

THE EARLY HISTORY OF SIMILES

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Annotation: *In this article is discussed ancient periods of similes, the first collection of similes and figures who used and worked on similes*

Key words: *Similes, "Garden of Eden", Old Testament, figure of speech, early records.*

Аннотация: *В данной статье рассматриваются древние периоды сравнений, первая коллекция сравнений и фигур, которые использовали и работали над сравнениями.*

Ключевые слова: *сравнения, «Райский сад», Ветхий Завет, фигура речи, ранние записи.*

The simile is the most ancient forms of speech. It is the hand maid of all early word records. It has proved itself essential to every form of human utterance.

The word simile is derived from the Latin word 'Simile', meaning 'resemblance and likenesses', technically it means the comparison of two objects with some similarities. Shamisa [1] has said simile is the claim of likeness of two things in one or two attributes "Simile is fundamentally a figure of speech requiring overt reference to source and target entities, and an explicit construction connecting them" [2].

In English, for this comparison some similarity markers such as, "like", "as". E.g: Mr. Smith is as changeable as a weathercock. He eats like a hoarse. In literary texts, simile is used with metaphors to enhance the effect and beauty of the text. As metaphor is a covert comparison, simile is an overt one which explicitly and precisely explains the object and it is the first and simplest method for conveying the beauty of message which is used in poetry, prose

and also usual conversations. Even children talking about their desires, use simile as a means of comparison.

Simile also differs from analogy, intended in its narrower sense, as former involves two entities, while the latter involves four. Unlike metaphors, similes require individuation of both source and target concepts, and an evaluation of what they have in common, but unlike literal comparisons, they are figurative, comparing things normally felt to be incomparable, typically using vivid or startling images to suggest unexpected connections between source and target.

Many similes which are now in general use would be known as having been current in the Garden of Eden. Undoubtedly, on many occasions, Father Adam when addressing Mother Eve, made use of "Cold as ice", "Busy as a bee", "Proud as a peacock", "Weak as water", "Angry as a wasp", and "Bitter as gall". With reliable data, many a simile which is now marked Anonymous would be credited to Adam.^[3] However, we have other authorities who testify that Father Adam and Mother Eve made frequent use of similes in their Garden conversations.

Some of the most familiar similes in general use are to be found in the Old Testament. Among them are: "Multiply as the stars of heaven", "Unstable as water", "Still as a stone", "White as snow", "Swifter than a weaver's shuttle", "Boil like a pot", "Firm as a stone", "Melted like wax", "Sharp as a two-edged sword", and "Bitter as wormwood". The Songs of Solomon are rich mine of similes, including, "Thy lips are like a thread of scarlet", "Thy neck is like her tower of David builded for an armoury", "Their teeth are like a flock of sheep that are even shorn, which came up from the washing", and "Cruel as the grave". [1]

From many other sources the antiquity of the simile is proved. In the time of Rameses II of Egypt, 1292-1225 B.C., according to Breasted's "History of Egypt", the poem of Pentaur was written. The Heroic Theban poet's work was so highly prized that it was carved on the temple walls in hard stone. Pentaur was not ignorant of the simile. Thus he speaks of Pharaoh:

“His heart is firm, his courage is like that of the god of the war”

“His courage is firm, like that of a bull”

“The King is dreadful as the grim lion in the valley”

“He appeared like the sun-god at his rising in the early morn”

Of Seti, the father of Rameses II, an unbroken inscription says: “He is as a jackal which rushed prowling through the land, as a grim lion that frequents hidden paths, as a powerful bull with sharpened horns” Now this Rameses, Ramses, or Ramessu, was that Pharaoh who oppressed the Israelites, the father of the princess who found the child Moses hid among the bulrushes.

Homer, Virgil, Horace, all the ancient writers, abound in similes; but the first to confine his literary expression to the making of similes alone was a Pythagorean philosopher, Demophilus, whose history is little known. His work, “Life’s Culture and Conduct”, is extant only in portions which are in the form of selections called “Dialectic Similitudes”. The first known edition of the work was printed in 1638. There were five editions in the seventeenth century. Three in the eighteenth, and the in nineteenth century. There is an interesting reference to Demophilus in “The Phoenix”, described as “a collection of old and rare fragments”, published by William Gowans, New York, 1835. [4]

“Demophilus appears to have enjoyed the dignity of archon Athens, where it was no unusual thing for the character of magistrate and philosopher to be united in the same person. Respecting the time when he lived, it is impossible to arrive at an absolute certainty. The most probable conjecture is that he flourished about the beginning of the Christian era, and prior to the reign of the Emperor Marcus Antonius. Such of his writings as are extant have come down to us in company with the philosophical works of Maximus Tyrius. Whether they owe their preservation to the latter philosopher having, from his conviction of their excellence, appended them to his own writings, is, though not unlikely, impossible to determine.”

Thus the making of similes has gone on from age to age. The New Testament is not so prolific in the use of this figure of speech as the Old; but the writers of the New

had a way, not unknown to the Old, of repeating the same similes many times. Not only that, but many that are found in the Old reappear in the new Testament.

Since the very beginning of English literature, the simile has been a favourite figure of speech. This is particularly true of the English writings which obtained before the time of Elizabeth I, and all of the great Elizabethans made happy use of it. There was one collection of similes made in the sixteenth century, and three during the seventeenth. These books are:

1. "Certain very proper and most profitable similes, also many very notable virtues" [5]
2. "A treasure or store-house of similes: both pleasant, delightful, and profitable, for all estates of men in general." Newly collected into heads and commonplaces. [6]
3. "A century of similes" [7]
4. "Things new and old; or a store-house of Similes" [8]

The first to make a collection of similes was John Ray, botanist and miscellaneous writer. His "A Collection of English proverbs" was published in 1670, and there have been many subsequent editions. It was not Ray's purpose to group together the proverbs and incidentally the similes to be found in English literature, but rather those in colloquial use by the people of England. The "Proverbial Similes" which he collected comprise but eight and a half pages of the two hundred and eighty, of the fifth edition of his book. Many of those gathered by Ray are of a character too gross for modern taste, while others are of a distinctly local character. Other collectors added many which came into general use after Ray's time; but all avoided making use of similes to be found in the works of the writers of preceding ages. The first to overcome this reluctance was Vincent Stuckey Lean, whose great work, "Lean's Collectanea" in five volumes, was published at Bristol, England, 1903. A part of the second volume of this erudite compilation is given over to, "A New Treasury of Similes". Lean not only embodied in his work all of the similes to be found in the various books of proverbs, but added very many from the old English writers. It is evident that he had a very considerable Elizabethan library to

delve in;but,oddly enough,he made use of but three modern similes,-one each from Dickens,Tennyson,and George Eliot.Of the four simile books mentioned,Lean knew of but one,and that by Robert Cawdray.

In conclusion,Similes are one of the antient forms of speech,one of the important part of literature.

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