

**SYMBOLS THAT REFLECT THE MAIN CHARACTER  
NAMED COCO IN WEI HUI'S *SHANGHAI BABY***

AN UNDERGRADUATE THESIS

Presented as Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements  
for the Degree of *Sarjana Sastra*  
in English Letters



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A *Sarjana Sastra* Undergraduate Thesis

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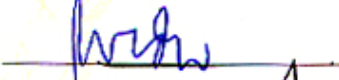
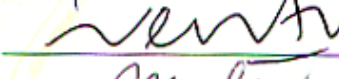
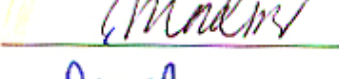

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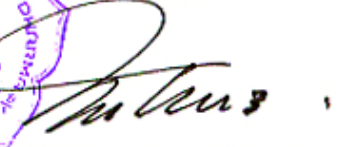
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Yogyakarta, April 5, 2010



Marta Nelly

*Don't Just Make A Dream, but  
Catch It and Run with It.*

**Marta Nelly**

*for My Lovely  
Parents. . . .*

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>TITLE PAGE</b> .....	i
<b>APPROVAL PAGE</b> .....	ii
<b>ACCEPTANCE PAGE</b> .....	iii
<b>MOTTO PAGE</b> .....	vi
<b>DEDICATION PAGE</b> .....	vii
<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</b> .....	viii
<b>TABLE OF CONTENTS</b> .....	ix
<b>ABSTRACT</b> .....	x
<b>ABSTRAK</b> .....	xi
<b>CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION</b> .....	1
A. Background of the Study .....	1
B. Problem Formulation .....	3
C. Objectives of the study .....	3
D. Definition of Terms .....	3
<b>CHAPTER II: THEORETICAL REVIEW</b> .....	4
A. Review of Related Studies .....	4
B. Review of Related Theories .....	5
1. Theory of Character and Characterization .....	5
2. Theory of Setting.....	8
3. Theory of Symbol .....	9
C. Theoretical Framework.....	12
<b>CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY</b> .....	13
A. Object of the Study .....	13
B. Approach of the Study .....	14
C. Method of the Study .....	16
<b>CHAPTER IV: ANALYSIS</b> .....	17
A. The Description of Coco in <i>Shanghai Baby</i> .....	17
B. The Depiction of a Cat, a Novel, and Yin Yang in <i>Shanghai Baby</i> .....	30
1. Cat .....	31
2. Novel .....	35
2. Yin Yang .....	40
C. How the Cat, the Novel, and the Yin Yang Symbolize Coco .....	42
1. The Cat as a Symbol .....	42
2. The Novel as a Symbol .....	49
3. The Yin Yang as a Symbol .....	55
<b>CHAPTER V: CONCLUSION</b> .....	67
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY</b> .....	72

## ABSTRACT

MARTA NELLY (2010). **Symbols that Reflect the Main Character Named Coco in Wei Hui's *Shanghai Baby***. Yogyakarta: Department of English Letters, Faculty of Letters, Sanata Dharma University.

This study analyzes the symbols that reflect the main character, Coco, in Wei Hui's *Shanghai Baby*. There are three objectives of this study, namely to describe how Coco is described as the main character in the novel, to describe how a cat, Coco's novel, and the yin yang are depicted in the novel, and to identify how the cat, the novel, and the yin yang symbolize Coco.

This study uses theories of character and characterization by Abrams, Milligan, Henkle, Gill, and Murphy, the theory of setting by Abrams, Gill, Holman and Harmon, and the theory of symbol by Holman and Harmon as well as sources from the internet about cat in many cultures.

Library research is used as the method of this study. Symbolic or formalistic approach is used because this approach examines the foregrounded properties or devices in literary works, including symbols, to reveal the form and logic of the literary works.

The answer to the first problem formulation, Coco is described with five main characteristics, namely strong, having both good and wild sides, independent, romantically active, and strongly connected to her loved ones. These descriptions are shown in her life since she was in university until now. As the answer to the second problem formulation, cat is the only animal mentioned constantly, both as a pet cat kept by Tian Tian, Coco's boyfriend, and in Coco's dreams. Novel is an important part of this story because Coco, the main character, is a novel writer. Coco starts writing her novel in the beginning of the story and finishes her novel in the end of the story. Yin and Yang are depicted as black and white or dark and light images in Shanghai in the evening, in some characters' eyes, in Tian Tian's pet cat's fur, in Coco's dream, and in Shamir's movie. As the answer to the last problem formulation, the cat, the novel, and the Yin Yang are depicted as symbols that reveal Coco as the main character. The cat symbolizes Coco, because they are both depicted as strong, found unexpectedly by Tian Tian, having a combination of good and wild sides, and independent. The novel symbolizes Coco's romance life. Coco is not yet satisfied with her previous novel and her previous romance life; Coco writes her novel and lives her romance life with great love and dedication; both Coco's novel and her romance life contain some problems and obstacles, and both Coco's novel and her romance life are finally finished at the end of the story. Yin and Yang symbolize Coco's relationship with her loved ones, namely her family and boyfriend. The contrasting characteristics of Yin and Yang resemble the contrasting characteristics of Coco and her loved ones; both the Yin and Yang as well as Coco and her loved ones are strongly connected and cannot be separated; both the Yin and Yang as well as Coco and her loved ones must be balanced. If they are not balanced, it will result in some problems.

## ABSTRAK

MARTA NELLY (2010). **Symbols that Reflect the Main Character Named Coco in Wei Hui's *Shanghai Baby***. Yogyakarta: Jurusan Sastra Inggris, Fakultas Sastra, Universitas Sanata Dharma.

Studi ini menganalisa simbol-simbol yang mencerminkan Coco, tokoh utama dalam novel karya Wei Hui, *Shanghai Baby*. Studi ini bertujuan membahas bagaimana Coco digambarkan sebagai tokoh utama cerita ini, bagaimana seekor kucing, novel karya Coco, dan yin-yang digambarkan dalam cerita ini, serta bagaimana kucing, novel, dan yin-yang menyimbolkan Coco.

Studi ini menggunakan teori karakter dan karakterisasi oleh Abrams, Milligan, Henkle, Gill, dan Murphy, teori tentang setting oleh Abrams, Gill, Holman dan Harmon, teori tentang simbol oleh Holman dan Harmon, serta sumber dari internet tentang penggambaran kucing dalam berbagai budaya.

Metode riset pustaka digunakan dalam studi ini. Pendekatan simbolik atau formalistik dipilih karena pendekatan ini mengkaji unsur atau alat yang menonjol dalam karya sastra, termasuk simbol, untuk mengungkap bentuk dan logika dari karya sastra tersebut.

Sebagai jawaban dari masalah pertama, Coco digambarkan dengan lima sifat utama, yaitu tangguh, memiliki sisi baik dan liar, independen, memiliki kehidupan cinta yang aktif, serta berhubungan erat dengan keluarga serta kekasihnya. Gambaran ini ditunjukkan sejak ia masih kuliah sampai saat ini.

Sebagai jawaban dari masalah kedua, kucing ialah satu-satunya hewan yang terus menerus muncul di cerita ini, baik sebagai hewan peliharaan Tian Tian, kekasih Coco, maupun dalam mimpi-mimpi Coco. Novel merupakan bagian penting dari cerita ini karena Coco adalah penulis novel, yang mulai menulis novelnya pada awal cerita dan menyelesaikan novelnya pada akhir cerita. Yin dan Yang digambarkan melalui berbagai citra hitam dan putih di kota Shanghai pada malam hari, mata beberapa karakter, warna kucing peliharaan Tian Tian, mimpi Coco, dan film buatan Shamir.

Sebagai jawaban dari masalah ketiga, kucing, novel dan Yin Yang ditampilkan sebagai simbol yang mengungkap tentang Coco sebagai tokoh utama. Kucing menyimbolkan Coco, karena keduanya kuat, ditemukan secara tak terduga oleh Tian Tian, merupakan kombinasi sisi baik dan liar, serta independen. Novel menyimbolkan kehidupan percintaan Coco. Coco belum puas dengan novel karyanya sebelumnya dan kehidupan percintaannya sebelumnya; Coco menulis novelnya dan menjalani kehidupan percintaannya dengan penuh cinta serta dedikasi; baik novel Coco maupun kehidupan percintaannya mengalami beberapa masalah dan halangan; baik novel Coco maupun kehidupan percintaannya akhirnya selesai pada akhir cerita. Yin and Yang menyimbolkan hubungan Coco dengan orang-orang yang dicintainya, yakni keluarga dan kekasihnya. Sifat Yin dan Yang yang bertolak belakang sama seperti sifat Coco dan keluarga maupun kekasihnya yang juga bertolak belakang; baik Yin dan Yang maupun Coco dan

keluarga maupun kekasihnya memiliki hubungan sangat kuat dan tak bisa dipisahkan; baik Yin dan Yang maupun Coco dan keluarga maupun kekasihnya harus selalu seimbang. Jika terjadi ketidakseimbangan, akan muncul masalah.

# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

### A. Background of the Study

Almost all of the things around give important and special meaning for each person, each group of people, each region, each religion, each culture, etc which is called as symbol. The meaning of a thing can be different. It depends on the places, the times and the aspects which follow it.

An example is the fire. From the point of view of some religions, fire can be either a symbol of respect, or an instrument of terror. In Hinduism in primeval ages, fire is one of five sacred elements of which all living creatures are comprised and considered an eternal witness essential to sacred religious ceremony. In Christianity, fire is a symbol of the Holy Ghost and it is often used in many descriptions of Hell. In the Zoroastrian religion, fire is constantly used to represent Ahura Mazda, or God of Zoroastrians. In Chinese symbolism, fire is a symbol of the active and masculine or the *Yang* (<http://gonzagakate.tripod.com/id12.html>).

Another example is the color red. Red becomes the symbol of communism and socialism during the Russian Revolution in 1907; Neolithic cave painters ascribes magic power to the color red; Roman brides are wrapped in a fiery red veil, the *flammeum*, which shall warrant love and fertility; In ancient Egypt, red is the color of the desert and of the destructive god Seth who impersonated the Evil (<http://www.webexhibits.org/pigments/indiv/color/reds2 & 4.html>).

Javanese culture has *wayang*, or shadow puppets, as a form of traditional entertainment and cultural activity that often contains symbols. Puppet shows tell the story of Baratayudha's book. *Pandawa Lima* becomes a symbol of goodness. *Pandawa Lima* consists of *Puntadewa*, *Arjuna*, *Bima*, *Nakula*, and *Sadewa*. *Kurawa* becomes a symbol for evil and consists of 100 persons (<http://swaktea.blogspot.com/2007/05/Javanese-puppets.htm>).

The facts above, give the inspiration to the researcher to analyze the symbols found in *Shanghai Baby* novel by Zhou Wei Hui. It is the object that will be the focus in this analysis. Some authors create symbols in their books or literatures to make new sensations to the readers, give interesting in reading, to make the readers think hardly and feel challenged; or the writers just want to create their ideas in their books and try to make sensation to their brain by using words by words.

It also happens to Zhou Wei Hui, the author of the *Shanghai Baby* novel. Zhou Wei Hui and her novels get many criticisms from the society and the novel *Shanghai Baby* becomes a controversy in early twentieth century in China. Despite the controversy, the novel *Shanghai Baby* actually does not only contain vulgar scenes or pornography. Rather, Wei Hui creates her novel as a literary work with intrinsic elements such as characters, plot, and symbols to enrich her story. This novel contains a strong main character, namely a young woman named Coco. This novel also contains several objects that may be seen as symbols. It is clear that this novel becomes the media for Wei Hui to create her imaginations by using words in her brain, not just to create sensation or controversy. Here, the

analysis will focus on how some objects in the novel can be seen as symbols that reflect Coco, the main character in *Shanghai Baby*.

## **B. Problems Formulation**

1. How is Coco described as the main character in Wei Hui's *Shanghai Baby*?
2. How are a cat, Coco's novel, and the yin yang depicted in Wei Hui's *Shanghai Baby*?
3. How do the cat, the novel, and the yin yang symbolize Coco?

## **C. Objectives of the Study**

Based on problems formulation above, there are three objectives of study. The first objective is to examine how Coco is described as the main character in Wei Hui's *Shanghai Baby*. The second objective is to describe how a cat, Coco's novel, and the yin yang are depicted in the novel. The third objective is to identify how the cat, the novel, and the yin yang symbolize Coco.

## **D. Definition of Terms**

### **1. Symbol**

Edgar V. Roberts and Henry E. Jacobs wrote the definition of symbol below.

Symbolism is modes of literary expression that is designed to extend meaning. Symbolism is derived from Greek word meaning 'to throw together' (*syn*, together, and *ballein*, to throw). In literature, a symbol pulls or draws together (1) a specific thing with (2) ideas, values, persons, or ways to life, in a direct relationship that otherwise would not be apparent. A symbol might also be regarded as a substitute for the elements being signified. (1997: 279)

## CHAPTER II

### THEORETICAL REVIEW

#### A. Review of Related Studies

Some criticisms appeared after *Shanghai Baby* novel was published. By collecting the information about *Shanghai Baby* before and after it was published, the researcher analyzes that Wei Hui, the author of *Shanghai Baby*, is so brave to give her idea in her novel. Some of the criticisms about the novel that are mentioned here are written by women.

