

Simile and Metaphor in Keats

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Simile and Metaphor in Keats.

In this paper I shall give the results of an attempt to gather and classify the similes and metaphors in the poetry of John Keats. When the dramas are excluded he wrote 10,000 lines. My first effort was to find a standard by which I could determine exact by what was a simile and what a metaphor. This standard I could not find. The chief of my difficulty lay in the distinction between simile and metaphor. After examining all the authorities at my disposal I could arrive at no conclusion.

uses on
 thing English.

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Arlo Bates says; "To comparison it is customary to give two names according as the likeness is stated explicitly or is implied. To the expressed comparison is given the name simile, to the comparison assumed, the name metaphor. Mr. Bates then goes on to say that the difference between these tropes need not be closely pressed. He gives as an instance of simile; 'Napoleon swept like a trumpet'

over Europe:" and as an instance of metaphor,
 "Napoleon, the tempest which was sweeping
 over Europe." By this he gives me to understand
 that he considers as a metaphor that trope of
 resemblance where both the comparison and
 the thing compared are named, and named
 in apposition.

Etical
 Rhetoric
 p. 275.

On the other hand Quakerbos in giving
 a definition of simile says, "A simile declar-
 es one thing to be like another directly by stat-
 ing the resemblance with the indicators like,
 as, and so and indirectly without any for-
 mal term. Quakerbos then gives as an
 illustration of an implied simile a selection
 from Shakespeare, "For sweetest things turn
 sourest by their deeds,

Which that fester smell far
 worse than words."

This example shows that Quakerbos consid-
 ers as simile those tropes in which the likeness
 is given in apposition. This is contrary to
 Bates who classifies such a trope as metaphor.

Mr. Inakubo also gives this as an instance of metaphor, "The grave is but a covered bridge"; in this trope the comparison and the thing compared are both given connected by the copula. This Inakubo calls metaphor.

ask

Barrett Wendell avoids all discussion of the distinction by throwing metaphor, simile and personification together. He

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says these three tropes have the common trait of expressing a meaning by a name ~~other~~ other than its rigorously proper one and that this distinction is sufficient for all practical purposes. Phelps and Frink avoid a discussion in much the same way.

Rhetoric.

Theory
and
Practice.

Prin. of

Rhetoric.

R. S. Hill gives the following as an instance of metaphor, "Ingratitude, thou marble-hearted fiend:" and this as a simile, "Ingratitude, thou fiend with heart like marble." In this he agrees with Bates and disagrees with Inakubo. Hill agrees with Inakubo in classifying as metaphor those tropes of resemblance which connect the comparison and thing compared with the copula.

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of Poetics
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But F. B. Gummere takes a more radical and a more decided stand in his distinction between simile and metaphor than any of those named above. He says that the trope is a substitution of one thing for another on the basis of resemblance which may be assumed, implied, or stated. That where the likeness is assumed and the picture or comparison is put directly in place of the thing itself, we have the metaphor. He says, "We do not state the resemblance of x to y ." We simply assume it, and give x in terms of y . In the metaphor the comparison and the thing compared are not both named, only the former. Where both are named we have the implied or stated simile." Therefore Gummere calls simile all those tropes of resemblance in which the two objects are presented to the mind for comparison. In taking this stand point of the difference between metaphor and simile Gummere differs from most writers on poetics.

The general tendency is to place the implied simile under the head of metaphor. In Keats, as I have shown places the apposition simile, which he calls an implied simile under the head of simile and not metaphor. But on the other hand those tropes of resemblance where the comparison and thing compared are connected by the copula he calls metaphor.

As it was impossible to agree with all of these writers I decided to use Gummere as a standard as he takes so much more decided and clear a stand than any of the others. His distinction between simile and metaphor seems to me to be very reasonable and just. By following out his idea and considering those tropes of resemblance in which the comparison and thing compared are both given as either stated or implied similes and those in which only the comparison is given and the likeness is assumed as metaphor I have succeeded, I hope, with some little accuracy in classifying metaphor and simile in Keats.

I found in Keats 399 formal similes. In collecting I was very careful to exclude simple comparison. Only when the things compared were essentially unlike, or unlike in most particulars or belonging to different classes did I call the comparison simile. Following are two instances of such comparison as I omitted. The first is from 'I stood Tiptoe', and the last from Eudymion Book II.

