



# A Glossary of Literary Terms

NINTH EDITION

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**novel:** The term "novel" is now applied to a great variety of writings that have in common only the attribute of being extended works of *fiction* written in prose. As an extended narrative, the novel is distinguished from the *short story* and from the work of middle length called the *novelette*; its magnitude permits a greater variety of characters, greater complication of plot (or plots), ampler development of milieu, and more sustained exploration of character and motives than do the shorter, more concentrated modes. As a narrative written in prose, the novel is distinguished from the long narratives in verse of Geoffrey Chaucer, Edmund Spenser, and John Milton which, beginning with the eighteenth century, the novel has increasingly supplanted. Within these limits the novel includes such diverse works as Samuel Richardson's *Pamela* and Laurence Sterne's *Tristram Shandy*; Jane Austen's *Emma* and Virginia Woolf's *Orlando*; Charles Dickens' *Pickwick Papers* and Henry James' *The Wings of the Dove*; Leo Tolstoy's *War and Peace* and Franz Kafka's *The Trial*; Ernest Hemingway's *The Sun Also Rises* and James Joyce's *Finnegans Wake*; Doris Lessing's *The Golden Notebook* and Vladimir Nabokov's *Lolita*.

The term for the novel in most European languages is **roman**, which is derived from the medieval term, the *romance*. The English name for the form, on the other hand, is derived from the Italian **novella** (literally, "a little new thing"), which was a short tale in prose. In fourteenth-century Italy there was a vogue for collections of such tales, some serious and some scandalous; the best known of these collections is Boccaccio's *Decameron*, which is still available in English translation at any well-stocked bookstore. Currently the term "novella" (or in the German form, *Novelle*) is often used as an equivalent for *novelette*: a prose fiction of middle length, such as Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* or Thomas Mann's *Death in Venice*. (See under *short story*.)

Long narrative romances in prose were written by Greek writers as early as the second and third centuries AD. Typically they dealt with separated lovers who, after perilous adventures and hairbreadth escapes, are happily reunited at the end. The best known of these Greek romances, influential in later European literature, were the *Aethiopica* by Heliodorus and the charming pastoral narrative

*Daphnis and Chloe* by Longus. Thomas Lodge's *Rosalynde* (the model for Shakespeare's *As You Like It*) and Sir Philip Sidney's *Arcadia* were Elizabethan continuations of the pastoral romance of the ancient Greeks. (See *romance* and *pastoral*.)

Another important predecessor of the later novel was the **picaresque narrative**, which emerged in sixteenth-century Spain; see Michael Alpert, trans., *Lazarillo de Tormes* and *The Swindler* (2003), and Giancarlo Maiorino, *At the Margins of the Renaissance: Lazarillo de Tormes and the Picaresque Art of Survival* (2003). The most popular instance, however, *Gil Blas* (1715), was written by the Frenchman Le Sage. "Picaro" is Spanish for "rogue," and a typical story concerns the escapades of an insouciant rascal who lives by his wits and shows little if any alteration of character through a long succession of adventures. Picaresque fiction is realistic in manner, **episodic** in structure (that is, composed of a sequence of events held together largely because they happened to one person), and often satirical in aim. The first, and very lively, English example was Thomas Nashe's *The Unfortunate Traveller* (1594). We recognize the survival of the picaresque type in many later novels such as Mark Twain's *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* (1876), Thomas Mann's *The Confessions of Felix Krull* (1954), and Saul Bellow's *The Adventures of Augie March* (1953). The development of the novel owes much to prose works which, like the picaresque story, were written to deflate romantic or idealized fictional forms. Cervantes' great quasi-picaresque narrative *Don Quixote* (1605) was the single most important progenitor of the modern novel; in it, an engaging madman who tries to live by the ideals of chivalric romance in the everyday world is used to explore the relationships of illusion and reality in human life.

