

## CHAPTER II

### THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This chapter discuss the theories that support the analysis of the novel. This chapter address two types of theories: the narrative elements and extrinsic aspects of the novel.

#### 2.1 Narrative Elements

Narrative elements are components within a narrative that act as the structure of literary works. The components within intrinsic elements are theme, plot, character, setting, conflict, point of view, and more. This paper analyze the story's character, setting, and conflict.

##### 2.1.1 Characters and Characterization

Characters are the portrayals of people within the fiction, which are established by the writer through their action or dialogues. Abrams and Harpham stated, “Characters are the persons represented in a dramatic or narrative work, who are interpreted by the reader as possessing particular moral, intellectual, and emotional qualities by inferences from what the persons say and their distinctive ways of saying it—the dialogue—and from what they do—the action” (2015: 48). Since each readers

have their own It can be said that each readers have various ways to interpret one character.

There are various ways to categorize characters, one of which is based on his or her role within the story. Abrams and Harpham stated, “The chief character in a plot, on whom our interest centers, is called the protagonist (or alternatively, the hero or heroine), and if the plot is such that he or she is pitted against an important opponent, that character is called the antagonist” (2015: 293-294). This means that the main character is always the protagonist of the story and the character that conflicted against them is the antagonist regardless of their morals and motivations.

### **2.1.2 Setting**

The setting in the story serves as the basic understanding of the world and give the readers a clue about how a character would behave and think. According to Meyer and Miller, “Setting is the context in which the action of a story occurs. These elements establish the world in which the characters act.” (2020: 324). There are three elements of setting that makes up to establish a world. Harmon and Holman defined it, “(1) the geographical location, its topography, scenery, and such physical arrangements as the location of the windows and doors in a room; (2) the time or period in which the action takes place, for example, epoch in history or season of the year; and (3) the general environment of the characters, for example, religious, mental, moral, social, and emotional conditions” (2009: 508). It can be said that the physical place, time period,

and the sociological and psychological conditions are the key to building a world in a story.

### **2.1.3 Conflict**

Conflict is an element in which Johnson and Arp defined it as, “a clash of actions, ideas, desires, or wills” (2017: 98). A conflict in a story may serve as a way to expand the story. A character may experience conflict in two different ways, internally or externally. Meyers and Miller stated, “External conflicts may place the protagonist in opposition to another individual, nature, or society. Conflict may also be internal; in such a case, some moral or psychological issue must be resolved within the protagonist” (2020: 147-148). It can be said that a character, mainly the protagonist can experience an internal and external conflict at the same time and correlate to each other.

## **2.2 Gender Roles and Patriarchy**

This part of the paper discusses the elements of gender roles and patriarchy to understand the social context that is prevalent in the novel.

### **2.2.1 Gender Roles**

The terms gender and sex have been used interchangeably to distinguish people’s identity. Short *et al.* argues that the difference between the two terms is that sex refers to the biological difference between men and women, especially in reproductive functions. Meanwhile, gender refers to the difference between men and women caused by the social construct (2013: 93). According to Lindsey, society tends

to put expectations on how men and women should look and behave according to their sex. Those expectations slowly become standardized by society, becoming what is commonly known as gender roles (2016: 5). Gender roles put the expectation on society that men should act masculine and women should act feminine. Aside from gender expressions, people are also expected to carry out duties that society deems appropriate for each gender. Sigelman and Rider pointed out that the society's ideal portrayal of men and women is to put them in a system where people are tasked accordingly to their gender (2018: 367). This idea of putting people in a binary system can lead to harmful stereotypes, especially when one gender considers itself to be superior to the other. The example can be seen when Tyson stated that traditional gender roles instill the idea of women as "submissive and weak," while in contrast, men are portrayed as "dominant and powerful" (2023: 72).

According to Eagly and Wood's gender role theory, many ideas that eventually become gender roles arise from society's observation of each gender and creating assumptions that men and women will behave according to their sex (2012: 459). By exhibiting specific actions, men and women are expected to perform roles appropriate to their respective genders. It can be stated that society views gender roles as a natural occurrence rather than a social construct because it reflects each sex's inherent characteristics. Eagly and Wood mentioned, "Gender roles seem natural and inevitable since they represent the sexes' natural traits. With these ideas, people construct gender roles that change according to cultural and environmental contexts while still appearing

to be a strong, organic bond between men and women and society's members” (2012: 459).

