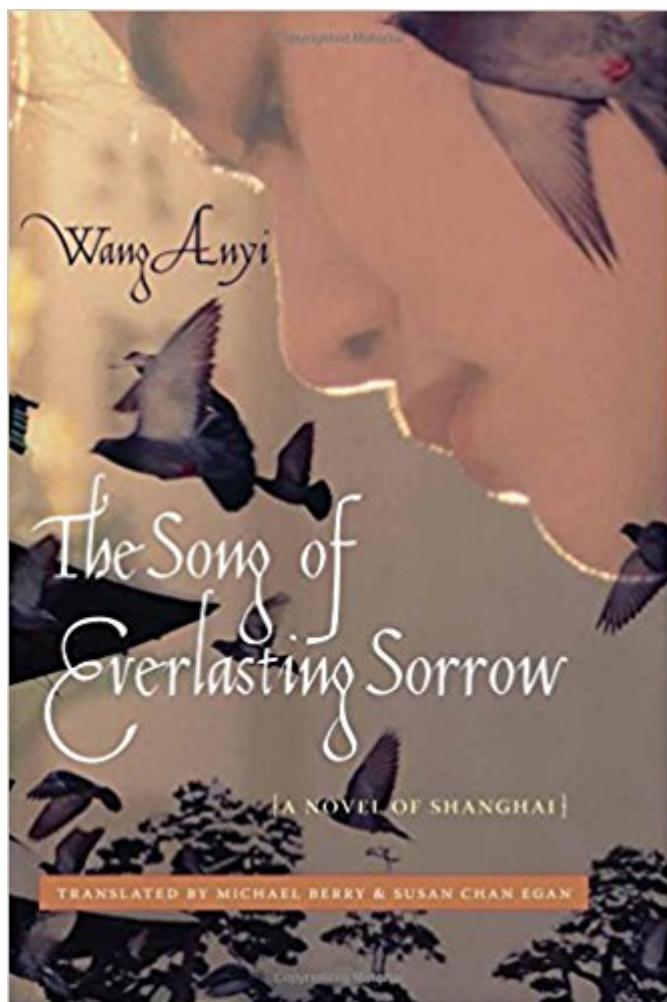


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The Song Of Everlasting Sorrow: A Novel Of Shanghai (Weatherhead Books On Asia)



Synopsis

The Song of Everlasting Sorrow follows the adventures of Wang Qiyao, a girl born of the crowded, labyrinthine alleys of Shanghai's working-class neighborhoods. Infatuated with the glitz and glamour of 1940s Hollywood, Wang Qiyao seeks fame in the Miss Shanghai beauty pageant, and this fleeting moment of stardom becomes the pinnacle of her life. After the Communist victory, Wang Qiyao continues to indulge in the decadent pleasures of the Shanghai bourgeoisie, secretly playing mahjong during the antirightist campaign and exchanging lovers on the eve of the Cultural Revolution. She reemerges in the 1980s as a purveyor of "old Shanghai," only to become embroiled in a tragedy that echoes the Hollywood noirs of her youth.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

The Song of Everlasting Sorrow is a novel equally about a woman and a city. The city is Shanghai, and the story opens in its last days of decadent opulence in the 1940s. The woman is Wang Qiyao, as a teenager a striking young beauty who has been raised on Hollywood movies and a mix of Chinese and Western fashions. Her life is that of a typical Shanghai girl until, with the help of a friend, Wang Qiyao gets a glimpse at the world of her dreams backstage at a Shanghai film studio. This leads to her being noticed by an amateur photographer who makes her his lifetime obsession. His photos of Wang Qiyao catapult her to local fame and a place in the 1946 "Miss Shanghai" beauty pageant. Wang Qiyao's feminine world is echoed in the author's descriptions of Shanghai

itself: "Shanghai's splendor is actually a kind of feminine grace; the scent carried by the wind is a woman's perfume.... The shadows of the French parasol trees seem to carry a womanly aura, as do the oleanders and the lilacs in the courtyard--the most feminine of flowers. The humid breeze during the rainy season is a woman's little temper tantrum, the murmuring sound of Shanghai is custom-made for women's most intimate gossip. The city is like one big goddess, wearing clothes plumed with rainbows, scattering silver and gold across the sky." Wang Qiyao lives in a "longtang," the traditional Shanghai residential block consisting of a group of connected houses fronting a single narrow alley. There are detailed descriptions of the longtang and changes that both it and Wang Qiyao undergo over time as history sweeps across Shanghai. But the tumultuous events of Chinese history from the 1940s to the 1980s are seen only indirectly.

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