

**1–Landmarks in the Moral and Artistic Concepts of the Novel
in View of Literary Criticism**

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The novel is a fluid and dynamic form of literature. As the term by itself implies, the novel seeks novelty and modernism. With the emergence of Modern Literature, the novel has become one of the most prominent elements and forms of literature (Matz 15). Being a clear manifestation of the human thought, the novel engages in all themes and subjects. The modern novel does not merely refer to any novel written in modern times, or a novel that is new or recent; in fact, a modern novel entails a specific description (Layoun 53). The novel depicts how the only constant is change. It echoes the facets of life: the satisfying as well as the distasteful, the striking as well as the hideous (Matz 25).

According to Carroll, the history of man can be traced through the evolution of art.

The novel, being one of the primary forms of art practiced in the world, portrays the broad entirety of life. The novel can show how people are exposed to the world, and how their identities, happiness, and unhappiness depend on the way their paths cross with those of others (Mazzoni 58).

The first novel that a person happened to tell, whether to himself or to others, had the recalling of a specific incident that occurred to him or ought to live inside him as a mere purpose. Hence, it may be said that the novel, from a narrative perspective, is as old as the human existence (Moretti 7). However, the novel is not just a form or process of reporting or narrating events. The novel, in its essence, is an act of literature that goes beyond narration to interpret ideas of life and attempt to analyze them (Armstrong and Warren 342). With such feature, the novel seeks to express a specific vision that has an impact on the recipient, and it searches various intellectual, linguistic and aesthetic dimensions to convey this vision.

The evolution of the novel from the realm of informing to the sphere of interpreting and revealing is considered the result of change in the needs of man (Moretti 6). Hence, one may understand how the art of writing novels emerged, starting from the

stories about myths and legends to the narratives that portray many ancient human experiences. If one wants to resort back to religious indications, perhaps the story of Adam and Eve, and what they encountered while in Heaven and caused their expulsion and landing on the earth, could be one of the oldest "narratives" with an artistic dimension

that encompasses the process of reporting and afterwards generalizing what was reported to become a worldly vision.

A novel, which has the goal of interpreting and analyzing the reality of matters that may not be necessarily real, is a form of literature known by almost all civilizations, peoples and nations since it is inherent to their existence and stems from it (Scheiber 54).

2

Many poems, epics and fairy tales extend deep into the human heritage and may be considered a novel; however, "the novel" in its contemporary literary and artistic structure

forms another art, which undertakes features, and functions that go beyond tracing the beginnings of human existence and answering the primitive needs that this existence requires. The novel takes us into a world replete with complexities of achieving both: artistic vision and aesthetic values (Gjerlevsen 180). It is a point of departure from the intuition of the act to the logic of its literary, aesthetic and human complexity (Williams 280).

Accordingly, this study surveys the historical development of the concept of morality and art in the novel from the lens of contemporary criticism and is carried out based on this standpoint. It presents historical descriptions of landmarks in criticism that shaped the development of the novel starting from the views of Dr. Samuel Johnson, who died in 1784 and ending with George Lukacs, who died in 1971. It is worth noting that this study does not aspire to survey all aspects of critical views. Mainly, this study is an attempt to get acquainted with some of these visions, their premises and aspirations. This study can be considered a modest contribution to the realm of literature concerned with the critical thought.

The contemporary novel began to take its historical form, which still undergoes development, when it ceased to have "poetic form" and "mythical content.

This change in

form dates back to the eighteenth century, specifically in England and France, where the first trials of writing a "novel" of realistic dimensions were witnessed¹. Samuel Richardson, who died in 1761, and Henry Fielding, who died in 1754, were two English men of letters and were the first two novelists to leave a footprint on the works of novelists who followed (Carnell).

To better explain the shift in the definition and concept of the novel, it may be appropriate to present the opinion of one of the contemporary novelists of that early era, the French Gerald De La Patrie, who wrote back in 1744 that people felt the need for literary writings that reflect their day-to-day conversations, relations, or simply what they could be living. They wanted to see real reflections of the world they live in, as well as the true history of their society with all the good and bad it encompasses (Wellek 241). As De La Patrie states, people felt the need for literary writings concerned with a realistic and not fictional portrayal of characters. This point of view was confirmed 100 years after De la Patrie stated his arguments in 1750. Dr. Johnson stated that novels which depict a real view of life and highlight events that are considered daily encounters are admired by contemporary generations (Bolin 440). This approach of thought continued to exist during the days of René Wellek who claims that literary realism has become a representation of contemporary social realism (Wellek 25).

