Stories abound in Greek literature. Many of them constitute what we call myth—for example, the myth of Prometheus, who stole fire from the gods and gave it to mankind. These stories express a community’s perception of the forces that govern its existence, and their basic form is narrative. For others we use the term legend. Legends are often about shadowy Bronze Age figures, such as Achilles; they may form the basis of epic narrative, or they can appear in other forms of poetry, such as lyric or drama. In such cases the writer is not using them primarily for their narrative interest, but the story is there and is the basic material of the artistic product. Two features, however, mark such stories. First, in principle they are not fictitious. They are always in some sense based on real things, historical events or figures, and offered as in some sense true accounts. What Homer wrote about is the Trojan War, and whatever the truth about that obscure conflict, some kind of historical event assuredly lies behind his epics. Second, these stories are told in verse; in early antiquity verse is always the medium for what we call creative literature. Prose is used for other purposes, such as the collection and analysis of information in the field of history or philosophy, not for imaginative purposes.

The present volume offers a number of extended stories that are conceived and executed in a fundamentally different way. They are narrative fiction in prose—imaginative, creative literature, sufficiently similar to what we call novels to justify the use of the term here. They belong to a period several centuries later than the literature just evoked; their heyday is the second century A.D., and the latest of them were written a thou-
sand years after the earliest extant epic. Most of them offer a mixture of love and adventure; it would seem that as the form increased in sophistication, the proportion of adventure declined, and the theme of love was treated less simplistically than in the earliest stages. Hero and heroine are always young, wellborn, and handsome; their marriage is disrupted or temporarily prevented by separation, travel in distant parts, and a series of misfortunes, usually spectacular. Virginity or chastity, at least in the female, is of crucial importance, and fidelity to one’s partner, together often with trust in the gods, will ultimately guarantee a happy ending. Such is the most common form of this fiction; as in later ages, the theme of love usually forms the kernel of the story’s development. Sometimes, however, love is given little space, or none at all, and the excitement lies entirely in the adventure; or it may be treated ironically, resulting in some form of comic story.

We know of over twenty texts that fit the above description. Some are fully extant, but the majority exist only in incomplete form, in fragments or as mere references; other fragments, more uncertain of interpretation, may probably be added to their number. The core of this corpus is the five love-and-adventure romances that have come to be regarded as constituting the canon in this form: those of Chariton, Xenophon of Ephesus, Achilles Tatius, Longus, and Heliodorus. These, along with some other romances, have survived as complete manuscripts, in libraries (some think Xenophon’s story is an epitome of the original). In some cases (e.g., the Alexander-romance, the Story of Apollonius King of Tyre) the manuscript tradition is bewilderingly complex; in others (e.g., Heliodorus) it is reasonably full; in two (Chariton and Xenophon) it is represented by a single, erratic manuscript. Two stories (Iamblichus’s Babylonian Story and Antonius Diogenes’ The Wonders Beyond Thule) survive in the summaries of a ninth-century Byzantine bibliophile, the patriarch Photius. These texts all survived in a manner similar to that of other Greek literature: preserved in Byzantium, they were diffused in Europe from the Renaissance onward. But in their case this resulted in a seriously inaccurate view of the genre, since practically nothing was known of their chronology or of any literary-historical picture into which they could be fitted.

Many novels, however, are known only from fragments, some of only a few lines. These have been the subject of one of the most dramatic developments in the history of classical scholarship. From the last decade of the nineteenth century onward a series of papyrological discoveries has been made—and continues to this day—that has radically changed our view of the ancient novel; no other form of ancient literature has known so major a change in its fortunes. Fragments of many new works have been brought to light, as well as passages from known works; and this
has added considerably to the range of fiction we know to have existed. But even more importantly, since papyri can usually be dated at least approximately, it has become possible for the first time to establish a serviceable chronology for the form; this has overturned our whole assessment of it, and has enabled scholars to see it as forming a coherent pattern. It is scarcely an exaggeration to say that a whole literary genre has sprung from the sands of Egypt. Not surprisingly, it seems on the whole (there are exceptions) to be the best texts that survived best. But these are topics we shall return to; here we should say a word about the contents of the present volume and complete our survey of what exists in antiquity in the area of fiction.

