CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTORY TO THE NOVELISTIC TECHNIQUE AND ITS EVOLUTION
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In spite of the fact that the privilege of inventing the 'novel' in its present-day form is, undoubtedly, of the eighteenth century novelists such as Richardson, Defoe, and Fielding, the precursors of the elements of novel could well be traced as far back as to Chaucer. Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde* has many of the elements which a modern reader would expect to find in a novel but for the fact that it is written in verse. The novel, by nature, furnishes the reader with characterization, social-background and so on. These, along with the more modern elements such as the psychological conflicts and tensions, the prevailing mental states of human beings are well depicted in most of Shakespeare's plays. This makes it evident that the Elizabethans invented everything requisite for a 'novel' but the 'form', and which according to James, "alone takes and holds, and preserves, substance."¹

The eighteenth century writers have evolved the basic 'form' of the novel as such. They are rightly privileged to be called the inventors of the novel. Most of the eighteenth

century novelists, having been primarily journalists, were socially conscious and wanted the 'novel' to serve a social purpose. They could accomplish this easily, as the novel, is primarily concerned with the representation of real life, by exposing the follies of manners and the morals of social institutions. In order to suit their purposes they invented new devices, which might be termed as the primary movement towards "realism."

"Realism" is the defining characteristic that distinguishes the novel from any other literary form. In the novel, the characters, their behaviour and social customs, closely resemble the actual ones in some actual society at an actual time. The characters' behaviour and experiences remain credible by being intermediate between what is consistent and what is irrational. The novel's realism lies chiefly in the way it presents life to the readers. It is the narrator's attitude which modifies the reader's relation to the imagined characters and the moral and social values being depicted. The novel, as such, rejects the conventional, the universal and emphasises the validity of individual experience by arriving at the real through sense impressions. Realism, thus aims at originality, the first-hand depiction of life, an impression of fidelity to human experience. In their pursuit of realistic presentation of life, the novelists arrived at a variety of narrative devices.
The movement was initiated for the first time by Daniel Defoe who wrote his Robinson Crusoe taking little notice of the traditional conventions and allowing the narrative sequence to flow spontaneously from his own mind. Defoe makes a successful combination of romance, depicting the adventures of Crusoe on the island, and realism, dramatising the development of the character and his outlook of life. His major contribution to the novelistic technique lies in his creation of personae who tell their stories and in his use of the first person point-of-view, which aids in achieving verisimilitude. It is this emphasis upon realistic presentation of life that released the novel from the bonds of the fabulous, the allegorical, and the improbable romanticism.

Richardson makes his entry next with Pamela, or Virtue Rewarded, written in epistolary form. The epistolary form provides the novelist with a ready-made point of view that limits the story. The first-person letters impart credibility and an illusion of reality. Richardson makes the device still more interesting by providing the readers with realistic details about the contrasts of character and temperament, thus making the novel an interesting study of human behaviour. Richardson's Clarissa is also written in epistolary form. It depicts the writer's introspective analysis of motives and feelings conveying the idea that the struggles of ordinary persons to live
within social codes frequently sets up a crisis of human importance.

The break which Defoe and Richardson made with the accepted canons of prose style enabled them to achieve immediacy and closeness of the text to what is being described. Defoe and Richardson accepted formal realism literally. Formal realism urges a novelist to give an authentic report of human experience. The novelist is obliged to satisfy the reader in spatial and temporal aspects and also in regard to the individuality of characters. "The historical importance of Defoe and Richardson depends on the suddenness and completeness with which they brought into being, what may be regarded as "formal realism"."²

It was with the arrival of Fielding on the scene that the stage was set for the process of improvisation of the existing devices. Fielding's *Joseph Andrews* is written in the manner of a journey. Except for some inserted stories, it is the omniscient author who conveys the action to the reader, with the author frequently intruding with certain introductory essays to enlighten the reader. Fielding pursued the same method in writing *Tom Jones*. The author's intruding presence

enables him to explain the motives determining a particular character's action in general or in a particular instance. The author thus enumerates the motives involved, for the reader, through his psychological analysis of the character in question. Most of the devices of Fielding (including his psychological analysis) were followed by the nineteenth century novelists.

