The genre of the novel has undergone many changes and modifications since the days of its emergence. Novelistic plot, character, narrative and theme have all undergone major transformations. In its history, the novel often developed by announcing itself against its predecessors. So much so that Frank Kermode comments that “the history of the novel is a history of anti-novels.”¹ Wallace Martin argues that, “the novel’ cannot be defined because its defining characteristic is to be unlike a novel.”² Walter L Reed says that “the novel… has delighted in flouting its own conventions.”³ While, Lorna Martens argues that “if we say that the novel changes, what we mean is that the word ‘novel’ remains the same, while this word is used to designate a multitude of different phenomenon.”⁴ Indeed, it is quite difficult to capture the novel within the bounds of classification. Its development, too, remains difficult to catalogue.

¹ Frank Kermode, ‘Literary Fiction and Reality,’ Hoffman and Murphy eds., 222.
² Wallace Martin, Recent Theories of Narrative (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1986) 44.
³ Reed, 3.
The history of the novel is very chequered, alternating between mind-blowing success to apocalyptic predictions of demise and death. Yet the novel has somehow managed to repeatedly reinvent itself like a phoenix. It is not a coincidence, therefore, that many contemporary critics have become deeply uneasy about the nomenclature of the ‘novel’ for describing much of prose fiction. Many have shifted almost entirely to the use of more incorporative terms like ‘fiction’ or ‘narrative’, and some use even more specialized terms like ‘metafiction’, ‘surfiction’, ‘fabulation’, ‘narcissist narrative’, ‘historiographic metafiction’, etc. In fact, one of the first questions that confront any student of the novel is, what exactly are the features that have prevailed in the novel across its multifarious development and spread? We argued in an earlier chapter that, among other things, an important (though theoretically neglected) generic feature of the novel is its plastic and elastic form, which allows it to incorporate a wide range of formal and thematic elements and concerns within its fold. In this chapter, therefore, we would test the veracity of this hypothesis by studying the trajectory of the development of the novel from the days of its inception to contemporary times. However, the definition of any phenomenon cannot be that it has no boundaries or limits. Therefore, we would explore whether there exists any pattern or logic to the generic incorporations done by the novel.

**The Question of ‘Genre’**

Let us, however, digress a bit to devote some attention to whether the novel should be studied as a literary genre at all or not. Contemporary critics of the novel are often compelled to undertake the genre debate before they can embark upon a detailed study of the novel. Critics like Franco Moretti, Frederic Jameson, Tzvetan Todorov and Michael McKeon are a case in the point. However, this is not the first time in western literary history when ‘genres’ have come to occupy the centre stage of literary contemplation. Classical genre theory starting from Plato to Aristotle to particularly Horace’s *Ars poetica* was considerably important. Neoclassical genre theory resurrected by Dryden and others in the beginning of the eighteenth century was also very influential.5

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5 It has been argued by many critics that rule-bound genres have become important in literary history only in times when the establishment has been threatened by some new social impulse that is democratic, be it in and about 68-8 BC (Horace) Rome or during the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. As Hayden White argues, “Everyone recognizes that the notion of generic purity is a supreme value among aristocratic, conservative, and reactionary social groups and political parties.” Therefore, the assertion of the importance of genres has been a means to argue for the superiority of select political or social groupings, especially when their predominance has been under
However, these earlier periods were remarkably distinct from the current period in one major respect. While the earlier debates about genre were all about establishing the primacy and centrality of genres in literature, today debates challenge the reliability of the concept of genres as an analytical category. Critics and thinkers like Northrop Frye, Jacques Derrida, Hayden White, Roland Barthes and Gérard Genette have contributed significantly to weakening the notion of genres, particularly the novel, by arguing for the use of 'fiction', 'text' or 'narrative' as alternative interpretive categories instead. As Wallace Martin says, "During the past fifteen years, the theory of narrative has replaced the theory of the novel as a topic of central concern in literary study."6 Dorothy J. Hale also asserts "novel theory now seems either dismissed or ignored.... Formal and generic descriptions of the novel have increasingly been subsumed by the almost hermetically sealed field of narratology."7 Looking at literature through such broad categories arises out of an a-historical way of looking at the world. The singular drawback of this outlook is that it blurs the capacity to demarcate differences between one form of literature and the other, thereby, rendering all literatures a part of the same continuum. It is this chronic loss of ability to distinguish between different and distinct phenomenon in recent times that perhaps compelled Umberto Eco to say:

Unfortunately, 'postmodern' is a term bon à tout faire. I have an impression that it is applied today to anything the user happens to like. Further, there seems to be an attempt to make it increasingly retroactive: first it was apparently applied to certain writers or artists active in the last twenty years, then gradually it reached the beginning of the century, then still further back. And this reverse procedure continues; soon the postmodern category will include Homer.8

This critical observation by Eco points towards the flaw in the general way of viewing the world through postmodernist perspectives. It also appropriately captures the threat. See Joseph Farrell, 'Classical Genre in Theory and Practice'; Hayden White, 'Anomalies of Genre'; Michael B. Prince, 'Mauvais Genres' in New Literary History: Theorising Genres II, Vol. 34, Summer 2003, Number 3.

6 Martin, 15.
assumptions and beliefs behind the shift from the category of the novel to concepts like fiction and narrative in recent literary theory. The evidence of this deep aversion of a-historical literary views towards generic classifications can also notably be found in E. M. Forster’s *Aspects of the Novel*, where he argues that the classification of the novel “by chronology” is silly, but classification by “subject matter” is “sillier still”\(^9\). He explicates the similarities between novelists like – Samuel Richardson and Henry James; Charles Dickens and H. G. Wells; and Lawrence Sterne and Virginia Woolf, who seemingly do not fall into similar literary categories. Doing so, he poses the main question of his study and answers:

> How then are we to attack the novel – that spongy tract, those fictions in prose of a certain extent which extend so indeterminately? Not with any elaborate apparatus. Principles and systems may suit other forms of art, but they cannot be applicable here... And I have chosen the title ‘Aspects’ because it is unscientific and vague...\(^10\)

Forster’s views can be immediately understood the moment we take into account his main thesis about the nature of all art — “History develops, Art stands still”\(^11\). He forcefully reiterates this point both in the introduction as well as the conclusion of his book.

The attack on the category of genres, however, does not arise merely out of this inability to demarcate historical differences, but also from another point of view. As Ralph Cohen famously asks in an essay called by the same name – ‘Do Postmodern Genres Exist?’ This question, he argues, is a particular malady of contemporary postmodern writing which deliberately and self-consciously claims that it “blurs genres, transgresses them, or unfixes boundaries that conceal domination or authority, and that ‘genre’ is an anachronistic term and concept.”\(^12\) Being critical of this postmodern tendency he explains:

> Postmodern critics have sought to do without a genre theory. Terms like ‘text’ and ‘écriture’ deliberately avoid generic classifications. And the reason

\(^9\) Forster, 19.

\(^10\) Forster, 30-31.

\(^11\) Forster, 28.

for this are to abolish the hierarchies that genres introduce, to avoid the
fixity of genres and the social as well as literary authority such limits exert,
to reject the social and subjective elements in classification.13

Cohen argues, however, that contrary to such popular postulations, which are
quite reductive in nature, genres do not serve only one single purpose; in fact they serve
multiple ends depending upon how they are employed. Apart from “classifying” literary
types, they also serve to “clarify”, “describe”, “theorize”, “analyse” and “interpret”
literature without necessarily making prescriptions or proscriptions. Hence, postmodern
arguments for the dissolution of genres are not merely a call for doing away with
hierarchy and domination, but also for circuitously bringing an end to theorization,
interpretation and analysis in literature. The sub-text of Cohen’s article is that the
dissolution of the interpretive category of genres is not devoid of its own ideological
underpinnings. But, as Michael B. Prince, a student of Cohen says, “[In today’s times]
even the decision as to whether genre per se is a fundamental category is left open.”14

In such a context, we would maintain that the concept of genres continues to be a
relevant, germane and useful concept for the study of all literature as well as for the
novel, precisely because of its capacity to theorize and analyse. Besides, as Walter L.
Reed says:

Many recent poetics, of course, claim not to deal merely with the novel but
with “fiction”, “narrative”, or even “prose”. But since all these schemes give
novels a place of prominence in the conceptual spectrum, it seems fair to
address oneself initially to this historically significant type of prose fiction
and ignore for the time being the wider reaches.15

An agreement, however, on studying the novel as a distinct generic category is not the
end of all contention. What is equally important is how and to what end are genres being
employed in literary studies. For instance, studying the novel through its teeming
multitude of sub-genres like the novel of chivalry, romantic novel, picaresque novel,
adventure novel, travel novel, sociological novel, historical novel, documentary novel,
chronicle novel, saga novel, encyclopaedic novel, political novel, propaganda novel,

13 Cohen, 295.
14 Michael B. Prince, ‘Mauvais Genres’, New Literary History: Theorising Genres II, Vol. 34: Summer,
Number 3 (2003): 475.
15 Reed, 1-2.
The theories of the novel, philosophical novel, thesis novel, utopian novel, allegory novel, regional novel, novel of the soil, and so on, can also unsettle one’s perspectives about the novel.\textsuperscript{16}

As Georg Lukács says in his book \textit{The Historical Novel}:

\begin{quote}

The genre theory of later bourgeois aesthetics which splits up the novel into various “sub-genres” -- adventure novel, detective novel, psychological novel, peasant novel, historical novel etc. and which vulgar sociology has taken over as an “achievement” has nothing to offer scientifically.... This soulless and ossified, this thoroughly bureaucratic classification is meant as a substitute for the living dialectics of history.\textsuperscript{17}
\end{quote}

Lukács explains that the propensity towards generic sub-divisions in novel theory starts at about the end of the nineteenth century. Once the bourgeoisie as a class becomes conservative and starts evading certain realities, its conceptual and academic tools too undergo change. New disciplines of understanding and theorizing society come up, ‘sociology’ being one of them. “The single original methodological feature of the new science of sociology is that it separates knowledge of the “laws” of social behaviour from economics and renders them independent.”\textsuperscript{18} Thus, along with offering significantly new types of insights, sociology also serves to obliterate certain kinds of understandings about the development of society and literature. The uses of genres in literary history, Lukács argues, are entrenched in such methodological and ideological disputes.

Fredric Jameson, too, expresses a similar disdain for the proliferation of novelistic sub-types in \textit{The Political Unconscious} where he argues that various generic categories and classifications of the novel, like Gothic, picaresque, \textit{mémoire}, associative psychology, \textit{Bildungsroman}, historical novel, \textit{roman d’adventures} and others “prove rewarding only as long as they are felt to be relatively arbitrary critical acts.”\textsuperscript{19} He argues that such categories are part of a provisional and transient tendency in literary theory:

\begin{quote}

...in which the working categories of genre are themselves historically deconstructed and abandoned...all generic categories, even the most time-
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{16} See Cuddon, \textquoteleft{novel}\textquoteright 599-641.

\textsuperscript{17} Georg Lukács, \textit{The Historical Novel}, P240.


\textsuperscript{19} Jameson, \textit{Unconscious}, 145.
hallowed and traditional, are...understood (or "estranged") as mere ad hoc, experimental constructs, devised for a specific textual occasion and abandoned like so much scaffolding when the analysis has done its work."²⁰

Peter Hitchcock in his essay, ‘The Genre of Postcoloniality’ (2003), also observes, “Most recent literary theory has avoided dealing with the novel as genre, opting instead for a focus on subgenres or types, variations on the genre (sociological, philosophical, political, historical) or modes of writing (realism, postmodernism, and so forth) in which the novel as genre remains axiological.”²¹ We, too, believe that certain generic subdivisions of the novel seem to obscure matters more than clarify them. Obviously, different conceptual or interpretive categories are methodological tools that have their own respective relevance. We do not intend to argue that conceptual categories like narrative or fiction are entirely irrelevant, or that many familiar generic sub-types of the novel are completely bogus; just that, when it comes to studying the development of the novel, using categories like narrative or fiction is like using a telescope to study a book, and using its multitude of novelistic sub-types is like using a microscope to read a book. Both, we believe, are ill suited tools for our object of study, and the novel perhaps merits a much simpler and straightforward approach. As Tzvetan Todorov says, “[The] omnipresence of genres has nonetheless not prevented widespread ignorance of their existence (particularly with respect to intimate and familiar genres).”²² The case of the novel seems to be one such case. On the one hand it seems easily accessible and intelligible even to ordinary readers; on the other it has continued to perplex the tallest of critics for generations.

At this juncture, it is befitting to invoke what Fredric Jameson says about the relevance of genres in his book The Political Unconscious. He aptly outlines a suitable approach for studying the novel – “[The category of genre has a] mediating function...which allows the coordination of immanent formal analysis of the individual text with the twin diachronic perspective of the history of forms and the evolution of social life.”²³ In the course of our study we shall try to grasp the nature of the novel in this

²⁰ Jameson, Unconscious 145.
particular sense, that is, by adopting an approach which will allow us simultaneously to fathom both the individual novel as well as its diachronic and synchronic significance in the history of literature and society.

Before doing that, however, let us state that there exist two broad approaches to understanding the development of the novel. One is by studying changes in the general perceptions or opinions about the genre in history, i.e., how the novel is positioned at different points of times. And the other is by studying the development of its techniques and themes, i.e., its internal growth as a literary genre. In this chapter we shall strive to understand the novel in both these ways and in the process also try to ascertain the structural parallels between these trajectories. In a somewhat unconventional approach, we shall first study the external growth of the novel, and only later move on to examining the content and technique of the early, realist, modern and postmodern novels. This way, we believe, it will help us to locate the internal development of the novel in, what Pierre Bourdieu calls, “the field of literary production” of the novel.

THE NOVEL IN THE LITERARY CANON

A sweeping survey of three hundred odd years of the history of the novel reveals that it has had many ups and downs. Unlike what seems to be the picture now, the novel did not always enjoy the favour of the literary establishment. In its initial stages the novel existed on the margins of official literary culture. In fact, it existed in considerable disrepute. J. Paul Hunter in Before Novels discusses this aspect of the early novel to say, “Until quite late in the eighteenth century, the term ‘novel’ was used very loosely and imprecisely (not that more recent use has been all that precise either), often implying little more than opprobrium or contempt.” 24 Lennard J. Davis points out in Factual Fictions that the “English novels of the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries were perceived by many of the middle and upper classes as immoral and illicit.” 25 Pam Norris also makes a similar observation that “as an upstart literary form, the novel lacked the cultural capital or prestige of traditional forms like poetry or drama.” 26

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24 Novelists were accused of promoting immorality and licentiousness in society, particularly due to their deliberate choice of low subjects. See J. Paul Hunter, Before Novels: The Cultural Contexts of Eighteenth-Century English Fiction (New York and London: W.W.Norton & Company, 1990) 25.
25 Davis, Factual Fictions 131.
26 Norris, Realism 3-4.
In such a context, early novelists took pains to deny that they were writing ‘novels’. Daniel Defoe’s denials in this regard were the most vociferous. Dissociating himself from novel writing, Defoe wrote in 1719 that *Robinson Crusoe* is a “true story”, as opposed to novels which are lies “created to corrupt men’s hearts and their tastes.” In 1722, he again reiterated that the “private history” of Moll Flanders is very different from other kinds of writings like “novels and romances”. During these early decades, novels and novelists faced scores of polemical attacks through articles in periodicals, pamphlets and newspapers. In spite of the fact that many early novelists claimed to be pioneers of new kinds of writings, none of them identified themselves as novelists per se. As a result, the novel took its own time to carve out a niche for itself in the literary world. Ian Watt elaborates upon this late stabilization of the genre of the novel to say, “[Novelists] did not even canonize the changed nature of their fiction by a change in nomenclature – our usage of the term ‘novel’ was not fully established until the end of the eighteenth century.”

Consequently, early evidences of the theorization of the novel are by far too few, that too mostly by novelists themselves. William Congreve is the first to define the novel by its name in a familiar modern sense in the ‘Preface’ to *Incognita: or, Love and Duty Reconciled* (1713). He counter poses the novel against the prevalent romances to argue that in contrast to the “lofty language, miraculous contingencies and impossible performances” of the romances, “novels are of a more familiar Nature; Come near us, and represent to us Intrigues in Practice, delight us with Accidents and odd Events, but not such as are wholly unusual or unprecedented.” Tobias Smollett, another novelist, describes the characteristics of the novel in the preface to *Ferdinand Count Fathom* (1753) – “A novel is a large diffused picture, comprehending the characters of life, disposed in different groups, and exhibited in various attitudes, for the purpose of a

27 Cited in Marthe Roberts, p3.
29 See Davis, *Factual Fictions*; Hunter, *Before Novels* and McKeon *Origins*.
30 Watt, 10.
32 Davis, *Factual Fictions* 103-04.
33 Qtd. by Cuddon, 603-04.
uniform plan, and general occurrence, to which every individual figure is subservient." 34 Novelist Clara Reeve not only differentiates between ‘Novels’ and ‘Romances’, but also gives the novel its first serious treatment in the elevated style of a ‘classical dialogue’ in The Progress of Romance Through Times, Centuries and Manners (1785). She goes a step further to argue, “The word Novel in all languages signifies something new. It was first used to distinguish these works from Romances, though they have lately been confounded together and are frequently mistaken for each other.” 35 A possible reason for this stated confusion over the nomenclature of the novel could be that, towards the end of the eighteenth century, novels from other European languages were also getting translated into English and vice versa. Novels in these other languages were called roman, as derived from the romances. Thus, at the same historical juncture in England similar kinds of writings were circulating under two different names – novel and roman.