After these precedents and many others—including the seventeenth-century *character* (a brief sketch of a typical personality or way of life) and Madame de La Fayette's psychologically complex study of character, *La Princesse de Clèves* (1678)—what is recognizably the novel as we now think of it appeared in England in the early eighteenth century. In 1719 Daniel Defoe wrote *Robinson Crusoe* and in 1722, *Moll Flanders*. Both of these are still picaresque in type, in the sense that their structure is episodic rather than in the organized form of a *plot*; while Moll is herself a colorful female version of the old picaro—"twelve Year a Whore, five times a Wife (whereof once to her own Brother), Twelve Year a Thief, Eight Year a Transported Felon in Virginia," as the title page resoundingly informs us. But *Robinson Crusoe* is given an enforced unity of action by its focus on the problem of surviving on an uninhabited island, and both stories present so convincing a central character, set in so solid and detailedly realized a world, that Defoe is often credited with writing the first **novel of incident**.

The credit for having written the first English **novel of character**, or "psychological novel," is almost unanimously given to Samuel Richardson for his *Pamela; or, Virtue Rewarded* (1740). Pamela is the story of a sentimental but shrewd young woman who, by prudently safeguarding her beleaguered chastity, succeeds in becoming the wife of a wild young gentleman instead of his debauched servant girl. The distinction between the novel of incident and the novel of character cannot be drawn sharply; but in the novel of incident the greater interest is in what the *protagonist* will do next and on how the story will turn out; in the novel of

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character, it is on the protagonist's motives for what he or she does, and on how the protagonist as a person will turn out. On twentieth-century developments in the novel of character see Leon Edel, *The Modern Psychological Novel* (rev. 1965). For an account, in the mode of *cultural studies*, of the genesis of the conception of character in the novel, see Deidre S. Lynch, *The Economy of Character: Novels, Market Culture, and the Business of Inner Meaning* (1998).

*Pamela*, like its greater and tragic successor, Richardson's *Clarissa* (1747–48), is an **epistolary novel**; that is, the narrative is conveyed entirely by an exchange of letters. Later novelists have preferred alternative devices for limiting the narrative *point of view* to one or another single character, but the epistolary technique is still occasionally revived—for example, in Mark Harris' hilarious novel *Wake Up, Stupid* (1959) and Alice Walker's *The Color Purple* (1982). See Linda Kauffman, *Special Delivery: Epistolary Modes in Modern Fiction* (1992).

Novels may have any kind of plot form—tragic, comic, satiric, or romantic. A common distinction—which was described by Hawthorne, in his preface to *The House of the Seven Gables* (1851) and elsewhere, and has been adopted and expanded by a number of recent critics—is that between two basic types of prose fiction: the realistic novel (which is the novel proper) and the romance. The **realistic novel** can be described as the fictional attempt to give the effect of *realism*, by representing complex characters with mixed motives who are rooted in a social class, operate in a developed social structure, interact with many other characters, and undergo plausible, everyday modes of experience. This novelistic mode, rooted in such eighteenth-century writers as Defoe and Fielding, achieved a high development in the master novelists of the nineteenth century, including Jane Austen, George Eliot, Anthony Trollope, William Dean Howells, and Henry James in England and America; Stendhal, George Sand, Balzac, and Flaubert in France; and Turgenev and Tolstoy in Russia. If, as in the writings of Jane Austen, Edith Wharton, and John P. Marquand, a realistic novel focuses on the customs, conversation, and ways of thinking and valuing of the upper social class, it is often called a **novel of manners**. The **prose romance**, on the other hand, has as its precursors the *chivalric romance* of the Middle Ages and the *Gothic novel* of the later eighteenth century. It usually deploys characters who are sharply discriminated as heroes or villains, masters or victims; its protagonist is often solitary, and relatively isolated from a social context; it tends to be set in the historical past, and the *atmosphere* is such as to suspend the reader's expectations that are based on everyday experience. The plot of the prose romance emphasizes adventure, and is frequently cast in the form of the quest for an ideal, or the pursuit of an enemy; and the nonrealistic and occasionally melodramatic events are claimed by some critics to project in symbolic form the primal desires, hopes, and terrors in the depths of the human mind, and to be therefore analogous to the materials of dream, myth, ritual, and folklore. Examples of romance novels are Walter Scott's *Rob Roy* (1817), Alexandre Dumas' *The Three Musketeers* (1844–45), Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* (1847), and an important line of American narratives which extends from Edgar Allan Poe, James Fenimore Cooper, Nathaniel Hawthorne, and Herman Melville to recent writings of William Faulkner and Saul Bellow. Martin Green, in *Dreams of Adventure, Deeds of Empire* (1979).