¹ See:

- Hemmings, *Realism and the Novel*, pp. 9-34.
- Filder, *The Death and Rebirth of the Novel*, p. 198

3

On the other hand, who did the realistic novel target? Who was the audience that had interest in realistic novels during the second half of the eighteenth century? Who was able to impose a new trend in "the act of writing novels"? Was the historical development the starting point for such form of writing? In fact, the readers of novels who began to face the consequences of the industrial revolution in Europe and witnessed the fall of many social, moral, and aesthetic values were the target and point of transformation. It was that public, who is rooted in the depths of human existence, who began to thrive with life, especially with the start of the collapse of certain political systems that dominated its capabilities and orientations for centuries. It was the public who suffered oppression and

domination and paid the price of this suffering due to ignorance and disdain. It was the lower class society that began to breathe and absorb an idea that says these people have the ability to lead a life and build their own values and ideologies. The answer to the previous question comes more clearly in the words of Dr. Johnson himself. He believed that novels are mainly written for the young, the ignorant and the stupid. They are written to serve as lectures, for those in need for guidance, on disciplines about life (Bolin 438). In fact, surveying a sample of novels of the 18th century provides confirmation of all these opinions and trends. The Parisian literary periodical named for Alain-René Lesage's novel

Gil Blas, which serialized famous novels such as Émile Zola's *Germinal* (1884) and *L'œuvre* (1885) before they appeared in book form, had its hero depicted in various stages

of life and in all stances of social encounters known at the time. It revolved around a boy who falls as a victim of bad company and becomes a thief, and finally ends up as a wealthy man with a family, wealth and good reputation 2 . Isn't such sample, therefore, considered as a model that seeks to transform "low profile" people to "high profile" people, where their ambitions are represented and desires in social experience are met? Such work is a representation of the novel that adopts realism as a means of guidance and social enlightenment.

Hence, it could be concluded that this transformation and shift in the art of writing novels from the realm of poetic formalism and unrealistic matter to the world of prose and real matter was not the result of the individual initiative from the writer or reader; in fact, it was an act that genuinely constituted a clear response to a mentality/ideology looked for in an era where social and political values, as well as certain social classes of people, were destroyed and decayed. The shift was an attempt to shed light on the values, social classes and groups that were wanted to gain the right of having their needs expressed in specific literary genre. Hence, the writer of the novel is the salvation of those people and their path for reaching their aspirations. It may be possible, therefore, to conclude that the novel, which was founded during the 18 th century in Europe, was a reaction against the concept of elite geniuses. In this regards, one must clearly distinguish between literature in its traditional "refined" concept, that is to say literature that relies on a limited elite of receivers, and literature that relies on uneducated audiences 3 (Hudson 568).

2 See Hemmings, Realism, p.12

3 See Fidler, The Death and the Rebirth of the Novel, p.189

4

In the eighteenth century, early theories of criticism of the contemporary novel had the realistic, moral significance of novels as a point of focus. In this regard, some of Dr. Johnson's views may be among the best views that represent this approach. Dr. Johnson states that "the supreme form of virtue that a person can achieve is the most complete form

of virtue... This virtue teaches us what we must hope for and what we can achieve" (Wellek 240). This quote diverges towards a perspective which focuses on the

aspect of "morality" rather than "literary writing." Hence, one may question the role of the

novel in this spectrum as long as the focus of this literary art is morality and ethical practices that people can learn about through other means. Perhaps the answer lies in another essay by Dr. Johnson who states that a righteous man is an exemplary for all those

around him, and in this sense, getting to know such a person is more beneficial than reading a novel. As Dr. Johnson mentions, virtuous men are usually notorious, and the writer must work to spread such virtues through his novels 4 .

This idea sheds light on the resemblance between the orientation of that era and Aristotle's stand of poetry. Aristotle, as is well known, perceives poetry as a form of moral guidance and considers the poet to be merely a tool for such ethical guidance. This general depiction of the novel resembled by Dr. Johnson matches a representation offered a century later by a famous influential novelist named Mary Ann Evans, known by her pen name George Eliot, who was an English novelist, poet, journalist, translator and one of the leading writers of the Victorian era, and who died in 1880. Taking the latter into consideration, one might reckon that criticism theories about the novel during that era had the relation between the reader and the text as a major point of concern.

During the 19th century, the main theme communicated through the novel was "morality". Novels attempted to make morality more efficient and effective. Even

criticism had morality as its point of focus. However, this tendency changed when two individuals with high interest in the novel came to light and lead to a significant change in this trend. They are Flaubert and Henry James.

