

# History of Femme Fatale Archetype: Analysis of Game of Thrones TV Series

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**Adrijana Vukelić**

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History of Femme Fatale Archetype: Analysis of Game of Thrones TV Series

Završni rad

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Zadar, 2020.



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## 1. Introduction

One of the TV series that has amazed the audience around the world in recent times is certainly *Game of Thrones*. With its pregnable content, various characters and their personalities, high resolution, and great effects, but most importantly, with its incredible historical story, it became clear that this TV series would not be like any other; it would be unforgettable to many following generations. David Benioff and D.B. Weiss, the creators of the TV series, managed to get the attention worldwide by bringing *Game of Thrones* into the world. However, the series has also been dealt with numerous issues, including the power of women and their discrimination, gender inequality, sexual violence, loss of identity, but also women archetypes modelled on women rulers from history, for example, Queen Elizabeth I<sup>1</sup> (King 37, 59) and Queen Elizabeth of York<sup>2</sup> (Warnicke 17, 97). Therefore, this paper aims to put the focus on some of the strongest female characters who became the rulers in the fictional TV series and to compare them to female rulers from the past to whom they share some characteristics. This comparison aims to examine the relevance and contemporary aspect of the *femme fatale* archetype, how it appears today, and how it developed into one of the most famous TV series of the previous decade. This paper consists of the following nine sections: introduction; *femme fatale* archetype; historical context; analysis of Daenerys Targaryen, Cersei Lannister, Catelyn Stark, Sansa Stark, and Arya Stark; comparison of the characters; women political leaders from the past; conclusion and summary of the key points. Through the analysis, mostly one episode from each of the eight seasons of the TV series will be analyzed, so that it becomes

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<sup>1</sup> Queen Elizabeth I was the queen of England and Ireland (1558-1603), the last one of the monarchs of the House of Tudor. One of Elizabeth's greatest achievements was the victory amongst the Spanish Armada in 1588. Moreover, she was also called The Virgin Queen because she never got married and, as it was assumed, never had intercourse. Until her death, she remained loyal to her country and people, thus providing identity and stability.

<sup>2</sup> Queen Elizabeth of York was the consort queen of England (1486-1503), married to Henry VII. She became known for the role in the Wars of Roses as the monarch of the House of Tudor. A maternal role that she possessed, which included raising children according to the catholic hierarchy and taking care of their education, made her one of the most important queen consorts of all time.

understandable to the maximum possible extent how and why characters have changed their personalities and behaviour, and whether they have improved or worsen, fell or succeeded under the influence of competition from others.

Finally, the focus of the analysis is to provide examples from the fictional TV series according to the femme fatale archetype and to prove that the analyzed characters belong to this archetype according to the characteristics they possess. By providing such examples, it is crucial to trace the characters' development from the beginning until the end of the TV series to indicate the relationship between them and the femme fatale archetype.

## 2. Femme fatale archetype

Before the endeavour to deeply analyze the TV series *Game of Thrones* (from now on *GoT*) itself, it is important to mention some of the key terms which are going to be explained while writing this paper. Those are the following: femme fatale, gender, identity, ideology, power, sexuality, feminism, etc.

According to Patrick Bade, the femme fatale term became especially significant in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, mostly in art and literature – poetry, operas, plays, etc. (7). Many writers and artists have become so obsessed with those wicked and dangerous women that their physical appearance even started to be found on necklaces, bowls, and other similar possessions. Such women use their power of seduction to achieve their goals, often by destroying everything in their path (Bade 7). Moreover, many artists, including Delacroix, Courbet, Munch, refused to engage in sacred matrimony because of the fear that their wives would mock their works of art, but also that they would over time transfer from submissive to seductive and ferocious wives. Nevertheless, it must not be forgotten how women throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century were mostly seen through the eyes of men, mostly as objects and not human