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distinguishes a special type of romance, "the adventure novel," which deals with masculine adventures in the newly colonized non-European world. Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (1719) is an early prototype: some later instances are H. Rider Haggard's *King Solomon's Mines* (1886), Robert Louis Stevenson's *Treasure Island* (1883), and Rudyard Kipling's *Kim* (1901).

Refer to Laurie Langbauer, *Women and Romance: The Consolations of Gender in the English Novel* (1990); Deborah Ross, *The Excellence of Falsehood: Romance, Realism, and Women's Contribution to the Novel* (1991). On the realistic novel in the nineteenth century see Harry Levin, *The Gates of Horn: A Study of Five French Realists* (1963); Ioan Williams, *The Realist Novel in England* (1975); G. J. Becker, *Master European Realists* (1982). On the prose romance in America, see Richard Chase, *The American Novel and Its Tradition* (1957); Northrop Frye, "The Mythos of Summer: Romance," in *Anatomy of Criticism* (1957); Joel Porte, *The Romance in America* (1969); Michael D. Bell, *The Development of American Romance* (1980); and for a skeptical view of the usual division between novel and romance, Nina Baym, *Novels, Readers, and Reviewers: Responses to Fiction in Antebellum America* (1984).

Other often identified subclasses of the novel are based on differences in subject matter, emphasis, and artistic purpose:

**Bildungsroman** and **Erziehungsroman** are German terms signifying "novel of formation" or "novel of education." The subject of these novels is the development of the protagonist's mind and character, in the passage from childhood through varied experiences—and often through a spiritual crisis—into maturity, which usually involves recognition of one's identity and role in the world. The mode began in Germany with K. P. Moritz's *Anton Reiser* (1785–90) and Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship* (1795–96); it includes Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* (1847), George Eliot's *The Mill on the Floss* (1860), Charles Dickens' *Great Expectations* (1861), Somerset Maugham's *Of Human Bondage* (1915), and Thomas Mann's *The Magic Mountain* (1924). An important subtype of the Bildungsroman is the **Künstlerroman** ("artist-novel"), which represents the growth of a novelist or other artist from childhood into the stage of maturity that signalizes the recognition of the protagonist's artistic destiny and mastery of an artistic craft. Dickens' *David Copperfield* (1849–50) can be considered an early instance of this type: later and more developed examples include some major novels of the twentieth century: Marcel Proust's *Remembrance of Things Past* (1913–27), James Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1914–15), Thomas Mann's *Tonio Kröger* (1903) and *Dr. Faustus* (1947), and André Gide's *The Counterfeiters* (1926). See Lionel Trilling, "The Princess Casamassima," in *The Liberal Imagination* (1950); Maurice Beebe, *Ivory Towers and Sacred Founts: The Artist as Hero in Fiction* (1964); Jerome H. Buckley, *Season of Youth: The Bildungsroman from Dickens to Golding* (1974); Martin Swales, *The German Bildungsroman from Wieland to Hesse* (1978); Thomas L. Jeffers, *Apprenticeships: The Bildungsroman from Goethe to Santayana* (2005). In *Unbecoming Women: British Women Writers and the Novel of Development* (1993), Susan Fraiman analyzes novels about "growing up female"; she proposes that they put to question the "enabling fiction" that the Bildungsroman is a "progressive development" toward "masterful selfhood."

The **social novel** emphasizes the influence of the social and economic conditions of an era on shaping characters and determining events; often it also embodies an implicit or explicit thesis recommending political and social reform. Examples of social novels are Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852), Upton Sinclair's *The Jungle* (1906), John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath* (1939), Nadine Gordimer's *Burger's Daughter* (1979). A Marxist version of the social novel, representing the hardships suffered by the oppressed working class, and usually written to incite the reader to radical political action, is called the **proletarian novel** (see *Marxist criticism*). Proletarian fiction flourished especially during the great economic depression of the 1930s. An English example is Walter Greenwood's *Love on the Dole* (1933); American examples are Grace Lumpkin's *To Make My Bread* (1932), about a mill strike in North Carolina, and Robert Cantwell's *Laugh and Lie Down* (1931), about the harshness of life in a lumber mill city in the Northwest.

