

Spring 1-1-2012

# The Spiritual World of Wang Anyi's *The Song of Everlasting Sorrow*

ChunHui Chuang

University of Colorado at Boulder, rebeccabobo.tw@gmail.com

Follow this and additional works at: [https://scholar.colorado.edu/asia\\_gradetds](https://scholar.colorado.edu/asia_gradetds)

---

## Recommended Citation

Chuang, ChunHui, "The Spiritual World of Wang Anyi's *The Song of Everlasting Sorrow*" (2012). *Asian Languages & Civilizations Graduate Theses & Dissertations*. 7.  
[https://scholar.colorado.edu/asia\\_gradetds/7](https://scholar.colorado.edu/asia_gradetds/7)

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by Asian Languages & Civilizations at CU Scholar. It has been accepted for inclusion in Asian Languages & Civilizations Graduate Theses & Dissertations by an authorized administrator of CU Scholar. For more information, please contact [cuscholaradmin@colorado.edu](mailto:cuscholaradmin@colorado.edu).

**THE SPIRITUAL WORLD OF WANG ANYI'S**  
***THE SONG OF EVERLASTING SORROW***

by

**CHUNHUI CHUANG**

B.A., Tamkang University, 2007

M.A., University of Colorado, 2012

A thesis submitted to the  
Faculty of the Graduate School of the  
University of Colorado in partial fulfillment  
of the requirement for the degree of  
Master of Arts  
Department of Asian Languages and Civilizations  
2012

This thesis entitled:

The Spiritual World of Wang Anyi's *The Song of Everlasting Sorrow*

written by ChunHui Chuang

has been approved for the Department of Asian Languages and Civilizations

---

G. Andrew Stuckey

---

Terry Kleeman

---

Antje Richter

Date \_\_\_\_\_

The final copy of this thesis has been examined by the signatories, and we  
Find that both the content and the form meet acceptable presentation standards  
Of scholarly work in the above mentioned discipline.

**ChunHui Chuang (M.A., Asian Languages and Civilizations)**

**The Spiritual World of Wang Anyi's *The Song of Everlasting Sorrow***

**Thesis directed by Assistant Professor G. Andrew Stuckey**

Wang Anyi 王安忆 (1954 - ), one of the most prominent Shanghai-based female Chinese authors. The hallmark of her literary career is her award winning *Changhen ge* 长恨歌, 1995. *Changhen ge* became available to the English reading world in 2008 when Michael Berry and Susan Chan Egan released their translation under the title *The Song of Everlasting Sorrow: A Novel of Shanghai*. The translation was well received considering *Changhen ge* has previously drawn the attention of western scholars such as David Der-wei Wang, Ban Wang, and Andrew Stuckey who have provided thorough analyses of a variety of themes in this novel including nostalgia, consumerism, and postmodern melancholy.

However, previous analyses of *Changhen ge* have yet to examine portions of this text used by Wang that also have Buddhist meanings. This thesis analyzes discernibly Buddhist influences in Wang's *Changhen ge* that until now have not been brought to light. The thesis begins with an introduction to Wang's life and literary works, followed by a summary of Wang's *Changhen ge*. Next I offer an intertextual analysis of Bo Juyi's poem of the same title "Changhen ge" and examine the poem in the context of Wang's novel. Attention is given to the sentimental aura of the two literary pieces and the essence of Buddhist influence in both texts.

Next, I closely examine the sites of Buddhist influence in Wang's text, specifically analyzing a variety of terms used by Wang that have varying forms of Buddhist intonations, such as *kuhai* (bitter sea 苦海), *yinguo* (cause and effect 因果), *yinyuan* (Hetu-prayaya 因緣) and *jie*

(Kalpa 劫). I also unravel the metaphor of Shanghai as a “bitter sea,” and the unique space of Wu Bridge (Wuqiao) with its ability to rescue lost souls from the “bitter sea.” Bringing to light the Buddhist essence of these words enables readers to recognize new dimensions of the text and the relationships between the characters.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>Chapter One: Introduction.....</b>	<b>1 - 2</b>
<b>Chapter Two: An Introduction to Wang Anyi's Life and Literary Works.....</b>	<b>3 - 10</b>
<b>Chapter Three: A Summary of <i>Changhen ge</i>.....</b>	<b>11 - 15</b>
<b>Chapter Four: A Brief Introduction to Buddhist Religion and Worldview.....</b>	<b>16 - 19</b>
<b>Chapter Five: The Origin and Historical Background of the Title <i>Changhen ge</i>..</b>	<b>20 - 24</b>
<b>Chapter Six: Buddhist Terminology within Wang Anyi's <i>Changhen ge</i>.....</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>1. Shanghai: The Bitter Sea.....</b>	<b>25 - 28</b>
<b>2. Wu Bridge.....</b>	<b>29 - 31</b>
<b>3. <i>Yinguo</i>.....</b>	<b>32 - 34</b>
<b>4. <i>Yinyuan</i> and <i>Jie</i>.....</b>	<b>35 - 41</b>
<b>Chapter Seven: Conclusion.....</b>	<b>42 - 44</b>
<b>Bibliography.....</b>	<b>45 - 47</b>
<b>Appendix.....</b>	<b>48 - 50</b>

## CHAPTER ONE:

### INTRODUCTION

In 1997, the acclaimed Chinese author, Wang Anyi remarked

Fiction is not reality; it is an individual's spiritual world. This world has its own routine, discipline, origin, and its' end-return, the value of the novel sets in the development of a divine world for humans.<sup>1</sup>

The passage offered above is an excerpt from one of thirteen addresses that Wang Anyi presented at Fudan University. While Wang's literary career began in 1978, well after the founding of the PRC and Chinese post-religious era of the 20<sup>th</sup> century; during these addresses she frequently mentions the terms “*guisu* (end-return 歸宿)” and “*shenjie* (divine world 神界).”<sup>2</sup> Both words have a history in Buddhist philosophy and religious worldviews in Chinese culture. Terms such as *ku* (bitterness 苦), *lunhui* (Samsara 輪回), *du* (overcome 渡), *pingchangxin* (ordinary mind 平常心), *yinguo* (cause and effect 因果), *yinyuan* (Hetu-prayaya 因緣), and *jie* (Kalpas 劫) also frequently appear in her literary works.<sup>3</sup>

However, until now, little to no scholarship exists concerning Wang's use of Buddhist terms. Wang Anyi named one of her novellas *Ti du* 剃度 which in English can be translated as

---

<sup>1</sup> Wang Anyi, *Xin ling shijie: Wang Anyi xiaoshui jiang gao* (Shanghai: Fu dan da xue chu ban she, 1997),

<sup>2</sup> Excluding the quote cited above, in the whole thirteen lectures at Fudan University, Wang Anyi mentions “*gui su*” 21 times and “*shenjie*” 37 times. Wang Anyi, *Xiaoshuo jia de 13 tang ke*. (Zhonghe, Taiwan: INK yin ke chu ban you xian gong si, 2007).

<sup>3</sup> Wang Anyi, *Xiang gang de qing yu ai* (Beijing: Zuo jia chu ban she, 1996), *Changhen ge* (Beijing: Zuo jia chu ban she, 2000), *Wo du wo kan* (Taipei, Taiwan: Yi fang chu ban you xian gong si, 2002), *Ti du* (Taipei, Taiwan: Mai tian chu ban you xian gong si, 2002), and *Mi Ni* (Zhonghe, Taiwan: INK yin ke chu ban you xian gong si si, 2003).

*Tonsure*, the shaving of the head, especially to make a shaved patch on the crown of a priest or monk's head.<sup>4</sup> There are ample references to Buddhism that appear in Wang Anyi's many literary works. However, until now this topic has been largely unaddressed in academic literary research.

In an effort to further examine the dynamic influence of Buddhist philosophy and worldview in Wang Anyi's writing, this thesis will provide a thorough reading of one of Wang Anyi's most important novels *Changhen ge* (*The Song of Everlasting Sorrow* 长恨歌) to examine how knowledge of these Buddhist influences deepens our understanding of the novel's meaning, and assists the novel's message to reach a broader audience. Through the use of intertextuality as a means to examine the historical relationship between Bo Juyi and Wang Anyi's *Changhen ge*, the influence of Buddhism in Wang Anyi's *Changhen ge* becomes increasingly apparent. I will then transition to an analysis of the second chapter of *Changhen ge*, and give thorough attention to two of its chapter subheadings "Wu Bridge" and "Shanghai" in order to illustrate the various social and romantic relationships this novel negotiates and how they are influenced by the concepts of "yinguo," "yinyuan," and "jie." To establish a context for these examinations I will begin with a brief introduction to Buddhism, Wang Anyi, and the novel *The Song of Everlasting Sorrow*.

---

<sup>4</sup> Wang, *Ti du*.

## CHAPTER TWO: AN INTRODUCTION TO WANG ANYI'S LIFE AND LITERARY WORKS

Wang Anyi 王安忆, born in 1954 in Nanjing but raised in Shanghai, is considered one of the most influential and innovative women writers in contemporary Chinese literature.<sup>5</sup> Wang Anyi grew up in a family of intellectuals. Her father, Wang Xiaoping 王啸平 (1919-2003) was a well-known dramatist and theatrical director. Her mother, Ru Zhijuan 茹志鹃 (1925-1998) was a noted writer during Mao's era (1942-1979). Just after birth, Wang Anyi was brought to Shanghai by her mother. Throughout Wang Anyi's literary works, she has always identified herself as Shanghainese, a resident hailing from the prestigious and wealthiest district surrounding Huaihai Road 淮海路.

When Wang Anyi reached twelve years old in 1966, she was not permitted to continue her education beyond junior high school owing to the outbreak of the Cultural Revolution,<sup>6</sup> and because her father had been condemned as a Rightist in 1957. Wang Anyi joined other Urban youth (*Zhiqing* 知青)<sup>7</sup> in 1970 and was assigned to become a laborer in Wuhe County 五河县 of Anhui Province 安徽省. The vice-mayor of Wuhe County was a friend of her parents so under

---

<sup>5</sup> For instance, scholar David Der-wei Wang listed Wang Anyi as one of the top twenty influential writers in contemporary China. David Der-wei Wang, *Dang dai xiaoshuo er shi jia*. (Beijing: Sheng huo, du shu, xin zhi san lian shu dian, 2006).

<sup>6</sup> The Cultural Revolution was a socio-political movement from 1966 through 1976 in China.

<sup>7</sup> *Zhiqing* refers to millions of urban youth who were assigned to the countryside during the Cultural Revolution.

her parents' arrangement the vice-mayor looked after her while she was away from her family. Wang Anyi soon began to pursue opportunities to return to Shanghai. To get closer to Shanghai, she managed to get a position in a dance troupe called Xuzhou Performing Arts Troupe in Jiangsu province in 1973 where she was assigned as a musician who played cello in the dance troupe. Wang Anyi also began writing short stories at the age of eighteen while working for the dance troupe, and most of her early literary works were based on personal experiences during the 1960s and 1970s. Eventually this practice of writing led her to her first literary job as an editor for the magazine *Shaonian wenyi* (*Childhood* 少年文艺) upon her return to Shanghai in 1978. This is also the year that her first short story "Pingyuan Shang" (On the Plains 平原上) was published. Soon afterwards another of her short stories "Yu, Sha sha sha" (And the Rain Patters On 雨, 沙沙沙) was published with accolades in *Beijing Literature* magazine in 1980.<sup>8</sup> The same year, now widely recognized as a talented young writer, she was invited to become a member of the Chinese Association of Writers.