Apart from these occasional attempts at characterising and analysing the form of the novel, the only other known early theorizations were done by German romantic thinkers — Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, Friedrich Schlegel and Friedrich August. They, however, did not contrast the novel to the romance. Goethe compared the novel to drama; Schegel distinguished it from classical writing, while August saw it as “the genre which included all other genres.” 36 J. Paul Hunter explains these types of early attempts to say, “Some of the difficulty stems from the novel’s inferiority complex. [Moreover, b]ecause of its obscure beginnings and insecure place in the hierarchy of literary forms and kinds, the novel historically has asserted itself by comparison to more established forms.” 37 Henry Fielding’s ‘Preface’ to Joseph Andrews (1742) in which he calls his work a “comic epic poem in prose” is another such example.

During the early nineteenth century, theorizations of the novel continued to remain very sparse. While it cannot be denied that the novel met with unprecedented success and underwent what many consider to be its peak as a form, the novel continued to exist outside the pale of official literary culture. For most part of the century, critics did not find the novel deserving of serious critical attention. Paradoxically, even the occasional prefaces written about novels by novelists disappeared. Despite the novel

34 Qtd. by Blamires, 247-48.
36 Reed, 8.
37 Hunter, 29.
coming into it's own as a genre, as far as its theorizations are concerned, the nineteenth century novelists took the success of the genre for granted and ignored it. The only significant change from the previous century was that polemical attacks against the novel became less strident and infrequent. Early nineteenth century novelists largely did not show any signs of overt self-reflexiveness and allowed their works to speak for themselves. It is only in the latter part of the century that novelists once again started writing about their novels, but this time it was more in the nature of polemical 'debates' or 'disputes' on the techniques, content and purpose of their novels.

The fiercest debates took place in post-1848 France. French novelists differed between three distinct philosophies of art — 'art for art sake', i.e., detached or apolitical writing, 'commercial or bourgeois art', i.e., art according to the needs of the market, and 'realist or social art', i.e., political or committed writing.\(^{38}\) These disputes strongly affected an entire generation of writers and critics all over Europe. Émile Zola's theory of 'Naturalism' transformed this debate into a full-blown pan-European literary controversy. Zola not merely wrote about how novels should be written, but also elaborated upon which novels were good and which subjects were appropriate for them. These debates opened up a floodgate of literary reflections on the art of the novel. Walter Besant wrote 'The Art of Fiction' in defence of naturalism; Henry James refuted him by writing an essay by the same title, before long Robert Louis Stevenson joined in by writing 'A Humble Remonstrance'; all these within the same year of 1884. Thomas Hardy targeted Zola to write 'The Science of Fiction' in 1891. Joseph Conrad elaborated upon the process of writing fiction in the 'Preface' to The Nigger of the Narcissus in 1897. Most of these debates, however, were as much about explanations and descriptions as they were about refutations and rebuttals. In spite of many such writings, the academic establishment still did not embrace the novel with open arms. There is record of an incident in 1895 in which a course on the novel was offered to students at Yale University. This course generated a huge academic controversy which spilled over into sensational debates in newspapers. In no time, the course was cancelled and the instructor threatened with suspension.\(^ {39}\)


\(^{39}\) See Eric Leuschner, 'Anthologizing the Novel', The Minnesota Review, the minnesota review n.s. 55-57 (2002).
It is only by the early twentieth century that a distinct change in the attitude to the novel became discernable. The novel started gaining critical acceptance and respect as a literary genre. Walter L. Reed correctly points out, "As far as the poetics of the novel is concerned, there were no real attempts at official classification until the twentieth century." He elaborates:

> The most influential figure in the latter development is of course Henry James, although one might mention Proust and Mann as well.... James insists on the high seriousness of the art of the novel... reveals his desire to represent the novel as a solid and enduring institution, at least as important to the present age as poetry and the drama.

Perceptions about the novel began to undergo change. The novel started earning its place in the official system of genres. By the 1920s, with the inclusion of the novel into university syllabi, things changed even more dramatically. An entirely new breed of people, i.e. novel scholars, now came into being. The novel graduated into becoming one among the major genres. Walter Allen takes note of this enhancement in the status of the genre of the novel in *The English Novel* (1954):

> The novel emerged from the underworld of taste and its development has been conditioned by this. Until quite recently, the only men who have taken the novel seriously have been novelists, and, often relatively uneducated men, they have frequently brought little to the study of it but their own experience as novelists, novelists, moreover, who interpreted their craft in no very exalted way.

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40 Reed, 9.
41 Reed P8.


42 Novel scholarship was directly linked to reforms in the English literature syllabi of two major British universities during the early twentieth century - Cambridge and Oxford. The novel was included in their literary syllabi along with classical writings and Shakespeare. The related changes were quite dramatic. As Terry Eagleton says, "In the early 1920s it was desperately unclear why English was worth studying at all; by the early 1930s it had become a question of why it was worth wasting your time on anything else," *Literary Theory: An Introduction* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1983) 31.

The notion of the novel as a literary form having something to do with art in the sense of being consciously made and shaped to an aesthetic end is quite new.43

Though the novel became an important literary genre, poetry and drama continued to dominate university syllabi. It was only after the Second World War that the novel truly arrived within the academia in the sense of becoming its central and most important genre. W. B. Carnochan explains this phenomenon in his essay, ‘The English Curriculum: Past and Present’ (2000), by arguing:

A hundred years ago, English departments might list perhaps one course in the novel, but poetry and drama . . . counted most. At mid-century, under the influence of New Criticism, poetry kept its preeminence. But after World War II, as literary criticism took a sociological turn, the novel gathered strength at the expense of poetry and drama.44

After the Second World War, the institutionalization of the novel in universities transformed not merely the status of the novel, but also the way it was written. German novelist, Thomas Mann, famously observes in his 1947 work, Doktor Faustus - “Art, is becoming criticism.”45 Early novelists, who were mostly journalists46, now started turning into professors and critics. By the 1960s the novel came to occupy a commanding position within the literary establishment. So much so, that in 1967, Frank Kermode said, “It happens in our phase of civility, the novel is the central form of literary art.”47 In this phase, novel ‘scholarship’ progressively became more deeply entrenched in universities. As Peter Hitchcock says:

Throughout the sixties and into the seventies.... the English literature establishment was vigorously formalizing elements discussed in criticism of the novel such as Ian Watt’s The Rise of the Novel, F. R. Leavis’s The Great Tradition, Northrop Frye’s Anatomy of Criticism, Wayne C. Booth’s The

43 Allen, 17-18.
46 Davis says, “...Eliza Haywood was a journalist; Defoe and fielding wrote and edited newspapers; Aphra Behn was also the writer of political pieces, as was Mary Manley; Bunyan was a pamphleteer; Swift ... wrote journalistic pieces...Like these writers, Richardson printed newspapers, pamphlets, and other pieces,” Factual Fictions, 175.
Simultaneously, a rival trend also began to manifest itself. Some literary critics started complaining about the near total domination of the field of literature by the novel. Hostility and resentment towards the novel’s enhanced status started finding expression in certain quarters. In 1957, Northrop Frye wrote *Anatomy of Criticism* to pose a challenge to the “novel-centred view of prose fiction”. Others, too, followed suit. This turnaround in the general approach towards the novel has been noted by Michael McKeon in his book *Theory of The Novel* (2000):

... over the course of the last two centuries, the novel has become so dominant that its popularity has tended to obscure the importance, and the ongoingness, of other forms of fictional narrative. To speak of the novel, it came to appear, was to speak of narrative “as such”. Four decades ago, however, there was a powerful reaction against this general tendency.

By the late 1960s critics like Robert Scholes and Robert Kellogg sought “to put the novel in its place.” Many critics started paying deliberate attention to other literary categories like prose-fiction and narrative. Approximately at the same point in time, some critics and novelists also started questioning ‘high’ canonical novels as opposed to ‘low’ novels. Ihab Hassan describes this new tendency in his book *The Postmodern Turn* to argue that “Decanonization ... [became the key feature of the literary posturing after the 1960s and it] applies to all canons, all conventions of authority.... we decanonize culture, demystify knowledge, deconstruct the language of power, desire, deceit.”

Eric Hobsbawm also notes this shift in *Age of Extremes*:

> [T]he boundary between what is and is not classifiable as ‘art’ ‘creation’ or artifice became increasingly hazy, or even disappeared altogether,... an influential school of literary critics at the fin de siècle thought it impossible,
irrelevant and undemocratic to decide whether Shakespeare's *Macbeth* was better or worse than *Batman.*

The form of the novel started undergoing a corresponding change. Novelists now tried to consciously embrace and integrate popular novels within the folds of the 'high' novel. They sought to collapse literary 'margins' into the 'centre'. Perhaps the most esteemed example of this growing trend is Italo Calvino's 1979 novel, *If on a winter's night a traveller,* which cleverly combines recognizable motifs from the 'spy' novel, 'murder mystery', 'romance', 'science fiction', 'adventure' novel, 'detective' novel, 'travel tale' and 'gangster' novel within the folds of a novel-within-novel mode of a highly stylized, self-referential and theoretically up-to-date novel. Calvino summed up the essence of his lifelong literary endeavour in a posthumously published work to say:

> After forty years of writing fiction, after exploring various roads and making diverse experiments, the time has come for me to look for an overall definition of my work. I would suggest this: my working method has more often than not involved the subtraction of weight. I have tried to remove weight, sometimes from people, sometimes from heavenly bodies, sometimes from cities; above all I have tried to remove weight from the structure of stories and from language.  

Apart from novelists, other artists also started changing the formal characteristics of their 'high' or 'canonized' art in order to include elements from 'low' or 'popular' arts within their works. As Linda Hutcheon says in *A Poetics of Postmodernism:*

> [P]ostmodern painters, sculptors, video artists, novelists, poets, and filmmakers join[ed] with these architects in collapsing the high/low art hierarchy of earlier times, in an attack on high art centralisation of academic interest, on the one hand, and, on the other, on the homogeneity of consumer culture which adapts, includes, and makes all seem accessible by neutralizing and popularising.

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This change in perspective was a manifestation of an aversion towards the elitism of the ‘high’ canon. It was also a result of the ideological triumph of the ‘market’ after the 1960s, and the ensuing crass commercialisation of literature, wherein erstwhile ‘low/mass’ culture now gained in esteem. Paradoxically and ironically, this shift also included a fair degree of critical self-awareness. As Robert Mengham says, “[F]rom the late 1970s onwards the mutual dependence of fiction and critical theory began to figure largely in the production and reception of numerous texts.”

This was because during the 1960s ‘literary theory’ started making dramatic breakthroughs in the academic world. Postmodernism, too, started making its mark. Frederick Karl aptly links both these developments to say — “Put succinctly: Postmodernism may be an invention of critics.”

Now, the canonized novel became even more obviously intellectualised and theoretical. By the late eighties the situation came to a point where refrains about the deliberate obscurity and unintelligibility of ‘theoretically loaded’ novels started getting voiced. Elizabeth Dipple complained in *The Unresolvable Plot* (1988), “The task of reading many current novels has become a serious academic exercise.... [and there is a] failure of complex experimental writers to win convinced American or international audiences inside or outside of the academy....”

Novelist and critic Raymond Federman, in his collection of essays, *Critifiction* (1993), also expressed his exasperation at postmodernist fiction being “stifled by academic theorizing”.

He articulated his suspicions to say, “The question then: Is a novel labelled UNREADABLE because it is experimental (a priori or a posteriori)? Or is it labelled EXPERIMENTAL because it is left unread?” This emerging state of affairs, conversely, was a further critique of the increasing institutionalisation of the genre of the novel, particularly the canonized novel, within the extremely restricted and limited circles of only those who had access to higher education.

In recent years, another shift has become discernable vis-à-vis the novel. Critics have started arguing that the novel is perhaps not as central to our civilization as has

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57 Dipple, 10-11.
58 Federman, 124.
59 Federman, 66.
been made out to be. Linda Hutcheon, one of the tallest critics of postmodern fiction makes the following observation, “In the early years of postmodernism, for instance, fiction seemed to be the genre that attracted the most attention from critics, including myself....But what was particularly striking in the 1990s was the move to [study] the performative.”

Fredric Jameson also argues that the novel has seen no major innovation after the *nouveau roman*, and that the most distinctive new medium-cum-form of postmodernism undoubtedly is the “videotext”. With literature departments turning into culture-studies departments, novels have become uneasy in their ivory towers. Interestingly, debates about the end of ‘theory’, as well as the end of ‘postmodernism’ have also started coming to the fore. Against this overall backdrop, it cannot yet be said that the novel has entirely fallen from grace, but it is undoubtedly poised at a juncture which does not look like its canonical ascendancy.

On the whole, we can say that literary perceptions about the novel have undergone dramatic reversals in the course of its history. During its initial stages, the novel started out by being a genre that existed outside the ambit of literary canonization. For most part of its existence, it was considered inappropriate and unbefitting for serious literary contemplation. It is only during the twentieth century that the novel started gaining acceptance and recognition within the official system of genres. By the mid-twentieth century, the novel came to occupy a distinct, assured and enviable place in the elite club of genres, enough to provoke hostile reactions, not on account of its ‘low’ character, but, on the contrary, on account of its ‘high’ character. In recent years, the spotlight has once again started shifting away from the novel. The novel has undeniably travelled a long way. It has occupied dramatically different positions in the literary canon in the course of its history. In our endeavour to understand this aspect of the novel, let us now try to understand the factors that have caused and shaped these developments.

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63 Federman says, “Postmodern fiction came and went, and there is nothing to compare it to now,” 109. Nicol also says, “Yet now, however, there is a sense that the term is finally showing signs of ‘stopping moving’ – or at least that major new definitions of postmodernism have, for the time being ceased appearing,” 2.
BOURGEOIS CULTURE AND THE NOVEL

So far, we have mainly tried to provide a brief outline of 'what' happened to the novel in history. Now, let us try to understand 'why' what happened, happened. We have already argued in the last two chapters that the novel was and continues to be a quintessential middle class genre. In this section, we would continue the argument that the trajectory of the genre of the novel can be best understood if the corresponding trajectories of capitalism and the development of 'bourgeois culture' are kept in mind. We would argue that the middle classes, on the whole, played an important role in legitimising 'bourgeois culture' and the novel as a genre played an important role in that. Let us explicate how.

We have already argued that the origin of the novel was integrally tied up with the concerns of the middle classes. The novel was a product of the very same historical circumstances that threw up the middle classes themselves, viz., the transition from feudalism to capitalism. Its themes reflected all the main debates involved in this long drawn process of transition, particularly its moral and ethical dimensions. Unlike the earlier genres the form of the novel was not bound by rules or codes. The novel incorporated new forms of print literature like the character, travelogue, diary, letter, pamphlet etc. within its fold. During its early days it emerged from low social origins; precisely the kind of origins that the middle classes came from. It represented either people who had recently bettered their social status and gained access to education, or those who were aspiring to improve their station in life. Its opposition to 'high' aristocratic literary forms was so overt that during its initial stages the novel displayed a deliberate preoccupation with 'low' themes. As Lennard J. Davis says, "Indeed, without the appearance of the whore, the rogue, the cutpurse, the cheat, the thief, or the outsider it would be impossible to imagine the genre of the novel." Or, as J. Paul Hunter says, "[T]he early novel concentrates not on true extremes (the unique or near unique) but rather on people who slip beyond the norm and test the social fabric. Here are murderers, thieves, rapists, those who commit incest, and those who father bastards or malidentified offspring..." With such subjects and themes it is not so difficult to understand why the novel was treated with contempt by the literary establishment of those times, especially an establishment that was largely aristocratic in nature.