Gustave Flaubert, the French novelist, who died in 1880, believed that the ideas of the novelist should go beyond the narrowness of the local environment; it must diverge towards global clarity, and should not be bound to a specific status, or time. Flaubert noted that prose, despite its essential objectivity, could have the potential to be musical and harmonious just as poetry. In this regard, a well-known saying by Flaubert declares that

“a good sentence of prose must be like a good verse of poetry” (Halperin³⁷⁵). This approach,

according to Flaubert, focuses on the “artistic touch” in writing novels. It can be assessed

as an attempt to substitute the absolute dominance of the aspect of “morality”, which was dominant in the eighteenth century, with the “artistic” aspect. In this regard, it may be

appropriate to note that Flaubert was one of the first advocates of the “dramatic representation” of human thought in the novel. Flaubert had become the enemy of the naive imitation of reality and of the romantic anecdotal plots that might have been invoked

4 See Halperin, *The Theory of the Novel*, p.375

5

by some of those who tried to present “moral” material away from the spontaneity of reality. It is a serious attempt to get out of the cliché “real” and “local” and immerse in the universal human space or global orientation.

Flaubert states that the artist does not need to narrate a story; neither does he need to have a story at the first place. All what the writer of the novel needs is a potential for spontaneity in depicting the features of human psychology (Rutledge 355). In his call, Flaubert seems to reveal some aspects of “Sufism” in the fulfilling of existence and being.

Man, according to some Sufi concepts, cannot achieve his existence and realize the fullness of his human perfection unless he dives into his inner human spectrum, where the direct and acute relationship between him and himself stems out. In order to achieve the

realization of human perfection, a person must turn to his Creator, his sole cause of existence. He must break free from his humane endeavor and try to cling as closely as possible to divine lights, which are the source of existence. Hence, it may be possible for him, after he picks up and interacts with the radiant rays, to realize the fullness of his human perfection and reach the outskirts of divine perfection.

When Flaubert announced in the year 1852 that he felt the need for the writer's complete absence from his own work, he began a trend in the art of criticizing and writing novels. This trend was concerned about moving away from the "direct moral lecture";

presented in such literary forms. Flaubert declared that the reader should know nothing about what the writer was thinking of when writing his work of literature, just as humans know nothing about what God thinks of when he creates them. It is an invitation to indulge in the "artistic" aspect of writing and not its end goal.

This implies that the "moral" goal is better and deeper achieved through technical

focus and not through direct intent. It is a form of centralization on the creative existence of the act and neglecting of what is "apparent". (Freidman 180). This does not mean, in any sense, the erosion of the author and his total absence. On the contrary, Flaubert's call

was with presented with a clear intent for having the writer of the novel present in every aspect of his writing. However, this presence shall be similar to the way we sense the presence of the Creator: He is everywhere, but he is not visible anywhere. Based on the above, the views of Flaubert can be considered as a turning point between old approaches adopted in writing novels (that is to say the approach that focuses on copying reality as is), and the new approach that has self-direction as a point of focus. In more general terms, after Flaubert's views, the focus in writing novels began to shift from the mere moral objective expressed by direct oration to the "moral-artistic" objective that encompasses the principle of self-flow in writing.

Following the footprints of Flaubert, Henry James, who died in 1916, was an American-British author and is considered by many to be among the greatest novelists in the English language, expressed his basic attitude towards the novel. James insisted on the psychological portrayal of characters through the utilization of a dramatic approach when

writing novels (Kenneth). In the year 1867, Emile Zola sought, in his introduction of the second edition of his novel *Therese Raquin*, to further develop the theory offered by

6

Flaubert in an attempt to be a pioneer in setting the ground for the natural school in Europe. Zola investigated the principle of pure scientific curiosity in the writing of novels. According to him, the writer can be seen as a surgeon exploring the secrets of the

“body”;
in an attempt to reach an understanding of the details from which it is composed. With Zola’s ideas about writing novels, the writer is considered a fan of the novel, but without

any direct intervention from him as an author (Becker). With such view, Zola’s approach

stressed the importance of socially benefiting from the natural school.