In the 1980s, Wang Anyi's vision continued to expand and her literary attention shifted towards the school of fiction categorized as *xungen wenxue* (searching-for-roots literature 寻根文学) and family genealogies. This transformation of her literary concentration resulted from her 1983 trip to attend a universal writers' colloquium in the United States with her mother. At the colloquium, she met multiple Asian writers and these experiences inspired her to publish *Muni tongyou meilijian* (*Mother and Daughter's Joint Voyage to America* 母女同游美丽坚, 1986) which she co-authored with her mother upon their return from the U.S. The book details their

---

<sup>8</sup> *Beijing Literature* magazine was launched on September 10, 1950 as *Beijing wenyi* (*Beijing Literature and Arts* 北京文艺). In 1971, rechristened *Beijing Xinwenyi* (*Beijing New Literature and Arts* 北京新文艺), it became the first literary periodical in Mainland China. It became the present *Beijing Literature* in October, 1980.

experiences and emotional response to the cultural differences they experienced while visiting the United States. These experiences led to the profound discovery of self-identity as a Chinese, as she noted, “when I went into the world and saw how huge it was and how numerous are its inhabitants, only then did I have a slightly more accurate sense of who I was.”<sup>9</sup>

With this sentiment, Wang’s creativity in writing seemed to flow inexhaustibly. She published a series of outstanding works such as *Xiaobao zhuang* (*Small Bao Town* 小鲍庄) in 1985, *Huangshan zhi lian* (*Love on a Barren Mountain* 荒山之恋) in 1986, *Xiaocheng zhi lian* (*Love in a small town* 小城之恋) in 1986, *Jinxiugu zhi lian* (*Brocade Valley* 锦绣谷之恋) in 1987,<sup>10</sup> and “Dixongmen” (“Brothers” 弟兄们) in 1989. *Shushu de gushi* (*Uncle’s Story* 叔叔的故事) published in 1990 is centered on *wo shushu* (my uncle 我叔叔) who sought to reconstruct his life after living in the countryside but discovered that his past was inescapable in the post-Tiananmen era. *Jishi yu xugou* (*Facts and Fictions* 纪实与虚构) in 1993 attempts to explore her maternal genealogy and *Shangxin de Taiping Yang* (*The Sorrowful Pacific* 伤心的太平洋) in 2001 examined her father’s lineage in Singapore. During this period of publication, Shanghai also became a recurring setting for her novels such as *Wo Ai Bier* (*I Love Bill* 我爱比尔) in 1995 and *The Song of Everlasting Sorrow* published in the same year. *The Song of Everlasting Sorrow* traces the personal history of a one-time Miss Shanghai, Wang Qiyao, from the 1940s to her death in the mid 1980s. *The Song of Everlasting Sorrow* has been recognized as one of the most

---

<sup>9</sup> Bian Ying, *The Time is Not Yet Ripe: Contemporary China's Best Writers and Their Stories* (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1991), 223.

<sup>10</sup> *Huangshan zhi lian*, *Xiaocheng zhi lian*, and *Jinxiugu zhi lian* constitute the famed *sanlian* (romance trilogy 三恋) published from 1986 to 1987.

influential pieces of writing in China during the 1990s and received the Fifth Mao Dun Literature Award.<sup>11</sup> This novel has also been adapted into film and television dramas, and a stage play that has been performed widely across Asia.

Known primarily for her short stories, novellas, and novels, Wang Anyi has also been recognized for her studies in literary criticism, literary translation and nonfiction genres. In 2001, she was elected and served as the chair of the Shanghai Writers' Association while teaching Chinese literature at Fudan University. The hectic work-style did not reduce Wang Anyi's productivity in writing. Wang Anyi manages to maintain her routine in writing in getting up early and writing every day. Nowadays, Wang Anyi's literary accomplishments include more than forty publications of novels, short stories, and essays.

In the 1980's some of Wang Anyi's works began to be translated into English. However, in comparison with other major Chinese writers' works available in English, including authors such as Yu Hua 余华 (1960 - ) and Zhang Ailing 张爱玲 (1920 - 1995); Wang Anyi's publications did not begin to become widely available until the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. As a prominent Chinese female author based in Shanghai, Wang Anyi's acclaim has not been missed by scholars of modern Chinese literature. David Der-wei Wang in his chapter "Zhang Ailing zaishengyuan" (Zhang Ailing reincarnated 张爱玲再生缘, 2004)<sup>12</sup> expressed his

---

<sup>11</sup> The Mao Dun Literature Award is considered one of most prestigious literature prizes in China sponsored by the Chinese Writers Association and has been awarded once every four years since its founding in 1981. For More details about the Mao Dun Literature Award and the Top ten ranking, refer to Xizhang Xie, "How does the Mao Dun Literature Award weigh in writers' minds," *Beijing Evening News*, October. 16<sup>th</sup>, 2000.

<sup>12</sup> David Der-wei Wang, "Zhang Ailing zaishengyuan," in *Zai du Zhang Ailing*, edited by David Der-wei Wang, (Jinan: Shandong huabao chubanshe, 2007), 7. For reference on Zhang Ailing and Wang Anyi see Jiwei Xiao, "Can she say no to Zhang Ailing? Detail idealism and woman in Wang Anyi's fiction," *Journal of Contemporary China* 17 (2008): 513-528.

excitement upon discovering traces of Zhang Ailing in Wang Anyi. Wang notes connections between the two authors in traces ranging from the notion of “*Liuyan*” (Gossip 流言) in Wang Anyi’s *The Song of Everlasting Sorrow* Part one Chapter two (also a famous title for an important collection of Zhang Ailing’s essays, *Liuyan [Written on Water 流言, 1945]*), to the anti-romantic narrative voice, the weight on fashion (especially on clothing), the battle-like relationship between men and women, and the story setting of 1940s Shanghai. As a result, David Der-wei Wang categorizes both Zhang Ailing and Wang Anyi’s literary style as *Hai Pai* (Shanghai style 海派). The origin and trademarks of *Hai Pai* literary style as described by David Der-wei Wang include:

The Haipai School comprises writers who assume postures ranging from the newly imported flaneur to the old-style literatus and features a hybrid of trends as far apart as Mandarin Ducks and Butterflies fiction and neoimpressionist sketches. Arising from and nourished by a commercial culture, the Shanghai style is flamboyant and changeable, with dilettantism and frivolity as its twin trademarks. But beneath their flamboyant style lies the writers’ inflamed desire to catch up with time; tear down the ostentatious and frivolous façade of the text, and one finds a desolate city threatened with the menacing power of modernization.<sup>13</sup>

The “Shanghai style” is closely associated with the unique urban consumerism that is mainly promoted by the urbanites of Shanghai who benefit from the advantages of residing in a modern city. In other words, this style of literature is considered as a type of commodity that aims to provide lighthearted entertainment. Wang Anyi’s protagonist in *The Song of Everlasting Sorrow*, Wang Qiyao, acquired the title of “Miss Third Place” in the Miss Shanghai pageant of 1946, her “natural” beauty was discovered by an amateur photographer named Mr. Cheng 程先生, who dedicated his love and support to her until the end of his life. However, Wang Qiyao soon

---

<sup>13</sup> David Der-wei Wang, “Introduction,” in Bangqing Han, *The Sing-Song Girls of Shanghai*, trans. Ailing Zhang and Eva Hung, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), xvii.

becomes mistress to a powerful Nationalist bureaucrat, Director Li 李主任. As in Zhang Ailing's *Fengsuo* (*Sealed Off* 封锁, 1943) which also takes place in 1940s Shanghai, the protagonist, Cuiyuan 翠远 whose beauty, like Wang Qiyao, is described as so "undefined" that even her mother finds it difficult to determine for sure whether she has a long face or round face. Zhang Ailing describes the ambivalent aspect of her characters in this story as neither heroic nor inherently wicked; they are simply imperfect human beings. This statement matches up with Wang Anyi's description of her characters in *The Song of Everlasting Sorrow*. In addition, Wang Qiyao also resembles another Zhang Ailing female character Bai Liusu 白流苏 in *Qing cheng zhi lian* (*Love in a Fallen City* 倾城之恋, 1943). This is especially true in terms of Zhang Ailing's description of how Bai Liusu walks through the empty rooms as she enters the luxury apartment provided by the wealthy businessman, Fan Liuyuan 范柳原 who has just taken her as a mistress.

Wang Anyi and Zhang Ailing are both female authors from Shanghai who achieved popularity in China at a relatively young age by writing works set in Shanghai. Both authors have written screenplays for films and have utilized the ideology of cinema in their texts. Most significantly, Wang Anyi's *The Song of Everlasting Sorrow* shares many of the same themes and narrative structures with Zhang Ailing's publications such as *Sealed Off* and *Love in a Fallen City*. Xudong Zhang discusses the relationship between the two writers' works and notes "Wang Anyi's writing on Shanghai in the 1990s can be regarded as a forceful response to Zhang Ailing's

work in the besieged city half a century ago.”<sup>14</sup> The influence of Zhang Ailing in Wang Anyi’s works is undeniable and recognizable.

Scholarship analyzing Wang Anyi’s *Changhen ge* has addressed topics and themes of nostalgia, consumerism, and postmodern melancholy of the texts. For instance, Ban Wang notes Wang’s *Changhen ge* presents an example of nostalgia narrative which

[A]ffirms a certain practice of the commodity form and critiques the unquestioned embrace of the market among liberals and postmodernists. It does so, interestingly, not by resisting the commodity but by working through it. By evoking a prehistory of the commercial culture in pre-1949 Shanghai which after 1949 persisted in a submerged existence through the socialist era and resurfaced in the post-Mao period, the novel attempts to infuse an aura of authentic experience and lends a historical dimension to the commodity. In Wang’s hands, the timeless mirage of the commodity is transformed into a thoroughly historical trajectory overlaid with accumulations of time and memory.<sup>15</sup>

Ban Wang states that when Shanghai falls into the hands of the revolutionaries, nostalgia arises. Ban Wang further states that “a historical nature of commodified literature that was sweeping through the Chinese literary scene is what prompted many historically minded humanists to turn against it when it resurfaced with a vengeance in the early 1990s.”<sup>16</sup> This statement also applies to Wang Anyi as her literary works are intended to be read against the backdrop of the attack of this popular trend of commodified literature. This reading of nostalgic narrative in Wang Anyi’s *Changhen ge* is also addressed by Michael Berry in the “Afterward” of the *The Song of Everlasting Sorrow: A Novel of Shanghai*. Berry especially points out how in Part three, the

---

<sup>14</sup> Xudong Zhang, “Shanghai Nostalgia: Postrevolutionary Allegories in Wang Anyi’s Literary Production in the 1990s,” *Positions: East Asia Cultures Critique* 8 (2000): 356.