64 Davis, Factual Fictions 175.
65 Hunter, 37.
We can understand the changes in the status of the novel better, if we put to use Raymond Williams's concept of 'residual', 'dominant' and 'emergent' forces in society. Using this concept, we can say that during its early years, the novel was an 'emergent' literary form, which represented the imaginative concerns of the still 'emergent' middle classes. In this phase the novel fulfilled an important historical function. As Fredric Jameson says:

...the novel play[ed]... a significant role in what can be called a properly bourgeois cultural revolution — that immense process of transformation whereby populations whose life habits were formed by other, now archaic, modes of production [we]re effectively reprogrammed for life and work in the new world of market capitalism.66

However, the novel, a typical middle class form, did not become part of the official culture too easily. This was because the middle classes themselves were not part of the establishment yet. As historians have observed, even by the late eighteenth century, the middle classes were “[d]ependent on the aristocracy for patronage...[and] bound to the landed elites in ties of deference.”67 The novel came into its own only during the nineteenth century when the triumph of the bourgeoisie over the aristocracy seemed imminent. As David Daiches says, “The nineteenth century was the great age of the English novel. This was...because this essentially middle-class form of literary art was bound to flourish increasingly as the middle classes rose in power and importance...”68 Several significant historical events took place during the mid-nineteenth century that led to and revealed the dramatic increase in the influence of the bourgeoisie. In 1846, the Corn Laws were repealed in England; a legislation that broke the backbone of the powerful landed aristocracy. By 1848, popular revolutions demanding liberal reforms started taking place simultaneously all over Europe — in Paris, Sicily, Naples, Vienna, Venice, Milan, Warsaw and Cracow69. These revolutions

66 Jameson, Unconscious 152.
69 See Belchem and Price eds., 692.
delivered a deathblow to an already declining feudalism\textsuperscript{70}. The way was now paved for a capitalism that had been ‘emergent’ till then to establish itself as a ‘dominant’ system and for the bourgeoisie to become the dominant class. Serious efforts were made to replace old aristocratic cultural symbols with new bourgeois cultural signifiers. The new liberal bourgeois state played its due role in this entire process, especially putting to use the ideology of nationalism. The entire literary establishment began to get overhauled. By then the “[m]iddle-class cultural hegemony was evidenced by the gains of the lifestyle of respectability among all social strata, with its family-centred social life and insistence on sobriety, frugality, educational attainment, religious observance and sexual propriety.”\textsuperscript{71} The reduction in the antipathy and hostility towards the form of the novel in this century was undoubtedly linked to this entire transformation. As the middle classes gained in prestige, the novel, too, gained in approval.

The middle classes, however, continued to play the same kind of role that we have described before. Neither were the middle classes like the bourgeoisie, i.e. the class that led from the front, nor were they like the working class, i.e. the class whose raw power fuelled the bourgeois liberal revolution but which clearly didn’t want to stop where the bourgeoisie in fact had. The middle classes occupied a more intermediate place in the capitalist system. They became its self-appointed bearers of the cross. As a consequence, they debated the right and wrong of all occurrences. By nature, the middle classes always swim with the tide. Right now, the tide was in favour of capitalism and the bourgeoisie, and although a section of the middle classes were unhappy, its vast majority helped in defining, legitimising and institutionalising bourgeois culture as a whole. The novel played a crucial role in this process.

In this backdrop, new kinds of debates and deliberations came up within the literati. The upwardly mobile middle classes now aspired to turn into sophisticated ‘gentlemen’ and ‘gentlewomen’, a new ‘non-class identity for the industrial and mercantile elites’. As David Cody points out “[B]y the latter part of the century, it was almost universally accepted that the recipient of a traditional liberal education based on Latin at one of the elite public schools – Eton, Harrow, Rugby, and so on – would be

\textsuperscript{70} The outcome of most of these revolutions was a compromise between the ascendant bourgeoisie and the decadent yet durable aristocracy, in favour of the principles of ‘liberalism’ and the ‘free market’.

\textsuperscript{71} Belchem and Price eds., 382.
recognized as a gentleman no matter what his origins had been.” The dominant bourgeoisie now sought to build itself into the mould of the neo-elites. It imbibed many of the same aristocratic values which it had earlier opposed. This changing ethos is best captured by William Thackeray in his masterpiece, *Vanity Fair* (1847-48) or by Charles Dickens in his famous novel, *Great Expectations* (1860-61). Gustave Flaubert and Charles Baudelaire also catch the same spirit in their French novels in more overt ways. *Great Expectations* is particularly noteworthy for its protagonist Pip, who begins as an apprentice blacksmith aspiring to become a gentleman. A mysterious benefactor pays for his education. However, Pip mistakenly imagines that his real benefactress is Ms. Havisham, an old aristocratic lady symbolic of the declining nobility. It is only later that Pip realizes, much to his initial embarrassment and shock, that the true source of his income is the outlawed Australian criminal from his childhood, Abel Magwitch. Although Pip tries to repay his moral debt to the dying Magwitch, his admiration and desire for becoming a sophisticated and refined gentleman, unlike Magwitch, remains intact. By the end of the novel, Pip realizes that the only true ‘gentleman’ he has ever known in his life is his blacksmith brother-in-law, Joe. He, therefore, gives up his snobbish ways and learns to value the inner worth of people as opposed to just appearances based on an elite education, money and wealth. Interestingly, he plans to return to the marshes to become a blacksmith again, but circumstances force him to go away to Cairo where he ends up earning a lot of money. Returning after eleven years, he not only becomes a gentleman but also marries his childhood fancy, the aristocratic Estella. Such social issues thrown up during the nineteenth century became the subject of novels.

By the last quarter of the nineteenth century, it became obvious that the bourgeoisie was no longer keen on carrying the Enlightenment values of equality and liberty any further. Doing so would have meant sharing its profits with the aspiring masses. Rather, the bourgeoisie chose the reverse path. It embarked upon an aggressive path of diversifying its economic activities, but in a manner that would centralize all profits more effectively. This mission resulted in the capitalist system developing from the stage of competitive capitalism to the stage of ‘imperialism’ or ‘monopoly capitalism’. Historians Belchem and Price say, “Ideologically liberal, the bourgeoisie

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emerged as the hegemonic class by 1875. Thereafter, however, the always-variegated class fragmented further, as genteel capitalists intermarried with landed wealth and embraced conservative politics."73 It is not surprising for us to understand, therefore, why the late Victorian culture is often associated with negative epithets like ‘decadent’, ‘high’, ‘prudish’, ‘repressed’, ‘old-fashioned’, etc.

New kinds of class differentiations began to surface. The middle classes started sub-dividing and stratifying into the ‘upper’ and the ‘lower’ middle classes. This was not a very simple transformation. Yet, on the whole, things changed so dramatically, that a novelist like Emile Zola, who advocated the writing of novels based on the lives of the poor and the downtrodden, ended up earning the ire of most of his colleagues and successors. Clearly, the bourgeoisie and the elite upper middle classes no longer wished to concern themselves with the lives of the underprivileged. By the turn of the century, with advances in capitalism, particularly in its more predatory form of imperialism, the middle classes grew in number on an unprecedented scale. The bourgeois state now became more aggressively nationalist, even as its economic growth became increasingly premised upon unprecedented levels of international trade, investment and financial activities.

The size of the reading public also grew at an extraordinary rate. The novel witnessed a corresponding increase in circulation. However, this growth was paradoxical in nature. As Eric Hobsbawm says, “The democratisation of culture through mass education – even through the numerical growth of culture-hungry middle and lower-middle classes – was itself sufficient to make elites look for more exclusive cultural status-symbols.”74 Though the circulation and publication of novels increased manifold, novels themselves started getting sub-divided into ‘high’ and ‘low’ novels. ‘High’ experimental novels emphasised technique and style and were rooted in the modernist movement, while ‘low’ novels were those associated with old-fashioned realism. This ‘high–low’ division was clearly a new development for the novel. Q.D. Leavis, in her landmark study, Fiction and the Reading Public (1932), emphasizes how the novel was not always divided into such categories. She argues that before the twentieth century such hierarchical divisions and classifications were virtually non-existent:

73 Belchem and Price eds., 131.
74 Hobsbawm, Empire 226.
It would not be true to suggest a stratification of novel writers and novel readers in 1760, for example, when anyone who could read would be equally likely to read any novel, or every novel, published... even a century later the same conditions hold.... To illustrate the curiously inverse relation now existing between esteem and popularity.... The twentieth-century reader who would let this pass as a commonplace could only be brought to realize that it is indeed something new in English history...  

In order to understand the emergence of this inverse relation between “esteem” and “popularity” during the twentieth century, it is important to understand the nature of the modernist movement in arts. The early twentieth century modernist movement was quite unique in nature. The modernists were bitterly and evenly divided between rival progressive and conservative ideological impulses and usually wore their politics on their sleeves. Their differences became even more pronounced after the Russian Revolution, though on the whole they remained highly confined and restricted in the scope of their influence upon the wider people. As Raymond Williams says, “Modernism and the avant-garde, in any of their forms, have never involved, as producers or as publics, more than minorities: often very small minorities.” Eric Hobsbawm also says, “It is the experimental avant garde of the pre-war years which, outside a small community of the ‘advanced’ — intellectuals, artists and critics and the fashion-conscious — was never to find a genuine, spontaneous welcome among the broad public.” Malcolm Bradbury reiterates that the modernist movement was restricted to a handful of intellectuals, artists and critics living in “cosmopolitan artistic enclaves...[or] culture-capitals like Berlin, Paris, London for a time, and perhaps more latterly New York.” David Harvey also says, “Modernism was ‘an art of cities’ and evidently found ‘its natural habitat in cities’.” Bradbury further argues that modernism not only made a distinguished “cult of the artist...[but also] a distinct ‘class’ of artists.”

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Hobsbawm, *Empire* 221.
Bradbury, 72 (emphasis added).
At approximately the same point in time, the process of overhauling universities also started in Europe (from the 1890s onwards). At this stage, universities started playing a crucial role in institutionalising bourgeois culture as the ‘national’ culture of different nations, especially in the context of the surcharged years preceding the First World War.\(^1\) As Terry Eagleton says, by the 1910s, universities like Oxford and Cambridge were already seen as “the bastions of ruling-class power.”\(^2\) The canonization of the genre of the novel during the twentieth century was part of this entire process and ethos. The novel was canonized because it was clearly the most eminent literary creation of capitalism and bourgeois culture. However, just because the novel was canonized does not mean that all novels were admitted into the corridors of ‘culture’. An intense debate about ‘good’ and ‘bad’ novels also started within the academia. Conversely, novels also fed on these university-based debates. The deliberately obscure, self-reflexive, experimental novels written by the modernists served to consolidate literature as a new ‘discipline’ of study in universities.\(^3\) A certain class of novels also became considerably more unintelligible and out of reach of the ordinary reader. A new kind of elitism and exclusivity crept into the form of the novel. This trend became evident through works like F. R. Leavis’s *Mass Civilization and Minority Culture* (1930). Leavis argued, “In any period it is upon a very small minority that the discerning appreciation of art and literature depends.”\(^4\) T. S. Eliot also theorized this elitism by calling it literary “taste”. Harry Levine makes the following observation about this transformation:

> [P]opularity was excluded, by definition, from the aims of the [modernist] writers...their names did not figure upon the best-sellers list of their day; many others did, which are now forgotten. The aura of obscurity or unintelligibility which may still occasionally tinge these intellectuals, in some

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\(^1\) See Barry, 11-38. See also Eagleton, *Literary Theory*.
\(^2\) Eagleton, *Literary Theory* 29.
\(^3\) Terry Eagleton describes various aspects of this prolonged academic transformation and reconstitution of university education in his book *Literary Theory: An Introduction* (1983). Eagleton argues how literature came to occupy an important place within the academia – “In the early 1920s it was desperately unclear why English was worth studying at all; by the early 1930s it had become a question of why it was worth wasting your time on anything else” (P31). Also, “the definition of an academic subject was what could be examined, and since English was no more than idle gossip about literary taste it was difficult to know how to make it unpleasant enough to qualify as proper academic pursuit” (P29). Modernism with its deliberately difficult techniques certainly helped in this entire project.

degree, emanates from their refusal to advertise themselves or to talk down to their audiences in the hope of enlarging it. That, for them, would indeed have been a treason of the clerks. Their ultimate quality, which pervades their work to the marrow, is its uncompromising intellectuality. Many modernists asserted their anti-populist positions along with their respective pro- or anti-capitalist positions. Some of them were anti-populist because they were against the stranglehold of market forces in arts and literature; they were against the arts being converted into commodities for mass consumption. However, some artists were anti-populist because they were just blatantly anti-democratic. As Fredric Jameson says, “Indeed, it can be argued that the emergence of high modernism is itself contemporaneous with the first great expansion of a recognizably mass culture...” Modernist trends like Dadaism, which were vehemently anti-elitist, could not make real breakthroughs with the masses. On the whole, popularity largely evaded both progressive and conservative experimental artists (except a few) during the early twentieth century.

The canonization of the novel during the early twentieth century took place in this overall backdrop. The novel was canonized largely through university departments. Only eighteenth and nineteenth century novels were included in university syllabi. Twentieth century contemporary novels were largely left out. However, the notable point for us about this process of canonization is the fact that the division of the novel into high and low novels also took place simultaneously.

The post-Second World War scenario was characterized by governments playing a significantly enhanced role in the fields of culture and literature by overtly constituting, patronizing and regulating many bodies associated with painting, literature, architecture, film, television, radio etc. Against the backdrop of the Cold War, the ideological preferences of Western governments and government-sponsored universities became very clear. Frederic Jameson argues, “In the aesthetic realm, indeed, the process of

85 Levin, 156.
86 Jameson, Postmodernism 63.
88 After the First World War, capitalism’s conflict with ‘socialism’ further intensified, and ‘fascism’ emerged as a major civilizational challenge. By the end of the Second World War, fascism was defeated and the West emerged from a deep crisis of decades of massacres, killings and destruction. The post-Second World War years, heralded the era of national liberation and decolonisation for the
cultural “universalisation” (which implies the repression of the oppositional voice, and
the illusion that there is only one genuine “culture”) is the specific form taken by what
can be called the process of legitimation in the realm of ideology and conceptual
systems.” 89 This same process was employed during the 1950s for canonizing twentieth
century literature. Academicians chose to canonize only ‘high’ modernism in university
syllabi, and ignored both the progressive avant-gardes as well as the realists, who were
very much part (perhaps the more dominant part) of early twentieth century literature.
Many critics have made this observation in their studies. Aijaz Ahmed argues in In
Theory that:

...the triumph of modernism is indicated today precisely in the fact that
realist texts produced during that same period and in the same Euro-
American spaces now find no significant place in the literary curricula and
critical discourses pertaining to that period and place, regardless of the
number, the worth or social influence of such texts in their own time. 90

Raymond Williams also says, “After Modernism is canonized, however, by the post-war
settlement and its accompanying, complicit academic endorsements....The marginal or
rejected artists become classics of organised teaching....” 91 Even authors with fascistic
sympathies like Yeats, Lewis, Pound, Eliot and Lawrence were canonized, but the
progressive avant-gardes and the realists were completely obliterated from memory. 92

colonized nations. By the 1970s “no territories of any significant size remained under direct
administration by former colonialist powers or their settler regimes, except in Central and Southern
Africa — and of course, in embattled Vietnam.” (Hobsbawm, Extremes 222). Advanced capitalist
nations lost their direct economic and political control over the worldwide web of profit making
through colonial rule. However, new ways of keeping this economic web alive were devised.
Bourgeois governments of most of the newly independent nations (in spite of avowals of non-
alignment) were slowly drawn into economic complicity. As Eric Hobsbawm says, “Some time in the
early 1970s such a transnational economy became an effective global force.” (Extremes 277).
Meanwhile, intense ideological, economic and political battles (largely non-military) were fought
with socialism throughout the decades of the Cold War. By the 1970s, socialist economies became
discernibly weak. By 1989, socialism started politically collapsing in many nations. In 1991 the
Soviet Union also collapsed. This changed many things for capitalism. Eric Hobsbawm describes the
decades of the nineties to say, “ ...the globe has now become far more of a single operational
unit...In fact, for many purposes, notably in economic affairs, the globe is now the primary
operational unit and older units such as the ‘national economies’, defined by the politics of territorial
states, are reduced to complications of transnational activities. The stage reached by the 1990s ...[is
that of the] the ‘global village’...”. (Extremes 15).

89 Jameson, Unconscious 87.
91 Williams, Politics of Modernism 34.
Perhaps the most outstanding example of this tendency was *The Great Tradition* (1948) written by F.R. Leavis. Leavis nominated only Jane Austen, George Eliot, Henry James, Joseph Conrad, and D. H. Lawrence to the novel canon. He left out Charles Dickens from the canon, arguing that Dickens was a mere “entertainer”. Thus, universities became very important ideological apparatuses. They defined and redefined modern literary history, and made conservative bourgeois culture seem like universal culture and good taste. It is at this juncture that novels and scholarship about novels started displacing poetry and drama from their esteemed positions in literature and literary criticism.

