

CHAPTER 2

Literature Review

The analysis of roles and images of Muslim women portrayed through female characters in Anita Amirrezvani's *The Blood of Flowers* will be based on three theoretical frameworks which are feminism theory, patriarchy and genders in Islam.

2.1 Theories

2.1.1 Feminism Theory

Feminism is defined by several theorists with different definitions. It is basically about the study of equal rights of men and women in the world. In accordance with Bell Hooks's *Feminism Is for Everybody* published in 2014, feminism is a range of social belief to stop "sexism," "sexist exploitation" and subjugation of women (1). Jane Freedom, the writer of *Concepts in the Social Sciences Feminism*, also states in her book that feminism has occurred after women began to have questions about their lower position and demanded amelioration in their social status (3). Hence, feminism is the concept that both genders should be equal in social, economic, education and political participation. Feminism is generally divided into series of waves and there are three waves (Dorey-Stein, par.1).

The first-wave feminism refers to suffrage and political equality in 1840s to 1850s in Europe and North America. The argument was that women should have had the right to vote and participate in political activities as men did (Dorey-Stein, par.2). According to Antje Kahle's *First Wave of Feminism in Politics and Literature*, women did not have the public status under the law at the period of the end of 18th to the beginning of 19th century, they remained silent and were not allowed to make any decision about their lives (4). First-wave feminism generally focuses on the right to vote for women. The Seneca Falls Convention in 1848 is considered to be the beginning of the women's movement in America. There are two activists, Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Lucretia Mott, fought for women's right to vote during this convention. They discussed

injustices against women and increased support for women's rights (“ First-wave Feminism” par. 1) . Besides, John Stuart Mill, a famous English philosopher and a feminist theorist, wrote the book, *The Subjection of Women* published in 1869. Mill claims that the parliament amendment gave equal rights to women in many fields. He recognizes that women have strong points and abilities that men do not wish to accept (13). He is of the opinion that women will reach the equality with men. Mill made it possible for feminists to seek equality and argued that human beings are free to employ their faculties (47). He worked hard for the equality of gender and is considered to be one of the pioneers of the feminist group.

The second-wave feminism occurred in late 1960s and 1980s. It focuses on raising consciousness about sexism and patriarchy. It also discusses an expansive sequence of public and personal topic of the unfairness, including the unfairness of “laws and policy,” “sexuality and sexual identity,” “marriage and child-nurture,” work environment, and violence against women (Freedom 4) . According to Linda Nicholson’s *The Second Wave: A Reader in Feminist Theory*, most second-wave theory emerged out of the women’s liberation (10). As women in many patriarchal cultures have not been equal to men, they have been men’s dependent and the two sexes have never shared the world in equality (16) . The second-wave feminism also aims at identifying and eliminating sources of sexism and gender oppression. During the period of second-wave feminism, the popular sentence “The personal is political” written by Carol Hanisch was used as a rallying slogan in 1960s. This sentence was constructed to underline what was happening in women's lives, for examples, the right of medical care, being in charge of housework, and possibly being sexual object. The famous website “ Askamy” by Amy Dickinson, an American newspaper columnist, states that the sentence “The personal is political” was created to motivate women to consider the issues that affected their lives and additionally to look at how the law ignored them (“Askamy” par.2). In feminist terms, “personal is political” means women’s problems are political problems, that women are experiencing many difficulties in their lives is not their mistakes, but it is “ systematic oppression” (“ Feminism 101” par.4) . In accordance with woman’s roles in the second-wave feminist movement, Betty Friedan’s *The Feminine Mystique* published in 1963, explains that what women wanted more were careers “I want something more than my husband and my children and my house”

(32). Thus, second-wave feminism associates the suppression of women with broader ideas of male-dominant system, capitalism, and the traditional roles of women as a wife and mother.

