



**GENDER ROLES AND PATRIARCHY IN THE WORLD  
OF XIRAN JAY ZHAO'S *IRON WIDOW* (2021)**

**A THESIS**

**In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements  
for S-1 Degree Majoring English Literature in the English  
Department, Faculty of Humanities Diponegoro University**

**Submitted by:**

**Nabila Reyrachma Cinta Nugraha**

**NIM 13020120130100**

**FACULTY OF HUMANITIES**

**DIPONEGORO UNIVERSITY**

**SEMARANG**

**2026**

## **PRONOUNCEMENT**

I honestly state that this thesis is written by myself without taking any works from other researchers in any university, in diploma degree, S-1, S-2, and S-3 degree. I also ascertain that I do not take any material from other works except from the references mentioned.

Semarang, 3 January 2026

Nabila Reyrachma Cinta Nugraha

PERPUSTAKAAN  
FAKULTAS ILMU  
UNIVERSITAS

BUDAYA  
DIPONEGORO

## MOTTO AND DEDICATION

*I know what it is to exist between the world's certainties.*

**Vincent Benitez, *Conclave* (2024)**

*No. This is somewhere to be. This is all you have, but it's still something. Streets and sodium lights. The sky, the world. You're still alive.*

**Volition, *Disco Elysium* (2019)**

*Trust me. It's not a gene. You just need to find someone to be brave for.*

**Yao Li-Jie, *Project Hail Mary* (2026)**

PERPUSTAKAAN BUDAYA  
FAKULTAS ILMU  
UNIVERSITAS DIPOENGORO

**APPROVAL**

**GENDER ROLES AND PATRIARCHY IN THE WORLD OF *IRON WIDOW*  
BY XIRAN JAY ZHAO**

Written by:

Nabila Reyrachma Cinta Nugraha

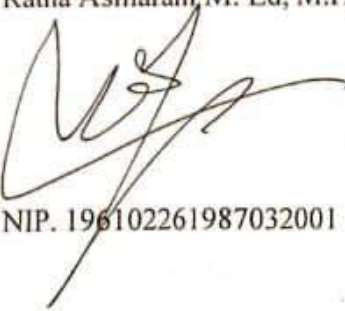
NIM: 13020120130100

Is approved by the thesis advisor

on 28<sup>th</sup> January 2026

Thesis Advisor

Dr. Ratna Asmarani, M. Ed, M.Hum



NIP. 196102261987032001

The Head of English Department



Dr. Oktiva Herry Chandra M.Hum

NIP. 196710041993031003

VALIDATION

GENDER ROLES AND PATRIARCHY IN THE WORLD OF XIRAN JAY  
ZHAO'S *IRON WIDOW* (2021)

Submitted by:

Nabila Reyrachma Cinta Nugraha

NIM 13020120130100

Is approved by

Strata 1 Thesis Examination Committee

Faculty of Humanities Diponegoro University

On April 27<sup>th</sup>, 2026

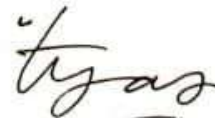
Chair Person

Eta Farmacelia Nurulhady, M.Hum., M.A., Ph.D.  
NIP. 197205292003122001



Member

Sulistyaningtyas S.S, M.A.  
NIP.199007102024062002



Thesis Advisor

Dr. Ratna Asmarani, M.Ed, M.Hum  
NIP. 196102261987032001



Accepted and declared in Semarang on May , 2026



The Dean of Faculty of Humanities

Prof. Dr. Anamsyah S.S., M.Hum.  
NIP. 197211191998021002

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Praise be to Allah SWT, who has given us His countless blessings and great mercy, so this thesis came to a completion. This part is presented to thank all people who have given their support in the accomplishment of this thesis. This gratitude might never be equal to their help and support.

The deepest appreciation and gratitude are extended to Dr. Ratna Asmarani, M.Ed., M. Hum. –my advisor- who has spared his valuable time to patiently give his constructive suggestions and continuous guidance, without which I would be doubtful to accomplish this thesis successfully.