One of the critics is Sarah Egelman. She says that *Shanghai Baby's* novel was burnt in China because it caused the controversy between contemporary Chinese culture and the issues of female independence and sexuality. The main character in the novel named Coco becomes controversial because her publication stories mirror Hui's own experience, the sex and sexuality described by Hui in *Shanghai baby* doomed the novel to condemnation, banning, and public burnings in China, where it was originally published. However, American readers may be disappointed to find that what is scandalous in China is more commonplace in Western literature (<http://www.bookreporter.com?reviews/0743421566.asp>)

J. Steven Cole, a man who gives the review about this novel, says that it does not matter if it's Coco's story or Wei Hui's. Coco's crowd could be the East Village of a couple of years ago, or London's west end. Okay, the book is officially banned, but Coco's hip to America references is as if she's been there. There are so many things that are more important that can become bombing, like



the fleeting political passage, like the mention of US bombing of Serbia that comes up at a party, during a fist fight between the Serbian lovers of bisexual, than the case of this novel ([http://www.freewilliamsburg.com/november\\_2001/books.html](http://www.freewilliamsburg.com/november_2001/books.html))

Another related study about *Shanghai Baby* is taken from the thesis of an English Letters Department student, Indah Anindya Ratri. Indah Anindya Ratri writes that *Shanghai Baby* is about a material girl and also about the love and desire in modern Chinese women. According to Indah Anindya Ratri's thesis, *Shanghai Baby* is clearly a contemporary Chinese novel infused with Western pop culture.

The thesis before, with same title *Shanghai Baby* by Wei Hui, talks about the women characters and the situation that is happened at that time and this thesis developed from that thesis, which has title "New Chinese View of Woman Main Characters of Shanghai Baby", which will be focused on the symbols seen in the main character named Coco. The time, the setting, and the situation at that time will influence the meaning of the symbols.

## **B. Review of Related Theories**

### **1. Theory of Character and Characterization**

The researcher finds six theories about character and characterization. The first is Abrams. Abrams in his book *A Glossary of Literary Terms*, defines the character as "the person presented in a dramatic or narrative work, who are interpreted by the reader as being endowed with moral and dispositional qualities

that are expressed in what they say- the dialogue- and by what they do- their action--.“ The main character is the most important because it can be centre of the story are focused to this character from the beginning until the end of the story. (1981:20-21)

The second is Ian Milligan. In his book *The Novel in English: An Introduction* (1983: 155), Ian Milligan classifies character into major character and minor character. The major characters are these who become the focus in the story from the beginning to end. They engage the readers' attention as their motivation and history are most fully established. The content of the story is highlighted to these characters' experience. The major characters perform important role in clarifying the theme of a story, because if it is understood, it will be easier to know the theme of the story. And then, the minor characters are those who appear in a certain setting, just necessarily to become the background of the major characters. Their roles are less important than those of the major characters because the focal experiences of the story take place among the major characters.

The third theory comes from Henkle in his book *Reading a Novel*. It is also about the character classifications. He said that character can be classified as major and secondary ones. Major character is the most important and also complex character in a novel. It is the major character that performs as the key structural function in the character; the readers will get the messages that the author implies in the story. Upon him, the readers also can build a big expectation and desires. And then, Secondary character is a character that performs more limited function (Henkle, 1977: 87).

The fourth theory comes from Gill. According to Gill, characterization is the way in which a character is created (Gill, 1995: 127). The creation of imaginary person in literary work, according to Holman, that becomes the fifth theory, must be lifelike. He states three fundamental methods of characterization in fiction: the first is the explicit presentation by the author of character through direct exposition, either in an introductory block or more often piecemeal throughout the work, illustrated by the action. The second is the presentation of character in action with little or no explicit comment by the author, in the expectation that the reader will be able to deduce the attributes of the author from the action. The third is the representation from within a character without comment on the character by the author, of the impact of the action and emotion on the character's inner self, with the expectation that the reader will come to a clear understanding of the attributes of the character (Holman, 1986:81).

The last theory is in the book *Understanding Unseen* by Murphy. Murphy gives nine points of character alive for the readers. Those are personal description, character as seen by another, speech, past life, reactions, thought, mannerism, direct comment, and conversation of other.

In personal description, the character can be displayed through the appearance and clothes. The usage of adjective gives personal description of a character in more details and clearer. Details mean to cover more than one part of the body, such as face, skin, eyes, and clothing. While clear means each aspect is described using good choice of adjective. Next is character as seen by another. Character as seen by another is through the eyes and opinions of another. The

readers get the description as a reflected image. And then, the next is speech. The speech of the character can also be seen in the way of a person give opinion and speak, and also what a person says. After that is about past life. The clue of the character also can be known through his or her past life by using direct comment from the author, through the person's thought, conversation, or a medium of another person. Next is reaction. Reactions of character or person in the story towards various situation and events can also show the characterization of the person. And then is the explanation about thought. The different characteristic of person influences people's way of thinking or way of behaves. Next is about mannerism. A character manner and habit can give us understanding about his or her characteristic. And then is about direct comment. The author can describe or comment on a person's character directly. And the last is about conversation of others. The author can also give us clues to a person's character through the conversation of other people and the things they say about him. People do talk about other people and the things they can say often give us a clue to the character of the person spoken about. (Murphy, 1972: 161-171)

## **2. Theory of Setting**

There are three sources used in the theory of setting. First of all from Abrams, and then Gill, and the last one are from Holman and Harmon. This theory is necessary to help describe Coco's surroundings, such as the atmosphere of her city, her house, her pet, and so on.

In his theory of setting, Abrams defines that a dramatic work is as the general place, historical time, and social circumstances in which its action occurs;

the setting of an episode or scene within a work is the particular physical location in which it takes place (Abrams, 1981: 175). In the same page, he also says that in a limited sense, setting refers to “the general place and historical time”; it is when and where the action occurs. In a broader sense, setting refers to “the social circumstances in which its action occurs.” (Abrams, 1981: 175)

According to Gill, setting can be an important aspect of the novel since most of the novelists have learnt much about the setting to give significance into their novels (Gill, 1995: 148).

And the last theory comes from Holman and Harmon. According to Holman and Harmon, there are four elements making up a setting. They are listed under four headings: the first is the actual geographical location, its topography, scenery, and such physical arrangements as the location of the windows and doors in a room. The second is the occupations and daily manner of living of the characters. The third is the time or period in which the action takes place, for example, speech in history or season of the year. And the fourth is the general environment of the characters, for example, religious, mental, moral, social, and emotional conditions through which the people in the narrative move. (Holman and Harmon, 1986:465)

### **3. Theory of Symbol**

According to Holman and Harmon’s *A Handbook to Literature*, symbol is a word or an object that stands for another word or object. The object or word can be seen with the eye or not visible. All language is symbolizing one thing or another (1983:151). Symbol can also be defined as modes of literary expression

that are designed to extend meaning (<http://web.mst.edu/~gdoty/classes/concepts-practices/symbolism.html>). Further explanation about the meaning of symbols can also be found in the article entitled *Symbolism*, as shown in the quotation below.

A symbol has complex meaning; it has not only "literal" meaning, but also additional meaning(s) beyond the literal. Sometimes the literal meaning of a symbol is absurd, so that the symbolic meaning over-rides and cancels out the literal meaning. A symbol may have more than one meaning. In fact, the most significant symbols do convey an indefinite range of meanings.

In the context of Christian symbolism, a tree can refer to the cross on which Jesus was crucified. Thus, in the right context, a tree can suggest a much wider range of meaning than its simple, literal meaning. (<http://web.mst.edu/~gdoty/classes/concepts-practices/symbolism.html>)

Symbols may have very narrow or quite wide ranges of meaning. The range may be limited to an individual, or perhaps to a small group. People other than the individual or group will not understand that meaning of the symbol. A symbol's range may be cultural, meaning that it is known by members of cultural groups: ethnic groups, religious groups, national groups, and so on.

Some people, such as the followers of Jung's theories, believe that some symbols have a universal range of meaning, as described in the article entitled "Signs, Symbols, Meaning, & Interpretation" below.

They believe that some symbols occur with the same meaning across individual and cultural boundaries. These universal symbols are often called archetypes, especially by followers of Jung. While there is much evidence to support the existence of universal symbols, or archetypes, one must remember that any use of a symbol is specific, and that makes its meaning specific. Just as the word "tree" used in a sentence has a specific meaning, rather than the general meaning given in the dictionary, so an archetype used in a work of art has specific meanings, rather than a general meaning one might find in a dictionary of archetypes. (<http://web.mst.edu/~gdoty/classes/concepts-practices/symbolism.html>)

Based on the explanation above, it is already clear that symbols can be found in the form of a word or object in literary works. However, not all words or objects can function as symbols. In order to be identified as a symbol, the symbolic meaning of a particular word or object must be confirmed by something else, as explained by Beaty and Hunter in the quotation below.

A single item, even something as traditionally fraught with meaning as a snake or a rose, becomes a symbol only when its potentially symbolic meaning is confirmed by something else in the story, just as a point needs a second point to define a line (1999: 184).

The quotation above shows that there must be enough proof or grounds to confirm a word or an object's symbolic meaning. Therefore, readers or writers who conduct a study on symbols in a literary work must read the work closely in order to find the proof. There are some procedures to confirm or identify a word or an object as a symbol, such as repetition, explicit statement, lengthy description, or special placement. In the article entitled "Symbols", it is explained that a symbol can be confirmed through repetition and through explicit statement (<http://www.cod.edu/people/faculty/fitchf/readlit/symbol1.htm>). Repetition means that a word, an object, or a place is repeated several times throughout the story; the word, object, or place is mentioned in a higher frequency than usual. Explicit statement means that the title may refer to a symbol or become a symbol, as explained in the quotation below.

Almost always a title is an invitation to think about an image from the story in terms of symbolic meaning. A title repeats an element in the story, and it is an explicit statement by the writer of significance. So if the title names "the yellow wall-paper" we can be sure that the writer is nudging us toward a closer examination of this image for its symbolic status (<http://www.cod.edu/people/faculty/fitchf/readlit/symbol1.htm>).

Meanwhile, in the article entitled “Teaching Symbolism”, it is explained that a symbol can be confirmed by “a lengthy description, repetition, or special placement” (<http://www.brighthub.com/education/k-12/articles/28791.aspx>). When a word, object, or place is depicted with a long description, mentioned repeatedly, or placed as the title of the work, it is highly possible that the author tries to draw attention to the word, object, or place’s symbolic meaning.

Based on the theory of symbol above, the researcher tries to find symbols from the meaning and the character of symbols which follow the main character and the researcher also tries to look for the background of the symbols itself.

### **C. Theoretical Framework**

This study uses several theories, namely the theories of character and characterization by Abrams, Milligan, Henkle, Gill, and Murphy, the theory of setting by Abrams, Gill, Holman and Harmon, and the theory of symbol by Holman and Harmon, and Beaty and Hunter as well as source from the internet.

To answer the first problem formulation, the theories of character and characterization are used to analyze the characteristics of Coco as the main character. To answer the second problem formulation, the theory of setting is used to analyze the objects found around the main character in her surroundings. To answer the third problems formulation, the theory of symbol is used to analyze how the objects in the novel can be seen as symbols, and how those objects symbolize Coco.



## CHAPTER III

### METHODOLOGY

#### A. Object of the Study

The young Chinese novelist Wei Hui has become a literary celebrity with her novel entitled *Shanghai Baby*. The novel was originally published in China in 1999. This novel was previously published in hardcover in 2001 by Pocket Book. This novel was published by Washington Square Press, by arrangement with Simon and Schuster, Inc., in 2002 in New York. The novel was translated from the Chinese by Bruce Humes. The novel consists of 263 pages, that are divided into 32 chapters and one additional page for a short biographical note of the author.

*Shanghai Baby* was published by China's biggest publisher in 1999 and soon sold over 130,000 copies. The official Xinhau news agency praised the book as a hugely popular account of the lives of China's "new generation". However, the Chinese Government condemned the book as a piece of western decadence. The book was banned. Two keys officials of the company which published *Shanghai Baby* were fired, and thousands of copies of the novels were burnt. As a result of all this notoriety, pirate editions can be easily and cheaply obtained in China (<http://www.bibliofemme.com/weihui.shtml>).

Nikki, who is usually called Coco, is the main character of the novel *Shanghai Baby*. She is 25 years old and graduated from Fudan University. She is an intelligent woman. Previously, she worked as a magazine journalist and wrote

a short story collection which didn't make any money. She decided to quit from her old job and work as a waitress at a café while trying to realize her dream to be a successful novel writer. She is a stubborn woman who has strong character.

Coco has a boyfriend named Tian Tian. They live together in Tian Tian's apartment. Tian Tian is an impotent and introverted young man. They do not need to work because Tian Tian's mother always sends him money from abroad. Everyday Coco works on her novel, supported by Tian Tian. One day, Tian Tian starts getting addicted to drugs. Meanwhile, Coco channels her sexual needs by having a casual affair with a married German man named Mark. At first Tian Tian didn't know about it, but gradually Coco spends more time with Mark and even grows to love Mark. She feels guilty but cannot stop the affair. At the end of story, Tian Tian dies of drug overdose and Coco is alone. She finishes her novel, while Mark goes back to his own wife and child in Germany.

## **B. Approach of the Study**

This study uses symbolic or formalistic approach to analyze the topic and the literary work. The article entitled "Literary Criticism Map" explains that "symbolic approaches may also fall under the category of formalism because they involve a close reading of the text" (<http://www.ksu.edu.sa/colleges/art/eng/461-Eng/Literary%20Criticism%20Map.htm>). Meanwhile, formalism is defined as the approach which focuses "on the formal patterns and technical devices of literature" (Abrams, 1981: 102).

This approach views literary language as “self-focused”, which functions to “offer the reader a special mode of experience by drawing attention to its own ‘formal’ features—that is, to the qualities and internal relations of the linguistic signs themselves” (1981: 103). Literary language is estranged by some foregrounded properties, or properties that are made more dominant or prominent, known as “artistic devices” (1981: 103). Those artistic devices include phrases, metaphors, images, symbols, and many more.