Meanwhile, in the advanced capitalist countries, there was an explosive growth in the size of the middle classes and in their economic prosperity during the years of the ‘Golden Age’ from 1950 to 1973. By and large the middle classes were very happy with this prosperity, but a section of the educated youth in the universities became uncomfortable with the proliferation of blatant consumerism and commercialisation, and the ideological intolerance shown towards dissent in the backdrop of the Cold War. A wave of opposition and rebellion spread among the students of Europe, America, Africa, Mexico, and Japan, etc. This dissent manifested itself through the watershed student movements of 1968. These movements were an attempt in history to critique and transcend capitalism as a system in order to build something new. These movements also perhaps symbolized the last major dissent that emerged from the heart of capitalism against capitalism for a long time. While they fizzled out very fast, they left a huge negative impact upon intellectuals and artists. Pierre Bourdieu argues that “the collapse of illusions” after 1968 was very similar to the situation after 1848, when writers vigorously invoked and asserted the autonomy of intellectuals in a “radically elitist” way. The proliferation of disengaged academic ‘theory’ and postmodernist intellectualism after 1968 was very likely an outcome of these disappointments. Alex Callinicos also argues:

The political odyssey of the 1968 generation is, in my view, crucial to the widespread acceptance of the idea of a postmodern epoch....This conjuncture – the prosperity of the Western new middle class combined with

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93 The only other movement has been the protests against the imminent Iraq War in the advanced capitalist countries.

the political disillusionment of many of its most articulate members – provides the context of the proliferating talk of postmodernism.95

Martin McQuillan, Graeme Macdonald, Robin Purves and Stephen Thomson also explain the emergence of ‘theory’ in the Western academia in their book, Post Theory: New Directions in Criticism (1999):

Theory wants more than anything to be thought of as ‘Radical’. ...It is also a wished-for Political activism....The rise of Theory as an institutional practice is contemporaneous with the ‘decline’ of the political left. ...Furthermore...there is some connection between ‘market-led’ educational reforms and the eminence of Theory within the academy....Not only is the university itself a site of political contest both in terms of what is taught and in terms of the struggle for control of access to education and ‘academic freedom’, it is the university in its production and demarcation of the limits of knowledge which defines the possibilities of any institutionalised, or otherwise, activity of thinking....’Theory’, its rhetoric, is that which can be applied, without having to bother applying itself. 96

Thus, ‘theory’ arrived into the Western academia by the 1970s and it impacted the novel canon in a particular way. Because theory basically represented a “conversation among academic professionals”97, canonized novels now withdrew into the in-house circle of universities. One of the earliest theorists of postmodernism, Susan Sontag articulates this emerging trend in ‘One Culture and the New Sensibility’ to say:

Art does not progress, in the sense that science and technology do. But the arts do develop and change. For instance, in our own time, art is becoming increasingly the terrain of specialists. The most interesting and creative art of our time is not open to the generally educated; it demands special effort; it speaks a specialized language.98

Eric Hobsbawm also says in Age of Extremes, “Speaking generally, the decisive development of twentieth-century culture, the rise of a revolutionary popular entertainment industry geared to the mass market, reduced the traditional forms of high

96 Martin McQuillan et al., x-xii.
97 Ahmed, 2.
art to elite ghettos, and from the middle of the century their inhabitants were essentially people who had enjoyed a higher education."99

It is in this overall backdrop that postmodern novelists started advocating for breaking the 'high-low' hierarchy in literature. The sheer ferocity of their claim implied that unlike ever before, the novel in fact became clearly sub-divided into two types – the novel for the common reading public, i.e., the 'low' novel, and the novel for the specialized and sophisticated reader, i.e., the 'high' novel. In this case it is useful to invoke what Fredric Jameson argues in another context, "Yet it is commonplace that transgressions, presupposing the laws or norms or taboos against which they function, thereby end up precisely reconfirming such laws."100 For all their well-intentioned claims about doing away with high and low divisions in literature, postmodern novelists have not managed to bridge the gap between their novels and their reading publics in the manner of the realist novelists like Balzac, Dickens or Tolstoy. Although attempts to create hybrid novels by mixing high and low genres do reveal the anxieties of the 'high' establishment in sustaining the sheer restrictedness and elitism of its existence, yet basic statistics of sales show that but for a few exceptions such intentions have not materialized into reality for postmodern novelists.

The ascendancy of theory within the academia meant that canons were scrutinized in greater detail, but they were not changed much. 'Derrida', 'Kristeva', 'Foucault' or 'Said' could be applied to the same old Austen or Dickens to revolutionize the meaning of their novels/texts. Any radical restructuring was therefore largely left undone. Although a separate canon for popular fiction came up within the academia, as Bob Ashley argues in his anthology entitled, The Study of Popular Fiction: A Source Book (1989), there exists a deep "theoretical" problem with the existence of the category of popular fiction itself within the academia:

The very notion of a method for the study of popular fiction may be questioned. There may be an anxiety lest one simply constructs an alternative tradition, even an 'alternative canon', separate and distinct from that of main-stream literature....And it may further be argued that to remove work on popular texts to a separate terrain, with its own distinctive

99 Hobsbawm, Extremes 509.
100 Jameson, Unconscious 68.
methodology, is to endorse its marginalisation, to legitimize Literature in its tendency to ignore.101

Theoretical and novelistic avowals against high-low hierarchy, therefore, instead of obliterating hierarchical differences also ended up reinforcing and fortifying them. This must be understood in another context. By the mid-1970s the forces of free market and neo-liberalism started gaining ground in policy-making circles. As Steven Connor says:

From the 1960s onwards, it became plain that the careful quarantining of culture from commerce was unsustainable; from the early 1980s onwards, as more and more cultural institutions were taken out from under the wing of government and exposed to the tender mercies of the market-place, the dream of the autonomy of art from society and the culture industry survived only as nostalgic desire or utopian vision.102

With the withdrawal of the state from crucial areas related to education, market forces stepped in. Obviously, the ‘market’ derived a lot of its cultural, ideological and social legitimacy from sponsored universities, academies and research institutions. In such a context, literary arguments finding inherent ‘merit’ in the literary market started emanating from the universities. Claims for doing away with literary hierarchies in the late twentieth century, therefore, were not only about integrating the really marginalized, oral, folk or other arts into the canon, but were also about integrating ‘mass’ literatures entrenched in the successes of the market into the canon. As Raymond Williams says, “We have all learned, on the pulse, the material realities of that long capitalist appropriation of the popular, and its scarcely less disturbing indifferences to the genuinely different.”103

Thus, on the whole, the history of the canonization of the genre of the novel was deeply entrenched in the changing nature of the literary ‘establishment’ itself. The process of the novel becoming the part of the literary establishment or the official system of genres was integrally tied up to and coincided with the process of the bourgeoisie itself becoming part of the establishment. The middle classes swayed in their artistic and other preferences with the ascending bourgeoisie. The novel, as a genre, remained

101 Ashley, 5.
102 Connor, 24.
103 Williams, Politics of Modernism 118.
outside the ambit of canonisation as long as the bourgeoisie themselves were outside the scope of the establishment. It became a part of the canon when the bourgeoisie became dominant and reconstituted the literary canon. Since then the novel, a typical middle class form has continued to remain an established and canonized form. Crucially, the canonization of the novel coincided with the division of the genre into the ‘high’ and the ‘low’ novel. With this bifurcation, the novel progressed from being an ‘unimportant’ to a ‘more important’ to the ‘most important’ literary genre. While the reach of the novel spread to an increasing number of people, the canonised novel undoubtedly became more and more elite. Over the past couple of decades, the politics of canonization has come under a lot of scrutiny. However, in spite of self-critical reconstitutions of the canon by the literary establishment aimed at including novels by women writers, black writers, third-world writers, etc. the canon has not undergone a restructuring which may be sufficient for entirely doing away with the high-low hierarchisation of the novel. This is because, the literary establishment, entrenched in bourgeois culture, has consistently found motivation in the tendency to distinguish its reading habits from an ever-increasing vast multitude of common readers, whether in the guise of ‘taste’ or in the guise of ‘intellectualism’ or ‘theory’. The ‘high’ canonized novel has undoubtedly become uncomfortable with its restrictedness, but that has not necessarily made the canon more accommodative in any radical or far-reaching way.

On the other hand, instead of examining the canonized novel, if we look at the genre of the novel as a whole, we would find that it continues to be consumed in vast numbers by the ever-growing educated middle classes. The novels that the middle and the lower-middle classes read are standard products of an increasingly standardising market, and cannot be valorised or celebrated uncritically. Nonetheless, their lack of canonization neither means that they are not being written, nor that they are not being

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104 The publishing industry contributed to this process in their own way. As Steven Connor says, “Central to the paperback revolution was the establishment of Penguin Books by Allen Lane in 1935....Initially, Penguin Books achieved its readership for classics and literary texts by not announcing them as such....Following the establishment of ‘quality paperback’ in the USA in the 1950s, an idea whose success depended on a hugely expanding college market, British publishers in the 1970s began to distinguish literary texts or classics from their other products by marketing them in larger format, more expensive editions and series, thus removing them from the kind of distribution outlets where they had previously been available alongside other less exalted kinds of reading.” (14-15).

105 Aijaz Ahmed in ‘Salman Rushdie’s Shame: Postmodern Migrancy and the Representation of Women,’ in In Theory argues that “the authors who are accorded central importance in this evolving counter-canon” write texts that are complicit in their appropriation by postmodernism. (125).
read. Perhaps, the sheer volume of such novels has ensured that in spite of nearly a hundred years of canonization, the establishment still hasn’t managed to entirely tame the genre of the novel. Even though elite literary establishments have sought to turn the novel into their own genre, the novel has not entirely divorced itself from its modest social origins. The quintessential middle class form of the novel may certainly be facing challenges in recent times from other mediums like film and the Internet, but the novel indisputably continues to be the most dominant literary genre of print.

THE DEATH OF THE NOVEL AND THE EVER-REGENERATIVE FORM
Alongside this aspect of the novel, there is another aspect that must be kept in mind while trying to understand the novel’s development in history. That is, its uncertain and insecure existence as a genre. Over the last hundred years the novel has continually been plagued by predictions about its exhaustion or death. These predictions started coming to the fore by the early twentieth century, just about the time when the novel started improving its literary acceptability as a genre. They continue to plague the novel till date. In this section, therefore, we shall try to understand why the novel seems to exhaust itself every few years. In order to do so, we shall take into account specific instances of such predictions over the last hundred years.

Let us examine a few of them. During the early twentieth century, upon seeing a film, Tolstoy famously announced the death of the novel, arguing that future writers would write for the screen rather than for the book. André Breton called for an end to the novel in 1924 condemning its tendency to generate consent and familiar reassurance among its readers. José Ortega y Gasset announced the death of the novel in 1925, putting the blame on new mass-democratic societies which were an anathema to the novel. George Orwell predicted the demise of the novel in 1939 through his essay, ‘Inside the Whale’, finding it incompatible with totalitarian dictatorships. Debates about the end of the novel resounded once again during the 1960s, this time it was mass media that was put to the docks. By 1965, such predictions became so common that Frank Kermode was prompted to say, “The special fate of the novel, considered as a genre, is to be always dying.” In 1967, John Barth wrote his famous essay, ‘The Literature of Exhaustion’, arguing that conventional literary modes of the novel had been “used up”.

In 1969, American novelist, Ronald Sukenick, wrote his landmark work *The Death of the Novel and Other Stories.* During the 1970s, debates about ‘metafiction’ or ‘surfiction’ assumed that novels were already dead and that contemporary writings merited an entirely new nomenclature. In 1983, Milan Kundera announced the death of the novel under socialism, finding it incompatible with “Totalitarian Truth”. He also stated that the reductive and unifying spirit of mass media was “contrary to the spirit of the novel.”

In 1988, Linda Hutcheon argued, “…postmodern fiction has also been called the death of the novel by so many critics that a list would run on for pages.”

Debates about computer *hypertexts* also predicted and continue to predict the demise of the novel. Even as late as in 2004, a major novelist like V.S. Naipaul announced, “I have no faith in the survival of the novel. It is almost over.”

Such predictions consequently led a large number of novelists and critics over the last hundred years, to express relief over the novel’s endurance and continuity as a genre. If we were to start enlisting writers and critics who have celebrated the novel’s longevity, either because they expected it to die and were reassured to find it still alive, or because they believed that it was not yet time for the novel to die, the list would run into hundreds. Irrespective of the specific instances of such opinions, however, what can be underscored is the fact that doubts about the novel’s endurance continue to be expressed, that too, to an extent not found for any other genre in literature. Those making these predictions fall into two distinct types. There are those who associate the novel’s demise to outmoded novelistic techniques and content, and argue that the novel’s exhaustion is internal in nature. And there are those who link the end of the novel to external factors like developments in cinema, television, video and the Internet, and their ill effects on book reading as a whole. Irrespective of the specific reasons associated with these different types of announcements or predictions, what can be underlined is the fact that throughout the twentieth century the novel has constantly run into a crisis of survival.

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customarily seeming to be at the brink of death, yet repeatedly managing to reinvent itself.

A striking resemblance to this trajectory of the novel can be found in the crisis-ridden path followed by capitalism itself. During the early twentieth century capitalism, too, started facing predictions about its demise or death. Some of these predictions had their basis in the emergence of socialism, which posed a serious ideological-political challenge to the foundations of capitalism. Others came up as a result of the economic cycles of ‘boom’ and ‘slump,’ or ‘growth’ and ‘slowdown’ which emerged as systemic to the development of capitalism. In spite of frequent predictions about its imminent end, capitalism, too, repeatedly managed to sustain and revive itself. It was this tendency of capitalism that caused an anti-capitalist but pro-novel critic like George Lukács to observe in *Studies in European Realism* (approx. 1938), “[Capitalism] is like the hydra of the legend which grows a new head every time one of its heads is chopped off.”

We do not intent to propose an exact one-to-one correspondence between the crisis-ridden system of capitalism and recurrent predictions about the novel’s death; however, the structural parallels between the two are too hard to miss. We would suggest therefore, that the novel, a typical middle-class literary genre, has mirrored the ups and downs of capitalism because of its deep umbilical relationship with the system. This view is further strengthened by the fact that unlike poetry or drama, it is only the novel that has incessantly invited such announcements and predictions over the last hundred years. However, we would also accept that this suggestion must be substantiated through a

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110 Many economists and philosophers argue that capitalism is a crisis-ridden system. Notable among them are - Karl Marx, Joseph Schumpeter, Joan Robinson, Ernest Mandel, Paul Baran, Paul Sweezy and Robert Brenner. They argue that since the days of its inception, capitalism has followed the cycle of boom and slump, and that economic stagnation and crisis are inherent to the development of capitalism. We must mention here, however, that this is not the dominant view about capitalism. Most bourgeois economists do not accept crisis to be an inherent component of the development of capitalism.

As Eric Hobsbawm says - “The so-called ‘trade cycle’ of boom and slump was familiar to all businessmen from the nineteenth century…. In the past, waves and cycles, long, medium and short, had been accepted by businessmen and economists rather as farmers accept the weather, which also has its ups and downs.” *Age of Extremes*, 86-87.

111 Lukács, *European Realism* 241.

112 Predictions about the end of poetry were made at the beginning of the modern age, i.e., just about the time when the novel started emerging. Hegel, most notably argued that the new age was prosaic in nature, therefore, it would be impossible for poetry or art to survive in it. During the twentieth century, both poetry and drama continue to survive in considerably weakened forms. This has produced anxieties, but no fresh or repeated speculations about the possibility of their very existence.
much more detailed and exhaustive study of each such prediction and its intellectual and literary context.

Let us examine this aspect of the novel in another light. If we examine the history of the novel we find that the novel has faced frequent predictions about its death, but as a corollary it has also managed to repeatedly reinvent itself. What is remarkable about this development is the fact that the novel has done so by time and again calling itself a 'NEW' form. When the genre of the novel originated in England, it was named – 'novel', literally meaning new. Samuel Richardson wrote that his works belonged to a "new species of writing."[113] Henry Fielding, too, described his novels as "a new province of writing."[114] During the early twentieth century, when Henry James discussed innovative novelistic techniques devised by his contemporaries, he called this new type of fiction – 'The New Novel'. He did so in an essay written by the same name in 1914. When Robbe-Grillet announced fresh approaches to writing novels by getting rid of 'order', 'chronology' and 'omniscient narration', he again used the epithet 'new' to describe, what he called, the 'Noveau Roman' or what was translated into English as the 'New Novel'. His collection of essays was also entitled For A New Novel (1963). Novelists like Philippe Sollers and Jean-Marie Le Clezio of the Tel Quel group[115], advanced the project of the 'New Novel' further by emphasizing the inability of writers to put their inner or outer worlds into words. They innovated yet another style of writing fiction and called it the 'New New Novel'. As Linda Hutcheon says, "If the nouveau roman is self-mirroring auto-representation, then Tel Quel's works are anti-representation."[116] Put together, the different stages of the development of the novel can thus be documented as – the novel, the new novel, the noveau roman/new novel and the new new novel. Thus, somehow, alongside the predictions of death, the novel has also been strongly associated with newness in all its different senses, of being innovative, recent, original, anti-traditional, latest, fresh and different. Without separately going into the details of each of these stages, let us now try to understand the reasons behind the novel's constant newness.

[113] Samuel Richardson, Selected Letters, qtd. by Davis, Factual Fictions 182.
[114] Fielding, qtd. by Davis, Factual Fictions 197.
[115] The Tel Quel group involved almost all the major luminaries of the structuralist and later poststructuralist movement at some or the other stage in their lives – Roland Barthes, Derrida, Foucault, Julia Kristeva etc.
As we have already argued in the chapter on the rise of the novel, the basic temper of the novel was forged by the new system of capitalism. Part of the novel’s newness lay in the fact that it broke the formal rigidities imposed upon literature by earlier genres, and evolved as a flexible new type of genre. Part of it lay in the ethos of the new era itself, which was based upon a strong sense of historical progress. Value was now invested in the ‘new’ instead of in the ‘old’. By the eighteenth century, perceptions changed to such an extent that unlike ever before, “Originality then became a common term of praise of art and literature.”\(^{117}\) The novel embodied this proclivity for the new, both in its form as well as in its content. It imbibed a forward-looking ethos as well as an anti-traditional approach. By dealing with contemporary times and ordinary characters, it broke new grounds in literary writing. However, the novel was path breaking in yet another way. In order to understand this, we must take into account the fact that before the novel’s times, oral forms of story-telling were dominant and prevalent. The novel, we would argue, was the first major literary genre to break away from oral story-telling traditions in order to become an important literary genre of print. Let us examine this point in some detail.