<sup>15</sup> Ban Wang, “Love at Last Sight: Nostalgia, Commodity, and Temporality in Wang Anyi’s *Song of Unending Sorrow*,” *Positions: East Asia Cultures Critique* 10 (2002): 681-682.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 679.

relationship between Wang Anyi and various characters, especially *laokela* (Old Colour 老克腊), functions as a nostalgic reading of old Shanghai. This nostalgia for old Shanghai generates an unexpected return to the popularity of Wang Qiyao. This “Miss Third Place” who is a frequent guest at parties for the younger generation survives as an object of fascination for the youth of the 1980s. Old Colour often expresses his affection for Wang Qiyao as “he hadn’t properly finished out his previous life, was now left with a strange attachment to the past.”<sup>17</sup> However, Wang Qiyao and her nostalgic admirer experience a somewhat abrupt ending, in which Wang Qiyao is murdered by another character, Long Legs, in search for her fortune.<sup>18</sup>

This scholarship has pored deeply into the prose of Wang Anyi’s novels and more specifically into the prose of *Changhen ge*, subjecting the novel to many levels of analysis. However, upon a thorough analysis of the existing literature I realized that there has yet to be an analysis of the text of *Changhen ge* and specific Chinese words used by Wang Anyi that also have discernible Buddhist meaning. Before treating the main textual analysis of Buddhist reading in *The Song of Everlasting Sorrow*, I’ll first summarize the plot of the novel.

---

<sup>17</sup> Wang Anyi, *The Song of Everlasting Sorrow: A Novel of Shanghai*, trans. Michael Berry and Susan Chan Egan (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), 370.

<sup>18</sup> Based on the story, rumor has it that Wang Qiyao holds a certain number of gold bars.

### CHAPTER THREE:

#### A SUMMARY OF *CHANGHEN GE*

Wang Anyi's 1995 novel *Changhen ge* (*The Song of Everlasting Sorrow*) traces the personal history of a one-time Miss Shanghai, Wang Qiyao 王琦瑶 from the 1940's and Wang Qiyao's teen years to her death in the mid 1980s. The novel is divided into three parts. Part one has four chapters, Chapter one establishes the novel in Shanghai with five subsections "longtang" (alleyways 弄堂)<sup>19</sup>, "liuyan" (gossip 留言), "guige" (the young lady's bedchamber 闺阁), "gezi" (pigeons 鸽子), and "Wang Qiyao" 王琦瑶. It is in these Shanghai alleyways that Wang Qiyao matures into a Shanghai teen. The author gives great attention to the manner by which she describes Wang Qiyao's life amongst the cityscape of what Wang Anyi suggests is a throng of a multitude of urban Wang Qiyaos.

Every morning, when the back door squeaks open, that's Wang Qiyao scurrying out with her book bag embroidered with flowers. In the afternoon, when the phonograph plays next door, that's Wang Qiyao humming along with "Song of the Four Seasons." Those girls rushing off to the theater, that's a whole group of Wang Qiyaos going to see Vivien Leigh in *Gone With the Wind*. Running off to the photo studio is a pair of Wang Qiyaos, best friends on their way to have their portrait taken. Sitting in virtually every side room and *tingzijian* is a Wang Qiyao.<sup>20</sup>

Wang Anyi paints Shanghai to be a city bulging with urbanite and uniquely Shanghainese girls coming of age and populating the uniquely Shanghai experience of 1940's China.

---

<sup>19</sup> *Longtang* 弄堂, is a special form of residence that solved the conflict between a large population and limited houses in 1940s Shanghai. Wang Anyi described this form of neighborhoods as the backdrop or the back alleyways of Shanghai where streets and buildings emerge. The apartments' structures in *longtang*s are built virtually on top of one another.

<sup>20</sup> Wang, *The Song of Everlasting Sorrow*, 22.

Through a variety of rhetorical structures Wang Qiyao is socially sculpted and presented as a “typical young lady of the Shanghai longtang.”<sup>21</sup> Her concerns and movements all occur against a living urban cityscape of her multitude of forms. At the age of sixteen a school friendship delivers an unexpected opportunity for glory and fame. She visits a film studio with her classmate Wu Peizhen 吴佩珍. This film studio visit also introduces her to a glamorous world well beyond her immediate longtang. Soon afterwards, Wang Qiyao finds herself being invited to be photographed. Her pictures draw attention and in a fast moving turn of events, she competes in the beauty pageant to become Miss Shanghai with the enthusiastic backing of Jiang Lili 蒋丽莉, Jiang Lili’s mother, and an amateur photographer named Mr. Cheng. The events surrounding the pageant trigger a cascading sequence of social appearances and interactions that forever change Wang Qiyao. She wins third place in the pageant and the attention of a powerful Nationalist bureaucrat, Director Li who in the months after the pageant arranges an opportunity for Wang Qiyao to become his mistress. Wang Qiyao considers her potential life with Director Li to be more desirable than the opportunity of a future married life and she departs the familiar longtang of her youth and reestablishes herself in an apartment rented for her by Director Li.

Though Wang Qiyao’s new world seems to be protected and secluded from the chaotic Shanghai of the mid-to-late 1940s, this secluded life collapses into pieces when Director Li dies in a plane crash amidst the civil war raging between the Nationalist and Communist Parties. Part two of the novel begins with an emotionally numb Wang Qiyao traveling by boat with her Grandmother to her Grandmother’s home in Suzhou. This peaceful tranquil town does not give Wang Qiyao peace. The events of her life have forever changed her and she patiently bides her

---

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 22.

time in Suzhou as but a brief interlude, knowing that she will inevitably return to Shanghai. The refined air of this knowing is recognizably attractive to Deuce 阿二, a young student who becomes enamored of both her stylish airs and also what he sees as her manifest poetry. When Wang Qiyao later returns to Shanghai she works as a nurse in a *longtang* providing shots for neighborhood residents from her longtang apartment clinic. Wang Qiyao's refined manner and exquisite taste in clothing soon piques the interests of two people who quickly become acquaintances, Yanjia shimu (Mrs. Yan 严家师母) and Kang Mingxun 康明逊. Kang is the son of a concubine, though as the only male heir in his family, his relationship with his father's legal wife is closer than with his own biological mother. Nonetheless, Kang Mingxun's status in the family is still unsteady which results in his inability to make his relationship with Wang Qiyao open and formal. Upon discovering the intimate relationship between Wang Qiyao and Kang Mingxun, Mrs. Yan informs Kang Mingxun's family about Wang Qiyao's past. Under pressure from his family, Kang Mingxun quickly retreats from Wang Qiyao's life, leaving her pregnant.

With the shortage of food and limited distribution during the early 1960s in China, Wang Qiyao struggles to survive on inadequate amounts of food.<sup>22</sup> In time, Wang Qiyao unexpectedly reencounters Mr. Cheng, her former photographer and admirer. They reconnect and together plan out their daily meals carefully. This companionship continues after Wang Qiyao gives birth to her daughter, Wei Wei 薇薇. Though Mr. Cheng clearly expresses his feelings for Wang Qiyao, the romantic relationship never fully develops. Jiang Lili (who has also reentered Wang Qiyao's life) seizes every opportunity to express her sentiments towards Mr. Cheng. As Jiang Lili is

---

<sup>22</sup> Though there are limited references to specify the years as the early 1960s, according to previous references to the campaigns of 1957-1958, it is an easy inference for most of the Chinese readership that the chronological historical instance that followed is famine.

taken by cancer, she demands that Wang Qiyao not marry Mr. Cheng. Part two ends with the deaths of Jiang Lili and Mr. Cheng during the period of the Culture Revolution. Unlike Jiang Lili dying of cancer, Mr. Cheng commits suicide due to the psychological pressure resulting from his interrogation at the hands of Red Guards. Aside from being friendless, Wang Qiyao survives this period with Wei Wei to Part three of the novel.

Part three begins as Wei Wei is turning fifteen years old, which declares the background of this stage as 1976's Shanghai. Wei Wei and Wang Qiyao's relationship is peculiar as jealousy and disputes between them simmer. Wei Wei is jealous of her mother's charming feminine nature as it is this quality that she does not possess. Wang Qiyao has always been a leader of fashion, in contrast to Wei Wei who always follows whatever fad is current. Wang Qiyao soon accumulates a group of admirers who recognize her taste in clothing and her elegant glamour. Zhang Yonghong 张永红, one of the group of admirers, introduces Wei Wei's future husband Xiao Lin 小林, a young upper middle class man, to Wang Qiyao. After Xiao Lin and Wei Wei both move to the United States, Wang Qiyao meets Old Colour 老克腊. To Old Colour, Wang Qiyao seems a remnant from old Shanghai. At the beginning, Wang Qiyao struggles with accepting this affair owing to their age difference. However, when Wang Qiyao is finally willing to acknowledge this relationship by inviting Old Colour to a party that she sets up for him, Old Colour does not attend. Meanwhile, Chang Jiao (Long Legs 长脚), Zhang Yonghong's boyfriend, hides the fabrication of his identity and bankrupt financial situation. Long Legs is enticed by the rumor that Wang Qiyao was left a fortune by Director Li. He sneaks into her apartment and attempts to rob her. When Wang Qiyao refuses to surrender her treasure box Long Legs strangles her on her bed. The novel concludes with Wang Qiyao's final vision, a reenactment of the film scene that she had observed when she first visited the film studio as a young girl in Part one of

the novel. However, in this final reenactment she finds herself to be the murdered woman who lies dying.

## CHAPTER FOUR:

### A BRIEF INTRODUCTION TO BUDDHIST RELIGION AND WORLDVIEW

A major argument of this thesis postulates that Wang Anyi's stories are constructed with a range of Buddhist terminology, it goes without saying that at least an introductory knowledge of the basic premises of Buddhism is necessary for grasping the contribution made by this thesis to the study of Bo Juyi 白居易 and Wang Anyi's editions of *Changhen ge*. Buddhism was founded by Siddhaatha Gautama (Shakyamuni Buddha)<sup>23</sup> who was born in India during the fifth century B.C.E. After experiencing a series of complex quasi-religious life changing experiences, Siddhaatha Gautama became a spiritual seeker and religious mendicant. During his life Siddhaatha attained the experience of enlightenment and shortly afterwards became known as a Buddha. Through the process of his enlightenment he gathered a few disciples. Upon attaining enlightenment his disciples and followers who worshipped him increased rapidly and they created a religion based upon his teachings.

The term 'Buddha' is not a proper noun, but a common noun. It means 'an Enlightened One' or 'an Awakened One'. ... In Buddhism.....the title, 'Buddha' can legitimately be applied not only to Siddhaatha, but to anyone who attains enlightenment or awakens to the Dharma (the truth).<sup>24</sup>

The Buddha taught the world that the attraction to and desire for wealth, fame, and sex leads many humans into an experience of suffering that may span many incarnations. The

---

<sup>23</sup> "Saakyamuni means 'the sage from the tribe of the Saakyas'." Masao Abe, "Zen and Buddhism," *Journal of Chinese Philosophy* 3 (1976): 236.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 236.

Buddha's teachings also suggest that suffering is "the essence of existence"<sup>25</sup> and a mandatory process in life. Birth, aging, illness, and death also contribute to the experience of suffering and they inevitably come one after another. Further, these sufferings ultimately help people to see that the delusion or a dream-like state created by the world and human desire is not real.

