

Preferences of words in the novel

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Preferences of words in the novel *Silver Sister* by Lillian Ng In Lillian Ng's *Silver Sister*, the protagonist, Silver Sister, is an 80 years old Chinese woman who has experienced a great deal of occurrences in her life. She has lived in many places from her hometown in a village in China called Lung Sun, to Canton, Hong Kong, Singapore, and finally to Australia. She describes each place and compares it with Australia. The words being used in her comparison determines where she positions herself. By using positive words in describing Australia, Silver Sister takes side with the place and reflects the ideology of the novel. In describing a graveyard in Australia Silver Sister uses words like elevated and prestigious to refer to its place: [...]Botany Bay in the eastern suburb of Sydney, a place with good feng shui in elevated ground with a view of the sea. I'm glad she [Ah Yi] had a proper burial; [...] and now lying in a prestigious graveyard, [...] (pp. 25) Meanwhile Silver Sister only describes her father's grave in her village as something in the back of our ancestral home. I cannot help comparing her burial with that of my Papa's, and I often wonder how I got the strength and the guts to bury Papa in the back of our ancestral home. (pp. 25) The words 'elevated' and 'prestigious' give more detailed description about the place compare to 'in the back of our ancestral home'. Moreover those two first words have more positive meanings than the last word. In other word Silver Sister gives better judgment to Australia than to her village. She also describes the people of her hometown. As a result of war many people from her village become "beggars" and "vagabonds". These people search for food to the charity kitchen. She then mentions people in Australia who are 'beggars' as "destitute" and 'vagabonds' as "old folks without home". The different words

she uses to describe two identical things in two different places gives different interpretation. According to Oxford dictionary, beggar is “ a person who lives by begging [ask for money, food, clothes, etc. as a gift or as charity]”; while destitute is “ without money, food and the other things necessary for life”. Those two words actually have the same meaning but the sense that is derived from the words is different. Beggar has more negative sense than destitute. The same thing happens to the word vagabonds. Still from the same source, vagabond is “ a person who wanders from place to place without a settled home or job, esp. one considered lazy or dishonest”. This word has negative meaning compare to ‘ old folks without home’. The choice of words Silver Sister uses indicate her opinion; that she stands closer to Australia. Silver Sister’s experiences in attending concerts in Hong Kong and Australia are also described and compared. She describes the concert in Hong Kong as something “ loud”. Not just the performance but also the audiences. They chat, children cry, vendors sell their wares [pp. 147]. Different with concert in Australia, she details as “ discipline” and “ silence”. The audiences sit quietly as the concert starts, and they will leave during the intermission to smoke, talk and chat. They will continue watching the second half of the performance in silence again [pp. 147]. Those opposite description about concert express her one-sidedness to Australia. Another aspect she compares is the Australian landscape with Singaporean landscape. She explains that Singapore government “ wipes out” many old historical buildings and changes them with modern ones. This program the government carries out according to Silver Sister is an “ over-enthusiastic” program. Meanwhile she considers the Australian government tries to

"[...]preserve its heritage under the National Trust" [pp. 223] and this effort is "serious[ly]" done. The words wipe out and preserve have different meaning and different sense. 'Preserve' has more positive and noble sense than 'wipe out'. This once again expresses Silver Sister's opinion about the two countries and that Australia is the country with positive and good description. Those Silver Sister's descriptions and comparisons by giving positive values to Australia determine the ideology of the novel. Silver Sister gives more credits to Australia than to other places the protagonist lives. As a result this novel considers that the country is the best place compares to others, and it is become the ideology of the novel. Reference List Ng, Lillian. 1994. Silver sister. Melbourne: Mandarin Australia.