

**HARRO VON SENGER**

Chinese-Swiss literature: representative works of Zhao Shuxia (Susie Chen)

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Zhao Shuxia seems to be the only Chinese language author with a permanent domicile in continental Europe and the nationality of an European country (Swiss).<sup>1</sup> She publishes her works in Taiwan, the People's Republic of China, Hong Kong, Singapore and in the various Chinese language periodicals of the United States and Western Europe. An important part of her literary works reflects the life and fate of the Chinese overseas, especially those living in Western Europe.

In some respects, Zhao Shuxia follows the tradition of that branch of contemporary Chinese literature which, in Taiwan and in the People's Republic of China, is sometimes known as "overseas students' literature" (*liuxuesheng wenxue*).<sup>2</sup> Among the pioneers of Chinese "overseas students' literature" are Yu Dafu (1896–1944), one of the founders of modern Chinese literature, and the Taiwanese writer Yang Kui (1906–85). In 1921, Yu Dafu published his short story *Chenlun* ("Sinking"). The story reflects the agony of spirit of a Chinese student exposed in Japan to the xenophobia and coldheartedness of his environment. Eleven years later, Yang Kui completed in the Japanese language<sup>3</sup> his short story *Songbaofu* ("Newspaper Carrier"), in which he describes the

<sup>1</sup> The paper is based mostly on published material. It also draws on information solicited by the author from Zhao Shuxia. The author wishes to express his gratitude to Zhao Shuxia for her kind readiness to answer his questions.

<sup>2</sup> WU QIJI; *Yi Dai Jian Kuan Zhong bu Hui — Fang Zhuming Xiashuoja Zhao Shuxia*. In: *Lianhe Zaobao*, (Singapore), February 2, 1985; LU JINGGUANG: *Gei Taiwan Wentan Daili yi gu Huoshui de Zhang Xiguo*. In: *Wenxue Bao*, (Shanghai), April 11, 1985; LU XINGLIANG and ZANG LIGAN: *Lü Mei Taiwan Zuoja Chen Ruoxi Da ben Bao Jizhe Wen. Zhongguo Wenxue Da You Ke Wei*. In: *Wenxue Bao*, (Shanghai), September 26, 1985. — The term *liuxuesheng wenyi* ("Overseas student's literature and art") is used for instance by: ZHAO SHUXIA: *Chunjiang*. Taipei: Luntan Chubanshe 1983, preface, p. 1; SHEN QIAN: *Zhao Shuxia de Wenxue Lixiang*. In: *Taiwan Ribao*, (Taipei), June 11, 1985.

<sup>3</sup> WU ZHICHUN: *Taiwan de Zhuming Lao Zuoja Yang Kui*. In: *Renmin Ribao*, (Beijing), March 28, 1985.

hardships of an unemployed Chinese youth living in Japan partly among students. One may also mention Soumay Tcheng (Zheng Yuxiu) (1896–1959), the wife of the Chinese ambassador to the United States Wei Daoming (1901–78) and one of the first Chinese women to study law abroad (in Paris), although her books *A Girl from China*. New York: Frederick A. Stokes co. 1926 and *My Revolutionary Years – The Autobiography of Madame Wei Tao-ming*. New York: C. Scribner's sons 1943 do not belong to the world of fiction and were not written entirely by herself. Since the nineteen-sixties, Chinese "overseas students' literature" has experienced new growth, thanks to authors who have moved from Taiwan to the United States and Canada during this time. They include Nie Hualing (b. 1926), Yu Lihua (b. 1931), Chen Ruoxi (b. 1938), Bai Xianyong (m., b. 1937) and Zhang Xiguo (m., b. 1944).

However, only a part of Zhao Shuxia's portraits of the Chinese abroad refers to overseas students and their problems. A significant portion of her work also depicts people in other walks of life, in particular the intellectuals among the more than 20 million<sup>4</sup> expatriate Chinese.

Thus, to what branch of Chinese literature should Zhao Shuxia's work be assigned? She once called herself an "overseas Chinese author" (*haiwai huaren zuojia*).<sup>5</sup> In the People's Republic of China, the Chinese Writer's Association (*Zhongguo Wen Lian*) announced the start of a new series called 'Sihai' Congshu ("The Whole World"), dedicated to the commonwealth of Chinese literature outside the PRCh due to begin in 1986. The first book of the series contains among other things a short story of Zhao Shuxia and is entitled *Xianggang, Taiwan yu Haiwai Huawen Wenxue (Hong Kong, Taiwan and Overseas Chinese Literature)*.<sup>6</sup> Since 1983, a *Haiwai Wencong* (Overseas [Chinese] Writer's Series) has been issued by Hong Kong's Joint Publishing Company (Sanlian Shudian Xianggang Fendian). The publication of a collection of short stories written by Zhao Shuxia is planned in this series.<sup>7</sup> In view of these developments, I prefer the technical term "overseas Chinese literature" to "overseas Chinese students' literature," which has become too narrow

<sup>4</sup> ZHAO SHUXIA: *Die neue Form der modernen chinesischen Literatur*, unpublished manuscript of a lecture given at the Faculty of Philosophy (I) of the University of Zürich on January 19, 1984, p. 4.

<sup>5</sup> ZHAI XIANGQIAN: *Haiwai Huaren de Minzu Geshou – Fang Ruishi Ji Huaren Nizuoja Zhao Shuxia*. In: Renmin Ribao, (Beijing), March 1, 1986.

<sup>6</sup> She Ke Xin Shumu no. 143–144, (Beijing), October 30, 1985.

<sup>7</sup> According to a letter of ZHAO SHUXIA written to the author on March 10, 1986.

to describe her work and that of other authors. "Exile literature",<sup>8</sup> another name sometimes used in this connection, sounds rather eccentric and is certainly inappropriate, since the representatives of this literary genre are living abroad of their own free will and nobody prevents them from returning to Taiwan or China. The term "overseas Chinese literature," which in my opinion should be translated into Chinese as *Haiwai Huaren Wenxue* and not as *Haiwai Huawen Wenxue*, could be understood in a fairly broad sense as including literary works on Chinese people abroad, and written by Chinese without regard to whether or not the author is living inside or outside China (Hong Kong, Taiwan) or to whether he is naturalized in a foreign country or not. Literary works on the Chinese abroad by non-Chinese authors in languages other than Chinese should, however, be excluded. Interpreted in this way, a number of works can be qualified as "overseas Chinese literature", such as the well-known poem on sledging in Switzerland composed by Lü Bicheng (f.),<sup>9</sup> who stayed there for several years before World War II, but also the writings of the Taiwanese female author San Mao (b. around 1950) on her experiences as the wife and later widow of a Spaniard living in the Sahara and in Western Europe, as well as the English-language one-act-play *I'm an American* by Kai-yu Hsu (b. 1922 and since 1959 professor of comparative literature at San Francisco State University), depicting the thought and feeling of a Chinese going through the process of naturalization to obtain his American citizenship.<sup>10</sup>

Before I go into further details of Zhao Shuxia's contributions to "overseas Chinese literature", I will provide some information about her career and personality.

Zhao Shuxia was born in Beijing on December 30, 1931.<sup>11</sup> As the eldest of eight children,<sup>12</sup> she endured an unhappy childhood and adolescence:

"Because of the lack of goods and materials during the time of the war of resistance against the Japanese [1937-45], everybody suffered poverty and need. The many daughters in our family and the burden of life rested heav-

<sup>8</sup> "Verbannten-Literatur" (*liufang wenxue*), term used by ZHAO SHUXIA, op. cit., p. 3.

<sup>9</sup> Rpt. by WANG JIAHONG: *Waijiao Shikua*. 2nd ed. Taipei: Taiwan Shangwu Yinshuguan 1970. (Renren Wenku. No. 722.), pp. 161-62.

<sup>10</sup> In: *Journal of Chinese Studies* 1 (1980), pp. 59-70.

<sup>11</sup> *The World Who's Who of Women*. Cambridge, England 1982, p. 138.