According to the Buddha's teachings once people awaken from this delusion or dream they can then reenter "the realm of desires," incarnation, reincarnation, and passage to celestial heaven becomes possible.

For the purpose of examining the influence of Buddhist thoughts in Wang Anyi's literary works, it is important to understand the Buddhist concept that "birth itself is the root of suffering."<sup>26</sup> The process of aging, sickness, pain, and death are inevitable while being alive. These sufferings terminate only when one is totally free of desires. This notion of becoming free of desire is acquired through the realization of the world's emptiness. When one truly comprehends this notion of emptiness, the state of enlightenment is attained.

It has been stated that a "Life of Buddha," similar to that of Asvaghosha's great poem, was brought to China as early as the year 70 A.D. From this date, for 600 or 700 years following, a succession of Buddhist monks or priests continued to arrive in that country.<sup>27</sup>

Historically, Buddhism was patronized by many Chinese emperors after the year 165 C.E., Buddhism became a dominant religion and culture which ultimately led to widespread Buddhist influence in Chinese society. Chinese Buddhism developed a large number of followers,

---

<sup>25</sup> JeeLoo Liu, *An Introduction to Chinese Philosophy: From Ancient Philosophy to Chinese Buddhism* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Pub, 2006), 212.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 212.

<sup>27</sup> Samuel Beal, *Buddhism in China* (London, 1884), 90.

disciples, and monks who through the centuries came to produce a large body of Chinese Buddhist literature. As Halperin remarks, “far from being pushed to the margins of Chinese culture, [Buddhism] became even more a part of everyday elite Chinese life.”<sup>28</sup> The remarkable establishment of Buddhism in its Chinese setting has long been a subject of fascination for scholars of Buddhism and Sinologists, who have researched various aspects of Chinese Buddhism, such as philosophy and doctrines, textual material, social and institutional organization, art, economy, and so on.

Buddhism suffered in China after 1949. According to Holmes Welch’s *Buddhism Under Mao*,

Until the Cultural Revolution began in 1966, it was the policy of the Chinese Communist Party to protect Buddhism, while at the same time keeping it under control and utilizing it in foreign policy. Yet in the first year after Liberation there were places in China where monasteries were destroyed, monks were beaten or killed, copies of the Buddhist canon were burned, and sacred images were melted down for their metal. In these places the sangha or Buddhist clergy, already worried about the effects of land reform, was reduced to “a state of terror.”<sup>29</sup>

After Mao Zedong's death in 1976 the Communist Party minimized the oppression of religion, and Buddhism made a slow comeback. However, Buddhist institutions restored in the post 1976 era have been formalized and operate under the control of the Chinese government, through a governmental agency entitled the Buddhist Association of China.

---

<sup>28</sup> Mark Halperin, *Out of the Cloister: Literati Perspectives on Buddhism in Sung China, 960-1279* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Asia Center, 2006), 26.

<sup>29</sup> Holms Welch, *Buddhism Under Mao* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1972), 85-86.

In time Buddhist concepts and terminologies were infused by Chinese culture and expressed in various interpretations and usage.<sup>30</sup> For example, the term “*Huangquan* (Yellow Spring 黃泉)” became a popular usage for *diyu* (the mythological Chinese realm of the dead 地獄) instead of its direct relationship with Buddhism.<sup>31</sup> Under such circumstances, it becomes complicated to define the origin of numerous terms or to categorize them into a single religious group. However, owing to the dedication of Sinologists, Buddhist scholars, and monks, there are detailed studies, manuscripts, and dictionaries as resources to trace the usage of certain words and their historical background to Buddhism. With these references, studying the impact of Buddhism in Wang Anyi’s works is more accessible and convincing, as Wang Anyi mentions words like *kuhai* (bitter sea), *lunhui* (Samsara), *du* (overcome), *pingchangxin* (ordinary mind), *yinguo* (cause and effect), *yinyuan* (Hetu-prayaya), and *jie* (Kalpas) repeatedly within her literary publications. Before further developing the reading of Buddhism in Wang Anyi’s *The Song of Everlasting Sorrow*, I’ll first provide an intertextual analysis of Bo Juyi 白居易 and Wang Anyi’s editions of *Changhen ge*.

---

<sup>30</sup> The two main branches of Buddhism in China are Hīnayāna and Mahāyāna. Hinayana Buddhism is more prevalent to the south of China as it spread South and East of China; whereas Mahayana Buddhism spread north and east through India, China, Korea, and Japan. I focus mainly on Mahayana Buddhist terminology and philosophy as northern China embraced mainly the Mahayana tradition.

<sup>31</sup> Shengyan and Douglas Gildow. *Orthodox Chinese Buddhism: A Contemporary Chan Master's Answers to Common Questions* (Elmhurst, N.Y.: Dharma Drum Publications, 2007), 197-198.

## CHAPTER FIVE:

### THE ORIGIN AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF THE TITLE *CHANGHEN GE*

The novel shares its name with the Tang Dynasty poem also entitled “Changhen ge” (The Song of Everlasting Sorrow 長恨歌) by Bo Juyi (772-846).<sup>32</sup> Bo’s epic poem written in 809 begins with the author’s criticism of a historical catastrophe stemming from a ruler’s longing for a beautiful woman, which ultimately distracts the ruler from governing and leads to the downfall of his empire. Specifically, the poem addresses the love story of Emperor Xuanzong (685-762)<sup>33</sup> and Imperial Consort Yang (719-756).<sup>34</sup> The poem goes on to describe how the astonishingly beautiful Yang makes Emperor Xuanzong believe his celestial wishes have been answered. The desire of Emperor Xuanzong for Imperial Consort Yang leads the emperor to lavish her with exclusive attention and afford her exceptional privileges. These privileges also extend to her family, bringing them wealth and power. The poem then describes the outbreak of the An Lushan Rebellion (755-763) which forced the Emperor to flee the capital and led to the execution of Imperial Consort Yang. The final section of the poem describes the devastated Emperor Xuanzong who is constantly in mourning for Yang and how he demanded that a Daoist Master travel to the island of immortals to meet with Yang. The Daoist brought two tokens of

---

<sup>32</sup> Bo Juyi was well known for writing using colloquial language so that his works were more accessible to the common citizens.

<sup>33</sup> Also known as Tang Minghuang or Emperor Ming of Tang.

<sup>34</sup> Also known as Yang Yuhuan or Yang Guifei.

Yang's love back to Emperor Xuanzong as a reminder of their everlasting love.<sup>35</sup> Thus, the poem closes with the sorrow of their eternal parting.

Bo Juyi was a famous poet known for his talent for writing and his devotion to Buddhism during the mid-Tang Dynasty. Within "The Song of Everlasting Sorrow," the Buddhist terminology of *yinguo*, the concept of *lunhui*,<sup>36</sup> and *tianshang renjian* can be recognized.<sup>37</sup>

The first couplet of Bo Juyi's poem expresses the *yinguo* notion as

China's Emperor, craving beauty that might shake an empire.<sup>38</sup>  
Was on the throne for many years, searching, never finding.<sup>39</sup>

Here, Bo Juyi implies that Emperor Xuanzong's craving to indulge his appreciation for beautiful women causes the fall of both ruler and empire as in the following couplet it reads

The Forbidden City, the nine-tiered palace, loomed in the dust.<sup>40</sup>  
From thousands of horses and chariots headed southwest.<sup>41</sup>

Other causes for the fall of both ruler and empire also include the following fact that Emperor Xuanzong has been searching for a beauty for some time but in vain. The accumulation of his

---

<sup>35</sup> The two tokens were a golden hair pin and inlaid box.

<sup>36</sup> In Japanese Shinto has its official term called "Yomi." In Chinese Buddhism, the Yellow Springs is the mythological Chinese realm of the dead which was believed to be located underneath the earth.

<sup>37</sup> *Yinguo* is one of the Buddha's seven modes of discourse. William Edward Soothill and Lewis Hodous. *A Dictionary of Chinese Buddhist Terms: With Sanskrit and English Equivalents and a Sanskrit-Pali Index* (London: K. Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., 1937), 172.

<sup>38</sup> 漢皇重色思傾國。Han dynasty is only a disguise to avoid literary inquisition; the Tang Dynasty is the actual dynasty. Cyril Birch and Donald Keene, Eds., *Anthology of Chinese Literature* (New York: Grove Press, 1965), 266. All the translations for Bo's poem are translated by Witter Bynner.

<sup>39</sup> 御宇多年求不得。Birch and Keene, *Anthology of Chinese Literature*, 266.

<sup>40</sup> 九重城闕煙塵生。Ibid., 266.

<sup>41</sup> 千乘萬騎西南行。Ibid., 266.

eagerness and frustration from searching for a beauty lead to the Emperor Xuanzong “not attending the morning court”<sup>42</sup> once Imperial Consort Yang is recognized as the loveliest women in the empire and is “selected to stand at the side of the emperor.”<sup>43</sup> Additionally, Imperial Consort Yang, another cause herself, results in “her sisters and brothers all were given titles”<sup>44</sup> and “She brought to every father, every mother through the empire, happiness when a girl was born rather than a boy.”<sup>45</sup> These results in turn also stimulate the cause for the palace looming in dust and the imperial court fleeing to the southwest. Likewise, the indulgence of Emperor Xuanzong in Imperial Consort Yang also leads to the

But thirty miles from the capital, beyond the western gate,  
The men of the army stopped, not one of them would stir,  
Till under their horses' hoofs they might trample those moth-eyebrows...<sup>46</sup>

The abundant references to Buddhist *yinguo*, continuing after Imperial Consort Yang's death, as her death led Emperor Xuanzong “clung to the spot [Yang's palace] and would not turn away”<sup>47</sup> and the request for a “Taoist priest to see if he could find her [Yang].”<sup>48</sup>

According to scholar Chen Yunji, the constant experience of *yinguo* between Emperor Xuanzong and Imperial Consort Yang, and between Emperor Xuanzong and his subjects also

---

<sup>42</sup> 從此君王不早朝. Ibid., 266

<sup>43</sup> 選在君王側. Ibid., 266.

<sup>44</sup> 遂令天下父母心. Ibid., 266.

<sup>45</sup> 不重生男重生女. Ibid., 266.

<sup>46</sup> 西出都門百餘里. 六軍不發無奈何, 宛轉蛾眉馬前死. Ibid., 266.

<sup>47</sup> 到此酬躇不能去. Ibid., 266.

<sup>48</sup> 遂教方士殷勤覓. Ibid., 266.

convey the Buddhist concepts of *lunhui*.<sup>49</sup> *Lunhui* can also be understood as “the realm of mortality.”<sup>50</sup> In Buddhist philosophy and worldview mankind is destined to rotate through an almost endless cycle of life and death, rebirth and redeath within the realm of desires, also known as *liu dao* (six ways 六道).<sup>51</sup> In Bo Juyi’s “The Song of Everlasting Sorrow,” upon Imperial Consort Yang’s death, she passed from the realm of desires and then ascended to the mountain of the celestial beings.<sup>52</sup> However, she was able to re-connect with Emperor Xuanzong later through the efforts of a traveling Daoist priest’s spirit mentioned above. Nonetheless, the poem ends with the declaration of their *yinguo* and fate as suggested by the poem’s final couplet which when translated reads

Even ancient heaven and earth in time will cease.  
The sorrow of this parting goes on without end.<sup>53</sup>

This analysis of Bo Juyi’s poem suggests a strong connection between Bo Juyi and Buddhism. Additionally, Wang Anyi’s decision to select the same title for her work indicates “a clear but complex intertextual relationship between Bo Juyi’s poem and her novel.”<sup>54</sup> Further, Wang Anyi refers directly to Bo Juyi and his “The Song of Everlasting Sorrow” seven times in

---

<sup>49</sup> Chen Yunji, *Tangshi zhong de Fojiao sixiang* (Taiwan: Shang ding wen hua chu ban she, 1993), 132.