beings (Bade 6). However, many biblical resources have provided a huge area of literature containing information about historical femme fatales, e.g. Judith, Salome, Eve, Delilah, and Jezebel. Judith and Salome are significant because they share a similar history. Firstly, Judith was a Jewish widow who beheaded the Philistine general Holofernes after seducing him. Secondly, Salome was famous for her dance before Herod, thus demanding the head of John the Baptist, as a reward for her dancing. Furthermore, Greek and Roman mythologies also offer evidence of a huge number of femme fatales – Medea, Medusa, Circe, the Sirens, and the Helen of Troy, and Cleopatra and Messalina. Those women were especially known for their envious power of seducing men (Bade 7). There are many other examples of femme fatales from aspects of art and literature, and similar areas, but for this paper, the most significant femme fatales are those who belong to the area of film noir and popular culture. For example, in many movies, women have been performing the roles of the characteristics which are considered to be masculine rather than feminine – the point is to “read” women as male heroines to become the right idea of how women’s minds in such movies develop according to their roles. In the *Aliens* series, Lieutenant Ripley (starring Sigourney Weaver) and in the *Terminator* series, Sarah Connor (starring Linda Hamilton), are perfect examples of performing male roles. Cunning, ferocious, bad, clever, they accomplished “dirty jobs” perfectly well, almost to the extent of being too perfect, because, naturally, as being considered as submissive and weakened sex, women are understood as not having enough physical strength and power to attempt what is believed to be a male job. But the characters like Lieutenant Ripley and Sarah Connor managed to do their job as perfect action heroines, almost like unbreakable objects made for destruction and dismissal. Also, such characters appear in movies like *Charlie’s Angels (2000)*, *Tomb Raider (2001)*, *Resident Evil (2002)*, *Bad Girls (1994)*, *Cutthroat Island (1995)*, etc. (Brown 43). However, it must not be forgotten how animation channels have also undergone dramatic changes over the last 15-20 years – The Cartoon Network, The Disney Channel, and



Nickelodeon. The serial animation in the United States has become a new trend for younger generations; it has provided, amongst others, new ways of introducing girl heroines (Brown 141). The only difference from the heroines mentioned in, for example, the *Terminator* series, is that these heroines are intended to entertain children and teenagers, so the contents are reshaped to correspond to their age and mind. Such shows and series include *Teen Titans*, *Kim Possible*, *Atomic Betty*, *My Life as a Teenage Robot*, *The Kids Next Door*, etc. Those have provided an inevitable pleasure in entertaining children and teenagers in every area of popular culture – the young action heroines ready to save the world and make it a better place. (Brown 141). Another example of females in action is the one concerning female marines. Naturally, a reaction of most men on making a movie with a female soldier would be that she is not strong enough to do the work, e.g. replace a tyre on a truck, carry big backpacks with all the necessary equipment, and, most importantly, that she does not know how to fight and survive on a mission. Besides, to make a movie with one female soldier amongst all the men means at a first glance only one thing – she is there to give pleasure to men and satisfy their needs. It is hard to imagine doing this job properly without asking for additional male help. But such movies are made and have been very successful throughout the years – *Courage Under Fire* (1996), *A Soldier's Sweetheart* (1998). It is important to note how every aspect of making a war movie changes when a female character enters the movie; the war movie immediately transforms into war drama. Gender itself starts to be questioned in every movie scene, e.g. the length of the girl's hair, her perfume, body weight, her ability of seduction. However, often happens that more attention has been transformed back to males because, after all, marines are male soldiers, and so, in many ways, female heroines are once again discriminated against. Nonetheless, the effort is made sufficiently enough to successfully make a movie with at least a few scenes with a female soldier in it – proven that females “can do the male job” (Schubart 10, 11).