Flaubert was the first to set a well-established theory that could be comprehensively applied to a novel. This theory did not have aesthetic elements as a basic point of concern, whether in the relation of such elements with each other or in their relation with the work of literature as a whole. Flaubert, through this approach, is considered to be the pioneer in setting theories of criticism of the art of writing novels; his opinions are considered the building blocks of modern forms of the novel. This high-end shift in the understanding of the novel compels a pause. The transition from realistic visualization, which aims to merely cultivate certain moral values, to the artistic depiction of reality, which aims to establish certain values across psychological and aesthetic dimensions, is an important milestone in the development of critical thought of the concept of the novel. As if the masses, starting from their basic needs in the eighteenth century, had made a quantum leap in the concept of the novel through introducing the element of realism and reality. The masses felt the need for an aesthetic dimension not provided in mere realistic novels. As if these masses, after knowing how to guide their needs through moral considerations, were keen to search for new dimensions that can add a new dimension to the current moral dimension. Such dimension could be assessed by some people as a way for entertainment; however, it had, with no doubt, paved the way for the “contemporary” modern concept of the novel.

The value of “Morality” in a novel cannot be denied and cannot cease to exist;

however, the human nature aspires and needs what is beyond the “moral lesson”: the aesthetic dimension. This need itself constitutes the most important element in a work of art and in the principle leading to the inevitability of its development. Hence, the paradigm shift, which began to appear in the nineteenth century, in the understanding of the motives behind writing novels, is considered an expected response to a specific realm of thought needed by the group. Due to this, novelists and pioneer critics had writings that realized this thought and its aspirations. Such interaction between the masses and the pioneers shows that the evolution in artistic views, which results from the awareness of the intellectual and social/ideological requirements of the group, is the right advancement that can survive and grow.

The focus on the “artistic spontaneity” rather than the established norms and imitation of reality is considered to be the first step in the shift from the old theory of the novel to the new theories and form of thinking. In 1890, Thomas Hardy, an English novelist and poet, who died in 1928, asserted that art acts as a means of changing the proportions of reality: it works on changing the standard presented in realities in an

7

attempt to clearly show most of the important features of those realities. Some “real facts”;

if reproduced in works of art as they are found, may attract the attention of some people; however, it might as well attract the attention of no one at all. Based on the latter, Hardy concludes that when reality is copied in a work, the work cannot be considered a form of art at all 5 .

However, a clear statement regarding the concept of the novel was provided in the 1890s by Vernon Lee, the British writer who died in 1935, and is remembered today primarily for her supernatural fiction and her work on aesthetics. She favored the addition of an artistic element when portraying the characters of the novel. She differentiated between novelists who are able to give, through an artistic eye, life to their novel. Vernon Lee declares that those writes reflect the real value of a literary work of art, and accordingly can’t be considered as other writes who portray characters that are strongly connected and rooted in reality, thus rendering them back to the monotonous and cliché forms of novels 6 .

Vernon Lee’s opinions echo the essence of Flaubert’s views that writers have to

“melt” in their novels. She describes the successful writer as someone whose inner opinions and views are totally placed in his literary work. This act, according to Vernon Lee, is the ultimate goal of the literary work; she contends that the pioneer writer who presented such model is the Russian novelist Tolstoy.

The concept of the novel began to take its real contemporary structure and form owing to Vernon Lee and her ilk from critical theorists of the novel. Due to their views, the novel was no more limited to being a form of narration that had morality as a main theme or a direct dissemination of mere reality. The novel became a work of art that is centered on an aesthetic aspect and its supreme ability to act as a means of expression. This does not mean that there happened a “divorce” between the novel and reality. On the contrary, the art of writing novels is still based on reality, but it is no longer attached to all the strains of reality that pull it away from aspects of aesthetics. The novel became an act driven by reality towards the realm art.

The novel, as Vernon Lee notes, is an act of art that can come close to reality, but must not try to imitate drama styles. The novel, Vernon Lee says, should be written like a symphony or opera. The itinerary of the novel with its ideas and facts must form a whole episode. Therefore, every word in the novel must be carefully studied, and what is outside the “circumference” of the novel should be ignored ⁷ .

Despite the different views, the obsession with “morality” did not leave the novel.

On the contrary, it had become more powerful when it reached for artistic views to

⁵ See Halperin, *The Theory*.,p.377

⁶ Halperin, *The Theory*.,pp.316(quoted from: Vernon Lee, *On Literary Construction*, in *The Contemporary*

Review, LXV III [1895], PP. 404–19)

⁷ Halperin, *The Theory*.,p.317 (quoted from: Vernon Lee, *The Craft of Words*, *Novell*

Revue, XI [1894],

PP.571–80)

⁸
express its existence. In the twentieth century, the novel became a revelation of the relationship between man and the universe surrounding that time as defined by David Herbert Lawrence (D.H. Lawrence) ⁸ , who died in 1930. Lawrence highlights the concept of permanent regeneration in a novel. This regeneration has become crucial to the

connection of the novel with life itself. The relationship between things, as Lawrence stated back in the 1930s, changes from day to day in a very rapid pace. Hence, the art that

seeks to reach complete balance between man and life shall always be original and innovative. This orientation in thought led Lawrence to emphasize the aspects of beauty and immensity in the novel. He says the novel resembles the ideal portrayal of the fast interactive relationships that humans have discovered.