<sup>12</sup> ZHAO SHUXIA: *Yixiang Qinghuai*. 4th ed. Taipei: Jiu Ge Chubanshe 1983, p. 13.

ily upon the shoulders of my father. Over the years, the continual pressures had made my father who had originally been rather irascible, more and more despondent. He was easily roused to anger, and time and again he lost his temper. My mother, who was busy with my little sisters and the household work, inevitably cold-shouldered me, the oldest of the children. This caused me to develop extreme psychological problems, for I thought that my parents greatly disliked me. It seems to me today that this phase was a very difficult one for me."<sup>13</sup> "In my heart, I was torn by melancholy and suffering, and in my behaviour, I was not exactly like a normal child. In the initial stage of my adolescence, even more frustrations and difficulties were piling up."<sup>14</sup>

The family originated from rural Manchuria (North-east China, today: Heilongjiang Province),<sup>15</sup> but her father, who had grown up in a very rich household,<sup>16</sup> had graduated from Beijing's Political-Juridical University (Beijing Zheng-Fa Daxue)<sup>17</sup> and worked throughout his life as a government official.<sup>18</sup> Today (March 1988), he is still a member of the Legislative Yuan in Taiwan. Because of the political turmoil of the period, the family moved successively to Chongqing and after World War II to Shenyang, Beijing, Nanjing and finally, in 1949, to Taiwan<sup>19</sup> where Zhao Shuxia spent the most enjoyable time of her life<sup>20</sup> but which she does not consider to be her genuine place of origin.<sup>21</sup> After having graduated from the Girl's Middle School of Taizhong (*Taizhong Nü Zhong*),<sup>22</sup> she twice failed, because of her weakness in mathematics, the entrance examination to the department of Chinese literature of the Taiwan National University in Taipei.<sup>23</sup> This dealt her a crushing blow:

"My original few aspirations were all, one after the other, smashed by reality."<sup>24</sup>

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., p. 128.

<sup>14</sup> ZHAO SHUXIA: *Xichuang yi Yeyu*. 2nd ed. Taibei: Daosheng Chubanshe, 1979, p. 2.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. Note 12, p. 120.

<sup>16</sup> ZHAO SHUXIA: *Zhao Shuxia Zixuan Ji*. Taibei: Liming Wenhua Shiye Gufen Youxian Gongsi 1981, p. 5.

<sup>17</sup> WEN LI: *Ruishi de Huaren Nüzuoqia*. In: *Funü zhi You Zazhi*, (Harbin), November 1984, p. 3.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. Note 16, p. 5.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., p. 4.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. Note 12, p. 189.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., p. 61.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. Note 16, p. 5.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., p. 5-6.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. Note 14, p. 2.

For some time, she studied at an agrotechnical college in Taizhong (Middle Taiwan)<sup>25</sup> which is in her eyes

“the most beautiful town in the world.”<sup>26</sup>

She did not graduate, however,<sup>27</sup> and took up a job in the privately owned broadcasting corporation Zheng Sheng (*Zheng Sheng Guangbo Gongsi*).<sup>28</sup> Here she worked from 1953 to 1956<sup>29</sup> as an announcer, and the author of small plays and commercial publicity.<sup>30</sup> Later, her father procured for her a position at the Bank of Taiwan (*Taiwan Yinhang*).<sup>31</sup> Besides her professional work, she learned foreign languages, dedicated herself to Chinese painting and improved her knowledge of Chinese literature.<sup>32</sup> One of her temporary teachers was Gao Ming, today (1988) in his eighties, among other things an expert on the classical Chinese “Book of Songs” (*Shijing*).<sup>33</sup> In 1961, she went to Paris to study, but fell ill soon after her arrival.<sup>34</sup> Dr. Chen Yannian, a graduate of the Swiss Polytechnical University (Zürich),<sup>35</sup> who was working as the head of the Sulzer Research Laboratory for Vibration and Acoustics in Oerlikon/Zürich, a son of friends of her parents, took care of her. He visited her every weekend in Paris, and after six months they were married. In 1968, the couple obtained Swiss citizenship. For more than twenty years, Zhao Shuxia, a mother of two children (Thomas and Susan), has lived in Winterthur near Zürich in a half-Western, half-Chinese way of life, with the majority of her acquaintances being Westerners. Three of her brothers and sisters are living in the United States:

“Half of us eight sisters and brothers today live at home, and the other half live abroad . . . Members of a family being scattered all over the globe — this has to be regarded as one of the distinguishing features of a contemporary Chinese family living in Taiwan.”<sup>36</sup>

<sup>25</sup> Cf. Note 16, p. 5.

<sup>26</sup> ZHAO SHUXIA: *Hainei Cun Zhiji*. 2nd ed. Taipei: Jiu Ge Chubanshe 1981, p. 58.

<sup>27</sup> Cf. Note 4, p. 7.

<sup>28</sup> Cf. Note 16, p. 7.

<sup>29</sup> Cf. Note 11.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. Note 16, p. 7.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 8.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 10.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>36</sup> Cf. Note 12, p. 187.

In Switzerland, Zhao Shuxia first attended a private fashion institute in Zürich<sup>37</sup> and then worked for three years (until the birth of her son in 1968) with the woman's clothing firm, Haussamann (Winterthur) as an advertisement and textile pattern designer.<sup>38</sup> Since the nineteen-sixties, Zhao Shuxia published sporadic reports of her travels in the Taiwanese magazine *Ziyou Tan* ("Free Talk"). These reports originated from journeys she has taken while accompanying her husband to scientific congresses in the United States, France, Denmark, Finland, Hungary, Romania, Argentina and other countries.<sup>39</sup> In 1982, she made a three week trip with one of her sisters who is married to an American in the United States<sup>40</sup> to the RPCh in order to see relatives and to find her "roots", but she returned rather disillusioned. From her stay in China, she brought back to Switzerland some earth and the sapling of a wild cherry tree, which she had dug up in the places of her parents' origin in Manchuria.<sup>41</sup> This symbolic action was the object of considerable comment in the PRCh press. It was, however, a trip to Taiwan ten years earlier which had given her the impetus to begin writing truly literary works and thus to translate into reality a dream of her youth. Zhao Shuxia gives the following account of this turning point of her life:

"My real literary career began in 1972. In that year, I returned to Taiwan for the first time after a separation of [eleven] years. What shocked me most was my feeling of having become a foreigner. The long years of living abroad had changed me into another person."<sup>42</sup>

"Everything had changed — the streets, the people. I even got lost. It was as if I'd lost my original self."<sup>43</sup>

"I was seized with deep emotions. How much does one gain abroad? How much does one lose? Is it worthwhile to live abroad? I felt that I had many things to speak and to write about."<sup>44</sup>

Is a feeling of alienation towards her Chinese homeland the deeper reason why Zhao Shuxia, at least in some of her work, emphasizes the Chi-

<sup>37</sup> Cf. Note 16, pp. 10–11.

<sup>38</sup> Cf. Note 11.

<sup>39</sup> LI YUXIANG and FENG DIANGE: *Ta Hui Longjiang Xun Gen — Ruishi Ji Huaren Nüzuoja Zhao Shuxia*. In: *Chuangzuo Tongxun* 1 (Heilongjiang 1986), p. 9.

<sup>40</sup> ZHAO SHUXIA: *Gutu yu Jiayuan*. Taipei: Jiu Ge Chubanshe 1983, p. 26.

<sup>41</sup> ZHAO SHUXIA: *Feicuisse de Meng*. 3rd ed. Taipei: Jiu Ge Chubanshe 1985, p. 54.

<sup>42</sup> Cf. Note 4, p. 8.

<sup>43</sup> GOH BENG CHOO: *In Search of an Identity*. In: *Straits Times*, (Singapore), February 18, 1985.

<sup>44</sup> Cf. Note 16, p. 8.

nese character of Chinese abroad to such an extent that she is inside and outside the PRCh celebrated as a patriotic<sup>45</sup> and nationalist<sup>46</sup> writer — apparently with her consent?<sup>47</sup> And must we regard sentences such as the following as reactions to the process of cultural assimilation which she in fact underwent?

