

Lessons for The New Woman?

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*The story presents a model for health and for healing the split between above and below.
...Inanna is joined to and separated from her dark ancestress-sister, the repressed
feminine.*

Sylvia Brinton Perera¹

To some extent, the experiences of Chinese women living in the twentieth-century would be incomprehensible without the stories of many heroines in modern fiction and film, whose problems have become a source of reference for real people. Women find bits and pieces of themselves in such works as *New Year Sacrifice*, (Lu Xun, 1924), *Diaries of Miss Sophie* (Ding Ling, 1928), *Rainbow* (Mao Dun, 1928), *The Golden Cangue*, *The Rouge of the North* (Zhang Ailing, 1939), *Love Must Not Be Forgotten*, *The Ark*, (Zhang Jie, 1979, 1982), *Song of Lasting Regret* (Wang Anyi, 1990), and *Kitchen* (Xu Kun, 1996). It seems that one of the recurring themes running through these stories of and/or by women seems is the rebellion against traditional womanhood as a form of institutionalized oppression. Most representative of this radical feminist position is perhaps the silent film *The New Woman* (*Xin nuxing*, directed by Cai Chu-sheng, 1935), a story about a young woman who kills herself in protest against the debilitating feminine traditions. Starring in this film of scathing cultural criticism, based on the real story of a 23-year old woman named Ai Xia who committed suicide, was Ruan Lingyu, the famous actress who was to commit suicide herself soon after the film's release.

If understood in the context of social progress, this new woman phenomenon then signifies the changes to come in the Mainland, Taiwan, and Hong Kong where there are now laws guaranteeing women's rights to work, divorce, choose marriage partners or remain single. But by progress, do we mean women's struggle rooted in China's long history or only a recent event in which women suddenly became emancipated by a total negation of traditions? Furthermore, if experience is culturally constructed and culture is historically relative, then we must also acknowledge ways in which women in the "old days" were happier than modern women, and/or modern women are less content than their counterparts in the past. The meaning of "a progressive feminism," Camille Paglia argues,

is that it “embraces and celebrates *all* historical depictions of women.”² To avoid the position that emphasizes progress (discontinuity) to the exclusion of tradition (continuity), I’d compare and contrast the conflicting views of two educated women who, living far apart in their respective time periods, represent different attitudes to what many would consider a male-dominated society. Living in first century A.D. (45-120), Ban Zhao, the famous female Confucian and the author of *Nu Jie*, (*Lessons for Women*), advocated the need for women to have an education in order to serve men better. At the other end of the time span in which female consciousness evolved and developed is Wei Ming, the tragic heroine in the film *The New Woman*. The differing views and attitudes of these two educated women help outline the promise and peril of women in a patrilineal society.

In the interest of time, I do not wish to respond to the challenges to the feminist claim that much of world civilization is phallicentric and male dominated, not because such a claim is indisputable³ but because the progressives and conservatives do not disagree about the historical facts that they interpret, which have not changed significantly. Suffice it to say that culturally speaking the Republic in the 1930s is not greatly different from the Eastern Han as far as the lives of ordinary women are concerned, which invariably revolved around men, through such domestic roles as the mother, wife, mistress, daughter. What may have changed are the attitudes of educated women towards these gendered roles that many have characterized as “patrilineal.” “To put the matter in present-day terms,” according to one historian, “Ban Zhao tried to reconcile a ‘conservative’ advocacy of chastity and submission to kinship hierarchies with a ‘progressive’ advocacy of female literacy and cultivation.”⁴ Confronting basically the same cultural and political paradigm, Wei Ming opts for a liberal view of the conventional marriage as “a life-long captivity.” Both women talk about the same reality but their attitudes differ. By calling for “womanly qualifications,” “wholehearted devotion,” “humility,” and “implicit obedience,” Ban Zhao does appear to speak with what Lacan called “the passion of the signifier [that] then becomes a new dimension of the human condition, in that it is not only man who speaks, but in man and through man that it speaks.”⁵ In other words, one can say that *Lessons for Women* is a case of women who have adopted an animus-ego.⁶ Ban Zhao’s relation as a subject to the patriarchal order was unambiguous when she said: “I, the unworthy writer, am unsophisticated, unenlightened, and *by nature* stupid, but I am fortunate to have

received not a little favor from my scholarly *father*.” Nonetheless, her masquerade of humility constitutes a part of the feminine as a cultural construct because “in order to be the phallus . . . the woman will reject an essential part of her femininity, notably all its attributes, through masquerade.”

