one all our allies – except England – would fall into their laps or declare themselves neutral. (Frank 31)

Losing in the Mediterranean is thus described as having drastic consequences all over the globe. Therefore, Frank claims that: “[n]ow, more than ever, control of the Med means control of the world” (Frank 31).

These horrific visions of a Cold War are then described as having entered the everyday life of ordinary citizens. People have grown accustomed to the Cold War and are thus no longer
shocked by the political developments: “That business in the Mediterranean? It’s happened before. I guess that’s one of the dangerous things about it. We get shockproof. We’ve been conditioned. Standing on the brink of war had become our normal posture” (Frank 58f). The normality of war then particularly manifests itself with children, since they grow up in a climate of constant war. “For them the abnormal has become normal” (Frank 85). While the Cold War is described as a ‘normal’ condition, the novel simultaneously reflects the paranoid political tendencies of the era. The threat posed by Communism is perceived as being omnipresent. Mark, Randy’s brother, is thus worried about military equipment of the Soviet Union: “Four subs when there shouldn’t be any, […] [i]t’s like shaking a haystack and having four needles pop out at your feet. Chances are that haystack is stiff with needles” (Frank 34). Similarly, the owner of the Fort Repose bank believes “that Russia intended to defeat the United States by scaring us into an inflationary, socialistic depression, and not by tossing missiles at us” (Frank 115). Communism is thus operating in the underground, subverting not only the American military position, but society in general.

The paranoid social and political tendencies throughout the novel lead to an arms race, finally resulting in a ‘missile gap’. The problem was thus not the actual superiority of any of the two superpowers, but the fact that one superpower thinks that there might be a ‘gap’: “Theoretically, they figure they can do it. I’m pretty sure they can’t – we may have some surprise for them – but that’s not the point. Point is, if they think they can get away with it, then we have lost” (Frank 33). As deterrent force is crucial, Frank argues that the United States had lost the Cold War during the Sputnik Shock: “When you don’t deter them any longer, you lose. I think we lost some time ago, because the last five Sputniks have been reconnaissance satellites. They’ve been mapping us, with infrared and transitor [sic!] television, measuring us for the Sunday punch” (Frank 33).

Alas, Babylon is then a novel that is overtly based on Cold War politics, extrapolating from possible military developments, ranging from the arms race right after the Sputnik Shock to the domino theory, as established by the Truman doctrine, and finally culminating into nuclear war. While the Cold War is thus essentially defining the setting of the novel, the inevitable nuclear holocaust then opens the possibility for the expression of utopian desires.

3.3.3.3. Paradoxes: nuclear holocaust and utopia

The Cold War scenario in Alas, Babylon finally escalates into a nuclear holocaust that is thoroughly described throughout the novel. Not only does Frank describe the preparation for a
nuclear war in terms of domestic issues – the piling of stocks and plans for evacuation – but also the problems in the aftermath of such a war. Fallout and contamination are therefore major themes in narratives depicting nuclear war (Cordle 69). Since there is no place where people are absolutely safe from fallout, radiation is a major threat to the surviving citizens. The character of Alice thus wishes “that she lived in Manhattan where one could die in a bright millisecond without suffering without risking the indignity of panic” (Frank 26). A problem concerning radiation, however, is that it is not immediately visible: “While radiation was a danger, it could not be felt or seen and therefore other dangers, and even annoyances, seemed more important” (Frank 146).

While Frank constantly downplays the dangers arising in the aftermath of a nuclear war, he seems deeply concerned with military strategies involved in a nuclear war. He thus describes the strategy of “time on target” that aims at the destruction of all enemy military capabilities in one blow (Frank 32):

> They know that the only way they can do it is knock off our nuclear capability with one blow – or at least cripple us so badly that they can accept what retaliatory power we have left. They don’t mind losing ten or twenty million people, so long as they sweep the board, because people, per se, are only pawns, and expendable. So their plan – it was no surprise to us – calls for a T.O.T. on a worldwide scale. (Frank 32)

From this particular passage it becomes clear, that it is the Soviets that are presented as being more likely to start a nuclear war. Once communication with the enemy breaks down, the president of the United States is asked to release the nuclear weapons – shortly after, the nuclear war starts.

*Alas, Babylon* might then also be read as a warning that nobody is able to ‘win’ a nuclear war: “Nobody’s winning. Cities are dying and ships are sinking and aircraft is going in, but nobody’s winning” (Frank 141). While the United States actually win the war in *Alas, Babylon*, it is no longer significant. Therefore, the novel serves as a warning that America might not be fully prepared for the inevitable conflict (Booker, *Monsters* 86) and that nuclear war “is probable if our deterrent is inadequate” (Brians).