Lastly, the third-wave feminism deals with race and sexuality. It is mostly about damage control and backlash against the second wave. Women of color led this movement, and began to explain how multiple social concepts are related to create multidimensional dynamics of oppression. According to Shelley Budgeon's *Third-Wave Feminism and the Politics of Gender in Late Modernity*, third-wave feminism plays an important role in examining how feminism creates the different conceptual frameworks in terms of gender subjectivity, identity, politics, knowledge and critics (18). Feminism points out the belief that men and women should have equality in terms of opportunities, behavior, respect, and social rights. R. Claire Snyder, an assistant Professor of Government at George Mason University, also explains in her book *What Is Third Wave Feminism?* published in 2008, that third-wave feminism is broader and different than the second wave (180). The concepts of women inferior's status are strongly connected to the third wave. In fact, third-wave feminism continues to construct the concept of freedom and fairness for all people by motivating particularly on "gender-related" problems (192). They focused not only on the transformation of women based on race, ethnicity, religion, but also economic status (Snyder 180).

2.1.2 Third World Feminism

According to Raj Kumar Mishra's "Postcolonial Feminism: Looking into within-beyond-to Difference" conducted in 2013, it can be concluded that the lives and experiences of western feminism differ utterly from third wave feminism (129). Specifically, the third world feminism sometimes refers to the postcolonial feminism which argues about colonial oppression of women (131). As a result, it is necessary to review some factual knowledge that deals with various aspects of women in the third world countries by the third world feminists such as Mohanty and Spivak who attempt to deconstruct the ideas, presuppositions and representations against third world women created by Western feminist scholars. These theoretical concepts, therefore, will be provided in order to help investigate, and discuss the roles and images of Muslim women in the novel, and elaborate the Muslim women's circumstances in the third

world society in reality to create a clearer understanding of how female characters are created by Anita Amirrezvani.

Chandra Talpade Mohanty, a prominent postcolonial and transnational feminist theorist, states in her article “Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses” published in 1984, that Western feminist scholars judge and categorize all third world women as a monolithic group who has the same oppression and experience within their societies (333) . However, the Third-wave Feminism categorizes women into two groups which are “Western women,” who are liberated, having equality, able to control their own bodies, being in higher positions, clever, and educated, while the other is the group of third world women who are uneducated, oppressed, and sexually objects (337) . This categorization finally indicates the imbalance of power. Western feminism is considered as watchperson of knowledge through “texts and language” unlike the third world women who are submissive and are victims. Mohanty tries to examine “the complexity of women” in the non-Western world, especially the cultural practices which are viewed as generally submissive in Western feminists’ points of view.

In the article, Mohanty further reveals that some western feminists categorize and define third world women as stereotypical victims. In this case, Mohanty cites some studies which were carried out by Western feminist scholars; for example, Hosken and Linsay’s study about the relationship between human rights and female genital mutilation carried out mostly in South Africa and Middle East (339) . In this study, all Afghan and Middle Eastern women are portrayed universally as victims of violence (339). Mohanty claims that this concept, as a result, universally categorizes all South African and Middle Eastern women as a group who has a political and social inferiority’s position and that these women are fixed within their space.

In the same way, Gayatri Spivak who is an Indian feminist scholar raises the question of voice in her popular essay “Can the Subaltern Speak?” From this sentence, Spivak shows the possibilities to recover the long-silenced voices of the subaltern women (90). She hardly is satisfied with westerns effort to speak for the Other or try to present their own voices. Spivak considers that Western feminists are obsessed with investigating subject that they speak for the subaltern condition by their own languages rather than allowing them to speak for themselves (66). As Spivak argues, by speaking

out and reclaiming a collective cultural identity, subalterns will in fact re-inscribe their subordinate position in society. Thus, trying to speak for others makes the subalterns invisible and they cannot even raise their desires and opinions. Additionally, women's role and status in the society widely differ and that no particular woman can be representative of other women (Mishra 133).