The formalistic approach focuses on the internal relations of the linguistic signs and the devices in literary works, which are different from the language outside literary works, because these relations can reveal the form and the logic of the literary work. In other words, from the perspective of this approach, paying attention to the foregrounded devices in a literary work such as metaphors, images, and symbols enables readers to understand the work, as explained in the quotation below.

In retrospect, we can say that what the author did was to make us see that internal relationships gradually reveal a form, a principle by which all subordinate patterns can be accommodated and accounted for. When all the words, phrases, metaphors, images, and symbols are examined in terms of each other and of the whole, any literary text worth our efforts will display its own internal logic. When that logic has been established, the reader is very close to identifying the overall form of the work (Guerin, 2005: 95).

Symbolic or formalistic approach is chosen as the suitable approach for analyzing this novel because this novel contains symbols as the foregrounded property or the main artistic device. In this novel, the symbols are used to support the characterization of the main character, or in other words to support the description of the main character, who becomes the central focus of this novel.

Symbolic or formalistic approach is applied in this study to identify how these symbols can be understood to reveal how the author wants to portray the main character. Therefore, the symbolic or formalistic approach is suitable for this study.

### **C. Method of the Study**

In analyzing the problem, the researcher collected the data from literary works, literary theories and history, and the internet. The researcher read the materials that had a relation with the topic that the researcher had. The researcher also used internet to looking for the data that the information can not be found in the literary works, theories, and history.

The first step that the researcher did to accomplish this analysis was to read the primary data, Wei Hui's novel entitled *Shanghai Baby*, and to decide on a topic to discuss. Some other data from many sources were collected in order to support the analysis. The researcher also looked for the information about the author. The researcher then formulated the problems, namely to analyze the main character in Wei Hui's *Shanghai Baby*. Then, the researcher tried to find the objects that could be seen as symbols that represent the main character. Finally, the researcher analyzed these objects to discover how they symbolize the main character.

## CHAPTER IV

### ANALYSIS

#### A. The Description of Coco in *Shanghai Baby*

This part discusses the depiction of Coco as the main character in Wei Hui's *Shanghai Baby*. The theories of character and characterization are used to analyze this part.

Coco is a young Chinese woman. Her real name is Nikki, but her nickname is Coco. She is the main character or the protagonist of this novel. The novel is narrated by her and told from her point of view. There are five main descriptions about Coco, namely that she is strong and self-assured, a combination of good and wild sides, independent, romantically active, and strongly connected to her family and her lovers.

**Firstly**, Coco is strong and self-assured. She is strong in facing problems, from the small problems to the big problems. In university, she has a problem with her ex-boyfriend who is a sex pervert and stalks her after they break up, but she can get over it. She finds another boyfriend, who “healed my gray memories and restored my healthy attitude to sex” (2001: 69). Then she uses her connections in the local police station from her job as a journalist to stop her ex-boyfriend from stalking her.

Not long after I began working at the magazine I used my contacts to find a friend in the administrative affairs office of the city government and then, via a local police station, finally delivered a warning to my ex (2001: 34).

Her first novel is not successful commercially and is not printed for the second time, but she keeps trying to write another novel, which she hopes to be more successful, as shown in her statement: "I'm twenty-five, and I want to be a writer. Even though the profession's totally passé, I'm going to make writing up-to-date again" (2001: 19) and "My novel--my novel would explode like fireworks and give meaning to our existence" (2001: 68). She tries to avoid the problems with her previous novel, as shown in her request for an agent "who could help me realize my dream and avoid the problems I had with my last book" (2001: 70). While writing her novel, she faces a writer's block, which makes her unable to write. However, finally she can get over that problem. She made a big party to refresh her mind, and she can write again afterwards, as described below.

Because my lifeless, dreary mood had completely vanished during the party, a swing in the opposite direction was inevitable. I threw out the rubbish, cleaned up the room, and prepared to start my life anew. Then I realized, with no surprise whatsoever, that I could write again. That impalpable, enchanting ability to manipulate language had come back to me, thank God! (2001: 227)

The biggest problem in her life is when she loses her boyfriend, Tian Tian, who dies of drugs overdose. She feels really sad, but finally she can get over his death and continue writing. As shown in her statement, "I'm not a cold-blooded woman, but I didn't go mad" (2001: 259). Her novel is finished two months and eight days after his death.

Coco is self-assured about her ability and her aspiration. She realizes her talent in writing and she fully knows how to use it in her education, work, and even personal life, as shown in her statements below.

To my teachers or ex-boss and colleagues at the magazine, I'm smart but hard-headed, a skilled professional with an unpredictable temperament who can guess how any film or a story will end from the way it begins (2001: 17).

At the university I often used to write letters to boys I was secretly in love with, rich in expression and affection, almost guaranteeing conquest. At the magazine, the interviews and stories I wrote were like something out of a novel, with their twisted plots and rarefied language, so that the real seemed false, and vice versa (2001: 18).

Coco has no doubt to grab opportunities, both in career and sex. Like the tiger pounces on her, Coco pounces on the opportunity to chase her dream to write full-time, supported by her assurance about her talent as shown in her statement: "Even though the profession's totally passé, I'm going to make writing up-to-date again" (2001: 19). She is going to chase that dream, even if it means that she must give up her highly paid job and take a part-time job.

When I finally realized that everything I had done until then was just a waste of my talent, I gave up my highly paid job at the magazine (2001: 18).

She also pounces on the opportunity to have sex with a man he likes. She is willing to meet Mark, a German man that she likes, in an exhibition and starts an affair with him, although she is already in a relationship with Tian Tian while Mark is already married with a son.

Mark and his questionable intentions stuck close to me, his hand on my waist like a pair of tongs, searing and dangerous. The appearance of that sexy couple gave me a sudden urge to behave badly. Perhaps I'd been prepared to do the unthinkable from the beginning (2001: 61).

**Secondly**, Coco is a combination of two sides, the orderly side and the wild side. On the orderly side, she has good achievement, work ethos, and ambition. She always had good marks at school and university. She always does

her job well, whether she works as a journalist in a magazine or as a waitress in a café. As a journalist, she writes good articles, as shown in the quote below.

At the magazine, the interviews and stories I wrote were like something out of a novel, with their twisted plots and rarefied language, so that the real seemed false, and vice versa (2001: 18).

As a waitress, she does her job of taking care of the café, including arranging the flowers as a decoration: “I began to arrange the scented white lilies in a large jar of water” (2001: 9). As a writer, her first novel is not successful commercially, but it is appreciated by many readers. It has been translated to other languages, she got letters from the readers, and she has inspired many students in the university she graduates from, as described below.

He kissed my hand graciously and said I was quite famous at Fudan, where many women had read my works and dreamed of becoming writers like me (2001: 219).

Students were caught stealing my book from bookstores. I got letters, with erotic photos enclosed, from men via my editor, wanting to know what my relationship was with the heroine of the book (2001: 68).

To achieve her dream of being a famous writer, she is willing to give up her high-paid job, take a lower paid job, and work hard to write her next novel, as described below.

When I finally realized that everything I had done until then was just a waste of my talent, I gave up my highly paid job at the magazine (2001: 18).

I stayed in my room writing for a week, not even bothering to comb my hair. No phone calls disturbed me, and no one knocked at the door. I was in a daze, like slipping on mud: from this door to that, from reality here to fiction there, I hardly needed to try. It was my novel that pushed me on (2001: 166).

The descriptions above show that Coco has responsibility and ambition to advance in her career. She often consumes alcohol and cigarettes, but she knows



the limit. She would not do anything destructive to herself, unlike Tian Tian who is addicted to drugs and finally dies of overdose.

On the wild side, Coco has a rebellious lifestyle. She goes to parties, clubs, and consumes alcoholic drink. In a club, she admits that “The music and alcohol made me drowsy, and I dozed” and that “Maybe I’d had too much to drink” (2001: 99). It can also be seen in the descriptions below.

I’m a bad girl, through and through, at least in the eyes of my mother. She gets provoked so easily (2001: 35).

Everybody looked merry as a hash-filled pipe, a few bottles of wine, and a stack of manuscript paper passed from one hand to another (2001: 40).

She rebels against her parents’ wish for her to settle down. Instead, she quits a good job that her father has struggled to give her and lives together with her boyfriend although they are not married, which is against the society’s values. It can be seen in her parents’ negative reactions below.

My parents despaired of me once again, because my father had had to pull a lot of strings to get me the job in the first place (2001: 18).

When I met Tian Tian and decided to move out, there was an uproar in my family fit to roil the Pacific Ocean. “I don’t know what to do about you. We’ll just have to wait and see how you’ll turn out. I might as well pretend I didn’t raise you,” said Mother, almost shouting (2001: 19).

Coco is also very promiscuous sexually, just like the cat Fur Ball, that “conferring her sexual favors on the males of her choice” and sometimes “bringing a tomcat home for the night” (2001: 204). As shown in her statement, “Ever since college I had seen sex as a basic necessity” (2001: 5). She has had a lot of sexual experience with several partners, from her boyfriend in university who was a sex pervert to her next boyfriend, as described in the quote below.

He was tall and handsome, and his balls were warm and clean. When I held them in my mouth, I got that sense of unquestioning trust that the act of sex bestows upon one's partner. His penis moved into me like a corkscrew. His straight-forward lovemaking healed my gray memories and restored my healthy attitude to sex. He patiently taught me how to distinguish between clitoral and vaginal orgasms, and often made me climax both ways at once (2001: 69).

Now, even though she is already in a relationship with Tian Tian, she keeps having sex with Mark, a man who is already married.

His golden body hairs were like fine rays of sunlight, zealously and intimately nibbling at my body. The tip of his rum-soaked tongue teased my nipples, then moved slowly downward. He penetrated my protective labia with deadly accuracy and located my budding clitoris. The coolness of the rum mingled with the warmth of his tongue and made me feel faint. I could feel a rush of liquid flow out of my uterus, and then he went inside (2001: 63).

**Thirdly**, Coco is an independent woman. She is not attached to and does not depend on her parents, her job, relationships, and her surroundings. Although her parents have some hopes and expectations of her, such as to live a settled family life and to work as a journalist, she does not follow them. As a consequence, she supports herself by working part-time as a waitress and does not ask for her parents' help when she faces problems in her life, such as writer's block or relationship problem. Although she already has a high-paid job which suits her educational background, she has no doubt to quit the job in order to chase her dream to write full time. Other people would commonly stick to their old job, but Coco does not do it. When having a confrontation with her parents about it, she shows her independence and detachment from her parents in her following statement.

The way we think is just too different. We're separated by a hundred generation gaps. We'd best respect one another rather than argue our cases (2001: 19).

When her boyfriend, Tian Tian, is addicted to drugs, she tries her best to forbid him. Although she feels very sad when Tian Tian eventually dies of overdose, she is not overcome by her grief. She gets on with her life and her work, as described below.

I'm not a cold-blooded woman, but I didn't go mad. *Shriek of the Butterfly* reprinted, and I promoted it at various universities as arranged by Deng and Godfather ... (2001: 259).

After that, Coco leaves the apartment, accustoms herself to the new condition, and survives on her own, as shown in the description below.

I decided to go to Berlin after Halloween. ... Just before I left, I sorted a few things out. I touched up the manuscript and cleaned up the apartment. I planned to move back in with my parents, so I needed to give Connie the key (2001: 261).

**Fourthly**, Coco is very active romantically. She has had several boyfriends since she was in university until she already works. In university, she had a crush on her senior who was nicknamed Godfather, but she was too shy and he already loved another girl at that time.

I would focus my eyes, misty from short-sightedness, on his eloquent face and fantasize that he'd suddenly shut up, lean across the table, and clamp onto my lips like a magnet. That scene was far more moving and memorable than any drawing-room comedy, but it never took place. I was too young and terribly afraid of embarrassment. And as for him, he fell for the stage designer (2001: 180).

Still in university, Coco had an intelligent boyfriend with good knowledge in literature. As she states, "I don't quite remember why I fell for him. Perhaps it was his erudition or his ability to recite famous Shakespearean works in Oxford

English” (2001: 32). However, he turned out to be a sex pervert and a liar, and later became a stalker after she broke up with him.

Naturally, I very soon realized that I had thrown myself into a slimy green pond instead. He wasn’t just a religious fanatic; he was also a sex maniac and enjoyed using my body to try out all sorts of positions from porn videos (2001: 33)

While she was writing her first novel, Coco had another boyfriend. He made her get over her trauma with her previous boyfriend. He “very patiently chatted [her] up” and “listened to [her] story of failed romance” (2001: 69). He also made Coco able to enjoy sex again, as shown in her statement: “His straightforward lovemaking healed my gray memories and restored my healthy attitude to sex” (2001: 69). However, he had materialistic motive. He left Coco soon after her first novel was published and failed commercially. Their separation does not make Coco sad, but it means that she has not found a satisfactory relationship yet.

My relationship with Ye Qian lasted several months, coinciding with the publication of my book. My impulsive state at that time brought him, and the sex he brought with him, into my life. When *Shriek of the Butterfly* had sold out and I still couldn’t hear the sound of money jingling in my pocket, we parted without argument or ill will, rationally and harmlessly (2001: 70).

After she works as a waitress in a café, Coco unexpectedly meets Tian Tian, a regular visitor in the café. They never talk but Coco says that “We rapidly fell in love” (2001: 2). One day, Tian Tian states his love to Coco. They start a relationship. Later, she moves in to Tian Tian’s apartment and they live together.

