

# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

### BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

I have chosen Lillian Ng's Silver Sister to analyse because 'as a woman writer, Lillian Ng's language is very exquisite...This is a quality that female writers usually possess' (Xiao, 2006: para 5). Besides, her novel got the Human Rights Award in 1995.

I have decided to choose one of Ng's novels, Silver Sister, which tells about the struggle of a woman who earns a living as a maid in other countries. This story is "full of ironies, wisdom, hope, fear and adventure" ([http://www.australed.iinet.net.au/east\\_asian\\_fiction.html](http://www.australed.iinet.net.au/east_asian_fiction.html)). I also like this novel because "the choice of the first person narrative voice makes the story more lively and engaging..." (Song, 1995: 2) and "...this book made an enjoyable read for the readers who aren't familiar with the region..." (Lim, 2001:1). In Silver Sister, Lillian Ng offers a memorizing portrait of the journey of a woman who experiences a dramatic change of character due to her job experiences in several countries. The novel truly gives the reader a wonderful insight.

I have decided to analyse the theme of Lillian Ng's Silver Sister because the theme of this novel is the most important literary aspect of this valuable

literary work. As a matter of fact, theme is the central and unifying element of a piece of literary work. It is ‘the total meaning of idea that unifies all literary elements like plot, characters, setting, conflict, point of view’ (Perrine, 1974:102). I try to understand the meaning that the author wants to deliver in the novel. In analysing the theme of the novel, I would also like to analyse the characterization of the protagonist because the characterization is closely related to the theme. In Dictionary of Literary Terms, Harry Shaw states that a protagonist is ‘ the leading character in drama, novel, or other literary work.’ (Shaw,1972:305). A protagonist plays an important role in a literary work because he or she determines the flow of the events of a story. Without a protagonist, a story will neither be interesting to read nor develop into a good story. Ah Pah, the protagonist of the novel is a round character. According to X.J.Kennedy “a round character is shown in much greater details, and shown more deeply.” (Kennedy,1991:78).

I have chosen the formalism approach because I believe that formalism approach is the most suitable approach for analysing the theme of the novel, which is very closely related to the characterization of the protagonist.

## **STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

In analysing Lillian Ng’s Silver Sister, I would like to state the problems as follows:

1. What is the theme of Lillian Ng’s Silver Sister?

2. How does the characterization of the protagonist help to reveal the theme?

### **PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

Based on the statement of the problem, the purposes of the study are:

1. To show the theme of Lillian Ng's Silver Sister.
2. To show how the characterization of the protagonist helps to reveal the theme.

### **METHOD OF RESEARCH**

In analysing the novel, I use the formalist approach which requires a thorough analysis of the novel in order to find the theme through the protagonist, who helps much in the revelation of the theme.

In this thesis, I use the library research. Firstly, I read the primary text of Ng's Silver Sister. I then look for some reference books in the library which are relevant to the topic being discussed. After that, I also find some information from the Internet to get more related references for my thesis. Finally, I use the selected data and theories to make the analysis and draw the conclusion.

### **ORGANIZATION OF THE THESIS**

I divide my thesis into three chapters, which are preceded by the Acknowledgements and the Abstract. Chapter One is the Introduction, which contains the Background of the Study, Statement of the Problem, Purpose of

the Study, Method of Research and Organization of the Thesis. Chapter Two contains the analysis of the theme of Lillian Ng's Silver Sister through the protagonist. Chapter Three contains the Conclusion. This thesis ends with the Bibliography, which provides a list of the references I have used for my thesis, and the Appendices, which contain the synopsis of the novel and a brief biography of the author.