The canonical texts here take pride of place, in their probable chronological order. They are followed by two comic novels from the second century, The Ass, once attributed to Lucian, and A True Story, certainly by him. Then come two works of somewhat different formation and descent, the Alexander Romance and the Latin Story of Apollonius King of Tyre; their inclusion is discussed below. Finally come the incomplete texts, the two summaries and the most extensive and important of the papyrus fragments; for practical purposes they are presented as a group. They are included in the volume because they constitute the literary-historical context of the fully extant texts. The volume thus contains what is available of nineteen novels; it is virtually certain that more, perhaps many more, once existed.

To return to the general literary history of the form, in addition to the works just described there is a penumbra of texts of a semifictional nature; narrative fiction is not a clearly defined category of literature. One important marginal case is fictional history. Some Greek historians and biographers readily embroider their themes, for purposes as close to the novelist’s as to the historian’s. At what point does history become fiction? The Cyropaedia, or Education of Cyrus, of Xenophon of Athens might well be regarded as a novel. An important variant of this question is, At what point does hagiography—which is ideologically directed biography—become fiction? In the genre “acts of apostles” much is invented, often, and there are related forms that are very similar in structure and content to the ideal romance: for instance, the Pseudo-Clementine Recognitions, which purports to recount the fortunes of the family of Clement of Rome, and Joseph and Asenath, a novelistic version of the Genesis story, with a Jewish slant. Yet other kinds of “fringe novel” are the travel tale and utopian literature, both of which are to be found in Greek, as far back indeed as the Odyssey. And these forms flow into one another in the Life of Apollonius of Tyana, an account of an itinerant wonder-worker, written in the third century A.D. by Philostratus.

It is worth while touching on such topics here to suggest the dimen-
sions of “fiction” in Greek literature. It would be a formidable volume that would include everything the term might be held to embrace at its most generous—if one could get scholars to agree on the list. At the other extreme the purist, excluding all marginal cases and all incomplete texts, might end up with only the novels of Chariton, Achilles Tatius, Longus, and Heliodorus, along with The Ass; and that would be a pity. For the purposes of this volume a degree of comprehensiveness was desirable, but a choice had to be made; I have tried to make the book as complete as may be, in as reasonable a way as I know how, and am aware that others could choose differently. The texts mentioned in the previous paragraph are not included because they seem to me in one way or another to fall a little short of being prose fiction in the full sense; the reader may be referred for discussion of them to Tomas Hägg’s The Novel in Antiquity. The historical fiction known as the Alexander Romance is included, however, partly on the grounds of the proportion of generally novelistic content in it. The Story of Apollonius King of Tyre is included too, on different grounds. Although the earliest surviving version of it is in Latin, it seems very likely that the original was in Greek, and the story is very closely bound to the whole indubitably Greek ideal tradition and to known Greek texts (see the introduction to the story). In the case of the latter works the balance has been tipped in favor of their inclusion by the great importance they have in the medieval tradition of fiction; it seemed desirable in such a collection as this to include what for several centuries were two of Europe’s most popular secular stories, both of which are firmly based in the Greek romance tradition.

Finally, there are also two Latin novels, Petronius’s Satyricon (or Satyrica) and Apuleius’s Metamorphoses (The Golden Ass). Ideally I should have liked to see them included, in a Collected Ancient Novels, but they are more readily available than the Greek texts. They have generally been much better known than the Greek works and have often been thought of as a separate chapter, so to speak, in ancient literature. They do indeed differ considerably from the Greek novels, but increasingly in recent years they have been studied in relation to the Greek corpus. The Satyricon, long thought unique as a raffish tale of dissolute antiheroes, may well after all be closely connected to a Greek comic tradition, represented by the recently deciphered Iolas (see the Fragments in this volume). But if it is, we cannot tell whether it was inspired by that tradition or was itself the model for it (which would constitute a rare case of Latin influence upon Greek literature). The Metamorphoses is certainly based on a Greek tale of a man transformed into an ass, but Apuleius has himself demonstrably brought about an almost equally striking transformation in the story (much greater, for instance, than has occurred in The Story of Apollonius King of Tyre), to the point where it is sui generis, a complex and
major work of art—playfully serious, realistic, and comic, but at the same time edifying. The relationship between the two versions of the story is discussed in J. P. Sullivan's introduction to *The Ass* in the present volume.