The relevance of Ban Zhao to Wei Ming, despite the differences between an agrarian society in which the former lived as a member of the intellectual elite and Shanghai, an urban center and bourgeois society in which the latter lived as a teacher and freelance writer, is her self-identity as a woman struggling to come to terms with male-domination. As an exercise of masquerade, the writing of *Lessons* defines femininity by describing women in ways that engage the representations that others (men) have made of them. The situation in which women as the second sex and a marginal group entered into the dominant discourse is not unlike that of colonialism in which those that Gayatri Spivak refers to as “the subaltern” sought to preserve their culture and traditions while forced to redefine their experience in terms of the colonizer who imposed an alien order upon them.⁷ This issue of representing or defining oneself in someone else’s language is important to keep in mind when we read Ban Zhao’s *Lessons*, a psychological and political condition for female self-consciousness that was as true in Eastern Han as it was in the 1930s. The meaning of femininity, dramatized by both Ban Zhao’s success and Wei Ming’s failure, can be further elucidated by Julie Kristeva’s theory of the abject, a key factor in the formation of subjectivity.⁸ Early in the process of forming an identity, the abject contributes to the child’s separation from the mother. But the formation of identity is a continuous process in which the semiotic dimension of subjectivity and language often disrupts the symbolic order. So, throughout our lives, the abject operates to disturb identity, system, and order. Since our identity and stability as subjects are derived from the unity and stability of the objects to which we attach ourselves, the abject by its very nature poses a threat to our subjectivity. The formation of subjectivity is a complex, ongoing, precarious process in which we witness, on the one hand, the blurring of the boundaries between self and other and, on the other hand, the ability of the self to distinguish itself from others. Women’s relation to the patriarchy, therefore, is abject by nature, which is neither yes nor no to the well-defined path for womanhood. Ban Zhao’s success rests on her abilities to train herself to *seem* but never *be*. If she were to fail in this, she would easily join rank with

the abject: *Madame Bovary* (1857), *Anne Karenina* (1876), Nora Helmer (*A Doll's House*, 1879), *Effi Briest* (1895), *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* (1898), Edna Pontellier (*Awakening*, 1899), and Wei Ming, literary women who are either dead or badly wounded.

Very much like Ban Zhao's *Lessons*, the film *The New Woman* is a good indication of how much rights that women actually enjoyed in a given situation, as opposed to rights that exist only in theory, be it Confucianism or individualism. It is in this respect that the life of Wei Ming can be meaningfully related to the views of Ban Zhao on femininity, which was really a means to an end rather than an end in itself, fundamentally alien to the human female. Ban Zhao wanted women to concede to their vulnerability, inferiority, and total submission (to men) because these "feminine" traits or cultural affectations are important *means* for women to achieve protection and security, the same way money and financial independence are prerequisites for female fulfillments in a bourgeois society. In other words, female virtue and chastity serve as political capitals for the traditional woman the way money acts as lubricant for social interactions of the modern bourgeois woman. Such pragmatism is the real meaning of Ban Zhao's teaching, living in a society whose state religion was patrilinealizing all aspects of social relations. Her views can be proven false if and when the condition of women is such that they become financially and sexually independent, which is a point of contention in *The New Woman*, with Wei Ming running into endless money problems. Those women who dutifully play the roles of chaste widows, virtuous wives, good mothers, filial daughters, and even subservient concubines or prostitutes do not have the problems that plagues Wei Ming's life, having rejected *in toto* the traditional notion of the feminine only to find herself without security and protection, broke in a society that recognizes only money. Hers is perhaps a worse disenfranchisement than the one that Ban Zhao had to deal with, which still allows room for women to express their concerns and grievances:

If a husband be unworthy, then he possesses nothing by which to control his wife. If a wife be unworthy, then she possesses nothing with which to serve her husband. If a husband does not control his wife, then the rules of conduct manifesting his authority are abandoned and broken. If a wife does not serve her husband, when the proper relationship between men and women and the natural order of things are neglected and destroyed.⁹

