

## 文体的に見た直喩：その心的過程と表現効果について

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# A STYLISTIC STUDY ON THE SIMILE

## Concerning Its Mechanism and Effect

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### 1. A few preliminary remarks on the simile.

Although there have been many discussions of tropes, the simile has been somewhat of a tragic figure, treated in most cases under the title of metaphor rather than being clearly distinguished in its own right. Foss (1949) notes that "metaphors have been defined as comparisons, analogies, similes. Similarity seems to constitute the metaphor as it constitutes the simile." (p. 53) I will let my small survey in this paper try to give the simile as much independence as possible.

The simile is represented in such forms as "X like Y," "X (as)...as Y," and "X as/though Y," where the compared elements X and the comparing elements Y are linked by the simile markers "like," "(as)...as," and "as if/though,"<sup>1</sup> X describing reality and Y unreality<sup>2</sup>. As we analyze examples gleaned from actual writings, we will observe similes in terms of their mechanisms and effects: the former will be surveyed from two vantage points—(1) linguistic forms and the nature of their effect upon the recipient, i.e. the hearer or reader, and (2) the kind of effect the mechanisms produce and in what way.

The following three innate aspects characterize the simile—the two conjoined elements cooperate to generate a relation of resemblance between themselves, and this resemblance is put into relief when the elements are similar to each other in one sense and dissimilar in another sense, and lastly, the simile has two characteristic uses, descriptive and intensifying (Svertengren, 1918 & Yamanaka, 1979). We will go further into each aspect.

*The first aspect*: the fact that "we have in mind a complex image, and to express this image in its fullness we break it up into its constituent units" (Read, 1928: 25) every now and then requires a resemblance

which relates X and Y to increase the vividness of the expression. Consider (1).

- (1) The child, roused by pain, struggled *like a fish in a strangling net*.  
—A. J. Cronin, *Adventures in Two Worlds*

The recipient can build a picture of the child's struggling the more easily because, on receiving the expression, he first sees with his mind's eye that a fish is struggling, caught in a strangling net, and then that this picture overlaps with the child's struggling. This example, however, does not exhaust the possibilities. Instead of providing pictures, comparing elements can do just the reverse. In (2) we only come about an abstract idea by the comparing element :

- (2) The dinner bell was ringing inside, over and over, the way Roxie rang—*like an insistence against disbelief*.  
—E. Welty, *Delta Wedding*

*The second aspect* : there are two opposite extremities in which the conjunction of X and Y creates resemblance. Consider :

- (3) The village gasped at the turn of events, and, allowing due sympathy for Stawhead, opinion swung round *like a weathercock in a change of wind*. —A.J.Cronin, *Adventures in Two Worlds*  
(4) After the door fell to at the sailor's heel, and the upstairs window had been forced up and propped, then silence closed over their house at this time of day ; but *like the noisy waterfall* it kept him awake—fighting sleep. —E. Welty, *June Recital*

(3) notes the one extremity in which resemblance originates in the similar natures of the two elements, viz. the manner<sup>3</sup> of opinion's swinging<sup>3</sup> round resembles that of a weathercock's swinging in a change of wind. The other extremity is seen in (4), where the nature of silence is considered to resemble that of the noisy waterfall in spite of the fact that "silent" and "noisy" describe quite contrary states-of-affairs. The utterer, i.e. the speaker or writer, by proposing this relation of resemblance to his recipient, expects him to perceive in it an unanticipated quality and consequently renders his expression more vivid. In Foss's words:

The inadequacy of the simile, forcing to a leap in order to overbridge its consistency, is here fructified by turning the leap into an exciting risk, an amusing gamble. [...] In any case, surprise will be the happy reward after having "found out." (1949: 54)

Simile is at its best when it admits this process of genesis of resemblance by means of juxtaposing two elements dissimilar to each other.

*The third aspect:* the simile has two intrinsic qualities in its use—descriptive, and intensifying or accentuating<sup>5</sup>.

- (5) a. 'What's a dragon?' / 'You know—one of those armoured creatures spitting out fire.' / '*Like a tank?*' / 'Well, yes, I suppose *like a tank*.' There was a lack of contact between their two imaginations which discouraged him. '*More like a giant lizard*,' he said. Then he realised that the boy had seen many tanks, but they had left the land of lizards before he was born. —G. Greene, *The Human Factor*
- b. In the Delta the sunsets were reddest light. The sun went down lopsided and wide *as a rose on a stem* in the west, and the west was *milk-white edge, like the foam of the sea*. —E. Welty, *Delta Wedding*
- (6) You're *as honest as the day*. —A. J. Cronin, *Crusader's Tomb*

The descriptive similes noted in (5) describe the manner of certain behaviors or qualities and, in essence, offer informational assistance so that the recipient will analogize them according to the images he takes from the comparing elements and thus easily accept the intended meanings. In (5a), in order to make their picture of a dragon as true to life as possible, the boy and his father conduct a "criss-cross" examination. With (5b) things are the same as (5a). As descriptions depend thoroughly on the utterer's imagination so, obviously, any comparison is pregnant: *a tank* and *a giant lizard* in (5a) merely stand as examples for the comparing element, for which others may come forward, similar or dissimilar to the compared element<sup>6</sup>.

The intensifying simile as in (6) hardly adds new information to the compared element, but is employed to intensify the marked quality of a behavior or nature. (6) simply states that "you are honest" to the same

extent as “the day is honest.” In fact, the day is so honest that it never fails. (6) is semantically equivalent to “you are extremely honest.”

