The main purpose of the present study is to show that the mid-Victorian novelist Anthony Trollope (1815-1882), despite the attack by Henry James, in a sense the father of the Modern English Novel, has an art of fiction all his own and that too of a very good kind. Trollope as is well-known was a very prolific writer having to his credit as many as forty seven novels. Of these the *Barsetshire Chronicles* and the *Palliser Novels* are the most notable. Whereas the latter are a set of political novels having a larger canvas, the former deal with ecclesiastical life centred round the county of Barsetshire, specially the town of Barchester. Readers and critics agree upon this set having the most characteristic achievements of Trollope.

The present study has chosen the six novels of *Barsetshire Chronicles* as its focal point to bring out the novelistic art of Anthony Trollope. Whenever one talks of artistic novels and the art of fiction in general, the names of Henry James, Virginia Wolf and James Joyce come to one’s mind, as they were evidently the most self-conscious artists.
But this may also blind us to the fact that the art they represent collectively is only one kind of art and that there are other varieties of fictional art too. The thesis attempts to draw attention to one such non-Jamesian kind of fiction represented by Trollope and his ilk, and to show that this art is of a good and viable kind. Indeed at times he evinces such artistic features as would win the approval even of a modernist like James.

For a logical presentation of this argument, the study is divided into eight chapters. The six novels of the Barset group are examined in detail in a chapter each from a predominantly formalistic viewpoint.

Chapter one gives not only general introduction to Trollope’s works but pays special attention to the graph of his reputation. When he began writing in mid and late Victorian period, he was seen as a novelist next in popularity to Dickens and Thackeray. Maybe because of James’s sustained attack on British novelists of the time on account of their theoretical naivete as he saw it, and also because of the rise of modernism both in poetry and fiction in the early decades of 20th century, Trollope’s reputation towards the end of his life and years succeeding to his death, took a downward turn. But since 1980s there has been a revival of interest in Trollope and the Victorian Age in general.
The present study is symptomatic of this revived interest, which seeks to show that Trollope hardly deserved the demonization which James heaped upon him. The first chapter, therefore, examines James’s strictures on Trollope especially in his *Art of Fiction* and *Partial Portraits* and compares them with E.M Forster’s *Aspect of the Novel*, characteristic of the sturdy British commonsense. Through this comparison the chapter proposes that if the novel tells a story, as Forster suggests, then Trollope was a much better story teller than Henry James.

Chapter two deals with the first novel of the Barset group, *The Warden* published in 1855. As in Thomas Hardy’s Wessex novels, *The Warden* introduces the scene of action, the Barsetshire County in vivid detail, and in a sense sets the tone of the entire group. It also introduces some of the characters that are to play a major role in the succeeding novels too. *The Warden* centres round the life of Reverend Septimus Harding, precentor of Barchester Cathedral and the controversy regarding his mismanagement of the church finances. Here Trollope shows that the manner of representation is as important as the matter. The opening paragraph of the novel is quite illustrative of Trollope’s narrative technique, not only here but of the subsequent novels too.
The Reverend Septimus Harding was, a few years since, a beneficed clergyman residing in the cathedral town of; let us call it Barchester. Were we to name Wells or Salisbury, Exeter, Hereford, or Gloucester, it might be presumed that something personal was intended; and as this tale will refer mainly to the cathedral dignitaries of the town in question, we are anxious that no personality be suspected. Let us presume that Barchester is a quiet town...At the time at which we introduce Mr. Harding to our readers he was living as a precentor at Barchester...

James in his essay ‘Anthony Trollope’ objected to this kind of narration saying, he “referred to the work in hand (in the course of that work) as a novel, and to himself as a novelist, and was fond of letting the reader know that this novelist could direct the course of events”. This assumption of divine omniscience and omnipotence in James’s eyes destroys the illusion transferring the reader from the Barchester world to the everyday humdrum reality.

The chapter tries to show that James completely misunderstood the novelistic strategy of Trollope. The combination of objectively referential narrative and the self- referential one has been there in English fiction since the days of Fielding and Sterne. This is not theoretical naivete as James
argues but a clever way of underscoring the fictionality of all fiction a strategy later on adopted by the dramatists like Brecht and directors like Piscator in their concept of the Epic Theatre that exposes all the nut-bolts of their dramatic illusion; and by postmodern novelists like B.S. Johnson and Thomas Pyncheon. In other words, Trollope may be said to have anticipated contemporary trends in fiction.

Chapter three examines the most well-known and popular novel from the *Barsetshire Chronicles, Barchester Towers* (1857). The novel is essentially about Dr Proudie’s appointment as the new bishop of Barchester and its after affects on the clerical life of the town. It contains many significant themes such as personal ambition. After the death of bishop Grantly his son the Archdeacon expects to succeed him in that position naturally. But the new government foils his dynastic aspirations by appointing Dr Proudie as the new bishop.

Another important theme is the nature of true and false friendship. When Mr Quiverful a friend of the warden Mr Harding succeeds the latter in his official position, he is taken around and introduced to his duties by none else than Harding himself. All this is done without a tinge of professional jealousy which constitutes true friendship. On the other hand, Mr Slope, the curate, attempts to win Eleanor Harding by representing his
passion as his genuine concern for her father who has fallen into disgrace because of ecclesiastical politics. And this is false friendship marked as it is by hypocrisy.