<sup>50</sup> Soothill and Hodous, *A Dictionary of Chinese Buddhist Terms*, 196.

<sup>51</sup> *Liu dao*, the six ways or conditions of sentient existence, which include the god domain, the jealous god domain, the human domain, the animal domain, the hungry ghost domain, and the hell domain. Ibid., 139, 196.

<sup>52</sup> The mountain of the celestial beings (*xianshan* 仙山). Chu Binjin, *Bo Juyi shige shangxi ji* (Cheng du: Ba shu shu she, 1990), 90.

<sup>53</sup> 天長地久有時盡, 此恨綿綿無絕期. Birch and Keene, *Anthology of Chinese Literature*, 266.

<sup>54</sup> G. Andrew Stuckey, *Old Stories Retold: Narrative and Vanishing Pasts in Modern China* (Landam, Md: Lexington Books Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2010), 113.

her novel.<sup>55</sup> Upon analyzing Wang Anyi's choice of titles for her literary works, from her first short novella, "And the Rain Patters On" (1979), to *Peach Flowers in Blossom* (2004), *Song of Everlasting Sorrows* is the only title she borrows from an already existing literary piece. Evidently, Wang Anyi's decision on selecting the same title from a past literary work is not a standard practice in her writing. When Wang Anyi was engaged in a dialogue with Zhang Xinying, a Professor of literary criticism from Fudan University, she cites one of her friends whom she regards as a model: he weighs the importance of a book title so profoundly that it takes him months in naming the title of his upcoming book.<sup>56</sup> Praising her friend as a model further indicates her agreement of the importance of naming a title of a book. Considering all factors, the title *The Song of Everlasting Sorrow* is not a random choice by Wang Anyi, but most likely is the outcome of cautious consideration. Additionally, Wang Anyi's decision to name her novel *The Song of Everlasting Sorrow* not only strongly links the sentimental aura of the two literary pieces but further bonds the Buddhist influences within the two texts.

---

<sup>55</sup> Wang, *The Song of Everlasting Sorrow*, 155, 431, 434-435, 437-438, and 440.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 246.

## CHAPTER SIX:

### BUDDHIST TERMINOLOGY WITHIN WANG ANYI'S *CHANGHEN GE*

#### 1.

#### SHANGHAI: THE BITTER SEA

To further analyze the intertextual correlation of Buddhist influence between both Wang Anyi and Bo Juyi's *The Song of Everlasting Sorrow*. I will offer a thorough analysis of the novel's plot beginning with the most palpable and outstanding example, which provides a description of Shanghai as the "Bitter Sea." In Charles Li's book *The Bitter Sea: Coming of Age in a China Before Mao*, he examines the term "Bitter Sea" carefully and describes it as follows:

"Bitter sea" is the literal translation of the Chinese expression *ku hai*, which means "life and the human condition." The metaphor originated in India and entered the Chinese language through Buddhism, which preaches that insatiable human desires make life bitter like brine, and that the endlessness of human suffering resembles an open sea: grief and sorrow like water everywhere.<sup>57</sup>

We see a comparable metaphor to Li's concept described above in *The Song of Everlasting Sorrow*, Wang Anyi inscribes Shanghai as a "city like a dried-up sea, where the buildings are ships stranded on a forest of coral reefs. How many people are suffering here?"<sup>58</sup> Thus, Wang Anyi describes Shanghai as a sea where people are suffering in the barren landscape's bitterness. This allegory could also be observed in one of her novellas entitled

---

<sup>57</sup> Charles N. Li, *The Bitter Sea: Coming of Age in a China Before Mao* (New York: HarperCollins, 2008), x. Also Soothill and Hodous, *A Dictionary of Chinese Buddhist Terms*, 94.

<sup>58</sup> Wang, *The Song of Everlasting Sorrow*, 21.

“Wuding shang de tonghua” (The Fairytale on the Roof 屋顶上的童话, 2000) which states “Shanghai, this enormous sea...people living in it are like stiff, motorized, fish who struggle keenly for survival and who also live on in degradation.”<sup>59</sup> In this passage Wang Anyi depicts Shanghai’s residents as human beings who are like fish “who live on in degradation” under the sea but cannot survive without living in it.

In *The Song of Everlasting Sorrow*, though the ostensible purpose of the Miss Shanghai Pageant is to raise money for flood victims, this campaign reflects the hidden greediness and desire for fame of many of Shanghai’s residents. For instance, Jiang Lili acquires more time to be with Mr. Cheng by assisting Wang Qiyao with the Pageant, Mr. Cheng’s affection toward Wang Qiyao is revealed and he anticipates a positive answer by backing up Wang Qiyao throughout the campaign, and Director Li develops a desire for Wang Qiyao and obtains her to become one of his mistresses. Wang Qiyao herself becomes addicted to glamorous living and designer clothing, a time under the spotlight and the center of Shanghai’s attention, and a higher quality living standard and residence (Alice Apartment) provided by Director Li. Shanghai, the bitter sea, gives rise to insatiable human desires which compel Wang Qiyao, Mr. Cheng, Jiang Lili, and Director Li to live on in degradation. The bitterness and dangers of this alluring Shanghai are depicted by Wang Qiyao’s grandmother

[Wang Qiyao] the poor child had set off on a crooked beginning that would not be easy to straighten out...It would be much better for a woman not to be conscious of her beauty. If only she could be kept in the dark for a few years, by then the danger would have passed. Unfortunately, people in a place like Shanghai are always vying to lavish compliments on pretty girls and tell them how beautiful they are. They seduce you into believing that everything is wonderful, that the good times will never end. They take you with them into this dreamland; but

---

<sup>59</sup> Wang. *Ti du*, 208. Translation by ChunHui Chuang in April 2011.

people do not easily give up their dreams, even after circumstances have changed.<sup>60</sup>

It becomes clear that the description of Shanghai as the bitter sea also links to the Buddhist elucidation of the concept of “insatiable human desires.”<sup>61</sup> *A Dictionary of Chinese Buddhist Terms* offers a definition for desires in Buddhist terminology, which are categorized into five domains.

The five desires, arising from the objects of the five senses, things seen, heard, smelt, tasted, or touched. Also, the five desires of wealth, sex, food-and-drink, fame and sleep.<sup>62</sup>

Wang Qiyao is a typical daughter of any of Shanghai’s *longtangs*, who was born to an ordinary family. Eventually through a series of contests she was able to be named Miss Third. Shanghai, known as “the Paris of the Orient,” kindles Wang Qiyao’s desires for fame and wealth. Other characters also reveal their desires rapidly. Jiang Lili and her mother both seek popularity by helping Wang Qiyao campaign for the title of Miss Shanghai, and Mr. Cheng’s enduring support is offered as a way of attracting Wang Qiyao’s affection for him.

Wang Anyi writes that in Shanghai

There is a panicky kind of energy, like that of a man so hungry he no longer cares what he eats. This leads to ill-considered actions, where one fails to mind the consequences, like a moth throwing itself into the flame without the slightest regret.<sup>63</sup>

---

<sup>60</sup> Wang, *The Song of Everlasting Sorrow*, 146.

<sup>61</sup> See note 57.

<sup>62</sup> Soothill and Hodous, *A Dictionary of Chinese Buddhist Terms*, 121.

<sup>63</sup> Wang, *The Song of Everlasting Sorrow*, 17.

For Wang Anyi, there are countless ladies who are eager to be Miss Shanghai without considering the consequences. In the beginning of the story Wang Anyi already offers clues to the reader that those who live as slaves to desire will eventually be consumed by the consequences of their actions “like a moth throwing itself into the flame.”

It is a similar panicky energy that later leads Long Legs to kill Wang Qiyao at the conclusion of the novel. Long Legs, like Wang Qiyao, is also the victim of desires in this bitter sea. He was born in a working class family and although his family lives in Shanghai, he feels like an out-of-towner due to his poverty. Walking on the street at night in Shanghai Wang Anyi writes that, Long Legs “felt like a fish trapped inside it; no matter how hard he swam, he couldn’t escape.”<sup>64</sup> To fulfill his desires to escape the net and maintain an existence in Shanghai, in Long Legs’s need for wealth, he murders Wang Qiyao as a way to accomplish his goals. The lure of Shanghai stimulates the characters’ desires in this novel which leads to the characters’ to strive for survival in this “Bitter Sea.”

---

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., 414.

## 2.

### WU BRIDGE

The subheading Wu Bridge (Wuqiao 郛桥) is located in Chapter one in Part two of Wang Anyi's *The Song of Everlasting Sorrow*. The description of Wu Bridge by Wang Anyi is

Wu Bridge is the kind of place that exists specifically to be a haven for those trying to escape from the chaos of the world.<sup>65</sup>

Bridges are the principal feature of this place, its very soul. To outsiders, they suggest the Buddhist idea of being ferried to the other shore. Wu Bridge is a place of compassion.<sup>66</sup>

Wang Anyi continues to indicate that

Wu Bridge is surrounded by waterways, but it is not isolated, like an island in the sea; it is rather a quiet enclave in a noisy world... The sea is a place without hope: what happens there is dictated by fate. But canals open up a way out of those places that are without hope; setting up a visible truth to stand against fate, they are easygoing and come-at-able. Compared to islands, places like Wu Bridge are more knowing, more prosaic, more willing to compromise. We can believe in them without sacrificing our earthly happiness, a crude happiness far removed from any splendor. This is a happiness that does not require the accompaniment of elegant music, but grows out of the pleasures of everyday living. Wu Bridge hovers, marvelously poised, between the philistine world and the realm of enlightenment. It is hard to tell to which side the balance is tilted. Places like these are here to put a crimp in society's vanity, but also to alleviate its sense of hopelessness, maintaining a delicate equilibrium. Once or twice in our lives, we arrive by some miracle at a place like Wu Bridge, where we can recompose ourselves.<sup>67</sup>

---

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 141.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., 142.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., 142-143.