Paradoxically, the apocalypse brought about by the nuclear war is not the end of all life on Earth, but merely the onset of a better and improved society. Once the nuclear holocaust has taken place, Frank is no longer concerned with international politics. The prime focus is then the breakdown of society. Civilization, as we know it, ceases to exist: “This was the end. Civilization was ended” (Frank 122). Not only are transportation, electricity and news broadcast gone, but supplies can no longer be delivered to Fort Repose. A Lack of food and
fresh water finally leads to a disastrous situation. However, not only infrastructure, but the entire social organization ceases to exist. Our protagonist thus attests “North American civilization’s return to the Neolithic Age” (Frank 229).

One of society’s biggest steps backwards is then presumably the vanishing of the monetary system. While the bank could neither be shattered in 1926 and 1929, nor during the depression (Frank 39), now “Fort Repose’s financial structure crumbled in a day” (Frank 112). Henceforth all money became useless and was soon abandoned as “the dollar, in Fort Repose, would be banished entirely as a medium of exchange” (Frank 119). Barter then takes the place of money. With “the end of money”, “civilization as we know it” was finally gone (Frank 121).

As this utmost catastrophe equals a reset of human civilization to its most fundamental form of existence, the breakdown of society is then described as a chance for a utopian renewal. This is by no means surprising, since post-holocaust literature is rooted in the genre of either Utopia or Dystopia. Both genres are then based on extrapolation and depict “the future consequences of present circumstances” (Ketterer 16). It is then the protagonist that exemplifies this utopian renewal. Before ‘The Day’ Randy Bragg is described as failure. Not only was he an alcoholic, but “Randolph was beaten five-to-one in the Democratic primaries for nomination to the state legislature. It was worse than defeat. It was humiliation, and Randy knew he could never run for public office again” (Frank 9). Randy’s nature becomes even more evident in contrast to his successful brother Mark: “it was apparent Mark was the older, harder, and probably wiser man” (Frank 29). Additionally, Elizabeth, Randy’s girlfriend, claims that he is “vegetating. I don’t want a vegetable. I want a man” (Frank 52). However, once the apocalypse has taken place, Randy’s nature changes and he takes control of Fort Repose. He becomes the ‘man’ Elizabeth desires: “He knew he should not have spared time for tears, and would not, ever again” (Frank 37). This transformation is then also made visible in his appearance: “It was true that his face, leaner and harder, looked like Mark’s face now” (Frank 222). Randy thus took the place of his successful brother.

This personal renewal is then in accordance to the renewal of society. Frank makes clear that the fall of the United States was inevitable – he points out that “yesterday was a past period in history, with laws and rules archaic as ancient Rome’s. Today the rules had changed, just as Roman law gave way to atavistic barbarism as the empire fell to Hun and Goth” (97f). Booker argues that the comparison of the destruction of the United States to the fall of Rome is a “typical right-wing point”, since it implies that Americans failed “to live up to their
responsibility to defend this way of life against the evil Soviets” (Booker, *Monsters* 86). Consequently, destruction almost acquires a positive connotation that is strengthened by means of metaphors. While the old civilization is compared to a sinking ship, the few survivors manage to rescue themselves on their own ‘island’, as it turns out that neither the town of Fort Repose nor the Bragg family and their friends are contaminated. When Frank finally writes that “Fort Repose became an island” (Frank 117), he creates strong reference to stranded islands narratives.

Finally, the nuclear holocaust gives people a new perspective. Referring to the librarian, the narrator notes “that it should require a holocaust to make her own life worth living” (Frank 188). And even starvation is portrayed as something positive. Although people have less to eat, they look healthier and younger as they are on what Frank calls “[a] fine, thinning diet. If everybody in the country had been on this diet before ‘The Day’ the cardiac death rate would have been cut in half” (Frank 219). The novel is thus a moral tale not only on American values, but on personal initiative – the characters apply the best in themselves in order to begin a new society. Not only do the inhabitants of Fort Repose establish their own rules, but an entirely self-sufficient community – a civilization that is built on bare essentials.