“During almost twenty years abroad, I have seen innumerable landscapes, some of majestic beauty, some of quiet loveliness, some of a charming purity, some of an extreme unusualness. I have also encountered societies with very different customs and habits. The prosperity and wealth of Western countries with their advanced science always leads me to feelings of admiration. I visited some world famous scenes and historical sites. Their imposing magnificence obliges me to acclaim them as the acme of perfection. But, how much have all these things to do with me? For them, I am just one of millions upon millions of nameless tourists. They do not belong to me, and I do not belong to them. Although other people’s places might be of a thousandfold or tenthousandfold goodness, they never become my place, and they will never be better than my own home.”<sup>48</sup>

“My twenty years in Europe have been the most quiet and rich in my life, as well as having been rather successful and important to me. I could not say that this place is not good, nor could I say that I completely do not care for this place, that I am not fond of it. But why was I never able to erase feelings of being a foreign guest nor a longing for my place of origin? I finally realized that my roots go deep into my own nation. Whether I went in former times to Sichuan, to Shenyang, to Nanjing or to Taiwan, it was always China with the same smell of earth floating in the air, with streets full of people with the same yellow skin and black hairs, with the same blood and the same language. We all together belong to that piece of earth; we have the same ancestors, we are all children of China.”<sup>49</sup>

“No matter how good Switzerland is, it is in the end only the paradise of the Swiss. For a Chinese, burdened with sorrow for his fatherland where his roots lie, Switzerland remains for ever an alien land.”<sup>50</sup>

<sup>45</sup> LI YANJIE: *Youyi, xiang na Haojie de Yueguang*. In: Renmin Ribao Haiwai Ban, (Beijing), November 2, 1985; WU TENGHUANG and YANG LIANCHENG: *Lai zi Haiwai de Xiangyin — Xi Du Zhao Shuxia Nüshi Changpian Xiaoshuo* ‘Women de Ge’. In: Beifang Wenxue, (Harbin), October 1985, p. 71. GANG JIAN uses a long quotation from an essay of Zhao Shuxia as point of departure of a patriotic commentary: *Huabudiao de Gen*. In: Renmin Ribao (Beijing), January 26, 1987, p. 1.

<sup>46</sup> Cf. Note 17, p. 4; *Zhongguoren de Zaiman Yinggai Zhixi le! — Yu Zhao Shuxia Nüshi yi xi Tan*. In: Ouzhou Ribao, (Paris), September 26, 1984.

<sup>47</sup> Cf. Note 40, p. 24; ZHAO SHUXIA: *Cong Jialingjiang dao Sainahe — Wenyi Wu Wo Sanshi Nian — Yi wei Wentan Duxing Xia de zibai*. In: Shijie Zhoubao, (New York), August 25–31, 1985, p. 20; SHEN QIAN, op. cit.; ZHAI XIANGQIAN, op. cit.

<sup>48</sup> Cf. Note 12, p. 188–89.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., p. 190.

<sup>50</sup> Li Lianjie, op. cit.



"I certainly love Switzerland, but I love still more the mother earth of my ancestors' country, which gave birth to me and brought me up. I love my brothers and sisters — all having the same skin colour as me."<sup>51</sup>

"It is terribly lonely living in Europe. Although my husband is a top scientist and we belong to the upper echelon of society, we never see ourselves as citizens of Switzerland."<sup>52</sup>

"I am thoroughly Chinese. A passport cannot change my heart nor weaken my sorrows for my fatherland."<sup>53</sup>

"I have always thought that there does not exist a Chinese who changes completely into a foreigner after a long stay abroad. Whether he is successful or not in the foreign country, in the eyes of the foreigners and in his own eyes, he will always have to acknowledge: 'After all, I am a Chinese'."<sup>54</sup>

Yet though both Zhao Shuxia and — according to her — her husband regard themselves as more Chinese than Swiss, there is still a dilemma:

"We love our [original] country and cherish our roots, but the irony is: With whom do we identify? China or Taiwan?"<sup>55</sup>

The answer is neither China nor Taiwan, because

"having lived in the free Western world for so long, it's quite impossible for us to return to live in either of the two places. Our lifestyle and outlook are totally different now."<sup>56</sup>

As a result, there remains the pervasive feeling of a floating "man of nowhere."<sup>57</sup> This feeling can only be softened or overcome by reestablishing some kind of Chinese self-confidence:

"No matter how long we might live abroad, we should continue to consider our [Chinese] cultural heritage and origins as glorious. For the Western culture can by no means match the age-old, vast rich culture of China."<sup>58</sup>

Driven first of all by her "homesickness" (*xiangchou*), her concern for the future fate of her fatherland, her love for her countrymen and her

<sup>51</sup> WANG XUQI: *Huaren Nüzuoqia Zhao Shuxia de Xinsheng*. In: Shijie Jingji Daobao, (Shanghai), December 16, 1986.

<sup>52</sup> GOH BENG CHOO, op. cit.

<sup>53</sup> HAN WENMIN: *Chengxian gei Zuguo Muqin de Ge — Zhao Shuxia 'Women de Ge' Du hou*. In: Wenxue Pinglun, 3, (Beijing), May 15, 1985, p. 72; WANG XUQI: *Ruishi Huaren Nüzuoqia Zhao Shuxia*. In: Renmin Ribao Haiwai Ban, (Beijing), January 6, 1986.

<sup>54</sup> SHEN QIAN, op. cit.

<sup>55</sup> GOH BENG CHOO, op. cit.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> ZHANG HUIZHEN: *Zhao Shuxia de Chensi*. In: Hai Hua, 9, (Taipei), October 1985, p. 51.

desire to express the sentiments of the Chinese "living under another's roof" (*ji ren li xia*)<sup>59</sup> as "children [of Mother China] wandering in strange lands" (*yixiang youzi*)<sup>60</sup> "like gypsies"<sup>61</sup>, like drifting "duckweed" (a kind of rootless seaweed) (*fuping*)<sup>62</sup> and feeling "lost" (*shiluo*)<sup>63</sup> "in their search for identity"<sup>64</sup>, Zhao Shuxia has thus dedicated herself since 1972<sup>65</sup> as a "sparetime-writer"<sup>66</sup> to increasingly more intensive literary activities, resulting in the total publication of approximately three million Chinese characters.<sup>67</sup> This literary activity has occurred in Switzerland, her "second homeland"<sup>68</sup> and a country "very suitable for writing,"<sup>69</sup> and in addition to her main occupation as a housewife.<sup>70</sup> Through her writings, Zhao Shuxia has not only assuaged her feelings of frustration,<sup>71</sup> but has also carved herself a niche in the world of Chinese literature.<sup>72</sup> She has become one of the few living Chinese authors accorded the privilege of acclamation in both Taiwan and in the PRCh. Due to her prominence amongst European Chinese, she was in July 1985 elected vicepresident of the "Association of Chinese scholars in Europe" (Ouzhou Huaren Xuehui), an organization founded in 1981 in Lyon (France).<sup>73</sup> Nearly 100 articles on Zhao Shuxia's literary activi-

<sup>59</sup> LU XIANG and LIU SHUSHENG: *Jianping Zhao Shuxia Nüshi de 'Women de Ge'*. In: Xiaoshuo Lin, (Harbin), March 1985, p. 62.

<sup>60</sup> WU TENGHUANG and YANG LIANCHENG: *Haiwai Youzi Xinli de Changyin - Du Zhao Shuxia de Changpian Xiaoshuo 'Women de Ge'*. In: Hua Sheng Bao, (Beijing), March 12, 1985.

<sup>61</sup> LI HUIYING: *'Dongbei Zuojia' Houji You Ren - Du Zhao Shuxia de 'Xichuang yi Yeyu' Xiangqi de*. In: Xin Wanbao, (Hong Kong), June 30, 1985.

<sup>62</sup> Cf. Note 59, p. 62.

<sup>63</sup> HAN WENMIN, op. cit.

<sup>64</sup> GOH BENG CHOO, op. cit.

<sup>65</sup> ZHAO SHUXIA: *Cong Jialingjiang dao Sainahe . . .* In: Shijie Zhoubao, (New York), August 25-31, 1985, p. 20.

<sup>66</sup> XIAO JUN: *Jieshao 'Women de Ge'*. In: Beijing Wanbao (Beijing), January 15, 1984.

<sup>67</sup> *Guoji Shuhong (Xin Liu Feng) Ruishi - Changchun Zhao Shuxia - Lu Xiang*. In: Gang Tai Wenxue Xuankan (Fuzhou), December 15, 1985, p. 22.

<sup>68</sup> Cf. Note 12, p. 88.