## 2. Similes reflecting the standpoint, psychological attitude, or experience of the user.

As in Wheelwright's quote of Rémy de Gourmont<sup>7</sup>, comparing elements offer useful clues to the recipient's understanding of similes which reflect the user's personal standpoint, psychological attitude, or experience<sup>8</sup>. Observing the way comparing elements reflect these factors makes it possible to elucidate the user's point of view. Consider (5a): the boy imagines *a dragon* as *a tank*, which his father says he has seen many times; the father, who once lived in Africa, compares *a dragon* more appropriately to *a giant lizard*—these comparisons all come from their individual experiences.

- (7) a. [...] as I climbed the stairs to the little room where I had first seen Hana-ogi my heart beat *like the throbbing of an airplane engine* and I thought, “God, that I should have become so involved,” [...] —J. A. Michener, *Sayonara*
- b. [...] and as she drew near my vegetable stall I was fluttering *like a broken propeller* [...] —*Ibid.*

In (7), for Major Gruver [I], a military jet-pilot who has shot down MIGs before, everything rises like a jet-plane.

- (8) a. ‘And she's his niece.’ / ‘So that's what he said,’ Mrs Baines struck softly back at him *like a clock under the duster*.  
—G. Greene, *The Basement Room*
- b. He held his own right hand ever so still as the old woman, unsteady *as the Christmas angel in Mrs. McGillicuddy's fourth-grade pageant*, came forward with a lighted candle in her hand.  
—E. Welty, *June Recital*

In (8a), when Philip, the seven-year-old hero, responds *And she's his niece*, Mrs Baines, a housemaid, is seized by a suspicion that her husband has been unfaithful to her. The reaction of the betrayed woman is depicted through the eyes of a small boy by the comparing element. The duster, which Mrs Baines spread over the furniture during the temporary absence of the boy's parents, has remained in the boy's memory. The

clock, by being anticipated in the simile, attracts *struck back*, which itself replaces “answer back.”<sup>9</sup> *Softly* suggests that the clock under the duster strikes with a muffled sound. In (8b), a little boy named Lock, in describing the quality of the old woman’s unsteadiness, sees her resemblance to what he saw in the past, i.e. *the Christmas angel in Mrs. McGillicuddy’s fourth-grade pageant*.

In the similes made through the user’s experience, standpoint, and psychological attitude, the resemblance, which “we all live, and speak, only through our eye for” (Richards, 1979: 89), always proceeds from the elements which the recipient cannot anticipate for comparing elements.

### 3. Two types of simile.

The simile divides itself into two types<sup>10</sup>, stereotyped and non-stereotyped. Here, for convenience’s sake, I distinguish between the stereotyped similes and the non-stereotyped in terms of the differences of linguistic forms, i.e. simile markers. The stereotyped, then, are realized by “(as)...as” and the non-stereotyped by other forms for the reason that when a simile is marked by “(as)...as,” the quality of resemblance between the two elements is explicit and restricts the quality that the comparing element must have, while the other simile markers, which do not necessarily call for explicit qualities, allow the comparing elements to be far more varied.

#### 3.1. Stereotyped similes.

Similes of this type exclude the others with regard to the fact that comparisons hardly provide additional information to the recipient. It is arguable that stereotyped similes, as (9) and (10) note, often serve to intensify the statements.

- (9) a. One minute I think it’s *as clear as daylight* and the crime we’re talking about is small one [...]

—B. Malamud, *The Fixer*

- b. I said it very fast because I wanted to stop him before he started reading *that* (orig.) out loud. But you couldn’t stop him. He was hot *as a firecracker*.

—J. D. Salinger, *The Catcher in the Rye*

- c. The spring came warm, with blue skies, —but dry, dry *as a bone*. —W. Cather, *Neighbour Rosicky*
- (10) a. Johnny was *as sinless as a sunset*. —J. Gunther, *Death Be Not Proud*
- b. Only about a dozen passengers got off the train, [...] all *as thick as thieves*. —B. Malamud, *The Tenants*
- c. Strangely enough the only girl who gave him any deep thrill was this same Lucy, who lived in this town, *as poor as a church mouse*, never flattered him, and often laughed at him. —W. Cather, *Lucy Gayheart*

The stereotyped simile, as in (10a) and (10b), tends to involve alliteration<sup>11</sup>—*as sinless as a sunset*; *as thick as thieves*—which renders the expressions phonetically effective. Alliteration, however, is not a necessary condition for the stereotyped simile, as we come across clichés like *poor as a church mouse*, (10c). We will not go further into the stereotyped case because our main concern is the non-stereotyped.

### 3.2. Non-stereotyped similes.

The non-stereotyped simile tends more or less to be descriptive since comparisons involved in the non-stereotyped simile characteristically add new contents to the expressions in order to eventually describe events or states-of-affairs in another way and to supply the recipient with easier and more vivid images of them. This descriptiveness occurs in the cases where the comparing element departs from the main component, maintains only a loose connection with the compared element, takes in the affair referred to by the main component, and describes it from a fresh angle (the new sentence always starts with *It is/was, etc.*). Thus, as is seen in (11), it often forms a separate sentence.

- (11) Parting is inevitably painful, even for a short time. It is *like an amputation*, I feel. —A. M. Lindbergh, *Gift from the Sea*

The comparing element which creates a non-stereotyped simile is, in general, so original a reference to an event or state-of-affairs that it strikes the recipient as a comparison beyond his anticipation or imagination, and the conjunction of the two elements results in a fresh view of the relationship between the two worlds—real and unreal (cf. Sato,

1978: 66). Raleigh (1923 : 60-61) flamboyantly voices his approval of this viewpoint :

The discovery of likeness in the midst of difference and of difference in the midst of likeness, is the keenest pleasure of the intellect; and literary expression, [...], is one long series of such discoveries, each with its thrill of incommunicable happiness, all unprecedented, and perhaps unverifiable by later experiment.

