



## **Private and Public Patriarchies: A Sylvia Walby-Inspired Analysis of Jennifer Saint's *Ariadne***

**Luis Valentino<sup>1</sup>, Ratu Prayuana<sup>2</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>[valentinoluis460@gmail.com](mailto:valentinoluis460@gmail.com)

<sup>2</sup>[dosen01443@gmail.com](mailto:dosen01443@gmail.com)

<sup>1,2</sup> Universitas Pamulang

### **Abstract**

#### **Keywords:**

*Patriarchy,  
power analysis,  
gender dynamics,  
myth retelling,  
women's agency*

This study examines the patriarchal structures in Jennifer Saint's novel *Ariadne* through Sylvia Walby's theoretical framework, which distinguishes between private and public patriarchy. Employing a qualitative method, this research analyzes textual data to reveal how these interconnected systems shape the experiences of female characters like Ariadne, Phaedra, and Pasiphaë. The findings demonstrate that patriarchal control within the household (private) and through state and religious institutions (public) systematically limits women's roles, silences their voices, and erases their agency. This study underscores the value of feminist myth-retellings in critiquing enduring gender inequalities, highlighting *Ariadne*'s significance as a contemporary literary intervention.

© 2025 Universitas Pamulang

✉ Corresponding author:

B3 Building, Kampus Viktor, Pamulang, Tangerang Selatan Indonesia 50229 E-mail:  
[valentinoluis460@gmail.com](mailto:valentinoluis460@gmail.com)

E-ISSN: 3047-8693

## INTRODUCTION

Patriarchy is a global issue that continues to shape societies across cultures and historical contexts. It is a sociocultural system in which men hold primary power and dominate roles of political leadership, moral authority, social privilege, and control over property. In patriarchal societies, power structures are arranged so that men are granted dominance in both public and private spheres, while women are often relegated to subordinate positions. This system not only perpetuates gender-based inequalities but also becomes deeply entrenched through cultural norms, religious beliefs, institutional practices, and familial expectations. Patriarchy affects women's lives at all levels, determining how they experience the world and restricting their freedom to act and speak within society.

Patriarchy is not only a theoretical concept but also an observable phenomenon manifested in real-life events. One of the most tragic recent examples is the case of Saltanat Nukenova, a Kazakhstani woman who was brutally murdered by her husband, Kairat Nukenov, a high-ranking government official. Despite being an advocate for women's rights and recognized for her intelligence and independence, Saltanat was not protected from gender-based violence. Reports revealed that she had experienced years of threats and abuse, yet her pleas for help were ignored. As Al Jazeera (2024) reported, "Kazakhstan's violence laws have long been criticized for being ineffective, with many cases not even reaching court" (para. 3). In May 2024, she was beaten to death in a hotel room, sparking protests across Kazakhstan. Her death exposed the depth of institutionalized patriarchy within legal and governmental systems that failed to address abuse, symbolizing how patriarchy operates on both private and systemic levels.

The urgent need to confront patriarchy has been reflected not only in activism and policy reform but also in literature. Feminist retellings of classical myths, in particular, offer a powerful lens through which patriarchal structures can be critiqued and reimaged. Literature functions as both a reflection of society and a tool for questioning its values, revealing how women's voices have been silenced or distorted throughout history. According to Laurenson and Swingewood (1972), literature serves as a mirror of emotions, values, and cultural developments, showing how individuals react to and resist their social conditions.

Jennifer Saint's *Ariadne* (2021) is a compelling example of this feminist revisionism. Reimagining the Greek myth of Ariadne, the daughter of King Minos of Crete, the novel shifts attention away from the glorified heroics of men to the emotional and psychological experiences of women. Ariadne and her sister Phaedra, despite their royal status, endure betrayal, abandonment, silencing, and exploitation under patriarchal power. By giving voice to these sidelined women, Saint exposes how myths not only glorify male gods and heroes but also erase female experiences. The novel challenges patriarchal structures embedded in both ancient narratives and modern realities, aligning with broader feminist efforts to reclaim women's voices and agency in cultural history.

