Conclusion

In this thesis we study the rise and development of the genre of the novel. We try to demonstrate that the roots of different aspects of the novel’s rise can ultimately be traced to developments in the material world. Using a historicist and materialist method we derive various conclusions about different aspects of the novel.

Rise of the Novel

We argue that the dating of the novel integrally depends upon what is understood by the genre of the novel. Studying various theorists of the novel we conclude that the novel is a genre marked by its depiction of the lives of ordinary and common people. It is different from genres like the epic or the romances because they only deal with the lives of gods, demi-gods, kings or noble men. The novel presents the lives of characters in contemporary times as opposed to narrations about heroes living in the past. It also incorporates themes and techniques from a wide variety of literary and non-literary genres.

In the course of our study we argue that these and many other characteristics of the novel can be understood if the moral, social and intellectual climate accompanying
the transformation from feudalism to capitalism in Europe is kept in mind. We argue that in pre-capitalist times, literature was bound by rigid rules and codes of writing. Not only were genres written by following classical and other rules, genres were also always hierarchically organized. The novel broke away from this tradition. It combined many genres within its form. This attribute came up in the novel because of the emergent system of capitalism, and its accompanying ideologies which were relatively more flexible and incorporative in comparison to those of the earlier feudal system. We argue that critics, who trace the novel to medieval or ancient times, neglect this crucial characteristic of the novel.

**Realism and the Novel**

We conclude that realism is both an ethic as well as an aesthetic that has three major characteristics. It concentrates upon depicting the common people and their ordinary lives. It places emphasis upon depicting the socio-historical context. And, it is premised upon a belief that the entire or total truth can be represented in literature. We also argue that realism becomes dominant in the novel only at particular points in time. In Europe, the novel is realist during the 19th century, when the European middle classes are engaged in progressive social movements. In the colonies, the novel is realist during the national liberation movements of respective nations. After these phases, novelists start expressing doubts about the possibility of representing the real. This development can be understood if we keep in mind the fact that in these phases the middle classes, which comprised the primary readership of novels, became disillusioned and lost their purpose and historic mission. In such times, the novel retreated from the socio-historical world to the interior world of people's minds. Novelists started expressing doubts about understanding and comprehending the whole world and took recourse to a fragmentary way of looking at the world. Thus, we argue that realism in the novel can be understood only if the changing preoccupations of the middle classes are kept in mind, which in turn impacted both the theme as well as technique of novels.

**Novel in the Literary Canon**

In our times, the novel occupies an important place in literature. However, it always did not enjoy such a place. During the eighteenth century, it was treated with a lot of contempt by the literary establishment. It was considered a low genre and did not receive serious literary consideration from critics. It gained respect only during the
nineteenth century, though even then no attempts were made to classify or theorize the novel. The first theorizations about the novel began only in the twentieth century, and by the mid-twentieth century the novel came to occupy a central place in the literary canon.

In our thesis, we argue that the reasons for the same can be understood by keeping in mind the changing character of the literary establishment in the modern age. Initially, the literary establishment was governed by the codes of feudal aristocracy. It resisted and attacked the novel because the novel was the literary genre that represented the emerging middle classes and their moral and intellectual preoccupations. By the mid-nineteenth century, when the dominance of capitalism was ensured, the bourgeoisie made efforts to build and consolidate an alternate notion of culture. It was in such a context that the novel, a middle class genre, gained respectability. By the early twentieth century, the novel became an important part of the project of defining and redefining bourgeois culture as national culture. It made its way into the university syllabi. However, at the same time, the novel started sub-dividing into high and low novels. Not all novels, therefore, gained entry into the corridors of culture. By the mid-twentieth century, the novel became very important and central to literature. However, the development of high novels became integrally associated with 'theory' and became restricted largely to highly educated readers. Novels with mass readership were not associated with 'taste'. This was because the bourgeoisie became more and more elite as a class and made an effort to demarcate its culture from that of the lower middle classes.

**Exhaustion of the Novel**

Novels are accosted with repeated predictions about their death or end. Simultaneously, the nomenclature of the development of the novel has an interesting association with 'novelty'. In our thesis, we argue that repeated assertions of novelty made by the novel are not coincidental. The novel embodies within its fold the spirit of novelty and innovation, crucial to the capitalist ethic. Capitalism as a system was anti-traditional and did not invest value in the old or the traditional. The capitalist market, too, employed the ideology of innovations to sell all its products. Therefore, we argue, that the novel, which was the first major literary genre to be integrally tied up with the market, asserted its innovative character repeatedly. Of late, the ideas of novelty and innovation have started receding. The markets often celebrate novelty, but more so in the sense of a fetish. Additionally, notions of historical 'progress' are also being challenged.
The 'end of history' has also been announced. Simultaneously, the publishing industry has also standardized mass culture and it often discourages genuine diversity. Given this entire state of affairs, contemporary assertions about the exhaustion of the novel need to be taken more seriously.

**Realist, Modern and Postmodern Novels**

Early and realist novels depict the lives of individuals located in their socio-historical contexts. Modern novels concentrate on representing the interior or psychological lives of people. Postmodern novels cannot represent the process of thinking and feeling without acute self-consciousness. The narratives of several novels substitute the material world with one that is freely constituted by thought. Particularly 'historiographic metafictions' make such assertions. Simultaneously, the development of the depiction of individuals in novels has become more fragmentary. In the early novels, individual characters were represented. Then, those individuals fragmented further to having distinct private and public lives, and developed notions of childhood, youth and old age. This process of fragmentation led to the development of the interior lives of people. This interior life fragmented yet more into the dimensions of the unconscious and the sub-conscious. In contemporary times, there exists an acute consciousness about all human faculties. We argue in our thesis that this growing fragmentation of consciousness has its roots in the phenomenon of alienation under capitalism and also reflects the fragmentation of real life. Thus, the development of the novel and its narrative techniques can better understood if this process of fragmentation is kept in mind.

In the last section of our thesis, we conclude that the pattern of generic incorporations within the novel can be understood by examining the process of centralisation under capitalism. Initially, when capitalism developed in direct contradiction with feudalism, the novel, too, developed in opposition to rural, folk as well as many other pre-capitalist forms and genres. When capitalism entered its imperialist stage, the novel became truly pan-European and occasionally began to borrow from colonial genres. Finally, when capitalism became completely globalized and all the more centralized, the post-colonial novel became part of the mainstream Western canon. We also argue that only those novels from the third world become part
of the Western canon, which reconfirm and reassure the intellectual preoccupations of the West. The rest of the third world novels are still neglected and ignored.

All in all, in the course of our thesis, we try to argue that it is possible to study the genre of the novel as a whole and that the novel continues to remain a pertinent and relevant concept. Therefore, tendencies that take recourse to studying only the sub-genres of the novel, or which discount the novel altogether to replace it with conceptual categories like fiction, narrative or text, emanate more from particular theoretical positions rather than from the nature of the novel.