of the immortals had had his sport with Tess"; or Tolstoy's philosophy of history at the end of *War and Peace*). Many such assertions, however, are said to be merely "implied," "suggested," or "inferrable" from the narrator's choice and control of the fictional characters and plot of the narrative itself. It is often claimed that such generalizations by the narrator within a fictional work, whether expressed or implied, function as assertions that claim to be true about the world, and that they thereby relate the fictional narrative to the factual and moral world of actual experience. See John Hospers, "Implied Truths in Literature" (1960), reprinted in W. E. Kennick, ed., *Art and Philosophy* (rev., 1979).

A much-discussed topic, related to the question of an author's assertions and truth-claims in narrative fiction, is that of the role of the **beliefs** of the reader. The problem raised is the extent to which a reader's own moral, religious, and social convictions, as they coincide with or diverge from those asserted or implied in a work, determine the interpretation, acceptability, and evaluation of that work by the reader. For the history and discussions of this problem in literary criticism, see William Joseph Rooney, *The Problem of "Poetry and Belief" in Contemporary Criticism* (1949); M. H. Abrams, editor and contributor, *Literature and Belief* (1957); Walter Benn Michaels, "Saving the Text: Reference and Belief," *Modern Language Notes* 93 (1978). Many discussions of the question of belief in fiction cite S. T. Coleridge's description of the reader's attitude as a "willing suspension of disbelief."

A review of theories concerning the relevance of the criterion of truth to fiction is Monroe C. Beardsley's *Aesthetics: Problems in the Philosophy of Criticism* (1958), pp. 409–19. For an analysis and critique of theories of emotive language see Max Black, "Questions about Emotive Meaning," in *Language and Philosophy* (1949), chapter 9. Gerald Graff defends propositional truth in poetry in *Poetic Statement and Critical Dogma* (1970), chapter 6. In the writings of Jacques Derrida and his followers in literary criticism, the opposition truth/falsity is one of the metaphysical presuppositions of Western thought that they put to question; see *deconstruction*. For a detailed treatment of the relations of fictions to the real world, including a survey of diverse answers to this problem, see Peter Lamarque and Stein Haugom Olsen, *Truth, Fiction and Literature: A Philosophical Perspective* (1994).

Figurative Language is a conspicuous departure from what users of a language apprehend as the standard meaning of words, or else the standard order of words, in order to achieve some special meaning or effect. Figures are sometimes described as primarily poetic, but they are integral to the functioning of language and indispensable to all modes of discourse.

Most modern classifications and analyses are based on the treatment of figurative language by Aristotle and later classical rhetoricians; the fullest and most influential treatment is in the Roman Quintilian's *Institutes of Oratory* (first century A.D.), Books VIII and IX. Since that time, figurative language has often been divided into two classes: (1) **Figures of thought**, or **tropes** (meaning "turns," "conversions"), in which words or phrases are used in a way that effects a conspicuous change in what we take to be their standard meaning.

The standard meaning, as opposed to its meaning in the figurative use, is called the **literal meaning.** (2) **Figures of speech,** or *rhetorical figures,* or **schemes** (from the Greek word for "form"), in which the departure from standard usage is not primarily in the meaning of the words, but in the order or syntactical pattern of the words. This distinction is not a sharp one, nor do all critics agree on its application. For convenience of exposition, however, the most commonly identified tropes are treated here, and the most commonly identified figures of speech are collected in the article *rhetorical figures.* For recent opposition to the basic distinction between the literal and the figurative, see *metaphor, theories of.*

In a **simile,** a comparison between two distinctly different things is explicitly indicated by the word "like" or "as." A simple example is Robert Burns, "O my love's like a red, red rose." The following simile from Samuel Taylor Coleridge's "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" also specifies the feature ("green") in which icebergs are similar to emerald:

> And ice, mast-high, came floating by,
> As green as emerald.

For highly elaborated types of simile, see *conceit* and *epic simile.*

In a **metaphor,** a word or expression that in literal usage denotes one kind of thing is applied to a distinctly different kind of thing, without asserting a comparison. For example, if Burns had said "O my love is a red, red rose" he would have uttered, technically speaking, a metaphor instead of a simile. Here is a more complex metaphor from the poet Stephen Spender, in which he describes the eye as it perceives a landscape:

> Eye, gazelle, delicate wanderer,
> Drinker of horizon's fluid line.*

For the distinction between metaphor and symbol, see *symbol.*

It should be noted that in these examples we can distinguish two elements, the metaphorical term and the subject to which it is applied. In a widely adopted usage, I. A. Richards introduced the name **tenor** for the subject ("my love" in the altered line from Burns, and "eye" in Spender's lines), and the name **vehicle** for the metaphorical term itself ("rose" in Burns, and the three words "gazelle," "wanderer," and "drinker" in Spender). In an **implicit metaphor,** the tenor is not itself specified, but only implied. If one were to say, while discussing someone's death, "That reed was too frail to survive the storm of its sorrows," the situational and verbal context of the term "reed" indicates that it is the vehicle for an implicit tenor, a human being, while "storm" is the vehicle for an aspect of a specified tenor, "sorrows." Those aspects, properties, or common associations of a vehicle which, in a given context, apply to a tenor are called by Richards the **grounds** of a metaphor. (See I. A. Richards, *Philosophy of Rhetoric,* 1936, chapters 5–6.)