I stood. "The evening weather was so bright and clear,
Tiptoe. That men of health were of unusual cheer:
Stepping like Homer at the trumpets call."
Eud II "O, Bread-Suen! would that thou had a pain
Like this of mine,"

399 similes in 10,000 lines is not excessive. Although the poetry of Keats was in excessive adornment his prodigality seems not to take the form of metaphor or simile. In Eudymion and in Lamia, both of which have an affluence even an excess of opulent adornment, his use of similes is moderate: Eudymion II which consists of 1000 lines having 45 similes and

Lamia 29 in 700 lines.

In Keats there are 328 stated similes and 71 implied. There are three instances of simile within simile. One in 'Hyperion',

"As when, upon a tranced summer night,
 Those green-robed senators of mighty woods,
 Tall oaks, branch charmed by the earnest stars,
 Dream and so dream all night without a stir
 Save from me gradual solitary gust
 Which comes upon the silence, and dies off,
 As if the ebbing air had but one wave:
 So came these words and went:"

This, I think, is as beautiful a simile as is found anywhere in Keats. There are 6 instances of metaphor within simile.

Keats in 35 of his similes has the thing compared compared to two or more totally different things. The best instance of this is found in 'Sleep and Poetry'. In this sleep is compared to seven different things, the comparisons being in the form of questions. The lines begin thus,

"What is more gentle than a wind in summer,
 What is more soothing than the pretty hummer,
 That stays me moment in an open floweret?"

In Keats's poetry there are 21 similes sustained five lines or over five. The simile given above from "Sleep and Poetry" is, of course, not a sustained simile. I have considered only those similes sustained in which the comparison is compared to one thing only. Hyperion has more by far than any other poem, having ten similes sustained 5 lines or over. 4 of the 10 are sustained successively 9, 8, 10, and 12 lines. Hyperion has more of the best of Keats' sustained similes.

"Say, doth the dull soil
 Inarvel with the proud forests it has fed,
 And feedeth still more cowardly than itself?
 Can it deny the chiefdom of green grove?
 (three lines omitted)"

We are such forest-trees, and our fair boughs
 Have bred forth, not pale solitary doves
 But eagles golden-feathered, who do tower

Above us in their beauty, and must reign
In right thereof:"

This trope is certainly very beautiful.

Similes with reference to form may be classified under these heads, sustained simile, period simile, clause simile, phrase simile and word simile.

Keats is intense and terse in style. This classification enables one to see in how far Keats made a single phrase or a word do the duty of a clause or of a longer comparison and thereby gain in immediate and intense effect and in vivid expression which was always a chief aim with Keats.

The more condensed the expression the greater the effect. Keats uses the phrase analogy as a norm or standard. He uses also rather a large number of word analogies. These condensed tropes when the comparison is clear, which is, of course, essential to the effect, of the are very force-

ful

In Keats there are 21 sustained similes, of which an example has been given above. There are no period similes except those given under the head of sustained. There are 129 phrase similes and 41 word similes. Of clause similes there are 208. The greater number of his word similes are found among the implied, under those implied by the use of the adjective, in compound words and by opposition. All the similes implied by the use of the dependent geritive are phrase similes. This form is also illustrated by such examples as "like a bird." Clause similes is confined to a single item of resemblance, and most often introduced by like, as if, as when, it seemed etc.

In the poetry of Keats there are 328 stated similes and 71 implied similes. In the stated similes like takes the lead in number, there being 156 introduced by like. Next in number are those introduced by as, there being 101 of these. There are 16 intro

duced by as -- so, 7 by as -- as. There are
5. in as though. A good one in this form
is found in 'Eudymion' II,

"What melodies are these?

They sound as though the whispering of trees,
Not native in such barren vaults."

Under stated similes I placed three ~~not~~ found
in compound words, "Infant-like", found
once, and "Dove-like" found twice. These three
given comprise all of this kind found in
Keats. There are eight introduced by seemed
in 'Eudymion' II 2, in 'Lor of St. Agnes' 1
& in early sonnets, and three in his
early poems. Very beautiful are those sim-
iles in which a resemblance is pictured
by the use of the compar^aative degree.

There are 32 similes of comparison in Keats.
This from 'Eudymion' II is good,

"This sleepy music, forced him wacktiptoe!