The eighteenth-century novels are episodic and temporal. Unlike these, the nineteenth century novels gave priority to the logical rather than temporal progression of events. Most often the central character starts with one intention and moral ideal and in the process of reaching his goal comes at no where, gaining nothing in the end. For instance, in Crime and Punishment, Raskolnikov starts with the intention of ameliorating the social condition by murdering the old woman. But in the process, he encounters unexpected conflicts. And the process ends by his adopting religiously humanitarian convictions.

Apart from Thackeray, Dickens, George Eliot, Meredith and Hardy used the omniscient point of view to picturize the society realistically. Dickens satirized the evils in the social institutions, with indignation. George Eliot, on the other hand, attempts to deal with moral tensions, the chief part of any experience of any conscientious person. She tries to
reveal the strength and weakness of a character as he experiences this tension and thus gives the readers an impression of reality.

With Hardy, "realism" came to imply the exploration of the darker side of life, the narrator mourning the helplessness of man in confrontation with the natural forces. Hardy appeals to our sense of reality also by means of associating events with the setting in which they occur. The opening chapter in The Return of the Native, amply illustrates the philosophical significance and importance of Edgon Heath in the motivation of the characters.

Laurence Sterne is the last great innovator among the eighteenth century novelists. Sterne's narrator in his The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy orders events not chronologically but with the association of ideas. This method, with slight alterations and improvisations reappeared, in the twentieth century as the "Stream-of-Consciousness" technique. Sterne's handling of temporal dimension in this way provides "the technical basis for his combination of realism of presentation with realism of assessment."³

³Ian Watt, p. 333.
Both Richardson and Fielding offered diverse solutions to the prevailing problems of the whole tradition of the novel. The full maturity of the genre is possible only when these two divergencies are reconciled. It is Jane Austen who has succeeded in combining these two into a harmonious unity of assessment, of internal and of the external approaches to character.

Just as it is "realism" which distinguishes the novel from any other previous literary form, it is once again 'realism', taken to a greater extent, which differentiates the New Novel from the Old. The Old novelists considered "realism" only as a means to an end. The New Novelists pursued it as an end in itself.

Towards the late nineteenth century several writers stressed the importance for fiction of new ideas in natural history. Darwinism, the theory of natural selection and religious thinking, began to play a major part in the change in attitude of the people towards the world, the universe. Science began to play a major role and writers like Zola began to rely on Science exclusively in the belief that it alone is capable of finding a solution to human miseries. The scientific approach affected the field of economics and social investigations, thus giving way to socio-economic concepts such as Marxism. To some writers, Marxism provided a tool of sceptical
analysis of the prevailing class-structure and a vision of the New Society. Though Marxism failed to survive after the war, the disillusionment having been expressed by novels like Orwell's *Animal Farm*, with such revised revolutionary slogans as "All animals are equal but some animals are more equal than others," the concern for social improvement continued in psychological as well as economic terms.

The first half of the twentieth century saw the evolution of the novel of ideas, the inheritors of which were Wells, Huxley, and Orwell. The novels of these writers are more like a series of essays and pamphlets than anything else.

The impact of Science, Darwinism, Marxism on the minds of the people was the same—an increased concern for the improvement of the social and economic condition and for the human beings, above everything. This resulted in the artist's increased concern for the exploration of the inner depths of consciousness, thoughts and feelings of human beings. It became the sole purpose of the novelists to diagnose the condition of the human mind caught between irreconcilable conflicts. Whether they found the solutions or not was immaterial.

Freud's observations on human psychology had their impact on the modern writer. The Freudian unconscious repre-
sents a continuum unmodified by the abstracting powers of logical thought. George Eliot was well aware of the Freudian theory of the unconscious apart from the science of psychology and of the influence of the physiological bases of behaviour in her analysis of the mental processes of her characters. One major aspect of Freudian psychology is the 'Oedipus Complex', the emotional relationship of mother, father and child which has been extensively used by Lawrence. Lawrence evolves a different technique to suit his preoccupation with the psychology of primal human relationships. Lawrence is intent on presenting the sensations of his characters, in the presence of one another, and of their objective reality. To achieve the interplay of these sensations Lawrence presents his characters in every possible combination with the other characters thus recording the sensations, which are both individual and common.