The technology of print was invented in Germany during the mid-fifteenth century; however, the mass use of print took a long time to establish itself. As Elizabeth L. Eisenstein says in her landmark work, *The Printing Revolution in Early Modern Europe* (1983), even till quite late after the establishment of printing presses, oral transmissions remained the preferred mode of communication. In fact even the much older technology of manuscripts was not very prevalent. As Eisenstein argues, “Outside certain transitory special centres, moreover, the texture of scribal culture was so thin that heavy reliance was placed on oral transmission even by the literary elites.”\(^{118}\) Even after considerable advancements in printing, the remnants of orality in literature remained very pronounced, and took a long time to give way to an autonomous and self-contained ‘print culture’. The most explicit proof of this phenomenon was that repetitions and adaptations of the same ‘stock’ stories continued in different narrative literary forms till

\(^{117}\) Williams, ‘Originality,’ *Keywords* 230.

Development of the Novel

well into the seventeenth century, be it drama, verse or prose\(^\text{119}\). As Walter J. Ong says in *Orality and Literacy* (1982), “In oral tradition, there will be as many minor variants of a myth as there are repetitions of it ... But the formulas and themes are reshuffled rather than supplanted with new material.”\(^\text{120}\) Walter Benjamin also says, “storytelling is always the art of repeating stories, and this art is lost when the stories are no longer retained.”\(^\text{121}\) The novel was the first major literary genre to break from this tradition of repeating old stories. Benjamin elaborates:

The earliest symptom of a process whose end is the decline of storytelling is the rise of the novel at the beginning of modern times. What distinguishes the novel from the story (and from epic in the narrower sense) is its essential dependence on the book. The dissemination of the novel became possible only with the invention of printing...What differentiates the novel from all other forms of prose literature – the fairy tale, the legend, even the novella – is that it neither comes from oral tradition nor goes into it.\(^\text{122}\)

Walter J. Ong also differentiates the novel from oral traditions to say, “The print world gave birth to the novel...”\(^\text{123}\); although he argues that the novel is different from oral storytelling mainly because it does not rely upon ‘oral episodic narratives’. In our view, one of the main distinguishing features of the novel was that it largely put an end to presenting variants, reworkings or adaptations of the same old stories to the reading public. By engaging with the lives of ordinary people, located in the here and the now, novels basically introduced new and unique stories of individuals into the literary realm. As Wallace Martin says, “It was in fact by breaking away from conventional forms and

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\(^{119}\) See Lennard Davis, *Factual Fictions*, where he argues that many forms of print like ballads, *newes*, novellas or news claimed to be new, recent or latest, however, during the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries it was still virtually impossible for any reader to imagine a narrative as being actually recent. Claims could be made; but there was no guarantee of a text of recentness. Older stories were still used (49-70).


\(^{122}\) Ngugi wa Thiong’o also describes a similar transformation in the African art of storytelling to say, “There were good and bad story-tellers. A good one could tell the same story over and over again, and it would be fresh to us, the listeners.” However, it was the colonial print culture that brought an end to this culture. See ‘The Language of African Literature,’ in Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin eds., 287.

\(^{123}\) Ong, 148-149.
imaginary situations that the novel came into existence... The shift from anonymous repetition of traditional tales to original stories filled with circumstantial detail [marked its emergence].” Thus, apart from many other factors, an important demarcating factor for the emergence of the novel also was the sheer originality of its stories.

Obvious links can be drawn between the novel’s engagement with newness or novelty and the prevalent philosophical ethos of those times which placed value in the ‘new’ instead of in the ‘old’. This also privileged a sense of historical progress as opposed to stagnation or continuum. However, in our view, the reason behind the continuing endurance of the concept of ‘innovation’ and ‘novelty’ in the novel also lay in the predilection of capitalism for favouring innovative and novel products, including literary products, for their success in the market. Let us understand this view in some detail. It is true that the pitched philosophical debates involved in the transition from feudalism to capitalism paved the way for establishing the worth and merit of the concepts of ‘originality’ and ‘novelty’. However, we must not forget that this entire philosophical ethos was an important ideological asset for capitalism only as long as feudalism (representing tradition) remained an important challenge for it. Once, the dominance of capitalism was established, it gave up its complete antipathy towards ‘tradition’ and established its own elite culture in the vocabulary of ‘customs’, ‘classics’ and ‘conventions’, although to be fair, we must mention here that tradition never became the dominant value under capitalism. However, in our opinion the more enduring reason for the prevalence of novelty as a virtue in the modern age has been the centrality of the ‘market’ for capitalism. The market has always sustained itself on the ideology of innovation and novelty, selling everything from goods to culture in the name of innovation or as the latest fad. As Pam Norris says, “Novels also were the first literary products to discover a mass market and they made some of their writers a great deal of money”. It is well known that the inception of the novel was closely tied up to the emergence of the literary market. We would argue, therefore, that the novel as a literary genre has shared a close relationship with the innovation-loving market, which in turn has played an important role in giving shape to the genre of the novel.

124 Martin, 18.
125 Norris, 3-4.
The development of print culture, which gave birth to the novel, was based upon the simultaneous emergence of a literary ‘market’. In the new marketplace, the skills of writers could be sold for a price and they could earn a living without necessarily having to depend upon aristocratic and feudal patrons. They could also make a living without necessarily having to follow the classical rules of writing. Writers like Henry Fielding and Dr. Johnson always lamented the manner in which upstarts like Samuel Richardson or Daniel Defoe could earn a living in the same marketplace without having received any formal training in the classics. Many authors also revelled in this newfound freedom from old constraints and restrictions. However, almost as soon as the writers discovered their economic independence and self-reliance, they also started discovering the tyranny of the marketplace and the new dependencies and limits that it imposed. Many authors learnt it the hard way that the marketplace did not turn them into their own masters; rather book traders and publishers assumed the role of their erstwhile noble patrons and became as exacting and demanding as their predecessors had been. The development and growth of print culture meant that writing became a ‘profession’ and literary books a ‘commodity’. The unease created by this new situation was and continues to remain a running strain for many writers and artists under capitalism. Novelists throughout the history of the novel have expressed this tension and lament over the commercialisation of art. Authors have also especially attacked other authors by insinuating that while they themselves were writing for the sake of art, others were writing for money. A subtle double-irony has always accompanied this topic of discussion by novelists. Let us take a look at a few examples.

Daniel Defoe, one of the earliest beneficiaries of this transformation wrote rather critically in 1725, “Writing...is become a considerable Branch of the English Commerce. The booksellers are the Master Manufacturers or Employers. The several Writers, Authors, Copyers, Sub-writers, and all other Operators with Pen and Ink are the workmen employed by the said Master Manufacturers.” Henry Fielding complained about falling literary standards due to the use of cheap writers as a substitute for quality writers — “paper merchants, commonly called booksellers [force the public to]...drink cider water... because they can produce no other liquor.” Goldsmith also condemned

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126 See Watt, 55-59.
127 See Watt, 55.
128 Watt, 56.
the devaluing of literary merit in the new marketplace in ‘The Distress of a Hired Writer’ (1761), and lamented “that fatal revolution whereby writing is converted to a mechanic trade; booksellers, instead of the great, become the patrons and paymaster’s [sic] of men of genius.”

He opined that the older system of feudal patronage was much better than the new marketplace. In 1837, Balzac wrote an entire novel on the changing face of writing and publishing called Lost Illusions. In this novel he created a character called Lucien. Lucien seeks to defend “pure poetry” and goes to Paris for this purpose. He, however, gets ruined in the process. In the course of his misfortunes a seasoned publisher enlightens him:

Mark this, my boy: in literature the secret of success is not work, but the exploitation of the work done by others. The newspaper-owners are the building contractors and we the bricklayers. The more mediocre a man is, the sooner he will reach his goal, for he will at need be willing to swallow a frog, and do anything else to flatter the passions of the little literary sultans ... Today you are still severe and have a conscience, but tomorrow your conscience will bow to the ground before those who can tear success from your grasp ... a fashionable author is haughtier and harsher towards the new generation than the most leech-like of publishers.

Interestingly, David, another character in the novel, who tries his hand at developing cheap paper for printing, is the one who manages better success between the two friends. In 1859, novelist Gustave Flaubert wrote, “And though I have great needs (which I never mention), I would rather be a wretched monitor in a school than write four lines for money.”

In 1891, George Gissing wrote his most successful novel called New Grub Street, in which he wrote, “Literature nowadays is a trade. Putting aside men of genius, who may succeed by mere cosmic force, your successful man of letters is your skilful tradesman. He thinks first and foremost of the markets; when one kind of goods begin to go off the slackly, he is ready with something new and appetising.”

In 1979, Italo Calvino grieved over the fate of the author as a ‘brand’ for promoting sales in the market. The dramatized novelist of his novel, If on a winter’s night a traveller, writes:

129 Watt, 55.
130 Qtd. by Lukács, European Realism 50.
131 Quoted by Bourdieu, Rules of Art 85.
Strange people circulate in this valley: literary agents awaiting my new novel, for which they have already collected advances from publishers all over the world; advertising agents who want my characters to wear certain articles of clothing and drink certain fruit juices; electronic technicians who insist on finishing my unfinished novels with a computer.133

Obviously, this lament has not been exclusive to novelists alone. Critics have also made similar observations about the stranglehold of the market over creativity. Ken Worpole, a critic of contemporary popular fiction, says in *Reading by Numbers*, "No longer does the writer type away at an original idea which becomes a novel submitted to the publisher; rather, the publisher, or agent, goes to the writer with the idea of the novel.... in many publishing houses the editorial department has shrunk as the rights, sales, publicity and marketing departments have grown."134 Other artists, especially poets, too, have expressed similar disappointments about writing in the era of capitalism. However, our reason for singling out the novel in this context is that the novel has been the first major literary genre (apart from genres associated with journalism), which made its mark in the literary world through its successes in the marketplace.135 In our view, apart from philosophical reasons, it is this integral link of the novel to the market that has made it aggressively rely upon emphasizing its ‘novelty’ and ‘innovation’ in the course of its developments, so much so, that the novel has embodied this spirit explicitly in its developing nomenclature.

This valuing of innovation or novelty by the market, however, has not always been about real innovations. Very often, it has actually been about fetishizing the new. Many critics have made observations about the empty significance of the aesthetic value of novelty in literature. Richard Hoggart writes about this phenomena that “there is an obsession with fashion and novelty: to be the latest thing is thought in itself sufficient recommendation.”136 Harry Levine makes the same observation, in a 1960 article, ‘What was Modernism?’ — “There is no inherent reason why time’s latest offspring should be

135 See Ian Watt (58-60) where he argues that the economic criterion led to the predominance of prose over verse because authors were paid on a per sheet basis. Verbose novels, therefore, were the most paying genre for authors who wanted to make a living. Novels, thus, proliferated due to the favourable terms offered by the market.
the last; on the other hand, there is an irrepressible tendency to canonize – at least for a
day — the very latest thing.” 137 Malcolm Bradbury argues, “‘Not to be new is, in these
days is to be nothing’... novelty is an achieved convention.” 138 Fredric Jameson also
explains this same tendency in his 1991 work Postmodernism:

What has happened is that aesthetic production today has become
integrated into commodity production generally: the frantic economic
urgency of producing fresh waves of ever more novel-seeming goods (from
cloning to airplanes), at ever greater turnover, now assigns an increasingly
essential structural function and position to aesthetic innovation and
experimentation. 139

An interesting development since the mid-twentieth century has been that certain
critics have started highlighting the lack of originality or innovation in contemporary
novels. Irving Howe, an early critic of postmodern fiction says, “...younger writers,...
feel that at whatever peril to their work and careers they must grapple with something
new in contemporary experience, even if, like everyone else, they find it extremely hard
to say what that ‘newness’ consists of.” 140 Harry Levine also says, “Since more and more
combinations have been tried, more and more possibilities have been exhausted... the
problems of experimentation have become harder and harder.” 141 Edward Said points out
in The World, the Text, and the Critic (1984), that today’s “writer thinks less of writing
originally, and more of rewriting.” 142 Italo Calvino expresses the same opinion through
the character of a dramatized reader, “With me, more and more often I happen to pick up
a novel that has just appeared and I find myself reading the same book I have read a
hundred times.” 143 Umberto Eco, writing about his novel, The Name of the Rose, claims:
“I discovered what writers have always known (and have told us again and again): Books
always speak of other books, and every story tells a story that has already been told.” 144
Tim Woods writes in Beginning Postmodernism, “Yet if there is one note which

137 Levin, 142.
138 Bradbury, 73- 89.
139 Jameson, Postmodernism 4-5.
141 Levin, 144.
142 Said qtd. in Hutcheon, Narrative xvi.
143 Calvino, If on a winters... 197.
144 Hutcheon, Poetics 128.
dominates all these descriptions of postmodernist fiction, it is exhaustion... that it is impossible to write an original work." 145 Bran Nicole says in *Postmodernism and the Contemporary Novel*, "In postmodernity we are no longer able to appreciate the particularity of our historical location, we can no longer create original works of art." 146

Some critics and novelists take this line of argument a bit further to express a sense of choking-up in the very act of writing itself. For instance, Robert Scholes says in ‘The Fictional Criticism of the Future’ — "Once we knew that fiction was about life and criticism was about fiction — and everything was simple. Now we know that fiction is about other fiction, is criticism infact, or metafiction. And we know that criticism is about the impossibility of anything being about life, really, or even about fiction, or, finally, about anything." 147 Raymond Federman explains this tendency to say that in today’s times "writers write simply to reveal the impossibility of writing in a postmodern era." 148 Thus, while most novels continue to be sold in the name of novelty, a creative exhaustion of possibilities has also come to the fore. In our opinion this condition is rooted in two contradictory trends. One is the development of a highly centralized publishing industry, which imposes a sameness upon the products for its global market, and the other is the theory of 'intertextuality' premised upon the ideas of Derrida, Foucault, Barthes, Kristeva and others. Let us elaborate.

Over the last few decades the publishing industry has become more and more monopolistic in nature. Big multinational publishing giants have expanded the scope of their business by increasingly investing in different countries in order to capture their book markets. Very often this development has been celebrated for making it possible for local readers to read a novel simultaneous to its release in the first world. Often it has also been celebrated for making it possible for local writers, especially third world writers to make a splash in the global market. The globalized publishing industry has periodically focussed upon ‘Latin American writers’, ‘Indian writers’, ‘Canadian writers’, ‘Australian writers’ etc. and made a novelty out of them. They have also claimed to bring the world closer through this act. However, this entire process has

146 Nicole, 5.
148 Federman, 5.
undoubtedly resulted in making the products of these publishing houses all the more 'same'. As Milan Kundera writes in *The Art of the Novel* in 1986:

> But alas, the novel too is ravaged by the termites of reduction, which reduce not only the meaning of the world but also the meaning of works of art. Like all of culture, the novel is more and more in the hands of mass media; as agents of the unification of the planet's history, the media amplify and channel the reduction process; they distribute throughout the world the same simplifications and stereotypes easily acceptable by the greatest number, by everyone, by all mankind.149

Raymond Williams also describes this process in *The Politics of Modernism* (1989) to say:

> What was being addressed was a real development of universal distribution and of unprecedented opportunities for genuine and diverse cultural exchange. What was ideologically inserted was a model of an homogenized humanity consciously served two or three centres: the monopolising corporations and the elite metropolitan intellectuals. One practiced homogenization, the other theorised it.150

Describing the scenario of British publishing houses over the last few decades, Steven Connor says in *The English Novel In History* (1996):

> Since the 1970s, British publishers, who had hitherto been able to resist the pressure of large American corporations, have become more and more vulnerable to takeovers and mergers. The 1980s saw a simultaneous increase in the size of publishers and a remorseless reduction in their numbers. Increasingly publishing houses found themselves either part of large publishing conglomerates, which demanded high-volume sales from every unit of production, or part of multinational companies, whose publishing sections were only a small part of a range of different activities...it also meant that their product became increasingly difficult to distinguish

149 Kundera, 17.
150 Williams, *Politics of Modernism* 132.
Thus, to some extent the exhaustion of novelty or innovation in novel writing has also been induced by the fact that choices regarding publications are increasingly being made by a small number of very large publishing houses, which among themselves decide upon what to supply to the reading public. Genuine variety and diversity, therefore, have to quite an extent been compromised.