Another concept which can be employed in this study is “Ecriture Feminine” or “women's writing.” Helene Cixous is considered one of the founders of poststructuralist feminist who firstly points out this literary theory. She states that works which are written by women should be in feminine style, language, tone, feeling and completely different from male language. Her popular essay “The Laugh of Medusa” conducted in 1971, reveals the subjugation of the female voice by exploring the myth of Medusa. It is the expression of the female body and sexuality in writing. Cixous employs the figure of Medusa as a metaphor for women's multiplicity that opposes patriarchal structures on women's body and voice. She also states that women should represent the “Other” in their writing to liberate themselves from the defining walls of phallogocentrism (Chakraborty 2901).

Generally, feminist theory comes from organized movements which promote gender equality in political, economic and social activities. It can take many different forms depending on a number of factors including one's own beliefs, history and culture. There are three main types of feminism: liberal feminism, Marxist feminism, and radical feminism (“Feminism Types” par.4)

According to liberal feminism, patriarchal system holds a false belief that women are emotional and physically weaker than men. Women are then prevented to access public activities. Liberal feminism aims for individuals to use their abilities and the egalitarian process to help both genders become more equal in law, society and work place. In accordance with Jane L. Parpart, M. Patricia Connelly and V. Eudine Barriteau's *Theoretical Perspectives on Gender and Development*, published in 2000, liberal feminism focuses on the ideals of equality and liberty (115). It argues that women and men should be equal in education, right to vote and in owning property (116). In terms of occupation, women can get positions of power in government and business as well. The activists of this feminist type ensure that law and politics do not discriminate against women. They should get equal chances in all parts of society (116).

Marxist feminism focuses on the way that women are submissive in capitalist economy and the right to own property. In patriarchal society, women are abused in the home to the role of unpaid domestic laborer. Women's labor is devalued and taken for granted. According to Chris Beasley's *What Is Feminism: An Introduction to Feminist Theory 1999*, sexual oppression is considered as a dimension of class power (60). While women are subordinated by men, they are also oppressed by capitalism (62). Class structure is responsible for the oppression and inequality between men and women. Women give birth to new labor force and continue to provide unpaid labor as homemakers and mothers (Jane L. Parpart et al. 121). Thus, it has been said that women were not only treated unequally in the public area, but also, they were seen to be inferior to men inside the family in the traditional patriarchal system.

Radical feminism concerns with having a new social structure in which women will not be degraded and undervalued. This treatment of women can lead to women liberating themselves from patriarchal societies. In accordance with Jane L. Parpart et al.'s *Theoretical Perspectives on Gender and Development* published in 2000, radical feminism deals with the ways to eliminate patriarchal system in which men have power over women in terms of economy, politics, job opportunities, and education and have rights to treat women inhumanly including rape and using violence against women (123). Radical feminist theory explains that men attempt to control women's bodies via sexual assault. It holds the belief that men have constructed female sexuality to serve their desires and to entirely destroy women's desire. Though women can make their own choices, this system of control is embedded far deeper than women seem to realize. In patriarchal society, women's choices are limited and they have to submit to the options arranged by men. Shulamith Firestone, a Canadian-born feminist who writes the widely influential feminist text's *The Dialectic of Sex: The Case for Feminist Revolution* in 1970, argues that the biological sexual division is the root cause of male domination, economic, and class exploitation (15). Men have extensively controlled abortion law which is a power of conception of the female body. This reveals the oppression of women and domination of men in this kind of society. Radical feminists do not conform to the belief that women are raised to serve men sexually, ignoring their own needs and desires. In this study, Radical and Marxist feminism study will be use in the analysis.

