

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

This chapter draws a conclusion regarding the features of radical feminism depicted in Xiran Jay Zhao's *Iron Widow*. According to the data discussed in the previous chapter analysis, the conclusion is provided along with a recommendation regarding this research.

5.1 Conclusion

This study uses *Iron Widow* (2021), a novel written by Xiran Jay Zhao. The novel follows Wu Zetian, a powerful female pilot in Huaxia, where men and women pilot giant robots to defend against Hunduns (enemies). Wu Zetian faces patriarchy and kills a male pilot to avenge her sister's death, taking over the control of the robotic device by herself. She is then nicknamed "Iron Widow" for her powerful actions, which were rare for female pilots. This study uses radical feminism features from Finn Mackay (2015) to analyze this novel's feminism issue. These four features are not exclusive to radical feminism; they are a concise version that distinguishes it from other feminism.

The radical feminism features are depicted through narratives, dialogues, or characterizations in this novel. The first feature, recognizing the existence of patriarchy and looking for ways to end it, is depicted in the act of recognising and ceasing patriarchy. The yin seat, assigned to female pilots in battle, is believed to have a

passive input, dampening their spirits to avoid matching or exceeding the spirit of male pilots. However, Wu Zetian is depicted denying this, believing women's forever docility and obedience to men are unlikely. On top of that, Zetian's character embodies her understanding of patriarchy and her commitment to promoting biological liberation for herself and other women. She sells herself to the army as a concubine pilot for Yang Guang, intending to avenge her sister's death, demonstrating her vengeful nature and desire to use her body for a revenge upon her sister's death.

Next, the emphasis of women-only spaces and women-only political activity, is seen by the character's urge in building sisterhood and safe space for women. In the narrative, Wu Zetian seeks sisterhood by contacting Dugu Qielo, a powerful female pilot, to oppose An Lushan. She believes that powerful female pilots should collaborate to support each other. Unfortunately, Qielo rejects her and Zetian fails to perform a sisterhood bond with Qielo. Zetian, in the novel, is concerned about the safety of women in similar situations and aims to change the patriarchy in the piloting system for girls who enlist as concubine pilots.

There is also a depiction of male violence as a keystone of oppression that is conveyed in the shape of domestic abuse and the threat of marital rape. In the story, Zetian's mother and grandmother are domestically abused by their respective husbands. It is depicted that Zetian's mother faces emotional abuse (isolation and threats), while Zetian's grandmother faces physical abuse (beating). Marital rape is then depicted in a dialogue of Zetian talking to Xiuying—a female pilot—insisting that female pilots

should stop appeasing male pilots (their husbands) by tolerating the unwanted bruises they got in harsh sexual intercourse. Additionally, one of the narratives shows Wu Zetian's fear about the possibility of being forcibly pregnant as a result of the army's compulsion towards Shimin, who is her new male pilot partner. This is depicting a fight against a marital rape.

Fourthly, male violence in the shape of sexual exploitation is depicted in non-consensual pornography and sexual subordination of a woman. In Zetian's studio photo shooting session for the media, a character named Gao Qiu is depicting an act of sexual subordination of a woman by making her pose as a pet to her male pilot partner, Shimin. In one of the dialogues of the later part of the story, Gao Qiu also attempts to use Zetian's naked video as a form of non-consensual pornography, aiming to threaten her to give him a position in the government. Fortunately, Gao Qiu is then killed by his own son, Gao Yizhi.

In conclusion, according to the data discussed, the novel encompasses all four key features of radical feminism, with each feature further examined into two separate parts (eight parts). The data that depict the features of radical feminism are divided into: the objection on male supremacy, advocacy on women's biological liberation, sisterhood, safe space for women, resistance on domestic abuse, opposition to marital rape, non-consensual pornography as a form of male violence, and male violence in sexual subordination of women. The four features of radical feminism in this novel are depicted through the eight discussions, mainly depicting how the lack of consciousness

regarding patriarchy could harm the society. Finally, I also found that the radical feminism issues are still relevant and can be seen in real life society problems, such as related to the eight discussions of radical feminism depicted in this today's popular novel.

5.2 Recommendation

Setting aside the depiction of radical feminism features in this novel, I would like to provide a recommendation regarding the object of this study. Although the research on this object focuses on the feminism issue, I am recommending that future researchers use the theory of deconstruction.

Deconstruction says that society and language are built on logical frameworks that are based on binaries, or binary pairs. Although *Iron Widow* showcases a strong main female character, there are some parts of the story that depict the opposite idea, such as depicting a woman being saved by men a couple of times. Deconstruction, as a literary theory, would be able to lead and uncover the ideas that oppose the seemingly dominant view of the story. Revealing how the story manages to depict a strong female character with possible hidden dependent tendencies to male characters.