On the other hand, the sense of exhaustion in the novel has also been an outcome of an accompanying philosophical trend whose roots lie in the views propounded by Derrida, Foucault, Barthes, Kristeva and others. These philosophers argue that the only means of knowing the world are textual, rather than material. In Derrida's famous words in Of Grammatology — 'There is nothing outside the text'. According to them anything that we know of the world today, or whatever we may know of it tomorrow are derived from existing textual knowledge. Even the limits of imagination are conditioned by what has already been imagined and expressed through texts. Therefore, all stories are an outcome of the stories that have already been told. The most important works in this regard are Julia Kristeva's essay, 'Word, Dialogue and Novel', and Roland Barthes's essay, 'The Death of the Author', both written during the late 1960s. Both these essays effectively put a serious question mark on the claim to originality and creativity by all authors and writers. Kristeva, of course, famously coined the term 'intertextuality' in order to concretize this entire concept of the inevitable interdependence of all new texts upon earlier texts. These critical ideas have had a corresponding impact upon the novel. Instead of claiming to write new stories, writers themselves have started positing their works as intertextual works. Narrating stories has now become all about deliberately giving a new spin to old tales. As Linda Hutcheon says, "The stories which The Name of the Rose retells are both of literature (by Conan Doyle, Borges, Joyce, Mann, Eliot, and so on) and those of history (medieval chronicles, religious testimonies). This is the paradoxically doubled discourse of postmodern intertextuality."152 This theoretical tendency has also been embraced by the culture industry. Remix music albums or

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151 Connor, 17-18.
152 Hutcheon, Poetics 128.
remaking of earlier films are the most prominent examples of this trend. Thus, for the first time since the inception of the novel, novelists have started claiming helplessness over the inability to write anything original or telling original tales. We have already argued that recent historical tendencies in the West have been that of preferring a sense of historical continuum rather than a sense of progress. The theory of intertextuality, i.e., that the new is not so different from the old, smoothly merges into this tendency. Indeed, of late, this tendency has intensified. Thus, both the mass industry as well as critically acclaimed novelists have been vocally pursuing an illusive creative ‘originality’ for quite some time now.

It is to be noted here that given our line of argument the latest instance of exhaustion in the novel seems highly unlikely. After all capitalism has scored its biggest political triumph only recently, with the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. If the trajectory of the novel is indeed somehow linked to the trajectory of capitalism, then this is the most implausible time for buzzes about the exhaustion of the novel to prevail. Nevertheless actual literary evidence is to the contrary and such predictions have been gaining ground with many critics claiming that no major innovations have taken place in the form of the novel over the last few decades. In this context it is perhaps useful to take into account what Francis Fukuyama argues in his landmark work *The End of History and the Last Man* (1992) — “[Today] we cannot picture to ourselves a world that is essentially different from the present one, and at the same time better. Others, less reflective ages also thought of themselves as the best, but we arrive at this conclusion exhausted, as it were, from the pursuit of alternatives we felt had to be better than liberal democracy.”

Thus, even for those who celebrate the unrivalled success of capitalism, the triumph of capitalism has come like a final word on historical change, that nothing else but capitalism can prevail from now onwards. Thus, somehow the present times embody an ethos of an end or a death of radically new possibilities. Literary critics, especially over the last ten years, have started taking a special interest in examining ‘dystopias’ as opposed to utopias, i.e., a unique civilisational malady in which contemporary writers are no longer able to imagine a beautiful or ideal future.


154 There has been a lot of critical interest in the study of Utopias during the last one decade. Critics have invented the category of Dystopias, symbolising the inability to imagine a beautiful future. It is not a
Current observations about the novel’s exhaustion must be taken into account against this overall backdrop. The novel emerged in an ethos that celebrated novelty and innovation, that firmly believed in the concept of progress and that was aggressively anti-traditional in its temper. As J. Paul Hunter says the early novel was, “Self-conscious about innovation and novelty....The repeated claims of novelty and innovation, whether about the specifics of a single book or about new variations for the species itself, taken together are a strong reminder of how odd the novel looks among traditional literary forms.”¹⁵⁵ The novel always celebrated this spirit of novelty in the course of its developments. Of late, however, novels have been written in an ethos that is entirely anti-thetical to this spirit of the early novel and to the spirit of early capitalism. Today’s times have become sceptical about a sense of novelty and innovation, at least with regard to novelty in the novel. The stranglehold of the monopolistic publishing industry has also stifled genuine novelty and innovation. Though novelty still continues as the *mantra* of the literary market, it exists more in terms of a fetish. The present times no longer believe in a sense of historical progress, rather there is an emphasis on an endless continuum of history. The anti-traditional approach of the novel too has run into trouble with the emergence of concepts like intertextuality, and theories about the impossibility of originality, which theoretically link even the latest novel with the traditional ones.

Today, therefore, the novel is indisputably poised at an interesting juncture. It remains to be seen, if the current sense of exhaustion in the novel would lead to its genuine end as a literary genre or whether it would turn out to be just another instance in its long line of deaths and rebirths. Should we believe that the novel has run out of words, techniques and content, or should we look forward to its resurgence as a genre in the coming days? Ralph Fox says in *The Novel and The People*, “[T]he novel is the most important gift of bourgeois, or capitalist, civilization to the world’s imaginative culture.”¹⁵⁶ We tend to agree with this evaluation. And, to remind ourselves of what Georg Lukács said a long time ago when similar announcements were being made about the death of the novel, “We are still far from being able to look on capitalist prose as a

¹⁵⁵ Hunter, 24-25.
¹⁵⁶ Fox, 82.
Theories of the Novel

period we have fully done with, as one which really does belong simply to the past.\endnote{157}

The history of the novel over the last century has been all about constant alternation between exhaustion and rejuvenation. The novel has continuously vacillated between these two kinds of extremes – ever dying and ever rejuvenating. We would argue that a large part of the novel’s constantly having to die has got to do with its insatiable longing to relentlessly renew itself. As far as the future of the novel is concerned, only time will tell whether we would witness some fresh innovations in the form of the novel, or whether our generation of readers and students shall be the one’s to witness the relegation of the novel to a ‘residual’ literary genre. We can only say that the contemporary times do not seem to be too much in favour of the novel’s philosophical essence.

EARLY, REALIST, MODERN AND POSTMODERN NOVELS

Till now, we have largely devoted our attention to studying the development of the novel ‘externally’. In this section of the chapter, let us devote our attention to studying the ‘internal’ development of the novel in history, that is, examine changes in its theme, content, technique and form. At the very outset let us mention again that the most popular typology for documenting the development of the Western novel is the following: early, realist, modern and postmodern novels. Let us first briefly take into account the basic characteristics of these different stages of the novel.

Early novels were written during the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. They were mostly about experimenting with various available genres of writing, ranging from church sermons, ballads and travelogues to private diaries and letters in order to evolve new ways of narrating the emerging bourgeois subject’s stories. Early novels were path breaking in their choice of subjects, dealing with ordinary people of modest or low social origins instead of nobles, kings or gods. Their narrators were self-conscious (though not self-reflexive in the postmodern sense) and struggled to establish the credibility of their stories. They went to great lengths to explain how they had been able to gain insights into the ‘true’ stories of other people’s lives, very often, private lives. Most authors used devices like epistolary forms, diary or journal entries, dramatized narrators, etc. in order to make their stories seem believable and tangible.

\endnote{157} Lukács, The Historical Novel 348.
They created individual ‘characters’ in great detail by giving them distinctive psychological and physical attributes. These characters largely remained constant throughout the course of their novels. The plots mostly comprised of the varying experiences of these unchanging characters against the backdrop of changing circumstances.

By the nineteenth century, the form of the novel underwent many modifications and developed into a more comprehensive genre for narrating the tale of individual subjects. At this stage, the novel came to be dominated by realism. Realist novels showed a marked preference for ‘omniscient’ narration, which was a more holistic technique of narration developed to its full by nineteenth century novelists. First-person biographical accounts of individuals progressing from childhood to youth to finding professional and/or personal happiness also became frequent. Considerable emphasis was now placed upon depicting socio-historical settings of novels in great details. Plots gradually evolved into structures with distinct beginnings, middles and ends. Realist narrations largely remained chronological and their endings usually neatly tied all the loose ends together into a closure. A two-fold development took place in these novels simultaneously. On the one hand, circumstances underwent change, on the other hand, characters also transformed through their diverse experiences. Plots were usually about transformations in both — socio-historical settings as well as individual characters.

By the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, realist novels started giving way to modernist novels. However, we must mention here that modernism was not a homogenous movement or tendency. Many major novelists of the early twentieth century did not switch over to modernist techniques of writing. They continued in the tradition of realism. Even those who used modernist techniques did not use all the modernist techniques simultaneously or towards the same ideological ends. Yet, modernist innovations included many features. For instance, chronological narratives gave way to non-chronological narratives. Closures were abandoned for more open-ended narratives. The focus shifted away from characters located in particular socio-historical contexts to the fragmented interior lives of these characters. In many novels the main plot revolved around developments in the inner lives of individuals, very often in spite and irrespective of their socio-historical contexts. Symbolism, imagism, stream-of-consciousness and other techniques evolved and were employed to emphasize the difficulty and indeterminacy of representing life. Point-of-view narratives were also used to further
underline the breakdown of unified and reliable accounts of truths. A sense of anguish or nostalgia for lost wholesomeness or unity became the characteristic tone of these novels. Relativity in moral and intellectual outlook was also emphasized.

After the mid-twentieth century, the techniques and themes of 'high' modernism further accentuated to give way to postmodern novels or fiction. Postmodern novels lay emphasis on the complete breakdown of the possibility of representing the real. They were aggressively against all accounts claiming to be authoritative or reliable, and emphasized plurality of meaning. Instead of a nostalgia for lost narratives, however, they fore-grounded irony and black humour. They also displayed narcissist tendencies in the persona of their dramatized narrators and characters. Postmodern novels were acutely self-referential and self-reflexive, both in their themes as well as in their techniques. Their characters were a-social beings devoid of identifiable character traits. The authority of authors or novelists also progressively declined. Readers were deliberately invited by novelists to participate more actively in the creation and interpretation of texts. Intertextuality was also used to highlight the textual constructedness of everything. Novelist took conscious positions against the division of literature into 'high' and 'low' genres and emphasized the creation of hybrid novels. Parody and pastiche were also employed as common techniques. Put simply, postmodern novels have been theorized into five major types - *nouveau roman, metafiction, surfiction, fabulation and historiographic metafiction*. *Nouveau romans* mainly emphasize the lack of any deep, coherent or definitive meaning in this world. *Metafictions* are self-referential fictions about fiction itself, that is, they make a commentary on their own form and technique. *Surfictions* propose that far from trying to make fiction imitate reality it is more important to understand that life itself is fictional. *Fabulations* denote a form of writing similar to magic realism, and are fantastic, mythical, nightmarish, strange, tragic yet comic at the same time. *Historiographic metafictions* are novels which revisit the socio-historical instead of evading it. However, this revisiting is always mediated through irony or a basic scepticism about the authenticity of histories and historiographies.

All in all, we believe that the typology of the early, realist, modern and postmodern novels is pertinent to our study and we shall employ it in the Jamesonian sense to denote the 'cultural dominant' of the novel in successive ages. However, using this typology is not without its own perils. For instance, the category of 'Modern novels' is highly problematic, because what is largely recognised as the 'Modern novel' today,
Development of the Novel

undoubtedly represents only a selective 'high modernist' canon that was put in place during the late 1940s and 50s. This explains the persistence of debates about continuities or similarities between 'modernism' and 'postmodernism' in literary theory. Contrary to such debates, no comparable confusions or ambiguities about continuities between realism and modernism exist in literature. In our view, the relationship between modernism and postmodernism is akin to the relationship between early and realist novels. They are different, yet they denote the deepening of the same essence. Historically, during the early twentieth century, realism was declining from being a 'dominant' to a 'residual' form, while modernism was just emerging. By the mid-twentieth century, high modernism gave way to postmodernism as the 'dominant' tendency, while realism became truly 'residual'. Let us take a brief look at some prevalent opinions about modernism and postmodernism.

Several critics argue that modernism and postmodernism share more in common between them than has usually been assumed. For instance, David Lodge in his 1977 work, The Modes of Modern Writing says, "Critical opinion varies about how significantly new postmodernism really is ... genuinely revolutionary [or] ... 'marginal developments of older modernism'. Both opinions are tenable – both are in a sense 'true'." 158 Jean-Francois Lyotard famously states in The Postmodern Condition (1979), "What then is the postmodern? ... It is undoubtedly a part of the modern.... Postmodernism ... is not modernism at its end but in its nascent state, and this state is constant." 159 Linda Hutcheon in A Poetics of Postmodernism (1988) argues, "...modernism literally and physically haunts postmodernism, and their interrelations should not be ignored." 160 In a subsequent work, The Politics of Postmodernism (1989) she reiterates, "Contrary to the tendency of some critics to label as typically postmodern both American surfiction and the French texts of Tel Quel, I would see these as extensions of modernist notions of autonomy and auto-referentiality and thus as 'late modernist'." 161 Alex Callinicos in Against Postmodernism (1989) goes a step further to emphasize, "I doubt very much that Postmodern art represents a qualitative break from

159 Lyotard, 'Answering the Question' 335.
160 Hutcheon, Poetics 61.
161 Hutcheon, Politics 27.
Modernism of the early twentieth century.\textsuperscript{162} They both share common features or traits, namely: "Aesthetic Self-consciousness or Self-Reflexiveness", "Simultaneity, Juxtaposition, or Montage", "Paradox, Ambiguity, and Uncertainty" and "Dehumanisation and the demise of the Integrated Subject or Personality".

Most of these critics, however, hold the complicated cultural category of postmodernism responsible for such theoretical ambiguities. Contrary to this view, we believe that postmodern tendencies which emphasize self-reflexivity, pluralism, loss of nostalgia, constant irony, black humour, breakdown of representation and language, narcissism, lack of meaning and totality, intertextuality, hybridity etc. are easier to understand because of their homogeneity; while the myriad and ideologically contested positions of modernism are more difficult to come to terms with, more so because a largely successful historiographic exercise in the decades following the Second World War managed to strait jacket the ideological and aesthetic diversity of early twentieth century arts and literatures.\textsuperscript{163}

We would not go into further details of this debate. Let us just state that most critics view modernism and postmodernism as fundamentally oppositional and different. Common entries in literary dictionaries, on web sites or in postmodern anthologies bear testimony to this opinion. For instance, Brian McHale in his landmark study \textit{Postmodernist Fiction} (1987) summarises his entire study to say, "This is essentially a one-idea book ... That idea simply stated: postmodernist fiction differs from modernist fiction just as a poetics dominated by ontological issues differs from one dominated by epistemological issues."\textsuperscript{164} David Harvey in \textit{The Condition of Postmodernity} (1990) also argues, "Somewhere between 1968 and 1972 ... we see postmodernism emerge as a full-blown though still incoherent movement out of the chrysalis of the anti-modern movements of the 1960s."\textsuperscript{165} Such inconsistencies in views about the typology of modernism and postmodernism are not very easy to resolve. Therefore, we would always refer to these conceptual categories in the course of our study with a pinch of salt.

Other interesting typologies of the development of the novel also exist. For instance, a sub-text to the dominant typology of the development of the novel is the

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item Callinicos, 5.
\item An excellent five-volume anthology in this regard is \textit{Modernism} by Tim Middleton.
\item McHale, \textit{Fiction} xii.
\item Harvey, 293.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
trajectory of 'popular' novels. Brian McHale says, "Science fiction, we might say, is to Postmodernism what detective fiction was to Modernism."\(^{166}\) The phenomenon of 'spy' fiction, too, existed somewhere in between, during the Cold War era, i.e. a period ranging from what could be called late modernism to early postmodernism. 'Gothic' novels also had their moments, most notably during the late eighteenth, late nineteenth and late twentieth centuries.\(^{167}\) Moreover, 'romantic' novels also enjoyed an unrivalled popularity throughout the history of the novel. Our study of the development of the Western novel, therefore, definitely merits a more exhaustive examination of all these and perhaps more categories like women's novels or novels written by non-white novelists, etc. However, as we have already mentioned before, our purpose for studying the development of the novel is not to document the multiple and diverse ways in which the novel has developed in history, but rather to discern and sift out the generic essence of the novel irrespective and in spite of its diversifications and modifications.

In an earlier chapter on the rise of the novel we have already tried to argue that an important generic feature of the novel is its plastic, elastic, incorporative and inclusive form. In this section also, we would continue to argue that the incorporative generic character of the novel constitutes its essential genre-giving principle across its development. However, in our view, the real question is not whether the novel is flexible and incorporative as a genre, but whether there is any logic or pattern to the generic incorporations done by the novel. After all, a viable definition of any phenomenon cannot be that it has no defining boundaries or limits, or that it is "free to the point of arbitrariness or total anarchy."\(^{168}\) In our effort to understand the development of the novel, therefore, we would concentrate upon trying to discern the boundaries and limits of the myriad generic incorporations done by the novel. Other critics have also raised similar questions about the novel, although without arriving upon any satisfactory answers. For instance, Marthe Roberts asks in \textit{Origins of the Novel}, "Indeed, if the genre is undefined and virtually indefinable, can it constitute a form recognisable as such?"\(^{169}\) J. Paul Hunter also says in \textit{Before Novels}, "The novel's imperialism - its ability to take

\(^{166}\) Brian McHale, 'Change of Dominant from Modernist to Postmodernist Writing,' 1986, in Nicol ed., 290.