In other words, the novelty of this conjunction stands out and encourages a renewal of expression; (11), (12), and (13) demonstrate well.

- (12) a. The cotton *like the rolling breath of sleep* overflowed the fields. —E. Welty, *Delta Wedding*  
b. He lived alone, a natural bachelor in an apartment in Wooton and managed, as he put it, to “do for himself” pretty well. *Like a good northern apple* he was hard, but sound all through. —A. J. Cronin, *The Northern Light*  
c. The chameleon quality of language may claim yet another illustration. Of origins we know nothing certainly, nor how words came by their meanings in the remote beginning, when speech, *like the barnacle-goose of the herbalist*, was suspended over an expectant world, ripening on a tree. —W. Raleigh, *Style*

- (13) [= 5b] In the Delta the sunsets were reddest light. The sun went down lopsided and wide *as a rose on a stem* in the west, [...]

Some of the non-stereotyped similes have an additional feature. Suppose it happens that the recipient does not know the entity that the comparing element refers to, then the process of the recipient's decoding of those similes becomes more complex. (12b) and (12c) are some such examples: the recipient's lack of knowledge what *a good northern apple* and *the barnacle-goose of the herbalist* are like causes them to malfunction as similes. However, he is ready to decode, in (12b), the moment he goes on<sup>12</sup> to the explicit quality of resemblance, which hints that *a good northern apple* is something *hard but sound all through*; and in (12c), when he, gathering bits of coded information along the way, reaches the suspended metaphor *ripening on a tree*, and thinks back on the comparing element *the barnacle-goose of the herbalist*. The similes

in question become acceptable only if the qualities of resemblance are either explicitly or implicitly expressed, or the images that the comparing elements are about to turn in can be visualized by the help of the other components. The more complicated the process of decoding is, the more effectiveness it lends to the simile.

An exception to the above discussion: (13) is not necessarily thought to be stereotyped even though it has the simile marker “(as)...as.” Yamanaka (1979), quoting Julij Levin (1965)<sup>13</sup>, points out that “as far as ‘a ribbon, as crimson as blood’ is concerned, the quality of ‘being crimson’ is proper to blood at any time, but to a ribbon it is incidental, so that this comparison is descriptive.” [my translation] (13) gives support to his view: the quality of *a rose on a stem* is more or less hard to identify with being *lopsided and wide*. Some rhetorical motives—poetical, flowery, mystifying, or whatever—might have worked on (13). The distinction between the stereotyped and the non-stereotyped depends not only on linguistic forms but on patterns of thinking. We will go further into this in later sections.

### 3.3. Stereotyped vs. non-stereotyped, descriptive vs. intensifying, and the correlations of the four.

Some of the stereotyped similes have become clichés as we have seen in (9) and (10). There are some that are considered to be *stereotyped* even though they are qualified with other simile markers than “(as)...as,” and there are some that have the simile marker “(as)...as” and are considered to be *non-stereotyped*. Consider (11): although this example is non-stereotyped in terms of its linguistic form, *amputation* is perceived to be more closely related to *painful* than *parting* from a perceptual and semantic point of view since *painful* remains more clearly in memory, which paves the way to the semantic cooperation between *painful* and *amputation* in the second sentence. Thus the whole statement can be paraphrased “Parting is as painful as an amputation.” When we come as far as this together with (13), there arises a difficulty in drawing a line of distinction between stereotyped and non-stereotyped. In another light, today’s skilled writers seldom employ stereotyped similes that have become clichés<sup>14</sup>, as Murry (1935: 13) remarks:

Metaphor is the unique expression of the writer’s individual vision.

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The faculty of using it is in itself as simple and direct as the faculty of saying 'Blue' is to the ordinary man when he sees a midsummer sky,

where "metaphor" permits "simile" to replace it.

As for the descriptive and intensifying qualities of the simile, it is roughly inferrable that the descriptive similes tend to correspond to the non-stereotyped similes and the intensifying to the stereotyped, but not perfectly, as we have seen in the previous section, and some similes, like (14), possess both the descriptive qualities and the intensifying, and there is no clear distinction between the two. Consider:

- (14) 'Hypnotism.' / 'You know the thing?' / 'Some.' / 'I've seen it somewhere. The subject really falls asleep?' / '*Like a log.*'

—I. B. Singer, *The Magician of Lublin*

If the response *Like a log* is made to describe the way of the subject's being asleep, it is considered to be a descriptive simile, but if it only intensifies the degree of the subject's being asleep, then it is an intensifying simile (though it is taken to be a cliché). It can be interpreted in two ways, depending on the context. It follows then that whether a simile is descriptive or intensifying relies on which the recipient construes it in a given context.

### 4. More of a simile or less?—the simile marker.

Even though only such lexicalized forms as "like" and "(as)...as" are generally considered to be simile markers, some other forms can be identified with simile markers, as well. Admittedly, this supposition is predicated on figurative expressions which may belong to the transitional zone between simile and metaphor, i.e. more of a simile or less, or more metaphoric or less, and on the judgment that an expression existing in the transitional zone between simile and plain statement is more of a simile or less than a plain statement.

Here, we will deal with the expressions that range from more of a metaphor to more of a plain statement and extend the simile proper toward the two poles, at one of which is the metaphor and at the other, the plain statement. To start with, let us consider the following:

- (15) a. Her teeth are white.<sup>15</sup>  
b. Her teeth are *as white as pearls*.