*Ariadne* serves as a rich text for the study of patriarchy because it mirrors the six structures identified by Walby in a mythological context, allowing readers to explore the implications of patriarchal power across different spheres. For example, household patriarchy is evident in the control that Minos exerts over his daughters, treating them as political pawns and tools for reinforcing his authority. The culture of patriarchy is expressed in how Ariadne's contributions are erased from myth, while Theseus is elevated as the singular hero.

This study analyzes Jennifer Saint's *Ariadne* (2021) through the framework of Sylvia Walby's theory of patriarchy, which examines how patriarchal systems operate across private and public domains. By applying this theoretical lens, the study seeks to uncover the ways in which women's struggles under patriarchy are portrayed in the novel and how these struggles resonate with contemporary issues of gender inequality..

## METHOD

This study employed a qualitative approach to examine the representation of patriarchy within literature. The study is considered qualitative because literature itself, as a form of written expression, relies heavily on descriptive language, narrative structures, and symbolic representations that convey meaning and reflect human experiences. According to Creswell (1994), qualitative research is a process of understanding inquiry based on traditional methodologies that explore social issues or humanity. Thus, this approach is appropriate because it provides an interpretive framework that allows the researcher to uncover the complexities of patriarchal structures in the narrative.

In qualitative research within the context of literature, researchers analyze textual data from stories, identifying and comparing the issues presented in the narrative to social realities. The researcher draws upon textual interpretation and theoretical perspectives to explain how literary representations reflect broader social problems and cultural systems. In this study, the data source is essential because it provides insight into how patriarchy is constructed in the fictional world and how characters respond to it.

The primary data of this study were taken from Jennifer Saint's novel *Ariadne* (2021), which contains narrative passages, dialogues, and descriptions that illustrate the dynamics of power, gender relations, and patriarchal systems. The data consist of selected quotations that describe how patriarchy is represented in the story and how the characters experience its effects.

In conducting this study, data collection was a crucial stage that determined the quality and validity of the results. This research used a specific method of collecting data by selecting quotations from *Ariadne* (2021) by Jennifer Saint. The following steps were carried out:

1. Reading the novel *Ariadne* (2021) carefully and repeatedly as the main source of data to gain a thorough understanding of its themes and narrative.
2. Identifying quotations, dialogues, or passages that reflect patriarchal structures, gender inequality, or male dominance.
3. Marking and taking notes on the identified quotations relevant to the issues studied.
4. Classifying the quotations based on their relation to Sylvia Walby's theory of patriarchy, particularly distinguishing between private and public patriarchy.

The data analysis followed a descriptive qualitative method. As Creswell (2018) stated, qualitative analysis involves gathering data, making interpretations, and writing reports. The analysis in this study was aimed at examining how patriarchy is manifested in the novel and how the characters respond to patriarchal control. This process focused on applying Sylvia Walby's theory of patriarchy (1991), which distinguishes between private and public forms of patriarchy, to interpret the textual evidence. Selected essential data were described in quotations that support the thesis statement and explain the ways in which patriarchal structures operate in Jennifer Saint's *Ariadne*.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the findings of the study and the discussion based on Sylvia Walby's (1991) theory of patriarchy. The analysis is divided into two parts: (1) the portrayal of patriarchy in Jennifer Saint's *Ariadne* (2021), and (2) the struggles faced by the characters in resisting or coping with patriarchal structures. The discussion demonstrates that patriarchy in the novel operates both in the private sphere—within family and household relations—and in the public sphere, encompassing political, religious, and social institutions.

### Portrayal of Patriarchy in *Ariadne*

Private patriarchy, according to Walby (1991), refers to forms of domination in which women's subordination is primarily situated within the household and family unit. Unlike public patriarchy, which disperses power across social institutions such as politics, education, or religion, private patriarchy locates male dominance in the intimate sphere, particularly in familial and domestic relationships. In Jennifer Saint's *Ariadne* (2021), private patriarchy is vividly illustrated through the interactions between fathers, daughters, and husbands, where women's choices, identities, and autonomy are consistently restricted by familial expectations and male authority.