Lawrence's theorization takes the definition of "realism" in the novel into a new dimension. Hence, realism spans beyond the "game" of capturing the reality, just as a camera does, and as the norm was throughout the 18th century. It enters the field of continuous interaction with time. Lawrence approved that everything is real in its moment, place, and setting; however, this "thing", by itself, is not true outside its moment, place

and setting. If the novelist attempts to "fix" any substance in the novel in a static place,

time and setting he chooses, this ends up in him condemning the novel in its entirety through this "fixing" process. As a result, the novel rebels against the act of "fixing" and

leaves its author.

This approach adopted by Lawrence takes the "morality" of the novel to a new dimension associated with the continuity of life. Lawrence's approach symbolizes a scale balance with two weighing platforms. The event taking place at a certain setting lays on one weighing platform, and the way this event lingers in its interaction with life lays on the other weighing platform. The aspect of "morality" in the novel is reflected in the unevenness of the balance when the writer seeks to impose his personal and subjective values on one of the two weighing platforms of the scale balance, thus resulting in the "death" of the purpose. This death of purpose is the "immoral" in the novel.

Hence, morality becomes a vigorous form of life in the purpose of writing a novel.

Based on the above, one can understand Lawrence's view of morality in the novel. He argues that when a novel portrays realistic relationships, then this portrayal is moral regardless of the nature of the relationship it presents. Similarly, when the novelist depicts the vitality of real life relations, then this is enough to classify his work as a great

novelistic work. Moral guidance is no longer the essence of the novel, and the novel is no longer a work of literature intended for the young and the naive who are in need for social and other forms of counseling and guidance. The novel became, in the early decades of the

8 There are two studies published by Lawrence that deal with this topic. I made reference to these two

articles to support my arguments. For a full review of the articles see:

–D.H. LAWRENCE, *Morality and the Novel*, first published in the *Calendar of Modern Letters*, 1925.

–*Why the Novel Matters*, first published in *Phoenix* (1936).

Both articles are published in: *20 th Century Literary Criticism –A Reader*, ed. David Lodge, Longman Group

Limited, London, 1972.pp.127_135.

9

twentieth century, an act of life by itself, encompassing all forms of interaction and continuity (Lee 181).

With the beginning of the twentieth century, the act of writing novels seceded from the scope of being “Static” to the realm of being “dynamic” in criticism. Such shift matches the transformation from fireplace stones to flames of fire burning in it. This shift was imposed by the awareness of the critics who tried to respond to the psychological and mental aspirations of the reader. The novel always seeks the reader. It is a

’commodity’;

that is directly associated with “marketing” tools and the desires of the “market”. It must, therefore, be keen to respond to the desires of this “market”. The obsession of people back

then in the 18th century was to reach the reign, and the masses aspired to take control and rule. With the development of the political practices, their concern has become more precise: How can these masses rule? What are the ways that they should follow, and accordingly, who can rule? This obsession became more complex. The same applies to the act of writing novels. There is no doubt that the reader at the beginning of the twentieth century, and even in the first decades of the century, is not the same reader of the eighteenth century. Knowledge expanded, and the ability to encompass humane aspects of

culture has increased and spread. Consequently, man longed for what is “artistic”; after he got over, with his capabilities, what is solely “moral”. Hence, building up on this “ideological” aspect, it can be said that the novel began to fix its footprints along the path

of the era. Thus, with Lawrence’s ideas and theories, the act of writing novels occupied a new dimension since it was no more a form of pure narration or artistic portrayal or even an approach for social, psychological, intellectual or political reform.

The novel, based on the views of Lawrence, transcended from its conventional conceptualization to a new scheme that stands for “the act of being” in its entirety. Simply, the novel became the crafting of life. Lawrence further reflects this point through saying: “I am a human, and I intend, as much as I can, to remain a human, and that’s why I’m a

novelist.” In this sense, and according to Lawrence, the novelist transcends all saints, scholars, philosophers, and poets. Each one of the latter is the master of an aspect of the being of man; however, the novelist is the only one who prevails over all aspects of human existence. The novelist, as Lawrence mentions, possesses existence in his entirety (Lee 180). The act of writing novels turns into a doctrine underlying a controversial relationship between the novel and the reader. The more life shakes between the two, the more authentic and strong the pulse of life depicted in the novel becomes. This leads to a realization that the novel is just more than a form of text; it is an interaction between the text and the reader.