Creating assumptions about how each gender has specific behavior leads to the creation of gender stereotypes. Deaux and Lewis, in Brannon’s *Gender: Psychological Perspectives*, claim that gender stereotypes of men and women can be broken down into four elements: physical attributes, personality, manners, and professions (2017: 54). These elements are exaggerated and eventually normalized in society. Basow stated that stereotypes associated with gender can also be associated with status. She said, “A person in a dominant role will be more authoritative and agentic, while a person in a submissive role will be more passive and communal, regardless of gender” (1992: 10-11). According to Eagly and Wood, people’s behavior can be influenced either by the gender role itself or it can be influenced by a specified social role (2012: 467).

#### **2.2.1.1 Gender Roles Influence**

Many people in society function by adjusting their manners depending on the people and the surrounding environment, whether intentionally or not. According to Eagly and Wood, these adjustments can be determined through hormonal alterations, gender identities, and assumptions of other people (2012: 467). The first adjustment is Hormonal alterations are linked through the chemical activation within the brain in both genders. There are two prevalent hormones, the first is testosterone, commonly associated with male qualities such as domination and aggression. It is usually activated

when the social conditions require a person to be dominant over other people. The other hormone is oxytocin, commonly associated with female qualities such as maternal behavior and affection. It is activated during social conditions that require a person to be friendly and caring towards other people. These hormones are activated in both genders, depending on the social interaction and the surrounding environment (Eagly and Wood, 2012: 468).

The second adjustment is gender identity, where people adjust their personality based on the gender identity that they feel comfortable with. Eagly and Wood stated that people who consider themselves as feminine tend to be comfortable doing feminine activities, whereas people who consider themselves as masculine are most likely to be comfortable doing masculine activities (2012: 468). However, there are also people who do not conform to the typical gender norm who are likely to exhibit uncommon behaviors to their assigned gender. A study by Martin *et al.* shows that androgynous people are more likely to be comfortable doing either masculine or feminine activities. This adaptability occurs depending on the suitability of the social condition (2016: 593).

The third adjustment that people make comes from the assumption of other people, especially on how to behave in accordance with their gender. Eagly and Wood stated that people who are integrated into the conventional gender role behavior are likely to be accepted by society, and in contrast, when people do not conform to it, they are likely to be ostracized from society (2012: 468). Society has been implanting the traditional gender role as early as childhood and continues to reinforce it into adulthood.

A study by Martin shows that children who do not act like their typical gender tend to be negatively perceived by adults, especially boys who engage in a typical feminine activity. The negative perception comes from the worry that these children will not integrate into society and will affect their mental health (1990: 152). Another study by Heilman et al. shows how women who are working in a traditionally masculine environment are punished for performing well. This punishment is done due to gender bias and stereotype reinforcement (2004: 426). These studies show how people are likely to integrate into the traditional gender roles and activities unless it benefits them.

#### **2.2.1.2 Behavioral Change by Gender Roles and Specific Roles**

Eagly and Wood stated that another factor that can influence the way people behave in society is through assigning people to a specialized task, which is either through familial relations or professions. These specialized tasks may influence a person more due to the explicit impact on the person than the subtle change of gender roles. In other words, there are many work environments where gender roles are less important than the duty within the work itself even if they are still tied to their assigned gender, regardless of their position (2012: 469). Moskowitz *et al.* researched the impact of gender and social roles on behavior within the work environment. The study shows that social roles are more influential than gender, depending on the occupation hierarchy. People who occupy the higher hierarchy tend to behave more dominantly towards those who rank below them, regardless of gender. However, regarding social interaction, gender roles are more influential than social roles, which means women

are likely to build interpersonal relationships than men, regardless of their position (1994: 758-759). This shows that gender roles are not essential in certain circumstances, but still play a key part in the way people interact with each other in society.

### **2.2.2 Patriarchy**

Walby defined patriarchy as a social institution in which men dominate and take advantage of women (1989: 214). This social construct indoctrinates society to think that men are superior and should be the ones who control society. At the same time, women tend to be put aside and not considered to be an essential part of society. Men's domination starts in the family, which is the lowest form of society, where men are expected to be the head of the family and to be the ones who provide all the necessities for the family. On the other hand, women are only expected to breed and do nothing except care for the family at home. Patriarchal systems have been perpetuated by society through external forces such as parenting, prejudice, social structures, lack of resources, and regulations (Soman, 2009: 254). Patriarchy emerges as men seeking prestige and protection from their own peers in order to avoid any embarrassment or defeat when they struggle to adhere to the norm. Men fear that other men will dominate them, so instead, they dominate women to feel superior in various ways that they can, such as enforcing cultures that degrade women, establishing discriminatory policies, or even straight up harming women (Johnson, 2005: 54).