Although totally unnatural, the patriarchal order did expect men and women to participate *equally*, not as individuals but as members of a community. As a female Confucian, Ban Zhao seemed to understand that “Confucian moral and philosophical thought is basically communitarian in outlook, (1) emphasizing the fact that the human person is essentially a social being, (2) giving primacy of place to the duties that persons have to the common good of the community and the virtues needed for fulfillment of these duties, and (3) casting reciprocal social relationships and rules as fundamental to communal flourishing and its shared vision of the good.”¹⁰ What Ban Zhao did was use the logic of Confucian moral discourse to enfranchise women through merit because “the Confucians did believe in the naturalness of social hierarchy; but . . . the sole criterion for receipt of political and economic privilege was merit.”¹¹ Failing to question the fundamental gender bias of Confucianism, Ban Zhao never realized how most women were disadvantaged by the phallicentric premises in the very education that she hoped women would have the privilege of receiving. Neither was she able to acknowledge the human costs of women’s “empowerment” by becoming wives and mothers in marriage.

Wei Ming represents the female consciousness of her time in which the mode of economic production required the emancipation and participation of women as well as men to be recognized as individuals.¹² Her contempt for traditions was thus appropriate because it was a part of the bourgeois ethos prevalent in all China’s urban centers being transformed by world capitalism. Understandably, to many early feminists and progressive thinkers in China, Confucianism was nothing other than “empty talk of virtue.”¹³ But what many failed to realize was that capitalism, or more precisely individualism, could also be empty talk too, which no more represented women’s interests than Confucian humanism, for a culture is only as good as its members and participants make it. Wei Ming’s self-destruction proves ineffective or irrelevant the bourgeois ideals in the 1930s—gender equality, financial independence, women’s rights to work, free choices of marital spouse or remaining single, and sexual freedom—to the majority of working women still living in the shadow of the patriarchy. The tragedy of Wei Ming thus exposes the hypocrisy and irony in a society where these liberal bourgeois values often end up misrepresenting the true social conditions of women. Wei Ming only knows how the feudal order alienates women and keeps them in check, but she is not conscious of the fact that “the modern bourgeois society that has

sprouted from the ruins of feudal society has not done away with class antagonisms. It has but established new classes, new conditions of oppression, new forms of struggle in place of old ones.”¹⁴ In other words, her self-expectations and hopes for change far exceed the socioeconomic reality of the time, a common failing from which only a few progressive intellectuals exempted themselves. Speaking to a group of female students at Peking Normal University in 1923 on “What happened to Nora after she left” (*nuola zouhou zenyang*), Lu Xun warned his audience about the potential problems with a liberalism that does not adequately address the conditions of women in an exploitative capitalist system. He argued that there could be only two outcomes for Ibsen’s rebellious heroine: to return to her husband or to become a prostitute.¹⁵ Of course he forgot the third possibility: suicide.

Following the footsteps of Nora, Wei Ming rebels against the feudal sexual mores only to run into a series of mishaps: the loss of her virginity through premarital sex, unwanted daughter born out of wedlock, abandonment by her lover, and disowning by her family. As if this is not enough for a woman struggling to free herself from a conventional womanhood, Wei Ming finds herself more and more alienated as she tries to reach the promised land of freedom and independence. Her identity as a new woman seems to attract only unwanted attention from nearly all the men around her, except the one man to whom she feels emotionally close. Her life is not much of an improvement on the situation where women could still have certain amount of security through marriage. Out of the frying pan of the traditional marriage, Wei Ming jumps into the fire of a capitalist economy in which she is treated as nothing more than a commodity and a piece of property. The piano rental company takes away her piano when she is unable to pay rental fees. The public school where she teaches fired her in spite of her dedication to excellence in teaching because Mr. Wang, educated in the States and one of school’s trustees, pays to have her dismissed after his sexual advances prove unsuccessful. Her publisher is interested not in her talent as a novelist but in the profit to be made by printing her private life. Likewise, the newspaper reporter sees her more as a sexual object than a respectable woman of intelligence, and ruins her reputation by exposing her scandalous sexual history. When she is out of a job in Shanghai, she has to be a slave for one night to save her daughter dying in the hospital. There is a poignant irony in the end when desperation drives Wei Ming to commit suicide, “You dogs, setting up trap after trap to force women like me to sell ourselves in one way or another. But the nets above

and the snares below will one day . . .” As she lays dying, engulfed by despair, we cannot help but be struck by the contrast between a traditional woman who survived relatively unscathed in a much more restricting and oppressive environment and a new woman whose life is cut short in a modern industrial society where women are believed to be free to pursue their hopes and dreams.