For it came more softly than the east could
Arion's magic to the Atlantic isles: Ublow
Or from the west made jealous by the smiles

Of throned Apollo, could breathe back the lyre
To seas Ionian and Tyrian."

Under implied simile I have three heads, implied by apposition, by dependent genitive, by the use of the copula, by adjectives and by compound words. There are 17 implied by apposition. This form of simile is particularly good, being explicit, and having an immediate effect. This from 'Isabella' is pretty,

"Parting they seemed to tread upon the air,
Twin roses by the zephyr blown apart
Only to meet again more close and share
The inward fragrance of each other's heart."

The use of the copula approaches the stated simile more nearly than any other form under the head of implied simile. There are twelve of these in Keats. Good instances of simile implied by the dependent genitive are found in 'Endymion', for instance,

"The dew of her rich speech,"
"Barbed shafts of disappointment"

"Pure wine of happiness,"

"Along the pebbled shore of memory."

Keats has 17 similes of this form.

There are 5 such forms as this found in 'Lamia', 'Hyperion', and the early poems, "dove-footed", "honey-words", "rapier-pointed", "tiger-passioned".

These are implied by compound words.

They show plain by their reduction from phrase form, "pointed like a rapier"; "words sweet as honey". The one remaining class is that in which the simile is implied by the use of the adjective. Of these there are twenty.

My attempt to classify the similes in Keats with regard to the source from which he drew them has not been nearly as successful as I as I would like. Some similes seemed quite impossible to classify with any degree of accuracy. Whether they should be placed in one class or in quite another class was often hard to decide. But more often the indcision arose from lack of a proper classification under

which the trope in question could be placed.

With the exception of a few tropes, 23, which I did not succeed in classifying at all, I have placed all the other similes, the 377 remaining under eight classifications.

These are nature, under which I found 231 similes; classical mythology having 54, the supernatural 24, 3 from the Bible.

Under life of the senses I found 28. From music three, 4 from religious ceremony. From the things of every day life he drew 26.

As there are but three from the Bible and they are good I will take room to give them here. *From 'Sleep and Poetry',

Sleep and
Poetry:

"So that ye taught a school

To Of dolts to smooth, inlay, and chise, and fit,

Till like the certain wands of Jacob's wit,
Their voices tallied."

From *Andynion* III

"Ah! how all this hums

In wakeful ears, like uproar past and gone—
Like thunder clouds that stroke to Babylon,

And set those old Chaldeans to their tasks."

and from Isabella,

"Those Babelites of yore,
Her ~~brothers~~ brethren."

When I speak of the similes that Keats drew from nature I mean by nature are the external phenomena of nature, sky, streams, hill and plain, woods and flowers, and animal life. Altogether Keats drew 231 similes from nature. I placed his nature similes under three heads. Animate nature, inanimate nature, and the phenomena of nature. Under this last head I placed those that he drew directly from the elements such as, thunder, lightning, storms. Under inanimate nature there are 71, under animate nature 119, under phenomena of nature 41.

Keats' general attitude toward nature was one of deep and unaffected love and he tried to show us how beautiful nature was

to him. In 29 of Keats' similes the comparison is a bird. 16 times out of the 29 the bird is a dove, and five times it is an eagle. The nightingale, also, comes in for a share of attention. Keats drew 42 similes from the flowers. Among the flowers the rose seems to be his favorite, 11 of his similes being comparisons to the rose, and 6 to the lily. Snakes and serpents are the source of quite a few similes.

As I have said before Keats drew 41 similes from the phenomena of nature.

These comparisons are, as a rule, not especially unusual or uncommon. This from Hyperion is unusual but not clear enough to be effective to me,

"Each several one against the other three,
 he fire with air loud warring when rain-floods
 Down both, and press them both against earth's
 Where, finding sulphur, ~~and~~ a quadruple wrath
 Unhinges the poor world."

Keats' use of the supernatural, of which

there are 24 instances, can be illustrated by three out of the four found in "Eve of St. Agnes;" "F lit like a ghost away."

"They glide like phantoms, into the wide hall,
Like phantoms, to the iron porch she glide:"

"Half-hidden like a mermaid in seaweed:"

The classification - life of the senses - under which I have placed 28 similes is not as exact and therefore not as satisfactory as the classes of which I have already spoken. Under life of the senses I included also the passions. Below are three illustrations of similes that I considered under this head. From 'Isabella',

"It came like a fierce potion drunk by chance,
Which saves a sick man from the feathered gall
For some few gasping moments"

From 'Lamia',

"While, like held breath, the stars drew
in their panting fires."