Until, that is, the day he gave me a note that said “I love you,” along with his name and address. Born in the Year of the Rabbit, and a year younger than me, this man enchanted me. It’s hard to put a finger on what made him so good looking in my eyes, but it had something to do with his air of world-weariness and his thirst for love (2001: 2).

Coco lives her romance life with great love and dedication. Coco's boyfriend, Tian Tian, loves her very much, which can be seen in his statement: "But I've found you and decided to put my faith in you" (2001: 3). Coco also loves him very much. Her love can be seen in her statement, her actions to Tian Tian, and her thought, as shown in the quotes below.

"I love you," I said. I hugged him tight and closed my eyes (2001: 77).

Tian Tian was my only love, a gift from God. Even though I'd always felt that our love was doomed, I didn't want to, and couldn't, change anything about it. I would never regret it, till the day I died (2001: 96-97).

Coco's love to Tian Tian can also be seen in her great hopes and dream about their relationship. She dreams to travel around the world with Tian Tian, as described in her statement below. It shows that Tian Tian is the one person that Coco loves the most and wants to be with.

Travelling doesn't just give you a change of time and place—to some extent it can also influence your mental and physical well-being. I fantasized about making love with Tian Tian in some hotel in a small French town (he'd be okay there), and later in a German motel, an abandoned small church in Vienna, the Roman Colosseum, a motorboat in the Mediterranean... The story would unfold little by little—as long as there was love and desire, freedom and love would encircle the forests, lakes, and sky (2001: 82).

She dedicates her time, attention, and feeling to Tian Tian. They live together and spend most of their time together, whether in Tian Tian's apartment, eating out, or doing some other activities, as shown in Coco's statement: "We often go out for a walk or sometimes to a bar for a drink, or we go dancing" (2001: 82). Their togetherness is also described in Coco's statement: "As I said, we're often inseparable, shadowing each other like Siamese twins" (2001: 27).

Every morning, the first thing they do after they wake up is kissing each other, as shown in the description below.

At exactly 8:30 AM I wake up, and beside me, Tian Tian opens his eyes. We look at each other for a second, then begin to kiss silently. Our early morning kisses are tender, affectionate, smooth as little fishes wriggling in water (2001: 4).

Coco also has an affair with a German man called Mark. Since Mark already has a wife and a son in Germany, he has no intention of having further relationship with Coco, such as being her boyfriend or marrying her. Although their affair is mostly focused on sex, Mark does love her and cares about her. On the other hand, Coco is attracted to him and cannot refuse him. Moreover, he gives her sexual pleasure, something that Tian Tian cannot give, as shown in the descriptions below.

Yet another kiss, long and leisurely. This was the first time that I realized kissing before lovemaking could be so comfortable, steady, unhurried, enhancing my desire. His golden body hairs were like fine rays of sunlight, zealously and intimately nibbling at my body. The tip of his rum-soaked tongue teased my nipples, then moved slowly downward. He penetrated my protective labia with deadly accuracy and located my budding clitoris (2001: 63).

In that instant, sexual pleasure swept over me as if mountains were being toppled and seas emptied, until it seemed I was making love with every man in the world (2001: 212).

As Coco starts to love Mark more and more, she also dedicates more and more of her time, attention, and feeling to Mark. She keeps thinking about him and her conversation with him even when she is not with him: "I lit a cigarette, sat down on the sofa, and thought about the phone conversation, about that man with his tall, tall body steeped in fragrance from head to toe, and his wicked smile"

(2001: 38). Sometimes she spends a night or even several days in Mark's apartment.

I stayed in Mark's apartment. We lay naked in bed, listening to Suzhou ballads, watching videos, and playing chess. When hungry, we cooked noodles or wonton in the kitchen. ... When semen, saliva, and sweat had glued shut every pore in our bodies, we took bathing suits, goggles, and VIP cards to the Hotel Equatorial for a swim (2001: 238).

Thus, Coco's romance life contains some problems and obstacles. Some of the problems in her romance life are caused by Coco herself, and some other problems are caused by the situation outside her control.

The problems from Coco herself are her willingness to have affair with Mark and her guilt from cheating on Tian Tian. As discussed above, Coco already has a boyfriend; they love each other and live happily together. However, when Mark tries to approach her, she does not reject Mark's attempt. Instead, she gives responses that encourage his attempt. For example, she does not reject Mark's invitation to the art gallery and goes there without Tian Tian. Then, she does not refuse when Mark takes her away with bad intentions.

Mark and his questionable intentions stuck close to me, his hand on my waist like a pair of tongs, searing and dangerous. The appearance of that sexy couple gave me a sudden urge to behave badly. ... Basking in masochistic joy, my mind went kaput. At that instant, all I needed was an ounce of self-control. I should have walked away from him right then, and none of what followed would ever have happened. But I wasn't the least bit cautious and didn't want to be; I was twenty-five and had never longed for security (2001: 61-62).

When Mark approaches her to have sex with him many times afterwards, Coco does not refuse. She even starts to enjoy it and does it non-stop with him, as shown in the description below.

A phone call from his wife saved me. He rose unsteadily from the bed and went to answer it. Eva wanted to know why he hadn't been answering her e-mails. I thought to myself: *God, after going at it nonstop, we didn't have the strength to turn on the computer* (2001: 238-239).

This affair eventually becomes a big problem for Coco. On one side, she enjoys her affair with Mark and even grows to love him. On the other side, she knows that it is not a good thing to do and she must always hide this affair. She feels guilty and ashamed from cheating on Tian Tian, as described below.

“Coco, no matter what, don't ever lie to me.” He fixed his eyes on mine, and an invisible chisel slashed my heart. A dense, terrifying silence seeped out like blood. The more hopelessly in love you are, the more you can get caught up in deceptions and murky nightmares (2001: 77).

Looking at this unconscious man, whose willpower had gone, my brokenhearted lover lying in this ice-cold bathroom, I could only cry until my throat closed up. Whose fault was it all? I wanted to find someone to blame for everything, so I'd have an object to hate and to rage against (2001: 246-247).

Tian Tian starts to suspect Coco's affair as she often goes missing without any explanation, and the affair is also known by Tian Tian's friend, Madonna. The impact is very serious and creates a problem in Coco and Tian Tian's relationship, which Coco describes as “a tumor” in their love.

Besides, Mark had begun to embed himself in the weakest link of our love, like a tumor. The tumor existed because of a virus spreading in a certain place in my body—and that virus was sex (2001: 87).

The problems outside Coco's control are Mark's attention to her, Tian Tian's impotence, drug addiction, and morbid tendency. Without any clear reason, Mark has really liked Coco since they first met. Despite his marriage and his statement that he loves his wife, he is crazy about Coco both sexually and romantically, as shown in his actions below.



He massaged my back and my feet with the amateur skills he'd acquired from visits to "pure massage" parlors. He teased me in his tacky Shanghainese. From start to finish he went to every length to wait hand and foot on the oriental princess of his dreams—his gifted girlfriend with waist-length black hair and sad, sensitive eyes (2001: 237).

Mark's attention worsens the problem. He keeps contacting and approaching Coco. Every time Coco feels guilty and tries to stop the affair, he always manages to persuade her by showing his affection to her, as described below.

"No, no, baby. You don't know how much I care for you. Really, Coco." His eyes were utterly tender, and in the washroom light that tenderness became sorrow (2001: 75).

Meanwhile, Tian Tian happens to be impotent, which make him unable to completely fulfill Coco's needs. It indirectly makes Coco feel that there is something missing, and she tries to get it through her affair. Furthermore, Tian Tian already has a morbid tendency. He is pessimistic and only has little will to live. He already has the habit of doing destructive things, such as smoking marijuana, getting drunk, and taking drugs. When he suspects that Coco is having an affair, he does not confront or blame Coco directly. Instead, he just channels his anger to himself and becomes more self-destructive.

Tian Tian leaned over and hugged me. "I despise you!" He squeezed these words out from between his teeth, and each word seemed to explode. "Because you make me despise myself." He began to cry. "I can't make love. My whole existence is just a farce. Don't pity me. I should disappear" (2001: 245).

After that, he completely loses the will to live. He tries to destroy himself by taking drugs heavily and ignoring Coco's pleas, as shown in her description: "Begging him, threatening him, throwing things, or leaving home—none of these were of use" (2001: 247). Finally, Tian Tian dies of overdose. Coco loses her boyfriend, which makes her very sad and guilty at the same time.

When your lover leaves, you can cry out all the tears in your body, but he won't come back. He's gone forever, taking with him your broken memories, reduced to ashes, and leaving behind a soul, alone (2001: 248).

Coco's romance life is closed with Tian Tian's death and Mark's return to Germany. Tian Tian is dead and Mark continues his life with his own family in Germany, so now Coco no longer has any romantic relationship.

**Fifth**, although she is independent, Coco has strong connection to her family and her boyfriend. She cannot be separated from them. As discussed before, she was raised by her parents and has been living with her parents since her birth until her twenties, when she works as a journalist and a waitress. Even after Coco no longer lives with her parents, her parents keep contacting her and approaching her.

My parents both phoned me. They had surrendered. Chinese parents give up easily to keep in contact with their children. Over the phone, they tried very hard to come across as warm while standing by their principles. They asked how I was doing and if I'd been having any problems. When they learned that there was no one to do the housework, Mother even offered to come over and help out (2001: 48).

After moving out of her parents' house, Coco lives with her boyfriend. They do not have daily jobs and spend most of their time together.

## **B. The Depiction of a Cat, a Novel, and the Yin Yang in *Shanghai Baby***

This part discusses the depiction of three objects in Wei Hui's *Shanghai Baby*, namely a cat, a novel, and the yin yang, and their relation to the main character in *Shanghai Baby* named Coco. As the previous description, in order to be identified as a symbol, the symbolic meaning of a particular word or object

must be confirmed by something else, as explained by Beaty and Hunter in the quotation below.

A single item, even something as traditionally fraught with meaning as a snake or a rose, becomes a symbol only when its potentially symbolic meaning is confirmed by something else in the story, just as a point needs a second point to define a line (1999: 184).

The quotation above shows that there must be enough proof or grounds to confirm a word or an object's symbolic meaning. Therefore, readers or writers who conduct a study on symbols in a literary work must read the work closely in order to find the proof. There are some procedures to confirm or identify a word or an object as a symbol, such as repetition, explicit statement, lengthy description, or special placement. In the article entitled "Symbols", it is explained that a symbol can be confirmed through repetition and through explicit statement. Repetition means that a word, an object, or a place is repeated several times throughout the story; the word, object, or place is mentioned in a higher frequency than usual. Explicit statement means that the title may refer to a symbol or become a symbol (<http://www.cod.edu/people/faculty/fitchf/readlit/symbol1.htm>). Meanwhile, in the article entitled "Teaching Symbolism", it is explained that a symbol can be confirmed by "a lengthy description, repetition, or special placement" (<http://www.brighthub.com/education/k-12/articles/28791.aspx>).

## **1. Cat**

Cat is "feline mammal usually having thick soft fur and no ability to roar; domestic cats". Cat is the only animal that is mentioned constantly in this story. The depiction of cat in this story can be divided into two groups. The first is about

the pet cat kept by Tian Tian, Coco's boyfriend. Coco lives together with her boyfriend, so her boyfriend's cat also has some relation to Coco's life. The second is Coco's dreams that are related to cat.

Based on Henkle's theory, major character is the most important character that conveys the author's message (1977: 87), and based on Milligan's theory, the content of the story is highlighted to major characters' experience (1983: 155). Therefore, as a major character, Coco's dreams are important part of the story, and the story highlights all her experience, including her experience with her boyfriend's cat.

Cat is first mentioned in the story when Coco's boyfriend, Tian Tian, suddenly brings home a cat after visiting her aunt. His aunt's cat just has many kittens, so his aunt gives him a kitten. It is shown in his statement: "Her cat had a new litter and she gave me a kitten. She's called Fur Ball" (2001: 67). He keeps the kitten as a pet in his apartment and names it Fur Ball. Its fur color is black and white, and its eyes are green.

He was sitting on the arm of the sofa, looking intently at my face and cradling a black-and-white cat. The cat was staring at me, too. I saw myself in its liquid green eyes (2001: 67).

Coco lives together with Tian Tian in his apartment, so the cat is considered her pet, too. Pet owners sometimes have a close relationship with their pets. For example, Tian Tian is very close with the cat. He often spends time with it when doing daily activities such as writing letters. He even insists on bringing the cat in a bag when he goes on vacation alone without Coco. However, Coco is not close with the cat. It always runs away whenever Coco comes near it.

Tian Tian was still up. He was lying on the sofa with his cat Fur Ball, holding a notepad and writing a long letter to his mother in far-off Spain. I sat down beside him and Fur Ball ran away (2001: 76).

Tian Tian gets addicted to drugs while he is away from Coco. He neglects everything, including his cat. He does not feed it or take care of it. The cat runs away and lives on the street.

One day Fur Ball ran away. She'd had no food for several days, and no attention from her master. So she decided to leave, by which time her stomach was shriveled, her coat blotched, her bones showing. She must have gone wild, hunting for food in garbage heaps late at night (2001: 145-146).

When Coco gets the news about Tian Tian's addiction, she comes to find and stop him. The cat suddenly comes back. Coco feeds it and observes its bad condition.

Late that night, I vaguely heard the sound of a cat's cry, fine as silk in motion. When I turned on the light, Fur Ball was there. I leaped out of bed and put the plate of leftover salt and pepper-roasted pork on the floor. She came over, put her head down, and wolfed it up. She looked totally run down. Her coat was so dirty you couldn't make out her color, and her face was thin and fierce (2001: 157).

I didn't know how she'd found her way back. Maybe she'd seen me from some corner, like her lucky star, and knew that meant she could go home to Shanghai (2001: 158).