Used in a loose sense, prostitution is the defining issue at the core of femininity, a cultural construct and institution on which a woman stands (like Ban Zhao) or falls (like Wei Ming) in both feudal and capitalist societies. Ban Zhao’s teaching on female chastity may appear backward and hypocritical because it implicitly endorses the trade of female sexuality for protection and security when women were expected to devote themselves wholeheartedly to men they hardly knew prior to marriage. Yet, the hypocrisy of phallicism that underscores both the subjugation of women as sexual tools and the social stigma of women forced to prostitute themselves in one way or another continues to characterize the culture of market economy and drives Wei Ming to despair, ashamed by her own indiscretion and punished for rejecting men like Mr. Wang who use both marriage proposal and cash to have sex with her. A showcase of Chinese feminism, the silent film makes a loud statement for the moral dilemma of modern women like Wei Ming who finds herself going nowhere without prostituting herself in some fashion. For the other women in the film (Mrs. Wang, the old woman and her daughter), the bourgeois way of life in Shanghai poses no fundamental challenge to their self-consciousness as women; they turn the attention of men into ready cash through both marriage and prostitution. The only alternative to the conventional female decorum and etiquette is Ah Ying, a factory worker and a music teacher, who is a single living the life of a nun in a society of commodity and consumerism. To her, ideal women are “virgin goddesses” that, in Jean Bolen’s words, “represent the independent, self-sufficient quality in women. . . . They were not victimized and did not suffer. As archetypes, they express the need in women for autonomy and the capacity women have to focus their consciousness on what is personally meaningful.”¹⁶ From a Chinese perspective, Ah Ying is a mixture of an innocent virgin and a chaste widow, whose sexuality is entirely sublimated into a passion for the cause of social change through communist revolution to overthrow the exploitative capitalist system.

Perhaps there is not a lot that we can say about either Wei Ming or Ban Zhao, considering that women's lives vary greatly not only from one historical period to another but even within one society or one culture in a given time. With the diversity and complexity of female experience recognized, we are left with the only thing we can focus on and emphasize, and that is the need to define the feminine in the broadest term possible while discussing women's lives, historical or fictional. For me, Ban Zhao and Wei Ming embody the extremes of female attitudes toward culture, yet jointly they represent the idea of the whole woman, which encompasses the views of those women who find a niche in the center of a male-dominated society as well as that of those who are pushed to the margins of that symbolic order. Their successes and failures are only the results of cultural biases and emphases of their time. What their cultural personae help reveal are different aspects of the feminine, which may live in a docile, loving, and subservient wife and mother, a prostitute with a wretched soul tormented by anger and bitterness, and everything in between.

¹ Sylvia Brinton Perera. *Descent to the Goddess*. Inner City, 1981. The remark is a reference to the ancient Sumerian myth of Inanna. To the author, the goddess represents the idea of the whole woman because of her descent into the underworld where she suffered death by the hand of her sister Erishkigal, the queen of the great below who represents all the negative female qualities. Only by her descent and death in the underworld, according to Perera, did Inanna come into contact with the rejected and forgotten part of herself, thus becoming a whole woman no longer suffering from the split between the conscious and unconscious selves.

² Camille Paglia. *Vamps and Tramps*. Vintage, 1994. p.115. "It is a progressive feminism that embraces and celebrates all historical depictions of women, including the most luridly pornographic. It wants mythology without sentimentality and every archetype, from mother to witch and whore, without censorship. It accepts and welcomes the testimony of men."

³ For example, in his book entitled *The Myth of Male Power*, (Simon & Schuster, 1993) Warren Farrell successfully challenged a number of assumptions feminist make about women's powerlessness, and called into question the very definition of "patriarchy" (by Encyclopedia of Feminism as "the universal political structure which privileges men at the expense of women"). He uses statistics and the literature of gender studies to show how men, though believed to be powerful and important, are in fact a disposable race, *less* able to control their fate than women who, though seen as powerless and weak, tend to live longer and are less prone to becoming the victims of violence. p.18. "I explain why it is both patriarchal and matriarchal, both male- and female-dominated. The book explains male disposability without denying female disposability. That is an integrated approach. How has feminism gotten us to see a one-sided approach as integrated? By telling us not that 'women see the world as patriarchal, sexist, and male-dominated' but rather that 'the world *is* patriarchal, sexist, and male-dominated.'"

⁴ Bret Hinsch. *Women in Early Imperial China*. Rowman & Littlefield, 2002. p.123.