2.1.3 Patriarchal Society

In order to understand how female characters in *The Blood of Flowers* written by Anita Amirrezvani live, experience and cope with their lives within Muslim patriarchal society, it is necessary to review primary and basic knowledge about patriarchy. Allan G. Johnson, a sociologist who works in the fields of sociology and gender studies, proposes his ideology of patriarchy in his book titled *The Gender Knot: Unraveling our Patriarchal Legacy?* published in 1999. In his book, the ideas and concepts about the detrimental effects of the patriarchy are suggested and clearly categorized. According to Allan, the term “patriarchy” is used to mean “the male-centered, male identified and male-dominated social structure” (38). He also suggests that among variable structure inequalities such as class, race, ethnicity and religion, women are disadvantaged in relation of positioning along these factors (Allan, “What Drives Patriarchy?” 94). It is suggested that patriarchy is associated with male domination both in public and private spheres. Women are under men’s control and it unfortunately causes enormous damages to women’s lives. As a consequence, women’s place in the society is complicated particularly in the aspect of the competition with men. Patriarchy is initiated from men and it is driven from what is inside them but it affects both men and women (Allan, “What Drives Patriarchy?”).

In addition, as women are seen physically and mentally weaker than men, their status is restricted. For example, women have less chance and freedom to participate in some social activities. According to Maria Mies’ s *Patriarchy and Accumulation on a World Scale: Women in the International Division of Labor*, patriarchy is the timeless system which has always existed in all societies (38). In terms of household area, a father is the head of the family while a mother is the one who takes his orders. Males are taught to be the leader and to be strong but females are taught to obey and to perform a subordinate role under the males (109). In accordance with Chris Weedon’s *Feminist Practice and Poststructuralist Theory*, patriarchy refers to a society where women are oppressed in several forms based on biological and sexual differences which put men and women in different roles and tasks (2). Mary Becker, a professor of the Law School at the University of Chicago, explains patriarchal structure and a feminist approach against patriarchy in her study “Patriarchy and Inequality: Towards a Substantive Feminism,” she says women are seen and treated as less than human with

less authority (23). Men are considered to be powerful, influential, and in control. On the other hand, women are considered to be feeble, emotional, and physically weak (27). To sum up, the concept of patriarchy relates to the concept of women oppression and violence against women because it focuses on authority, gender difference, and power control.

2.1.4 Genders in Islam

Islamic culture is a controversial culture. Whenever Islam religion is being discussed, the veils traditionally worn by Muslim women is debated on. To emphasize the meaning of the Qur'an as a main text of Islam, Riffat Hassan who is a Pakistani-American theologian and a leading Islamic feminist scholar of the Qur'an states in her work "Feminism in Islam" that both Islamic "negative" and "positive" attitudes are created concerning women's issues (275). Hassan provides the examples of Muslim women's oppression and discrimination in Qur'an. Islam divides the world in to "private" space and "public" space (251). The private space is for women and the public space is for men. It has been said in the Qur'an that men and women have to be kept separately. When women invade men's space, they must turn themselves to be "faceless," or having no identity, thus, the concept of "veiling" which becomes an expansion of the isolation of the sexes (252). The Qur'an has made men and women strikingly different.

According to Ruby's "Listening to the Voices of Hijab," the veil or hijab are the symbol of Muslim women community (54). They are used for covering of the face, hair and neck of Muslim women. Veil or Hijab are one of the sexual controls (55). According to Islam, women are regarded as dangerous both sexually and in other ways. The covering of the body is to monitor the sexual desires and this might even save a woman's life from men's gaze. There is a statement about wearing Hijab in the Qur'an verse 33:59 that says "O Prophet! Tell thy wives and daughters, and believing women, that, they should cast their outer garments over their persons ... " (cited in Ruby 56). Thus, an unveiled woman is no different from a naked woman. Moreover, a number of researches study the roles and the situations of women in Islam in terms of education, employment, marriage and political participation. Islamic societies tend to be patriarchal society where women are subordinated by men. Muslim women cannot enjoy the same status and have equal rights as men (65).