Some realistic novels make use of events and personages from the historical past to add interest and picturesqueness to the narrative. What we usually specify as the **historical novel**, however, began in the nineteenth century with Sir Walter Scott. The historical novel not only takes its setting and some characters and events from history, but makes the historical events and issues crucial for the central characters and the course of the narrative. Some of the greatest historical novels also use the protagonists and actions to reveal what the author regards as the deep forces that impel the historical process. Examples of historical novels are Scott's *Ivanhoe* (1819), set in the period of Norman domination of the Saxons at the time of Richard I; Dickens' *A Tale of Two Cities* (1859), set in Paris and London during the French Revolution; George Eliot's *Romola* (1863), in Florence during the Renaissance; Tolstoy's *War and Peace* (1869), in Russia during the invasion by Napoleon; and Margaret Mitchell's *Gone with the Wind* (1936), in Georgia during the Civil War and Reconstruction. An influential treatment of the form was by the Marxist scholar and critic Georg Lukács, *The Historical Novel* (1937, trans. 1962); a comprehensive later commentary is by Harry E. Shaw, *The Forms of Historical Fiction: Sir Walter Scott and His Successors* (1983).

One twentieth-century variant of the historical novel is known as **documentary fiction**, which incorporates not only historical characters and events, but also reports of everyday events in contemporary newspapers: John Dos Passos, *USA* (1938); E. L. Doctorow, *Ragtime* (1975) and *Billy Bathgate* (1989). Another recent offshoot is the form that one of its innovators, Truman Capote, named the **non-fiction novel**. This uses a variety of novelistic techniques, such as deviations from the temporal sequence of events and descriptions of a participant's state of mind, to give a graphic rendering of recent people and happenings, and is based not only on historical records but often on personal interviews with the chief agents. Truman Capote's *In Cold Blood* (1965) and Norman Mailer's *The Executioner's Song* (1979) are instances of this mode; both offer a detailed rendering of the life, personality, and actions of murderers, based on a sustained series of prison interviews with the protagonists themselves. Other examples of this form are the writings of John McPhee, which the author calls **literature of fact**; see his *Levels of the Game* (1969) and *The Deltoid Pumpkin Seed* (1973). A third variant is the

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*fabulative* historical novel that interweaves history with fantasized, even fantastic events: John Barth, *The Sot-Weed Factor* (1960, rev. 1967); Thomas Pynchon, *Gravity's Rainbow* (1973). See John Hollowell, *Fact and Fiction: The New Journalism and the Nonfiction Novel* (1977); Barbara Foley, *Telling the Truth: The Theory and Practice of Documentary Fiction* (1986); and Barbara Lounsberry, *The Art of Fact: Contemporary Artistic Nonfiction* (1990). Cushing Strout, in *The Veracious Imagination* (1981), studies such developments in recent novels, as well as the related form called **documentary drama** in theater, film, and television, which combines fiction with history, journalistic reports, and biography.

The **regional novel** emphasizes the setting, speech, and social structure and customs of a particular locality, not merely as *local color*, but as important conditions affecting the temperament of the characters and their ways of thinking, feeling, and interacting. Instances of such localities are "Wessex" in Thomas Hardy's novels, and "Yoknapatawpha County," Mississippi, in Faulkner's. Stella Gibbons wrote a witty *parody* of the regional novel in *Cold Comfort Farm* (1936). For a discussion of regionalism centered on the Maine author Sarah Orne Jewett, see chapter 4 in Bill Brown, *A Sense of Things* (2003).

Beginning with the second half of the nineteenth century, the novel displaced all other literary forms in popularity. The theory as well as the practice of the novelistic art has received the devoted attention of some of the greatest masters of modern literature—Flaubert, Henry James, Proust, Mann, Joyce, and Virginia Woolf. (Henry James' prefaces, gathered into one volume as *The Art of the Novel*, ed. R. P. Blackmur, 1934, exemplify the care and subtlety that have been lavished on this craft.) There has been constant experimentation with new fictional methods, such as management of the *point of view* to minimize or eliminate the apparent role of the author-narrator or, at the opposite extreme, to foreground the role of the author as the inventor and controller of the fiction; the use of *symbolist* and *expressionist* techniques and of devices adopted from the art of the cinema; the dislocation of time sequence; the adaptation of forms and motifs from myths and dreams; and the exploitation of *stream of consciousness* narration in a way that converts the story of outer action and events into a drama of the life of the mind.