Precise dating of the novels is impossible—the margin of doubt varies from a couple of decades to a century or more—and there is not complete agreement about when the genre first appeared or how long it lasted. It is commonly thought, though it cannot be demonstrated, that the first, shadowy "proto-novels" appeared in late Hellenistic times, and that the genre grew in confidence during the first century of our era. It certainly reached its peak in the second century, in the conditions of relative prosperity and renewed literary activity that mark the period of Hadrian and the Antonines—that is, the high *pax Romana*. Novels continued to be written and read in the third century, but the genre seems to have faded out in the great crises and disorder of that period. It is quite possible, however, that Heliodorus's *Ethiopica*, the "novel to end all novels," belongs to the late fourth century; if so, it is exceptional, and probably a throwback. The texts in this collection would be disposed roughly as follows.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Ninus</em></td>
<td>first century B.C.?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chariton, <em>Chaereas and Callirhoe</em></td>
<td>mid-first century A.D.?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Xenophon, <em>An Ephesian Story</em></td>
<td>mid-second century?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Antonius Diogenes, <em>The Wonders Beyond Thule</em></td>
<td>third quarter of second century</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lucian, <em>A True Story</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pseudo-Lucian, <em>The Ass</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iamblichus, <em>A Babylonian Story</em></td>
<td>165–180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Achilles Tatius, <em>Lencippe and Clitophon</em></td>
<td>late second century</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Longus, <em>Daphnis and Chloe</em></td>
<td>200?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heliodorus, <em>An Ethiopian Story</em></td>
<td>third century (or late fourth century)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Alexander Romance</em></td>
<td>third century (source: third century B.C.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Apollonius King of Tyre</em></td>
<td>original: third century (Latin text: fifth or sixth century)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fragments</td>
<td>variously, first–third century A.D.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Although this list is probably not too far away from the truth, it is not easy to draw from the evidence any very detailed picture of the genre’s development. We have no idea how many texts, or what kind, have disappeared completely, and there are reasons for thinking that from near the beginning of the genre polished texts existed contemporaneously with crude ones—as is the case with the modern novel, after all.

We may turn now to some general matters relating to the genre. How did such stories come into existence? What is the relationship between the Greek novel and earlier literature? Why is it such a late-blooming form? And how is it that these stories are so little known in the modern world? For today they are relatively little known, even among classicists, and a fortiori among scholars and readers of other literatures, although this was not always so. These questions merit comment.

In one sense every genre, indeed each individual work of literature, involves a deliberate act of original creation. B. E. Perry’s dictum has become famous: “The first romance was deliberately planned and written by an individual author, its inventor. He conceived it on a Tuesday afternoon in July.” This conscious element should never be forgotten. For all that, even though literary works do not “develop” spontaneously as plants do, they do have predecessors that help to shape the writer’s thoughts, and one can see embryonic narrative fiction from the beginnings of Greek literature. The Odyssey itself is a prime example. In the classical period there are short stories embedded in Herodotus’s history, and Ctesias, the author of a fanciful history of Persia and a contemporary of Xenophon of Athens, is another candidate for the title of father of historical romance. Subsequently, emotionally colored historiography and travel tales, already mentioned, were a feature of the Hellenistic period. It would appear that these forms began to merge in writers’ minds as the concept of fiction became clearer and clearer. But it may be noted that that concept had already more or less appeared in the fourth century, in the shape of the ideologically based stories conceived by Plato as one form of social engineering that could be used by authority in his ideal state; Plato himself, indeed, constructed several such fictions at the end of major dialogues (the myth of Er in Republic 10, for instance).