- c. Her teeth are *like pearls*.
- d. She has *pearly teeth*.
- e. She has *pearl-teeth*.
- f. Her teeth are *pearls*. (Buck, 1978, excepting (e))

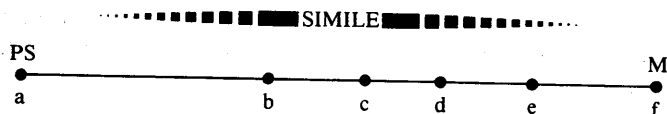
Generally, (15b) and (15c) are defined to be similes, and (15d), (15e), and (15f) metaphors. However, both (15d) and (15e) are almost synonymous with (15c), or with "She has teeth like pearls." Then, what distinguishes (15d) and (15e) from (15c), and (15f) from these three? The answer to the first question is that (15d) and (15e) have something of a simile marker, though not "like" or "(as)...as." (15f) has nothing which could qualify as a simile marker. (15f) is reduced to the formula "A is B" where A is identified with B; this means that a full metaphor seeks *identity*, whereas (15d) and (15e) are reduced to the formula "A is like B" where A has the quality of B, as in (15c); this means that expressions more or less metaphoric seek *quality* as a full simile does. As suggested above, it may well follow that the simile proper can be extended to (15e) in that the examples from (15b) to (15e) have some linguistic forms (e.g. "*—(l)y*" and "*—*", the hyphen marking compound-noun *stress*) that suggest simile markers. As far as (15d) and (15e) go, (15d) is more of a simile, i.e. less metaphoric than (15e), because *pearl-teeth* is a compound-noun which is seeking identity, while *pearly teeth* is a noun phrase in which *teeth* requires quality.

- (16) a. Her hair hung in little rolled clusters, *like sausages*.
- b. Her face was made up and the *little sausage* curls were all in place.
- c. The curls, *tiny little sausages*, were spread on the hay behind her head, and her lips were parted.

—J. Steinbeck, *Of Mice and Men*

As for (16), (16a) is a full simile, and what we are concerned with is (16b) and (16c). (16b) is synonymous with (15e), and (16c) is considered to be next to a full metaphor since *the curls* and *tiny little sausages* are in apposition, which demonstrates that these two things are identical.

Let us get back to the discussion of the examples in (15). I will dot the examples in (15) along a scale with two extremities —at one end, a full plain statement (PS); and at the other, a full metaphor (M).



All the examples except (15a) are dotted along the right half of the scale; it could be hypothesized that expressions more of a simile or less (or, more metaphoric or less) are governed by something like morphological simile markers, and expressions that are considered to be located somewhere between (a) and (b) seem to be governed by something else. We will go further into these hypotheses separately.

#### 4.1. More of a metaphor or less?

- (17) a. She was tall and slender than Stephen had expected, with [...] *sandy* hair, and *milky* skin [...]  
 — A. J. Cronin, *Crusader's Tomb*
- b. Smith blinked at Nye *owlishly*.  
 — A. J. Cronin, *The Northern Light*
- c. By midday, moving here and moving there [...], he was *dog-tired*.  
 — G. Greene, *A Gun for Sale*
- d. On its [a snail shell] smooth symmetrical face is pencilled with precision a perfect spiral, winding inward to the pinpoint center of the shell, the tiny dark core of the apex, *the pupil of the eye*—and I stare back.  
 — A.M. Lindbergh, *Gift from the Sea*

None of the examples in (17) has an independent simile marker that has gone through lexicalization, but each has some semantic equivalent of “like,” or “(as)...as,” i.e. *sandy hair* can be translated as “hair like sand”; *owlish* as “like an owl”; *dog-tired* as “tired as a dog”; , *the pupil of the eye* as “like the pupil of the eye.” In spite of Brook-Rose’s claim (1958) that words like *sandy*, *milky*, *owlish* and *dog-tired* are metaphorical, the suffixes “-y” and “-ish” of *sandy*, *milky*, and *owlish* in (17a) and (17b), the “hyphen” in *dog-tired*<sup>16</sup>[(17c)], and the “comma” in , *the pupil of the eye* [(17d)] can be regarded as simile markers, and in (16b) the noun *sausage* is used for an adjective, standing in the same line as a suffix, hyphen, and comma, even though it lacks anything like a suffix. It is also possible to regard (16b) and (17) as similes since one



(22) Bed: *B as in broken, A as in awful, D as in dropping.*

— M. Crichton, *The Andromeda Strain*

From (20) through (21), the elements for comparison increasingly serve to describe reality, i.e. *a screaming bore* for “a bore as if he were on the verge of screaming”; *a blinding snow-storm* for “a snow-storm which might have blinded<sup>17</sup> one and all”; *haltingly* for “as if (it were) halting,” or “the word halted and”; and finally in (22), the three *as*-phrases only serve as examples, not as comparisons. In contrast to (22), the *as* in (23) operates to link a subordinate clause that makes a comparison<sup>18</sup>:

(23) He found that the reduced dividend had tipped over prices rather *as an extra brick on a child's toy tower will send half of it toppling.*

— J. Hilton, *Random Harvest*

We can roughly gather from the morphology alone that the form of simile markers has to do with the expressions that feasibly belong to the metaphor-simile zone, and whether comparing elements describe reality or unreality has to do with the expressions that appear to belong to the simile-plain statement zone. However, needless to say, linguistic forms<sup>19</sup> are not water-tight decision makers, and it seems necessary to consider contexts and patterns of thinking as well<sup>20</sup>. In any case, much more consideration ought to be put in into this matter concerning the distinction between metaphor and simile and simile and plain statement.

