WHAT IS LITERATURE, WHAT IS A TEXT? Look up the term literature in any current encyclopedia and you will be struck by the vagueness of its usage as well as by an inevitable lack of substance in the attempts to define it. In most cases, literature is referred to as the entirety of written expression, with the restriction that not every written document can be categorized as literature in the more exact sense of the word. The definitions, therefore, usually include additional adjectives such as "aesthetic" or "artistic" to distinguish literary works from texts of everyday use such as telephone books, newspapers, legal documents, and scholarly writings. Etymologically, the Latin word "litteratura" is derived from "littera" (letter), which is the smallest element of alphabetical writing. The word text is related to "textile" and can be translated as "fabric": just as single threads form a fabric, so words and sentences form a meaningful and coherent text. The origins of the two central terms are, therefore, not of great help in defining literature or text. It is more enlightening to look at literature or text as cultural and historical phenomena and to investigate the conditions of their production and reception. Underlying literary production is certainly the human wish to leave behind a trace of oneself through creative expression, which will exist detached from the individual and, therefore, outlast its creator. The earliest manifestations of this creative wish are prehistoric paintings in caves, which hold "encoded" information in the form of visual signs. This visual component inevitably remains closely connected to literature throughout its various historical and social manifestations. In 2 WHAT IS LITERATURE, WHAT IS A TEXT some periods, however, the pictorial dimension is pushed into the back-ground and is hardly noticeable. Not only the visual—writing is always pictorial—but also the acoustic element, the spoken word, is an integral part of literature, for the alphabet translates spoken words into signs. Before writing developed as a system of signs, whether pictographs or alphabets, "texts" were passed on orally. This predecessor of literary expression, called "oral poetry," consisted of texts stored in a bard's or minstrel's memory which could be recited upon demand. It is assumed that most of the early classical and Old English epics were produced in this tradition and only later preserved in written form. This oral component, which runs counter to the modern way of thinking about texts, has been revived in the twentieth century through the medium of radio and other sound carriers. Audio-literature and the lyrics of songs display the acoustic features of literary phenomena. The visual in literary texts, as well as the oral dimension, has been pushed into the background in the course of history. While in the Middle Ages the visual component of writing was highly privileged in such forms as richly decorated handwritten manuscripts, the arrival of the modern age—along with the invention of the printing press— made the visual element disappear or reduced it to a few illustrations in the text. "Pure" writing became more and more stylized as an abstract medium devoid of traces of material or physical elements. The medieval union of word and picture, in which both components of the text formed a single, harmonious entity and even partly overlapped, slowly disappeared. This modern "iconoclasm" (i.e. hostility towards pictures) not only restricts the visual dimensions of texts but also sees writing as a medium which can function with little connection to the acoustic element of language. It is only in drama that the union between the spoken word and visual expression survives in a traditional literary genre, although this feature is not always immediately noticeable. Drama, which is— traditionally and without hesitation—viewed as literature, combines the acoustic and the visual elements, which are usually classified as non-literary. Even more obviously than

Iin drama, the symbiosis of word and image culminates in film. This young medium is particularly interesting for textual studies, since word and picture are recorded and, as in a book, can be looked up at any time. Methods of literary 3 WHAT IS LITERATURE, WHAT IS A TEXT? and textual criticism are, therefore, frequently applied to the cinema and acoustic media. Computer hypertexts and networks such as the Internet are the latest hybrids of the textual and various media; here writing is linked to sounds, pictures or even video clips within an interdependent network. Although the written medium is obviously the main concern in the study of literature or texts, this field of inquiry is also closely related to other media such as the stage, painting, film, music or even computer networks. As a result of the permeation of modern textual studies with unusual media, there have been major controversies as to the definition of "text." Many authors and critics have deliberately left the traditional paths of literature, abandoning old textual forms in order to find new ways of literary expression and analysis. On the one hand, visual and acoustic elements are being reintroduced into literature, on the other hand, media, genres, text types, and discourses are being mixed. 