As the world was becoming increasingly social, the novelists tended to give priority to the personal and individual experience over the general. They tried to evolve new devices through which human beings can express themselves and they saw life as a series of emotional intensities involving a logic different from that of the rational and practical world which could be captured only through dissociated images or stream-of-consciousness musings. These writers tended to
see life as flux and process. The chief exponents of this technique are Dorothy Richardson, James Joyce and Virginia Woolf, the last of whom was always preoccupied with the immediate and ever-changing surface of life. She says:

"Life is not a series of gig lamps symmetrically arranged; life is a luminous halo, a semi transparent envelope surrounding us from the beginning of consciousness to the end. Is it not the task of the novelist to convey this varying, this unknown and uncircumscribed spirit, whatever aberration and complexity it may display, with as little mixture of the alien and external as possible? We are not merely for courage and sincerity; we are suggesting that the proper stuff of fiction is a little other than custom would have us believe it."4

The revolution in the novel brought about by the stream-of-consciousness technique is that it began to give priority to feeling or thought of the moment over what was happening. The technique reflects a genuine and compassionate concern for what makes life really rich and what dries it up.

James’ stories are stories about story-telling. Conrad’s sense of life is a sustained struggle between good

and evil. The virtue of the modern novelists from James to Conrad lies in the importance they give to the medium. As Mark Schorer says, "Under the "immense artistic preoccupations" of James and Conrad and Joyce, the form of the novel changed, and with the technical change, analogous changes took place in the substance, in point of view, in the whole conception of fiction." 5

As one passes from the Old Novel to the New Novel, "the one thing that will impress you more than any other is the disappearance of the author." 6 An author may appear in or disappear from his novel by his selection and management of conventions of style and structure. To disappear completely from the novel, the author must, in the first place, make it dramatic. Otherwise he would be taking the risk of becoming a middleman, intruding between the action and the beholder, thus making the reader conscious of a narrator, all of which leads to the destruction of the illusion of reality.

One of the ways in which one could eliminate everything but the dialogue from the novel is by making use of the first-person narrative. This form has been extensively used by

5 "Technique as Discovery," Hudson Review, 1, No.1 (Spring 1948), pp 67-87.

writers like Defoe in his *Robinson Crusoe*, Dickens in his *Great expectations* etc., But, unless it is combined with a certain structural or stylistic device, the total rendering becomes undramatic and unrealistic, as one experiences the presence of an imaginary narrator in place of the author.

There are certain structural and stylistic devices which aid the author in disappearing from his novel to a certain extent in the third-person narrative.

In the third-person narrative, the author makes us feel his presence structurally by means of "omniscience, exposition, and block-characterization; stylistically, by such conventions as the vocative case ("Dear reader"), normative words, persuasive definitions, and panoramic narration."  

A writer like Bennett uses "Omniscience" often, he becomes omniscient not only by reporting the external action, the appearances and speeches of his characters, but by going to the extent of reporting their inner feelings, thoughts and states of consciousness. As it most often happens, he observes his characters from the outside and interprets the character's feelings to the reader. This method sounds undramatic because the author, instead of merely reporting, goes to the extent

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of making inferences about his characters. Omniscience could be exploited stylistically also through the use of certain psychological words, which are not concrete and not directly perceivable qualities.

"Exposition" is a mode of intrusion for the author through which he turns from the story to lecture to the reader or to evaluate his own theories on certain subjects, as could be seen in the elaborate theory of history in Tolstoy's *War and Peace*.

Fielding uses this method in *Tom Jones* in the introductory essays. In modern novels, one can find such kind of narration in Lawrence and Proust. One more advantage of exposition is that the author assumes moralistic role or gives his own account of the moral constitution of the universe in order to subsume the fates of his ill-starred characters, as Hardy does in *The Return of the Native* or in *Tess of the D'urbervilles*.

Almost at a leap Tess thus changed from simple girl to complex woman - symbols of reflectiveness passed into her face, and a note of tragedy at times into her voice ... her soul that of a woman whom the turbulent experiences of the last year or two had quite failed to demoralize.⁸

It may also be used in the novel of social purpose as in Dickens' *Hard Times* where in the description of the Coketown environment the inhuman utilitarian calculus is exposed.