\(^{168}\) Roberts, 5.

\(^{169}\) Roberts, 5.
over features from other species and assimilate them into a new form – is well known, but we have to be clearer about what those feature are and where they come from.\textsuperscript{170} Let us, therefore, explore these questions in detail. In our chapter on the rise of the novel we have linked the flexible and inclusive character of the novel to the roots of its inception in the flexible and incorporative system of capitalism. In this section also we would continue to follow the same line of argument. In order to do so let us digress from our main topic for a while and take into account two important aspects of the development of capitalism: increasing centralisation of its politico-economic system and the simultaneous fragmentation of its social and individual life.

We have already tried to argue how from the days of its inception, capitalism was an ever-expanding system which steadily spread to all parts of the globe. Terry Eagleton says in \textit{The Illusions of Postmodernism} (1996), "Capitalism is the most pluralistic order history has ever known, restlessly transgressing boundaries and dismantling oppositions, pitching together diverse life-forms and continually overflowing the measure."\textsuperscript{171} In its initial years, capitalism emerged in England and then emerged and re-emerged in other European nations. By the mid-nineteenth century it became the dominant system of Europe. It integrated both rural as well as urban areas within its life forms. Simultaneously the process of colonization also intensified. By the twentieth century elaborate worldwide networks of 'drain of wealth' were set into place. As Edward Said argues, "Primarily, as we look back at the nineteenth century, we see that the drive toward empire in effect brought most of the earth under the domination of a handful of powers."\textsuperscript{172} Eric Hobsbawm also testifies, "Between 1876 and 1915 about one-quarter of the globe's land surface was distributed or redistributed as colonies among half-dozen states."\textsuperscript{173} Ania Loomba elaborates, "By the 1930s, colonies and ex-colonies covered 84.6 per cent of the land surface of the globe."\textsuperscript{174} This tendency to centralize profits from around the world produced conflicts which led to the First and the Second World Wars. This tendency also augmented international economic transactions on an unprecedented scale. The two World Wars had an interesting outcome. On the one hand they triggered a

\textsuperscript{170} Hunter, 58.
\textsuperscript{171} Terry Eagleton, \textit{The Illusions of Postmodernism} (Blackwell Publishers, 1996) 133.
\textsuperscript{172} Said, 20.
\textsuperscript{173} Hobsbawm, \textit{Empire} 59.
process of decolonisation. On the other, they weakened most capitalist nations and only a single nation emerged as the most powerful. As Eric Hobsbawm says, "Only the USA came out of the world wars very much as it had gone into them, only rather stronger. For all others the wars meant upheaval." After the mid-twentieth century, the process of decolonisation witnessed acceleration, but the world also turned more and more into a single economic unit. By the 1990s, the world became what is now popularly called – a global village. Economic and political power got concentrated in the hands of the United States. We are emphasizing this point about the development of capitalism only so that the spread of capitalism is not viewed merely as a process of spread and extension, but also as a process of concentration and centralization. It is in the context of this view that we would subsequently try to theorize the development of the novel and its form. For the time being, however, let us continue with the present discussion.

Contrary to this actual process of centralisation, the emphasis in most artistic, theoretical and critical discourses over the last hundred years has been on fragmentation and the lack of any identifiable centre in the world. The modernist movement in arts and literature was strongly associated with this tendency. W.B. Yeats's famous lines — "Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold" — almost became the motto of modernism. The modernist emphasis on points-of-view and multiplicity of meanings also served the same philosophical end associated with fragmentation and breakdown. Ironically, these were the same times which historically represented the peak period of colonialism. The emphasis on fragmentation also became an important part of postmodern theorizations. Major postmodern theorists celebrated 'fragmentations' as opposed to totalities. 'Decentring' was also routinely invoked by them. For instance, the influential method of 'deconstruction' propounded by Derrida sought to do away with the assumption that the structure of texts had a unifying centre. Derrida tried to 'disperse' meanings instead of integrating them. Explaining this genesis of postmodernism Linda Hutcheon argues in *A Poetics of Postmodernism*, "Umberto Eco has suggested that postmodernism is born at the moment when we discover that the world has no fixed centre and that, as Foucault taught, power is not something unitary that exists outside of us." In our view, the intensification of this philosophical trend during the twentieth century is extremely

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175 Hobsbawm, *Extremes* 55.
176 Hutcheon, *Poetics* 86.
ironical. The more the real world has become centralized (even to the extent of having a single instead of multiple centres), the more philosophical discourses about fragmentation and decentring have proliferated in theory. Linda Hutcheon of course associates the process of decentring and fragmentation to political and cultural decolonisation and to assertions by hitherto marginalized sections and groups. She argues, “Outside of North America too, then, there are texts which overtly challenge cultural notions of the centrality of the metropolis, for both France and Britain had former colonial empires, with strong centralized cultures that are now being upset by their own history, as Arab, African, East and West Indian voices demand to be heard.”

Many critics and thinkers, however, criticize such views which celebrate fragmentation. In their opinion fragmentation is something to be overcome and combated. For instance, Edward Said in *Culture and Imperialism* (1993) argues that:

> Imperialism consolidated the mixture of cultures and identities on a global scale. But its worst and most paradoxical gift was to allow people to believe that they were only, mainly, exclusively, white, or Black, or Western, or Oriental. ... No one can deny the persisting continuities of long traditions, sustained habitations, national languages, and cultural geographies, but there seems no reason except fear and prejudice to keep on insisting on their separation and distinctiveness, as if that was all human life was about.

Thus, approaches to the concept of ‘fragmentation’ vary drastically among philosophers and thinkers. Let us try to understand the complex phenomenon of ‘fragmentation’ in another light. Let us also state that we are dealing with this issue in such detail because we believe that fragmentation provides an important key to understanding the development of the novel over the years.

Hegel was the first major philosopher to theorize fragmentation. He associated the new modern age with the breakdown of totality. In his book *Phenomenology* (1808) he used the concept of alienation to argue that ‘World Spirit’ or world consciousness had lost its unity of thought in modern times. He attributed this to the fact that the symmetry between mind and matter had got shattered. People were now alienated from nature and

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177 Hutcheon, *Poetics* 72.
178 Said, 336 (emphasis added).
viewed it as something outside of themselves. He argued that this stage of alienation or fragmentation of the World Spirit was a degraded stage because it destroyed the ability of human beings to think in terms of totality. He proposed that the only way to overcome this alienation was to always seek knowledge of the ‘whole’ rather than of just a part. Ludwig Feuerbach, a student of Hegel, extended this concept of alienation to the realm of religion in his book, *The Essence of Christianity* (1841). He argued that inherently all human beings were good. But due to religion they projected all good qualities upon an imaginary being, ‘God’, and thought of themselves as worthless. Religion, he said, made people alienated from their own goodness. Feuerbach viewed religion as an obstacle in the way of people realizing their own goodness and gaining true insights into the nature of man.179

The concept of alienation, however, has most famously been associated with Karl Marx, who associated the growing sense of alienation and fragmentation to the conditions produced by capitalism. Marx attributed alienation to various factors. He argued that under capitalism the worker was alienated from his own labour because he did not have any control over the fate of the product of his labour or over the production process. He was merely a wage labourer. Moreover, the process of production under capitalism itself was fragmented. For instance, in the process of making a shoe in a capitalist enterprise, various people were involved. One person designed the shoe, one labourer prepared the leather for it, one just cut the leather in a particular shape, one nailed the sole to the shoe, one worked only with glue, one coloured or polished it, and one finally put it in a box. The net outcome of such a process was that a particular worker could just nail the left sole of the shoe for his entire life without having an integrated sense of creating a whole pair of shoes. Thus, Marx attributed the sense of alienation to the emergence of narrower specialisations in the field of production. He also associated alienation or fragmentation with ‘commodity fetish’, that is, a process wherein all things and relationships under capitalism get transformed into market relations. He argued that this tendency afflicted not merely the working classes but all classes of people under capitalism. In the *Communist Manifesto* (1848) he said, “The

179 See ‘alienation,’ *Sociology* 12-15.

bourgeoisie has stripped of its halo every occupation hitherto honoured and looked up to with reverent awe. It has converted the physician, the lawyer, the priest, the poet, the man of science, into its paid wage labourers.  

In *Capital I* (1859) he argued that under a system of generalised commodity production "the definite social relation between men themselves...assume...the fantastic form of a relation between things." In *Theories of Surplus Value* (1863) he described the new role of the writer to say, "A writer is a worker not in so far as he produces ideas, but in so far as he enriches the publisher, in so far as he is working for a wage." Ralph Fox explained this process of 'commodity fetish' in the realm of literature and art in a Marxian sense to say:

No less deeply did they [creative artists] feel the levelling of their work through the capitalist market. Money makes all things equal - a Michael Angelo to so much oil or soap, if it is purchased by a millionaire with a fortune made from these useful and homely commodities, a play by Shakespeare to a quantity of manure, should a season be run in the West End on the charity of a shareholder in the Imperial Chemical Industries.  

Georg Lukács also theorized the same concept of fragmentation/alienation/commodity fetish by calling it 'reification'. He argued — "Just as the capitalist system continuously produces or reproduces itself economically on higher and higher levels, the structure of reification progressively sinks more deeply, more fatefully and more definitively into the consciousness of man." He linked this fragmentation of consciousness to the development of the genre of the novel. In *Theory of the Novel* written in his pre-Marxist days he argued, "The novel is the epic of an age in which the extensive totality of life is no longer directly given, in which the immanence of meaning in life has become a problem, yet which still thinks in terms of totality." He explained the form of the novel by saying, "For the novel form is, like no other, an expression of this transcendent-al homelessness." Subsequently, another major literary critic, Lucien  

180 Qtd. by Fox, 77.  
181 Qtd. by Callinicos, 149.  
183 Fox, 78.  
185 Lukács, *Theory* 56.
homelessness."\(^{186}\) Subsequently, another major literary critic, Lucien Goldman, used the concept of reification to theorize the novel. In *Towards a Sociology of the Novel* (1964) he argued, "[R]eification as a permanent psychological process [has been] working for several centuries uninterruptedly in Western Market societies."\(^ {187}\) He proposed that there exists "an intelligible relation or a homology between the history of reificational structures and the history of fictional structures."\(^{188}\) His entire book was an exposition of the homologies existing between the literary form of the novel and "the everyday relation between man and commodities in general, and by extension between men and other men, in a market society."\(^ {189}\)

Let us now try to employ this concept in our analysis on the development of the novel. We have already linked the genesis of the novel to the historical genesis of capitalism. One of the first few changes that capitalism brought about in the consciousness of people was to give rise to an 'individual subject'. This was a new realization in history. Philosopher Gregory Currie argues that the emergence of individualism led to an opinion that "only individuals are real, but the wholes of which they are parts such as social groups, political societies and the like, have no independent reality over and above that of their components and the interrelations and interactions amongst these".\(^ {190}\) We would not repeat here the links that have been drawn by all theorists of the rise-of-the-novel, most notably Ian Watt, between the emergence of the novel and the growth of individualism. We would just reiterate the basic thesis of Ian Watt, "[T]he modern novel is closely allied on the one hand to the realist epistemology of the modern period, and on the other to the individualism of its social structure."\(^ {191}\) It is not a coincidence, therefore, that all early novels were based upon an abstraction of the individual and his/her life from the socio-historical 'whole'. Unlike epics or romances, which narrated stories without an overt sense of subjectivity, early novels like *Pamela*, *Joseph Andrews*, and *Moll Flanders* etc. inevitably invoked a subjective response from the readers. After all, who could identify completely with these stories, characters or narrators without having a sense of ironic distance from them? Moreover, early novels

\(^{186}\) Lukács, *Theory* 41.
\(^{188}\) Goldman, *Sociology* 135.
\(^{189}\) Goldman, *Sociology* 7.
\(^{190}\) See 'individualism', *Dictionary of Philosophy*, 272-273.
\(^{191}\) Watt, 64.
were distinct from older narrative forms like myths and epics, which were definitely community narratives aimed for collective consumption rather than narratives about individuals aimed at the individual reader.

By the nineteenth century, the individual fragmented further and got divided into phases of childhood, youth and old age. It is not a coincidence, therefore, that before the nineteenth century, most early novels did not devote attention to the details of the evolution of characters from the days of their childhood, the way the bildungsromans did. Of course, in today’s times these phases of life have fragmented further to involve phases like teenage, youth, mid-life, mid-life crisis and so on, notions that were nonexistent in earlier times. During the nineteenth century there was also a deepening of consciousness regarding the division of an individual between the private and the public, the physical and the mental, the intellectual and the emotional, as well as the objective and the subjective. These details were used to fill out the characters of novels and situate them against a more complicated backdrop. The interplay of these distinguishable aspects in different characters created the grounds for interesting plots in the novels. The novels of Charles Dickens, Jane Austen or William Thackeray exemplify this. The sense of the socio-historical was also consciously perceived as important. The social was now not just taken into account, but also presented as an important and developing factor in novels. It was no longer just an incidental aspect but an objective reality viewed as such. The attention paid to deliberately capturing socio-historical details in nineteenth century novels increased to unprecedented levels.

By the late nineteenth century, the alienation of the individual from the socio-historical deepened. Increasingly the socio-historical was relegated to the role of a lifeless background or context. Georg Lukács makes this criticism in all his studies about the development of realism. Lukács argues that ‘Naturalism’ represents this degraded stage of the novel in which the social becomes just a lifeless average. The socio-historical now began to be dealt with a sense of aesthetic distance by novelists and therefore, the conceptions about ‘life’ hanged considerably. By the twentieth century the individual fragmented further. Now the focus of novels shifted to a large extent to the interior lives of people. This interiority simultaneously included within itself a sense of the emotional as well as the intellectual. This new type of interior life was called the psychological. Fredric Jameson argues in *The Political Unconscious*, “The conditions of possibility of psychoanalysis become visible, one would imagine, only when you begin
to appreciate the extent of psychic fragmentation since the beginnings of capitalism, with its systematic quantification and rationalization of experience, its instrumental reorganization of the subject as much as of the outside world.”

The psychological, too, became very complex. Not only was it at odds with ‘external’ life, but it was also at odds with the sub-conscious and the unconscious. The unconscious was a new discovery and had a life of its own. As a result, the behaviour of individual characters became arbitrary and ambiguous. The unconscious could assert itself at any time. Also, the interior life of characters could be one right now and another the next moment. The interior became so important that opinions about the external began to get mediated by it. Thus, the socio-historical was left with very little life of its’ own, and was entirely subordinated to the psychological. The evolution of the technique of stream-of-consciousness was an outcome of these developments. The act of writing further became fragmented between content and form. Now, authors increasingly started discussing their techniques and style with a considerable degree of self-consciousness. Novelists like Virginia Woolf, James Joyce, Henry James and Conrad show all these tendencies in their novels. Modernist techniques of point-of-view, non-chronological narratives, symbolism and imagism were innovated to give suitable expression to this highly fragmented state of consciousness. It is in this backdrop that we can understand the very strong sense of anguish, which became characteristic of the modernist movement to represent the loss of wholeness and unity. This inability to have any reliability or stability in the world increased steadily, and led to the pits of anguish during the Existentialist or Absurd movement in Europe.

Many critics associate fragmentation centrally with modernism. Ihab Hassan argues, “Alienation of the self from society used to be, and in a sense remains, the basic assumption of the modern novel.” Fredric Jameson also argues, “That modernism is itself an ideological expression of capitalism, and in particular, of the latter’s reification of daily life, may be granted a local validity.” Subsequently, he asserted again, “Indeed, their [modernist] work was said to represent a new “inward turn” and the opening up of some new reflexive deep subjectivity: the ‘carnival of interiorised

192 Jameson, Unconscious, 62.
194 Jameson, Unconscious 236.
fetishism,’ Lukács once called it.”

David Harvey also reiterates, “Modernity, therefore, not only entails a ruthless break with any or all preceding historical conditions, but is characterized by a never-ending process of internal ruptures and fragmentations within itself.”

This process of fragmentation was intensified further during the century. Slowly the very act of writing became full of perils. The use of language by human beings became one of the most complicated and disabling phenomenon. Even the act of thinking became more complicated. By now human beings were ironically conscious and self-conscious about everything — thoughts, emotions, speech, writing etc. Patricia Waugh describes this stage to say, “...language soon becomes a ‘prisonhouse’ from which the possibility of escape is remote. Metafiction is set out to explore this dilemma.”