Apart from the history of veiling, there is the related issue of women discrimination. The Qur'an verse 4:34 has unquestionably contains important clauses regarding social interaction. According to Sadia Kausar and Sjaad Hussain's "Does the Qur'an Condone Domestic Violence," the thirty-four Qur'an verse perpetuate an oppressive patriarchal system not intended by Islamic law and serve as an incorrect justification for the oppression of women in Islamic societies (96). The Qur'anic passage Surah 4: An-Nisa': 34 is brought to support the contention that men have ruled over women: Men are the managers of the affairs of women because Allah has made the one superior to the other and because men spends of their wealth on women. Virtuous women are, therefore, obedient: they guard their rights carefully in their absence under the care and watch of Allah. As for those women whose defiance you have cause to fear, admonish them and keep them apart from your beds and beat them. Then, if they submit to you, do not look for excuses to punish them: note it well that there is Allah above you, who is Supreme and Great. (cited from Hassan 263)

It generally means that men are the one who protect and maintain women because Allah has made one of them to stand out from the other. Moreover, men get the permission to hit their wives. The honest women are seriously submissive and watched in the husband's absence. As for those women who have indecent behavior, firstly the husband could warn them, next is to refuse sharing a bed with them, and last is to beat them, but if they return to obey you, stay with them. Although the Qur'an does not state directly that women are oppressed in Islamic society, however, there are a number of researchers who interpret the Qur'an verse in the same way that shows the inequality between women and men (Arlandson Par.18).

2.2 Synopsis

The Blood of Flowers is a historical fiction novel and a love story, which is set in 17th century Iran. It was written by Anita Amirrezvani, who was born in Iran but she has moved to San Francisco, USA with her mother since she was young. The novel first launched in 2007 and has been translated since then to more than 22 languages. The story is narrated by the nameless female protagonist, a Muslim woman, in a realistic situation. The nameless protagonist faces unexpected challenges after she loses her father and is left with no support. Her father's brother in Isfahan decides to take them both in. she and her mother are forced to work as servants in her uncle's house. She is

also treated differently from other women because of her ethnicity, upbringing, family and class, including being pressured into a “Sigheh,” a temporary marriage contract for women who offer sexual favors in return for money. The protagonist works hard in her uncle’s house to exchange for the chance to learn to knot carpets from her uncle who works as the rug maker in the royal workshop. The carpet knotting skills seem to be the perfect tool which she can use for escaping from poverty and her hard life. Her passion and talent for creating carpets provides her with the means and the opportunity to find both sexual and financial independence. After she finds herself faced with no dignity, injustice and be oppressed. She has in an effort to create her new fate to be free in economic and life. She stands against male domination and chooses to live in poverty by herself. Finally, her attempt has been shown and proved strongly that the female protagonist crosses over from a naive young lady to a strong and independent woman.

2.3 Previous Studies

In this part, four previous studies related to patriarchal society are examined: Abeda Sultana’s “Patriarchy and Women’s Subordination: A Theoretical Analysis” conducted in 2012, Niels Spierings’s “The influence of Patriarchal Norms, Institutions, and Household Composition on Women’s Employment in Twenty-Eight Muslim Majority Countries” conducted in 2014, Asifa Siraj’s “Because I Am the man! I Am the Head: British Married Muslims and the Patriarchal Family Structure” conducted in 2010, and Isam M. Shihada’s “The Patriarchal Class System in Nawal El Saadawi’s *God Dies by the Nile*” conducted in 2007

In “Patriarchy and Women’s Subordination: A Theoretical Analysis,” Abeda Sultana studies the systems of patriarchy in Bangladesh where the majority of people are Muslim. Sultana employs the key concept of patriarchy system. The study reveals that male domination is a common way of life. Men having power over women decreases women’s right and opportunities, education, economy and religion. Sultana also explains the situations and some beliefs in Bangladesh. For examples, girls do not have opportunities for education because education is for boys only. Thus, girls do not have any chance to develop their skills and abilities to work outside the house (12-13).