One of the clearest depictions of private patriarchy appears in Theseus's warning to Ariadne regarding the consequences of betraying her father, Minos. Saint (2021, p. 38) wrote:

*"But, Princess, I do not want to add your life to the shame I carry. Remember Scylla, Ariadne. If you do this, you must not remain to face your father's wrath. You must leave Crete and never return."*

This passage underscores the centrality of paternal authority in determining Ariadne's fate. Rather than being governed by legal or civic consequences, her primary threat emerges from the wrath of her father. Here, Minos embodies Walby's (1991) concept of patriarchal control within the household, where the father dictates the conditions of a daughter's existence. First, Ariadne's bodily autonomy and freedom of movement are constrained by her father's honor. Her survival hinges not on her choices but on her willingness to avoid shaming her father, even if it requires permanent exile from her homeland. Second, Theseus's words frame Ariadne's identity in relation to family shame, not individual agency. She is reminded of Scylla, another young woman who defied male authority and suffered fatal consequences. Through this parallel, Ariadne learns that her desires are inconsequential compared to the collective honor dictated by patriarchal power.

The dynamic at play in this quotation reflects Walby's (1991) structure of household production, wherein women's labor, mobility, and even existence are subsumed under the authority of male heads of families. In this case, Ariadne cannot determine whether she remains in Crete or leaves; her destiny is tied to her father's anger and his interpretation of honor. The broader implication is that women's lives in patriarchal systems are never their own—they are extensions of the household's reputation, controlled by paternal figures who wield both emotional and coercive power.

Furthermore, Ariadne's internal reflection on Scylla demonstrates how patriarchal norms infiltrate women's own self-perceptions. Saint (2021, p. 14) stated:

*"I thought of Scylla, I thought of the foolish and all too human girl..."*

This quotation reveals the internalization of patriarchal values, where Ariadne adopts dismissive language to describe another woman who acted on her emotions. Instead of sympathizing with Scylla's plight, Ariadne unconsciously echoes the patriarchal narrative that frames Scylla as "foolish." This moment is significant because it illustrates how private patriarchy functions not only through overt male control but also through women's complicity in perpetuating patriarchal standards. By calling Scylla "foolish," Ariadne demonstrates that patriarchal power has conditioned women to police each other's behavior, reinforcing the idea that female desire or emotion is inherently dangerous.

Walby (1991) emphasizes that patriarchy is not merely structural but also cultural, shaping norms and internal beliefs that sustain male dominance. Ariadne's reflection illustrates this perfectly: she has absorbed the patriarchal lesson that women who challenge male authority or act independently are to be ridiculed or condemned. The psychological effect of such internalization ensures the continuation of private patriarchy, as women come to view their own oppression as natural or even justified.

Ariadne's relationship with her father further illustrates the dynamics of private patriarchy through the control of marriage arrangements. Saint (2021, p. 27) narrated:

*"But it was Minos' decree that mattered, not our hopes. So when he summoned me to court on one overcast afternoon, I had a suspicion that he had at last selected an alliance he considered favorable."*

This passage demonstrates that Ariadne's future is determined not by her own desires but by Minos's political calculations. Her role is reduced to that of a bargaining chip, exchanged to secure alliances that serve her father's interests. Marriage, in this sense, becomes an economic and political tool of patriarchal dominance, aligning with Walby's (1991) structure of household production and sexual relations, where women are utilized to reproduce and sustain male power. Ariadne's lack of voice in such a pivotal life decision reveals the extent of private patriarchal control. She is not considered an agent in her own life but rather a daughter whose existence must serve male ambitions.

The silencing of women in moments when they attempt to resist this control is further illustrated when Ariadne protests against her father's marriage arrangement. Saint (2021, p. 28) stated:

*"I could see that I had only this moment of his attention. 'But I do not want to marry him!' A hush fell upon the room. Minos smiled. 'You sail with him after tomorrow is done.'"*

This exchange encapsulates the mechanism of patriarchal silencing. Even when Ariadne dares to voice her refusal, her protest is dismissed without consideration. Minos's authority is absolute, and the social environment enforces compliance through collective silence. The hush that falls over the room reflects the complicity of others in maintaining patriarchal order, where no one dares to challenge the father's authority. This scene not only illustrates Walby's (1991) structure of patriarchal household control but also highlights the intersection with patriarchal violence, as Ariadne's dissent is met with the symbolic violence of being ignored and forced into submission.