<sup>69</sup> ZHANG NINGJING: *Zanmen de Xianghuai*. In: Zhongyang Ribao Zhongyang Fukan, (Taipei), March 3, 1985.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

<sup>71</sup> SHEN QIAN, op. cit.

<sup>72</sup> GOH BENG CHOO, op. cit.

<sup>73</sup> *Huaren Nüzuoqia Zhao Shuxia Dangxuan wei Ouzhou Huaren Xuehui Fuhuizhang*. In: Wenxue Xinxu, (Harbin), November 20, 1985, p. 3.

ties have been published throughout the world in Chinese-language periodicals. Her work has culminated in the following (not necessarily complete) list of books:

First, I want to mention her novels:

- 1) *Women de Ge* ("Our Song"), written in 1979, first ed. in Taiwan: 1980 (Taipei: Zhongyang Ribao Chubanshe); first [slightly revised] ed. in the PRCh: 1983 (Beijing: Youyi Chuban Gongsi); ca. 600'000 characters;
- 2) *Luodi* ("Failure in the Examination"), written in 1974, first ed. in Taiwan: 1982 (Taipei: Daosheng Chubanshe); first ed. in the PRCh: 1985 (Beijing: Zhongguo Youyi Chuban Gongsi); ca. 400'000 characters;
- 3) *Chunjiang* ("Spring River"), written in 1981–82, first ed. in Taiwan: 1983 (Taipei: Luntan Chubanshe) second ed. in Taiwan: 1987 (Taipei: Daosheng Chubanshe); first ed. in the PRCh: 1985 (Fuzhou: Haixia Wenyi Chubanshe); ca. 200'000 characters;
- 4) *Sainahe Pan* ("On the River Seine"), written in 1984–85, first ed. in Taiwan: 1986 (Taipei: Chun Wenxue Chubanshe); first ed. in the PRCh under the title *Piaobo de Ai* ("Wandering Love"): 1986 (Beijing: Zuoja Chubanshe) second ed. in the PRCh under the title "Sainahe Pan": 1987 (Harbin: Beifang Wenxue Chubanshe); ca. 270'000 characters.

In addition to this, Zhao Shuxia has published a number of collections of short stories and essays:

- 5) *Xichuang yi Yeyu* ("A Rainy Night at the West Window"), first ed. in Taiwan: 1976 (Taipei: Daosheng Chubanshe); first ed. in the PRCh: 1984 (Beijing: Zhongguo Youyi Chuban Gongsi); nine short stories;
- 6) *Dang Women Nianqing Shi* ("When We Were Young"), first ed. in Taiwan: 1977 (Taipei: Daosheng Chubanshe); first ed. in the PRCh: 1984 (Beijing: Zhongguo Youyi Chuban Gongsi); 10 short stories;
- 7) *Cifengyuan Suibi* ("Essays from the Maple Garden"), first ed. in Taiwan: 1979 (Taipei: Daosheng Chubanshe), first [slightly revised] ed. in the PRCh: 1984 (Beijing: Zhongguo Youyi Chuban Gongsi); 23 (in the Mainland China ed. 22) essays;
- 8) *Yixiang Qinghuai* ("Feelings in a Foreign Country"), first ed. in Taiwan: 1981 (Taipei: Jiu Ge Chubanshe); first [slightly revised] ed. in the PRCh: 1984 (Beijing: Zhongguo Youyi Chuban Gongsi); 21 (in the Mainland China ed. 20) essays;

- 9) *Hainei Cun Zhiji* ("Friendship across the Four Seas"), first ed. in Taiwan: 1981 (Taipei: Jiu Ge Chubanshe); 21 essays;
- 10) *Zhao Shuxia Zicuan Ji* ("Zhao Shuxia's Own Collection"), first ed. in Taiwan: 1981 (Taipei: Liming Wenhua Shiye Gufen Youxian Gongsi); 13 essays and short stories;
- 11) *Feicuise de Meng* ("The Emerald Dream"), first ed. in Taiwan: 1984 (Taipei: Jiu Ge Chubanshe); 17 essays;
- 12) *Xuefeng Yunying* ("The shadows of the Clouds over the Snowy Mountains"), first ed. in Taiwan: 1986 (Taipei: Daosheng Chubanshe); 19 essays;
- 13) *Hupan Menghen* ("Scars of Dreams dreamt on the Shores of the Lake"), first ed. in Taiwan: 1986 (Taipei: Daosheng Chubanshe); 6 short stories;
- 14) *Ren de Gushi* ("Human Stories"), first ed. in Hongkong: 1986 (Joint Publishing Company/Overseas Chinese Writers Series); 7 short stories;
- 15) *Traumspuren* ("Scars of Dreams"), first ed. in Köln/Federal Republic of Germany: 1987 (Kai Yeh Verlag); 3 short stories, translated by RAINER KLINGE;
- 16) *Der Jadering* ("The Ring of Jade"), first ed. in Thalwil/Switzerland: 1988 (Adonia-Verlag); 3 short stories, translated by RAINER KLINGE.

A final book which has to be mentioned is Zhao Shuxia's report on her three week journey to the PRCh in 1982:

- 17) *Gutu yu Jiaoyuan* ("My Ancient Earth and my Old Home"), first ed. in Taiwan: 1983 (Taipei: Jiu Ge Chubanshe).

Zhao Shuxia, preferring Western authors such as Tolstoi, Hesse, Thomas Mann, Remarque and Romain Rolland<sup>74</sup> as well as the Chinese poets Li Bai, Bai Juyi, Du Fu,<sup>75</sup> and admiring the 18th century Chinese novel *Hong Lou Meng* ("Dream of the Red Chamber"),<sup>76</sup> is opposed to the concept of "art for art's sake"<sup>77</sup> and is not favourably impressed by the modernists.<sup>78</sup> She writes in a way which is celebrated by Chinese

<sup>74</sup> WU QIJI, op. cit.

<sup>75</sup> Cf. Note 65, p. 21.

<sup>76</sup> *Die Auslandchinesen als Thema – Heinrich Geisser sprach mit der chinesischen Schriftstellerin Zhao Shu Xia*. In: Vaterland, (Luzern, Switzerland), March 17, 1984.

<sup>77</sup> Cf. Note 51.

<sup>78</sup> WU QIJI, op. cit.

commentators as “quietly elegant”<sup>79</sup>, “pure and fresh”, “bright and beautiful”, “graceful and restrained,” “fine and smooth”, “simple and unadorned”<sup>80</sup>, “soul-stirring and heart-rending”<sup>81</sup> etc. Her style based on a fundamentally positive attitude towards men and society<sup>82</sup> and adhering to the Confucianist artistic ideal of the “true, good and beautiful” (*zhen, shan, mei*),<sup>83</sup> is said to be characterized by the “beauty of plainness,”<sup>84</sup> by “ease and grace,” a “flowing rhythm,” “an admirable skill not affected by those modernist schools of all shades with their confused vagueness and hardly understandable obscurity, but entirely marked by a Chinese form and a Chinese manner, excelling by the blending of emotional messages with descriptions, narrations and dialogues.”<sup>85</sup> It is a style which guarantees “contact with the broad mass of readers,” since Zhao Shuxia attaches much importance to the idea that “enjoying literature should not be the privilege of a small minority.”<sup>86</sup> Zhao Shuxia herself described her novels using the term “romantic realism” (*langman xieshi*).<sup>87</sup> Critical remarks coming from Chinese analysts aim at certain weak points in the plots of her novels, for instance the long-windedness and lack of originality of *Luodi* (“Failure in the Examination”)<sup>88</sup>, the somehow exaggerated typification of certain protagonists in *Women de Ge* (“Our Song”),<sup>89</sup> artificiality of the course of certain events in *Chunjiang* (“Spring River”).<sup>90</sup>

Most of Zhao Shuxia’s books appeared in Chinese periodicals all over the world before they were published. One example is the novel *Women de Ge* (“Our Song”), up to now the greatest success of Zhao Shuxia. It

<sup>79</sup> HAN WENMIN, op. cit.

<sup>80</sup> JIANG BAOCHEN: *Yi qu Jifa Minzu Zizun de Ge — Jieshao Zhao Shuxia he tade Changpian Xiaoshuo ‘Women de Ge’*. In: Renmin Ribao, August 28, 1984.

