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 Hough, "Implied Truths in Literature" (1960), reprinted in W. E. Kennicott, 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, concerns the parts played by 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 role 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* (1968), 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 the claim for 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 *binary* 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 relationships of fictions to the real world, including a survey of the diverse views about this problem, see Peter Lamarque and Stein Haugom Olsen, *Truth, Fiction and Literature: A Philosophical Perspective* (1994).

figural interpretation: 162.

**figurative language:** Figurative language is a conspicuous departure from what competent 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 AD), 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 "form", in which the meaning of the words, but distinction is not a sharp convenience of exposition, however, and the most common *rhetorical figures* for literal and the figurative, see

In a *simile*, a comparison indicated by the word "like"

"love's like a red, red rose."

"The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" is similar to emer

And ice: 1

As green:

For highly elaborated types

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"That reed was too frail to verbal context of the term tenor, a human being, with tenor, 'sorrows.'" Those as which, in a given context, of a metaphor. (See I. A. Ri

All the metaphorical term parts of speech may also be occurs in Shakespeare's *Man*

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1 Lines from "Not palaces, an era's crown,

renewed 1962 by Stephen Spender. Repr
(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 instance from the poet Stephen Spender, in which he applies several metaphorical terms to the eye as it scans a landscape:

> Eye, gazelle, delicate wanderer,  
> Drinker of horizon’s fluid line.²

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.)

All the metaphorical terms, or vehicles, cited so far have been nouns, but other parts of speech may also be used metaphorically. The metaphorical use of a verb occurs in Shakespeare’s *Merchant of Venice*, V. i. 54, “How sweet the moonlight

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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 ve-
hicles. 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 ex-
pression of his troubled state of mind in his *soliloquy* (III. i. 59–60), “to take arms
against a sea of troubles, / 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 we have ceased to be
aware of the discrepancy between vehicle and tenor. Many dead metaphors, how-
ever, 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 a
great many 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 sub-
ject of copious analyses, and sharp disagreements, by rhetoricians, linguists, literary
critics, and philosophers of language. For a discussion of diverse views, see the en-
try *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 re-
current relation 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 cour-
rageous to petticoat” (Shakespeare, *As You Like It*, II. iv. 6). (For the influential
distinction by the linguist Roman Jakobson between the metaphoric, or “verti-
cal,” and the metonymic, or “horizontal,” dimension, in application to many as-
pects 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 workers, or “a hundred sails” for ships and, in current
slang, “wheels” to stand for an automobile. By a bold use of the figure, Milton
describes the corrupt and greedy clergy in “Lycidas” as “blind mouths.”