Ariadne's lack of agency within her family echoes the broader cultural tendency in

patriarchal societies to silence women's voices. In private patriarchy, the household becomes the microcosm where women are trained to accept subordination, and their attempts at self-expression are curtailed. Minos's smile, in this context, represents the arrogance of male authority that assumes women's protests are irrelevant. The result is that Ariadne's individuality is erased in favor of patriarchal dictates, reinforcing her role as a passive participant in decisions about her own life.

Taken together, these examples from *Ariadne* demonstrate the pervasive nature of private patriarchy. Women are confined to roles defined by their fathers and husbands, their desires subordinated to male authority. Ariadne is compelled to leave Crete to avoid her father's wrath, internalizes patriarchal norms by belittling Scylla, is treated as a political pawn in marriage negotiations, and is silenced when she resists her father's decision. Each of these instances illustrates how private patriarchy functions as both structural domination and cultural conditioning, ensuring that women remain subordinate within the household and family.

Moreover, these examples resonate with real-world manifestations of private patriarchy. Across history and into the present, women have been denied agency in marriage decisions, silenced when they resist familial expectations, and punished for defying paternal authority. The case of Saltanat Nukenova, discussed in the background of this study, provides a harrowing real-life parallel: despite her intelligence and social standing, she was ultimately controlled, silenced, and killed by her husband, revealing that patriarchal control within intimate relationships can have deadly consequences. Just as Ariadne's life is shaped by her father's decrees and her husband's withdrawal of emotional support, Saltanat's story demonstrates how patriarchal power within private spheres continues to endanger women today.

Thus, Saint's *Ariadne* not only retells an ancient myth but also reflects the enduring presence of private patriarchy in contemporary society. By highlighting the ways in which fathers and husbands control women's lives, silence their voices, and reduce them to tools for maintaining male honor, the novel exposes the oppressive dynamics of private patriarchy and challenges readers to recognize its persistence across time and culture.

Public patriarchy, as defined by Sylvia Walby (1990, 1991), refers to the systematic domination of men over women through public institutions such as politics, law, religion, and economic structures. Unlike private patriarchy, which centers on the family and household, public patriarchy extends male dominance into the broader social and political spheres, shaping women's roles, limiting their opportunities, and silencing their voices within collective life. In Jennifer Saint's *Ariadne* (2021), public patriarchy is vividly represented through the political systems of Crete, the religious influence of gods, and the wider structures of war and societal control that determine women's destinies. Ariadne, Phaedra, and Pasiphaë become embodiments of how public patriarchy systematically marginalizes women and denies them agency, even when their lives are deeply affected by the public actions of men.

One of the most telling moments of public patriarchy in *Ariadne* appears in Ariadne's early reflections on the vulnerability of women within male-dominated politics: "A life we led, the passions and the greed of men could bring us to ruin, and there was nothing we could do" (Saint, 2021, p. 18). This quotation captures the essence of Walby's (1990) concept of public patriarchy, in which women's lives are dictated not by their own choices but by decisions made in male-controlled institutions. Ariadne recognizes that women live at the mercy of men's ambitions, whether those ambitions manifest in political alliances, military conquests, or

dynastic struggles. The word “ruin” underlines the destructive consequences of male ambition on women’s lives, while the phrase “there was nothing we could do” emphasizes the silencing of women’s voices in the public sphere. Here, women are excluded from decision-making yet forced to bear the consequences of men’s greed, which aligns with Walby’s assertion that public patriarchy operates by structurally excluding women from power while exposing them to the outcomes of male-centered politics.