Finally, the connection must be made within all the heroines mentioned before, from women from action movies to those in animation series and movies. They all share an enormous will to make things right, or to make a world a better place than before. The right way to attempt to achieve the goal is to “steal” male jobs, because males would not give up on their jobs easily, and to do what needs to be done. Heroines will destroy only what is necessary to destroy and spare those who maybe deserved to be punished and disciplined. Also, the immense determination to move forward at the times when they feel lost and alone has helped them to survive many battles because the light at the end of a tunnel is always near if one is enough determined and strong-willed to carry on and not give up. The right path will emerge eventually. However, there would always exist those girls who are weakened and who have their ways of thinking, often creating destruction in places where should not be any. In the end, they can see their mistakes and fix them as more as possible. Nonetheless, one important question has become visible: Are all the females in movies and series heroines? The answer is yes, merely because the action movies with females as protagonists often offer the plot with the main idea of “saving the world”. When calling them heroines and not females, a sort of respect and admiration has been created, thus helping the audience to sympathize with them and produce a full movie experience; it helps to comprehend the “uniqueness” and rareness of introducing girls into movies and series.

Also, one can conclude that all heroines belong to the area of femme fatale archetype, which is true; none of the movies with female characters has been made without introducing girl’s ability of seduction and her beauty. In the first place, this is needed because girls from such movies usually encounter a male and need to fight him; like an obstacle to move on the next mission. Femme fatale archetype offers a sort of help to heroines in needs, giving them power and strength, which are needed to come to victory. Thus, it can be concluded that heroines and femme fatales need to merge to create a powerful woman, almost like providing her with a

booster or giving her enough energy and power to make her job properly. The connection between those two terms must be made to produce a powerful movie to put women in the first place, far enough to outshine men, which is, truly, the main goal – to make women stand out.

From now on, attention is transformed to the five femme fatales from *GoT*, who shall be analyzed - Daenerys Targaryen, Cersei Lannister, Catelyn Stark, Sansa Stark, and Arya Stark. They seem to possess the privilege to be called exactly femme fatales because of their power in times of gender inequality and, above all, women discrimination. Every single one of the mentioned characters who are to be analyzed possesses one or more qualities of a woman who is ready to subjugate her own life and ideals to make herself worthy enough to seduce men and get her rights back. It is hard to stay on the right path while constantly suffering from the lack of freedom and voice; being called a prostitute and perceiving a role of giving physical pleasure to men – nothing more than a tool or a toy, giving an ability to men to play with women as they wanted. Nevertheless, the mentioned characters deserve to be mentioned as women who have changed from tools or toys to powerful and fearless role-models, who do not let any male the ability to destroy the new life they have created. That is why it is of huge importance to mention the historical context in which *GoT* was created to be able to understand the circumstances and times of living of medieval period people. Nevertheless, the distinction should be made between the terms “heroine” and “femme fatale” to understand *GoT*'s characters in further analysis.

To compare, both heroines and femme fatales have done something worth mentioning, they both have achieved the deeds for which they have been remembered. However, the main distinction is in the “art” of those achievements – on the one hand, heroines are admired for something “good” they have done, and usually something very brave and modest at the same time, and do not wish to be famous and glorious. Based on this premise, other people sympathize with them and like to be near, merely to feel “the goodness” within them and to

honour them. On the other hand, femme fatales are not admired for goodness, but often for “badness”, that is, for the bad deeds. They are prepared to murder anybody or to bring evil into the world if they think it is enough lucrative for them. Unlike the heroines, most of femme fatales do not feel sorrow and would destroy everybody in their path to success. Bad-tempered, strong-willed, they do not sympathize with others, except with the people they care about, mostly lovers or youngsters. They are often grasping for more than they can chew, never fully satisfying their needs and wishes. That is why others do not admire them the same way as heroines but mostly despise them for being mean and cruel amongst others who are weak and do not wish anything bad to happen. Femme fatales are grasping for attention and fame, in the end, they usually suffer from an illness or severe death, or they have been murdered, as a result of their bad deeds in life, as a punishment. Besides, one should not forget how many femme fatales have been good before transferring to the bad side; many of them have also done good things before bad ones, but eventually have transferred to “the other side” because of many disappointments in life.

In further analysis, it will be more clearly explained which characteristics of the femme fatale archetype each one of the analyzed female characters possesses.