⁵ Jacques Lacan. *Feminine Sexuality*. ed. by Juliet Mitchell and trans. by Jacqueline Rose. W.W. Norton, 1982. The chapter is entitled "The Meaning of the Phallus;" pp.74-85. Lacan seems to speak directly to the situation of Ban Zhao whose relationship as a subject to the symbolic order did not allow her to speak proudly of her (second) sex. With the help of Lacan's essay, it is easy for us to imagine what it would be like if we lived in a different system in which, say, breasts (instead of penises) symbolize gender difference. In this mamma-envy society, men (and masculinity) became signified by their lack-in-having. Because of that symbolic order men would feel inadequate the way Ban Zhao felt thinking she was by nature stupid and unintelligent. Here, the anatomical differences between male and female are not all that important; what is important is the symbol used to signify and differentiate man and woman. The moment we are conscious of ourselves as men and women, we are already living in a symbolic structure, with gendered roles. The moment a child calls her parents mom and dad, she begins to orient herself towards them according to a symbolic order. She would be upset or confused if she sees anyone other than her father intimate with her mother. That is why Oedipus cannot be tolerated yet represents (according to Freud) so much of human unconsciousness. That is why Erishkigal cannot be tolerated and has to be kept in the underworld. And that is why women like Wei Ming who did not perform as Ban Zhao asked must not be tolerated by the patrilineal society.

⁶ For example, in Sylvia Brinton Perera's *Descent to the Goddess: A Way of Initiation for Women*, the author argues the following, "The problem is that we who are badly wounded in our relation to the feminine usually have a fairly successful persona, a good public image. We have grown up as docile, often intellectual, daughters of the patriarchy, with what I call 'animus-ego.' We strive to uphold the virtues and aesthetic ideals which the patriarchal superego has presented to us. But we are filled with self-loathing and a deep sense of personal ugliness and failure when we can neither meet nor mitigate the superego's standards of perfection." p.11.

⁷ Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak. *In Other Worlds: Essays in Cultural Politics*. Routledge, 1988. The relevance here is the sensitivity Spivak tries to promote toward those underrepresented. For example, in Chapter 12 "Subaltern Studies: Deconstructing Historiography," she states, "The work of the Subaltern Studies group offers a theory of change. The insertion of India into colonialism is generally defined as a change from semi-feudalism into capitalist subjection. Such a definition theorizes the change within the great narrative of the modes of production and, by uneasy implication, within the narrative of the transition from feudalism to capitalism. ... The Subaltern Studies group seems to me to be revising this general definition and its theorization by proposing at least two things: first, that the moments of change be pluralized and plotted as confrontations rather than transition (they would thus be seen in relation to histories of domination and exploitation rather than within the great mode-of-production narrative) and secondly, that such changes are signaled or marked by a functional change in sign-systems." p.197.

Likewise, the danger of over-Confucianizing feudal China, even in the case of Pan Chao whose writings were accepted into the canons of Chinese classics, is to neglect the complexity and nuance that exist in the lives of those that have reasons to resent the dominant ideology.

⁸ The abject is a term used by Julia Kristeva to designate that which upsets, disturbs, or undermines some established order or stable position. It does so because it is in between what we ordinarily take to be absolute opposites (for example, life and death, or the human and the mechanical). A number of English words are derived from the Latin *jacere*, “to throw.” Some of these words (subject, object and abject) are important for semiotics. Etymologically, the subject (sub = under) is that which is thrown under or subjected to, some process; the object (ob = against) is that which throws itself against, or resists, another; and the abject is neither subject nor object; rather, it is something that “disturbs identities, systems and orders. Something that does not respect limits, positions, rules. The in-between, the ambiguous, the mixed up” (Kristeva 1980) A corpse is an example of the abject, for it is neither human nor nonhuman—it is in between and mixed up. A mother’s body is for a child something abject, something both belonging to and not belonging to the child. Jacques Lacan, Luce Irigaray, Kristeva and other semioticians have explored this process in depth and detail; a distinctive feature of Kristeva’s semanalytic accounts of human subjectivity is her attention to the role played by the abject.

⁹ Ban Zhao. *Lessons for Women in The Columbia Anthology of Traditional Chinese Literature*, ed. Victor Mair; Columbia UP, 1994. p.536.