One might notice that the initial approach of writing novels was used to develop the novel clearly aimed at drawing attention to the subjectivity of the novel, whereas later methods, which were used specifically applied by Flaubert and the generation of novelists and novel critics he echoes, were concerned with drawing attention to the subjectivity of the structure of the novel itself, that is to say to the act of writing a novel by itself (Fletcher and Bradbury390).

10

Early approaches to writing novels had “entertainment” as the main artistic objective behind the literary work, yet later approaches had a different objective reflected in presenting a literary work in a way that cannot be comprehended or realized by earlier

centuries. Such divergence resulted from the distinct development of the driving mentality of critical thought. This mentality emerges from efforts to answer the needs of the masses as well as the civilization and political necessities of the society. This shift in the critical understanding of the writing of novels, that is when the novelist or critic places the means and directions of art at the heart of the literary mind and its service, is a matter that requires the reader to effectively participate in the literary work. These critical or theoretical “means” of the act of writing novels aimed, within their theoretical conceptualizations, to limit the degree of live reality in the novel in an attempt to shift the reader’s attention towards this “central” point in particular, and to lead him to deal with the novel while taking into account that its layout, structure and content are considered as one whole.

This understanding was the cornerstone of the launch of literary criticism of the novel in the decades following the twentieth century. Thus, there are those who affirm that this approach in critically assessing the writing of the novel has helped rid the novel of superficial realism, dependence on the materialistic world and shallowness of prose expression, to become more focused on the reality of life and the persistence of modern consciousness⁹. It is as if the novel, within this vision, began to differentiate between the “existing given” and the “power to create”. The attempt was not to set the novel as a work of literature that can decide events on behalf of the world, but rather to have the novel as a means that seeks to create these events. From this perspective, it can be said that the literary criticism of the novel is less concerned with the dimension of “morality”, yet it became more interested in the “philosophical” relationship between the novelist and the

authentic content of the novel. This, in turn, presents a tendency towards looking at the novel as a medium of “interaction” rather than “reporting”.

In this regard, José Ortega y Gasset, who died in 1955, was a Spanish philosopher and essayist who worked during the first half of the 20th century, while Spain oscillated between monarchy, republicanism, and dictatorship; he believed that the novel is an automatic form of art, or at least it must be theoretically as such. In 1925, he stated that the

novel, while establishing its inner world, must replace and deny the real world surrounding it. According to Ortega, the writer of the novel shall attract the reader to the

world of “spontaneity” in his novel. Hence, it can be concluded that the novel shall free the reader from his real world, and allow him to migrate to the world of his imagination; the novel shall keep the reader there and prevent him from returning to his real world 10 . On the other hand, Ortega differentiated between “form” and “content” in a work

of literature. He considered that art only lives in the form of a novel, yet the beauty of art shall stem from the novel’s structure; that is from the way it is structured and not only its subject matter. It is worth noting Ortega’s emphasis on the artistic structure of the novel

9 See Fletcher and Bradbury, *The Introverted.*, p.408

10 See Halperin, *The Theory of the Novel*, p. 375

11

does not eliminate the role of “ideas”. The novelist must not forget his “ideas” when

writing a novel, but his use of these “ideas” must be confined in the inner world of his

novel. The ideas in the novel become creative as much as the characters of the novel are. Thus, ideas become characters: acting factors that contribute to shaping of the structure of the novel itself. Based on this understanding of the novel’s arrangement, it can be noted that the aesthetic value of the novel mainly dependent on the skill which the novelist utilizes in presenting his “characters”. Accordingly, the characters of the novel become independent from the readers. They appear as dynamic realities that go beyond the reader’s

imagination. Hence, what makes Dostoevsky a great novelist and Balzac an average novelist in the views of Ortega? In fact, Balzac’s characters are simply copies of real people. They are aspects of life itself. As for personalities portrayed by Dostoevsky, they are people who may exist and accordingly “propose” a more influential and attractive “form” of life. The more reporting the form is, the more it remotes itself from being aesthetic and influential.