## 5. Similes in context.

Richards (1979: 10) claims that the meaning of words is created by context, using an analogy to make his point:

Bricks for all practical purposes, hardly mind what other things they are put with. Meanings mind intensely—more indeed than any other sorts of things. It is the peculiarity of meanings that they do so mind their company; that is in part what we mean by calling them meanings! In themselves they are nothing—figments, abstractions, unreal things that we invent, if you like—but we invent them for a purpose. They help us to avoid taking account of the peculiar way in which any part of the surrounding, uttered or unuttered discourse and its conditions are what they are.

The simile is evidently one of the constituents of a context and requires



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Since a comparison cannot exist without some connection between the two elements, the utterer places the comparing element closest to the nuclear part of the compared element<sup>22</sup> and lets it come after that. This is, syntactically, semantically, and perceptually, the most natural strategy, and the resultant tight bond between the two elements prevents any other element from splitting them. In (24a), *like water* is inseparable from the nuclear part *money* of the compared element *spending money*, making the expression sound unnatural if placed elsewhere. Comparing elements are inevitably placed at the end in processing sentences semantically and syntactically. The dash before the simile marker in (24b) suggests that the utterer pauses to find an appropriate comparison which will illustrate his afterthought. In (24c), the series of *like*-phrases suggests a sequence of events. All these comparing elements build pictures, which will remain in the recipient's mind as after-images.

### 5.1.2. In the middle.

When the utterer feels a need to make a visual or more concrete impression midway in description, he injects a comparison, as the examples in (25) show. The ensuing development is cued by the after-image which the comparison leaves. And syntactic nature sometimes chooses this position. Let us consider the following:

- (25) a. Pigeons *like old grey tennis balls* rolled unnoticed around their feet. —G. Greene, *Two Gentle People*  
b. Having put on first a velvet coat, then a fur mantle, Madame Schroeder-Schatz moved *like a galleon* out into the living room and kissed all her cousins, and Claude Wheeler, goodnight. —W. Cather, *One of Ours*

In (25a) the novelty of the conjunction of the two elements keeps the recipient suspended. The utterer, it can be said, is making use of the comparison *like old grey tennis balls* to convey *rolled unnoticed around* clearly in a vivid image, for the good reason that the verb *rolled* is perceived to be more appropriately related to the nuclear part *tennis balls* than to *pigeons*, and that he hopes that *rolled unnoticed around their feet* will occupy the recipient's foremost consciousness with the help of the quiet tint of color (*old grey*) which enforces the manner (*unnoticed*). Thus the comparing element, which, as a whole, is a comparison to

*pigeons*—that is, *pigeons* has been separated, or “topicalized,” by the comparing element—has to precede *rolled unnoticed*, and the whole scene is made pictorial. Therefore, the most appropriate position is thought to be in the middle rather than at the end. In (25b), the way the fully dressed Madame Schroeder-Schatz moves is compared to the way a galleon does. In spite of the close relation of *out to move*, the nuclear part of the compared element is considered to be *Madame Schroeder-Schatz moved*. It seems then that *moved out* is of necessity split by the comparing element, and this juxtaposition also implies that her movement is “stately” since the visions of “Madame Schroeder-Schatz moved out into the living room” and “a galleon moved out into the open sea” overlap. This is another example whose comparing element is most appropriately placed en route.

- (26) Several of the patients showed signs of having passed the crisis, but three, helpless and delirious, a mass of running sores, were carried to the lighter, *like children*, in the arms of Hasan.

—A. J. Cronin, *Adventures in Two Worlds*

This example is one in which the comparison is placed midway for fear that its reinforcing effect on *in the arms of Hasan* would be lost and its perception interrupted, should it be placed at the end. Otherwise it is liable to become difficult to identify the compared element because the intervening distance between the two elements would be too long (cf. Bever, 1970).

### 5.1.3. At the head.

Placement at the head topicalizes the comparing element, and this operation brings about two peculiar effects, the one being that the adverbial phrase becomes emphasized, and the other that a kind of suspense arises since the natural order of the two elements breaks up (cf. 5.1.1.), although the comparing element is occasionally brought to the place in question in compliance with the demand of sentence processing. Consider:

- (27) a. *Like the voice of my own conscience* I heard, *as from a great distance*, General Webster saying, “Pull yourself together, son. Whatever makes you a better man makes you a better officer.” / I looked up and said, “What?”

—J. A. Michener, *Sayonara*

b. *Like a thief* Death took him.

———J. Gunther, *Death Be Not Proud*

In (27a), as the topicalized comparing element gains emphatic force, it works with the second simile, *as from a great distance*, to delude the recipient into perceiving that it is not *General Webster* but *my own conscience* that is speaking. This delusion guides the recipient to the last sentence. In (27b), the placement of *like a thief* at the head has caused the implication “coming stealthily.” It is placed at the head because “stealing (or, stealing in)” takes place before “taking” as a natural procedure in which moral or psychological events take place. If placed wrongly, the comparing element does not create this implication.

Positions of comparing elements cannot be determined by only one rule, for the utterer has many motives in determining them in anticipation of the recipient’s understanding of the context and the resulting effects; but the positions reflect the utterer’s intention to avoid misunderstandings by making the structure syntactically and semantically clear.

- (28) [...] *like a small blunt icicle* in her white mackintosh she stood in the doorway with her back to them, then melted into the afternoon.  
———G. Greene, *The Basement Room*

To show this is true, let us consider how the sentence would read if the other positions were used instead.