Block-characterization is another of the structural conventions which means a complete description of a character upon his first appearance. This device is widely used by Dickens. Block characterization remains undramatic as it can help only in portraying 'flat' characters who are blunt and incapable of having an extended life. Only "round" characters can give the readers a life-like reality. In Jane Austen's novels, even a minor character like Miss Bates or Charlotte Lucas have a life-like reality. They are independent and are ready for an extended life and they have a specific function towards the unity and complication of the plot. Contrary to this, Dickens's characters do not have an extended life of the kind Jane Austen's characters have. The characters can be made to achieve the dramatic quality by making them reveal their qualities gradually through their actions, conversations and soliloquies in confrontation with a variety of situations and experiences as Conrad does most often.

'Panoramic' narration which has a general description

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of action ranging over long periods of time is often used in a third-person narrative as in *Vanity Fair*. This kind of narration is undramatic as it makes the reader conscious of the narrator all the time. This method is suitable only for those novels whose action spans over greater periods of time and which have a large number of characters. Some new novels like *Sons and Lovers* and *The Rainbow* by Lawrence also use Panoramic narration.

Another mode of presentation is the 'scenic' mode. It is more selective and thus more dramatic. It presents the action in the form of scenes as in a play. The first chapter of *Pride and Prejudice*, for instance, is typically scenic. Jane Austen allows Mr and Mrs. Bennet to exhibit their qualities through their speeches. But the illusion of reality is lost when the author makes her appearance as an essayist to summarize the particulars.

The Old Novel, thus, treats the 'dramatic quality' as a means to an end and makes use of the above said conventions to give a limited sense of an illusion of life.

In the new novel two contrary tendencies can be noted—one progressive and the other reactionary. One is "an extension of traditional realism, a new realism often sought as an
end in itself. The other is a revival of didacticism. The new realism calls for the disappearance of the author, a shift of the point of view from the omniscient author to one or more of his characters within the third-person narrative. The shift from the action to what the character makes of it is clearly evident. The action as such loses its importance as it stands in confrontation with the impact that the action makes on the character in terms of its effect on his relationship with the world and its effect on his personality. Thus the individual experience assumes new significance in the New realism, as the New Realism is intent on revealing the changes going on in a character's psyche.

As the reader is made to view the character's inner feelings and thoughts directly without the intervening presence of the author's voice, the total effect is dramatic rather than undramatic. There is, certainly, omniscience, but it is limited and appears as if it is the reader's own. The shift from the objective to the subjective puts the reader in direct touch with the reality of the subjective rather than that of the objective. The limited omniscience seems to be no omniscience at all because of the absence of the traditional conventions which remind us of the omniscience. The vagaries of the

10 Steinmann, JR., p. 298.
character's psyche become the only organizing principle and not the logical analysing and classifying imagination of an omniscient mind.

This, in fact, became the method of the later James of *The Ambassadors*, of Joyce, of Virginia Woolf, of Conrad and of Hemingway. Hemingway achieves a totally dramatic effect by making his narrators report only the dialogue and action and thus by making them disappear. Being scientific, his narrators aimed at objectivity.

*The Ambassadors* is one of the best examples of a novel which achieves new realism to the utmost point. James employs conventional and conservative methods which are dramatic and scenic. The narrative is in the third person narrated from the point of view of Strether, one of the characters. Strether is the observer who tries to influence the action, and when he fails to do so, he gains extra opportunities for observations. And the rest of the characters are portrayed in such a way as to be observed by Strether without any difficulty. We get everything about the other characters, their doings, from Strether's point-of-view. What becomes significant and important is what Strether makes of these things. James achieves the new realism not only by an artistic manoeuvring
of point-of-view but also by the density of the medium and the degree of saturation of facts. The Ambassadors satisfies its readers not only by its artistic fineness but also by its truth.

The other novel which uses devices contrary to The Ambassadors is Ulysses which is also successful in achieving its goal of realism. Joyce uses experimental methods. The author disappears and the action is rendered exclusively scenically, from the points-of-view of many characters. The complete action of the novel is confined to the events of a single day's life in Dublin.

Besides "New Realism", the other contrasting tendency of the new novel is the "New didacticism" which shuns explicit statement. The New novel entertains a "moral". This moral goes by the name the "theme", moral generalisation about life. The moral, in turn, remains implicit all the time, thus subordinating the theme to the technique.