But why should the novel have taken the shape it did take? In particular, why should the love theme insert itself into a structure apparently based on exciting historiography? In one of the best-known analyses of the genre Rohde, over a century ago, put his finger on Hellenistic love poetry as the source of the erotic element in the novel. And perhaps that is not very far from the truth, although there may not have been direct literary filiation in the first place. The impulse that led Alexandrian poets

to treat romantic love as a worthy topic of literature—which it seldom had been in classical drama or other forms (lyric is an exception)—itself indicates that a new spirit was abroad, that the emotions of the individual, without regard to their social implications, were claiming attention more and more. This is certainly one of the features of postclassical society, visible for instance in sculpture, where the expression of the subject’s personal psychology is of dominant importance. A late Hellenistic writer, however, would hardly need to know Apollonius of Rhodes’ picture of Medea to be aware of the contemporary importance of the theme of love. He could assuredly see for himself that private emotions mattered, and that increasingly in the postclassical world they had become what mattered most. For in a world of large empires, essentially controlled from Alexandria or Antioch, there could not be the same intense interest in political matters as had characterized the classical city-state. The world had become bigger, and the individual, in consequence, smaller in it—smaller, and more absorbed in himself, his private life. And there is hardly any need to explain why romantic sentiment, love, should occupy his thoughts. The basic story was new in kind; the love story with a happy ending had never occupied center stage before. It is surely here that one must look for the most important impulse stimulating the new genre; this was the kind of experience people wanted to write and read about. The novel is a reflection of their personal experience, as the older forms of tragedy and Old Comedy had been a reflection of their civic experience.

By the early Christian era, then, there was a substantial core of love-romance, and around it a fringe of nonerotic forms. There was ample room for influences from a wide range of earlier literature: epic, tragedy, comedy, love poetry are the forms that most noticeably color the novel. In the early Hellenistic period there had already arisen a form of drama that focused on this personal theme: New Comedy shows us the small world of the family group, with a fictitious love-intrigue as the structural basis of the action. The novel extends this action, beyond the polis and into a Mediterranean world. The obstacles standing between hero and heroine become bigger and more dangerous; the protagonists are separated not only from each other but from their own familiar surroundings, as Fortune—a veritable deity in the Hellenistic world—drives them back and forth, from Syracuse to Babylon, from Delphi to Ethiopia. Each is essentially alone in the world, although the man may find a companion here and there (the woman seldom does). In this isolation they may benefit from the unpredictable providence of a deity, Isis or Artemis or Aphrodite, just as in the Hellenistic age people turned more and more to mystery religions for comfort. Their progress through the story seems, indeed, a figure of human progress through life; this is another form of myth, myth for postclassical times.
But along with a love theme, some apparently early texts (*Ninus* and *Chaereas and Callirhoe*, perhaps *Sesnochis* and *Metiochus and Parthenope*) also contain an element of history. It is history with a difference though, history that is not afraid of anachronisms, that will readily displace its characters by a couple of generations or more; clearly it is not seriously concerned with representing an earlier epoch, as modern historical novels usually are. Some later novels also have a historical aura about them, but even less historical conscience: those of Xenophon of Ephesus, Achilles Tatius, certainly Heliodorus. No Greek novel, in fact, purports to represent its own times (although both Latin novels do). This may, as has been suggested, be a bow in the direction of academic tradition: romantic prose fiction was not intellectually respectable, but historiography, being information, was, and perhaps a veneer of history might be thought to render such fiction respectable. But there is in any case an inherent attraction in making a story seem to represent a recognizable society; realistic modern fiction operates on that principle. There is something that readers can hang on to, something that will authenticate the story they are consuming. And when kings and queens are involved, as in the Ninus-romance, there is also comfort to be derived from seeing that a known great personage (the fabulous king of Assyria, no less!) could have his own feelings, be governed by readily recognizable emotions, just like the reader's. It is the attitude that guarantees a sale for revelations from a royal household.

The mature ancient novel, then, is an imperial genre which reflects a late stage of the development of Hellenistic society and absorbs into itself several forms of antecedent literature. As the large empires of Alexander's successors became established in the eastern Mediterranean, and as thereafter the empire of Rome encroached progressively on them, there was an accelerating transformation to the values of a cosmopolitan world. Evidently this acceleration occurred in prose fiction too, for by the second century of our era the form shows much sophistication. It has become the predominant mode of creative literature, the major form portraying human beings.