* Lines from "Not palaces, an era's crown," from *Collected Poems, 1928-1953,* by Stephen Spender. Copyright 1934 by The Modern Library, Inc., and renewed 1962 by Stephen Spender. Reprinted by permission of Random House, Inc., and Faber & Faber Ltd.

All the metaphoric terms, or vehicles, cited so far have been nouns, but other parts of speech may also be used metaphorically. The metaphoric use of a verb occurs in Shakespeare's *Merchant of Venice,* V. i. 54, "How sweet the moonlight *sleeps* upon this bank"; and the metaphoric use of an adjective occurs in Andrew Marvell's "The Garden" (1681):

> Annihilating all that's made
> To a *green* thought in a green shade.

A **mixed metaphor** conjoins two or more obviously diverse metaphoric vehicles. When used inadvertently, without sensitivity to the possible incongruity of the vehicles, the effect can be ludicrous: "Girding up his loins, the chairman plowed through the mountainous agenda." Densely figurative poets such as Shakespeare, however, often mix metaphors in a functional way. One example is Hamlet's expression of his troubled state of mind in his *soliloquy* (III. i. 59–60), "to take arms against a sea of trouble, / And by opposing end them"; another is the complex involvement of vehicle within vehicle, applied to the process of aging, in Shakespeare's Sonnet 65:

> O, how shall summer's honey breath hold out
> Against the wrackful siege of battering days?

A **dead metaphor** is one which, like "the leg of a table" or "the heart of the matter," has been used so long and become so common that its users have ceased to be aware of the discrepancy between vehicle and tenor. Many dead metaphors, however, are only moribund and can be brought back to life. Someone asked Groucho Marx, "Are you a man or a mouse?" He answered, "Throw me a piece of cheese and you'll find out." The recorded history of language indicates that most words that we now take to be literal were, in the distant past, metaphors.

Metaphors are essential to the functioning of language and have been the subject of copious analyses, and sharp disagreements, by rhetoricians, linguists, literary critics, and philosophers of language. For a discussion of diverse views, see the entry *metaphor, theories of.*

Some tropes, sometimes classified as species of metaphor, are more frequently and usefully given names of their own:

In **metonymy** (Greek for "a change of name") the literal term for one thing is applied to another with which it has become closely associated because of a recurrent relationship in common experience. Thus "the crown" or "the scepter" can be used to stand for a king and "Hollywood" for the film industry; "Milton" can signify the writings of Milton ("I have read all of Milton"); and typical attire can signify the male and female sexes: "doublet and hose ought to show itself courageous to petticoat" (Shakespeare, *As You Like It,* II. iv. 6). (For the influential distinction by the linguist Roman Jakobson between the metaphoric, or "vertical," and the metonymic, or "horizontal," dimension, in application to many aspects of the functioning of language, see under *linguistics in literary criticism.*)

In **synecdoche** (Greek for "taking together"), a part of something is used to signify the whole, or (more rarely) the whole is used to signify a part. We use

the term "ten *hands*" for ten workmen, or "a hundred *sails*" for ships and, in current slang, "wheels" to stand for an automobile. In a bold use of the figure, Milton describes the corrupt and greedy clergy in "Lycidas" as "blind *mouths*."

Another figure related to metaphor is **personification**, or in the Greek term, **prosopopeia**, in which either an inanimate object or an abstract concept is spoken of as though it were endowed with life or with human attributes or feelings (compare *pathetic fallacy*). Milton wrote in *Paradise Lost* (IX. 1002–3), as Adam bit into the fatal apple,

> Sky lowered, and muttering thunder, some sad drops
> Wept at completing of the mortal sin.

The second stanza of Keats' "To Autumn" finely personifies the season, autumn, as a woman carrying on the rural chores of that time of year; and in *Aurora Leigh*, I. 251–2, Elizabeth Barrett Browning wrote:

> Then, land!—then, England! oh, the frosty cliffs
> Looked cold upon me.

