ABSTRACT

Shang Wanyun (pseudonym Ng Lee Lee, 1952-1995), a well-known female writer in Malaysia had published two collections of short stories, namely Chi Nu A Lian and Qi Se Hua Shui. Chi Nu Ah Lian was well received by critics and readers in Taiwan and Malaysia. Many stories that appeared in this collection had won her numerous literary awards. Her second collection, Qi Se Hua Shui, published in 1991 revealed her maturity in writing short stories. However, her death in 1995 denied her of achieving greater success in the Chinese literary field.

Most of her works expressed a Malaysian flavour, as they were often based on her childhood experiences in her hometown Baling in Kedah. Her choice of her hometown as the locale for the stories enabled her to portray people from different ethnic background and occupations with much realism.

However, the central ideas in her works were more about the intricate human relationships and conditions, especially those of the female gender. In both her works, she had shown empathy for women in the patriarchal society. Noticeably in her second collection, her focus had shifted to the plight of modern intellectual women whose lifestyles no longer revolved only around men. In fact, they felt disillusioned in the pursuit of their dreams, in addition to conflicts they encountered in their workplaces. In her stories, she hinted the creation of spiritual haven for women through sisterhood and mutual concern. As such, some of her works resonated a feminist overtone.

Her immersion in western literature tradition during her four years of study in Taiwan influenced her writing to some extent. She had since infused modern writing techniques into her composition, without compromising the native-soil (乡土) elements in the stories. Shang Wanyun successfully interwove different literary techniques such as symbolism, defamiliarization and stream of consciousness technique etc. in writing her short fiction. All of these made her to be one of the best short story writers in her era. Shang's writing stood at its own in terms of artistic value, and yet contained a socially critical edge, if perceived carefully.

The whole dissertation comprises of five chapters. Chapter one of my dissertation will comment on her literary achievements and outline the scope of my research. In Chapter Two, I will attempt to explore the native-soil elements that are found in her stories. Chapter Three will seek to uncover the feminist overtone in her works. As for Chapter Four, I will analyse the different literary techniques and artistic features that are present in her short stories. In the final chapter, I will comment on the societal and humanistic concern her stories revealed, and also refer to other facets of her works that might be of interest to further researchers.