Another significant example of public patriarchy is the role of King Minos, who rules not only his household but also Crete as a sovereign power. His control over his daughters, Ariadne and Phaedra, exemplifies how patriarchal authority within the private realm extends seamlessly into the public realm of politics. When Minos arranges marriages for his daughters, he does so not out of concern for their desires but to secure political alliances. Saint (2021, p. 27) writes: “But it was Minos’ decree that mattered, not our hopes. So when he summoned me to court on one overcast afternoon, I had a suspicion that he had at last selected an alliance he considered favorable.” This passage reveals how marriage becomes a political tool within public patriarchy, reducing women to commodities exchanged between men to maintain power. Ariadne’s personal agency is irrelevant, as her future is decided in the context of statecraft. Walby (1991) explains that one of the central mechanisms of public patriarchy is the exclusion of women from political participation, and Minos’s actions demonstrate how women’s identities and futures are entirely subordinated to political strategy. Ariadne is simultaneously a daughter and a political instrument, illustrating how public patriarchy collapses the boundary between private and public to consolidate male control.

Religion in Ariadne also functions as a significant mechanism of public patriarchy. Male gods are portrayed as figures who exercise unchecked power over mortals, while women’s suffering becomes collateral damage in their divine conflicts. For example, Pasiphaë’s fate is sealed when Poseidon curses her to fall in love with a bull, leading to the birth of the Minotaur. Her experience is framed not as a divine injustice against her but as a mark of shame against Minos, further underlining how women’s suffering is appropriated within male-centered narratives. As Saint (2021, p. 11) notes through Ariadne’s narration: “My mother’s torment was spoken of only as Minos’ humiliation; her pain and shame were never her own.” This illustrates Walby’s (1990) argument that public patriarchy functions through cultural institutions, such as religion and mythology, which normalize women’s subordination by erasing their voices. Pasiphaë’s trauma is overshadowed by male honor, transforming her suffering into a political issue rather than a personal tragedy. In this way, religion becomes not a space of solace but a patriarchal institution that silences and objectifies women.

Dionysus, who later becomes Ariadne’s husband, also embodies the intersection of religion and public patriarchy. His rise to power depends on manipulating public faith and establishing himself as a god worthy of worship. Ariadne observes: “As news spreads that Dionysus can bring the dead back to life, they come to me in their thousands” (Saint, 2021, p. 166). On the surface, this reflects Dionysus’s divinity, but deeper analysis reveals how religious authority consolidates male dominance within public institutions. While Ariadne serves as the intermediary for worshippers, she is denied actual authority. The public comes to her physically, but their devotion is directed entirely to Dionysus, showing how women’s proximity to power does not translate into participation. Walby’s theory is especially relevant here: public patriarchy thrives in cultural and religious systems where men control collective belief structures, while women are relegated to passive roles. Ariadne becomes the vessel through which Dionysus’s influence spreads, but her lack of agency reveals how public patriarchy thrives by exploiting women’s visibility while denying them true authority.

Public patriarchy in *Ariadne* also manifests through warfare and its consequences for women. The violence of men, conducted on the battlefield and within political struggles, inevitably reshapes the lives of women. For instance, *Ariadne* recalls the story of Scylla, who betrayed her father out of love for Minos, only to be executed as a traitor: “I thought of Scylla, I thought of the foolish and all too human girl...” (Saint, 2021, p. 14). While Scylla’s choice is condemned as foolish, her story reveals how women are punished disproportionately when they attempt to act within political conflicts. Her betrayal is remembered not for its political significance but as a moral failing rooted in her femininity. Walby (1991) notes that public patriarchy punishes women who transgress established boundaries, reinforcing structures that preserve male authority. Scylla’s death illustrates how women who attempt to engage in public power are vilified, while men who wage wars are glorified. This double standard reflects the deeply entrenched gender bias of public patriarchy, in which women are remembered for their failures while men are celebrated for their ambition.

*Ariadne* herself becomes entangled in public patriarchy when she aids Theseus in defeating the Minotaur. Her act of defiance against Minos and solidarity with Theseus might be interpreted as reclaiming agency, yet it also reflects how women are often caught between competing patriarchal structures. As Saint (2021, p. 38) recounts through Theseus’s warning: “If you do this, you must not remain to face your father’s wrath. You must leave Crete and never return.” *Ariadne*’s bravery is overshadowed by the consequences of male politics. She is compelled to abandon her homeland, not because of legal punishment but because of her father’s patriarchal authority, which is intertwined with his political sovereignty. Walby’s theory clarifies this dynamic: public patriarchy ensures that women who intervene in political or social conflicts are displaced, silenced, or punished, thereby sustaining male dominance across generations.