- (28<sup>1</sup>) [...] in her white mackintosh *like a small blunt icicle* she stood in the doorway with her back to them,  
(28<sup>2</sup>) [...] in her white mackintosh she *like a small blunt icicle* stood in the doorway with her back to them,  
(28<sup>3</sup>) [...] in her white mackintosh she stood *like a small blunt icicle* in the doorway with her back to them,  
(28<sup>4</sup>) [...] in her white mackintosh she stood in the doorway *like a small blunt icicle* with her back to them,

Although *like a small blunt icicle in her white mackintosh* forms one adverbial phrase and *like a small blunt icicle* and *in her white mackintosh* are invertible within the phrase, in (28<sup>1</sup>) it will be difficult to see the parallelism to *in her white mackintosh* (unless the simile component is topicalized), and also, the metaphor that comes later is not effective. As in (28<sup>2</sup>), should the comparing element split the compared element

*she stood*, its naturalness is ruined because the adverbial phrase is split and the tight bond *she stood* becomes loose. Placement directly after *stood* in (28'") also causes unnaturalness since *stood* and *in the doorway* are closely related to each other, and placement somewhere after *in the doorway* as in (28'") only aggravates the problem for the reason that the comparing element and the compared are placed almost too far apart for the recipient to grasp the meaning, causing him to misunderstand.

In (29), should the comparing element be placed elsewhere, the tenseness between *beam* and *suspicion* will be lax, with the recipient feeling that *fresh suspicion* no more "strikes."

- (29) *Like a beam from the darkness*, fresh suspicion struck at Paul.  
—A. J. Cronin, *Beyond This Place*

These examples are those in which the comparing elements are best and most naturally placed at the head.

## 5.2. Similes in discourse.

To make the matter more complex, the context at times demands more than one sentence, and perhaps as large a unit as a discourse. Consider the following:

- (30) Any number of wicked things could be listed against him [Marvin Macy], but quite apart from these crimes there was about him a secret meanness that clung to him almost *like a smell*.  
—C. McCullers, *The Ballad of the Sad Café*

Let us look back upon the preceding paragraph:

Marvin Macy brought with him bad fortune, right from the first, as could be expected. The next day the weather turned suddenly, and it became hot. Even in the early morning there was a sticky sultriness in the atmosphere, the wind carried the rotten smell of the swamp, and delicate shrill mosquitoes webbed the green millpond. It was unseasonable, worse than August, and much damage was done. For nearly everyone in the country who owned a hog had copied Miss Amelia and slaughtered the day before. And what sausage could keep in

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such weather as this? After a few days there was everywhere the smell of slowly spoiling meat, and an atmosphere of dreary waste. Worse yet, a family reunion near the Forks Falls highway ate pork roast and died, every one of them. It was plain that their hog had been infected—and who could tell whether the rest of the meat was safe or not? People were torn between the longing for the good taste of pork, and the fear of death. It was a time of waste and confusion.

The author describes the various kinds of “wicked things,” which warn of the impending bad fortune brought by Marvin Macy’s return. Although the comparison is not very striking within (30), by (30) it is implied that the *meanness* is “like a smell which clung (i.e. was peculiar) to the swamp” and *Marvin Macy*, which is not the nuclear part of the compared element, summons up an image of a swamp. This psychological operation spanning more than one sentence, even more than one paragraph, only then makes the comparison of the two elements striking.

### 5.3. Amalgams of simile and metaphor.

In a context, the simile often turns out to be amalgamated with a metaphor, causing the mechanism of expression to be a labyrinth, whose phenomenon is considered to result also from the function of an after-image. In terms of the simile that goes with a metaphor, the metaphor leaves its after-image and attracts a simile, and vice versa.

#### 5.3.1. Similes attracted by metaphors.

This amalgam can be analyzed in two ways. The utterer realizes that ending an expression with only a metaphor might confuse the recipient for a desire, conscious or subconscious, to give the expression something like stability, the utterer offers a second resemblance, proposing a more concrete image by means of a simile, and resolves the two elements which are not yet distinguished in the metaphor. The analysis can be the other way round. The second way will make it even clearer that the psychological aim of the utterer’s sentence processing is greater effectiveness of expression. Here, we will analyze this amalgam the second way and observe the intention of the utterances. Let us consider the following :



route in his expression. To analyze this more in detail, *bent and struggled* scarcely stands per se as a metaphoric comparison to the way she behaves, but *wove and bent and struggled* as a whole is evaluated by the following simile. (32c) has a more complex mechanism than (32b): either *wearing* or *an old suit* attracts or is attracted by the other, and not only that but such elements as *old* in *old Mr Halliday*, *white-haired*, and *wearing an air of courtesy* get together and make the utterer imagine the whole simile component (*like an old suit in which he would probably like to be buried*).

A subtle distinction is seen between (31) and (32): when all of the expressions of (32) are taken and evaluated as similes, not as a fusion of metaphor and simile or as a metaphor as in (31), the distinction between stereotyped and non-stereotyped (cf. Chapter 3) comes into focus again<sup>23</sup>.

In context, this sentence precedes (33):

(33') His voice was *wet and slimy*, as he always had too much spit in his mouth,

where *wet and slimy* is inclined to be more metaphoric<sup>24</sup> and lets the simile component be anticipated, or else operates to attract it. This has caused the metaphor *glided (slowly)* to precede the simile *like eels*. When one evaluates as one context the preceding expression and the following put together, the foregoing figure *wet and slimy* enables the following one *glided* to be more easily decoded and then to be more smoothly related to the simile *like eels* in the same sentence.