My greatest thank also goes to the following;

1. Prof. Dr. Alamsyah, S.S., M.Hum, as the Dean of Faculty of Humanities, Diponegoro University.
2. Dr. Oktiva Herry Chandra, M.Hum., as the Head of the English Department of the Faculty of Humanities, Diponegoro University.
3. All lecturers of the English Department Diponegoro University. Precious knowledge and their advice would be unforgettable for the writer.
4. My parents, who are the biggest reasons and motivations for the writer to finish her education.

5. All of my friends from Teater Emka, Pia, Enjel, Damar, Yaser, Cindy, Cici, Naomi, Zul, Clara, Veo, Almas, Rizka, and many others, who provided a secondary home for the writer by cheering and supporting the writer no matter what.
6. My college friends, Tya, Citako, Yanti, Lulu, Rasya, and Shabrina, who became the writer's closest friends and made college life feel less lonely.
7. My junior high school friends, Sahma, Nabdar, and Kartika, who have been accompanying me for so long.

This thesis still needs to be improved since I realize that this is far from being perfect. Thus, any recommendation and constructive suggestion would always be welcomed and appreciated. Finally, I hope that this thesis will be helpful for those who want to learn about gender roles and patriarchy or any related field in general.

Semarang, 30 April 2026

Nabila Reyrachma Cinta Nugraha

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

PRONOUNCEMENT .....	i
MOTTO AND DEDICATION.....	ii
APPROVAL .....	iii
VALIDATION .....	iv
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT .....	v
TABLE OF CONTENTS .....	vi
ABSTRACT .....	vii
CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION .....	1
1.1 Background of the Study.....	1
1.2 Research Questions .....	3
1.3 Objectives of the Study.....	3
1.4 Previous Studies .....	3
1.5 Scope of the Study .....	5
1.6 Writing Organization .....	6

CHAPTER II THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK.....	7
2.1 Narrative Elements.....	7
2.1.1 Character and Characterization.....	7
2.1.2 Setting.....	8
2.1.3 Conflict.....	8
2.2 Gender Roles and Patriarchy .....	9
2.2.1 Gender Roles.....	9
2.2.1.1 Gender Roles Influence .....	11
2.2.1.2 Behavioral Change by Gender Roles and Specific Roles.....	13
2.2.2 Patriarchy.....	14
2.2.2.1 Patriarchal State.....	15
2.2.2.2 Male Violence .....	16
2.2.2.3 Patriarchal Culture.....	17
2.3 Research Method .....	17
2.3.1 Research Approach.....	17
2.3.2 Method of Data Collection .....	18

CHAPTER III DISCUSSION.....	19
3.1 Analysis of Narrative Elements .....	19
3.1.1 Setting.....	19
3.1.1.1 Setting of Place.....	19
3.1.1.2 Setting of Time .....	20
3.1.1.3 Setting of Social Environment .....	21
3.1.2 Characters .....	22
3.1.2.1 Protagonist Characters .....	22
3.1.2.1.1 Wu Zetian.....	22
3.1.2.1.2 Gao Yizhi .....	24
3.1.2.1.3 Li Shimin.....	25
3.1.2.2 Antagonist Characters.....	26
3.1.2.2.1 Yang Guang.....	26
3.1.2.2.2 An Lushan .....	27
3.1.3 Conflict.....	27
3.1.3.1 Internal Conflict .....	28
3.1.3.2 External Conflict .....	29

3.2 Gender Roles and Patriarchal Society in <i>Iron Widow</i> .....	31
3.2.1 Gender Roles.....	31
3.2.1.1 Wu Zetian's Social Adjustment .....	32
3.2.1.2 Wu Zetian's Behavioral Change .....	33
3.2.2 Patriarchal Society of Iron Widow.....	35
3.2.2.1 Patriarchal state .....	36
3.2.2.2 Male Violence .....	37
3.2.2.3 Patriarchal Culture .....	39
CHAPTER IV CONCLUSION.....	41
REFERENCES	

PERPUSTAKAAN BUDAYA  
FAKULTAS ILMU  
UNIVERSITAS DIPONEGORO