Later in the novel, *Ariadne*’s marriage to Dionysus initially appears to offer liberation from Minos’s control, but it soon becomes another illustration of public patriarchy’s insidious reach. Dionysus’s divine authority positions him not only as a husband but as a public figure whose power eclipses *Ariadne*’s identity. As Saint (2021, p. 172) writes: “Can you blame me for thinking it better to garner the love of a thousand mortals instead; to hold the adoration of a city instead of one consort’s frail, mortal flesh?” Dionysus openly compares the adoration of thousands to the intimacy of his marriage, reducing *Ariadne* to a dispensable presence. This moment starkly reflects Walby’s view that public patriarchy prioritizes male participation in public institutions (such as politics and religion) over private relationships, reinforcing women’s invisibility and subordination. *Ariadne*’s personal suffering is overshadowed by Dionysus’s pursuit of public validation, showing how women are sidelined even within divine narratives.

The consequences of public patriarchy in *Ariadne* extend beyond individual suffering to collective female experiences. *Ariadne*, *Phaedra*, and *Pasiphaë* each embody different facets of public patriarchy: *Pasiphaë* is humiliated through divine punishment reframed as political shame, *Ariadne* is silenced in political decision-making and displaced from her homeland, and *Phaedra* becomes entrapped in the oppressive expectations of marriage and political alliance. Their struggles reveal how public patriarchy functions not only as an abstract system but as a lived reality that shapes women’s identities, relationships, and futures. Walby’s framework illuminates how the exclusion of women from political and religious institutions is not incidental but deliberate, reinforcing a cycle where men’s ambitions dominate public life while women bear the burdens in silence.



Ariadne portrays public patriarchy as a pervasive and destructive system that operates through politics, religion, and cultural narratives. By applying Walby's (1990, 1991) theory, it becomes clear that women in the novel are systematically excluded from decision-making, punished for transgressions, and denied agency within institutions that shape their lives. Ariadne's reflections, Pasiphaë's torment, and Dionysus's pursuit of public adoration all demonstrate how public patriarchy silences women while consolidating male authority. Saint's retelling of the myth, however, disrupts this silence by centering female voices, exposing the injustice of patriarchal systems, and inviting readers to critically examine the enduring structures of gender inequality in both ancient and contemporary contexts.

### **The Struggles of the Characters in *Ariadne***

Jennifer Saint's *Ariadne* (2021) is not only a feminist retelling of Greek mythology but also a narrative that foregrounds the struggles of women living under patriarchal systems. Using Sylvia Walby's (1990, 1991) framework, these struggles can be analyzed through the interaction of both private patriarchy (domination within the family and household) and public patriarchy (domination within institutions such as politics, religion, and culture). Ariadne, Phaedra, Pasiphaë, and even secondary female figures endure struggles rooted in their gendered positions within patriarchal structures. These struggles manifest in silencing, displacement, commodification, and the erasure of their agency.

By examining the struggles of the characters, Saint's narrative emphasizes how patriarchy, whether private or public, systematically shapes women's fates while simultaneously denying them power over their own lives. Each woman's struggle highlights a different dimension of Walby's theory, showing the multifaceted and enduring oppression women face.

Ariadne is the central character, and her struggles reflect the paradox of having proximity to power yet being continually denied agency. One of her earliest reflections encapsulates this: "A life we led, the passions and the greed of men could bring us to ruin, and there was nothing we could do" (Saint, 2021, p. 18). This demonstrates her awareness that her life is shaped not by her own choices but by the actions of men in power. Her struggle is not simply personal; it is structural, as Walby (1990) explains, patriarchy operates through institutionalized exclusion of women from decision-making.