### 3. Historical context

Medievalism<sup>3</sup> (Rubin 34) is a period in which *GoT* was created but the readers may be confused with the mentioned term because it is impossible to create a TV series dating from the “real” medieval period. To solve the problem, the readers have been given two types of past – the remote past and the recent past. The remote past relates to the past where the story is established

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<sup>3</sup> Medievalism, or Middle Ages, marks the period in European history between 500 and 1500 century. However, it also shapes the minds of people who lived during this particular historical period, how they perceived the very notion of Europe, and behaved according to the expected norms.

in reality, and the recent past determines the historical context in which the film or TV series has been produced according to the “real” story, since it is impossible to recreate an exact storyline, but only to make it as realistic as possible according to the year in which the story is settled. As such, *GoT* is not made in the “real” Middle Ages, but it is rather a fiction modelled on such historical context. As Gianfranco Gori put it: “a historical film can be defined as historical concerning the public that perceives it as historical” (Gori in Facchini 16, 17). The patriarchal society in the medieval period enslaved women and made them a part of militarism, as a way of thinking between people and nations. The lack of identity and gender inequality ordered women to step into militarized security – it inexorably leads to violence (Rees 108). That is why women at the time were considered impure because of their cultural norms, taken away their identity, if ever had any. Without identity, women’s gender<sup>4</sup> (Leavy and Trier-Bieniek 2) becomes underprivileged, it depends on women to fulfil men’s wishes. One cannot give a woman a fired weapon and expect to behave as a man, nor can give a man a daintiness of a woman and expect to behave like one. It is naturally not possible to subjugate oneself to the culture and norms of the society the one is not biologically given. However, women in medieval times were expected to behave unnaturally, against their wishes and ideas, just because the social norms are not strong enough to defend their beliefs and rights as opposed to men. The author of the novels, Martin, as well portraying it later in the *GoT* TV series, was accused to be a chauvinist because his works are considered to possess inappropriate sexual content but as such also the TV series (Facchini 54). Moreover, it is extremely difficult to stay focused to define what is right and what is wrong because the inner minds of the medieval period people were much more different from people’s minds of this century. It took ages to

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<sup>4</sup> Consists of the ideas we develop about femininity and masculinity and how we apply them to people based on their sexuality. It is socially constructed, unlike the notion of “sex“, which is constructed biologically.

see how the society was functioning, how the systems were organized, or to whom the power was transmitted.

When comparing The Middle Ages to today's society, we can surely conclude that we are all behaving according to the rules of the systems. We perform our identities toward our culture. In other words, we need to be very aware when negatively maintaining these cultures in our families or our households and education systems, within our employment practices, social networks, or in our behaviour. The structures of power were meant to break, like glass. They can likewise be made of membranes too. Women who cross inside the membranes, do not break them like they would break the glass and make a progress by successfully having an undisruptive allowance to go back anytime; the membranes close behind them again, marking that women are still not ready to take structures of power in their own hands. They do not want to embrace change but would always rather isolate themselves and become vulnerable (Rees 111). If we take an example of Cersei Targaryen (later on, the character will be analyzed in detail with the specific examples of the TV series), who intends on crushing everyone who is not Targaryen, it becomes clear how she does not challenge the structures of power, nor the culture and, therefore, there would be no change whatsoever. Furthermore, through *GoT*, one is constantly able to see a repeated phrase: "The Winter is Coming"<sup>5</sup>, as a warning for the audience; not just in the spectrum of climate, but also seen as a metaphor for an upcoming war (Rees 111).

By introducing the reader with some of the specific and important information and terms concerning the history of *GoT*, the deep analysis of each of the five femme fatales will be provided. The importance shall be put on their good and bad sides, but also the comparison among them.