Such experimentation reached a radical extreme in the second half of the twentieth century (see *postmodernism*). Vladimir Nabokov was a supreme technician who wrote **involutéd novels** (a work whose subject incorporates an account of its own genesis and development—for example, his *Pale Fire*); employed multi-lingual puns and jokes; incorporated esoteric data about butterflies (a subject in which he was an accomplished scientist); adopted strategies from chess, crossword puzzles, and other games; parodied other novels (and his own as well); and set elaborate traps for the unwary reader. This was also the era of what is sometimes called the **antinovel**—that is, a work which is deliberately constructed in a negative fashion, relying for its effects on the deletion of standard elements, on violating traditional norms, and on playing against the expectations established in the reader by the novelistic methods and conventions of the past. Thus Alain Robbe-Grillet, a leader among the exponents of the **nouveau roman** (the **new novel**) in France, wrote *Jealousy* (1957), in which he left out such standard elements as plot, characterization, descriptions of states of mind, locations in time

and space, and frame of reference to the world in which the work is set. We are simply presented in this novel with a sequence of perceptions, mainly visual, which we may *naturalize* (that is, make intelligible in the mode of standard narrative procedures) by postulating that we are occupying the physical space and sharing the hyperacute observations of a jealous husband, from which we may infer also the tortured state of his disintegrating mind. Other new novelists are Nathalie Sarraute and Philippe Sollers. See Roland Barthes, *Writing Degree Zero* (trans. 1967), and Stephen Heath, *The Nouveau Roman: A Study in the Practice of Writing* (1972).

The term **magic realism**, originally applied in the 1920s to a school of surrealist German painters, was later used to describe the prose fiction of Jorge Luis Borges in Argentina, as well as the work of writers such as Gabriel García Márquez in Colombia, Isabel Allende in Chile, Günter Grass in Germany, Italo Calvino in Italy, and John Fowles and Salman Rushdie in England. These writers weave, in an ever-shifting pattern, a sharply etched *realism* in representing ordinary events and details together with fantastic and dreamlike elements, as well as with materials derived from myth and fairy tales. See, for example, Gabriel García Márquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude* (1967). Robert Scholes has popularized **metafiction** (an alternative is **surfiction**) as an overall term for the growing class of novels which depart from realism and foreground the roles of the author in inventing the fiction and of the reader in receiving the fiction. Scholes has also popularized the term **fabulation** for a current mode of freewheeling narrative invention. Fabulative novels violate, in various ways, standard novelistic expectations by drastic—and sometimes highly effective—experiments with subject matter, form, style, temporal sequence, and fusions of the everyday, the fantastic, the mythical, and the nightmarish, in renderings that blur traditional distinctions between what is serious or trivial, horrible or ludicrous, tragic or comic. Recent fabulators include Thomas Pynchon, John Barth, Donald Barthelme, William Gass, Robert Coover, and Ishmael Reed. See Raymond Federman, *Surfiction* (1975); Robert Scholes, *Fabulation and Metafiction* (1979)—an expansion of his *The Fabulators* (1967); James M. Mellard, *The Exploded Form: The Modernist Novel in America* (1980); and Patricia Waugh, *Metafiction* (1984). For an account of metafiction from a *feminist* viewpoint, see Joan Douglas Peters, *Feminist Metafiction and the Evolution of the British Novel* (2002). Refer also to the entries in this *Glossary* on the literature of the *absurd* and *black humor*.

See *fiction and narrative and narratology*. Histories of the novel: E. A. Baker, *History of the English Novel* (12 vols., 1924ff.); Arnold Kettle's Marxist survey, *An Introduction to the English Novel* (2 vols., 1951); Dorothy Van Ghent, *The English Novel: Form and Function* (1953); Ian Watt, *The Rise of the Novel* (1957); Michael McKeon, *The Origins of the English Novel 1600–1740* (1987; 2d ed., 2002); J. Paul Hunter, *Before Novels: The Cultural Contexts of Eighteenth-Century English Fiction* (1990); Nancy Armstrong, *Desire and Domestic Fiction: A Political History of the Novel* (1990); *The Columbia History of the British Novel*, ed. John Richetti (1994); and *The Columbia History of the American Novel*, ed. Emory Elliott (1991). *The Novel*, ed. Franco Moretti (2 vols., 2006), consists of essays by many critics on the history, forms, and themes of the novel as an international literary type.