That night, Coco and Tian Tian are united again. When they make love, the cat goes near Coco and licks her feet. Then the cat sleeps at Coco and Tian Tian's feet until morning.

The warm air lifted my naked body; I saw my pink nipples rising like graceful buoys on the tide, and my lover's lips were tiny fish, tenderly and adorably playing in the water. I closed my eyes and accepted everything. His fingers caressed my bleeding wound. Lubricated by blood, I exploded. I heard Fur Ball meow in the distance and at the same time felt her rough tongue on the soles of my feet. That morning's lovemaking with my lover and a cat remains clear in my mind (2001: 158).

Tian Tian was still sleeping, and Fur Ball went to sleep at our feet. We awoke to sunlight and to find Fur Ball licking us (2001: 158).

After that, the cat lives with Coco and Tian Tian again, but it has a double life. It spends half of its time at Coco and Tian Tian's apartment as a pet, which is bathed and fed. On the other hand, it spends the other half of its time on the streets as a stray cat, which goes wherever it wants and eats from rubbish bins.

Our cat Fur Ball remained incorrigibly wild, maintaining two homes, in our apartment and among the street-corner rubbish bins. She commuted between the two, snoring at the foot of our bed on Fridays and Saturdays, her body smelling sweetly of body wash, and as soon as Monday arrived, like a commuter she would tuck her tail in and leave the apartment right on time--but unlike a commuter, she wandered the streets as she pleased (2001: 204).

Beside description of Tian Tian's pet cat, Coco also has some dreams related to cat. The first is about a cat that eats the potted sunflowers in a room, then jumps out of the window. The second is Coco's imagination about a tiger in the fridge. When she opens the fridge, she often imagines a tiger would come out of the fridge and rape her.

I often dream of a room where there's a potted sunflower. The blossom wilts; its seeds drift away and grow into more sunflowers. It's terrifying. There's also a cat that wants to eat the flowers. When he jumps up, he falls out the window and disappears (2001: 103).

Several times when my patience was exhausted, I put down my pen and walked quietly into the kitchen and opened the fridge. I hoped a tiger hidden inside would pounce on me, cover my mouth and nose with his golden fur to stop my breathing, and then rape me without hesitation (2001: 167).

Tiger is an animal that belongs to the same group as cat, namely feline.

Tigers and cats also have some similarities in their behavior, shape of body and

head, although they are different in size. Therefore, Coco's imagination about a tiger is still related to the depiction of cat.

## 2. Novel

Novel is "an extended fictional work in prose; usually in the form of a story". Novel is an important part of this story. It is mentioned from the beginning until the end of the story because Coco, the main character, is a novel writer. Based on Milligan's theory, major characters are those who become the focus in the story from the beginning to end and whose motivation and history are fully established (1983: 155). As a major character, Coco becomes the focus in the story, and one of her main motivations is to write a novel. Therefore, novel becomes one of the things that engage the readers' attention.

Coco is a university graduate with a degree in Chinese. She already wrote and published a novel entitled *Shriek of the Butterfly*. The novel was not successful financially, but it was famous among young readers for its controversial content, and it also gave her some fans. As shown in her statement,

With her help I had published *Shriek of the Butterfly*, which provoked such curious reactions. Everyone was whispering about this risqué book, and rumor had it that I was a bisexual with a predilection for violence. Students were caught stealing my book from bookstores. I got letters, with erotic photos enclosed, from men via my editor, wanting to know what my relationship was with the heroine of the book. They hoped for a dinner date with me at Saigon Restaurant on Hengshan Road, dressed up as one of my romantic characters (2001: 68).

However, Coco is not satisfied with her achievement. She has a dream to write a great novel. She even left her old job as a journalist in a magazine to be a writer. This dream is shown in her statement: "I'm twenty-five, and I want to be a

writer. Even though the profession's totally passe, I'm going to make writing up-to-date again" (2001: 19). In the beginning of the novel, she begins to realize her dream to write a novel.

To finance herself, Coco works part-time as a waitress in a cafe, where she met her boyfriend, Tian Tian. He really supports Coco's dream to write a novel. With his money, he finances Coco so that she does not have to work and can write her novel full time. It is shown in his statement: "We've enough money not to have to work all the time. You could write your novel" (2001: 6). He also gives Coco spirit and attention. It is shown in his activities, such as watching over Coco and preparing food for her while she is working hard to write a novel.

Tian Tian trod softly in the apartment, poured Suntory soda for me, prepared fruit salad with Mother's Choice salad dressing for me, gave me Dove chocolate bars for inspiration, chose CDs that were stimulating but not distracting, and adjusted the level of the air conditioning (2001: 24).

When there are some guests, he asks her to read part of her novel. From his words and gestures, it is clear that he is happy about Coco's novel.

"Coco, go ahead and read from your writing," said Tian Tian, his eyes sparkling as he gazed at me. This was the moment when he felt doubly reassured and content (2001: 40).

Although a novel is defined as a fictional work, Coco writes her novel based on her real life, in setting, character, and plot. Her novel is set in the city of Shanghai. In reality, Coco lives in Shanghai, too. Therefore, she knows much about the city and can describe it in detail.

My instinct told me that I should write about turn-of-the-century Shanghai. This fun-loving city: the bubbles of happiness that rise from it, the new generation it has nurtured, and the vulgar, sentimental, and mysterious atmosphere to be found in its back street and alleys. This is a unique Asian city (2001: 25).



Her novel's main character's identity and characteristics are similar to Coco's identity and characteristics. Her novel's main character is a young woman with characteristics such as ambitious, impulsive, and pleasure loving. She is in relationship with two men. In reality, Coco is also a young woman with those characteristics, and she also has an affair with a German man, Mark, beside her boyfriend, Tian Tian.

Like me, my heroine did not want to lead an ordinary life. She is ambitious, has two men, and lives on an emotional roller coaster. She believes in these words: Suck dry the juice of life like a leech, including its secret happiness and hurt, spontaneous passion and eternal longing. Like me, she was afraid that she went to hell there would be no films to watch, no comfortable pajamas to wear, no heavenly sounds of records to be heard--just suffocating boredom (2001: 93).

Coco's novel's plot even includes events from her real life. After Mark appears in her real life, she writes it as part of her novel, as shown in her statement: "I wrote about the randomness of Mark's appearance on the scene and the inevitability of certain events in life" (2001: 38). Once, Coco ever feels worried because she does not want to mix up her novel with her real life. She wants to disguise herself in the novel. However, she later gives up trying to disguise herself and decides to base the novel on her real life.

I didn't know how to disguise myself effectively to my readers. In other words, I didn't want to mix my novel up with my real life, and to be honest, I was even more worried that as the plot developed, it could have an impact on my future (2001: 92).

I gave up embellishment and lies. I intended to put a completely genuine version of my life before the public's eye. This didn't require too much courage, just obedience to that mysterious force. As long as it felt good, that was enough; I didn't have to play naive or cool. This is how I discovered my real self and overcame my terror of loneliness, poverty, death, and all other potential disasters (2001: 167).

While writing the novel, Coco has positive feelings about it, such as hope and spirit. She has great hopes that her novel would be successful both in its sales, fame, and content. She hopes her novel would be best selling, famous, revealing and meaningful. Her hope can be seen clearly in her statement, "My novel--my novel would explode like fireworks and give meaning to our existence" (2001: 68), as well as her statement in the quotation below.

And my shocking best selling novel will reveal the truth about humankind: violence, style, lust, joy, and then enigma, machines, power, and death (2001: 9).

She also has high spirit in writing the novel to achieve her hopes. She works hard for days and weeks to write the novel. She is so busy writing in her room until she often falls asleep on her desk and forgets to take care of herself, such as dressing or combing her hair. Her non-stop effort to write her novel can be seen in her statement, "Dressed in my pajamas, hair disheveled, I would write through the night" (2001: 113). She also stays in her room for days to write.

I stayed in my room writing for a week, not even bothering to comb my hair. No phone calls disturbed me, and no one knocked at the door. I was in a daze, like slipping on mud: from this door to that, from reality here to fiction there, I hardly needed to try. It was my novel that pushed me on (2001: 166).

On the other hand, Coco also has negative feelings about the novel, such as anxiety. She suddenly feels she is not talented enough to write a novel. She is scared she would not be able to realize her dream to write a great novel, and she would disappoint the people around her, especially Tian Tian. Her fear is shown in her statement: "The thought that I'd never be able to finish this novel frightened me" (2001: 87). She feels panicked because she suddenly loses her ability to

write, as shown in her statement, “I hit a momentary dry spell, and then panic came over me, like a sorceress who discovers her magic has vanished. I couldn't throw myself into the distant world of words” (2001: 160). Furthermore, she feels useless and guilty because of her failure to write, as described below.

Perhaps this will be my last book, because I still feel that despite all my efforts I haven't created anything unique. I've shamed my parents and disappointed my innocent little butterfly of a lover (2001: 169).

Another negative feeling is writer's block. Writer's block is a condition where a writer suddenly loses his or her ability to write. Coco experiences writer's block when her novel is almost finished. She suddenly loses all her idea and cannot write at all. It is not because of something wrong with her intelligence or physical condition because she can still do other activities such as thinking and talking. It is probably caused by psychological factor, her anxiety.

And as for me, I hit a bout of writer's block. Twenty-five thousand or so words away from the end, my brain went utterly blank, as if all my imagination, wit, and fire had oozed out of my ears overnight. The words that came from my pen were lousy and obscure; I wrote, tore it up, and tossed my pen into the dustbin, too. (2001: 204).

Finally, Coco finishes her novel after facing many obstacles, such as overcoming writer's block, problem in her relationship with Tian Tian because of her affairs with Mark, to Tian Tian's death in drugs overdose.

My novel is coming to an end now. After going through one pen after another, at last I've found that feeling of release--like when you shoot from a mountaintop down the ski slopes toward the bottom. Release, and a strange sense of sadness. I don't believe I can predict the fate of this book. It's part of my fate, too, and I haven't the means to control it (2001: 254).

As described in above, after Coco finishes her novel with hard work, she has mixed feeling between calm and sad. Until the end of the novel, she does not know whether the novel would be successful like her dream or not.

### **3. Yin Yang**

Yin and Yang are the two contrasting cosmic forces in Chinese philosophy, usually described as a circle divided into light and dark fields by an S-shaped curve. In this story, the yin yang are not depicted exactly as the real circle, but as black and white or dark and light things and images around Coco, the main character.

The first thing that contains dark and light contrast in the novel is Shanghai in the evening. The city of Shanghai in the evening is described several times in the novel. The sun already sets in the evening, so the sky is dark. However, there is light from sources such as street lanterns, streetlights, lights from the shops and buildings in the city. Therefore, there is a combination between dark and light in the outdoor. Coco describes that “the lights, tree shadows, and gothic roof of the Paris Printemps department store, and the people in autumn garb meandering among them” seem to drift among the night colors (2001: 14). Two other quotations below also describe the dark and light contrast in Shanghai.

The colorful street lanterns had just come on, and the fluorescent lights of the shops shimmered like shards of gold. I walked along the street, blending with the thousands of people and vehicles shuttling back and forth, like the Milky Way blaxing right here on earth. The most exciting moment of the city's day had arrived (2001: 9).

Standing on the roof, we looked at the silhouettes of the buildings lit up by the streetlights on both sides of the Huangpu River, specially the Oriental Pearl TV Tower, Asia's tallest. Its long, long steel column pierces the sky, proof of the city's phallic worship. The ferries, the waves, the night-dark grass, the dazzling neon lights, and incredible structures (2001: 14).

The second thing that contains dark and light contrast is some characters' eyes. Tian Tian's eyes contain very strong contrast because his eyeballs are very black, but the whites of his eyes are very bright. Coco describes it as the eyes "where black was so distinct from white" (2001: 64). The eyes of Flying Apple, a minor character in the novel, also contain strong contrast because his eye sockets are dark, but his eyes are bright.

Then he turned to look straight at me. His eye sockets were slightly shadowed, but his eyes were bright, commanding yet delicate, casting a harmonious image in which yin and yang were turned topsy-turvy (2001: 148).

There are also many other things with dark and light contrast in the novel, such as Tian Tian's cat, Coco's dream, and Shamir's movie. Tian Tian's cat, Fur Ball, has black and white fur as shown in Coco's description: "He was sitting on the arm of the sofa, looking intently at my face and cradling a black-and-white cat" (2001: 67). Coco also has a dream that contains dark and light contrast. In her dream, the night is very dark, but there is also a thread of moonlight.

It must have been around two or three in the morning. Something hazy and soft was there in the black night. Then I saw it clearly -- a thread of moonlight glancing in through a chink in the blinds, which hadn't been pulled quite shut. I stared at this thread of light for a good half hour (2001: 42).

Lastly, Coco is taken by Mark, her secret lover, to watch a movie by a German director named Shamir. Shamir's movie contains black and white contrast. The lights clash with but also attract each other. It is shown in Coco's

statement: "The colors in the images were mesmerizing, with a subtle purple and blue harmony amid the strong black and white contrast" (2001: 208), and also in Mark's statement: "But I was mesmerized by the colors. Those rays of light clashing with one another, yet attracting each other, too" (2001: 209).

### **C. How the Cat, the Novel, and the Yin Yang Symbolize Coco**

This part discusses the cat, the novel, and the yin yang as symbols, specifically about how those three objects symbolize Coco in different ways, based on the discussion in the previous part. The theory of symbol is used to analyze this part.

#### **1. The Cat as a Symbol of Coco**

As described before, cat is a small feline animal. Animal symbolism has been existing for a long time, especially in literature. Many famous authors have used animals as symbols in their works. For example, in the short story "Cat in the Rain", Ernst Hemingway's depiction of cat is considered as a symbol for the American woman, one of the major characters (Wright, 2001: 1) or the baby that the American couple lacks (Leon, 2002: 5). In the novel *Moby Dick*, Herman Melville's depiction of the whale is also considered as a symbol.