Mention has already been made of the literary renaissance of the period. One important aspect of it was the rhetorical movement known as the Second Sophistic. Its principal manifestation was concert performances by itinerant orators who spoke on a multitude of topics, usually taken from classical Greek tradition—this was one expression of the contemporary classicizing fashion. The movement in itself need not concern us very closely here, but it constitutes a formative background to the writing of novels. Most of the writers whose works appear in this volume were trained in its schools (Chariton, for example, was the secretary of a rhetor, and Achilles Tatius is said to have been himself a sophist). The developed novel is thus heavily influenced by a broader literary
movement; indeed, at one time it was thought to have been born of it. In
the second century there was ample encouragement for writers to write,
and great interest in the technical aspects of at least one form of literary
expression, namely rhetoric. It is thus no surprise at all to find literary
ambition and literary skill in at least some of the novels, with a liberal el-
ement of emotional rhetoric as a standard feature. We may here return to
the individual texts, to consider briefly where they might fit in the above
analysis.

The five canonical writers have commonly been seen as falling into
two groups, the presophistic (Chariton and Xenophon) and the sophistic
(Achilles Tatius, Longus, and Heliodorus). The labels are somewhat mis-
leading, but they will serve for the purposes of preliminary assessment,
since the latter group is certainly more adventurous in exploiting the pos-
sibilities of the basic pattern. Some of the fragments would no doubt fit
into this classification—Ninus, notably, is clearly presophistic in every
sense, and others may well be of the sophistic period and manner but are
too brief to categorize with confidence. It may be, however, that we
should think of an additional category, subsophistic. Iamblichus’s Babyloni-
nian Story, for instance, can be dated to the later second century, the pe-
riod of Lucian and Achilles Tatius, but with its ghosts, corpses, pursuits,
and mistaken identities it clearly relies for its effect more on Grand Guig-
nol than on other qualities; and as much can be said for the bloodthirsty,
lurid Phoenicica. The higher level of the sophistic texts derives in large
part from the way in which they adapt the structural basis of the form,
the recital of the adventures that happen to the principals. Whereas
Chariton and Xenophon straightforwardly (although in different ways)
direct the reader’s attention alternately to hero and heroine, their succe-
sors employ various devices to avoid the clumsiness to which this tech-
nique is vulnerable. Achilles employs ego-narrative, thus altering the
reader’s perspective on one of the two lines of action; Longus virtually
does away with travel and physical adventure, thus avoiding the separa-
tion of his lovers, and turns our attention rather to psychological de-
velopments in them; and Heliodorus borrows from the Odyssey the tech-
nique of the flashback, thus building narrative tension into the structure
of his story and (as J. R. Morgan’s introduction points out) enlisting the
reader’s own hermeneutic effort. At this level, it could be argued, the
genre has transcended whatever original sociocultural function it had and
has become another literary game, as in our own day. Indeed, much in
the Hellenistic and imperial world, and much in this product of that
world, reminds us of our own condition; in Perry’s formulation, the
novel is the open form for the open society.²

2. See Perry, The Ancient Romances, 47; the idea is developed in his chapter 2, “The
Form Romance in Historical Perspective.”
Many tastes are catered for in this body of work. The *Ephesian Story*, the *Alexander Romance*, and *Apollonius of Tyre* represent a quite different kind of fiction. These works are made of folktale and folkhero; their authors are concerned less with literary refinement than with putting the reader in exciting situations, involving him in the search for happiness or the pursuit of the unattainable; they operate through identification and do not expect readers to employ their critical intellect. But there are also stories that rely on precisely this critical judgment, and operate through irony: Lucian’s *jeu d’esprit*, *A True Story*, a satire on tall tales (“my story is all lies, and this is the only true statement in it”); the Greek *Ass*-story with its worm’s-eye view of the world; and the tantalizing, cynical Io-laus-fragment. Each reader will pick his own favorite. The Renaissance liked Heliodorus for his epic and dramatic qualities; Longus’s story, often taken as a rustic pipe dream, seems to our eyes a more subtle work of art. Achilles Tatius has his admirers too, as can be seen from the remarks of his present translator, John J. Winkler; he has seemed to some to mark the point at which naive sentimental romance turns into self-conscious novel. For myself, I confess to an unregenerate penchant for the naive sentimental romance *par excellence* in this collection, that of Chariton; he is still more interested in his story than in his presentation of it, while in fact he does present it with unobtrusive skill (it has, of course, its conventions).