György Lukács, the Hungarian Marxist philosopher, aesthetician, literary historian, who died in 1971, known for his famous book *Theory of the Novel* in 1914–1915, provides a new dimension of theorization in criticizing the novel. This dimension is

considered an attempt to shift the novel from the realm of being a "pure" artistic work to a new spectrum where the "artistic twist", along with the purposeful social aspect and the philosophical realistic depth, interact. Based on the views of Lukacs, the novel attempts to reflect aspects which go beyond the dimensions of “morality” that it used to echo in the past; however, Lukacs explains that the dimension of “morality” comes more sophisticated and adapts with other technical dimensions in the novel (480). Lukacs’s call to deal with the "morality" dimension is more consistent with concepts of intellectual and social commitment. Moreover, Lukacs’s evaluation of the novel stems from historical as well as political spectrum due to the fact that his views are always formulated within a scope of systematic philosophy. In his book "Studies in European Realism" issued between 1935 and 1939, Lukacs states that everything is politics; the realistic novel is the most appropriate form of art which expresses the relation between politics and history (483). Hence, it can be argued that Lukacs’s theories related to the act of writing novels used to seek the discovery of the present through understanding the current relation between this present and other factors that led to its existence through events from the past.

It may also be argued that one of the aims of setting theories that criticize the novel is acknowledging the inevitability of the influence of both, the present and the past, on the act of writing novels and the inability of this action to get out of the sphere of that influence. In 1958, Lukacs states in his book "The Meaning of Contemporary Realism" that no work of art can stand in the way of the historical and political setting in which it is written (482). He declares that the economical and social reality always produces a literary environment that is compatible with it. Lukacs tries to portray the art of writing a literary work as an inevitable consequence of the pressure it generates towards capitalism and its dominating powers that the writer faces. The more capitalism becomes a dominant force,

12

the more the writer feels a sense of alienation from his own environment, and the more his

understanding of the reality transforms into a mature separation from this reality itself. Thus, instead of choosing his material himself, the writer feels compelled, as Zola did, to describe everything, and so on. Moreover, as capitalism grows to be a part of everyday life, the writer becomes more dispersed and ruptured within himself and finds himself detached from the natural rhythms of life and the reality of creation.

Lukacs's important addition to the theories of criticizing the novel is clearly depicted in his study "Theory of The Novel" conducted between 1914 and 1920. In this study, Lukacs sheds light on the relation between the novel and time. He states that time stands in its historical moment and in its daily control over the present moment (484). Lukacs declares that the ability and intensity of imaginative power present in the mind of a novelist is one of the important factors that determines the nature and outcomes of this conflict. However, is it a very limited capacity for this community? Or is it too big? As for the novel, when it is in its supreme epic dimension, it will meet with this fundamental concern which shows that the form of the epic, in itself, is an expression of the relationship between the mind and the world.

Lukacs sees in the epic form of the novel a rise from the experience of the outside world, the world from which God disappeared and became based on the inner spontaneity of the writer. It is the spontaneity that constitutes the element of the possible presence of the alienated hero. The novel, therefore, is the controversy of the writer. It is the result of the struggle of the mental genius with the power of alienation and oppression that capitalism exerts on the human-writer. The call provided by Lukacs to create a new world that we can explore via the novel can serve as an invitation to discover the unknown. It is a migration from reality to the unknown. The novel here goes beyond the boundaries of amoral lesson or artistic proposal, or even trying to set distinctive rules to sense life. It becomes a ship that passes through the sea of the unseen, in an attempt to arrive at answers to questions people always had in their head. There is always a change in this being; however, it is necessary for the writer, from this particular perception, to realize that there is no change that can reach the "end" of finding answers to the question, that is to say, to perfection. Hence, the protagonist in the novel shifts from being an ordinary person to another who is epic, accordingly, the novel becomes an epic. Its hero should be a

"lunatic" looking for meaningful values without knowing what he is searching for or what

he might find. He is a gambler aspiring to the absolute.

From this perspective, it can be said that the act of writing novels is completely different from the tradition that initiated it in the 18th century. The novelist's attention no longer revolves around "reality" as much as it revolves around "the becoming" that becomes the "reality" by itself. The novel turns out to be an adventure by itself. It either leads to futility or failure; it might even lead to the discovery of the "elixir".

Hence,

Lukacs considers the novel a "reflective" act rather than an act of "imitation". The reader

here begins with the outside world but does not end in that same old world. On th

13

contrary, the reader gets along with the novel, lives its adventures, and accordingly ends up being an adventurer just like it.

While Lukacs calls for a contemporary view of the novel that accommodates the realistic being and takes it to a new, promising existence that begins from reality, with all what it entails, to move beyond this reality, the "Russian formalists", from their perspective, have tried to separate literature from politics. They discussed the spontaneity of art and suggested that criticism should ignore social causes and consequences 11 .