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<sup>5</sup> Also the name of one episode in the *GoT* TV series (S1E1)

#### 4. Analyzing characters

Before starting with the characters' analysis, the following will be mentioned: Daenerys Targaryen will be analyzed separately from the others because she is the main character in *GoT* and has the most influence throughout all eight seasons. After Daenerys, Cersei Lannister and Catelyn Stark would be analyzed together, as well as Sansa Stark and Arya Stark, because they possess certain qualities which make them very similar. At all times the specific examples from the TV series will be added, but the gradual (physical) development of the characters from the beginning to the end will also be followed (e.g. power value, vulnerability, influence, etc.).

##### 4.1. Daenerys Targaryen

Daenerys Targaryen (starring Emilia Clarke) is the female protagonist in *GoT*. When tracing her path from season 1 to season 8, she managed to gradually develop from a vulnerable 14-year-old girl to a mature woman ready to occupy The Iron Throne and become the true queen of Westeros and The Seven Kingdoms.

Daenerys can be classified into the femme fatale archetype according to the following characteristics: pre-eroticized female attractiveness, great manipulative abilities, seductive techniques, and mostly, aspiration for power. However, it should not be forgotten how she wanted to free all the enslaved people and bring peace into the world, but her thirst for The Iron Throne led to the destruction of her persona.

Firstly, let us look at one situation happening at the sole beginning of *GoT*. In this particular scene in season 1, episode 1 ("The Winter is Coming"), Daenerys, the 14-year-old girl, she is stunned by her brother Viserys Targaryen, making viewers uncomfortably polite in violation of the plot as actress Emilia Clarke's breasts caught everyone's attention (Ferreday 24). Viserys married her to a Khal Drogo to get his army of Dothraki men to give him support

to sit on The Iron Throne, as, in his opinion, a rightful leader to the throne. He lefts Dany (as her brother often calls Daenerys) with Khal Drogo with the words: “Make him happy” (“The Winter is Coming”). Wedded and bedded, Dany was raped by her husband but eventually learned from her enslaved women that she can learn ways of seducing him and get the power she needs. And so, Dany has learned how to take the control back by learning seduction techniques from her slaves (Ferreday 24). What may catch one’s attention is that Dany is, above all, also a lesbian, as her enslaved women tend to give her pleasure whenever she makes a wish to get some. She is also a feminist<sup>6</sup> (Walters 2,3) who claims that she will at some time get what is hers, her Iron Throne.

Secondly, another situation worth mentioning comes from the season 1, episode 10 (“Fire and Blood”), where Dany says her last goodbye to her husband Khal Drogo and her son Rhaego, who was born, according to a witch Mirri Maz Duur, with the lizard-like scales, bat-like wings and inner organs full of worms – that was the price Daenerys had to pay for her husband’s life, who eventually died. The scene where Dany comes out of fire untouched by its flames, while carrying a little dragon upon her shoulder, made Dothraki bent on their knees and call her their *Khaleesi* and The Mother of Dragons. This last episode of season 1 has certainly made a great movement when it comes to Daenerys’s reign over Dothraki; a *femme fatale* who put the army of men on their knees with the words: “I swear to you that those who would harm you would die screaming!” (“Fire and Blood”), and, therefore, made them love her, listening to her encouraging young voice and made them call her their *Khaleesi*, who would change the world and make it equal for everyone, both men and women. Daenerys follows her ideology<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Feminism is a term that can often be defined in several ways, depending on the so-called type of feminism itself (e.g. religious). However, the most fundamental definition that can be applied is the theory that women should be treated equally as men, regardless of gender, race, class, and that they should have the same rights to education, life, and employment as men do.

<sup>7</sup> Ideas and beliefs that help the legitimacy of the interests of the ruling group or class, especially by using distortion.



(qtd. in Eagleton 30); her beliefs and virtues to fight for her rights and make herself truly a worthy leader.