<sup>81</sup> ZHOU CAN: *Zhao Shuxia de Duanpian Xiaoshuo*. In: *Nanyang Shangbao*, Xinnian Dai No. 913, (Singapore), August, 1980.

<sup>82</sup> DUANMU HONGGEN: *Zhao Shuxia de Zhizhuo*. In: *Wenhui Bao*, (Hong Kong), December 2, 1985.

<sup>83</sup> SHEN QIAN, op. cit.

<sup>84</sup> XIAO JUN, op. cit.

<sup>85</sup> WU TENGHUANG, YANG LIANCHENG, op. cit., p. 72.

<sup>86</sup> Cf. Note 65, p. 21.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid.

<sup>88</sup> ZHOU CAN: *Li Jia You Nü Chu Zhangchen — Tan Zhao Shuxia de Xiaoshuo ‘Luodi’*. In: *Lianhe Zaobao*, (Singapore), April 19, 1983.

<sup>89</sup> WU TENGHUANG, YANG LIANCHENG, op. cit., pp. 71–72.

<sup>90</sup> LU XIANG: *‘Chunjiang’ Xuyi*. In: ZHAO SHUXIA: *Chunjiang*. Fuzhou: Haixia Wenyi Chubanshe 1985, pp. 235–36.

was first published from 1979 to 1980 as a serial in *Zhongyang Ribao Zhongyang Fukan*, the literary supplement of the Central Daily, which comes out in Taipei as a part of the official organ of the ruling People's Party (Guomindang).

In her essays, Zhao Shuxia treats a large variety of subjects, for instance: difficulties with an apple tree in her house garden in Winterthur described in a humorous way;<sup>91</sup> problems of adjusting to the dog Oli(ver), a present of a Swiss friend initially more terrifying than amusing since in China dogs are rarely kept as pets;<sup>92</sup> Swiss neighbours;<sup>93</sup> wishes for the new year;<sup>94</sup> memories of her childhood and adolescence; various aspects of Switzerland and its people and the Chinese saying "A beautiful face causes an unlucky fate."<sup>95</sup> Even the overthrow of the Shah of Persia is chosen by Zhao Shuxia as the point of departure for one of her essays.<sup>96</sup> This essay is not included in the mainland edition of the book. Commentaries on Chinese politics are rare, but an example of them is a critique of the United States' diplomatic break with Taiwan in December 1978.<sup>97</sup> Likewise this essay did not find the approval of the Chinese mainland editor of her works.

Very few of her short stories centre on purely Western protagonists as for instance a juvenile delinquent in Italy<sup>98</sup> or a Swiss youngster lacking in filial piety.<sup>99</sup> Their main theme is the psychologically hard life of the Chinese "in exile,"<sup>100</sup> whether a celibate, fiftyish Chinese scientist who has changed a great deal in his customs and thoughts during his more than twenty years of life in Switzerland, remaining Chinese only in outward appearance and having spiritually become a "freak who was neither Chinese nor western;"<sup>101</sup> or a Chinese artist in Paris whose self-confidence defies all adversities and outshines even his death;<sup>102</sup> or a Chi-

<sup>91</sup> *Wo Jiating qian 'Jinmeiwei'*, cf. Note 12, pp. 99-110.

<sup>92</sup> *Ren Gou zhi jian* and *Ying Gou Ji*, *ibid.*, pp. 15-25, 161-69.

<sup>93</sup> *Linjunmen de Qu Tan*, *ibid.* 35-53; cf. also Note 16, p. 231-250.

<sup>94</sup> *Xinnian Xinyuan*, cf. Note 12, pp. 55-57.

<sup>95</sup> *Lun Hong Yan Bo Ming*, *ibid.*, pp.27-34.

<sup>96</sup> *Ai Balewei*, *ibid.*, pp. 71-78.

<sup>97</sup> *Ziji zui Kekao*. In: ZHAO SHUXIA: *Cifengyuan Suibi*. 2nd ed. Taipei: Dao-sheng Chubanshe 1981, pp. 23-27.

<sup>98</sup> *Pangti Lao Die de Xin Wu*, cf. Note 14, pp. 29-63.

<sup>99</sup> *Pashan de Erzi*, *ibid.*, pp. 179-200.

<sup>100</sup> GOH BENG CHOO, *op. cit.*

<sup>101</sup> *Wang Boshi de Bali Jiaqi*, cf. Note 14, pp. 7-28, and Note 16, pp. 174-95; German translation in: *Traumspuren*. Köln 1987, p. 93-124.

<sup>102</sup> *Sainah zhi Wang*, cf. Note 14, pp. 137-78, and Note 16, pp. 34-75.

nese woman who lives isolated in Copenhagen after the death of her Danish husband;<sup>103</sup> or a Chinese blue collar worker resident in Hamburg unhappy with his working environment and frustrated in his marriage with a German wife and his two "100% Western children;"<sup>104</sup> or a Chinese medical doctor passing his "monotonous" (*dandiao*) life in a Swiss village lacking true harmony with his Swiss wife, but imbued with thoughts of his Chinese friends;<sup>105</sup> or a Chinese whose first happy journey after over thirty years of a lonely life in Finland with his Finnish wife and four children leads him to Taiwan;<sup>106</sup> or a halfcast with a Chinese father and an Austrian mother who, after the divorce of his mother, had lived since he was six years old in Europe and later becomes a rootless vagabond . . .<sup>107</sup>

With the exception of *Luodi* ("Failure in the Examination"), a love story taking place in Taipei, Zhao Shuxia's novels portray the Chinese abroad. Since I have not yet read her most recent novel *Sainake Pan* ("On the River Seine") which was published in 1986, I wish to examine the two novels *Women de Ge* ("Our Song") and *Chunjiang* ("Spring River"). *Women de Ge* ("Our Song") in particular must be considered as the most representative work of Zhao Shuxia, since in 1980 she received for it Taiwan's highest literary award, the gold medal of the Taiwanese writer's association. It is said that this novel helped to promote the rise of Taiwanese campus folk-songs in the early nineteen-eighties.<sup>108</sup> The recognition of this novel in the PRCh propelled Madame Zhao to fame. It therefore deserves a special attention here.

Homesickness, patriotism and national consciousness are the basic themes of the novel "Our Song". The main figure of the plot is the Chinese girl Yu Zhiyun, who is from Taipeh. At the end of the nineteen-sixties, she goes to Munich to study sinology. For ten years, her family had saved money in order to finance Yu Zhiyun's studies abroad. These studies were particularly promoted by her mother who hopes that her

<sup>103</sup> *Hansen Taitai de yi Tian*, cf. Note 14, pp. 225-46; German translation in: op. cit., p. 125-154.

<sup>104</sup> *Xichuang yi Yeyu*, cf. Note 14, pp. 115-36, and Note 16, pp. 151-73.

<sup>105</sup> *Hupan Menghen*. In: Gang Tai Wenxue Xuankan, (Fuzhou), January 1986, pp. 12-21; German translation in: op. cit., p. 11-56.

<sup>106</sup> *Kuaile Jiaqi*. In: Wen Ji, 9, (Taipei), September 1984, pp. 127-55.

<sup>107</sup> *Feng · Xue · Luulangren*. In: ZHAO SHUXIA: *Dang Women Nianqing Shi*. 4th ed. Taipei: Daosheng Chubanshe 1982, pp. 207-233; German translation in: op. cit., p. 57-92.

<sup>108</sup> JIANG BAOCHEN, op. cit.

daughter, equipped with a fine "intellectual dowry", will manage to find in the West an acceptable Chinese husband (preferably with an academic title) and establish a foreign family base, enabling her four sisters and brothers, and parents, to travel to the West. After her arrival in Munich, Yu Zhiyun falls in love with Jiang Xiaofeng, an idealistic patriotic Taiwanese musician who is studying in the West with no ulterior motive, exclusively to broaden his mind and perfect his technical skills. Eventually, he intends to return to Taiwan to develop and popularize a distinct Chinese music as a medium to arouse Chinese national feelings. Since Yu Zhiyun, under the psychological pressure of her mother and her family rejects the idea of going back to Taiwan, the break with Jiang Xiaofeng is inevitable when he returns to Taiwan. Soon after, Yu Zhiyun, now 25 years old, marries the 42 year-old He Shaoxiang, who meets all the criteria fixed by her mother for an ideal son-in-law. He has the title of doctor, a lucrative job as a physicist and an excellent reputation. Last but not least, he is a national of the Federal Republic of Germany. He Shaoxiang's marriage with Yu Zhiyun coincides with his move to Switzerland where he obtains a position in a European nuclear research institute. He hopes to be promoted later to the position of director of the institute. In view of this aim, He Shaoxiang sacrifices all his time to his professional and scientific work. As cosmopolitan and a "citizen of the world," he enjoys his life in Switzerland. Quite different are the emotions of Yu Zhiyun. She feels neglected by her workaholic husband and, especially after the birth of her son Hans, thinks more and more of her Chinese homeland. The Swiss mentality, spoiled and emasculated by more than a hundred years free of wars and catastrophies, and the discriminating coldness of the country vis-à-vis foreigners, prevent Yu Zhiyun from developing roots in Switzerland.