1 GENRE, TEXT TYPE, AND DISCOURSE Literary criticism, like biology, resorts to the concept of evolution or development and to criteria of classification to distinguish various genres. The former area is referred to as literary history, whereas the latter is termed poetics. Both fields are closely related to the issue at hand, as every attempt to define text or literature touches not only upon differences between genres but also upon the historical dimensions of these literary forms of expression. The term genre usually refers to one of the three classical literary forms of epic, drama, or poetry. This categorization is slightly confusing as the epic occurs in verse, too, but is not classified as poetry. It is, in fact, a precursor of the modern novel (i.e., prose fiction) because of its structural features such as plot, character presentation, and narrative perspective. Although this old classification is still in use, the tendency today is to abandon the term "epic" and introduce "prose," "fiction," or "prose fiction" for the relatively young literary forms of the novel and the short story. Beside the genres which describe general areas of traditional literature, the term text type has been introduced, under the 4 WHAT IS LITERATURE, WHAT IS A TEXT? influence of linguistics. Texts which cannot be categorized under the canonical genres of fiction, drama, and poetry are now often dealt with in modern linguistics. Scholars are looking at texts which were previously regarded as worthless or irrelevant for textual analysis. The term text type refers to highly conventional written documents such as instruction manuals, sermons, obituaries, advertising texts, catalogues, and scientific or scholarly writing. It can, of course, also include the three main literary genres and their sub-genres. A further key term in theoretical treatises on literary phenomena is discourse. Like text type, it is used as a term for any kind of classifiable linguistic expression. It has become a useful denotation for various linguistic conventions referring to areas of content and theme; for instance, one may speak of male or female, political, sexual, economic, philosophical, and historical discourse. The classifications for these forms of linguistic expression are based on levels of content, vocabulary, syntax, as well as stylistic and rhetorical elements. Whereas the term text type refers to written documents, discourse includes written and oral expression. In sum, genre is applied primarily to the three classical forms of the literary tradition; text type is a broader term that is also applicable to "non-canonical" written texts, i.e., those which are traditionally not classified as literature. Discourseي the broadest term, referring to a variety of written and oral manifestations which

share common thematic or structural features. The boundaries of these terms are not fixed and vary depending on the context in which they appear . 2 PRIMARY AND SECONDARY SOURCES Traditional literary studies distinguish between the artistic object, or primary source, and its scholarly treatment in a critical text, or secondary source. Primary sources denote the traditional objects of analysis in literary criticism, including texts from all literary genres, such as fiction, poetry, or drama. The term secondary source applies to texts such as articles (or essays), book reviews, and notes (brief comments on a very specific topic), all of which are published primarily in scholarly journals. In Anglo– American literary criticism, as in any other academic 5 WHAT IS LITERATURE, WHAT IS A TEXT? discipline, regularly published journals inform readers about the latest results of researchers (see Chapter 5). Essays are also published as collections (or anthologies) compiled by one or several editors on a specific theme. If such an anthology is published in honor of a famous researcher, it is often called a festschrift, a term which comes from the German but is also used in English. Book–length scholarly treatises on a single theme are called monographs. Most dissertations and scholarly books published by university presses belong to this group. In terms of content, secondary literature tries to uphold those standards of scholarly practice which have, over time, been established for scientific discourse, including objectivity, documentation of sources, and general validity. It is vital for any reader to be able to check and follow the arguments, results, and statements of literary criticism. As the interpretation of texts always contains subjective traits, objective criteria or the general validity of the thesis can only be applied or maintained to a certain degree. This can be seen as the main difference between literary criticism and the natural sciences. At the same time, it is the basis for the tremendous creative potential of this academic