The passages offered above show that only by reaching through Wu Bridge can those human beings who were living in the bitter sea be rescued from its bitterness. In keeping with the abundance of Buddhist philosophy and expressions in the above three passages, Wang Anyi compares Wu Bridge with the shore of the bitter sea. Further, Wu Bridge functions as a haven for the protagonist Wang Qiyao to flee from the chaos of Shanghai, the space of Wu Bridge resonates with the Buddhist idiom “kuhai wubian, huitou shi an” (the bitter sea [of existence] has no end; [but just] turn your head, and there is the shore 苦海無邊, 回頭是岸.)”<sup>68</sup> With the determination to put a crimp in society's vanity, Wang Anyi gives Wang Qiyao a transitive juncture to be rescued from Shanghai’s bitterness. Wu Bridge offers Wang Qiyao a ground on which to search for a peaceful mind, and acquiring that peaceful mind she becomes more capable of rejecting the demands and seductions of the external world. This notion coincides with the Buddhist phrase “wu nian wei zong (no-longing as a guiding principle 無念為宗)”<sup>69</sup> and can be understood as experience which strengthens one’s ability to resist while encountering the attractions, desires, or persuasions from the outer surface. The Buddhist terms “*bi’an* (the other shore 彼岸),” “*du* (ferry 渡),” “*fo* (Buddha 佛),” “*jingdi* (quiet enclave 淨地),” “*suming* (fate 宿命),” and “*kuhai*” can be located throughout the whole chapter. These Buddhist phrases are

---

<sup>68</sup> Charles, Holcombe. *A History of East Asia: From the Origins of Civilization to the Twenty-First Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 70.

<sup>69</sup> “A Chinese term for detachment is “*wu nian*” 無念, which literally means “no thought.” This does not signify the literal absence of thought, but rather the state of being “unstained” (*bu ran* 不然) by thought. Therefore, “detachment” is being detached from one's thoughts. It is to separate oneself from one's own thoughts and opinions as to not be harmed mentally and emotionally by them.” Philip B. Yampolsky, *The Platform Sutra of the Sixth Patriarch: The Text of the Tun-Huang Manuscript with Translation, Introduction, and Notes* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1967), 130. Also Fang Litian, *Fojiao zhexue* (Beijing: Zhongguo renmin daxue chu ban she, 1986), 372.

inherent in Wang Anyi's construction of Wu Bridge as a place of escape and shelter in Wang Anyi's *The Song of Everlasting Sorrow*.

### 3.

#### *YINGUO*

The popular Chinese notion of destiny has long been associated with *yinguo* and *yinyuan* which derive from Buddhism. The term *yinguo* as mentioned previously in chapter five of this thesis is a Buddhist term and is literally translated as “cause and effect.” There are ample references in Wang Anyi’s *Changhen ge* related to this term. For example, in Part one, Wang Qiyao takes third place in the Miss Shanghai pageant, and this becomes the cause to generate an affair with Director Li who provided her a spacious apartment (Alice Apartment) in Shanghai. Meanwhile, during the beauty pageant, Mr. Cheng reveals his affection for Wang Qiyao, which is the cause that leads to the dispersion and gap between Wang Qiyao, Jiang Lili, and Mr. Cheng. Wang Qiyao and Jiang Lili’s friendship scatters when Jiang Lili realizes Mr. Cheng’s fondness for Wang Qiyao but not herself. This dispersion between the three of them further motivates Wang Qiyao to accept the suggestion of moving into the luxurious Alice Apartment from Director Li as Jiang Lili is no longer baking her up, and the irresistible attachment to fame and wealth has rooted inside herself.

The beginning of Part Two describes how Wang Qiyao is given a chance to escape by Wu Bridge after the death of Director Li from a plane crash and the outbreak of the Huaihai 淮海 Battle in Shanghai. Here, the cause of *yinguo* can be seen as because Wang Qiyao’s heart is set on wealth, comfort, and fame, she did not grasp the opportunity (Wu Bridge) to escape the *kuhai*. The admiration from Deuce is also a *yin* as he constantly reminds her of the beauty and glory of her past.

After getting her [Wang Qiyao] hair permed, . . . Her good clothes came out of the bottom of the chest and were updated with minor alterations. One by one, she took out her tweezers, eyebrow pencil, and powder compact and laid them in front of the mirror, where she tarried longer and longer. The person in the mirror, an old friend as well as a new acquaintance, communicated with her.<sup>70</sup>

Deuce awakened Wang Qiyao's consciousness of her own beauty and aroused her allure to go back to Shanghai. This, in turn, leads to the accumulation of ample instances of *yinguo* in Wang Qiyao's life. Without Deuce, the *guo* of making the acquaintance of Kang Mingxun, the father of Wang Qiyao's child (Wei Wei) could not be. Similarly, Wang Qiyao's relationship with Director Li caused Kang Mingxun's family to pressure Kang Mingxun to retreat from Wang Qiyao's life. The lack of a father in Wei Wei's childhood results in a peculiar relationship as jealousy and disputes between Wei Wei and Wang Qiyao simmer.

“Wei Wei” is also the opening of the last chapter which concludes with “*Biluo Huangquan* (down to the Yellow Springs 碧落黄泉).” In this section, *yinguo* occurs when Wei Wei brings her friend, Zhang Yonghong, into Wang Qiyao's life. Zhang Yonghong, one of Wang Qiyao's many admirers, introduces Xiao Lin, Long Legs and Old Colour to Wang Qiyao. Xiao Lin became Wei Wei's husband and soon after their marriage, they moved to the United States. With the company of many admirers, Wang Qiyao was invited to parties and events.

Wang Qiyao's apartment had come alive with people, mostly young friends of hers. Pretty, refined, bright, and fashionable: just seeing them there was enough to make one light up with joy. They appeared in Peace Lane like a flock of golden phoenixes alighting in a nest of grass. Staring at them as they disappeared into Wang Qiyao's apartment, the neighbors marveled at her ability to bring together the best and brightest of Shanghai's fashionable elite. . . . Sometimes even Wang Qiyao herself wondered if time had stopped and everything was still as it had

---

<sup>70</sup> Wang, *The Song of Everlasting Sorrow*, 169.

been forty years before. It was easy to get carried away, to focus on the pleasure at hand and leave reality behind.<sup>71</sup>

Zhang Yonghong, Old Colour, and Long Legs brought back the illusion of the allure of Shanghai to Wang Qiyao's life. This bitter sea reentered Wang Qiyao's life and seduced Wang Qiyao from reality temporarily. However, Long legs sneaks in Wang Qiyao's Apartment, as he believes the rumor that Wang Qiyao's glorious past has left her with a secret saving of gold. Long Legs' thoughts and actions lead to the death scene of Wang Qiyao, as he strangles her to death on her bed.

If Wang Qiyao did not participate in the Miss Shanghai pageant, she would not encounter Director Li, or move into the luxury apartment provided by him. Then, Wang Qiyao's relationship with Kang Mingxun would not be doomed and Wei Wei would have a father, and further the peculiar tension between Wang Qiyao and Wei Wei would not occur. If Wei Wei's relationship with Wang Qiyao were more intimate, she might not leave Shanghai and follow Xiao Lin so quickly and eagerly. Moreover, if Wei Wei did not introduce Zhang Yonghong to Wang Qiyao, there would not be the romance with Old Colour, the illusion of the past Shanghai, or Long Leg's murder that resulted in her death. These illustrations of *yingguo* are also linked with the Buddhist concept of *yinyuan* and *jie*.

---

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., 397.

#### 4.

### *YINYUAN AND JIE*

*Yinyuan*, is a Sanskrit word which means “the direct en-act of your/their *guo* (fruit 果).”<sup>72</sup> The concept of Hetu-prayaya has been widely utilized in East Asian countries, which intermingle with local rituals and cultures; nevertheless, it is still linked closely with the Buddhist terminology of *suming* (fate 宿命). *Yinyuan* is constantly utilized by Hinayana and Mahāyāna Buddhism.<sup>73</sup>

The most common meaning of *yinyuan* in Buddhism refers to the “*Shier yinyuan* 十二因緣 (Twelve Hetu-prayayas)” which is the cycle of twelve causes or links in the chain of existence. The twelve *yinyuan* represent “old age and death, (re)birth, existence, laying hold of, love and desires, receiving, feeling and touching, the six senses, name and form, the six forms of receptions, actions, and un-enlightenment.”<sup>74</sup> This cycle is not commanded by human beings themselves but from the outside. A Chinese proverb states, “A hundred years’ endeavor brings about crossing by the same ferry; A thousand years’ endeavor brings about sleeping on the same

---

<sup>72</sup> Dan Lusthaus. *Buddhist Phenomenology: A Philosophical Investigation of Yogācāra Buddhism and the Ch’eng Wei-shih lun* (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2002), 498.

<sup>73</sup> See note 30. The two main branches of Buddhism in China are Hīnayāna and Mahāyāna. The Chinese monk Yijing who visited India in the 7th century, distinguishes Mahāyāna from Hīnayāna by claiming that “those who venerate the bodhisattvas and read the Mahāyāna sūtras are called the Mahāyānists, while those who do not perform these are called the Hīnayānists.”

<sup>74</sup> Soothill and Hodous, *A Dictionary of Chinese Buddhist Terms*, 43.

pillow.” Wang Anyi has quoted this proverb more than eight times throughout her works.<sup>75</sup>

Resting on the same pillow signifies the unyielding *yinyuan* between these two people. However, maintaining this spiritual tie relies on the omen of this *yinyuan*. In Buddhism, there are two sides which follow the *yinyuan*: shan yuan (good side 善緣) and er yuan (evil side 惡緣).<sup>76</sup> The good omen of the *yinyuan* is the key factor to strengthen the relationship between those who shared the same pillow. In accordance with her portrayal of the bitter sea, Wang Anyi’s conception of *yinyuan* is more directly related to revealing the evil omen of the *yinyuan* in *The Song of Everlasting Sorrow*.

The negative side of *yinyuan* emerges in Wang Anyi’s depictions of Jiang Lili’s affection towards Mr. Cheng, Mr. Cheng’s enduring devotion to Wang Qiyao, and Wang Qiyao’s relationship with Director Li and Old Colour. In one instance Old Colour is described as being

... the reincarnation of someone who had lived four decades earlier. This person had probably died a violent death in his youth, but because he hadn’t properly finished out his previous life, was now left with a strange attachment to the past.....[and has] endless longing for the Shanghai of the forties.<sup>77</sup>

Wang Anyi aligns this romance with the negative aspects of *yinyuan* by illustrating the age difference between Old Colour and Wang Qiyao. Old Colour was twenty-six years old when he

---

<sup>75</sup> It appears 3 times in Wang Anyi, *Xiang gang de qing yu ai* (Beijing: Zuo jia chu ban she, 1996), 3 times in Wang Anyi, *Wang Anyi zi xuan ji* (Beijing: Zuo jia chu ban she, 1996) and 2 times in Wang, *The Song of Everlasting Sorrow*, 379-380.

<sup>76</sup> Soothill and Hodous, *A Dictionary of Chinese Buddhist Terms*, 186 and 304.

<sup>77</sup> Wang, *The Song of Everlasting Sorrow*, 370.

met Wang Qiyao who at that time was already in her fifties.<sup>78</sup> Further, throughout the novel Wang Qiyao's multiple rejections of Old Colour always conclude with concern over the differences in their ages. When Old Colour attempts to woo Wang Qiyao, she remarks to herself "he's forty years too late!"<sup>79</sup>

In addition to the evil omen of *yinyuan* in *The Song of Everlasting Sorrow*, Wang Anyi also includes the Buddhist perception of Kalpa (*jie* 劫). Similar to *yinyuan*, *jie* is also not commanded by human beings themselves but exerts influence on them from the outside.