We have so far discussed the importance of context, which also should sometimes mean the context of a discourse.

### 5.3.2. Metaphors attracted by similes

- (34) a. [= 28] [...] *like a small blunt icicle* in her white makintosh she stood in the doorway with her back to them, and then melted into the afternoon.
- b. A look of worry came down *like a curtain* between us and she retired behind it with private troubles.  
—G. Greene, *The End of the Affair*
- c. He ran the telescope out the window again and put his frowning eye to it. He discovered the old woman moving

from point to point all around the parlor, in and out of the little chairs, sliding along the piano. He could not see her feet; she behaved a little *like a wind-up toy on wheels*, rolling into the corners and edges of objects and being diverted and sent on, but never out of the parlor.

—E. Welty, *June Recital*

- d. Dubin gave her credit: Kitty knew herself not badly, and lived with it, not badly. He thought of her as comparatively untired. Life had fallen on her once *like a tree that had cracked and been blown over in a storm*. She had crawled out from under a ton of broken branches, shocked, bleeding, traumatized; but after that, life had more or less let her be. A little crippled was fine with life. So long as you're wounded you know you're alive. Yet he felt the more experienced he became, the less she seemed to be. Though Kitty called her passionate there were areas of sensual experience she had made no attempt to know. She did not play with what might explode in her face. One tree falling on you in a lifetime was enough forever. She seemed always self-protective; had a quality of that kind, therefore that kind of innocence. Besides she couldn't lie. Perhaps he could teach her?

—B. Malamud, *Dubin's Lives*

As the examples in (34) illustrate, the metaphors that come later than the similes help the recipient decode the similes in which the utterer intends to convey the resemblance of the two explicit elements. Although the similes earlier in the expressions give two explicit images, the utterer aims to confirm the resemblance between the elements so that only when the recipient arrives at the metaphors are the two images more clear-cut. In (34a), *she* can be identified with *a small blunt icicle* and the two elements will be recognized, but when the recipient comes to the metaphor *melted*, the two images ("the small blunt icicle melted," and "she melted") can be more clearly recognized because of the metaphor. As for (34b), the same thing can be said by the same operation. In (34c), it is made clearer by the metaphor *rolling into the corners... and sent on* that the way she behaves is as clumsy as the way a *wind-up toy on wheels* does. Through this resemblance the way she

behaves is drawn more vividly. (34d) has this feature like the rest, but this one example requires special attention in that this feature occurs in a discourse including more than one sentence.

## 6. A concluding remark.

The linguistic forms “X like Y,” “X as Y,” “X as if/though Y,” etc., are devices for establishing a relation of resemblance between the two explicit elements X and Y in the expression, but this resemblance, being exclusively of the utterer’s own choice, not of anybody else’s, reflects his standpoint, experience, and psychological attitude in many cases. Therefore, novelists make use of this resemblance which comes from the simile in drawing the characters, or their psychology.

The non-stereotyped simile is more effective than the stereotyped especially when it proceeds from a dissimilar comparison where it is an uphill task to infer resemblance from the two dissimilar elements: psychological effects are expected. But the simile does not always serve only this purpose; it is also employed for making the description exact.

Contexts, as well as positions where comparing elements are placed, are important clues in decoding similes, and these stylistic factors enhance the effects of expression. The context requires attention to the fact that it is formed in a discourse including more than one sentence.

The simile is often found in a complicated structure such as an amalgam with other metaphorical figures. The coding of the simile depends not only on the word order and the positions of the elements, but also on the melee of metaphor-and-simile amalgams, which encourage the inference of resemblance all the more because it demands a complicated procedure. Similes of this sort are all the more effective for it. The simile should be evaluated in terms of the amalgam, discourse, and sentence processing of both a single sentence and a discourse.

I have so far tried to discuss the simile as linguistically as possible, but at the same time have failed to eschew the intuitive discussions, which have tended to be more or less philosophical, if I might say, or too abstract. It might be a fair justification when I say that the discussion in regard to the functions of the simile, and whether a simile is more metaphoric or less, is in itself not able to escape from being much too abstract, or even *metaphorical* in thinking. What I will try to do in the future is bring order to this chaos and make the discussion as close to

being scientific as possible.

### Notes

1. Nakamura (1977a) uses terms of his own for his surveys on figurative expressions. They will be employed in this survey too, translated by me from the original in Japanese. They are *comparing element* (Y) for the term with which to refer to something that compares; *compared element* (X), with which to refer to something that is compared (by the comparing element); *simile marker*, to refer to some functional word or phrase that links X and Y.
2. Let us have recourse to Read (1928 : 27) to explicate the concept of "unreality" in the simile:  
'They climbed high trees as nimbly as a squirrel, for they had strong extended claws before and behind, terminating in sharp points, and hooked.' [... ] a direct or simple *comparison*, where the objects compared are of a common nature, is not a figure of speech at all ; to climb high trees comes naturally to both Yahoos and squirrels. But if we say of a man, or a horse, that he climbed high trees as nimbly as a squirrel, then we compare the particular qualities of one object to the general qualities of another, and this constitutes a *simile*.
3. Cf. "The simile, i.e., 'N<sub>1</sub> is A like N<sub>2</sub>' (where A stands for either a nominal or an adjective), is an expression employed to show 'the resemblance of manner' while comparison is in itself the comparison of degree." (Yamanaka, 1979 [my translation])
4. Note that *swung* itself is a metaphor whose tenor (Richards, 1979) is to be abstracted later from the following simile component where "swing" is used in its original sense.
5. Cf. Svartengren (1918), Nakamura (1977a & b), and Yamanaka (1979).
6. Cf. Chapter 3.
7. "The sole excuse which a man can have for writing," says Rémy de Gourmont, "is to unveil for others the sort of world which mirrors itself in his individual glass." (Wheelwright, 1968 : 15)
8. These factors more or less affect the general choice of comparing elements, which is made deliberately, though arbitrarily, from an infinite stock of possible candidates.
9. Cf. Chapter 5.
10. Fowler points out that "in all discussion of metaphor it must be borne in mind that some metaphors are living, i.e. are offered and accepted with a consciousness of their nature as substitutes for their literal equivalents, while others are dead, i.e. have been so often used that speaker and hearer have