field. With changes of perspective and varying methodological approaches, new results in the interpretation of texts can be suggested. As far as documentation of sources is concerned, however, the requirements in literary criticism are as strict as those of the natural sciences. The reader of a secondary source should be able to retrace every quotation or paraphrase (summary) to the primary or secondary source from which it has been taken. Although varying and subjective opinions on texts will remain, the scholarly documentation of the sources should permit the reader to refer back to the original texts and thus make it possible to compare results and judge the quality of the interpretation. As a consequence of these conventions in documentation, a number of formal criteria have evolved in literary criticism which can be summarized by the term critical apparatus, which includes the following elements: footnotes or endnotes, providing comments on the main text or references to further secondary or primary sources; a bibliography (or list of works cited); and, possibly, an index. This documentation format has not always been followed in scholarly texts, but it has developed into a convention in the field over the last several centuries (see also Chapter 6) 6 WHAT IS LITERATURE, WHAT IS A TEXT ? forms of secondary sources essay (article) note book review review article monograph formal aspects of secondary literature footnotes bibliography index quotations publishing media journal anthology (collection) festschrift book aspects of content objectivity lucid arguments general validity of thesis The strict separation of primary from secondary sources is not always easy. The literary essay of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries is a historical example which shows that our modern classification did not exist in rigid form in earlier periods. This popular genre treated a clearly defined, abstract or language, and thus theoretical

topic in overtly literary possessed the stylistic features of primary sources; however, the themes and questions that it dealt with are typical of scholarly texts or secondary sources. From a modern perspective, therefore, the literary essay bridges two text types. In the twentieth century, the traditional classification of primary and secondary sources is often deliberately neglected. A famous example from literature in English is T.S. Eliot's (1888–1965) modernist poem The Waste Land (1922), in which the American poet includes footnotes (a traditional element of secondary sources) in the primary text. In the second half of the twentieth century, this feature has been further developed and employed in two ways: elements of secondary sources are added to literary texts, and elements of primary sources—e.g., the absence of a critical apparatus or an overtly literary style—are incorporated in secondary texts. The strict separation of the two text types is therefore not always possible. Vladimir Nabokov's (1899–1977) novel Pale Fire (1962) is an example of the deliberate confusion of text types in American literature. Pale Fire consists of parts—for instance, the text of a poem 7 WHAT IS LITERATURE, WHAT IS A TEXT? —which can be labeled as primary sources, but also of other parts which are normally characteristic of scholarly treatises or critical editions of texts, such as a "Foreword" by the editor of the poem, a "Commentary" with stylistic analysis as well as critical comments on the text, and an "Index" of the characters in the poem. In the (fictitious) foreword signed by the (fictitious) literary critic Charles Kinbote, Nabokov introduces a poem by the (fictitious) author Francis Shade. Nabokov's novel borrows the form of a critical edition, in which the traditional differentiation between literary text and scholarly commentary or interpretation remains clearly visible. In the case of Pale Fire, however, all text types are created by the author Vladimir Nabokov himself, who tries to point out the arbitrariness of this artificial categorization of primary and secondary sources. The fact that this text is called a novel, even though it has a poem at its center, calls attention to the relativity inherent in the traditional categorization of genres. 2 MAJOR GENRES IN TEXTUAL STUDIES As early as Greco–Roman antiquity, the classification of literary works into different genres has been a major concern of literary theory, which has since then produced a number of divergent and sometimes even contradictory categories. Among the various attempts to classify literature into genres, the triad epic, drama, and poetry has proved to be the most common in modern literary criticism. Because the epic was widely replaced by the new prose form of the novel in the eighteenth century, recent classifications prefer the terms fiction, drama, and poetry as designations of the three major literary genres. The following section will explain the basic characteristics of these literary genres as well as those of film, a fourth textual manifestation in the wider sense of the term. We will examine these types of texts with reference to concrete examples and introduce crucial textual terminology and methods of analysis helpful for understanding the respective genres. 