The image of women in the work of Guo Songfen

Guo Songfen, born in 1938 in Taipei, belongs to the group of the modernist writers of Taiwan. Like them, he was a student in the department of foreign languages in the Taipei University at the beginning of the sixties, where he got a good knowledge of Western literature. As a reaction to anti-communism, all those writers were interested in the depiction of individual life more than society. In 1966, Guo Songfen went to the United States as a student. His political beliefs prevented him from going back to Taiwan for many years. He began to write in 1984.

Women are the key characters of the work of Guo Songfen. Therefore, we would like to focus on the image of women in his short stories, according to three points of view:

1/ The depiction of inner life and psychology, which was influenced by existentialism. The narrative structure follows the thoughts of the main characters. The moderate tone of this prose, the poetic and refined language reflect their quiet and melancholy temperament, which is symbolized by the moon.

2/ The quest of a peaceful life and an individual happiness: a simple family life close to nature is the main goal of several heroines, but they face obstacles to reach it, like the difficulties to communicate in married couples, etc (Shouts under the moon, Moon seal).

3/ Women and historical events. During and after the second world war and upheavals of Taiwan, many women became widows and had to fight alone with bravery (The running mother), but most of them refused to be involved in the quest of a new society, probably because of their family-oriented position in traditional society, like the main character of Moon seal, who makes an irreparable mistake without understanding anything of the new events in the country.

Through those portraits of women, the author relates a difficult time of the Taiwan history which he never forgot: the second world war, the end of Japanese occupation, the February 28 Incident, the white terror of the fifties, the difficulties to learn a new language, and his consequences for the people.