Fredric Jameson says that “The “discovery” of Language is at one with its structural abstraction from concrete experience, with its hypostasis as an autonomous object, power, or activity...as a thing in itself.” The modernist anguish accompanying this acute sense of fragmentation was abandoned in postmodernism for a more playful irony. An apt example of this playful irony is evident in Tin Drum (1959) by Gunter Grass. The dramatized narrator of Tin Drum, Oskar Matzerath ponders while writing a novel in a mental asylum:

You can begin a story in the middle and create confusion by striking out boldly, backward and forward. You can be modern, put aside all mention of time and distance and, when the whole thing is done, proclaim, or let someone else proclaim, that you have finally, at the last moment, solved the space-time problem. Or you can declare at the very start that it's impossible to write a novel nowadays, but then, behind your own back so to speak, give birth to a whopper, a novel to end all novels. I have also been told that it makes a good impression, an impression of modesty so to speak, if you begin by saying that a novel can't have a hero any more because there are no more individualists, because individuality is a thing of the past, because man—each man and all men together—is alone in his loneliness and no one

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195 Jameson, Postmodernism 311.
196 Harvey, 268.
198 Jameson, Unconscious 63-64.
is entitled to individual loneliness, and all men lumped together make up a "lonely mass" without names and without heroes. 199

By this time the interior became so prevalent that it could transform the external at will. Novels like Gunter Grass's *Tin Drum* or Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* (1981) exhibit this skill explicitly. The dramatized narrators of these novels, namely Oskar and Saleem Sinai, transform the history of Germany and the history of the Indian subcontinent according to their own whims and fancies. In the late twentieth century, novelists and critics started celebrating the figure of the exiled or rootless intellectual, who did not belong anywhere at all and lived in complete alienation. They argued that this rootless individual was at an advantage because he could interpret and understand the world without any prejudices or attachments. Postmodern fragmentation, however, also had its own discomforts. Bran Nicol argues in *Postmodernism and the Contemporary Novel* (2002), "It is striking how readily postmodern theory turns to the language of psychopathology — schizophrenia, hysteria, narcissism, paranoia, etc. — to explain the postmodern 'condition'." 200

All in all, if we look at the development of the novel in history, we would not be wrong in concluding that the novel parallels and represents the process of reification or fragmentation in life under capitalism. As Fredric Jameson argues, "The realm of separation, of fragmentation, of the explosion of codes and the multiplicity of disciplines is merely the reality of the appearance: it exists, as Hegel would put it, not so much in itself as rather for us, as the basic logic and fundamental law of our daily life and existential experience in late capitalism." 201 The novel's techniques have developed in accordance to giving appropriate expression to this increasing fragmentation. However, the crucial question in this regard is about the approach adopted towards understanding this process. On the one hand are those intellectuals and novelists who view fragmentation as an enabling process, as indicating stages in acquiring greater knowledge about the complications of life. For instance, modern and postmodern novelists ridicule realist novelists for not being aware of the problems of representation in the same way as them, for being naïve, ignorant and simplistic. Such critics attack the

200 Nicol, 6.
201 Jameson, *Unconscious* 40.
very possibility of acquiring ‘whole’ knowledge and celebrate the fragmented as a higher stage of knowledge. For example, Linda Hutcheon argues:

And, in addition, if elitist culture has indeed been fragmented into specialist disciplines, as many have argued, then hybrid novels like these work both to address and to subvert that fragmentation through their pluralizing recourse to the discourses of history, sociology, theology, political science, economics, philosophy, semiotics, literature, literary criticism, and so on.202

On the other hand are those intellectuals and artists, who see this fragmentation as a disabling process, as a process which destroys the capacity of human beings to live wholesome lives. Such critics criticize intellectuals and artists who make no attempt to transcend this fragmentation in order to grasp the ‘whole’. Fredric Jameson argues in The Political Unconscious:

...the program to which the various contemporary ideologies of pluralism are most passionately attached is a largely negative one: namely to forestall that systematic articulation and totalization of interpretive results which can only lead to embarrassing questions about the relationship between them and in particular the place of history and the ultimate ground of narrative and textual production.203

Such critics also view fragmented narratives of modern and postmodern novels as somewhat inferior to realist narratives. Fredric Jameson argues that the “Great Writer” has disappeared under postmodernism.204 Eric Hobsbawm also laments, “Naturally it [the novel] continues to be written in vast quantities, bought and read. Yet if we look for the great novels and great novelists of the second half of the century, which took an entire society or historical era as their subject, we find them outside the central regions of Western culture.”205 Lucien Goldman also says, “...the novel can be characterized as the story of a search for authentic values in a degraded mode, in a degraded society, and that this degradation, in so far as it concerns the hero is expressed principally through the

202 Hutcheon, Poetics 20-21.
203 Jameson, Unconscious 32.
204 Jameson, Postmodernism 307.
205 Hobsbawm, Extremes 511-12.
mediatization, the reduction of authentic values to the implicit level and their disappearance as manifest realities.”

Instead of getting into detailed debates about how this increasing fragmentation should be perceived by novelists and critics, we would just conclude by saying that there is a little bit of truth in both these views, and a suitable balance between both is merited in understanding the development of the novel. However, we would not share the view that fragmentation in the realm of philosophy or discourse is independent of the process of fragmentation unleashed by capitalism. Unfortunately, the dominant view in literary theory is that fragmentation at the level of consciousness leads to fragmentation in real life. We would prefer a dialectical approach in understanding this phenomenon and its relation to the development of the novel.

Let us now get back to our main task of this chapter, that is, to try and discern the nature of the generic incorporations done by the novel. We have already argued that during its initial stages the early novel borrowed extensively from various existing genres of print like ballads, sermons, letters, diaries, travelogues, ethnographies, etc. At this early stage the novel looked like it was incorporating all kinds of genres and discourses within its form. However, we would like to point out a crucial ‘lack’ in this regard. If we examine the generic incorporations of the early novel more closely, we notice that the early Western novel incorporated only genres of print or manuscript within its fold. What it left out completely were authentic oral genres. Some forms like the ballad, which it incorporated, were ‘derived’ from oral forms, but they were not oral per se and were removed from their original oral roots. As J. Paul Hunter says in Before Novels, “Some historians of English folklore claim that no fairy tales survived into the mid-eighteenth century, and they all agree that the native tradition atrophied severely in the face of disuse and active suppression.” Eric Hobsbawm also says in The Age of Capital:

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206 Goldman, Sociology 6.
207 The history of the development of the colonial novel is somewhat different. While the novel in the west developed after over three hundred years of print, the novel in the colonies was among the forms that transported print culture to the colonies. Thus, in the colonies, the novel emerged in times when oral forms were vibrantly alive, while in the West it emerged in conditions when oral forms were already considerably weakened.
208 Hunter, 142.
With the triumph of city and industry an increasingly sharp division grew up between the 'modern' sectors of the masses, i.e. the urbanised, the literate, and those who accepted the content of hegemonic culture – that of the bourgeois society – and the increasingly undermined ‘traditional’ ones. Increasingly sharp, because the heritage of the rural past became increasingly irrelevant to the pattern of urban working-class life: in the 1860s and 1870s the industrial workers in Bohemia stopped expressing themselves through folksong and took to music-hall song, doggerel ballads about a life which had little in common with their fathers. The hegemony of the official culture, inevitably identified with the triumphant middle class, was asserted over the subaltern masses.

Other critics also talk about similar changes in the field of culture. Fredric Jameson argues, “...the older kind of folk and genuinely “popular” culture which flourished when the older social classes of a peasantry and urban artisanat still existed and which, from the mid-nineteenth century on, has been gradually colonized and extinguished by commodification and the market capitalism.” Thus, we can discern the pattern of the initial incorporations done by the bourgeois form of the novel, if we locate them against the backdrop of the contradictions between emergent capitalism and dominant feudalism. The generic form of the novel did not incorporate in its form, pre-capitalist cultural genres, but rather served as a means to further marginalize and suppress them. The novel was not averse to dealing with people of low social origins or marginalized social types, but only as long as they were part of a process of consolidating bourgeois culture, not otherwise. Thus, while it was generically open to modern forward-looking genres, it was not equally open to older genres representing a contradictory cultural ethos. This tendency was apparent both in the early novel as well as the realist novel.

We can understand this point further if we look at the development of the modern novel. Many critics have pointed out the incorporative nature of the modernist movement, which integrated artists extensively from all over Europe and even borrowed liberally from the colonies, both for its subject as well as for its form. It is easy to understand why this type of assimilations began in the late nineteenth century and not before. Obviously, before that time capitalism was still a system that was mainly trying...
to consolidate the nation as an entity, however, by the late nineteenth century it began the
process of consolidating and strengthening an international network of relationships
through aggressive colonization. As Raymond Williams says in ‘The Metropolis and the
Emergence of Modernism’ (1985) – “The most important general element of the
innovations in form is the fact of immigration to the metropolis, and it cannot too often
be emphasized how many of the major innovators were, in this precise sense, immigrants.” Or, as Bernard Bergonzi says in ‘The Advent of Modernism; 1900-1920’ (1970), “In its broadest sense the Modern Movement was international and embraced all
the arts. ... Conrad was Polish, and Ford was half-German...; Yeats was Irish, and
Pound and Eliot were Americans....The dominance of alien talents in the Modern
Movement, whether Continental or Celtic or American [is remarkable].” Daniel Bell
also says in The Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism (1976), “Modern culture is
defined by this extraordinary freedom to ransack the world storehouse and to engorge
any and every style it comes upon.” Aijaz Ahmed emphasizes the same point in In
Theory, “The felt experience of the elite artist, in this same phase of modern capital, was
that he too could now draw upon a whole range of cultural artefacts from around the
globe (Indian philosophy, African masks, Cambodian sculpture).” Stephen Slemen
also reiterates in ‘Modernism’s last post’ (1991) that modernism was “unthinkable had it
not been for the assimilative power of Empire to appropriate the cultural work of a
heterogeneous world “out there” and to reproduce it for its own social and discursive
ends....”

It is precisely in this context that we must try to understand the way in which
assimilations were made in the form of the novel during the early twentieth century. The
assimilations were not random or without reason. Obviously, modernism was an
expression of fragmentation and a loss of totality. Western artists looked for a lost
wholesomeness both in their own pasts as well as in the colonies or tribal and primitive
societies etc. But this assimilation was partly to reconfirm the cultural lag of these places.

213 Daniel Bell, ‘Urbanization and Mass Society,’ 1976, Revolutions of the Word: Intellectual Contexts
214 Aijaz, 129.
and their people, and partly to address the Western sense of alienation. Without understanding the stage of imperialism or the acute fragmentation in the lives of Western bourgeois subjects, it is impossible to understand the generic assimilations of the novel. Thus, whatever assimilations took place from the colonies they were largely to reconfirm to the Western readerships that loss of totality of meaning and fragmentation of truth were indeed the deepest and most advanced levels of knowledge. For instance, in Joseph Conrad’s novel Lord Jim (1900) the main narrator is dramatized as a sailor named Marlow. Marlow knows all about the wisdom of the East, the Africas and the Caribbean because he has seen the entire world. By temperament Marlow is drawn to scrutinize and understand the motives of men. In this novel he tries to understand Jim. However, after all his efforts and assistance from people from many of these diverse places and cultures he says, “I wanted to know – and to this day I don’t know, I can only guess.”\textsuperscript{216} Thus, although the form of the novel was open, it was so, only to give expression to the fragmented urban angst of the Western bourgeois subject. Additionally, the rural Western subject was already out of sight.

If we look at the development of postmodernism, we find that in the second half of the twentieth century conscious efforts were made to assimilate diverse generic forms into the novel. We have already discussed the aspect of mixing high and low genres in a previous section of this chapter. Here, we will look at another aspect of postmodern novels, that is, their engagement with the postcolonial. As Aijaz Ahmed says, “[From 1960s onwards an interest in] ‘empire, colony, nation, migrancy, post-coloniality, and so on [intensified in the West].”\textsuperscript{217} So much so, that today many critics argue that no credible postmodern novel canon can be constituted without including novels by third world novelists like Marquez, Fuentes, Rushdie, Naipaul, etc. Ostensibly, postmodern discourses are characterized not only by the West visiting the colonies, but also by the colonies visiting and often conquering the West in the field of literature, especially as regards the novel. Many critics point to this diversity by especially emphasizing the emergence of ‘postcolonial’ theoretical discourses in Western literature. As Tim Woods in \textit{Beginning Postmodernism} says, “Although one might be tempted to suggest that postmodern fiction is largely an American and European affair, it was not exclusively so.

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{216} Joseph Conrad, \textit{Lord Jim}, 1900 (New York and Ontario: New American Library) 63-64.
\item \textsuperscript{217} Aijaz, 3.
\end{itemize}
The debate about the extent to which postmodernism has engaged with postcolonial texts is deeply involved and complicated. However, many critics believe that postcolonial discourses serve a greater purpose in relation to the West rather than for the Third World. As Kwame Anthony Appiah argues in ‘Is the Post- in Postmodernism the Post- in Postcolonial?’ (1991):

Postcoloniality is the condition of what we might ungenerously call a 
_comprador_ intelligentsia: a relatively small, Western-style, Western-trained group of writers and thinkers, who mediate the trade in cultural commodities of world capitalism at the periphery. In the West they are known through the Africa they offer; their compatriots know them both through the West they present to Africa and through an Africa they have invented for the world, for each other, and for Africa.

Ania Loomba also argues in _Colonialism/Postcolonialism_ (1998), “But many ‘Third World’ academics continue to be wary of even this transformed theory, including postcolonial theory, because of its perceived distance from situations in their part of the world, and because of its supposed overlaps with ‘post-modernism’.” Aijaz Ahmed also argues:

...to offer a _symptomatic_ reading of an ideological location which makes it possible for Rushdie to partake, equally, of the postmodernist movement and the counter-canon of ‘Third World Literature’...the actual authors who are accorded central importance in this evolving counter-canon – García Márquez, Fuentes, Rushdie, among others – we find, first, that these critical positions are framed by the cultural dominance of postmodernism itself...

Aijaz Ahmed argues in the context of the writings of Salman Rushdie that his novels are centrally dependent upon the ‘rootless’ individual. He argues that the rootless individual serves the purpose of reassuring the Western fragmented subject and the cosmopolitan third world reader about the philosophical fundamentals of postmodernism. We would further argue that only those ‘postcolonial’ texts find a premier place in the West, which reconfirm Western philosophical concerns. Let us take a look at an important novel of

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218 Woods, 63.
220 Loomba, xii.
221 Aijaz, 125.
the postcolonial/postmodern canon – *One Hundred Years of Solitude* (1967) by Gabriel García Márquez. In our view this novel reconfirms an important Western postmodern conclusion, that is, that history does not progress but rather moves in circles. The entire narrative of this novel is arranged to prove this point. Due to an interesting narrative device we discover at the end of the novel that actually the end is the real beginning of the story. In the course of the novel, different characters make several such observations. Let us recount one such conversation:

"What did you expect? He murmured. "Time passes."

"That's how it goes," Ursula said, "but not so much."

When she said it she realized that she was giving the same reply that Colonel Aureliano Buendía had given in his death cell, and once again she shuddered with evidence that time was not passing, as she had just admitted, but that it was turning in a circle.222

We can recount numerous other instances of such assertions in the course of the novel. There are also examples of other parts of the novel in which the questions of subjectivity, interiority, the primacy of perception over material reality, the lack of coherent meaning, the impossibility of accessing totality etc. are presented in the text. However, most of these conclusions are presented not in any overt conformity to the West but rather as opposed to and in spite of the West. Thus, the novel works with a double irony. It reconfirms to the Western reader that what they believe is actually true. It creates the illusion that the same conclusion has been arrived upon by other civilizations on their own, independent of the West. Thus, the anti-Western rhetoric of the novel serves a double purpose. On the one hand it is truly transgressive. On the other it is all the more reassuring and supportive of western conclusions.

All in all, the development of the genre of the novel can be best understood against the template of the development of fragmented consciousness under capitalism. The assimilative character of the novel derives its character from the roots of its inception in the equally assimilative system of capitalism. As Fredric Jameson says, "For we all know that capitalism is the first genuinely global culture and has never renounced

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its mission to assimilate everything alien into itself."\(^{223}\) This generic flexibility, in our view, is also found in all art forms emerging under capitalism. However, the novel is unique because it is the first and the most eminent literary form to display this characteristic right from its inception. However, the generic assimilations done by the novel in history are not arbitrary or random. They follow the pattern created by the needs and material conditions of the bourgeoisie. The Western novel starts borrowing on a considerable scale from the colonies only when capitalism reaches the stage of imperialism, not before. Before, the novel develops in opposition to pre-capitalist oral forms. Later, by postmodern times, it becomes open to incorporating oral, mythic and folk aspects, especially through third world writers. The novel does so in times which represent the stage of "...late capitalism, in which all the earlier modes of production in one way or another structurally coexist."\(^{224}\) All pre-capitalist modes of production in this stage are entirely subordinated to the highly centralized system of capitalism. Thus, the novel in this stage traverses at will through all the cultural diversity available in the world. Yet, the centre appropriates only that which suits its purpose. In the postmodern stage only those novels from the Third World are given legitimacy in the West which either reconfirm to the West that the rest of the world lives in a cultural lag from the centre, or which redress and reconfirm the philosophical preoccupations of the West and convey an impression that they are doing so in spite of the West.

\(^{223}\) Jameson, 'Beyond the Cave' 171.

\(^{224}\) Jameson, *Unconscious* 100.