From among the wealth of interesting characters in *Barchester Towers*, Mrs Proudie and Mr Slope are perhaps the most memorable ones as comic types. In their creation, Trollope has reached those heights where Jane Austen and Charles Dickens normally dwell. Mrs Proudie is reminiscent very much of Austen’s Mrs Bennett. Only this time, Trollope has given a sinister streak to her character. Mrs Proudie is not only foolish like the anxious mother of *Pride and Prejudice* but is swollen with self-importance as the wife of the new bishop and openly dabbles in her husband’s official matters. In Mr Slope we find the slick and sly Uriah Heep or better still Mr Pecksniff from *Martin Chuzzlewit*. From the way Trollope describes Mr Slope, it seems extremely likely that he has modelled his character on Dickens’s portrait of his arch-hypocrite.

The chapter singles out one particular incident for detailed examination as it is from a technical point of view quite interesting. The incident is the interview between Eleanor and Mr Arabian who desired to marry her. The way Trollope has narrated the incident invited the James’s wrath. While concluding the incident, Trollope remarks:
Had she given way and sobbed aloud, as in such cases a woman should do, he would have melted at once, implored her pardon, perhaps knelt at her feet and declared his love. Everything would have been explained, and Eleanor would have gone back to Barchester with a contented mind --- But then where would have been my novel? She did not cry and Mr Arabian did not melt.

James in *Partial Portraits* castigates Trollope for such authorial intrusion and ‘slaps at credulity’. The chapter tries to argue along with Kincaid and Wayne Booth that such comments far from damaging author’s credibility betray his full confidence in himself as an artist. Such laying bare the bones of illusion he has created speaks complete mastery of the creator over his creation. In fact, such observations on his own craft of fiction not only give his novel the textual self-reflexivity of postmodern fiction but make his account of the incident more readable due to their comic humour.

The incident between Eleanor and Mr Arabian is interesting from yet another point of view. Essentially it boils down to the rejection of an aristocrat by a maiden of megre means; situation very similar to the story of Isabel Archer in James’s *The Portrait of a Lady*. The chapter compares the treatment of the scene by James and Trollope and argues that between the two Trollope is a better story teller. It is interesting to note that
Trollope deals with similar situation in subsequent novels also which gives his treatment a great psychological variety where as James was not to explore such a situation in his later novels like The Golden Bowl and The Wings of Dove.

Chapter four centres round Dr Thorne, the third novel of the Barsetshire Chronicles. The novel published in 1858, is a story of an illegitimate child, Mary, lovingly raised by her uncle Dr Thorne. The love affair between Mary and Frank Gresham, son of the squire of Greshamsbury, occupies a major place in the total plot structure of the novel. The chapter examines the authorial comments of Trollope not only on the incidents of the novel but also on the fiction in general.

Chapter five examines Trollope novelistic art as reflected in the fourth novel of Barset group, Framley Parsonage (1861). It mainly deals with such stylistic features of Trollope as his penchant for long sentences, and of his combination of formal and informal language. Similarly, the chapter also pays special attention to Trollope’s treatment rejection of a young lord like Lufton by Lucy, a commoner which recalls James’s The Portrait of a Lady.
Chapter six is devoted to the fifth novel of Barset group, *The Small House at Allington* (1864). The scene of action this time is shifted from Barchester to Allington, but the links between the two remain quite strong. The novel is a story of Lily Dale and her sister Bell, who live with their widowed mother in Allington. The main part of the story is the depiction of the unsuccessful loves of Lily and Bell. An interesting feature of *The Small House at Allington* is Trollope’s use of the moth-flame image as the unifying, structural principle of the novel. The chapter examines in detail Trollope’s use of the image and proposes that such a strategy should have won the approval even of Henry James.

Chapter seven deals with *The Last Chronicle of Barset* (1867), the concluding piece of the group. The story revolves round Grace Crawley and her father, the perpetual curate of Hogglestock, who is assumed of stealing a check but is finally exonerated. The Archdeacon’s son Henry Grantly is in love with Grace and insists on marrying her despite the father’s threat of disinheriting him.

The chapter closely examines the narrative technique of the novel especially with reference to James’s objections to Trollope’s authorial intrusions. It also demonstrates how at times by getting under the skin of his characters, Trollope anticipates the stream-of-consciousness novel.
Chapter eight forms the conclusion of the thesis. It is a recapitulation of the points made in the earlier chapters and tries to tie up loose ends, if any of the arguments advanced in the study. The chapter compares in brief Hardy’s Wessex novels and Trollope’s *Barsetshire Chronicles* as examples of topographical fiction. Similarly, taking into account Trollope’s comments at the end of *The Last Chronicle of Barset* on his depiction of clergymen in their human rather than professional aspects, the chapter argues that by following such a strategy Trollope’s characterization gains that quality of universality which one associates with Chaucer’s ecclesiasts and with Shakespeare’s kings and queens. The study concludes by pointing out some directions for further research in the field. For instance, a similar study could be undertaken for some other figures like Wells, Galsworthy and Bennet.