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From the 1920s to a school of surrealism, the prose fiction of Jorge Luis Borges, Vladimir Nabokov, and writers such as Gabriel García Márquez, Günter Grass in Germany, Italo Calvino, and Salman Rushdie in England. These writers practice *realism* in representing ordinary life and unlike elements, as well as with the fantastic. For example, Gabriel García Márquez and Robert Scholes has popularized the term *magical realism* for the growing class of writers and the roles of the author in the fiction. Scholes has also written of freewheeling narrative in standard novelistic expectations and experiments with subject matter, like the everyday, the fantastic, the surreal, and the traditional distinctions between the tragic and the comic. Recent fabulists include Roland Barthes, William S. Burroughs, and Donald Federman, *Surfiction* (1975); and Umberto Eco—*idem*—an expansion of his *The Open Work: The Modernist Novel in* (1984). For an account of metafiction, see *Feminist Metafiction and the* entries in this *Glossary* on the

types of the novel: E. A. Baker, *The* Kettle's Marxist survey, *An* anthology Van Ghent, *The English* *Use of the Novel* (1957); Michael *idem* (1987; 2d ed., 2002); J. Paul *idem*, *Eighteenth-Century English Fiction* *History: A Political History of the* *Novel*, ed. John Richetti (1994); *idem*, ed. Emory Elliott (1991). *The* lists of essays by many critics on *idem* an international literary type.

Michael McKeon, ed., *Theory of the Novel: A Historical Approach* (2000), gathers essays in literary criticism of the novel, from its beginnings to the present. On the art of the novel: Percy Lubbock, *The Craft of Fiction* (1921); E. M. Forster, *Aspects of the Novel* (1927); and three later influential books—Wayne C. Booth, *The Rhetoric of Fiction* (rev. 1983); Frank Kermode, *The Sense of an Ending* (1968); and David Lodge, *The Art of Fiction* (1992). Philip Stevick, ed., *The Theory of the Novel* (1967) is a collection of influential essays by various critics; J. Hillis Miller applies a deconstructive mode of criticism in *Fiction and Repetition* (1982); and Daniel Schwarz, *The Humanistic Heritage* (1986), reviews theories of prose fiction from 1900 to the present. The Czech émigré writer Milan Kundera has written three notable meditations on the novel in Europe: *The Art of the Novel* (2003), *Testaments Betrayed: An Essay in Nine Parts* (1995), and *The Curtain: An Essay in Seven Parts* (2006).

For additional types of the novel, see *absurd, literature of the; fantastic literature; Gothic novel; magic realism; novel of sensibility; novelette; realism and naturalism; science fiction; utopias and dystopias*. For features of the novel, see *atmosphere; character and characterization; confidant; distance and involvement; frame story; local color; narration, grammar of; persona, tone, and voice; plot; point of view; realism and naturalism; setting; stock character; stock situations; stream of consciousness*.

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**novella** (nōvēl' ā): 226.

**Novelle** (nōvēl' ě): 332.

**objective and subjective:** The social critic John Ruskin complained in 1856 that "German dullness and English affectation have of late much multiplied among us the use of two of the most objectionable words that were ever coined by the troublesomeness of metaphysicians—namely, 'objective' and 'subjective'." Ruskin was at least in part right. The words were imported into English criticism from the post-Kantian German critics of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, and they have certainly been troublesome. Amid the great variety of sometimes conflicting ways in which the opposition has been applied to literature, one is sufficiently widespread to be worth specifying. A **subjective** work is one in which the author incorporates personal experiences, or projects into the narrative his or her personal disposition, judgments, values, and feelings. An **objective** work is one in which the author presents the invented situation or the fictional characters and their thoughts, feelings, and actions and undertakes to remain detached and noncommittal. Thus a subjective *lyric* is one in which we are invited to associate