At a tea party in Zürich, the "saddest event" in the life of a Swiss lady with whom she finds herself talking upsets Yu Zhiyun. The "saddest event" of this Swiss lady was the death of her dog when she was fifteen. Yu Zhiyun's comment illustrates Zhao Shuxia's inclination towards generalizations which will be observed also in other contexts. These, of course, in many cases have to be interpreted from the point of view of certain figures of speech such as antithesis, hyperbole etc.:

"Such is the suffering of these refined European ladies! How fragile are their hearts! The hearts of us Chinese, however, are indeed able to endure millions upon millions of kinds of pain!" (ZHAO SHUXIA: *Women de Ge* ("Our Song"), 4th ed. Taibei: Zhongyang Ribao Chubanshe 1982, p. 476).

The prejudices against foreigners in general and Chinese in particular make a devastating impression on Yu Zhiyun. She is exposed to this



xenophobia when she looks for an apartment or visits the childrens playground.

When her husband points to the fact that long ago he became naturalized in Western Germany, the Swiss landlady, showing a reluctance to rent her house to Chinese, retorts:

“Oh, doctor He, you know, in my eyes you are and you remain Chinese!” (Ibid., p. 457).

And in the childrens playground, Yu Zhiyun hears a Swiss boy saying about her son:

“We shall not play any more with him. He is a Chinese with slit eyes and a flat nose.” (Ibid., p. 689).

Since her arrival in Switzerland, Yu Zhiyun finds herself therefore

“isolated as if living in a desert.” (Ibid., p. 497).

She can by no means share the opinion of her husband who remarks:

“You must forget that we are Chinese, since we are now Germans.” (Ibid., p. 492).

More and more, she suffers from homesickness for Taiwan. Everything she observes on holiday trips, in Spain for example, increases her scepticism about Western society, which

“on the surface looks noble and flourishing, but stores beneath the surface much filth.” (Ibid., p. 585).

Yu Zhiyun clearly recognizes

“how lost is a society which is not bound to ethical traditions and an old culture.” (Ibid., p. 586).

Finally she becomes aware

“that her roots are with the Chinese people and its 5000 year old traditional culture and true Chinese spirit.” (Ibid., p. 586).

She remembers what her first lover Jiang Xiaofeng had told her:

“The dejection and the loss of orientation displayed in the usual contemporary literature and music, psychoanalytical statements and so on, do not express the feelings of the Chinese. These are ailments brought on Western society by Western philosophical thinking. It does not affect our Chinese society, for we are a nation with an old culture and a complete ethical system. We are tough and unfathomable. We have our way. We shall not and we need not be influenced by such degenerate trends of thoughts.” (Ibid., p. 586).

## The members of Western "high society"

"are criminals vis-à-vis the society. They would have the money, the standing, the influence and the power to guide society in a better direction. But they are concerned exclusively with amusement, pleasure and showing off. . . . They do not think about the bad influence their lifestyle has upon society." (Ibid., p. 624).

In the end, the antagonism between the pro-Western attitude and work obsession of He Shaoxiang and the isolation and increasing orientation towards China of Yu Zhiyun leads to open conflict. Yu Zhiyun abandons her husband and returns with her son to Taiwan. To the dismay of her parents, she decides to obtain a divorce in order to devote herself for the rest of her life to the promotion of Chinese culture in Taiwan. At this moment, the unexpected occurs. Her husband reports in a long, self-critical letter that he did not obtain the position of director of the institute because he is Chinese. An indigenous European with much inferior professional qualifications was preferred. Thus his cosmopolitanism is proved to be an illusion. Henceforth, He Shaoxiang writes, he is determined to devote his scientific activities abroad to the glory of China. This change of mind induces Yu Zhiyun to return to her husband in Switzerland.

Our second representative novel of Zhao Shuxia is entitled *Chunjiang* ("Spring River"). This is the poetical name given by the author to the Neckar at Heidelberg, where Liu Weizu (Liu Lang), the hero of the novel, occasionally finds some mental peace.

In comparison with *Women de Ge* ("Our Song"), this novel has a completely different content. The basic problem here is the moral decay, decadence and hypocrisy of Chinese society together with the alienation of an individual Chinese in his native society.

After a sheltered youth in the glasshouse of a rich and honourable family, first in Beijing, then in Taipei, the protagonist of the novel Liu Weizu loses first his faith in women, and then his faith in his beloved family and in all mankind. He becomes a vagabond and adapts even his name to the change in his way of life. He blames the fate which befalls him on his first girl friend, who had abandoned him suddenly and without apparent reason in Taipei in order to marry someone else. He feels similarly towards his father and grandmother. During his studies in Heidelberg, he finds out that they had rejected his mother, a dancer, who was thus forced to seek her livelihood as a prostitute. His father and grandmother, however, had always told him that his mother died soon after he was born. Hate and thirst for revenge, upon his first lover and his father and grandmother are the prime motivations behind Liu

Weizu's conduct. He then meets his first love unexpectedly in Heidelberg, where she has settled down with her family. She informs him of the true reasons for her sudden disappearance. Having thus become aware of his own culpability, Liu Weizu begins to go back to being a well-balanced personality. His feelings of hate and rejection towards the world dwindle away. A return to Taibei to his family seems possible:

"It would be sad if a human being was not able to sever the ties with the past. The hope lies in front, not behind us. Forgiveness is a lofty virtue." (ZHAO SHUXIA: *Chunjiang*. ("Spring River"). Taibei: Luntan Chubanshe 1983, p. 308.)

It is true that this novel is situated to a large extent in Heidelberg. But the solution of Liu Weizu's problems is not in the slightest way conditioned by his confrontation with Western society. The relevant actors of the plot are exclusively Chinese, with the exception of the rather insignificant appearances of Liu Weizu's Mexican bed-fellow Carmen (*Ibid.*, pp. 3-4), the waiter Klaus (*Ibid.*, pp. 26-28) and Elisabeth, the sinophile, Chinese-speaking wife of the physician Wang Hongjun, a student friend of Liu Weizu who, with his two children Micky and Katja has — apparently quite happily — settled down in Heidelberg. (*Ibid.*, pp. 46-49, 106, 258).

In the eyes of commentators in the PRC, "Our Song" is a "fine book" "written for the youth."<sup>109</sup> It

"helps us to understand very well another aspect of life in the world."<sup>110</sup>

It is a medium for awakening the

"Western Chinese" (*yang Zhongguoren*)<sup>111</sup>

or, as they are all but called by Zhao Shuxia.

"the banana Chinese" (*xianqijiaoxing de Zhongguoren*)<sup>112</sup>

who are yellow on the outside, but white inside. A reporter from the People's Daily, the official organ of the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party, ends an article on Zhao Shuxia with a quotation from "Our Song":

<sup>109</sup> HAN WENMIN, *op. cit.*

<sup>110</sup> XIAO JUN, quoted by LU XIANG, LIU SHUSHENG, *op. cit.*, p. 62.

<sup>111</sup> WU TENGHUANG, YANG LIANCHENG, *op. cit.*

<sup>112</sup> ZHAO SHUXIA: *Gutu yu Jiayuan*. Taibei: Jiu Ge Chubanshe 1983, p. 17.