To return to generalities: the obverse of the question why writers wrote novels is the question of why readers read them. Who read these stories? It is a fashionable question. No simple answer is possible, although a number have been offered: the poor-in-spirit; the young; women; the cultivated in their off-duty moments. But even in the restricted sample of texts that we have the range is too great for one answer, as the preceding paragraphs will have suggested. Could we answer the question Who reads novels today? We should have to ask, What novels? One cannot see Longus and Heliodorus being devoured by the uncultivated, and even among the melodramatic texts there are differences of purpose—Xenophon’s story, for example, has been thought to have a proselytizing aim (and so have others, as we shall see). Different qualities imply different audiences. Besides the plain sentimentality of Chariton there is genuinely thoughtful analysis of emotion, not only in Longus but in *Metiochus and Parthenope*, little as we have of it, where a character describes love as a “movement of the intellect born of beauty and deepened by familiarity.” Achilles Tatius combines refinement with melodrama; he offers us elaborate psychological theory, intrigue almost fit for Restoration comedy, and a heroine who after being disemboweled and (on a different occasion) decapitated, both before the eyes of her lover, survives to pass a virginity test for which, had she had her way, she would have disqualified herself before the story had properly begun. There is in these
texts both barren and spectacular, penny plain and tuppence colored; in all probability their readers were as various. We can say that most, if not all, of the writers are careful about the way they write, but that is true of most writers at most times, for the very act of literary composition usually breeds care. If some are more ambitious than others, there is no simple progression in ambition; the earliest and the latest of the canonical authors, Chariton and Heliodorus, are both patently proud of the construction and writing of their stories. The form clearly existed on several levels simultaneously, perhaps even in its early days, as today it exists on several levels on drugstore book racks. No doubt the destination of many texts would be covered by a rubric like “the relaxation of the literate,” but no simple formula could categorize the novel’s whole audience.

It may well be that the most important influence in the writing and reading of these texts is simply the appetite for entertainment; perhaps it is overstating the case to see the novel as a myth for the times. Yet the two views are not incompatible. All myths are first and foremost entertaining stories. That does not mean that they do not figure various aspects of the human situation. Sophocles made a thrilling drama out of the legend of Oedipus, but matters do not stop there; others have seen much more in it than that. Stories can seep through the cracks in our consciousness. Even the writer who simply feels the itch to write has to write about something; it is not possible to write about nothing.

Closely related to the questions of the intentions of the writers and the perception of the stories by their readers is the interpretation of the stories as unreservedly religious texts—mystery texts, to be precise. The first such exposition was that of Kerényi in 1927: he saw the plots of all the novels as based on the Egyptian myth of Isis. Her consort, Osiris, was killed by the evil Set, and his members were dispersed over the earth; Isis wandered the world in search of them and reconstituted and resuscitated the body; and Osiris was reborn to eternal life. This sequence formed the basis of Isiac mystery ritual, and the ritual, Kerényi maintained, in turn suggested the basis of the novels, which are likewise concerned with tribulation and apparent death, wandering, salvation, and ultimate happiness. Subsequently a stricter version of this theory, promulgated by Merkelbach in 1962, saw several of the novels as actually literary elaborations of the ritual of other mystery cults (Dionysus, Mithras, Helius) as well as that of Isis; the texts, Merkelbach claimed, are full of mystery symbols, and could thus be fully understood only by initiates. By the common consent of scholars this goes too far in the direction of symbolic interpretation, but as we have seen, the novels do re-

semblé mystery cult in being modeled on life itself. But the purpose of this introduction is to present and situate such questions rather than try to settle them. To summarize, my own view is that these stories do have an underlying spiritual aspect to them, although their authors—most of them at any rate—were not consciously symbolizing; on the other hand, the literary elaboration of the genre is fully deliberate, and at its best very careful.