However, we might argue that this new happy utopian society is to be considered somewhat naïve. In general, nuclear war fiction ignores the side-effects of nuclear war – even if topics such as radiation poisoning are touched, they are only addressed superficially (Brians). In *Alas, Babylon*, the danger of radiation is, therefore, hardly addressed. “While radiation was a danger, it could not be felt or seen, and therefore other dangers, and even annoyances, seemed more imperative” (Frank 146). And not only radiation is treated in a naïve way. Referring to the bad sanitary conditions Randy thus states: “I can’t shoot a germ. I’m concerned with the highwaymen right now, this minute” (Frank 252).

While the inhabitants of Fort Repose live on their utopian ‘island’, society outside the small town is rebuilt as well. However, life in Fort Repose is presented as being significantly better. When the inhabitants of the town are offered to be brought to a ‘clear zone’, they finally refuse, since they are better off in the world they have created. *Alas, Babylon* thus almost works as an antithesis to George Orwell’s *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. While Orwell’s novel is based on the assumption that the nuclear threat leads to a fossilization of international relations, and as a consequence prevents revolution that is necessary for social development, nuclear annihilation in Pat Frank’s novel leads to a utopian renewal. Booker thus claims that in the novel nuclear holocaust almost takes on romantic form (*Monsters* 85f). Therefore, we
might argue that *Alas, Babylon* romanticises nuclear holocaust, especially since the old, outdated society is cleansed and renewed. Closely resembling frontier literature, the new society offers endless possibilities (Booker, *Monsters* 56). In this newly built almost-utopian society survival is then one of the key issues, as only the strong manage to survive.

Consequently, *Alas, Babylon* is revolving around ideas of Darwinism. While Frank incorporates general ideas about the survival of the fittest, he then relates those ideas to humanity, and finally also to the clash of ideological systems. In the end, Frank mingles all of those aspects – after society has undergone a ‘reset’, and is ‘cleansed’ of its burdens, it is merely the survival of the fittest that is of importance. Throughout the novel, the author constantly stresses the role of nature, as life always will go. In one particular instance the idea of Darwinism is explicitly introduced: “Nature is proving Darwin’s law of natural selection. The defective bee, unable to cope with its environment, is rejected by nature before birth. I think this will be true of man. It is said that nature is cruel. I don’t think so. Nature is just, and even merciful. By natural selection, nature will attempt to undo what man has done” (Frank 219f). Thus also mankind is subordinate to the very same mechanisms. After a dog has stolen food and is thus shot, our protagonist explains that “[i]t wasn’t a dog any longer. In times like these dogs can turn into wolves” (Frank 244).

When Bill McGovern finally kills a man in order to protect the community, it becomes clear that animals are used metaphorically, in order to reflect on human behaviour. The narrator explains that “he had killed a man that day and felt no guilt at the time or after. It was like stepping on a roach” (Frank 282). Both ‘wolf’ and ‘roach’ then clearly serve as metaphors that refer to social Darwinism – man has to do whatever it takes to survive, even if this means to kill other humans. While the weak die first, the future belongs to the young and strong. Randy thus believes that “a boy either grows up fast or he doesn’t grow up at all” (Frank 230), and Fort Repose’s doctor argues that nature will go its natural way: “You don’t have to worry so much with women having babies. They’ll have them whether I’m there or not, and chances are that both mother and baby will do all right” (Frank 104). Since mankind has to be strong and fight for its right, weapons – which had become obsolete in the old society – become important again.

Finally, *Alas, Babylon* is then also concerned with a clash of ideologies in which only the stronger will survive. However, America is presented as weak and is said to being led astray by consumerism:
It was state of mind. Chevrolet mentalities shying away from a space-ship world. Nations are like people. When they grow old and rich and fat they get conservative. They exhaust their energy trying to keep things the way they are – and that’s against nature. [...] We designed the most beautiful bombers in the world, and built them by the thousands. We improved and modified them each year, like new model cars. We couldn’t bear the thought that jet bombers themselves might be out of style. (Frank 16)

The horrific visions of an ending world are then deeply rooted in conservative or even Darwinist ideals, as nuclear holocaust was often seen as a means of ending Communism (Booker, *Science Fiction and the Cold War* 173). It is then exactly this systemic conflict in which the core theme of Cold War narratives becomes visible: the ‘alien’ as a threat to the ‘self’.

From this perspective, the atomic bomb finally represents the ultimate loss of the ‘self’. Rieder, arguing from a postcolonial perspective, claims that “super-weapons henceforth tend to threaten total extinction rather than a militarily imposed form of dominance”. The atomic bomb does not cause repression, but the ultimate loss of the ‘self’ (386f). Nuclear annihilation can thus be seen as creating ultimate closure. However, it often takes on “anticlimactic” forms. In *Alas, Babylon*, for example, the population is no longer frightened by the nuclear threat (Cordle 73).