Her decision to help Theseus defeat the Minotaur reflects her attempt to assert agency, but this very act also becomes a source of struggle. Theseus warns her: "If you do this, you must not remain to face your father's wrath. You must leave Crete and never return" (Saint, 2021, p. 38). Ariadne's act of bravery, rather than securing her freedom, forces her into exile. This aligns with Walby's concept that women who attempt to intervene in public patriarchal structures are punished or displaced, reinforcing their marginalization.

Her later marriage to Dionysus intensifies this struggle. While initially appearing liberatory, it evolves into another patriarchal trap. Dionysus prioritizes public adoration over their marriage: "Can you blame me for thinking it better to garner the love of a thousand mortals instead; to hold the adoration of a city instead of one consort's frail, mortal flesh?" (Saint, 2021, p. 172). Ariadne's identity is diminished in comparison to Dionysus's divine authority, and her struggle lies in the painful realization that even divine unions cannot protect her from erasure within public patriarchy.

Thus, Ariadne's struggles embody the tension between private and public patriarchy: she

is subject to her father's political will, displaced when she seeks agency, and sidelined by her husband's pursuit of public validation.

Phaedra, Ariadne's sister, experiences her struggles primarily through the mechanism of marriage, which Walby (1991) identifies as a critical site of patriarchal control. Her marriage to Theseus, arranged for political purposes, symbolizes how women are commodified in patriarchal societies. As Ariadne recalls: "But it was Minos' decree that mattered, not our hopes. So when he summoned me to court on one overcast afternoon, I had a suspicion that he had at last selected an alliance he considered favorable" (Saint, 2021, p. 27). This demonstrates that Phaedra's desires are irrelevant; her marriage functions as a political alliance, illustrating how women's struggles are tied to their objectification within public patriarchy.

Her later struggles intensify in Athens, where she is subjected to Theseus's indifference and betrayal. While Theseus is celebrated as a hero, Phaedra's existence is reduced to that of a political accessory, highlighting the asymmetry of patriarchal recognition. Her struggle is not only marital but also political, as she is trapped within the dual mechanisms of private and public patriarchy: controlled by her husband at home and objectified by the Athenian state as a symbol of alliance.

Walby's framework helps us see how Phaedra's struggles are systemic rather than incidental. She embodies the fate of women who, in patriarchal societies, are exchanged and confined without the possibility of self-determination.

Pasiphaë, Ariadne's mother, reveals another dimension of struggle within patriarchal structures: the erasure of women's pain. After being cursed by Poseidon to fall in love with a bull, her suffering is reframed as her husband's humiliation rather than her own torment. Ariadne reflects: "My mother's torment was spoken of only as Minos' humiliation; her pain and shame were never her own" (Saint, 2021, p. 11). This quotation highlights how women's suffering is erased within patriarchal narratives, becoming significant only insofar as it impacts men's honor.

Her struggle is twofold. On the one hand, she is victimized by divine patriarchy, where male gods use mortal women as pawns in their conflicts. On the other hand, she is further silenced within public discourse, as her voice and pain are overwritten by the political implications for Minos. Walby's (1990) observation that patriarchy operates through cultural institutions is highly relevant here: mythology and religion function to normalize the silencing of women, ensuring that their struggles remain invisible.

Pasiphaë's erasure demonstrates how women's suffering is systematically denied recognition, transforming her from a victim into a symbol of male dishonor.

Though a minor figure, Scylla embodies the struggles of women who attempt to intervene in public patriarchal structures. She betrays her father for Minos, only to be executed as a traitor: "*I thought of Scylla, I thought of the foolish and all too human girl...*" (Saint, 2021, p. 14). Her actions are condemned as foolishness rather than political strategy, underscoring the double standard in how men and women are judged.

Her struggle lies in the fact that her political involvement is reframed as moral failure rooted in her femininity. Walby (1991) notes that public patriarchy punishes women who transgress established boundaries, reinforcing structures that preserve male authority. Scylla's death illustrates this principle: while men are glorified for ambition and violence, women are

vilified for attempting to act politically.

Her struggle reflects the impossibility of women's participation in public life under patriarchal conditions, as even bold choices are punished with vilification and death.