Kalpa (is) aeon, age; Ka means a fabulous period of time, a period of four hundred and thirty-two million years of mortals, measuring the duration of the world. ....There are four processes to Kalpas, the creation period, the appearance of sun and moon, destruction, and the total destruction.<sup>80</sup>

The term "Kalpa" *jie* originates from Buddhism and has also been utilized in modern East Asian society as an understanding that humans have to encounter to develop spiritually during their cycle of life. *The Song of Everlasting Sorrow* brings up the popular sentiment of "zai jie nan tao" (Inside the *jie* and cannot escape 在劫難逃). Wang Anyi chose Peace Lane (Pingan li 平安里), a common *longtang* in Shanghai, as the primary living area and neighborhood for her novel's protagonists. "Peace Lane" indicates an intention of having peace for the residents.

...what Peace Lane prayed for was peace itself. You could hear it even from the bell that was rung every night to warn people to mind their kitchen fires. Peace is

---

<sup>78</sup> According to the assumption that Wang Qiyao was born in 1929 and is 17 when she becomes Miss Shanghai in 1946. For detailed evaluation and analysis see Stuckey, *Old Stories Retold*, 125.

<sup>79</sup> Wang, *The Song of Everlasting Sorrow*, 374.

<sup>80</sup> Soothill and Hodous, *A Dictionary of Chinese Buddhist Terms*, 232. For detail definitions see page 85 and 137.

not something ordinary, but Peace Lane had an ordinary heart and its prayers were quite humble as well.<sup>81</sup>

Nevertheless, as stated in the novel's last chapter "Misfortunes from Within," Peace Lane's "humble prayers" are not easily granted.

No major disaster had befallen Peace Lane in many years, but little things kept coming up, such as someone falling off the balcony while bringing in their laundry, another getting electrocuted when he turned off a light switch with a wet hand, pressure cooker explosions, rat poison accidentally ingested.<sup>82</sup>

Life on Peace Lane is continuously going to pieces while the residents turn a blind eye and hide behind their walls. Through the voices of her characters and with statements such as "You might be able to escape it [*jie*] in the first round, but would you escape in the second,"<sup>83</sup> it soon becomes clear that for Wang Anyi kalpas are inescapable.

Wang Qiyao's first *jie* is described in the end of Part One and the beginning of Part Two Chapter one when Wang Qiyao's lover and benefactor, Director Li, dies in a plane crash and she had to move out of the Shanghai apartment provided by Director Li

A crucial battle between the Nationalists and the Communists was being fought in Huaihai; the price of gold was soaring; the stock market collapsed; Wang Xiaohe was shot by the government; the Jiangya steamship running between Shanghai and Ningbo exploded and 1,685 people sink to the bottom of the sea.<sup>84</sup>

Though Wang Qiyao escaped to Wu Bridge with her grandma, the *jie* re-occurred and forced Wang Qiyao to return to Shanghai. She was again forced to face her kalpas through her

---

<sup>81</sup> Wang, *The Song of Everlasting Sorrow*, 394.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, 394.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, 395.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, 137.

relationships with multiple characters, Deuce, Kang Mingxun, Wei Wei, Old Colour, and Long Legs. Years later, she would be murdered by Long Legs.

However, in addition to Wang Anyi's portrayal of human suffering that leads people astray as understood through a Buddhist perspective, her novel also offers characters whose actions express that humans are born with an inherent good-nature. Long Legs, for instance, in this novel was the murderer who took life from Wang Qiyao, although in the Buddhist worldview Long Legs is the earthly instrument that removes Wang Qiyao from life, Wang Anyi provides him a grounded reason as to how he turned out to be a murderer. Instead of directly accusing Long Legs of being evil, Wang Anyi offers a biographical account for "poor Long Legs"<sup>85</sup> and the events that made him become what he was.

He was quite the talker and would open up to everyone whether he knew them or not, which always left people with a warm impression. He loved to treat friends to dinner; so much so that when he ran into old friends at a restaurant he would sometime settle up for them when paying his bills.<sup>86</sup>

Long Legs cares for friends and others.

Long Legs was so busy running around that he never had time to spend the money he was making, so he ended up spending most of it on others while he wore the same old pair of dirty blue jeans all year round. ...In order to create a fun atmosphere he was even willing to make himself the butt of people's jokes; he didn't think twice about putting himself in what people would have thought of as an awkward situation...Whenever his friends went out, they always made sure to bring him along, and when he wasn't around they would instantly start looking for him: "Where's Long Legs? Where'd he go?"<sup>87</sup>

---

<sup>85</sup> Ibid., 384.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid., 382.

<sup>87</sup> Wang Anyi describes Long Legs as a person who receives positive remarks when being discussed by others. "People like to be with him." Ibid., 383.

Wang Anyi pronounces Long Legs's good-nature (hao tianxing 好天性)<sup>88</sup> repeatedly including when he played a scam while exchanging money with a client by replacing a stack of ten twenty dollar bills with one dollar bills. In this instance Wang Anyi suggests

If he hadn't had nowhere else to turn, he would have never gone down that path. Part of Long Legs' good-natured disposition was his purity, but now that purity had been tarnished and his heart ached silently.<sup>89</sup>

Wang Anyi presents Long Legs as good-natured as if being in Shanghai this bitter sea is the cause of his disposition. Though Long Legs works in the high-risk business of exchanging money on the black market in Shanghai, this unstable career and expensive cost of living did not make his ends meet. He worries about money day and night and he even lives in conditions that

..you would have never believed where Long Legs slept....Long Legs crawling into a hole to sleep..If you witnessed the sorry sight of his bent waist and scrunched up legs as he tried to tuck his body into a bed where it would never fit, you would cry too.<sup>90</sup>

Long Legs is just another fish trapped in this massive net and is forced to abandon his own good-nature to survive. However, this characterization of Long Legs also shows itself to contain threads of Buddhist philosophy.

A close reading of Wang Anyi's description of Long Legs shows characteristics of the expression "wuming (un-enlightenment 無明)." *Wuming* (un-enlightenment) is one of the *shier yinyuan*; it is "the ignorance which mistakes the illusory phenomena of this world for

---

<sup>88</sup> The description of Long Legs's good-nature can be found in Wang, *The Song of Everlasting Sorrow*, 382-392.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, 392.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, 384.

realities.”<sup>91</sup> *Yinyuan* is directed by outside forces since in Buddhism it is believed that mankind is not born with a malicious nature. Humans are powerless to escape the bitter sea, thus they also lack the capability to distinguish good from evil and the capability to avoid the circulation of *yinyuan* and *jie*, a theme that appears frequently in *The Song of Everlasting Sorrow* particularly concerning Long Legs.

In order to get his life back, Long Legs had become a swindler. Two nights earlier, in *longtang* off Lujiazui Road in Pudong, he was exchanging money with a client when he secretly replaced a stack of ten twenty-dollar bills with one dollar bills. There was nothing new about this type of scam, but for Long Legs it was the first time: a shameful blemish on his record as a currency trader.<sup>92</sup>

It is the bitter sea that instigated the contamination of Long Legs’s good nature; that Wang Anyi provides this explanation for Long Legs’s vices not only allows him to be read by the readers as a victim but also extends their sympathies towards him. Wang Anyi’s compassion for Long Legs’s vices is based upon the recognition that his evilness is not generated from within himself but from the bitter sea, this outside force rots his benevolence. This compassion is also related to another Buddhist term, “*ci’bei* 慈悲”, the virtue of being sympathetic to all living beings and thoughtfully consider their meaning of existence. Wang Anyi presents Long Legs with good-nature as if being in the bitter sea is the cause of his disposition which arouses the readers’ empathy toward his un-enlightenment and sympathy for his circumstance.

---

<sup>91</sup> Soothill, and Hodous, *A Dictionary of Chinese Buddhist Terms*, 186.

<sup>92</sup> Wang, *The Song of Everlasting Sorrow*, 392.

## CHAPTER SEVEN:

### CONCLUSION

The influence of Buddhism in Wang Anyi's works could be interpreted in various aspects. It is unrealistic to claim that all her literary pieces reflect the impact of Buddhism as Chinese Buddhism has influenced and in turn been influenced by Confucianism, Daoism, and Chinese communal rituals throughout Chinese history, and in many cases it is difficult to categorically identify terms or practices as specifically one of these and not reflecting influences from the others. Nevertheless, Chinese Buddhism gradually came to be one of the influential religious beliefs in Chinese society. The impact of Buddhism in Wang Anyi's works cannot be neglected as she mentions words like *kuhai* (bitter sea), *lunhui* (Samsara), *du* (overcome), *pingchangxin* (ordinary mind), *yinguo* (cause and effect), *yinyuan* (Hetu-prayaya), and *jie* (Kalpas) repeatedly within her literary publications. As indicated above, some terms that Wang Anyi uses may not be purely classified into Buddhism, but they have solid connections to Buddhist thought via historical Dunhuang manuscripts and Buddhist Dictionaries. Hence, this thesis aims to provide a reading of Buddhist influences in Wang Anyi's *The Song of Everlasting Sorrow* and with these analyses I intend to acquire a perspective of how Buddhism influences Wang Anyi's approaches in writing *The Song of Everlasting Sorrow* and how the reading of Buddhism sways the views of the readers.

Glancing through *The Song of Everlasting Sorrow*, one may assume that it is merely an entertaining tale of an unfortunate Chinese woman who lives in Shanghai. However, this award-winning novel by Wang Anyi portrays a depth of understanding of the Buddhist term "Bitter Sea

*kuhai*,” using it to describe Shanghai from the 1940s to the 1980s. Within the span of forty years, the characters constantly perceive Shanghai as a bitter sea in the midst of which, mankind has to experience *yinguo*, *yinyuan*, *jie*, and struggle to survive. These characters experience the end of the Anti-Japanese War between 1945-1946, the battle between the Nationalists and the Communists between 1948-1949, the shortage of food during the Great Leap Forward in 1958, the beginning of the Cultural Revolution and Mr. Cheng’s suicide in 1966, the aftermath of the fall of Gang of Four in 1976-1978, and the confusion created by modernization as promoted by Deng Xiaoping in the 1980s which portrays Shanghai, this bitter sea, where the characters live within its water of suffering, grief, and sorrow. The characters, the narration, the format of the story, and the ending: analyzing all of these elements, we perceive the correlated connection between Buddhism and Wang Anyi’s *The Song of Everlasting Sorrows*.

This thesis begins with an introduction to Wang Anyi’s life and literary works, followed by a summary of Wang Anyi’s *Changhen ge*. Next it offers an intertextual analysis of Bo Juyi’s poem of the same name “Changhen ge” and examines the poem in the context of Wang Anyi’s novel tracing the authors’ deeply felt sorrow intertwined with Buddhism via the two writers and their two literary pieces.

The next chapter provides a close examination of the sites of Buddhist influence in Wang’s text, specifically analyzing a variety of words used by Wang Anyi that have varying forms of Buddhist intonations, including her use of uniquely specific Buddhist terminology, such as *kuhai* which can be translated as “bitter sea.” Then, I unravel the metaphor of Shanghai as a “bitter sea,” and the unique space of Wu Bridge with its ability to rescue lost souls from the “bitter sea.” This bitter sea does not engage the good omen of the *yinyuan* as most of the leading roles experience unrequited love. Besides, this bitter sea even contaminates Long Legs’s good-nature. As for those who seek tranquility and choose to live in Peace Lane, they are buried inside

the *jie* and still cannot escape the bitterness. Bringing to light the Buddhist essence of the concepts *yinguo*, *yinyuan* and *jie* enables readers to recognize new dimensions of the text and the relationships between the characters.