"However good the songs of other people might be, they belong after all to other people. After having studied abroad the profound technical knowledge of other people, we go back again [to our country] in order to create "Our Song." Yes, that will be a song praising the Chinese people and arousing its national soul."<sup>113</sup>

It is obvious that such words appeal to the leaders of the PRCh, in view of the huge masses of Chinese sent abroad to study. These words recall not only the 19th century Chinese slogan "Make Chinese learning the basis, and adopt Western learning for practical purposes" (*Zhong xue wei ti, Xi xue wei yong*), but also the "fangzhen" ("duality norm")<sup>114</sup> of the Chinese Communist Party "*Yang wei Zhong yong*" ("Make foreign things serve China"). They are also of appeal in Taiwan, since there too, it is the case that unconditional and complete Westernization is controversial, although to a lesser degree than in the PRCh.

"Spring River", on the other hand, is interpreted in the Chinese world outside the PRCh as a novel dealing with a general human problem,<sup>115</sup> with the "vexed modern man"<sup>116</sup> as such:

"*'Spring River'* is not the story of a given person or a given country. We could change the name of the hero into James, into Martin, into . . . , and we could situate the plot with few changes in Rome, Taipei or New York: The main content of the story would be unaffected."<sup>117</sup>

In the PRCh, of course, there is a tendency to consider this novel as a denunciation of the pre-modern Chinese and the "decadent, bourgeois" and westernized contemporary Taiwanese society. But Lu Xiang goes a step further and acknowledges:

"The problem raised in the book does not only exist in Taiwan. As a pernicious influence of the old society, it exists also in the New China. Especially during the ten years when the "Gang of Four" ravaged China [1966-76], those unhealthy tendencies such as currying favours (entering by the back door), that hypocrisy, that aggressiveness, that ugliness in human relations . . . caused youths in our country to be at a loss as to what to do, to take a wrong step in life, to bark up the wrong tree."<sup>118</sup>

<sup>113</sup> ZHAI XIANGQIAN, op. cit.

<sup>114</sup> Cf. HARRO VON SENGER: *Recent Developments in the Relation between State and Party Norms in the People's Republic of China*. In: *The Scope of State Power in China*. Ed. STUART R. SCHRAM. London: School of Oriental and African Studies; Hong Kong: The Chinese Univ. Pr. 1985, pp. 177-82.

<sup>115</sup> ZHANG NINGJING: *Qingdan yu Handong — Ping Zhao Shuxia de Xiaoshuo 'Chunjiang'*. In: *Xin Shu Yuekan*, (Taipei), March 1985, p. 46.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid., p. 44.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid., p. 46.

<sup>118</sup> Cf. Note 90, p. 233.

For these disillusioned young Chinese

“‘Spring River’ is a good work with a pedagogical value.”<sup>119</sup>

Before dealing with Zhao Shuxia’s essays, it seems appropriate to point out the fact that Zhao Shuxia manages to have good relations simultaneously with Europe, Taiwan and the PRCh. One of the reasons for her popularity on all sides may be the fact that in her public appearances, she always succeeds in finding things to say that will please the audience.

To her admirers in the PRCh, she says, for example, in a manner which seems almost imploring:

“After all, Chinese are Chinese, no matter how far apart they are . . . Due to the different places where we grew up and where we are living and as a result of the different education we received, there exist necessarily different viewpoints with respect to some matters. But all literary people show the same respect and love for literature, truth and human nature.”<sup>120</sup>

To a reporter from the People’s Daily (Beijing), she says that her work gives voice to the vexation and helplessness of the overseas Chinese, that it stirs up their national self-respect and mirrors the postulate that

“they should strive to go in quest of their own roots, [for] only when they have found their roots as a reliable and stabilizing base, will their existence become meaningful and their life worthwhile.”<sup>121</sup>

In the Taiwanese or pro-Taiwanese milieu, she emphasizes the importance of the freedom of artistic creativity, as well as of a moral consciousness,<sup>122</sup> and she utters sentences such as:

“I firmly adhere to the camp of freedom.”<sup>123</sup>

But

“When I am asked about my basic point of view, my answer consists of just one word: Chinese.”<sup>124</sup>

Statements like the last one might also be welcomed, of course, by the “united front” (*tongyi zhanxian*) strategists within the Chinese Commu-

<sup>119</sup> Ibid., p. 234.

<sup>120</sup> Cf. Note 67, p. 22–23.

<sup>121</sup> ZHAI XIANGQIAN, op. cit.

<sup>122</sup> SHEN QIAN, op. cit.

<sup>123</sup> Cf. Note 112, p. 24.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid., p. 15.

nist Party, although Zhao Shuxia obviously is not in line with them, as can be demonstrated by certain other of her remarks. In a slightly different way, Zhao Shuxia had stated to a Swiss audience for example:

"I think that true humanity is everywhere the same. In my eyes, men are men after all . . . . .  
 By and large, life is everywhere the same. The differences concern only bagatelles . . . . .  
 Of course, one cannot ignore the differences between the East and the West regarding the social system, the cultural background, the concept of relations between old and young people, the way of life and other matters."<sup>125</sup>  
 "There are some differences in external appearances. For instance the Chinese have almost without exception brown eyes and black hairs, whereas the Europeans often are blond and have blue, grey or green eyes."<sup>126</sup>  
 "Since during my days in China I was continuously confronted with the cruelties of war, I particularly appreciate in Switzerland the peace, the quietness and the esteem for the individuality of every person. Therefore, as a Chinese doing literary work in the Chinese language, I have for long been completely assimilated among the Swiss people . . . . .  
 It is my aim that the Chinese readers consider the Europeans and Americans who appear in my book[s] as their friendly neighbours, with whom they are associated, and not as men who think in a different way."<sup>127</sup>

In the preface of *Yixiang Qinghuai* ("Feelings in a Foreign Country"), Zhao Shuxia says that she writes according to this principle:

"When I see something, when I think something, when I feel something, than I write it down, without sedulously striving for perfection, without cutting and polishing it and without intending much seriousness. Free and unrestrained, I confide to the pencil and start to write."<sup>128</sup>

Knowing this, the reader of Zhao Shuxia's works might be well advised to take certain of her statements with a pinch of salt, as for instance:

"All over the world, in general, families are the foundations of society. The men work, the women keep house and the children are full of joy;"<sup>129</sup>  
 "The Western world harbours a religious society. The morals in the community correspond to the guidelines of the Christian spirit;"<sup>130</sup>

<sup>125</sup> Cf. Note 4, pp. 9-10.

<sup>126</sup> ZHAO SHUXIA, Report on her literary work, delivered on June 18, 1984, in the framework of the course of lectures on "China and Switzerland" given by the author at the Faculty of Philosophy (I) of the University of Zürich, p. 2 (unpublished).

<sup>127</sup> Cf. Note 4, pp. 6, 9.

<sup>128</sup> Cf. Note 12, p. 4.

<sup>129</sup> Cf. Note 4, p. 10.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid.

"Every Swiss city and even small town has an indoor and outdoor sports ground and swimming pool as well as a gymnasium, so that the young people can have physical training after school or after work;"<sup>131</sup>

"In Switzerland to dispose of rubbish one must use plastic bags standardized by the government authorities. If one uses bags which do not conform to the standards, the truck gathering the rubbish will not collect it;"<sup>132</sup>

". . . at every turn, Swiss people use flower diplomacy [that is, present flowers to smooth over personal quarrels];"<sup>133</sup>

"In Switzerland, nobody except a millionaire would be so foolish as to have clothes and shoes made to order;"<sup>134</sup>

"In Switzerland, people expect married women to devote themselves completely to housework;"<sup>135</sup>

"Swiss people are really thrifty in this way. What they pay most attention to is saving. To the children in the primary school, the teacher says: 'Don't spend all the pocket money your mother gives you; save it. Thrift is the way to wealth. Who would not like to be a man of wealth?' Of course, all children like to be 'men of wealth.' Hence, they hand over one after the other their tiny pieces of money to the teacher, who himself shirks no effort, keeps accounts with meticulous accuracy and brings all the money to the bank to deposit it. Everybody gets a deposit book and makes one deposit every month. After several years, every primary school pupil has about 100 francs of bank savings, and everybody thinks he is a little 'man of wealth.' It is therefore not accidental that the Swiss people are said to have money. They both 'broaden sources of income' and 'reduce expenditure.' Therefore they get rich as a matter of course;"<sup>136</sup>

"[In Switzerland,] there are no poor people;"<sup>137</sup>

a. s. o. Certainly, all these remarks have an element of truth, but they might not always exhaustively reflect the reality. On the other hand, some of Zhao Shuxia's statements and descriptions, which are at times slightly shocking to the Western or Swiss reader at first glance, show her observant turn of mind, her straightforwardness and her sense of humour, for example:

"The most frightful human relationship is that characterized by misunderstanding;"<sup>138</sup>

<sup>131</sup> ZHAO SHUXIA: *Cifengyuan Suibi* (for details cf. Note 97), p. 170.

