

1. Introduction

Introductory paragraph: content of chapter 1

1.1. Background

There are many prominent writers who have marked the history of Singaporean literature with their masterpieces (Leong, 2000). From that many prominent writers, there are some prominent women writers who can be said as outstanding writers (Lim, 1999). Suchen Christine Lim is one of the prominent woman writers who became ‘the first winner of the Singapore Literature Prize with *Fistful of colours* (1993), her third novel, *Rice bowl* (1984) and *Gift from the Gods* (1990)’ (Leong, 2000, p. 130). Lately, Catherine Lim is considered as the most outstanding woman writer who shows her capability in making her literary works such as short stories and novels, and shortly afterwards, her name is well known and noticeable by Singaporeans and people in other countries (Lim, 1999). The article of ‘*Catherine Lim: The lightning God delivers*’ states that, Catherine Lim is one of the postcolonial writers, and Catherine Lim is a Singapore-Chinese enormous writer in the 20th century (Mayberry, 1998). Catherine Lim is also acknowledged as ‘the flowering of a generation of truly Singaporean writers’ (Loh, 2000).

There are many reasons why I choose Catherine Lim and her novel. First of all, the reason I’m choosing Catherine Lim’s novel, especially this novel because Singapore novels nowadays, especially her works become popular in the society, even in Indonesia. Besides, *Following the wrong god home* has been translated in Indonesia.

At her first career as a writer, she had some difficulties that came from herself and the society (Peters, 1981). ‘She was also known to be shy and a personality trait hardly suitable to handle all the publicity she had been accorded’ (Peters, 1981, p. 42). Furthermore, she had received criticism that her works were ‘too specific and that they had no relevance for a large segment of the Singapore population’ (Peters, 1981, p. 43). Even though she had that kind of problems, which come from herself and the critics from society, she still kept on her writing.

Catherine Lim's works are based on her childhood memories, people she met, stories she heard while growing up in Kedah, Malaysia (Mayberry, 1998). She writes something that is related to the social daily life, and can teach the people about moral. Because of that, she is called as 'a person with a mission, not one with a message' (Lim, 1999, p. 56). And because of her mission to carry out a great lesson for the readers, Catherine Lim is well known for 'her ironic dissection of contemporary Singaporean behavior' (Mayberry, 1998).

Lim's short stories are based mainly on the experiences and observations as a member of the Chinese community. Many of them are told from the perspective of a female narrator. It is assumed in many occasions that the narrator is Lim herself. This is due to her claim that many of the stories are based on or inspired by real incidents and people that she had observed or known. Most of her works criticize Singaporean behavior that treats women as second class (Lim, 1999). Singaporean people still hold their ancient tradition, in which male has more important role in the family and society rather than the female. That is why through her works, she tried to wipe that traditional image out of Singapore society (Mayberry, 1998).

In 1978, Catherine Lim produced her first collection of short stories as an experiment. Her first collection namely *Little ironies*, was very well received. In fact, *Little Ironies*, which was used as an 'N' Level examination text in 1988, had sold 38,000 copies and had undergone eleven reprints by 1989 (Lim, 1999). This collection contains seventeen short stories, which centers on the ethnic Chinese community. The resounding success of *Little ironies* was followed hard on its heels by *Or else, the lightning God and other stories* in 1980, which was used as an 'O' Level literature text in 1989 (Lim, 1999). This book alone sold 25,000 copies as a prescribed text in 1989 and 1990 (Lim, 1999). This collection contains eighteen short stories continues in much the same vein as the stories in *Little ironies*. In 1982, Catherine Lim published her novel *The serpent's tooth*. In 1991, *The serpent's tooth* still ranked first from the period April until December 1992 (Lim, 1999). Her short stories did well too, such as *O Singapore!: Stories in celebration* was a runaway success from 1990 until 1992 (Lim, 1999). The runner-up was another one of her own volumes called *The shadow of a shadow of*

a dream in 1990 also until 1992 (Lim, 1999). Both of those short stories published in 1989. Therefore, in 1992, Catherine Lim was considered as ‘Singapore’s most prolific short story writer’ since she produced remarkable literary works, which are published in the ‘US, France, Germany, Italy, Netherlands, Spain, and other countries’ [‘Dr. Catherine Lim’, 1998, p. 1]. Still in 1993, *The woman’s book of superlatives* appears, which consists of a substantial collection of ten short stories. This volume of stories are inspired the Asian fascination for social women’s problem, the one that Lim is interested in (Lim, 1999). From this book, Catherine Lim became ‘the winner of the 1999 Southeast Asian Write Award in Bangkok’ (‘Authors and Participants’, n.d, p. 1). *The bondmaid* was published in 1995, and it became a number one best seller in Singapore and international sensation (Lim, 1999). In 1998, *The teardrop story woman* was published, and reached number nine in The Guardian’s best seller list, just two weeks after its launch (Mayberry, 1998).

