Chapter 6

Conclusion

From this research and study I have come to conclude that, the genre 'novel of ideas' as a meaningful form of novel writing and their authors are indeed impassioned by the search for a new form. These novelists are not completely devoid of any avant-garde ideology, nor do they find it necessary to have a radical break from the conventional novel. They do not consider the traditional possibilities of the novel to be exhausted; but their only aim is to radically enlarge the novel form to incorporate their bold perceptions.

To say that I conclude would be wrong on my part as during the journey of this study of all the five novels, numerous thoughts in various situations have found relevance. At times it also gave me the feeling that the authors may have been in consultation between them.

The technique of addressing the subject in each plot through a character or debate leaves the reader with various depths to explore which is a remarkable achievement in the novel of ideas. In leaving the ends open each novel fulfills it’s author’s responsibility towards human civilization.

All the five novels have dared to address and criticize the issues that were and are directly affecting the quality of human life in a bold and warning note. This not only displays the ability of the authors but also helped me to appreciate their skill in including multiple plots and issues within a single novel.

Though all the novels were lacking in the conventional style of portraying a single or few characters to a obvious end, the novel of ideas is an ongoing journey, but the most important aspect is that the novel does engage the
thought process in the reader, to contemplate upon the parallels that can associate with.

As the civilized world was more stable before the onset of the events that led to the industrial revolution, religious faith started losing its influence on the masses, the materialistic and capitalistic attitude catered to the inlayed greed in individuals, values were compromised for status, pleasure and pride. People were becoming more isolated within civilizations, avoiding their humanistic responsibilities towards their own community and species. A new form of threat was now born, and the reigns of this disturbed social situation was being handed over to the younger generations without any warning or preparedness. The technological developments are faster than the pace man could understand or keep up with, all five authors warn about the kind of hatred, selfishness and disaster we are set to face if not taken heed of the warning. *The Plague* warns of a return of the epidemic if man ignored the conditions that cause, the lifestyle, living conditions and the moral conduct. *The Counterfiters* warns us of the youth being mislead in the absence of proper strong value based guidance during puberty. *Sammlers planet* warns us about the urge to live of inherited or ill-gotten wealth. *The Magic Mountain* warns us about the bourgeois culture that is not immune to human limitations to counter disease.

Death of morality and decay of civilization is also a common theme that all five authors have emphasized upon, as all five were associated with the World War and experienced the manmade disaster, by either being in it or observing from outside. As Europe, Russia and America as nations could not prevent the war; the authors blame most of the cause on the ignorance of the ultimate consequence, and the growing faith on technology more than religious, human and ethical values. Absence of religion in socialist Russia in *The First Circle*, Pastor Vedel who doubts his own preaching in *The
counterfeiters, the variation in the first and second sermons of Pastor Paneloux in *The Plague*, where religion fails to ease the pain and suffering of the effected.

Some of the most common characteristics observed in all the novels is the lack of specific main characters. At first these works can be understood as irrelevant fiction. But only a dedicated reader with a better understanding of the contemporary can experience the various layers of narration depicted by each character, debate or situations. Each work is meticulously planned, and woven into the main story.

Under no circumstances *the novel of idea* are works written to cater to the readers preference or commercial success, but is almost opposite in more aspects than one. The novels of this study are not the only publications of all the five authors, but they are the most acclaimed for their representation of the slice-of-life portrayal in narration. The most remarkable feature is that the authors have brought in ideas and characters from various dimensions of life and removed them when they have served their purpose.

None of the authors have compromised on their subjects, plots or subplots to uphold the strong feelings that they intended to convey. There is also a strong representation of right and wrong, along with the reasons that lead to the degeneration humanist thought process. A strong urge for a cautious acceptance of both capitalist western culture and the godless socialist values is felt, with a need for reinstallation of strong religious values, to be inculcated in the youth.

None of the five authors have attempted to make the selected novels as pure work of fiction. Not only some of them have included their experiences and observations but also their own autobiographical characters, there is an author in each novel, Torrou in *The Plague*, Gleb in *The First Circle*, Sammler in the
Sammlers Planet but he was not going to write anything, Edouard in The Counterfeiters, and Mann was inspired by his visit to the Sanatorium in Devos. These novels needed meticulous planning and the various subplots had to fit in like a flawless fabric, but with open fiber on all sides. Typical to the Novel of Ideas all five novels offer no conclusions to the reader. None of the stories end, but only terminate in a manner that the reader is compelled to contemplate upon the essence of each subplot and absorb its relevance.

Unlike the conventional novel the reader is faced with the possibility to associate his experiences in the civilized society with the characters and debates, and tempted to reread to discover the multiple layers of meanings that can be derived. Almost all five authors have addressed all the age groups, children to grandparents, and death in particular. The relevance of the life of each character not just signifies his profession, attitude and role within the story but also what impact the character has on the civilized human society on earth. The decaying human value that reached its height during the wars, where killing was priority, to the selfish capitalist and socialist attitude prevailing after the wars, makes these novels timeless.

The problems of the youth portrayed by Gide in the Counterfeiters and by Saul Bellow in Sammler’s Planet though decades apart are more of facts than fiction that a reader can directly associate with.

This study has led me to conclude that all the five authors wrote their masterpieces with absolute sense of responsibility, maybe to express their disgust or to fulfill their human obligation to mankind, and as a fore warning to the modern greedy materialistic civilized world where compassion, ethics and values effecting human life was under threat. Man himself had become a stepping stone for his own species. No religion, philosophy, government or leader had absolute control on the direction of progress that the world has taken to.
Unlike the conventional or traditional novels a reader of the novel of ideas is compelled to pause and contemplate of what has been read, as the content triggers various thoughts from reader to reader, depending upon their individual capacity and experiences.

The novel of ideas is a reiteration of the popular phrase ‘history repeats itself’ and the authors have conveyed a stern warning of future cycles of decay if man does not correct his wrongs. It is needless to emphasize that the Novel of ideas is indeed a very responsible form of novel writing. All the five novels reflect hopeless helpless situations and human misery, but eventually for a reader of this genre these novels are beacons of hope for the human civilization. I have acquired a broader perspective of life itself as a consequence of this study.