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ceased to be aware that the words are not literal : but the line of distinction between the live and the dead is a shifting one\*, the dead sometimes liable, under the stimulus of an affinity or a repulsion, to galvanic stirrings indistinguishable from life." (1922 : 308, cf. Richards, 1979) I think the same thing can be said of the simile by the names of stereotyped and non-stereotyped. I am indebted for my distinction to Dr. Saburo Ohye.

\* Consider the following example:

Carlson laughed. "You God damn punk," he said. "You tried to throw a scare into Slim, an' you couldn't make it stick. Slim threw a scare into you. You're yella *as a frog belly*. I don't care if you're the best welter in the country. You come for me, an' I'll kick your God damn head off."

—J. Steinbeck, *Of Mice and Men*

In spite of the fact that "you're yellow" is noted for a dead metaphor, meaning "you're coward," the whole expression lives again as a living simile by the conjunction with a comparison (*as*) *a frog belly* which has recovered the original sense of "yellow" and evokes the color of yellow. Thus another problem arises concerning the distinction between the stereotyped simile and the non-stereotyped apart from the linguistic form.

11. Svartengren (1918) lists other phonetic factors involved in the simile such as rhythm, assonance, and rhyme, and goes on to say that an alliterated simile is significant in two ways : (1) conservativeness, i.e. alliteration possesses fixing power for the simile to keep up its existence ; (2) formativeness, i.e. the power which exchanges a non-alliterative word for an alliterative, e.g. "as dead as a doornail" replaces "as dead as a nail" when the latter is semantically more appropriate in use.
12. In case the placement of the comparing element takes place at the end of the expression, the recipient goes back to reconsider the quality of resemblance.
13. Levin, Julij. 1965. "The Structure of the Metaphor," in Daniel P. Lucid (tr.), *Soviet Semeiotics* 203—210, The Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, Baltimore.
14. Cf. Dubin began to write one of the articles he had contributed for. It was hard to write with his mind on Lawrence; he was impatient to be back to him but was worried about money. He worked on the biography for two hours each morning and then for two wrote the article. *Each sentence was like lifting a rock.*  
—B. Malamud, *Dubin's Lives*  
This example shows the reflection of the user's psychology as well (cf. Chapter 2).
15. Cf. Consider the following for future discussion :  
Her teeth are white, ovular, hard, ...[*ad infinitum*]  
Her teeth are *pearly white*.  
She has *pearly white teeth*.  
Her teeth are *like white teeth*.

She has white, *pearly* teeth.

She has white *pearl*-teeth.

Her teeth are white *pearls*.

I am indebted for the discussion in this section to Mr. Douglas Duncan Smylie, whose suggestions have been very useful.

16. This is another example of the stereotyped simile. Just as *dog-tired* is a short circuit of "as tired as a/any dog (can be)," "crystal-clear" is replaceable with "as clear as crystal" in the following: "From our investigation and analysis of the trial it is *crystal-clear* that he is innocent, [...]" (A. J. Cronin, *Beyond This Place*). For brevity's sake, frequent and repeated uses have made these expressions clichés when they were non-stereotyped in genesis.
17. Here, we do not deal with another figure "personification." Cf. fn 20.
18. Cf. fn 20.
19. Nakamura (1979a), using an enormous data base, classifies figurative expressions of the Japanese language in terms of linguistic forms.
20. Patterns of thinking seem to be reflected in such a mood as the subjunctive. The following example shows that it is possible for the subjunctive mood to be considered as a kind of simile :

There was a sound *that might have been a blue jay scolding*, and that was the back door; they were just now going in off the back porch.

—E. Welty, *June Recital*

In this example, although the sound is "*like a blue jay scolding*" which had once been experienced by the narrator of this story (not the author, but a 16-year-old girl), in reality it is the sound of *the back door*. It is, in a way, possible to say that the sound of *the back door* is compared to that of *a blue jay scolding* through the narrator's experience.

21. The three positions, i.e. the end, the middle, and the head, mean respectively the end, the middle, and the head of the unit or the expression which makes up a context, not the sentence.
22. The nuclear part of the compared element is the smallest element in X which is most closely related to Y, when X is either a noun phrase or a verb phrase as in "X like Y."
23. In (31), the meaning does not change even when the simile component is left out of the whole expression, which means that the figure "sniffed like a dog" can be regarded as stereotyped. In (32), however, the recipient may not be able to catch the meaning clearly when the simile components are left off, which means that the figures *ticking like a fine Swiss watch*; *wove and bent and struggled behind it, like a spider with something bigger than he can eat*; and *wearing an air of courtesy like an old suit in which he would probably like to be buried* can be regarded as non-stereotyped—it should be noted that since *a watch*, *a spider*, and *an old suit* are each specified by the qualifiers,

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they can avoid becoming stereotyped.

24. Cf. 4.1.

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