As a matter of fact, in 1990, the statistics at the National Library stated that her works were the most popular among the local novels (Lim, 1999). Lim’s works have ‘an impact on the reading public’ that some of her readers have translated her stories from the various collections into Mandarin, which are published in Shaxi, China (Lim, 1999). Besides, her works are preferred because all classes of society easily understand her works so that she was considered as a practical writer of modern literature (Mayberry, 1998).

Since her works are the best of all, Lim has received many great appreciations in the literary field. She was awarded ‘an honorary Doctorate in Literature by Murdoch University, Australia’ [‘Dr. Catherine Lim’, 1998, p. 1]. According to the Art Editorial Committee, Catherine Lim was also the recipient of ‘The Fulbright Award, which included an attachment to Columbia University’ and even in 1998, she received the arts Literary Awards by Montblanc -NUS Centre, Singapore, for the best writer in English (Lim, 1999, p.16). After some literary awards and a number of acclaimed literary works including novellas, novels, and short stories, Catherine Lim is undoubtedly the most outstanding woman writer in Singapore. Moreover, she is committed herself to push her works up to a level that is ‘experimental, innovative, and inventive’ (Lim, 1999, p. 86).

From the many novels written by Catherine Lim I choose to discuss *Following the wrong god home*. *Following the wrong god home* is a great book. This book was published in 2001. *Following the wrong god home* is one of Catherine Lim's best novels. Although this book was just published in 2001, this novel is considered as a love story in modern-day Singapore. Catherine made this book based on a real character, which is played by Ying Ling. This book tells about a young Singaporean woman, named Yin Ling, who is young, sensitive, poetic, intelligent and beautiful. She is engaged to, and eventually married to Vincent, the most eligible bachelor in Singapore. Later, Yin Ling falls in love with Ben, an outspoken American professor. Her family does not agree with her relationship to the American. Here, Yin Ling is faced by two choices, between choosing the 'gods of hard cash, property and status', which means she has to choose Vincent, or 'the god of love', which means she has to choose Ben.

In this novel, Yin Ling as a Chinese woman wants to fight for her rights to love and being loved. The issue of getting her own rights is shown step-by-step in the main character's decision towards her life. Considering that, I am interested to analyze about the influence of the Chinese culture in Yin Ling's decision in a marriage.

1.2. Statement of the Problem

In the novel, the main character – Yin Ling – is facing two choices, whether she has to choose Vincent or Ben. Here, I am eager to know in what way the Chinese culture influences Yin Ling's choice of whom to marry. Besides, I am also eager to know the consequences of the relationships that Yin Ling has with Vincent and with Ben.

1.3. Purpose of the Study

In the study, I will analyze the influence of the Chinese culture in Yin Ling's choice of a husband. I will also discuss about the consequences of Yin Ling's relationships with Vincent and Ben.

1.4. Significance of the Study

I hope that after reading this thesis, the readers, especially the students of the English Department will be encouraged to know and learn more about Singaporean English Literature and Singaporean female writers. I also hope that other students will be encouraged to Singaporean novels as the object of their thesis. Though Singaporean novels rarely discussed compared to English novels or American novels, Singaporean novels are also interesting to be discussed and analyzed.

Among Asian female writers, Catherine Lim is quite well known. Though she is not very familiar for the students of the English Department of Petra Christian University, her works are good and worth studying. Therefore, after reading this thesis, I hope that more students are encouraged to choose Catherine Lim's other works for the thesis.

Eventually, through my analysis, I want to show that to fight for individual rights is very important, because as a human being, a woman, has her own rights to be happy. Chinese women, who have their traditional culture, must fight for their individual rights to be happy. There are lots of obstructions, still they have to fight for it, because if they do not, they will suffer, become depressed, and unhappy.

1.5. Scope and Limitation

The scope of this study is on the influences of Chinese culture in Yin Ling's decision in a marriage and its consequence. I limit this study only three characters: Yin Ling, Vincent Chee, and Ben Gallagher. Yin Ling is chosen because she is the major character in the novel. Vincent and Ben are chosen because Vincent and Ben have a connection with Yin Ling.

1.6. Methodology

In writing this thesis, I take Catherine Lim's novel *Following the wrong god home* as my primary data. First, I read this novel carefully. Then, the data are enriched with criticism related to the novel. To gather the data, I use library

research. All data gathered are read and analyzed to support my analysis in the novel.

To achieve my purpose, I use literary approach to help me in doing the analysis. One of the theories is the theory of New Criticism. The New Criticism contains many devices that are useful to analyze the novel. I specifically am going to use characterization and conflicts. Both devices are used to explain the main character's struggles as a Chinese woman in the way she fights for her happiness. I also need the concept Chinese marriage, family status, and woman status as the additional aid to conduct the analysis.

1.7.Organization of the Study

I divide this study in four chapters. The first chapter consists of the introduction of the study, including the background of the study, the statement of the problem, the purpose of the study, the significance of the study, the scope and limitation of the study, the methodology, and the organization of the study. The next chapter, chapter two, contains the review of related literature, including theories and references that are related to this study. Chapter three contains the analysis and the finding of the study. Then the last chapter, chapter four, is the conclusion or the result of the analysis and findings.