We may here turn to some associated questions. First, is the term novel justified? It does beg a question. We are accustomed to employ it of something more realistic than these works, with their improbable incident and stereotyped figures. Perhaps romance would be a better word? It has often been employed for this fiction, and is used in these remarks for variety. But it misses the essence of the form by as much on one side as novel does on the other, and tends to sell short writers who in some cases are capable of genuine psychological realism as well as considerable narrative skill. We tend to associate the term romance with princesses, castles, and dragons—or else with nurses who fall in love with doctors. But we could certainly fitly use the term as rehabilitated by Northrop Frye to cover that form of narrative which constitutes, in his words, a “secular scripture,” embodying and authorizing the aspirations of man-centered society.  

Next, the fortunes of the genre and of these texts. In its own time the Greek novel was disregarded by literary historians and is not mentioned by other literary practitioners. Very little information about it has survived at all. There are a couple of uncomplimentary references in the works of figures of the literary establishment: the writer Philostratus, in the early third century, refers to one Chariton as a “nothing,” whose writings are totally forgettable; and the highly literate emperor Julian, in the middle of the fourth century, talks of the love story as a genre of the past that is not worth serious attention.  Beyond that there are only a few references to the genre in later encyclopedias and similar works. On the whole, the novel made little lasting impression on educated antiquity. It is a commonplace that the form disappeared with Heliodorus, or thereabouts. But that is only half true; so basic a thing as fiction does not disappear; it adapts. In the early Byzantine period fiction is represented by hagiography, for in the writing of inspirational lives fact comes a very poor third to edification and excitement. The taste for narrative fiction never has died; it is simply conditioned by the circumstances of its times, by the shape of society, people’s assumptions, and the literary vehicles that lie to hand. In the twelfth-century Comnenian renaissance in Byzantium there was a revival of the form in a group of four stories (modeled

6. Philostratus, Letter 66; Julian, Letter 89B.
on the ancient texts), all but one in verse, and in the fourteenth century a further group appears, but these contain strong elements of folktale and Western medieval tradition.

To return to the ancient texts, Heliiodorus, Longus, and Achilles Tatius were much appreciated in Western Europe at the time of the Renaissance, and were translated into several modern languages; some of these translations (e.g., Amyot’s Longus) became classics in their own right. From the seventeenth century there is the story of how the young Racine, having twice had his copy of Heliiodorus (probably in Amyot’s translation) confiscated at Port-Royal as unsuitable reading, acquired yet another copy, which he took the precaution of learning by heart, according to his son. Chariton and Xenophon have always been the poor relations: after barely surviving the Middle Ages neither reappeared until the eighteenth century. The tone of modern study of the genre was set in 1876 by one of the magisterial works of a golden age of German scholarship, Rohde’s Der griechische Roman. Without papyrology to guide him and with very little evidence of any kind available, Rohde deduced a history for the genre which, as we have seen, has since been exploded. He saw these texts as isolated outcrops of more or less subliterary material, certainly not as manifestations of an explicable genre. For him, they stretched from the first or second to the fifth or sixth century and were the products of Greek decadence, either fatally impoverished in content and expression or else contemptible examples of the frivolous and insincere art of the sophist. Although one or two voices were raised in protest, his authority carried the day. Less than twenty years after the publication of Rohde’s massive book, the crucial papyrological discoveries had begun and had overthrown his chronological scheme, establishing essentially the picture set out earlier in this introduction. From the 1920s important work was done in the field by Lavagnini, Perry, Rattenbury, and others. But it was not until after the Second World War that the tide really began to turn; the first comprehensive, accurate, and measured account of the new state of things appeared in Lesky’s History of Greek Literature in 1957, and the first collections of translations appeared, in French and Italian, in 1958.