¹⁰ Sumner B. Twiss. “A Constructive Framework for Discussing Confucianism and Human Rights” in *Confucianism and Human Rights* ed. by Wm. Theodore de Bary and Tu Weiming, Columbia University Press, 1998. pp.40-1. In this article, Twiss offers a variety of evidence from Confucian tradition supportive of human rights, even if not couched in the current idiom of human rights.

¹¹ Donald Munro. *The Concept of Man in Early China*. Stanford University Press, 1969. p.49. “It is remarkable that a belief in cosmic hierarchies did not lead the Chou Confucians to a belief in natural inequalities among men, as it did the Platonists in Greece. The Confucians adhered to a doctrine of natural equality, based principally on the argument that all men have an evaluating mind; this is the key to understanding the Confucian concept of man. The Confucians did indeed believe in the naturalness of social hierarchies; but for them no men were by birth more exalted than others and thus entitled to higher places in the hierarchy. The sole criterion for receipt of political and economic privilege was merit.”

¹² Chen Duxiu, for example, is quoted as saying that “The pulse of modern life is economic and the fundamental principle of economic production is individual independence. Its effect has penetrated ethics. Consequently the independence of the individual in the ethical field and the independence of property in the economic field bear witness to each other, thus reaffirming the theory. Because of this, social mores and material culture have taken a great step forward. In China, the Confucians have based their teachings on their ethical norms. Sons and wives possess neither personal individuality nor personal property. Fathers and elder brothers bring up their son and younger brothers and are in turn supported by them. It is said the chapter 30 of the *Record of Rites* that ‘while parents are alive, the son dares not regard his person or property as his own’. This is absolutely not the way to personal independence. ... Confucius lived in a feudal age. The ethics he promoted are the ethics of the feudal age. The social mores he taught and even his own mode of living were teachings and modes of a feudal age. The objectives, ethics, social norms, mode of living and political institutions did not go beyond the privilege and prestige of a few rulers and aristocrats and had nothing to do with the happiness of the great masses.” *Confucianism and Human Rights* ed. by Wm. Theodore de Bary and Tu Weiming. Columbia University Press, 1998. p.1.

¹³ The remark below, for example, was made by He Shen, wife of Liu Shiwei, founder of the Anarchist movement in China; Ho Chen “Nuzi fuchou lun” in *Tianyi bao* no.3 (10), 7-13. translated by Peter Zarrow, “Almost all of the writings since the Chin and Han dynasties have followed Confucianism, and Confucian learning is marked by its devotion to honoring men and denigrating women. Later generations of Confucians respected what the founders had to say and followed their example of venerating men like gods while condemning women to hells. They felt that as long as it was of benefit to men, then it was fine to twist the truth around in any way to gain advantage. The learning of Confucianism has tended to be oppressive and to promote male selfishness. Therefore Confucianism marks the beginning of justifications for polygamy [for men] and chastity [for women]. Confucians, representing the ancestral learning of the Han Dynasty, felt free to twist the meaning of the ancient writings as they pertained to women in order to extend their own views. Just as men loyal to a fallen dynasty went into hiding, women should die faithful to their deceased husbands like a royalist giving his life for his country. Thus are women driven to their deaths with this empty talk of virtue. We can see that the Confucian emphasis on propriety is nothing more than a tool for murdering women. This proves that women have duties but no rights. Household responsibilities cannot be assumed

by men but all the tasks of managing the household are given to women. Out of fear that women might interfere with their concerns, men said women had no business outside the home. This deprived women of their natural rights

¹⁴ Karl Marx and Fredrich Engels. *Selected Works*. Lawrence and Wishard, 1968. (1848, pp.35-6)

¹⁵ Lu Xun. *Fen*. Renmin wenzue chubanshe, 1973. p.128. "What happens after Nora left? There have been opinions on this. An English man who wrote a play about a new woman who left her home, became helpless and degenerated into a prostitute. ... We can infer from our understanding of the real world that there are only two possibilities for Nora: degeneration (*duoluo*) or return."

¹⁶ Jean Bolen. *Goddesses in Everywoman*. Harper Perennial, 1984. p.16. In this book, the author introduces three psychological archetypes for discussing women's experience: (1) the virgin goddesses, (2) the vulnerable goddesses, and (3) the alchemical goddesses. In this light, both Ban Zhao and Wei Ming seem to fall comfortably into the second category, since they all seek happiness in "the traditional roles of wife, mother, and daughter. They are relationship-oriented goddess archetypes, whose identity and wellbeing depend on having a significant relationship. They express women's needs for affiliation and bonding."