While the novel focuses on specific characters, Saint also highlights the collective struggles of women in patriarchal societies. For example, when Dionysus rises to power, Ariadne describes how crowds of women flock to worship him: "As news spreads that Dionysus can bring the dead back to life, they come to me in their thousands" (Saint, 2021, p. 166). While these women appear to have agency in seeking religious solace, their devotion reinforces male authority rather than empowering them. Ariadne acts as an intermediary, but her role is merely symbolic, as the true power lies with Dionysus.

This reflects Walby's (1990) observation that public patriarchy operates by granting women visibility without authority. Their struggles are collective: women are visible as worshippers, as wives, as daughters, yet they remain excluded from decision-making structures. Their voices are directed toward male gods, kings, and heroes, never toward self-determination.

Thus, the struggles of women in *Ariadne* are not only individual but systemic, reflecting the pervasiveness of patriarchal domination across both private and public spheres.

The struggles of Ariadne, Phaedra, Pasiphaë, Scylla, and other women in Jennifer Saint's *Ariadne* exemplify how patriarchy, as theorized by Walby (1990, 1991), permeates every dimension of their lives. Ariadne's displacement, Phaedra's commodification, Pasiphaë's silencing, and Scylla's punishment reveal the mechanisms of private and public patriarchy at work. These struggles are not isolated tragedies but systemic consequences of gendered oppression that denies women agency while holding them accountable for men's ambitions.

By centering women's voices in a narrative traditionally dominated by male heroism, Saint not only exposes the injustice of patriarchal systems but also foregrounds the resilience of women who, even in silence and struggle, resist erasure. Their stories collectively illustrate that patriarchy is not a singular event but a structure—persistent, multifaceted, and deeply entrenched—that shapes women's struggles across generations.

## CONCLUSION

This Jennifer Saint's *Ariadne* (2021) vividly portrays patriarchy as a multilayered and oppressive system that governs both divine and mortal realms, aligning closely with Sylvia Walby's theory of patriarchy. Through the lens of both public and private patriarchy, the novel presents a world in which women are systematically excluded, controlled, and devalued by male-dominated institutions such as the monarchy, marriage, mythology, and religion. In the public sphere, figures like King Minos and Theseus exemplify how male authority manifests through state power, political alliances, and the rewriting of mythic narratives to glorify male heroism while silencing women's contributions male authority. Overall, the novel critiques the deep-rooted presence of patriarchy across both personal and public dimensions of life, emphasizing how women's identities, choices, and stories are persistently shaped and restricted by systems that privilege male power.

## Reference

Abrams, M. H. (1999). *A glossary of literary terms* (7th ed.). Harcourt Brace College Publishers.

- Beauvoir, S. de. (1956). *The Second Sex*. Vintage Books. Butler, J. (1990). *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. Routledge.
- Connell, R. W. (2005). *Masculinities*. University of California Press.
- Cottom, T, M. (2019). *Thick*. The New Press
- Creswell, J. W. (1994). *Research Design: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches*. Thousand Oaks. CA: Sage.
- Khaerati, A. M. & Iskandar. (2023). *The Representation of Patriarchal Ideology in Amy Poehler's Movie "Moxie"*.
- Naufina, N. (2021). *The Portrayal of Hegemony and Patriarchy in Louise O' Neill's Only Ever Yours*.
- Okin, S. M. (1991). *Justice, Gender, and the Family*. Basic Books.
- Perrine, L. (1988). *Literature: Structure, sound, and sense* (6th ed.). Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.
- Ragasatiwi, G. (2018). *The portrait of patriarchy in the novel the girl on the train By Paula Hawkins*.
- Roberts, E. V. (1991). *Writing about literature* (7th ed.). Prentice Hall. 56 Rosin, H. (2012). *The End of Men: And the Rise of Women*. Riverhead Books.
- Saint, J. (2021). *Ariadne*. Flatiron Books.
- Stanton, R. (1965). *An Introduction to Fiction*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.
- Walby, S. (1991). *Theorizing Patriarchy*. Sage Publications.
- Vorobyov, Niko. (2024). *in Kazakhstan a 'storm' over domestic violence after Minister killed wife*, Aljazeera.