But it was not only lack of information that determined the reception of the Greek novel. In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries the imperial nations of the West—and one should remember that the study of the classics was the pursuit of an elite, an establishment—took it for granted that what was important about the early centuries of our era was the immensely impressive political fact of the Roman Empire; it naturally had the sympathy of people who themselves ruled empires, or aspired to do so, and the Greek world of the imperial period attracted less attention. But things have changed since the days of the gunboat. Wars and revolutions, the rise and fall of dictators, the swelling movement of democracy,
the rise of a Third World all have changed the rules of the game; *imperialism* is now a dirty word. We are inclined today to look behind the Roman Empire, to analyze it more critically. In this perspective, the Greek East of the imperial period has seemed less negligible and has more and more attracted study.

Among the objects of that study has been the copious literature of that world. We can point to a veritable galaxy of early imperial writers: along with Longus and the other novelists, along with Plutarch and Lucian, there are Dio Chrysostom, Aelius Aristides, Marcus Aurelius, Galen, Arrian, Pausanias, and a score of lesser names. No one would claim that they shine as brightly as Homer, Pindar, and Sophocles, Thucydides, Aristophanes, and Plato, but the period is nonetheless well worth attention. The novel has profited particularly from recent scholarship. Texts have been edited afresh in the last generation and studies have multiplied, some of them of major importance. In 1976—the year was chosen as being the centenary of the appearance of Rohde's book—the first international conference on the ancient novel attracted several dozen scholars from Europe and North America, and since then several similar meetings have been held. The growing realization that there is a body of ancient fiction available for study comes at a time when the fiction of other periods is being analyzed with great energy. Such a collection as this may render service to others besides classicists.

Finally, the translations. They are new and were made for this volume (with the exception of my translation of Lucian's *True Story*, which first appeared in 1965); this is the first such collection ever to appear in English. For most of the works presented here good or adequate texts exist and have been followed in the translations with only occasional changes, minor departures generally not being noted. In the case of Chariton the current state of scholarship called for rather more modification of the text: the fluid traditions of the *Alexander Romance* and *Apollonius King of Tyre* invite some conjecture in the interests of clarity; and the papyrus fragments obviously constitute a special case. Since the problems vary from work to work it has not been practicable to follow an entirely systematic procedure, but in any case it is not the function of such a volume to enter into textual questions in detail. The translations are intended to be readable; they are also intended to be accurate, but accurate does not mean literal. Their manner varies with the originals: from the often extremely elaborate prose of the sophistic novels, where on occasion translators have deliberately resorted to minor reorganization of the matter in order to suggest its original flavor (see the introductions to Achilles Tatius and Heliodorus), through the undistinguished style of the popular stories, to the cribs that are all it is possible to give for some of the incomplete texts. The introductions and notes are by the translators; for the most part annotation is limited to what is necessary for understanding.
Some differences of convention will be found from work to work, for instance in the spelling of Greek names: should one write Heraclitus or Herakleitos? That is a perennial problem, and a matter of personal preference; complete consistency is in any case not practicable, in any convention. This volume is an anthology of individual contributions, rather than a homogeneous set; I have conceived it as the editor’s function to elicit quality, not to impose uniformity. For the titles: these stories have various kinds of title in the ancient tradition, and hence in modern usage. Often they are called after their main characters, usually the pair of lovers (or sometimes the heroine alone); but some are also known by another name indicating, for instance, their geographical setting. Thus, the story by Heliodorus is called variously Ethiopica (An Ethiopian Story), Theagenes and Chariclea, or Chariclea. In this volume the stories are in general called by their most convenient modern English titles, but some variations occur. Variant titles are indicated in the individual introductions. For the fragments, the titles used here are mostly titles of convenience; we do not know for sure what these works were called in antiquity, except in the case of the Phoenician Story.

I should like to thank the contributors for their unfailing good nature in accepting an editor’s sometimes extensive interventions, and particularly for the effort and skill that have gone into their versions; some of the translations, I venture to think, will become standard for our time. I am grateful also to August Frugé for the benevolent interest and help he has accorded this enterprise from its inception, in his not-quite-retirement from the University of California Press; the volume owes much to his experience and judgment. I thank the present staff, particularly Doris Kretschmer and Mary Lamprecht, for patient assistance. Lastly, my own work on the book was completed in 1987–88 at the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton, where I held a Visiting Professorship awarded by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation; I wish to record my gratitude to both bodies.

—B. P. R.

General Bibliography

LITERARY HISTORIES