From 'Ode to Nightingale',

"a drowsy numbness pains

my soul, as though of hemlock I had drunk
Or emptied some dull opiate to the drains!"

In Keats's poetry there are 54 similes drawn from classical mythology. More come from this source than from any other single source with the exception of nature. Of the Greek gods Jove, Apollo and Mercury are favorites. Keats's similes from this source are especially good. But our appreciation depends largely upon his knowledge of mythology. I shall give two from *Lamia*,

"Fierce was the mitigated fury, like
Apollo's presence when in act to strike
The serpent."

"Not with cold wonder fearingly,
But Cleopatra-like at an Eurydice:"

The eighth and last classification is—"every day life". It is not difficult to understand that there is nothing rigid in this classification. It is unsatisfactory because it is so loose. Those that I have placed under this head could not be

assigned to any of the other seven classifications and they seemed to be drawn from the experiences of every day life. Under this classification I have placed twenty-six similes. Two instances will be sufficient to give an idea of the nature of these similes. One from 'Ode on Indolence':

"They passed like figures on a marble urn,
When shifted around to see the other side."
Another from 'Isabella':

"She smeared down
with tears as chilly as a dripping will
she drenched away."

metaphor in Keats:

In the poetry of Keats I found 101 metaphors. This seems a very few when we remember that the metaphor is the commonest of all tropes. This trope would have been more abundant in Keats if I had not considered under implied simile many tropes which are commonly

Handbook classed as metaphor. Gummere says that
of Poetics.

all speech is based upon metaphor, that it is the first of all tropes. Barrett Wendell says that our modern language is nothing but a rose-gay of faded metaphors. This is doubtless true but there are many words of which the tropic use has become so common as to pass without notice to any except one who is reading critically. These are tropes that are no longer thought of as tropes. All of these I have included.

In tabulating metaphors I found, sometimes the distinction between metaphor and personification rather difficult to make. Personification is, of course, very nearly allied to metaphor: it is essentially a metaphor. Especially where the idea of person is implied in the use of certain objects I found this difficulty, for instance in *Eudymion* I, "night holds back her dark grey hood". This is personification but is there not a metaphor also? What is meant by the "dark grey hood" of night?"

Again, at times, I found what seemed to be metaphors dealing with process hard to distinquish from personification. In 'Eve of St. Agnes' is found this trope: "The key turns, and the door upon its hinges groans". If not perfect personification this is, at least, what some writers on poetics call imperfect personification in which a human attribute is given to an inanimate thing. Again in *Eudymion* II:

"The breeze is sent
Careful and soft that not a leaf may fall
Before the serene father of them all
Bows down his summer head below the west."

This is personification but is it not also a pretty way of saying "before the sun sets?"

I have found it impossible to classify Keats's metaphors as to the source from which they are drawn. Any as I might there ~~was~~ always fully one third that I could not classify at all and others besides of which the disposal seemed very unsatisfactory.

Under the circumstances I shall discuss this phase of the subject in stating that Keats drew twenty-eight metaphors from nature and ten from classical mythology.

In Keats, as I have said, I found 101 metaphors. Metaphors may deal with objects; may give one object in terms of another and thus gain in strength and vividness of expression. Of such metaphors this is the commonest of metaphors. Of such there are fifty in Keats. Instead of literal "tear" Keats says, in two places, ~~tear~~ "pearl"; In 'Lamia' "teeth" are called "pearls"; In 'Habit thou lovest' "ivory" are called "pearls". In 'Calidore' the dew is likened to a pearl, "The even my dew has pearled their tresses." In 'Imitation of Spenser' Keats says "tears" instead of "dew". Also in 'To my Brother George'; "The sun when first it kissed away the tears that filled these eyes of morn". The dew is spoken of as "starry diadems" in 'I stood tip toe'. One of the prettiest met-

aphors in Keats is of this kind. In *Isabella*,
 "O'er the hot sun count

His dewy rosary on the eglantine."