1 FICTION Although the novel emerged as the most important form of prose fiction in the eighteenth century, its precursors go back to the oldest texts of literary history. Homer's epics, the Iliad and the Odyssey (c. seventh century BC), and Virgil's (70–19 BC) Aeneid (c. 31–19 BC) influenced the major medieval epics such as Dante Alighieri's (1265– 1321) Italian Divina Commedia (Divine Comedy, c. 1307–21) and the early modern English epics such as Edmund Spenser's (c. 1552–99) Faerie Queene (1590; 1596) and John Milton's (1608–74) baroque long poem Paradise Lost (1667). The majority of traditional epics revolve 10 MAJOR GENRES IN TEXTUAL STUDIES around a hero who has

to fulfill a number of tasks of national or cosmic significance in a multiplicity of episodes. Classical epics in particular, through their roots in myth, history, and religion, reflect a self–contained world–view of their particular periods and nationalities. With the obliteration of a unified Weltanschauung in early modern times, the position of the epic weakened and it was eventually replaced by the novel, the mouthpiece of relativism that was emerging in all aspects of cultural discourse. Although traditional epics are written in verse, they clearly distinguish themselves from other forms of poetry by length, narrative structure, depiction of characters, and plot patterns and are therefore regarded—together with the romance—as precursors of the modern novel. As early as classical times, but more strongly in the late Middle Ages, the romance established itself as an independent genre. Ancient romances such as Apuleius' Golden Ass (second century AD) were usually written in prose, while medieval works of this genre use verse forms, as in the anonymous Middle English Arthurian romance Sir Gawain and the Green Knight (fourteenth century). Despite its verse form and its eventful episodes, the romance is nevertheless considered a forerunner of the novel mainly because of its tendency toward a focused plot and unified point of view (see also the sections on plot and point of view in this chapter). While the scope of the traditional epic is usually broad, the romance condenses the action and orients the plot toward a particular goal. At the same time, the protagonist or main character is depicted in more detail and with greater care, thereby moving beyond the classical epic whose main character functions primarily as the embodiment of abstract heroic ideals. In the romances, individual traits, such as insecurity, weakness, or other facets of character come to the foreground, anticipating distinct aspects of the novel. The individualization of the protagonist, the deliberately perspectival point of view, and above all the linear plot structure, oriented toward a specific climax which no longer centers on national or cosmic problems, are among the crucial features that distinguish the romance from epic poetry. The novel, which emerged in Spain during the seventeenth century and in England during the eighteenth century, employs these elements in a very deliberate manner, although the early novels 11 MAJOR GENRES IN TEXTUAL STUDIES remain deeply rooted in the older genre of the epic. Miguel de Cervantes' (1547–1616) Don Quixote (1605; 1615), for instance, puts an end to the epic and to the chivalric romance by parodying their traditional elements (a lady who is not so deserving of adoration is courted by a not–so–noble knight who is involved in quite unheroic adventures). At the same time, however, Cervantes initiates a new and modified epic tradition. Similarly, the Englishman Henry Fielding (1707–54) characterizes his novel Joseph Andrews (1742) as a "comic romance" and "comic epic poem in prose," i.e., a parody and synthesis of existing genres. Also, in the plot structure of the early novel, which often tends to be episodic, elements of the epic survive in a new attire. In England, Daniel Defoe's (1660–1731) Robinson Crusoe (1719), Samuel Richardson's (1689–1761) Pamela (1740–41) and Clarissa (1748–49), Henry Fielding's Tom Jones (1749), and Laurence Sterne's (1713–68) Tristram Shandy (1759–67) mark the beginning of this new literary genre, which replaces the epic, thus becoming one of the most productive genres of modern literature. The newly established novel is often characterized by the terms "realism" and "individualism," thereby summarizing some of the basic innovations of this new medium. While th traditional epic exhibited a cosmic and allegorical dimension, the modern novel distinguishes itself by grounding the plot in a distinct historical and geographical reality. The allegorical and typified epic hero