They

also declared that formalism and Marxism are contradictory: the former interprets existence from within, while the latter seeks to interpret it from the outside. Accordingly, the Russian formalists refused the academic approach to the novel, and called for the separation of literary criticism from historical, philosophical, and social concerns.

Hence, unity is considered to be the gate to the act of writing novels. From a theoretical point of view, this unity is not connected to other elements. It is the beginning and the start point. It may lead to the understanding of relations, and it may refer to backgrounds. From a literary perspective, it is the only unit that exists: it is the novel. The Russian formalists focused on the internal relations that exist within the novel. The primary task of the critic became to study the ways in which writers utilized words and linguistic means. The value of art according to this perception, as Victor Shklovsky says,

lies in its ability of not enabling the “recipient” to notice the non-artistic “theme” in the literary work. The “theme”, per se, is not important. In fact, what matters is the technique and not what this technique encompasses. Hence, the work of art, based on this perspective, does not need to refer to or resemble anything outside the work itself. With the rise of the structural movement in literary criticism, the novel took a new turn. The goal behind writing novels was no longer to guide a certain community by providing it with moral lessons, aesthetic representations, or analysis of a topic that matters to it. The novel became, based on these new perspectives, a reflection of the environment, experiences, and people. The artistic act of writing novels became, in its entirety, a map through which the elements that compose its various dimensions can be explored. Hence, contemporary Parisian Structuralists have a well-developed view in their approach towards structure. The unity of any work, in this critical view, is defined as a psychological report or a metaphysical test that gives room for the birth of the work. Hence, writing is the product of the subconscious mind. “Structuralism” often focuses on the subconscious mind that produces the very basic structures of the work of art. The structural criticism tends to consider anything the writer produces as an important part of his entire work, and it searches for signs and clues everywhere and anywhere ¹² !Writing, according to this view, can be considered a system of signs. As for language, it is considered an index that reflects the psyche of the writer.

11 See Halperin, Twentieth.,pp.379_ 380

12 See Halperin, Twentieth.,p.381

14

Whatever the attitudes towards the act of writing a novel are, there is a fact that has proven to be true for more than two centuries. It does not matter whether the novel is perceived as a guide for the society or a guide to the society. What really matters is that the novel is a work of literature that proved to be essential and notable in its ability to develop and interact with multiple ideologies. All theories of the novel were built on certain ideologies. Hence, it can be said that the novel, and due to the diverse elements that constitute it, is among the most responsive forms of literature that act as a representation of the ideology of an era; however, where is the future of the novel at our

current time? Do contemporary ideologies still demand – through actual practice – the presence of the novel? Is the novel still a “product” capable of being spread and marketed? Can the novel still be considered an “act” of literature with all its dimensions? In this regard, it is worth highlighting the views of one of the most prominent French critics and theorists, Alain Robbe-Grillet, who states that it is hard to imagine that the art of writing novels could survive without radical changes. He also states that many people believe that this kind of change is not possible because the art of writing novels died; however, Alan Robbe-Grillet asserts that history alone will prove whether the signs that we witness today in the art of writing novels are signs of life or death 13 .

Leslie Aaron Fiedler, who died in 2003, is an American literary critic, known for his interest in mythography and his championing of genre fiction. Leslie Fidler links the death of the novel in certain parts of the world to the weak and decaying cultural situation in these parts. According to her, the sort of evidence that reflects the death of the novel is depicted in the way contemporary writers and critics deal with it. Fidler sees that the death of the novel is evident in instances when writers ridicule it while showing that they are trying to set it on high standards; or configure it in a manner that is far from reality, or even consider it a trace of amateur writing or decaying death as many writers do. Fidler believes that the novel is fading, and she links this status to two reasons: The first is that faith in the “being” of the novel has died in the souls of writers, and the second is that the need that triggered the call for a novel is currently answered in readers.

The question raised now is as follows: Does the novel die? Is it true that some contemporary civilizations are turning into a dagger stabbing the novel? Does the era of the novel end in the world of literature? To answer such questions, it is better to refer back to the origin of the novel, which was previously discussed at the beginning of this study. The origin of the novel is the human existence in its entirety. Therefore, as long as man exists and is able to think, interact, work, imagine, and live, so long shall the novel live, even if it took other forms or embodied other aspirations led by new generations and new views.

13 See Robbe-Grillet, Alain, and Richard Howard. *For a New Novel: Essays on Fiction*.

15

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16

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