In the same way, Niels Spierings, an assistant professor of sociology specializing in political and gender sociology at Radboud University, conducts a research, “The Influence of Patriarchal Norms, Institutions, and Household Composition on Women’s

Employment in Twenty-Eight Muslim Majority Countries.” He examines 250,410 women in 28 Muslim majority countries by observing the data from the organization for economic co-operation and development recorded in 2009 (96). Spierings pays attention to how male public-dominance society decreases women’s job opportunities. He finds that the household composition is affected by patriarchal policies and norms. Male dominance does not provide females many choices in public sphere and women who stay in the family with children have less chance to be employed to work outside (105).

Next, Asifa Siraj states in her study “Because I Am the Man! I am the Head: British Married Muslims and the Patriarchal Family Structure” that a hierarchical social structure constructs a patriarchal system in the family (195). Her study focuses on the relationship between couples by using semi-structured qualitative interview among twenty-five married Muslim couples who live in Glasgow, UK. Gender, family and the roles participants are the main idea within the family (200). Siraj finds that most families have men as the family head and breadwinners while women look after the family such as taking care of children and doing the housework. Their roles go along with the Qur’an that the patriarchal ideology allows men to have power while women do not attempt to question men in the position of head of the family (212).

Lastly, since the issues of patriarchy and gender inequality have been studied in a number of researches in the last few decades, this encourages feminists, activists and academics worldwide to call for the rights and equality of women. The study by Shihada, “The Patriarchal Class System in Nawal El Saadawi’s *God Dies by the Nile*,” aims to understand how El Saadawi, a writer and black feminist, attempts to deconstruct patriarchy by revealing the dark sides of it where female characters are preyed upon and destroyed for being women by men through her novel. In Shihada’s study, the analysis is drawn from a socialist feminist perspective. As a result, the study shows that female characters in *God Dies by the Nile* is considered a submissive in patriarchal system. Also, the study shows how patriarchal class system impacts women through double moral standards, psychological violence and sexual abuse.

In the following part, four previous studies related to genders in Islam are reviewed which are Tabassum F. Ruby’s “Listening to the Voices of Hijab” conducted in 2005, Mehrdad Darvishpour’s “Islamic Feminism: Compromise or Challenge to Feminism” conducted in 2003, Hannah R. Blakeman’s “The Muslim Veil in America:

A Symbol of Oppression or Empowerment?” conducted in 2014, and Muhammad M. Haj-Yahia’s “Beliefs About Wife Beating Among Arab Men From Israel: The Influence of Their Patriarchal Ideology” conducted in 1997.

Tabassum F. Ruby’s “Listening to the Voices of Hijab” analyzes the ways in which Muslim women immigrants in Canada perceive and associate the veils with various meanings. This study employs the method of interviewing Muslim immigrants in a qualitative research. Hijab, a symbol of Muslim women, is used for covering the head, face, neck and shoulders. Ruby states that hijab is a symbol of Muslim women’s oppression. The Qur’an (33:59) states that hijab is the women’s dress cloth which can hide their bodies from men. However, Ruby finds that the participants consider that the Hijab is their identities, gives them an opportunity to have power on their own lives, and portrays them as respectable women.

Next, Mehrdad Darvishpour’s “Islamic Feminism: Compromise or Challenge to Feminism,” examines women’s situation in Islamic countries such as Iran through western feminist eyes. Darvishpour discusses the complications of Islamic feminism by analyzing the conditions of women in Islamic societies in two decades after the Islamic revolution. She argues that Muslim feminism is the image of third world women (56). Muslim women have been portrayed as submissive, oppressed, and backward. The research shows the antifeminist and antidemocratic tendency of the fundamentalist and religious movement. For examples, in polygamous marriage, men can divorce at any time he wants, but women can ask for a divorce, only with “an exceptional reason” (57).