Moreover, in season 3, episode 10 (“Mhysa”), Daenerys makes her way to Yunkai and with an army of Unsullied sets the slaves free. When the slaves were freed, Missandei (a girl whom Daenerys set free and made her choose either to be a free woman, or to be her ward; Missandei chose to be a part of Dany’s adventures and help her) tells them in their language (which at that time Dany could not understand) that Daenerys has freed them, but courageous Dany replies that only they can take their freedom back (“Mhysa”). The crowd of yet freed people started cheering and called her *Mhysa*, which in Ghiscari language means *mother*. The freed slaves lifted her upon their shoulders and chanted *Mhysa*, as at the same time her three dragons, Drogon, Rhaegal, and Viserion, flew freely across the sky. From the mentioned scene, one would have easily concluded that Daenerys made an impact with her dragons, as the only person in the series who possesses dragons and calls them her children. However, she has mostly made an impact with her smart thinking, making allies, and giving encouraging speeches to the masses. Alongside all of it, her white hair, a symbol of the Targaryen family, her pale skin, and beautiful green eyes<sup>8</sup> made her character even more seductive and goddess-like. It is not odd to conclude how she made all her way to the end of season 8 untouched and alive, safe from many usurpers and enemies. Nevertheless, in the season 8, episode 6 (“The Iron Throne”), the last episode of *GoT*, Daenerys got killed by a person she loved, by Jon Snow, her brother who had no other choice but to subjugate himself to the masses and do what is best for the future lives of Westeros and Seven Kingdoms, despite the love he felt for her. In the end, Daenerys did not fulfil her dream to become the ruthless and rightful queen of the Seven Kingdoms, but, despite the circumstances, she managed to get respected in a way in which no

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<sup>8</sup> In *A Song of Ice and Fire*, Daenerys has purple eyes.

other woman before her managed to. She fought for the rights of her people, she has done things which needed to be done to secure her reign, she loved and was being loved by many other men and women; she was special in her appearance and deeds; she was the good queen of *GoT*. However, despite all the goods she did, by the end of the last season, she somehow transformed from a young, idealistic woman who fought for the rights of hers and her people into a mad queen, just like her father, the mad king. She has become somebody who started to fulfil only her dreams of ruling others, making them her tool and toy, just like once before she was treated the same way by the other controlling men. Maybe Daenerys wanted to satisfy her needs and get a rightful revenge over all other men under her reign to erase all the negative influences and moments she got when she was a child, especially from her brother, Viserys. She must not be blamed for what she has become at least, despite the circumstances which led her to become just like her father, the mad king. Her courage and selfishness made her unable to rule and now she must have died for the sake of others to live happily ever after with the other king, as in fairy tales. However, it is important to take The Iron Throne as a symbol of power. In the last episode of the *GoT* TV series, season 8, episode 6 (“The Iron Throne”), when Daenerys got killed, her dragon Drogon felt that his mother is dead and came to rescue and fly away with her. Before he flew away, he put The Iron Throne on fire, and all the swords from the Throne melted away. The melted Iron Throne may be understood as a symbol of its impowerlessness; after all the battles and deaths that have been happening for The Throne, in the end, it is useless and marks a new beginning for someone courageous and fearless to take the crown and to rule Westeros and The Seven Kingdoms. It should not be taken for granted that the rightful throne was given to a cripple, Bran Stark, another man to structure his power over Daenerys – in her appearance, to get revenge over all the women; the patriarchal society has won once again, but Daenerys’s deeds shall never be forgotten.