Wang Anyi's *The Song of Everlasting Sorrow* inscribes the never-ending grief and divulges the fate of its protagonist. As "one cannot force the hand of fate,"<sup>93</sup> Wang Anyi's notion of Buddhist "fate (*suming*)" spreads through the novel and requires the "ordinary mind (*pingchangxin*)" from the reader as they read through the course of action undertaken in the midst of the bitter sea. Subsequently, the conception of Buddhism is slowly exposed over the course of the text. In the course of these analyses and examinations, this thesis endeavors to provide a reading of Buddhist influences in Wang Anyi's *The Song of Everlasting Sorrow*. In further assessing Wang Anyi's literary relation to Buddhism, I believe one can observe more references related to Buddhism.

---

<sup>93</sup> Wang, *The Song of Everlasting Sorrow*, 175.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Abe, Masao. 1976. "Zen and Buddhism." *Journal of Chinese Philosophy* 3 (3): 235-252.
- Beal, Samuel. 1884. *Buddhism in China*. London.
- Birch, Cyril, and Donald Keene. 1965. *Anthology of Chinese Literature*. New York: Grove Press.
- Bo Juyi. 1939. *The Everlasting Woe: Changhen ge*. Shanghai: Chung Hwa Book Co.
- Chen Yunji. 1993. *Tangshi zhong de Fojiao sixiang*. Taiwan: Shang ding wen hua chu ban she.
- Chu Binjie. 1990. *Bo juyi shige shangxi ji*. Cheng dou: Ba shu shu she.
- Fang Litian. 1986. *Fojiao zhexue*. Beijing: Zhongguo renmin daxue chu ban she.
- Halperin, Mark. 2006. *Out of the Cloister: Literati Perspectives on Buddhism in Sung China, 960-1279*. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Asia Center.
- Han Bangqing. 2005. *The Sing-Song Girls of Shanghai*. Ailing Zhang and Eva Hung trans. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Hao Yunqian. 2003. *Yu shijian duizhi: Wang Anyi lun*. Lunwen (bo shi), Hua dong shi fan daxue.
- Holcombe, Charles. 2010. *A History of East Asia: From The Origins of Civilization to the Twenty-First Century*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Kumārajīva. 2009. Burton Watson, trans *The Lotus Sutra: Its Opening and Closing Sutras*. Tokyo: Soka Gakkai.
- Li, Charles N. 2008. *The Bitter Sea: Coming of Age in a China Before Mao*. New York: HarperCollins.
- Li Shuxia. 2008. *Wang Anyi xiaoshuo chuang zuo yan jiu*. Qingdao Shi: Zhongguo hai yang da xue chu ban she.
- Lin Danya. 2008. "Changhen ge zhi ge." *Xiamen Literature* 9: 48-51.
- Liu, JeeLoo. 2006. *An Introduction to Chinese Philosophy: From Ancient Philosophy to Chinese Buddhism*. Malden, MA: Blackwell Pub.
- Lusthaus, Dan. 2002. *Buddhist Phenomenology: A Philosophical Investigation of Yogācāra Buddhism and the Ch'eng Wei-shih Lun*. London: RoutledgeCurzon.

- Shengyan, and Douglas Gildow. 2007. *Orthodox Chinese Buddhism: A Contemporary Chan Master's Answers to Common Questions*. Elmhurst, N.Y.: Dharma Drum Publications.
- Soothill, William Edward, and Lewis Hodous. 1937. *A Dictionary of Chinese Buddhist Terms: With Sanskrit and English Equivalents and a Sanskrit-Pali Index*. London: K. Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co.
- Stuckey, G. Andrew. 2010. *Old Stories Retold: Narrative and Vanishing Pasts in Modern China*. Lanham, Md: Lexington Books Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.
- Wang Anyi. 1996. *Xianggang de qing yu ai*. Beijing: Zuo jia chu ban she.
- . 1996. *Wang Anyi zi xuan ji*. Beijing: Zuo jia chu ban she.
- . 1997. *Xin ling shijie: Wang Anyi xiao shui jiang gao*. Shanghai: Fu dan da xue chu ban she.
- . 2000. *Ti du*. Haikou shi: Nan hai chu ban gong si.
- . 1995. *Changhen ge*. Beijing: Zuo jia chu ban she.
- . 2002. *Xiaoshuo jia de 13 tang ke*. Taibei Shi: INK yin ke chu ban you xian gong si.
- . 2008. *The Song of Everlasting Sorrow: A Novel of Shanghai*. Michael Berry and Susan Chan Egan, trans New York: Columbia University Press.
- , and Zhang Xinying. 2008. *Tan hua lu*. Guilin: Guangxi shi fan da xue chu ban she.
- Wang, Ban. 2002. "Love at Last Sight: Nostalgia, Commodity, and Temporality in Wang Anyi's Song of Unending Sorrow." *Positions: East Asia Cultures Critique*. 10 (3): 669-694.
- Wang, David Der-wei. 2004. "Zhang Ailing zaishengyuan." In *Zai du Zhang Ailing* edited by David Der-wei Wang. Jinan: Shandong huabao chubanshe.
- . 2006. *Dangdai xiaoshuo ershi jia*. Beijing: Sheng huo, du shu, xin zhi san lian shu dian.
- Welch, Holmes. 1972. *Buddhism Under Mao*. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press.
- Wu Yunqian. 2010. *Lun Wang Anyi*. Shanghai Shi: Hua dong shi fan da xue chu ban she.
- Xiao, Jiwei. 2008. "Can she say no to Zhang Ailing? Detail, idealism and woman in Wang Anyi's fiction." *Journal of Contemporary China* 17 (56): 513-528.
- Xingyun, and Ciyi. 1989. *Fo guang da cidian*. Beijing: Shu mu wen xian chu ban she.
- Yampolsky, Philip B. 1967. *The Platform Sutra of the Sixth Patriarch: The Text of the Tun-Huang Manuscript with Translation, Introduction, and Notes*. New York: Columbia University Press.

- Ying, Bian. 1991. *The Time is Not Yet Ripe: Contemporary China's Best Writers and Their Stories*. Beijing: Foreign Languages Press.
- Zhang Ailing. 1943. *Qing cheng zhi lian: duan pian xiao shu ji yi: yi jiu si san nian*. Taipei Shi: Huang guan wen hua chu ban you xian gong si.
- Zhang, Xudong. 2000. "Shanghai Nostalgia: Postrevolutionary Allegories in Wang Anyi's Literary Production in the 1990s." *Positions: East Asia Cultures Critique* 8 (2): 349-387.
- Zhang Zhongyu. 2005. "Changhen ge zhuti yanjiu zonglun." *Wenxue yichan* 3: 144-149.

## APPENDIX

### A Brief Chronicle of Wang Anyi's Life and Publications

#### 1954

Born in Nanjing and moved to Shanghai

#### 1966

Discontinued her high school education

#### 1970

Joined Zhiqing (Urban Youth 知青) and went to Anhui Province

#### 1973

Joined Xuzhou Performing Arts Troupe in Jiangsu Province

#### 1978

Returned to Shanghai

Worked as an editor for the magazine *Shaonian wenyi* (*Childhood* 少年文艺)

Published short story "On the Plains" ("Pingyuan Shang" 平原上)

#### 1981

Published short story "Yu, Sha sha sha" ("And the Rain Patters On" 雨, 沙沙沙)

#### 1983

Published "Heihei baibai" ("Black and White" 黑黑白白)

#### 1983

Published *Wang Anyi zhong duan bian xiaoshuo ji* (*Short Stories of Wang Anyi* 王安忆中短篇小说集)

Published *Liushi* (*Lapse of Time* 流逝) and won the prize for Best Novelette

Published *Weisheng* (*Epilogue* 尾声)

Published *Xiaobao zhuang* (*Small Bao Town* 小鲍庄)

Wang Anyi and her mother went to the United States to participate in an international writers' colloquium at the University of Iowa

**1986**

Published *Xiaocheng zhi lian* (*Love in a Small Town* 小城之恋)

Published *Huangshan zhi lian* (*Love on a Barren Mountain* 荒山之恋)

Published *Huanghe gudao ren* (*The Old Course of the Yellow River* 黄河故道人)

Published *69 jie chuzhong sheng* (*A Junior High Graduate of 1969* 六九届初中生)

Published *Munü tongyou meilijian* (*Mother and Daughter's Joint Voyage to America* 母女同游美丽坚)

**1987**

Published *Jinxiugu zhi lian* (*Brocade Valley* 锦绣谷之恋)

**1988**

*Pugongyin* (*Dandelion* 蒲公英)

**1989**

Published *Haishang fanhua meng* (*Dreams in Shanghai* 海上繁华梦)

Published “Dixongmen” (“Brothers” 弟兄们)

**1990**

Published *ShuShu de gushi* (*Uncle's Story* 叔叔的故事)

Published *Lu De de dushi* (*Stories of Traveling to Germany* 旅德的故事)

Published *Liushui sanshi zhang* (*The Lapse of Thirty Years* 流水三十章)

**1991**

Published *Shensheng jitan* (*Sacred Altar* 神圣祭坛)

Published *Mi Ni* 米尼

**1993**

Published *Jishi yu xugou* (*Records and Fictions* 纪实与虚构)

Published *Shangxin de Taiping Yang* (*The Sorrowful Pacific* 伤心的太平洋)

Published *Xianggang de qing yu ai* (*Love and Sentiment in HongKong* 香港的情与爱)

**1995**

Published *Changhen ge* (*The Song of Everlasting Sorrow* 长恨歌)

Published *Wo Ai Bier* (*I Love Bill* 我爱比尔)

**1996**

Co-wrote the screenplay for film *Temptress Moon* with Chen Kaige. The film is directed by Chen Kaige, and stars Leslie Cheung and Gong Li.

**1997**

Published *Xin ling shijie* (*Spiritual World* 心灵世界)

**2000**

Awarded Mao Dun Wenxuejiang (Mao Dun Literature Prize 茅盾文学奖)

Published *Fuping* 富萍

Published *Meitou* 妹头

**2001**

Elected as the chair of the Shanghai Writers' Association

Published *Xunzhao Shanghai* (*In Search of Shanghai* 寻找上海)

**2002**

Published *Wo du Wo kan* (*I Read, I See* 我读我看)

Published *Tidu* (*Tonsure* 剃度)

**2004**

Published *Tao zhi yao yao* (*Peach Flower in Blossom* 桃之夭夭)

**2005**

Film adaptation of *Changhen ge*, entitled *Everlasting Regret*, director Stanley Kwan, produced by Jackie Chan, screenplay by Elmond Yeung, starring Sammi Cheng, Tony Leung Ka-Fai, Jun Hu, Daniel Wu

Published *Bian di xiaoxiong* (*Heroes in Every Corner* 遍地枭雄)

**2007**

Published *Qimeng shidai* (*The Age of Enlightenment* 启蒙时代)

**2011**

Published *Tianxiang* (*Heavenly Fragrance* 天香)