Walby argued that the six main structures of patriarchy became the foundations that establish the patriarchal system, which are the mode of production, paid wages,

patriarchal state, male violence, sexuality, and patriarchal culture (Walby, 1989: 220). Mode of production refers to the economic part of patriarchy, in which women's labor is being exploited by their husbands within the marriage (Walby, 1989: 221). Paid work also refers to the economic part where women are being excluded and separated within an occupation, causes women to earn less than men even when they have the same skill (Walby, 2021: 223). Patriarchal state refers to the exclusion of women from political sphere, which leads to lack of women's rights and women's power in government (Walby, 1989: 224). Male violence refers to the social occurrence of men using physical violence to display dominance over women due to lack of government intervention (Walby, 1989: 225). Sexuality refers to the prosecution of unusual sexual practice in heteronormative society, some examples are homosexuality or non-marital sex (Walby, 1989: 226). Patriarchal culture refers to the social element where patriarchy is being implemented through institutionalized means such as religion or media (Walby, 1989: 227). Out of the six main structures, the paper will focus on three: patriarchal state, male violence, and culture.

#### **2.2.2.1 Patriarchal State**

A nation becomes a part of the patriarchal system when it excludes women's rights and position from the government. The exclusion of women from governmental positions comes from the capitalistic interest that can be gained through control over women's bodies by making policies that discriminate against women and are considered incapable of establishing rules for the state (Walby, 1989: 224). Since the

state is establishing more power for men and silencing women at the same time, this creates laws that relate to gender. Folbre argued that there are three classifications of laws that are being controlled by patriarchy, which are ownership rights over women and children, individual rights restriction, and lack of compensation for family care (2021: 34).

#### **2.2.2.2 Male Violence**

One of the ways for men to directly perpetuate patriarchy in society is through violence. Men cultivate fear in women by using physical and sexual assault, which results in women's tendency to become more submissive and reduces the chance for women to fight against men. A patriarchal state is likely to tolerate men's violence, as it is the one that justifies laws and policies against women in the first place (Walby, 1989: 224-225). Fleming *et al.* stated that various factors contribute to these acts of violence, from the highest hierarchy, which is society and down to the individual. An imbalanced power hierarchy of men and women within a male-dominated society could foster a culture where men use violence against women or even other men. This display of violence and aggression is to display their power and status within society, where men are expected to be strong and dominant, and the ones who do not conform to conventional masculinity may get ostracized (2015: 251). Society's standard of masculinity can influence an individual to become violent against women or even other men by either asserting his masculinity and staying away from non-masculine activities,

or letting out their emotions using violence because they are pressured to conform to society's expectation of masculinity (Pleck in Fleming et al., 2015: 252).

### **2.2.2.3 Patriarchal Culture**

The culture of patriarchy had long been established before the ideology of it. Many societies are implementing the idea of the binary system of men and women, and the way they should behave through various aspects within a society, such as through religion or school. This indoctrination leads the society into thinking that patriarchy is part of the social norm (Walby, 1989: 227). Johnson stated that patriarchy is all about authority and superiority in all aspects of humanity, from the smallest aspect, such as people's identity, to life-changing aspects, such as the world's economy or even the environment. Since patriarchy becomes the standard in society, it drives people into thinking that masculinity is superior and considered more human, and at the same time, discredits femininity as inferior and less human (Johnson: 2005: 39).

## **2.3 Research Method**

The research method is a collection of data and analysis procedures to study a particular phenomenon. The research method for this thesis uses a research approach and data collection method to proceed with the thesis.

### **2.3.1 Research Approach**

The writer uses the feminist approach based on the research background, which discusses gender roles and patriarchy in Xiran Jay Zhao's novel *Iron Widow*.

According to McHugh in Leavy's *The Oxford Handbook of Qualitative Research*, feminist research is "research about the context of gender in women, uncovering gender inequality, empowering women, social change advocacy, and/or improving the status or material reality of women's lives" (2014: 137). Humm defines feminist literary criticism as, "reads writing and examines its ideology and culture with a woman-centred perspective. Criticism is feminist if it critiques existing disciplines, traditional paradigms about women, nature or social roles, or documents such work by others, from the point of view of women" (2021: 51). For this research thesis, the writer uses Alice Eagly and Wendy Wood's gender role theory and Silvia Walby's theory of patriarchy to analyze gender roles and patriarchy in depth.

### **2.3.2 Method of Data Collection**

In order to collect data for this research, the writer uses the library research method. This method is about searching and collecting essential data that is assessed through critical evaluation for a relevant discussion (George, 2008: 6). The data that is collected for this research uses two types of sources, which are primary and secondary sources. Primary sources are described by George as the central information that illustrates the whole research (2008: 189). This research uses a novel by Xiran Jay Zhao entitled *Iron Widow* as its primary source. The secondary sources are previous research that serves as additional observation for the primary source (George, 2008: 193). The secondary data sources for this research are journals, books, articles, and any other sources of credible and reliable writing.