Finally, the struggle between ‘self’ and ‘other’ may also be examined on a linguistic level. The following passage, which is concerned not only with the Sputnik Shock, but also with the danger of a Soviet attack, makes the linguistic realisation of the Cold War dichotomy visible:

On this morning Dave looked troubled, and sure enough, when he began to give the news, it was bad. The Russians had sent up another Sputnik, No. 23, and something sinister was going on in the Middle East. Sputnik No 23 was the largest yet, according to the Smithsonian Institution, and was radioing continues and elaborate coded signals. ‘There is reason to believe,’ Frank said, ‘that Sputniks of this size are equipped to observe the terrain of earth below.’ (Frank 2f)

What is most striking about this particular passage is the usage of adjectives and adverbs. The actions of the ‘other’, the Soviet Union, are described with adjectives and adverbs that have primarily negative connotations. Not only are people “troubled”, but news are “bad”, the situation is “sinister” and the Soviet satellite is the “largest”. The threat posed by the satellites is then also the largest, since its technology is “elaborate.”

We might want to contrast this passage describing the threatening ‘other’, with a paragraph focusing on the ‘self’ in the form of the home, as not only a place of retreat, but as most intimate mirror of the ‘self’:
the Braggs house was planked and panelled with native cypress, and encased in pine clapboard, hard as iron, that might last another hundred years. Its grove, at this season like full green cloak flecked with gold, trailed all the way from back yard to river bank, a quarter mile. And she would say this for Randy, his grounds were well kept, bright with poinsettias and bougainvillea, hibiscus, camellias, gardenias, and flame vine. (Frank 4)

Once again, the usage of adjectives and adverbs is of major importance. However, only words with a positive connotation are used. Not only is the house built of “native” wood – thus stressing the own culture and realm – but the materials are “hard as iron”. Therefore, we might argue that the own values are presented as being indestructible. The friendliness of the home is then further stressed by bright colours – the surrounding environment is thus “full green” and “bright”. The description of the home, finally, reinforces the importance of the home as ‘secure’ and ‘friendly’ place.

Similar to George Orwell’s Nineteen Eighty-Four and Jack Finney’s Invasion of the Body Snatchers, the ‘self’ is always at the centre of the story. It is the own values that are threatened by the Communist system. This ‘self’, which is under constant attack, might then refer to the whole Western civilization. In the light of this ideological struggle Alas, Babylon makes the connection between the ‘self’, thus the respective society, and the international politics visible. The ‘self’ in the novel takes on the shape of a ‘we’: “by we I mean the NATO coalition” (Frank 31). The idea of the ‘self’ is thus closely tied to bloc formation that took place during the Cold War.

This highly ideological angle is then also mirrored in the depiction of a certain value system. Alas, Babylon thus implicitly elaborates on ‘proper American values’. Most notably, the importance of modesty and hard work are continuously stressed throughout the novel. The Henry family, the Bragg’s neighbours, has always been living a very modest life. When civilization finally ended, hardly anything changed for them – they still rely on their hard work. Randy Bragg then stresses the importance of hard work, as he claims: “When you had the responsibility you also had the right to command” (Frank 169). Another frequently stressed value is that of the ‘past’ that is constantly described as being better. Not only were children able to read in the past, but the plot of Frank’s novel closely resembles frontier literature, thus focusing on the ‘good old days’ with its ‘frontier spirit’.

Finally, the importance of the home and the domestic realm are stressed throughout the novel. In sharp opposition to the harsh international climate, the 1950s are characterized by “a pro-family mood” – marriage, privacy and the security of home and family are important values (McEnaney 435f). The external Communist ‘evil’ thus creates a strong focus on internal
values, especially on family life. This phenomenon is then closely linked to the consumerist tendencies of the period “with its special emphasis on home ownership and on household products and appliances” (Booker, *Post-Utopian* 28). Home and family are then constantly attacked by “threats from the outside”, but they are also vulnerable from within, due to the fear that our ‘normal’ and ‘everyday’ way of life is challenged (Cordle 70f). In general, ‘shelter’ is the central place in nuclear war fiction, while at the same time being depicted as a trap – the horror begins once the shelter is left. “Looting, rape, gang warfare, and random violence are all commonplace” (Brians).