In Wei Hui's *Shanghai Baby*, the cat becomes a symbol, or something that "has not only "literal" meaning, but also additional meaning(s) beyond the literal" (<http://web.mst.edu/~gdoty/classes/concepts-practices/symbolism.html>).

Therefore, cat in this novel has literal meaning and additional meaning beyond the literal. Literally, the cat represents the animal depicted in the story, as the writer

has discussed in the previous part, but it also stands for deeper meanings beyond the literal meaning. The cat symbolizes Coco, the protagonist of the story, as discussed in the four points below.

Firstly, the cat is strong and self-assured. In Western, Asian, and other cultures, there is a common belief that cats have nine lives. It shows that cats are considered tough and do not die easily. In the article entitled “Cat - Pagan Symbol of the Arcane”, Jill Stefko describes some common views about cat, including the cat as a strong and self-assured animal.

Self-assured, she’s a strong protector, especially in confrontational situations. The zenith of her power is the night and she’s been called a child of the Moon (Stefko, 2008: 1).

In the novel itself, the cat Fur Ball is depicted as the queen among street cats. Although it is kept as a pet in Tian Tian’s apartment, it routinely wanders on the street among the stray cats to mate or find food. Despite the local Residents Committee’s effort to reduce the number of stray cats, Fur Ball continues its activities unaffected.

As night fell, she would gather her cohorts and begin her ritual mating calls (2001: 204).

As a result, there were a lot fewer stray cats, but Fur Ball kept right on doing her thing unmolested. It was as if she had an uncanny ability to outwit fate. The gods were powerful, but she was pretty resourceful herself, occassionally even bringing a tomcat home for the night. We imagine that if there were a cat gang, she would be its queen (2001: 204).

Additionally, Coco’s dream features a tiger, an animal from the feline family. As described by Coco, it “would pounce on me, cover my mouth and nose with his golden fur to stop my breathing” (2001: 167). Based on that description, the tiger is strong enough to pounce on Coco and stop her from breathing.

Like the cat, Coco is strong and self-assured, as already discussed in the first part. She is strong in facing her problems, from the small problems to the big problems, from the problems in romance to the problems in her work as an author. She is also self-assured about her ability and her aspiration. She realizes her talent and knows how to use it in her education, work, and personal life. Coco also has no doubt to grab opportunities, both in career and romance. She is willing to do anything to chase her dream to become a writer or to get the love of a man that she likes.

Secondly, the cat is unexpectedly brought home by Tian Tian. He gets it from his grandmother. He keeps it as a pet and calls it Fur Ball. This event is considered unexpected because Tian Tian is a person who hardly keeps in contact with his family. As he admits himself, he has not visited his grandmother for a long time: “It’s been a long time since I went” (2001: 67). He never visits his mother in Spain, as described in his mother’s statement: “I’ve never understood why you wouldn’t come to Spain—it seems you have never trusted me” (2001: 57); and when his mother comes to Shanghai, he does not want to meet her. Furthermore, normally he is not the kind of person who can take good care of something. He cannot even take care of his own home, as described below.

The washing machine in the bathroom was stuffed with stiff socks and dirty sheets. Tian Tian was against hiring a daily or a maid to do the housework, because he didn’t want a stranger in his personal space, touching his underwear, ashtrays, or slippers. But we were getting lazier and lazier (2001: 43).

Therefore, it is unexpected that Tian Tian’s grandmother gives him a kitten, a creature that must be well cared for, at the one time he visits her after a long time.



Furthermore, the cat becomes very dear and very close to him. It accompanies him anywhere and anytime. It accompanies him as he writes a letter at midnight, and he insists on taking it with him when he goes away on vacation, as described in the quotes below.

He was lying on the sofa with his cat Fur Ball, holding a notepad and writing a long letter to his mother in far-off Spain (2001: 75).

In another bag was the kitten, FurBall, whom Tian Tian insisted on taking (2001: 88).

Like the cat, Coco is unexpectedly found by Tian Tian, although not in the literal sense. It is highly unexpected that they should meet because Coco should not be working there in the first place. She has good education, with a degree in English from a prestigious university, and she also had a highly paid job as a magazine journalist. However, she quit her job to write full-time and works part-time as a waitress. Normally, people with such education and job would not take a job which is less interesting and has lower pay, but Coco does it. It is also unexpected that they fall in love because Tian Tian is introverted and antisocial.

For a while after his father died, Tian Tian lost the power of speech. Then he dropped out of high school in his first year. His lonely childhood had already turned him into a nihilist. His aversion to the outside world meant he spent half his life in bed (2001: 4).

As shown in the quote above, he has few friends and does not easily get close to other people. He never even had any girlfriend before, as described by Coco: “It was his first time with a woman in all his twenty-four years” (2001: 5), but he can fall in love with Coco immediately and deeply.

His eyes grew wet, and he clenched his hands tightly. “But I’ve found you and decided to put my faith in you” (2001: 3).

“I love you,” said Tian Tian softly. “Don’t leave me; don’t stop caring for me. You’re the best, the most beautiful girl in the world. You have all my love” (2001: 157).

Thus, Coco’s encounter and relationship with Tian Tian resembles the cat’s. Both encounter Tian Tian unexpectedly, are brought to live with him, and become close and dear to him.

Thirdly, the cat is a combination of two sides. In Stefko’s article, the cat is described as “the merging of the spiritual and physical; the psychic and sensual”, and also “symbolic of ... balance” (Stefko, 2008: 2). Based on the article, the cat is formed by a balance of two sides, namely the spiritual or psychic side and the physical or sensual side.

In the novel, the cat leads a double life of a pet and a street cat. It has a tame side and a wild side. On the tame side, the cat is kept as a pet in Tian Tian’s apartment. It is given attention, bathed, groomed, and it does not have to hunt for food because it is fed by its owner. The descriptions below show Fur Ball being fed and bathed.

When I turned on the light, Fur Ball was there. I leaped out of bed and put the plate of leftover saff and pepper-roasted pork on the floor (2001: 157).

I jumped off the bed, gathered Fur Ball in my arms, and went into the bathroom, where I bathed her in shower gel and warm water (2001: 158).

On the wild side, the cat lives as a stray cat on the street. It goes wherever it wants and eats whatever it wants from the rubbish bins, as described below.

Our cat Fur Ball remained incorrigibly wild, maintaining two homes, in our apartment and among the street-corner rubbish bins. She commuted between the two, snoring at the foot of our bed on Fridays and Saturdays, her body smelling sweetly of body wash, and as soon as Monday arrived, like a commuter she would tuck her tail in and leave the apartment right on time--but unlike a commuter, she wandered the streets as she pleased (2001: 204).

Furthermore, it also mates with any male cat it chooses, as shown in the description below.

As night fell, she would gather her cohorts and begin her ritual mating calls. ... We imagine that if there were a cat gang, she would be its queen, conferring her sexual favors on the males of her choice (2001: 204).

Like the cat, Coco is a combination of two sides, the orderly side and the wild side. On the orderly side, she has good achievement, work ethos, and ambition. She always had good marks at school and university. She always does her job well, both as a writer and as a waitress. On the wild side, Coco has a rebellious lifestyle. She goes to parties, clubs, and consumes alcoholic drink. She rebels against her parents' wish for her to settle down. She quits a good job that her father has struggled to give her and lives together with her boyfriend although they are not married, which is against the society's values.

Coco is also very promiscuous sexually, just like the cat Fur Ball, that "conferring her sexual favors on the males of her choice" and sometimes "bringing a tomcat home for the night" (2001: 204). As shown in her statement, "Ever since college I had seen sex as a basic necessity" (2001: 5). She has had a lot of sexual experience with several partners, from her boyfriend in university who was a sex pervert to her next boyfriend, as described in the quote below.

He was tall and handsome, and his balls were warm and clean. When I held them in my mouth, I got that sense of unquestioning trust that the act of sex bestows upon one's partner. His penis moved into me like a corkscrew. His straight-forward lovemaking healed my gray memories and restored my healthy attitude to sex. He patiently taught me how to distinguish between clitoral and vaginal orgasms, and often made me climax both ways at once (2001: 69).

Coco's orderly side reflects the cat's tame side in the novel or spiritual side in the myth, while Coco's wild side reflect the cat's wild side in the novel or physical and sensual side in the myth.

Fourthly, the cat is an independent animal. It has been a common view that cat is considered as an independent animal, as described in Stefko's article below.

Cats are independent and appear aloof, yet, when they're in the mood, can be very affectionate (Stefko, 2008: 1).

Beside the quote above, cat is also described as "symbol of independence" and "represents ... detachment" (Stefko, 2008: 1). This view is supported by the description in the novel. In the novel, the cat is also described as independent animal. As a dearly-loved pet, the cat is always fed, given attention, and even taken by its owner, Tian Tian, wherever he goes. However, when Tian Tian is addicted to drugs and neglects the cat, it goes away and lives on the street.

One day Fur Ball ran away. She'd had no food for several days, and no attention from her master. So she decided to leave, by which time her stomach was shriveled, her coat blotched, her bones showing (2001: 145).

The cat is not attached to Tian Tian despite their closeness. Although it has never lived on the street before, it can survive on its own instead of die of neglect in Tian Tian's room. Thus, the cat can control its own life, including when to follow its owner and when to leave its owner.

Like the cat, Coco is an independent woman. She is not attached to and does not depend on her parents, her job, relationships, and her surroundings. She can support herself and take the consequences of her actions. The points discussed above, along with Coco's admission that "I saw my eyes in its liquid green eyes" (67), show that the cat depicted in the novel actually symbolizes Coco herself.

## 2. Coco's Novel as a Symbol of Coco's Romance Life

As defined before, novel is “an invented story in prose, long enough to fill a complete book” (Hornby, 1995: 792). In Wei Hui's *Shanghai Baby*, Coco's novel also becomes a symbol, something that has additional meanings beyond the literal (<http://web.mst.edu/~gdoty/classes/concepts-practices/symbolism.html>). As a symbol, Coco's novel has literal meaning and additional meaning beyond the literal. Literally, Coco's novel represents a piece of prose that Coco works on throughout the story. Symbolically, Coco's novel represents Coco's romance life, as discussed in the four points below.

Firstly, Coco's novel is preceded by another novel, which could not satisfy Coco yet. She has written a novel before. She enjoyed writing the novel, and the novel was successful to some extent. As the proof, it achieves fame among young readers and also gains Coco some fans.

Students were caught stealing my book from bookstores. I got letters, with erotic photos enclosed, from men via my editor, wanting to know what my relationship was with the heroine of the book. They hoped for a dinner date with me at Saigon Restaurant on Hengshan Road, dressed up as one of my romantic characters (2001: 68).

However, the success is limited in terms of income, quality, and response. As the proof, the novel is not successful financially and is not printed for the second time, as shown below.

But to get to the point, I didn't earn much money from it, because after the first printing of a few thousand had sold out, there was no second printing. When I asked Deng why, she said the publishing company had recently had some management problems and I should bring the matter up a bit later. I'd been waiting ever since (2001: 69).

More importantly, Coco feels she has not achieved her dream in her previous novel. As a proof, she asks her editor to find an agent, “Someone who could help me realize my dream and avoid the problems I had with my last book” (2001: 70). She still yearns to write another, better novel, a best selling novel that “will reveal the truth about humankind: violence, style, lust, joy, and then enigma, machines, power, and death” (2001: 9). It means that she knows she has not unleashed her full potential yet in the previous novel.

Like her novel, Coco has had some romantic relationships before, but her previous relationships have never satisfied her. Thus, Coco’s previous novel resembles Coco’s previous romance. Both have achieved limited success to some extent, but both have not satisfied Coco enough.

Secondly, Coco’s novel is written with great love and dedication. Coco is depicted as writing her novel, which is still a work in progress, with great love and dedication. She loves her novel very much, which can be seen in her great hopes about the novel and her spirit in writing the novel.

And my shocking best selling novel will reveal the truth about humankind: violence, style, lust, joy, and then enigma, machines, power, and death (2001: 9).

My mind was filled with flickering shadows, like those made by a candle. Then a shower of sparks glittered before my eyes. My novel--my novel would explode like fireworks and give meaning to our existence (2001: 68).

With her love, hopes and spirit, she also dedicates her life to write her novel. She totally concentrates on writing her novel that she does not do any hobby or leisure activity, dress up, take care of her hair, take phone calls, or meet other people. She

spends nearly all her time writing her novel, both during the day and the night.

Sometimes she even falls asleep on her desk, as described in the quotes below.

Dressed in my pajamas, hair disheveled, I would write through the night. In the early mornings, when I awoke and lifted my head from the desk, there would be purple ink marks on my forehead (2001: 113).

I often fell asleep on top of my manuscript, then woke with a swollen cheek (2001: 167).

I stayed in my room writing for a week, not even bothering to comb my hair. No phone calls disturbed me, and no one knocked at the door. I was in a daze, like slipping on mud: from this door to that, from reality here to fiction there, I hardly needed to try. It was my novel that pushed me on (2001: 166).

Like her novel, Coco lives her romance life with great love and dedication.

In this case, love and dedication do not mean that she is monogamous. Instead, it means that she really loves and dedicates her time, attention, and feeling to both of her lovers. She does not start romantic relationship with them for money, revenge, or other factors, but really because she is attracted to them. As discussed in the first part, Coco treats both men in her romance life with all her love and dedication, just like the way she treats her novel. Thus, Coco's novel can be regarded to symbolize Coco's romance life.