While above study chooses the focused group who are Muslim women in Islamic countries, another study reveals the opinions of Muslim women in other countries. Hannah R. Blakeman’s “The Muslim Veil in America: A Symbol of Oppression or Empowerment,” examines Muslims in America who wear the veil and how Americans perceive them by interviewing one non-Muslim American woman and a Muslim woman who used to wear the veil but no longer does. The word “veil” is used for this thesis. The meanings of the words “Hijab” and “veil” are nearly the same. It is used for covering Muslim women’s face and body in public places. Blakeman agrees that the veil is perceived as a symbol of oppression as well. American women have a tendency to sight women’s beauty as a part of their “sexuality” while Islamic practice does not

share the same opinion. Islamic people believe that women should keep their purity and hold honor under the veil (33).

Also, there is a study about gender violence in Muhammad M. Haj-Yahia's "Beliefs About Wife Beating Among Arab Men from Israel: The Influence of Their Patriarchal Ideology." Haj-Yahia studies the influence of patriarchal ideology, in particular about their wives being beaten. Yahia employs the systematic random samples of 500 married men who have been chosen from the lists of households obtained from three Arab local councils and asks them to do a self-administered questionnaire. As women in Arab societies tend to be viewed as inferior to men, Haj-Yahia concludes that Arab or Muslim men justify wife beating with no excuses. The reasons for wife beating are wives being sexually unfaithful, wife challenging her "husband's manhood" and being rude to their husband in front of his friends (203).

For the studies of Muslim society in other novels, three studies are reviewed which are Charity Azumi Issaka's "The situation of the Women in a Patriarchal African Society: A Case Study of Nawal El Saadawi's *God Dies by the Nile* and *Woman at Point Zero*" conducted in 2010, Sayed Sadek's "The Struggle of African Women in Selected Works by Ngugi Wa Thiong" conducted in 2014, and the review of the book *I am Malala: the Girl Who Stood Up for Education and Was Shot by the Taliban* by Malala Yousafzai published in 2013.

Issaka's "The Situation of the Women in a Patriarchal African Society: A Case Study of Nawal El Saadawi's *God Dies by the Nile* and *Woman at Point Zero*" primarily explains how Islamic culture contributes or fails to return women's dignity and rights through two novels by Nawal El Saadawi. Nawal El Saadawi is an Egyptian writer who became well-known as the most honest critic of women subjugation. Issaka examines two main female characters in the novels who act against patriarchal system; one is left by the family to be an outsider, and the other is stoned to death. She pays attention to how Islam regards the women's status. Issaka finds that these novels reveal that women oppression needs to be wiped out. The "long-enduring struggle of women" will become a real power to transform and eliminate the patriarchal structure which discriminates against women (124-6).

Sayed Sadek, an assistant professor of English at Department of Foreign Language in Taif University, states in his study "The Struggle of African Women in

Selected Works by Ngugi Wa Thiong” that there is empowerment of African women in a male-dominated society. Ngugi Wa Thiong is an internationally acclaimed African writer and human rights activist who refuses to use English in his works. Sadek concerns himself with women’s reaction to patriarchal power and the success of women’s struggle against patriarchy. He finds that most women in Ngugi’s work fight to change the position for both genders by giving education to their children and teach them about equality. Besides, women obtain more power by asking for divorce when they have complicated relationship (184).

Besides, Malala Yousafzai, the author of the book *I am Malala: The Girl Who Stood Up for Education and Was Shot by the Taliban* narrates her life’s story focusing on the critics and responses towards inequality of the two sexes and domestic violence. *I Am Malala* narrates the story of Malala, a young girl who fights for human rights, especially in terms of education. In patriarchal cultures, women are supposed to obey men. A good girl should stay silent, modest and subservient. Malala is taught not to inquire about anything, even if she feels that certain things are incorrect or unfair. But her father encourages her to always ask questions and to demand answers. Her book constructs herself as someone who believes in the Islamic faith and believes in universal education and women’s rights.

According to the review of previous studies, Patriarchy and genders in Islam can be used to analyze *The Blood of Flowers* in order to explain how Muslim women are treated in Muslim patriarchal society. Besides, this study will use radical and Marxist feminism theory to investigate how the female protagonist can empower and liberate herself as represented in *The Blood of Flowers*.

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