In accordance with the idea that the home serves as refuge, ideals that are frequently linked to the concept of the ‘home’ are foregrounded. Children are thus depicted as the most precious good, and “the least a man can do is give his children a chance to grow up” (Frank 17). Not only is marriage the desirable way of living, but true love is considered the norm. However, we might examine a very conservative and patriarchal society. When our protagonist addresses Helen he thus claims that: “Your job is to survive because if you don’t the children won’t survive. That is your job. There is no other” (Frank 66).

Finally, *Alas, Babylon* makes clear that every crisis strives towards a solution. For Frank this clearly means the emergence of a utopian society that revolves around family and home – as manifestation of security, selfhood and proper values. Similar to Orwell’s *Nineteen Eighty Four* and Finney’s *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*, the plot clearly revolves around a Cold War setting. While *Alas, Babylon* contains a vast number of direct traces of this ideological conflict, the most fundamental trace is the underlying systemic dichotomy that is manifested in the conflict of the ‘self’ against the ‘other’. While other narratives discussed in this paper explore the systemic and social implications of this ideological struggle, Frank focuses his narration on the ultimate erasure of the ‘self’. Since the population of America has not been careful enough, it was erased. However, a new civilization may be rebuilt on the basis of hard work and good morals.
Conclusion

In the course of this paper we have been concerned with two distinct realms and their possible interrelation – the political phenomenon of the Cold War and its discourses, and the literary genre of science fiction. We have established a basic historical background, showing that the very term Cold War is misleading, as it disregards the many violent manifestations of this ideological conflict. We have then established that the conflict went far beyond the realms of politics and armed conflicts – propaganda and cultural competition thus extended the ideological struggle to domestic and cultural realms.

In a second step, we have been concerned with science fiction, as a particular genre of popular literature. Using mechanisms to represent the hypothetical, the genre seems particularly open to the representation of political ideas. While the defining element of science fiction is a presumably new element, the so called novum is based on everyday phenomena. It is created by extending the actual reality to speculative realms by modes of metaphorical representation – most notably cognitive estrangement and extrapolation. It is especially this ‘extended reality’ in which the genre unfolds its potential for social criticism. The skilled science fiction writer is eager to render the novum as believable as possible. Scientific plausibility is thus an important means of presenting the sometimes almost-fantastic narratives as plausible. It is then the existence of those basic mechanisms that allow for the classification of the various subgenres as science fiction.

By examining metaphorical representation we have been able to unveil an extensive number of Cold War traces within science fiction literature. While ‘overt traces’, such as the nuclear war in *Alas, Babylon*, are easily accessible to the reader, ‘covert traces’ often take on the form of allegories about Cold War anxieties. The examined narratives mirror the various discourses of the Cold War era. While immediately after World War II the fear of totalitarianism, including the Stalinist terror regime, was a major theme – as presented in George Orwell’s *Nineteen Eighty-Four* – later works focus less on the systemic threat, but more on the dangers of domestic Communism. Jack Finney’s *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* might thus be read as an allegory about a Communist infiltration of the United States. Consequently, the McCarthyist paranoia of the early 1950s became primarily visible in alien invasion narratives.

In his novel *Alas, Babylon*, Pat Frank is finally concerned with the ultimate systemic conflict—a nuclear war between the Soviet Union and the United States.

Throughout the examined literature the major theme is that of ‘identity’. As we have claimed in the course of this paper, identity is always established in the area of tension between the
‘self’, representing society and its underlying ‘values’, and an alien entity – something outside our realm, threatening our existence. This climate of political, social and economic instability then further reinforces the fear of losing one’s identity. It is this basic systemic dichotomy that serves as a red thread throughout the works of science fiction that have been examined in this paper.

This underlying identity crisis is clearly no desirable situation. Whenever there is a crisis, it is in the nature of human beings – both fictional and real – to strive for a solution. It is immanent to this Cold War dualism, and its fictional representation, to foreground the implicit values of society. Therefore, basic value assumptions – such as the ‘good old past’ and the ‘home’ as a ‘safe haven’ – are foregrounded. While the ideals of a safe home are subverted in Orwell’s narrative, they are heightened in *Alas, Babylon*.

Similar to what we have examined for Cold War discourses, the ‘self’ in science fiction narratives is regarded to be the most precious good. Once our values are endangered to a degree where the very existence of the ‘self’ is threatened, a more violent approach is usually followed. Both science fiction literature and the American public in the Cold War era are concerned with how to avert this danger. In case the damage is not done yet, there is a tendency to respond to the existing threat with violence. Thus the protagonists in the novels discussed in this paper tend to engage in a heroic endeavour to ‘rescue’ the American way of life.