Thirdly, Coco's novel is written with some problems and obstacles. Coco is depicted as experiencing some problems and obstacles in the process of writing her novel. Some of the problems come from Coco herself, and some other problems come from the situation.

The examples of problems from Coco herself are her boredom, anxiety and pessimistic feelings about her writing ability. Sometimes she feels tired and bored with her writing, so she goes around aimlessly and even goes to another

city, Beijing. She calls Tian Tian and hopes to join him on vacation, but when he mentions her novel, she feels that she must continue her novel despite her boredom.

As soon as he mentioned my novel, I fell silent. I knew then I'd go back to Shanghai and go on writing. That was how Tian Tian liked me, and I knew it was my only possible choice (2001: 111).

She also feels anxious and pessimistic about her novel. She feels that she cannot create anything and will not be able to create anything good, as shown in her statement and thoughts below.

“I can't do anything,” I said. “I think I'm really losing it. No enthusiasm, no inspiration. I guess I'm just an ordinary woman—more ordinary than most—infected with a mad desire to get famous by writing a book.” I felt even more useless when I looked at the desk piled with his lovely illustrations. I felt truly sad, knowing that I was failing to live up to his love and my own dreams (2001: 205).

Perhaps this will be my last book, because I still feel that despite all my efforts I haven't created anything unique. I've shamed my parents and disappointed my innocent little butterfly of a lover (2001: 169).

The problems that come from the situation, or outside Coco's control, are Tian Tian's new habit of taking morphine and Coco's writer's block. Tian Tian starts taking morphine and has a relapse, although he has been to rehabilitation center a few times. It occupies Coco's mind and unconsciously makes her unable to write.

And one breakfast wasn't enough to buy me off. I couldn't forgive his relapse. I didn't eat the breakfast. He sat silently on the sofa, feeding Fur Ball. My manuscript in front of me, I hit a momentary dry spell, and then panic came over me, like a sorceress who discovers her magic has vanished. I couldn't throw myself into the distant world of words (2001: 160).

She also suffers from writer's block. She just loses her ability to write and even speak for no clear reason. As Coco admits in her statement, “I even began to



stutter a bit. Whether on the phone or chatting with Tian Tian, I did my best to avoid adjectives” (2001: 204-205).

And as for me, I hit a bout of writer's block. Twenty-five thousand or so words away from the end, my brain went utterly blank, as if all my imagination, wit, and fire had oozed out of my ears overnight. The words that came from my pen were lousy and obscure (2001: 204).

This problem might be related to her problems, both from herself and the situation. Her psychological burden from those problems disturb her mind's creative function, which results in the writing and speaking impediment.

Like her novel, Coco's romance life contains some problems and obstacles. Some of the problems in her romance life are caused by Coco herself, such as her willingness to have affair with Mark and her guilt from cheating on Tian Tian, while some other problems are caused by the situation outside her control, such as Mark's uninvited attention, Tian Tian's impotence, drug addiction, and morbid tendency.

Fourthly, Coco's novel is finally finished at the end of the story. However, the result is still unknown. It is not described whether it will be successful or unsuccessful, or whether Coco would achieve her dream of writing a great novel. As shown in her statement, “I don't believe I can predict the fate of this book. It's part of my fate, too, and I haven't the means to control it” (2001: 254). With the end of her novel, Coco feels a combination of two feelings, release and sadness. She has the feeling of release because after a long and hard process, including the problems she faced during the process, she finally finishes her novel. On the other hand, she also feels a sense of sadness, possibly because after the long process,

she grows accustomed and attached to writing the novel, but now her writing process is already finished.

My novel is coming to an end now. After going through one pen after another, at last I've found that feeling of release--like when you shoot from a mountaintop down the ski slopes toward the bottom. Release, and a strange sense of sadness (2001: 254).

Like her novel, Coco's romance life is finally finished at the end of the story with Tian Tian's death and Mark's return to Germany. Tian Tian is dead and Mark continues his life with his own family in Germany, so now Coco no longer has any romantic relationship. However, the result is also still unknown. Nobody knows whether Coco's separation with those two men would bring good or bad impacts on her life. On one side, she feels that there is something missing in her life. She takes a shirt Tian Tian used to wear and says, "Burying my face in it made me realize what it is to lose happiness" (2001: 261). On the other side, she can go on with her life, for example by promoting her work to universities as arranged by her agent and editor.

I'm not a cold-blooded woman, but I didn't go mad. *Shriek of the Butterfly* reprinted, and I promoted it at various universities as arranged by Deng and Godfather (2001: 259).

Coco also feels a combination of two feelings. Her feeling is dominated by sadness, but she also feels calm. She naturally feels sad because of Tian Tian's death, as shown in the description below.

Tears flooded my face, and I bit my fingertips. I cried out: "You fool!" He didn't react. He was dead, and so was I (2001: 258).

On the other hand, she also feels calm because she is no longer torn between Tian Tian and Mark, no longer torn with guilt, and no longer has to hide her affair. She starts to accept the condition and free her life from her old romance. She

corresponds with her friends and makes plans for the future, such as the plans to leave Tian Tian's apartment, move back to her parents' house, and go to Germany.

From Germany came a stream of e-mail from Mark and Shamir. I told them the news of Tian Tian's death and said I was calmer now because my novel was almost finished and this was the best gift I could give Tian Tian. Shamir invited me to visit Germany when my novel was finished. "It will help you get over it. Come and see our sharp-spined churches, the Black Forest, and the crowds" (2001: 260).

Coco herself already describes the connection between her novel and her romance life at a glance. She describes writing as a way of cultivating love in her following comment: "Perhaps writing really could function as an aphrodisiac, cultivating the inexplicable but imperfect love between us?" (2001: 26). Again, she relates her writing and her romance, especially related to sex and love, by explaining that sex and love can trigger inspiration in writing.

The men in my life must have a few ingenious synapses in their brains, because sex and love make a person more sensitive and more likely to generate the spark of inspiration (2001: 161).

Thus, the points discussed above show that Coco's novel depicted in Wei Hui's *Shanghai Baby* actually symbolizes Coco's romance.

### **3. The Yin Yang as a Symbol of Coco's Relationship with Her Family and Lover**

As defined before, yin and yang are a pair of cosmic forces in Chinese Tao philosophy, usually depicted as a circle divided into light and dark fields. In Wei Hui's *Shanghai Baby*, the pair of light and darkness also becomes a symbol. As a symbol, the light and darkness have literal meaning and deeper meanings beyond

the literal meaning. Literally, the light and darkness represent combination of contrasting colors in various objects, as the writer has discussed in the previous part. However, the light and darkness also symbolize Coco's relationship with her loved ones as discussed in the three points below.

**Firstly**, based on Charles Osgood's article "From Yang and Yin to And or But", yin is described as the dark side, which is passive, cold, and feminine, while yang is described as the light side, which is active, warm, and masculine (Osgood, 1973: 381). Yin and Yang's contrasting characteristics symbolize the contrasting characteristics of Coco and her loved ones. Yin's characteristics resemble Coco's loved ones' characteristics, while Yang's characteristics resemble Coco's characteristics.

As described above, Yin, or the darkness, have characteristics such as passive and cold. Coco's loved ones, which consist of her boyfriend and her family, also have those characteristics. Coco's family passively conform to the traditional values, for instance in morality, marriage, and family. They uphold those values unquestioningly. For instance, Coco's mother "cannot accept the idea of sex before marriage and absolutely cannot bear the shape of a girl's nipples when she wears a tight T-shirt and no bra" (2001: 18). While her father tells Coco that "a steady, down-to-earth life is the most important thing" (2001: 19) and "first and second, you're a human being and a woman—and only third, an author" (2001: 232).

They also show their passivity in the way they face Coco, their only daughter. As parents, they cannot control Coco when they have confrontation with

her. For instance, when Coco wants to move and live together with her boyfriend, they cannot stop her from leaving. After she lives with her boyfriend, they quickly surrender instead of upholding their own values, as described below. Their action shows their passive tendency.

My parents both phoned me. They had surrendered. Chinese parents give up easily to keep in contact with their children (2001: 48).

Coco's family show their coldness in their monotonous, settled lifestyle. Coco's father is a typical husband and breadwinner of the family. He is occupied with his position as a professor in a university. While Coco's mother is a typical housewife. She spends all her life taking care of the house, serving her husband and her daughter. She does her role as a wife and mother without ever questioning or protesting it.

Mother is a pretty, frail woman who has spent her life ironing shirts for her husband and seeking the right road for her daughter's happiness (2001: 18).

Meanwhile, Coco's boyfriend, Tian Tian, shows his passivity in his soft, fragile, and trusting attitude. He describes himself as "devoid of desire, drifting with the tide" (2001: 163). He is also passive in living his life and facing the condition, for example in family, education, work, and relationship. He prefers remaining passive instead of taking any actions to decide his own fate. For example, he drops out of high school and does not continue his education although he can afford it. He does not work; he just stays home all the time. As another example, he has a problem with his mother, but he never tries to express it or try to solve the problem. When his mother plans to visit him, he does not want to meet her despite Coco's advice.

“I understand it upsets you. But you shouldn’t be afraid of this sort of complicated situation. Don’t hate or avoid it; now’s the time to face up to it. This is just what you need.”

“She’s never loved me. I don’t know who she is. She’s just a woman who sends me money from time to time, and that’s only to fool herself. It’s just a way to exonerate herself, make her feel less guilty” (2001: 196).

Instead of expressing his views or solving his problems with other people, he channels aggression to himself. For example, regarding his problem with his mother, he just lets the problem dwell within himself, as described below.

But I’d always understood that Tian Tian’s rootless existence, filled with lost souls and dark shadows, was fatally linked to her. Their relationship was a rotting umbilical cord linking the infant to its mother’s womb forever. Ever since she’d abandoned her family and her husband’s ashes had been flown home in a jet, her young son’s chaotic fate was sealed. That was when he started to lose his faith in talent, enthusiasm, and happiness (2001: 191).

As another example, when he guesses that Coco has an affair with another man, he does not directly ask her about it, ask her to stop it, or end his relationship with her. He just blames himself and despises himself more, as described below. Later, he channels his self-hatred by taking drugs, which destroys his body and soul.

Tian Tian leaned over and hugged me. “I despise you!” He squeezed these words out from between his teeth, and each word seemed to explode. “Because you make me despise myself.” He began to cry. “I can’t make love. My whole existence is just a farce. Don’t pity me. I should disappear” (2001: 245).

Tian Tian shows his coldness, or lack of feeling, in his morbid and self-destructive attitude. He is obsessed with anything related to death and destruction.

“Death is the expression of exhaustion, a solution arrived at rationally once one has known the deepest depths of tiredness. I’ve thought about it for a long time, perhaps all my life, and having thought it through, I’m not ashamed of dying. A person like me can’t go on constantly polluting himself, annihilating his soul” (2001: 162).

Not only his thoughts, but his actions are actually self-destructive. He often does things that harm himself, such as smoking marijuana and drinking alcohol until he becomes unconscious. He is very cold towards other people. In his relations, he is very introverted and antisocial. He closes himself from most people and hardly ever socializes. For the last few years, he only has one friend in Shanghai, as shown in his statement when introducing Madonna to Coco.

“This is Madonna; we were at elementary school together,” said Tian Tian. Perhaps thinking that inadequate, he added: “She’s also been my only friend in Shanghai lately” (2001: 10).

He is also cold in his sexual relationship, as he is impotent and cannot have sexual intercourse. This condition is not caused by physical problem, but psychological problem, as described below.

The doctor scribbled away on the diagnosis form. “Your reproductive system is quite normal,” he said to Tian Tian. “The key lies in your mind” (2001: 79).

Yang, or the light, have characteristics such as active and warm. Although Yang is actually described as a “masculine” characteristic (Osgood, 1973: 381), in fact Coco also has those characteristics. She shows her activeness through her high spirit in her work, sex, and social life. She is quite productive in her work as a writer. She has started writing since she was in university, and she has published two works by the time she reaches her twenties. She actively seeks way to develop her career, such as finding an agent and promoting her books. She has an active sex life as well as social life. As described before, she has had several boyfriends and even a lover. In university, she dares to approach a man she likes, using the university play script conference as the excuse (2001: 180). She has

some friends whom she sometimes hangs out with, such as Madonna, Spider, Zhu Sha, Flying Apple, and many other acquaintances such as Christophe Lee, a DJ from Hong Kong, and Pu Yong, a rock musician from Beijing. It shows Coco's active social life.

Coco is also warm, or affectionate, in her relations with her friends and even in her sex life. She sometimes calls, emails, meets her friends, and chats with them. When she hears her friend, who is a rock musician, interviewed on the radio, she calls him and accepts his invitation to Beijing to spend Christmas together. They meet and chat warmly, as described below.

I walked over and tapped him on the shoulder. He looked up, smiled broadly, and then put the things in his hands into those of the woman sitting next to him and gave me a fierce hug. "So you really came? Crazy Shanghai woman. How are you?" (2001: 107).

Her warmth is manifested in her sex life as well. She is passionate about sex and is able to enjoy her sex experience fully, as shown in her description: "In that instant, sexual pleasure swept over me as if mountains were being toppled and seas emptied" (2001: 212). As told by one of Coco's previous boyfriends, not many women can enjoy their sex experience like Coco does:

In the end, he made me believe that I'm luckier than many women. The statistics say some seventy percent of Chinese women have some sort of problem with sex, and ten percent have never had an orgasm (2001: 68).

In brief, Coco and Tian Tian's contrasting characteristics, which are symbolized by the light and darkness contrast, are described in Tian Tian's statements to Coco.

You're not really like Madonna and me. We're different types. You're ambitious and full of faith in the future. You and your drive are what give me a reason to live (2001: 13).