<sup>132</sup> Cf. Note 12, p. 103.

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 197.

<sup>134</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 191.

<sup>135</sup> GOH BENG CHOO, *op. cit.*

<sup>136</sup> Cf. Note 12, p. 93.

<sup>137</sup> ZHAO SHUXIA: *Xuefeng Huying Hua Ruishi*. In: *Lianhe Zaobao*, (Singapore), August 9, 1985, p. 21.

<sup>138</sup> Cf. Note 12, p. 203.

"Man is a most complicated animal. If we take one thousand human beings, there will be one thousand different individuals . . . . . But no matter whether they are Chinese or foreigners, and in spite of different cultural backgrounds and different social concepts, they are all animals eating meals and wearing clothes. Human nature is not too different;"<sup>139</sup>  
 "Whoever is born as a woman has no choice and, wherever she turns, she is always a 'house-animal'"<sup>140</sup> [In the German language, the term 'Arbeitstier' ('working animal') is sometimes used in this context];  
 "What Westerners strive for above all else is the earning of money;"<sup>141</sup>  
 "One of the things the Swiss like doing most is hoisting up their national flag;"<sup>142</sup>  
 "Although Zürich is beautiful, it is however, after all, a commercial city, slightly lacking the romantic touch;"<sup>143</sup>  
 ". . . the greatest majority of Swiss young people, like the youngsters of other European countries, consider 'freedom' as the first prerequisite of their existence . . .;"<sup>144</sup>  
 "The basic trend of Swiss society reflects an attitude by which young people everywhere want to realize their 'selves,' and as a result, their whole heart and soul knows only the desire to prove that they are independent individuals belonging to no one;"<sup>145</sup>  
 "The Swiss of the old type are mostly devout believers in a religion. Although conservative youngsters do not oppose religion, they are not sufficiently interested to go to church. For those young people who go 'ahead of the time', religion becomes a subject of jokes. Once, I chatted with some university students. One of them was a student of chemistry called 'Harri.' His fiancée Maya, a future nurse, was also present. Both of them came from old Catholic families and were baptized soon after birth. Maya in her appearance and style of conversation belonged to the 'well-behaved' type, whereas Harri with his unrestrained way of speaking and his humour was the exact opposite of Maya . . . One part of their dialogue referred to religion. I found it most fascinating, and record it here now:

'Harri, for more than two months, I have not gone to church. Please come with me to Mass tomorrow morning,' said Maya in an imploring tone. 'I shall certainly not attend Mass. I prefer to use the time to get some more sleep. The songs which the priests sing are not pleasant to hear, that small wheat cake (the Catholics call it the 'host') is neither sweet nor salty, and besides is tasteless,' answered Harri with a smile on his face as he fumbled with his large beard.

<sup>139</sup> Cf. Note 131, p. 176-77.

<sup>140</sup> ZHAO SHUXIA: *Madelin san Ri You*. In: Huaqiao Ribao, (New York), September 27, 1985.

<sup>141</sup> Cf. Note 12, p. 106.

<sup>142</sup> Cf. Note 41, p. 164.

<sup>143</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 99.

<sup>144</sup> Cf. Note 131, p. 169.

<sup>145</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 166.



Maya, who tried her best not to become angry, said:

'Oh, Harri! How can you talk such nonsense? Have you forgotten that you are a member of our religion, baptized years ago?'

'It is not my fault that I was baptized. It is the fault of my parents. They idle away all that precious time in Church listening to the ravings of these priests . . .'

'Harri . . .', cried Maya, frowning, in order to interrupt Harri's remarks, but Harri had not the slightest intention of stopping. The more he said, the more courageous he became.

'Nietzsche said: 'God is dead.' I am much more progressive than he. I say: 'God was never born.'

Maya shook her head and sighed:

'Oh! Harri, how can you say such things? In the future, you will go to hell.'

Harri burst into laughing.

'Beloved Maya, don't you know how much I would like to go to hell? I don't want to go to heaven at all. In heaven, there are old ladies like my mother who run to church the whole time. How annoying! But hell is really amusing. I'm sure Marilyn Monroe is there. I'll go to see her . . .'

'Harri, you are seized by the devil!' said Maya, trembling with great rage.

This extract from their discussion is representative of the feelings of a part of the youth of Switzerland towards religion. True, there are youngsters who are as conservative and honest as Maya, but there are also youngsters as radical and daring as Harri, who want to do away with all [conventions].<sup>146</sup>

The rich and colourful work of Zhao Shuxia offers the European and Western reader revealing insights into the horizon of Chinese people confronted with an alien culture, and the way they approach their new environment. Zhao Shuxia's writings sometimes suggest possible parallels with German-Turk literature, which also to some extent reveals conflicts arising from the encounter of varying cultures.<sup>147</sup> It is therefore fortunate that German translations of *Women de Ge* ("Our Song"), six short stories and fourteen essays of Zhao Shuxia are now being prepared in Köln and West Berlin. It should, however be noted that these translations are not based on the full Chinese texts, but mostly on shortened versions of the original publications. Not only should the German editors of her works take into consideration the time problems of German readers who rarely enjoy long books but should also not forget the differences in cultural backgrounds. The German reader, will he understand for instance in the case of *Women de Ge*, the ardent wish of Yu

<sup>146</sup> Ibid., pp. 168-69.

<sup>147</sup> ANTON J. WEINBERGER: *Und die Frauen weinten Blut*. In: Die Zeit, (Hamburg), January 24, 1986, p. 65.

Zhiyun's mother to send her daughter abroad for ever? What does he know about the reasons — among others the uncertain political future of Taiwan — for this Chinese kind of 'Republikflucht' (Abandoning their country.)? Will he understand confucianist filial piety inspiring a young woman of the 20th century to show unconditional obedience to her mother and even to sacrifice her love? Anyhow, it will be an important contribution to the German reader of Zhao Shuxia's works to give him the opportunity of getting in touch with value systems different from those usually attributed to the "modern man." "Overseas Chinese literature" is building, in the true sense of this expression, bridges between China and the outside world and is thus not simply a precious new branch of literature for Chinese readers only. It can reveal to Western readers weak and dark points in their culture and civilization, and can help modify persistent trends towards feelings of Western superiority and ignorance of other cultures. Since Zhao Shuxia does not veil the faults of Chinese society, her works, as a whole, convey the full range of human behaviour both Chinese and Western. In the long run, her tendency to paint a rather gloomy picture of the uprooting and forlornness of the Chinese abroad will certainly be counterbalanced by contributions stressing the success, rather than the failure, of the assimilation of the Chinese there. After all, quite a few successful cases actually exist. Chen Ruoxi recently stated, certainly not without reason, that the time is now ripe to open a new page in the development of "overseas Chinese literature" and to show how expatriate Chinese can integrate fully in their host countries.<sup>148</sup> Maybe the children of Zhao Shuxia will write quite different works from those of their mother.

It is incomprehensible that "overseas Chinese literature" as represented by Zhao Shuxia is not discussed in *Chūgoku Gendai Bungaku Jiten* (Encyclopedia of Modern Chinese Literature"). Ed. by MARUYAMA NOBORU, ITŌ TORAMARU and SHINMURA TŌRU. Tokyo: Tōkyōdō Shuppan 1985.

Recently, a conference on the "Commonwealth of Chinese Literature" was convened by Professor HELMUT MARTIN and Professor JOSEPH LAU in Günzburg (Federal Republic of Germany). Papers were presented not only on mainland Chinese literature, but also the Chinese literature of Taiwan, Hong Kong, Malaysia, Singapore, the Philippines, Indonesia and Western Europe. It was an excellent initiative, in that it broke new ground and promoted the recognition by the international academic world of the overseas branch of contemporary Chinese literature.

<sup>148</sup> LU XINGLIANG, ZANG LIGAN, op. cit.