The personification of abstract terms was standard in eighteenth-century *poetic diction*, where it sometimes became a thoughtless formula. Coleridge cited an eighteenth-century ode celebrating the invention of inoculation against smallpox that began with this *apostrophe* to the personified subject of the poem:

> Inoculation! heavenly Maid, descend!

See Steven Knapp, *Personification and the Sublime* (1986).

The term **kenning** denotes the recurrent use, in the Anglo-Saxon *Beowulf* and poems written in other Old Germanic languages, of a descriptive phrase in place of the ordinary name for something. This type of *periphrasis*, which at times becomes a stereotyped expression, is an indication of the origin of these poems in oral tradition (see *oral formulaic poetry*). Some kennings are instances of *metonymy* ("the whale road" for the sea, and "the ring-giver" for a king); others of *synecdoche* ("the ringed prow" for a ship); still others describe salient or picturesque features of the object referred to ("foamy-necked floater" for a ship under sail, "storm of swords" for a battle).

Other departures from the standard use of words, often classified as tropes, are treated elsewhere in this *Glossary: aporia, conceit, epic simile, hyperbole, irony, litotes, paradox, periphrasis, pun, understatement.* In recent decades, especially in the *New Criticism, Russian formalism, deconstruction,* and Harold Bloom's theory of the *anxiety of influence,* there has been a great interest in the analysis and functioning of figurative language, which was once thought to be largely the province of pedantic rhetoricians.

A clear summary of the classification of figures that was inherited from the classical past is Edward P. J. Corbett, *Classical Rhetoric for the Modern Student* (3d ed., 1990). Sister Miriam Joseph's *Shakespeare's Use of the Arts of Language* (1947) treats the conventional analysis of figures in the Renaissance. René Wellek and Austin Warren, in *Theory of Literature* (rev., 1970), summarize, with bibliography, diverse treatments of figurative language; and Jonathan Culler,

in *Structuralist Poetics* (1975) and *The Pursuit of Signs* (1981), discusses the concern with the subject in recent critical theories.

Folklore, since the mid-nineteenth century, has been the collective name applied to sayings, verbal compositions, and social rituals that have been handed down solely, or at least primarily, by word of mouth and example rather than in written form. Folklore developed, and continues even now, in communities where few if any people can read or write. It also continues to flourish among literate populations, in the form of oral jokes, stories, and varieties of wordplay; see, for example, the collection of "urban folklore" by Alan Dundes and Carl R. Pagter, *When You're up to Your Ass in Alligators: More Urban Folklore from the Paperwork Empire* (1987). Folklore includes legends, superstitions, songs, tales, proverbs, riddles, spells, and nursery rhymes; pseudoscientific lore about the weather, plants, and animals; customary activities at births, marriages, and deaths; and traditional dances and forms of drama which are performed on holidays or at communal gatherings. Elements of folklore have at all times entered into sophisticated written literature. For example, the choice among the three caskets in Shakespeare's *Merchant of Venice* (II. ix.) and the superstition about a maiden's dream which is central to Keats' *Eve of St. Agnes* (1820) are both derived from folklore. Refer to A. H. Krappe, *Science of Folklore* (1930, reprinted 1974); Richard M. Dorson, ed. *Folklore and Folklife: An Introduction* (1972).

The following forms of folklore have been of special importance for later written literature:

Folk drama originated in primitive rites of song and dance, especially in connection with agricultural activities, which centered on vegetational deities and goddesses of fertility. Some scholars maintain that Greek *tragedy* developed from such rites, which celebrated the life, death, and rebirth of the vegetational god Dionysus. Folk dramas survive in England in such forms as the St. George play and the **mummers' play** (a "mummer" is a masked actor). Thomas Hardy's *The Return of the Native* (Book II, chapter 5) describes the performance of a mummers' play, and a form of this drama is still performed in America in the Kentucky mountains. See Edmund K. Chambers, *The English Folk-Play* (1933).

Folk songs include love songs, Christmas carols, work songs, sea chanties, religious songs, drinking songs, children's game-songs, and many other types of lyric, as well as the narrative song, or traditional *ballad.* (See *oral formulaic poetry.*) All forms of folk song have been assiduously collected since the late eighteenth century, and have inspired many imitations by writers of lyric poetry, as well as by composers of popular songs in the twentieth century. Robert Burns collected and edited Scottish folk songs, restored or rewrote them, and imitated them in his own lyrics. His "A Red, Red Rose" and "Auld Lang Syne," for example, both derive from one or more folk songs, and his "Green Grow the Rashes, O" is a tidied-up version of a bawdy folk song. See J. C. Dick, *The Songs of Robert Burns* (1903); Cecil J. Sharp, *Folk Songs of England* (5 vols., 1908–12); and Alan Lomax, *The Folk Songs of North America* (1960).