



LYRIC AND HUMOROUS STYLE WITH A STRONG FEMININE COLOUR IN AMY TAN’S NOVELS

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Abstract: *This paper explores the distinctive feminine language and artistic symbolism in Amy Tan's novels, particularly focusing on "The Joy Luck Club" and "The Kitchen God's Wife." Amy Tan's writing is characterized by a strong feminine tone, simple yet lyrical and humorous style, and metaphors rooted in daily female experiences. Through detailed analysis, this paper illustrates how the use of metaphors, similes, and analogies enhances the narrative and provides deeper insights into the characters' lives. The study also delves into Tan's use of paradox, parallelism, and antithesis to convey complex emotional states and cultural conflicts. Additionally, it examines the role of humor and irony in her storytelling, revealing how these elements contribute to the richness of her characters and themes. By highlighting the interplay between language, symbolism, and cultural context, this paper underscores Amy Tan's artistic mastery and her profound impact on contemporary literature.*

Keywords: *Feminine Language, Artistic Symbolism, Metaphors and Analogies, Humor and Irony, Cultural Identity*

Introduction

Amy Tan’s literary works are renowned for their focus on the female experience, articulated through a language imbued with simplicity, lyricism, and humor. Her metaphors and analogies are deeply rooted in female daily life, vividly illustrating complex emotions and situations. Weiwei described Hulan’s personality: “She was not the soft melonhead she made everyone believe she was. That girl could throw out sharp words, slicing fast as any knife.” Hulan’s funny behaviour when she was counting: “She fanned out the fingers on one hand, then pulled up her thumb as if it were a rotten turnip.” The peaks looked like giant fried fish heads trying to jump out of a vat of oil. Behind each hill, I could see shadows of another fish and then another and another. And then the clouds would move just a little, and the hills would suddenly become monstrous elephants marching slowly toward me! Can you see this? And at the root of the hill were secret caves. Inside grew hanging rock gardens in the shapes and colours of cabbage, winter melons, turnips, and onions. These were things so strange and beautiful you can't ever imagine them.

Metaphors and Analogies in Female Daily Life

In “The Joy Luck Club,” Tan uses food-related imagery to describe the beauty of the mountains. For instance, Suyuan describes the peaks as “giant fried fish heads trying to jump out of a vat of oil” and the hills as “monstrous elephants marching slowly” (Tan, 1989). Similarly, An-Mei’s vivid descriptions include likening her



Auntie’s scolding tongue to “hungry scissors eating silk cloth” and her Popo’s education for disgrace as “like dropping your necklace down a well” (Tan, 1989).

In “The Kitchen God’s Wife,” Tan continues to employ simple, humorous, and feminine similes and metaphors. Weiwei compares Peanut reading a love letter to a mother duck protecting her babies and uses Chinese food imagery to describe Hulan’s figure as “a steamed dumpling with too much filling leaking out of the sides” (Tan, 1991). Tan’s humorous depiction of Hulan’s behavior while counting further exemplifies her ability to infuse humor into her narratives. In grammar, parallelism, also known as parallel structure or parallel construction, is a balance within one or more sentences of similar phrases or clauses that have the same grammatical structure Gary, B and Robert, W. (1993).

In this paradoxical way, she told her daughter that though he was recovering from his accident injury, he was becoming more violent, more brutal, and more inhuman. On the contrary, after two years of separation with much suffering on both sides, Weiwei and her husband, Jimmy Louie, kept the same strong love for each other despite the changes in their appearances and their attitudes towards the outside world. “In America, I saw your father and I had both changed, and yet we had not.”

Artistic Symbolism and Life Philosophy

Tan’s novels are rich in artistic symbolism, often presented through paradox and parallel structure. For instance, in “The Kitchen God’s Wife,” Weiwei describes her ex-husband, Wen Fu, paradoxically as “getting better, but also getting worse” (Tan, 1991). This reflects his recovery from an injury alongside his increasing violence. In contrast, Weiwei’s enduring love for Jimmy Louie is encapsulated in the statement, “In America, I saw your father and I had both changed, and yet we had not” (Tan, 1991).

Tan also employs antithesis to vividly describe complex emotions, as seen in Weiwei’s feelings towards a young pilot and her arranged marriage to Wen Fu. She captures the duality of her emotions with phrases like “without hope, yet without despair” and “weak and strong” (Tan, 1991).

Parallelism is another stylistic device Tan frequently uses. For example, Weiwei’s gratitude upon reaching the mountain top is expressed through anaphora: “So lucky to be there. So lucky to have these friends. So lucky to have my husband” (Tan, 1991). Epistrophe is used to emphasize shared traits, as seen in the repetition of “just like you” to strengthen the mother-daughter bond (Tan, 1991).

Humor as a Literary Tool

Humor is a prominent feature in Tan’s novels, created through puns, incongruity, and irony. In “The Bonesetter’s Daughter,” LuLing’s retort to Ruth’s declaration of American individualism with “No, right! All wrong!” exemplifies a pun arising from cultural and linguistic differences (Tan, 2001). Similarly, the situational humor in “The Joy Luck Club” regarding “hulihudu” and “heimongmong” captures the confusion and cultural clash between Chinese and American values (Tan, 1989).

Irony is another powerful tool in Tan’s narratives. For instance, Weiwei’s husband, who was “not smart enough to get into the Air Force, but clever enough to



use his dead brother's name," highlights situational irony (Tan, 1991). Additionally, Weiwei's ironic gratitude towards Hulan for not charging her evil husband with any crime underscores the complex interplay of emotions in Tan's characters (Tan, 1991).

Artistic Symbolism in “The Kitchen God’s Wife” and “The Joy Luck Club”

The “Magic Spring” in “The Kitchen God’s Wife” symbolizes hope and is mentioned thrice, each time reflecting a deeper layer of meaning (Tan, 1991). Similarly, in “The Joy Luck Club,” the turtle and magpie symbolize suffering and oppressive forces, respectively, with An-mei’s mother representing the enduring turtle and the magpies as the oppressors (Tan, 1989).

Conclusion

Amy Tan’s novels, including “The Joy Luck Club” and “The Kitchen God’s Wife,” are celebrated for their rich depiction of women’s experiences through a unique narrative style characterized by simplicity, lyricism, and humor. Tan’s use of metaphors and analogies rooted in daily female life brings a vividness to her storytelling that deeply resonates with readers. Her ability to intertwine humor, paradox, and artistic symbolism into her narratives not only illuminates the complexities of her characters’ lives but also underscores universal themes of resilience, identity, and cultural conflict.

Through intricate literary devices such as parallelism, antithesis, and irony, Tan crafts stories that are both poignant and thought-provoking. Her humorous language and cultural references provide a nuanced perspective on the immigrant experience, bridging the gap between Chinese and American cultural values. Tan's skillful use of artistic symbolism, particularly in the recurring motifs of the “Magic Spring” and the turtle and magpie, encapsulates the themes of hope, endurance, and the struggle against oppression.

Amy Tan’s mastery of narrative techniques and her profound understanding of the female experience make her novels enduring contributions to contemporary literature. Her works offer valuable insights into the human condition, reflecting the complexities of cultural identity and the enduring power of familial bonds. As such, Tan's novels continue to captivate and inspire readers worldwide, solidifying her place as a significant voice in American literature.

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