#### 4.2.Cersei Lannister and Catelyn Stark

Cersei Lannister (starring Lena Headey) and Catelyn Stark (starring Michelle Fairley) are the second and the third most interesting and developing characters in *GoT*. The reason why I have chosen not to analyze the characters separately is to make it understandable for the reader to find similarities and differences between the two. Before the analysis, the reader should be able to understand which characteristics of the femme fatale archetype are associated with Cersei and Catelyn. On the one hand, Cersei possesses physical attractiveness, great manipulative techniques, intelligence and emotional coldness, destructive transgression of norms and laws, and striving towards power. On the other hand, Catelyn does not possess almost any of the physical attractiveness, but possesses wisdom, seductive techniques, and self-determined sexuality. However, both Cersei and Catelyn are bound by their maternal role; they are both willing to do everything in their power to protect their children from danger that strikes from many sides along the Seven Kingdoms. On the one side, Catelyn admires Winterfell and enjoys the cold it provides; she gets the feeling of becoming stronger while being manageable to live in the snowy area; by suffering the cold, Catelyn does not feel the other, inner pain, at least the pain is lesser if she makes her body suffer and not her mind. On the other hand, Cersei lives in a completely another area of Westeros; she lives in the King's Landing where is no snowy area, but extremely hot weather strikes on every step she takes. She struggles with compassion and lust for power because after all, being most loyal to herself; just like Catelyn. Furthermore, being completely different in their appearances, Cersei has blond and beautiful curly hair, like everybody in Lannister's family, both men and women - her body is a dream of every woman and her face is so beautiful that any man or a woman would likely fall in love with her. She may be comparable to Ishtar, the Sumerian goddess of love, sex, and war. She is especially known for her famous performance of the "Dance of Desire" as a reward for successful battles and the generous protection of her temples; the most beautiful woman in the

country in human form who easily seduces men (Brown 120). However, Catelyn's hair is reddish, her face is full of wrinkles, she does not possess a body like Cersei, but she has got something else that Cersei does not – an unconditional love for her husband Eddard Stark, who is her biggest support, alongside her children. Although Catelyn is not seductive in a way Cersei is, she possesses a gift of saying courageous words to men when necessary, for example, in season 2, episode 4 (“Garden of Bones”), in a conversation with Petyr Baelish. After her husband was killed, she takes a knife and points it out at Baelish, saying: “I trusted you, my husband trusted you, and you repaid our faith with treachery!” (“Garden of Bones”), showing that she can fight for her beliefs and ideas. Moreover, the love story between her and her husband, Eddard Stark, shall never be forgotten; they have loved each other enormously and passionately, the real love in *GoT*, but was taken away the day Eddard was killed and so was Catelyn “killed” from the inside. Furthermore, in season 3, episode 9 (“The Rains of Castamere”), Catelyn got brutally betrayed and killed but letting her son to marry Talisa Stark and not one of the Frey's daughters, she broke the oath given to Frey and therefore suffered a terrible death, as well as her son Robb and his wife Talisa (“The Rains of Castamere”). Her throat was cut and the time of Catelyn Stark in *GoT* was brutally taken away by force. The viewer must have concluded that she was not strong and brave enough to foresee the future when breaking the oath, just like a naive child when given the sweets. However, moving to Cersei, it is important to mention some of the many famous scenes that made her deterrent. Firstly, in season 1, episode 1 (“The Winter is Coming”), she was caught in a sexual incestuous act with her brother Jamie Lannister by Bran Stark. Not really knowing what to do, Jamie said his famous words: “The things I do for love!” (Ferreday 28), and pushed Bran out of the window, making him a cripple for the rest of his life. Furthermore, Cersei was not loyal to her brother and lover like Catelyn was to her husband, but she certainly loved him. However, there was the time when Jamie raped Cersei, although in medieval times it was not considered to be

