

# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

### BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

There are many well-known novelists of Asian descent who have contributed to the world of literature. Some of them are Catherine Lim, Mako Yoshikawa, Amy Tan, Gish Jen, Maxine Hong Kingston, and Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni. The present writer has decided to choose Catherine Lim, the author of The Song of Silver Frond (2003). She has been recognized as one of the famous female Asian writers in the 20th century, two of whose novels, The Bondmaid and The Serpent's Tooth, are often discussed and reviewed as literary texts, both in England and Australia. ([http://www.geocities.com/eril\\_project/bio.html](http://www.geocities.com/eril_project/bio.html))

Catherine Lim's style of writing is unique because her novels present the real condition of society based on her own experiences in relation to the society in Singapore touching her life. Her works contain a simple but valuable philosophy about respect, regard for human values, and the assertion of the independence of the human spirit. ([http://abcasiapacific.com/nexus/stories/s10695\\_41.htm](http://abcasiapacific.com/nexus/stories/s10695_41.htm))

In The Song of Silver Frond, the characteristics of the major characters are extraordinary, especially the character of Silver Frond as the female protagonist. She has a variety of complex characteristics which make her different from the characteristics of Chinese women in general who have a passive role in

Chinese society at that time. She dares to express her opinions and fight against the patriarchal system to fulfil her ambition and her dream.

The present writer has decided to choose the portrayal of the female protagonist in The Song of Silver Frond because characterization is one of the most important aspects in literary works, apart from plot, theme, setting, and point of view. Through the characters' dialogue and action, the story can be analysed and understood easily.

Characters have an important role in helping the readers understand the author's purpose of writing his or her book. To help the readers understand the characters, the author can describe the characters by the characters' appearance, speech, reactions, past life, and conversations of other characters in the story.

(<http://www.geocities.com/blondelibrarian/literaryexplorer/attributes.html#characters>) According to M.J. Murphy, characterization is:

...how an author conveys to the reader the characters and the personalities of the people he writes about; in other words, how he conveys to the reader what sort of people they are, how he makes the reader get to know and understand them.

Characterization techniques consist of personal description, character as seen by another, speech, past life, conversation of others, reactions, direct comment, thoughts, and mannerisms.  
(Murphy, 1972: 161-173)

In her analysis, the present writer would like to discuss the portrayal of Silver Frond as the protagonist in The Song of Silver Frond. Silver Frond's characteristics are created to react against the patriarchal system in Chinese society of the mid-twentieth century. Her characteristics are also uniquely different from those of other Chinese women who perform a passive and submissive role in society. Silver Frond has a strong role to convey the message

of the story in the novel, which makes the readers understand about women's values in Chinese society in Singapore during the end period of the Second World War (the mid 1940s).

### **STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEMS**

In order to analyse the novel, the present writer states the problems as follows:

1. How does the author of The Song of Silver Frond portray the female protagonist?
2. What is the purpose of the author in portraying such a character?

### **PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

The present writer's purpose in analysing Catherine Lim's The Song of Silver Frond is to show:

1. How the author of The Song of Silver Frond portrays the female protagonist.
2. The author's purpose in portraying such a character.

### **METHOD OF RESEARCH**

The present writer uses library research as the method of research. First, she reads the primary text, The Song of Silver Frond, written by Catherine Lim. Then, she reads some references to support this research. Afterwards, she gathers some information from the Internet that is relevant to the topic of the research. Finally, she analyses the primary text itself and draws some conclusions.

## **ORGANIZATION OF THE THESIS**

The present writer divides her thesis into three chapters. Chapter One contains the Introduction, which consists of the Background of the Study, the Statement of the Problems, the Purpose of the Study, the Method of Research and the Organization of the Thesis. In Chapter Two, she analyses the portrayal of the female protagonist in The Song of Silver Frond. In Chapter Three, the present writer states her Conclusion. The Bibliography contains the list of reference books which are used in writing the thesis. At the end of the thesis, the present writer inserts the Appendices, which contain the Synopsis of The Song of Silver Frond and the Biography of Catherine Lim.