The willingness to fight the ‘other’, or at least to contain its influence, is then rooted in the political climate of the respective historical period – especially in the United States. The xenophobic nationalism that became particularly visible during the era of McCarthyism serves as a blueprint for a vast number of science fiction narratives. While real-life politics is primarily based on deterrence, fictional politics unleashes the most horrid political desires. Ideally, the ‘other’, the ‘alien’ must be erased. Based on the assumption that Communism eventually cannot be defeated and the danger of nuclear war cannot be overcome, the only feasible scenario is to live with the danger. Consequently, the ‘self’ has to be modified to such an extent that it can coexist with the threat. In *Alas, Babylon* the ‘other’ thus becomes the norm – as the nuclear holocaust cannot be undone, all that people can do is to learn to live with the horror and build a new and better society. In the end, the newly built society is the ‘norm’ against which other ways of living is measured. A similar perspective is then presented in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* where it is utterly impossible to escape the system. As
even subversiveness is a calculated factor in the political system, the ‘self’ is continuously alienated.

The awareness that the danger of the ‘other’ cannot be avoided might finally be extended to the idea that the ‘alien’ might cure our society. Therefore, the Party in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is not only a stabilizing instance in the fictional Cold War conflict, but it also creates a single well-functioning ‘social body’ at the price of personal liberties and freedom. However, not only quasi-enslavement is a means of stabilizing society. In *Alas, Babylon*, paradoxically, society is cured by its destruction. The horror that ended civilization can finally also cure it. The underlying question is then how much of our ‘self’ we are willing to sacrifice in order to preserve the human race.

Traces of Cold War are thus manifold in science fiction narratives after World War II. Not only is the ideological struggle between systems a major covert trace throughout the novels discussed in this paper, but the very same conflict finds overt expression in various nuclear war scenarios and remarks about politics of the particular era. Since a number of science fiction authors actively engaged in politics, their works both represent contemporary anxieties as well as popular political tendencies and modes of thinking.
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**German Summary**

Obwohl Science Fiction oft als Trivialliteratur abgetan wird ist das Genre in der Realität wesentlich vielfältiger und anspruchsvoller als weithin angenommen wird. Während George Orwells *Nineteen Eighty-Four* einen überaus hohen Grad an Systemkritik an den Tag legt, basiert Arthur C. Clarkes Roman *2001, a space odyssey* auf den damals gängigen wissenschaftlichen Prinzipien der Weltraumerkundung. Science Fiction ist somit ein literarisches Genre das seine Inhalte aus der unmittelbaren, im besten Fall wissenschaftlichen, Lebenswelt bezieht. Ausgehend von diesem Bezug zur unmittelbaren Lebenswelt scheint es naheliegend, dass Science Fiction auch die politischen Strömungen einer bestimmten historischen Epoche widerzuspiegeln vermag.


In einem zweiten Schritt haben wir festgestellt, dass der Grundmechanismus von Science Fiction der der Verfremdung (cognitive estrangement) ist. Lebensweltliche Elemente werden dabei soweit verzerrt, dass sie dem Leser als vermeintliche Neuerung (novum) präsentiert werden können. Während die Erzählung oft einer zeitlichen und räumlichen Distanzierung unterliegt, basiert sie häufig auf lebensweltlichen Inhalten und Grundprinzipien. Wesentlich für diese Verfremdung ist allerdings ihre Plausibilität. Im Idealfall folgt Science Fiction also gängigen wissenschaftlichen Diskursen, zumindest aber ihren Mechanismen.


So unterschiedlich die diskutierten Werke auch sind, so ähnlich sind sie schließlich in Bezug auf ihre literarischen Mechanismen und die Diskurse die sie wiederspiegeln. Jene Romane spiegeln also nicht nur die historische Epoche des Kalten Krieges mit all ihren Eigenheiten wieder, sondern auch den Systemkonflikt der nicht nur die eigene Nation, sondern vielmehr die eigene Gesellschaft und ihre Werte gefährdet. Sowohl die reellen gesellschaftspolitischen Tendenzen jener Epoche, als auch die fiktionalen Science Fiction Erzählungen, bedingen schließlich eine Überhöhung der eigenen Werte und ein grundlegendes Misstrauen gegenüber dem Fremden. In anderen Worten: Kommunismus im politischen Lager des Westens muss um jeden Preis zurückgeschlagen werden.
Curriculum Vitae

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