The disappearance of the author in the new realism results ultimately in the active and sensitive participation of the reader in the action of the novel, contrary to the Old novel in which the narrator has dominated the proceedings and where the reader has been nothing but a passive participant.
In spite of the fact that the New realism and New didacticism are incompatible by nature, realism cannot escape didacticism as the author wishes to present his reader with some hints of his own personal beliefs and attitudes. This is because whatever course of events the novelist narrates in the novel, it necessarily symbolizes a similar course of events in real life. More so because a novel carries with it a moral or a theme, unlike life. Even the new novels like *Ulysses*, *The Ambassadors* and *Mrs Dalloway* exploit and reaffirm a certain moral code and the new didacticism is exemplified in these novels. The Old novel is rich in didacticism as it accomplishes a moral code by such means as exposition, human characters, and allegorical names. The new novel, in its endeavour to avoid didacticism, achieves it by means of its structure, the author's selection and organization of topics which embodies a moral, an implied one rather than an explicit one. Structure becomes the only clue to arrive at these moral implications in the new novel.

Virginia Woolf achieves this feat quite admirably in her *Mrs. Dalloway* by the juxtaposition of the world of well-given parties, represented by Mrs Dalloway, and the world of war, neurosis and suicide, represented by Septimus Warren-Smith, which implies a tragic dimension to human existence.
Ulysses accomplishes this in another remarkable way through a mythology and through a veiled comparison of Bloom with Ulysses. Through the veiled comparison of the journey of Ulysses with the journey of a modern man from morning to midnight, from bed to funeral, to a pub, to a brothel, to a coffee-stall and back to bed, Joyce is able to drive home a moral or a generalization on the blighted lives of modern men.

The New realism and the New didacticism are doubtless the results of the increasing interest of the modern mind in matters pertaining to human psychology, the rise of romanticism, the decline of religion and the rise of science. It can also be attributed to the unwillingness of the modern mind to make any assertions about values or ideologies and the confusion of the roles of fact and fiction, of reason and art. That is why some of the new novelists are prone to expose the human consciousness itself to the readers. They tend to reject any external comment on the part of the author or any generalization or proclamation of ideologies from him. This kind of thinking gives priority to a presentation of characters, scene and actions as they appear to a writer at a particular moment rather than to a presentation from the point-of-view of objective reality. These 'impressionistic' tendencies could be found in Ford Maddox Ford who went to the extent of breaking
down the imagined rigidities of the space-time continuum and making the visual world dissolve in his *Parade’s End*, in which the reader moves freely within the time continuum and the total picture is perceived through bits of impressions. In *The Inheritors* jointly written by Ford and Conrad, they attempted to present speech as it is actually spoken, with the concrete meanings only implied and stated nowhere explicitly.

The 'interior monologue' or the direct quotation of the character's consciousness is an extension of this technique. In this, the thoughts, feelings and sensuous perceptions are neither articulated nor ordered into a rational sequence. This method has been employed by Hemingway in *For Whom the Bell Tolls* intermittently. Faulkner uses it exclusively in *The Sound and the Fury*. Virginia Woolf's *The Waves* is rendered exclusively in the form of interior monologues. Joyce, of course, makes perfect the technique of interior monologue through Mary Bloom's long, unpunctuated monologue in *Ulysses*.

A similar but with slightly different technique goes by the name "stream-of-consciousness" technique. It is first employed by Dorothy Richardson in her *Honeycomb*, the entire novel is nothing but the stream of consciousness of the heroine, where "the author attempts to give a direct quotation of the
mind" of the whole consciousness and no author exists there to interpret for us. Faulkner, Virginia Woolf, and Joyce are the major exponents of this technique as seen in their The Sound and Fury and As I Lay Dying, Mrs. Dalloway and To the Lighthouse, Ulysses respectively. It is a new and direct development from the subjectivism of the new novel.

The new realism gains in one direction by its fine dramatization of the subjective details while it loses in another direction, by losing rapport with the reader and the kinds of irony that omniscience only can furnish.

Though the representation of realism has its own limitations, the new novelists cannot sacrifice or forego the life-like quality it imparts to the novel. And this, more than anything else, seems to be the reason why the new novelists persist in experimenting and in finding more and more new techniques with varying degrees of success in their endeavours. One of the major aspects of the novelistic technique which has been extensively subjected to modifications and still has a vast scope for improvisation is the 'point of view'.