Right from the start, we were two different sorts of people; I said so at the time. But that hasn't stopped us loving each other; you, full of energy and ambition, and me, devoid of desire, drifting with the tide (2001: 163).

Based on the explanation above, not only are Coco and her loved ones inseparable just like yin and yang, but their respective characteristics also resemble the yin and yang's characteristics. To be precise, Coco's characteristics resemble Yang while Coco's loved ones' characteristics resemble Yin. Thus, yin and yang can be regarded as a symbol of Coco's relationship with her loved ones.

**Secondly**, yin and yang describe the interaction of two opposite or contrasting forces which cannot be separated. These forces are "yin", or the black force, and "yang", or the white force. They are connected to each other and work together in unity. Thus, yin cannot be separated from yang, as shown in the quotation below.

The outer circle represents "everything", while the black and white shapes within the circle represent the interaction of two energies, called "yin" (black) and "yang" (white), which cause everything to happen. They are not completely black or white, just as things in life are not completely black or white, and they cannot exist without each other (<http://fly.srk.fer.hr/~shlede/ying/yang.html>).

The close connection of yin and yang symbolizes Coco's relationship with her loved ones, which consist of her boyfriend and her family. Just like the way "yin" cannot be separated from "yang", Coco is strongly connected to her loved ones and cannot be separated from them. Even after she moves out of her parents' house, she still goes back there when she hears that her mother is ill and when she has problems. Likewise, even though she has an affair with another man, she still loves her boyfriend; she cannot leave him and she feels very sad when he dies. So,

it can be concluded that both Coco's parents and boyfriend are strongly connected to Coco's life.

**Thirdly**, Yin and Yang or light and darkness must be balanced. When they are balanced or equally present, they will work together and produce good result, as described in the quotation below.

Since yin and yang are created together in a single movement, they are bound together as parts of a mutual whole. A race with only men or only women would disappear in a single generation; but men and women together create new generations that allow the race they mutually create (and mutually come from) to survive. The interaction of the two gives birth to things (<http://www.iep.utm.edu/y/yinyang.htm>).

However, when one force outweighs another force, it will produce bad result. When the light becomes much stronger than the darkness, or when the darkness becomes much stronger than the light, the result is confusion.

It represents the balance of opposites in the universe. When they are equally present, all is calm. When one is outweighed by the other, there is confusion and disarray (Caffrey: 2005: 78).

Just like the yin and yang, Coco's relationship with her loved ones must be balanced. It means Coco must not overpower her loved ones, and her loved ones must not overpower Coco. When Coco overpowers her loved ones, it brings problems to her life, as shown in the story.

Coco overpowers her boyfriend, which can be seen in her betrayal to him. They already enjoy their relationship, but she betrays him by having an affair with another man. At first, she feels guilty and says she will not repeat it, as shown in her thought: "*This was the first and last time*, I told myself disingenuously" (2001: 64). However, the affair develops and she does it frequently. She starts to feel less guilty and prioritize her affair over her relationship with her boyfriend. It can be

seen in her actions. For instance, she continues the affair even though her boyfriend already suspects it, as described in the quote below.

His hands were cascading over every inch of my skin, and I felt sure that he knew everything, that his fingers could detect a stranger's secretions and particles on my skin. Tian Tian was so sensitive that one touch could set him off, almost like a madman (2001: 67).

She also continues the affair even though she knows it would really hurt her boyfriend, as told by her friend, Madonna: "That would be the end of him. He's too naïve, too weak" (2001: 117). She leaves the apartment, where she and her boyfriend lives together, to spend time with Mark for several days. She even lies to her boyfriend about her affair with Mark, as shown in her statement: "From that night on, I swore to myself that I wouldn't reveal anything about Mark or our affair to Tian Tian. Not one bit of it" (2001: 77).

Coco also overpowers her family, which can be seen in her rebellion to them. She never listens to her parents, although they have good intentions for her. Instead, she always tries to dominate them by making them accept her decisions. For example, they already work hard to get her a good job, but she quits the job without consulting them first, thus forcing them to accept her decision.

My parents despaired of me once again, because my father had had to pull a lot of strings to get me the job in the first place.  
 "Child, are you really my daughter? Why does your head grow horns and your feet grow thorns?" said Mother. "Tell me, why all these wasted efforts?" (2001: 18)

Her parents are willing to compromise with her view, as shown in the following quote, but she is not willing to compromise or listen to their view.

My parents both phoned me. They had surrendered. Chinese parents give up easily to keep in contact with their children. Over the phone, they tried

very hard to come across as warm while standing by their principles. They asked how I was doing and if I'd been having any problems (2001: 48).

For instance, regarding her relationship, Coco has been dominating her family since the start of her relationship. Although her parents do not agree when Coco decides to live with her boyfriend Tian Tian and they already tell her the reasons, she insists on following her own desire.

“And I'm disappointed, too. A girl like you is bound to be taken advantage of. You say that boy's family is odd. His father died in strange circumstances. Is he normal himself? Is he reliable?” (2001: 19).

She does not listen to her father's reasons of forbidding her, namely so that she would not be taken advantage of and because her boyfriend might not be reliable. She just says “Believe me, I know what I'm doing” (2001: 19) and left. She still does it although she knows that she disappoints her father and hurts her mother, as shown in her statement: “I'm a bad girl, through and through, at least in the eyes of my mother. She gets provoked so easily. I've never done anything for her—just hurt her feelings” (2001: 35).

Thus, one force, namely Coco, outweighs another force, namely her loved ones. The result is confusion and disarray, which can be seen most clearly in Coco's life. Coco feels a combination of sadness, guilt, and confusion. She feels immense sadness and guilt towards Tian Tian, because he is “kind, loving and trusting as a dolphin” (2001: 5) but she betrays and hurts him.

When I sat up to get dressed, I was draped in depression. The passion and orgasm had passed. When the film is over and the filmgoers leave en masse, all you hear is the bang of seats returning to their upright positions, the sound of footsteps, throats clearing: The characters, the story, and the music have all gone. But Tian Tian's face just wouldn't stop moving back and forth in my brain (2001: 64).

She feels confused with her growing love towards Mark, although actually he is not supposed to be more than a sex partner and she ought not to feel that way, as shown in Coco's thought below.

And I—I finally realized I'd fallen into the trap of love and passion set by this German man who wasn't supposed to be anything more than a sex partner. By way of my vulva, he had reached my vulnerable heart and then the intimacy behind my eyes (2001: 238).

She faces the dilemma of her love towards both men; this condition is impossible to continue, but she cannot choose one of them. Finally, both men in Coco's life leave her forever: Tian Tian is dead, while Mark returns to his family in Germany. Coco no longer has anyone or any relationship; what remains are the confusion and disarray in her mind, as described in her statement: "It makes your head ache, it makes you scream, and it makes you mad" (2001: 259).

In this condition, she cannot channel her desires at all. As she always follows her desire without considering her family's advice or her boyfriend's existence, her desires has grown excessively and now she is overwhelmed by her desires. Because of her guilt, she cannot tell anyone about the confusion and disarray in her mind. All she could do is to go back to her parents' place and isolate herself.

My parents led me to my bed to rest, their eyes filled with surprise. They couldn't know what their daughter had been up to. They would never really understand the impulsive, noisy world and its futility from their daughter's point of view. They didn't know their daughter's boyfriend took drugs, that their daughter's lover would soon be on a plane home to Germany, or that the novel she was writing was chaotic, revealing, and full of metaphysical thoughts and raw sex. They would never know the terror deep in their daughter's heart, and the desire that death can't overcome (2001: 253).

Thus, Coco's relationship with her loved ones is symbolized by the relationship between light and darkness or yin and yang.

## CHAPTER V

### CONCLUSION

This study analyzes the symbols that reveal the main character, Coco, in Wei Hui's novel entitled *Shanghai Baby*. The novel is analyzed based on the theories of character and characterization by Abrams, Milligan, Henkle, Gill, and Murphy, the theory of setting by Abrams, Gill, Holman and Harmon, and the theory of symbol by Holman and Harmon, and Beaty and Hunter as well as source from the internet.

This study has three objectives, namely to discover the symbols in the story, to discover the allegory in the story, and to discover how the symbols and allegory reveal the theme in the story. The analysis of this study results in three findings.

Firstly, Coco is a young Chinese woman who is depicted as the main character of this novel. Coco is described with five main characteristics, namely strong and self-assured, a combination of good and wild sides, independent, romantically active, and strongly connected to her loved ones. Coco is strong in facing small and big problems, such as facing her stalker ex-boyfriend, the failure of her first novel, and the death of his boyfriend; she is also self-assured about her ability and her aspiration to be successful in professional and personal life. Coco is a combination of two sides. On the good side, she has good achievement at school and university, work ethos, and ambition, while on the wild side, she has a rebellious lifestyle, she is promiscuous sexually, goes to parties, clubs, and

consumes alcoholic drink. Then, Coco is an independent woman. She does not depend on her parents, her job, relationships, and her surroundings to support herself, to reach her objectives, and to face her problems. Next, Coco is very active romantically. She has had several boyfriends since she was in university until she already works. She lives with her boyfriend, Tian Tian, but she also has an affair with a married German man called Mark. Therefore, her romance life contains some problems and obstacles. Finally, Coco has strong connection to her loved ones, namely her family and her boyfriend. Even after she no longer lives with her parents, they always keep in contact. She lives with her boyfriend and spends most of their time together.

Secondly, the novel contains some descriptions of a cat, a novel, and the yin yang. Cat is the only animal mentioned constantly, both as a pet cat kept by Tian Tian, Coco's boyfriend, and in Coco's dreams. Tian Tian is unexpectedly given a cat named Fur Ball by his grandmother. When Tian Tian is addicted to drugs, Fur Ball runs away to the street but comes back again. Afterwards, Fur Ball lives both on the streets and at Tian Tian and Coco's apartment. Coco also has some dreams related to cat.

Novel is an important part of this story because Coco, the main character, is a novel writer. Coco already published her first novel. It achieved limited fame, but Coco was not satisfied. She left her job as a journalist to reach her dream to write a great novel. She writes her novel with the support of her boyfriend, Tian Tian, based on the place, people, and events from her real life. Coco has positive



feelings about her novel, such as hope and spirit, but Coco also has negative feelings, such as anxiety.

Yin and Yang are the two contrasting cosmic forces in Chinese philosophy, which is depicted as black and white or dark and light images. The first image is found in Shanghai in the evening. The sky is dark because the sun already sets, but there is light from sources such as street lanterns, streetlights, shops and buildings in the city. The second image of dark and light is found in the eyes of some characters, Tian Tian and Flying Apple. The third image contrast is found in Fur Ball, Tian Tian's cat that has black and white fur. The next image is found in Coco's dream, in which the night is very dark, but there is also a thread of moonlight. The last image is found in a movie by Shamir, Mark's friend, which contains black and white contrast, and contains clashing lights which also attract each other.

Lastly, the cat, the novel, and the yin yang depicted in *Shanghai Baby* are depicted as symbols. It means that those objects have deeper meanings beyond the literal meaning, which are related to Coco. The cat symbolizes Coco, as shown in four ways. Firstly, both the cat and Coco are strong. In Western and Asian cultures, the cat is viewed as a strong animal, while in the novel *Shanghai Baby*, the cat Fur Ball is depicted as a strong queen among street cats and Coco's dream contains a strong tiger. Coco is also described as a strong person, as discussed in the first problem formulation. Secondly, both the cat and Coco are found unexpectedly by Tian Tian. Tian Tian is given the cat by his grandmother, although he rarely visits her and she never gives him any pet before. Tian Tian

meets Coco in a café, where she works as a waitress, and falls in love with her although they never talk and Tian Tian is very introverted. Thirdly, both the cat and Coco are a combination of good and wild sides. In the novel, the cat leads a double life as a pet on weekends and as a street cat on weekdays. Coco also shows a good side and a wild side, as discussed in the first problem formulation. Fourthly, both the cat and Coco are independent. In many cultures, cat is seen as a symbol of independence, while in the novel, the cat is given much attention as a pet, but it is also able to leave its master and live on the street when neglected by the master. Coco is also independent, as discussed in the first problem formulation.

The novel symbolizes Coco's romance life, as shown in four ways. Firstly, Coco's novel is preceded by another novel, which could not satisfy Coco yet. Like her novel, Coco has had some romantic relationships before, but they could not satisfy her yet. Secondly, Coco's novel is written with great love and dedication. Like her novel, Coco lives her romantic life with great love and dedication. Thirdly, Coco's novel is written with some problems and obstacles, both the ones caused by Coco herself and the ones caused by other factors. Like her novel, Coco's romance life contains some problems and obstacles. Fourthly, Coco's novel is finally finished at the end of the story. Like her novel, Coco's romance life is finally finished at the end of the story with Tian Tian's death and Mark's return to Germany.

Yin and Yang, or light and darkness, symbolize Coco's relationship with her loved ones, as shown in three points. Firstly, Yin and Yang's contrasting

characteristics symbolize the contrasting characteristics of Coco and her loved ones. Yin's characteristics resemble Coco's loved ones' characteristics, while Yang's characteristics resemble Coco's characteristics. Secondly, Yin and Yang contain two contrasting forces which are strongly connected and cannot be separated. Just like the way "yin" cannot be separated from "yang", Coco is strongly connected to her loved ones and cannot be separated from them. Thirdly, Yin and Yang must be balanced. Just like the yin and yang, Coco's relationship with her loved ones must be balanced. When Coco overpowers her family and her boyfriend, that condition brings problems to her life.

In conclusion, the cat, the novel, and the Yin Yang become symbols that reveal Coco, the main character of *Shanghai Baby*.

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