lakmetamorphoses into the protagonist of the novel, with individual and realistic character traits. These features of the novel which, in their attention to individualism and realism, reflect basic sociohistorical tendencies of the eighteenth century, soon made the novel a dominant literary genre. The novel thus mirrors the modern disregard for the collective spirit of the Middle Ages that heavily relied on allegory and symbolism. The rise of an educated middle class, the spread of the printing press, and a modified economic basis which allowed authors to pursue writing as an independent profession underlie these major shifts in eighteenth–century literary production. To this day, the novel still maintains its leading position as the genre which produces the most innovations in literature. The term "novel," however, subsumes a number of subgenres such as the picaresque novel, which relates the experiences of a vagrant rogue (from the Spanish "picaro") in his conflict with the norms of 12 MAJOR GENRES IN TEXTUAL STUDIES society. Structured as an episodic narrative, the picaresque novel tries to lay bare social injustice in a satirical way, as for example Hans Jacob Christoph von Grimmelshausen's (c. 1621–76) German Simplizissimus (1669), Daniel Defoe's Moll Flanders (1722), or Henry Fielding's Tom Jones (1749), which all display specific traits of this form of prose fiction. The Bildungsroman (novel of education), generally referred to by its German name, describes the development of a protagonist from childhood to maturity, including such examples as George Eliot's (1819–80) Mill on the Floss (1860), or more recently Doris Lessing's (1919–) cycle Children of Violence (1952–69). Another important form is the epistolary novel, which uses letters as a means of first–person narration, as for example Samuel Richardson's Pamela (1740–41) and Clarissa (1748–49). A further form is the historical novel, such as Sir Walter Scott's (1771–1832) Waverley (1814), whose actions take place within a realistic historical context. Related to the historical novel is a more recent trend often labeled new journalism, which uses the genre of the novel to rework incidents based on real events, as exemplified by Truman Capote's (1924–84) In Cold Blood (1966) or Norman Mailer's (1923–) Armies of the Night (1968). The satirical novel, such as Jonathan Swift's (1667–1745) Gulliver's Travels (1726) or Mark Twain's (1835–1910) The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn (1884), highlights weaknesses of society through the exaggeration of social conventions, whereas utopian novels or science fiction novels create alternative worlds as a means of criticizing real sociopolitical conditions, as in the classic Nineteen Eighty–four (1949) by George Orwell (1903–50) or more recently Margaret Atwood's (1939–) The Handmaid's Tale (1985). Very popular forms are the gothic novel, which includes such works as Bram Stoker's (1847–1912) Dracula (1897), and the detective novel, one of the best known of which is Agatha Christie's (1890–1976) Murder on the Orient Express (1934). The short story, a concise form of prose fiction, has received less attention from literary scholars than the novel. As with the novel, the roots of the short story lie in antiquity and the Middle Ages. Story, myth, and fairy tale relate to the oldest types of textual manifestations, "texts" which were primarily orally transmitted. The term "tale" (from "to tell"), like the German "Sage" (from "sagen"—"to speak"), reflects this oral dimension inherent in short 13 MAJOR GENRES IN TEXTUAL STUDIES fiction. Even the Bible includes stories such as "Job" (c. fifth–fourth century BC) or "The Prodigal Son" (c. first century BC), whose structures and narrative patterns resemble modern short stories. Other forerunners of this subgenre of fiction are ancient satire and the aforementioned romance. Indirect precursors of the short story are cycles. The Arabian medieval and

early modern narrative Thousand and One Nights, compiled in the fourteenth and subsequent centuries, Giovanni Boccaccio's (1313–75) Italian Decamerone (1349–51), and Geoffrey Chaucer's (c. 1343–1400) Canterbury Tales (c. 1387) anticipate important features of modern short fiction. These cycles of tales are characterized by a frame narrative—such as the pilgrimage to the tomb of Saint Thomas Becket in the Canterbury Tales—which unites a number of otherwise heterogeneous stories. On their way to Canterbury, the pilgrims tell different, rather self–contained tales which are only connected through Chaucer's use of a frame story. The short story emerged as a more or less independent text type at the end of the eighteenth century, parallel to the development of the novel and the newspaper. Regularly issued magazines of the nineteenth century exerted a major influence on the establishment of the short story by providing an ideal medium for the publication of this prose genre of limited volume. Forerunners of these journals are the Tatler (1709–11) and the Spectator (1711–12; 1714), published in England by Joseph Addison and Richard Steele, who tried to address the educated middle class in short literary texts and commentaries of general interest (essays). Even today, magazines like the New Yorker (since 1925) still function as privileged organs for first publications