In this met aphor the drops of dew, glistening, in the early morning on the eglantine are supposed to resemble the beads of a rosary and the sun, personified, absorbs them with his heat, or counts them, as the poet puts it, one by one as the beads of a rosary are told. In *Andymion I* the eyes are spoken of as jewels, "whose eyelids curtained up their jewels dim". The stars in *'To some Ladies'* are spoken of as the "foot-work of heaven". And in *'Keen, fitful gusts'* as "silver lamps which burn on high". In *'Isabella'*, Lorenzo "Bow'd a fair greeting to these serpents whine". This assumes a likeness between the sly cunning brothers and a serpent.

Metaphors may deal with process: of these there are twenty-six in Keats. This kind of metaphor adds much to ^{the} power

and force of an expression. A very strange one of this kind is found in 'Ode to a Nightingale';
 "To thy high requiem become a sod".

Here "sod" is a metaphor for "deaf as a sod". Another good one from the same ode is,

"For I will fly to thee,
 Not charioted by Bacchus and his pards",
 which is another way of saying, "not under the influence of wine". Joining this metaphor is a still more beautiful one,

"But on the viewless wings of Poesy",
 which is literally, "but by poetic inspiration". A very novel and vivid image under this classification is found in 'Ode to Psyche',

"Far, far around shall those dark clustered trees
 Fledge the wild-ridged mountains steep by steep".

"Fledge" compares the trees to the feathers of a bird, in other words the trees cover the mountains as the feathers cover a bird.

Following are two very good ones of this class which ^{show} the power of a single word. From

'Hyperion', "Her voice flowed on": and from

the 'Love of St. Agnes' in the description given of
 Madeline's room, "A shielded scutcheon
 blushed with blood of queens and kings".

In the description of nature metaphors is
 used a great deal. In description of the dawn
 and the sunset Keats uses a goodly num-
 ber of metaphors that are somewhat sim-
 ilar; I will give two of the best, both
 from Endymion. 1

"For I shall watch all night to see unfold
 Heaven's gates".

and in description of sunset, addressed to
 Apollo. "When thy gold breath is meeting
 in the west", for when the sun is setting.

There are a few cases of metaphor
 in which the abstract is rendered by the
 concrete. There are only a few instances
 of this kind in Keats, six in all. The best
 illustration of this is found in Endymion. I
 Endymion is discourses on the power of
 love over mortals. He says love has power
 "To shake Ambition from their memories,

and bring their measure of content." Another in *Eudymion*, "The crown of these is made of love and friendship and sets high upon the forehead of humanity".

One from *Lamia* I shall give here as I do not know where to class by it, and in truth am undecided whether or not it is a metaphor,

"His passion, cruel grown, took on a hue
Fierce and sanguineous as 'twas possible
In one whose brow had no dark veins to swell?"

I found ten metaphors in Keats in which he has likened the physical processes in man to those of the outer world. This class can be illustrated by one from *Eudymion* III,

"At this a surprised start

Frosted the springing verdure of his heart."

Closely allied to this classification is ^{me} where the mental processes of man are likened to those of the outer world. Of this class I have found nine in Keats.

One instance of this is found in one of his early poems, 'An Induction to a Poem',
"When the fire flashes from a warrior's
eye". And another in *Eudymon I*,
"Within my breast there lives a churning
flame".

Tabulation Similes

Stated Similes	328
Stated by the use of like	156
Stated by the use of as	101
Stated by the use of as --- so	16
Stated by the use of as -- as	7
Stated by the use of as though	5.
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Stated by the use of seemed	8.
Stated in a comparison	32.
Implied Similes	71
Implied by Apposition	17
Implied by Dependant Genitive	17
Implied by the use of the copula	12
Implied in the use of adjectives	20
Implied in compound words	5.

Tabulation Smiles

Sustained smiles		21
Period	Smiles	0
Clause	Smiles	208
Phrase	Smiles	129
Word	Smiles	41

Smile within smile		3
Metaphor within smile		6
Smiles having two or more		
	Comparisons	35

Source of Keats' smiles

Nature

231

Inanimate nature	71
Phenomena of "	41
Animate nature	119
Birds	29
Eagle	5
Dove	16
Flowers	42

Tabulation - Similes

Source

Flowers 42

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The Bible 3.

Life of the Deuses 28.

Music 3

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Every Day Life 26.

Tabulation

Metaphor.

Metaphors that deal with Objects	50
Metaphors that deal with Processes	26
Abstract expressed by Concrete	6
Physical Processes in man likened to those of outer world	16
Mental Processes in man likened to those of outer world	9.

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