

celebrated example in English is Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852), which powerfully urged the abolition of slavery. A more philosophical kind of thesis novel is Jean-Paul Sartre's *La Nausée* (1938), which embodies many of the principles of his \*EXISTENTIALISM. See also propagandism, thesis.

**roman à tiroirs** [roh-mah<sup>n</sup> a tee-rwah], the French term for an \*EPISODIC novel, such as Alain-René Lesage's *Gil Blas* (1715–35)—a *tiroir* being a drawer in a desk or chest. See also picaresque novel.

**romance**, a fictional story in verse or prose that relates improbable adventures of idealized characters in some remote or enchanted setting; or, more generally, a tendency in fiction opposite to that of \*REALISM. The term now embraces many forms of fiction from the \*GOTHIC NOVEL and the popular escapist love story to the 'scientific romances' of H. G. Wells, but it usually refers to the tales of King Arthur's knights written in the late Middle Ages by Chrétien de Troyes (in verse), Sir Thomas Malory (in prose), and many others (see chivalric romance). Medieval romance is distinguished from \*EPIC by its concentration on \*COURTLY LOVE rather than warlike heroism. Long, elaborate romances were written during the \*RENAISSANCE, including Ludovico Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso* (1532), Edmund Spenser's *The Faerie Queene* (1590–6), and Sir Philip Sidney's prose romance *Arcadia* (1590), but Cervantes's \*PARODY of romances in *Don Quixote* (1605) helped to undermine this tradition. Later prose romances differ from novels in their preference for \*ALLEGORY and psychological exploration rather than realistic social observation, especially in American works like Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Blithedale Romance* (1852). Several modern literary \*GENRES, from \*SCIENCE FICTION to the detective story, can be regarded as variants of the romance (see also fantasy, marvellous). In modern criticism of Shakespeare, the term is also applied to four of his last plays—*Pericles*, *Cymbeline*, *The Winter's Tale*, and *The Tempest*—which are distinguished by their daring use of magical illusion and improbable reunions. The **Romance languages** are those languages originating in southern Europe that are derived from Latin: the most important of these are Spanish, French, Italian, and Portuguese. In Spanish literature, the term has a special sense, the *romance* [ro-mahn-thay] being a \*BALLAD composed in \*OCTOSYLLABIC lines. For a fuller account, consult Gillian Beer, *The Romance* (1970).

**roman-feuilleton**, a serialized novel: see *feuilleton*.