of short stories. Many of the early novels appeared as serial stories in these magazines before being published as independent books, for example, Charles Dickens's (1812–70) The Pickwick Papers (1836–37). While the novel has always attracted the interest of literary theorists, the short story has never actually achieved the status held by book–length fiction. The short story, however, surfaces in comparative definitions of other prose genres such as the novel or its shorter variants, the novella and novelette. A crucial feature commonly identified with the short story is its impression of unity since it can be read—in contrast to the novel—in one sitting without interruption. Due to restrictions of length, the plot of the short story 14 MAJOR GENRES IN TEXTUAL STUDIES has to be highly selective, entailing an idiosyncratic temporal dimension that usually focuses on one central moment of action. The slow and gradual build–up of suspense in the novel must be accelerated in the short story by means of specific techniques. The action of the short story therefore often commences close to the climax (in medias res—"the middle of the matter"), reconstructing the preceding context and plot development through flashbacks. Focusing on one main figure or location, the setting and the characters generally receive less detailed and careful depiction than in the novel. In contrast to the novel's generally descriptive style, the short story, for the simple reason of limited length, has to be more suggestive. While the novel experiments with various narrative perspectives, the short story usually chooses one particular point of view, relating the action through the eyes of one particular figure or narrator. The novella or novelette, such as Joseph Conrad's (1857–1924) Heart of Darkness (1902), holds an intermediary position between novel and short story, since its length and narratological elements cannot be strictly identified with either of the two genres. As this juxtaposition of the main elements of the novel and the short story shows, attempts to explain the nature of these genres rely on different methodological approaches, among them reception theory with respect to reading without interruption, formalist notions for the analysis of plot structures, and contextual approaches delineating their boundaries with other comparable genres. The terms plot, time, character, setting, narrative perspective, and style emerge not only in the definitions and characterizations of the genre of ي the novel, but also function as the most important areas of inquiry in film and drama. Since these ﺍ aspects

can be isolated most easily in prose fiction, they will be dealt with in greater detail in the following section by drawing on examples from novels and short stories. The most important elements are: Plot Characters Narrative perspective Setting What happens? Who acts? Who sees what? Where and when do the events take place? MAJOR GENRES IN TEXTUAL STUDIES 15 a) Plot Plot is the logical interaction of the various thematic elements of a text which lead to a change of the original situation as presented at the outset of the narrative. An ideal traditional plot line encompasses the following four sequential levels: exposition—complication—climax or turning point— resolution The exposition or presentation of the initial situation is disturbed by a complication or conflict which produces suspense and eventually leads to a climax, crisis, or turning point. The climax is followed by a resolution of the complication (French denouement), with which the text usually ends. Most traditional fiction, drama, and film employ this basic plot structure, which is also called linear plot since its different elements follow a chronological order. In many cases—even in linear plots—flashback and foreshadowing introduce information concerning the past or future into the narrative. The opening scene in Billy Wilder's (1906–2002) Sunset Boulevard (1950) is a famous example of the foreshadowing effect in film: the first-person narrator posthumously relates the events that lead to his death while drifting dead in a swimming pool. The only break with a linear plot or chronological narrative is the anticipation of the film's ending—the death of its protagonist—thus eliminating suspense as an important element of plot. This technique directs the audience's attention to aspects of the film other than the outcome of the action (see also Chapter 2, §4: Film). The drama of the absurd and the experimental novel deliberately break with linear narrative structures while at the same time maintaining traditional elements of plot in modified ways. Many contemporary novels alter linear narrative structures by introducing elements of plot in an unorthodox sequence. Kurt Vonnegut's (1922–) postmodern novel Slaughterhouse-Five (1969) is a striking example of experimental plot structure which mixes various levels of action and time, such as the experiences of a young soldier in World War II, his life in America after the war, and a science- fiction-like dream-world in