rape if the person at the end agrees to be involved in a violent sexual act. The one scene in season 4, episode 9 (“The Watchers on the Wall”), shows Cersei and Jamie alongside their poisoned son Joffrey at his funeral. Cersei turns to Jamie in a grievance, sobbing: “My baby boy...our son.” At first, he appears to give her comfort but then changes his attitude while whispering to her: “You are a hateful woman; why have the Gods made me love a hateful woman”, and then, despite her disapproval and cries of “no”, rapes her (Ferreday 21). Despite being strong and influential, Cersei succumbs to her brother and his will, unable to change the superiority of the male brother. Like a wounded animal, she hides and waits until she becomes strong enough to strike her enemies again. Therefore, she becomes the most vulnerable person in *GoT* in season 5, episode 10 (“Mother’s Mercy”), when she needed to confess her sins before the High Sparrow to save her life. Cersei’s “walk of shame” has become one of the most heart-breaking scenes in all the TV series. Her famous golden locks were cut, her clothes were ripped apart; naked, she was walking a “walk of shame” in front of all the people in the city, who are yelling at her the words like “whore” and “sinner”. Cersei walked with her head up by listening to septa Unella saying to the masses: “Shame, shame, shame!”. After that scene, Cersei got revenge on the septa in season 6, episode 10 (“The Winds of Winter”); she let her knight, sir Gregor Clegane rape the septa to get revenge for the “walk of shame”, at the same time repeating the same words as septa Unella before: “Shame, shame, shame!”, spacing up her revenge and making it intense for the viewers. It is fantastic to see how Cersei never forgets her enemies and always does everything she can to get revenge; a real revengeful queen. Finally, amongst many of the interesting scenes concerning Cersei, the death scene has surely made readers to sympathize with her. In season 8, episode 5 (“The Bells”), Cersei and her brother Jamie stay alongside each other while their palace is collapsing, constantly repeating “I love you” and certainly the death is coming soon. Although many critics think that Cersei needed to die a lot more rigorously, her debt was paid by dying. She was aware that her time has come to

an end, failing in becoming a queen on The Seven Kingdoms. At the end of the analysis, one can conclude that Catelyn represents a good queen, while Cersei represents a bad queen. Nevertheless, they both deserve praise and a place in this paper because of the enormous courage and love for their children, as well as all the deeds that needed to be done for the sake of others. In the end, the more cunning one, Cersei, lives longer, but eventually decays under the pressure of the “curse” of the Iron Throne. From strong queens at the beginning of *GoT*, those femme fatales have gradually become unable to keep pace with other characters who have survived.

#### 4.3.Sansa Stark and Arya Stark

Sansa Stark (starring Sophie Turner) and Arya Stark (starring Maisie Williams) are the last two characters who are going to be analyzed in this paper. The two sisters in *GoT* are so different that it almost seems unreal that they both belong to the Stark family. On the one hand, Sansa is good, obedient, clean, lady-like. On the other side, Arya behaves like a boy, she is wild and likes to play with swords; she wanted to be a knight one day, but that was impossible in medieval times, for a woman to be a knight.

The characteristics which are going to be mentioned assort the two opposite sisters with the femme fatale archetype. On the one hand, Sansa possesses great physical attractiveness of a young woman, emotional coldness, intelligence, determined sexuality, cleverness, revenge but also disagreement of appearance and nature – at first, she is sensual, kind-hearted, behaving like a princess, but inside she has a plan of getting the rightful role of the queen of Winterfell. On the other hand, Arya possesses the following: great cunningness (the most cunning character of all the mentioned femme fatales), a thirst for revenge, intelligence, emotional stability, an overdraft law and norms, anger, and a wish for destruction. At this moment, it would be

understandable for a reader to trace Sansa and Arya's path in becoming femme fatales and what events led them to become such women.

First, let us switch to Sansa's character for a moment. Many may find her boring, obedient, deceptive, or fragile because she is a perfect example of a good-behaving woman in times of *GoT*'s revelation. At the beginning of the TV series, Sansa is a very naive girl and does not possess the qualities that other characters do, e.g. moral strength, cunningness, wisdom, etc. However, Sansa's character serves as a perfect example of medieval women – an honoured lady who obeys the rules and lacks immorality and cruelty (Alesi 161). Soon enough she begins to realize that she cannot live in the land of milk and honey, happily married until the rest of her days. Her sole purpose is to take back her home, Winterfell, after many members of her family who were brutally killed. For example, in season 1, episode 10 ("Fire and Blood"), Sansa tries to save her father who is sentenced to death by her future husband Joffrey Baratheon, the son of Cersei Lannister and Jamie Lannister. She evokes the time when she was so naive when she kept telling herself: "Once she was queen, she could persuade Joff to bring Father back and grant him pardon" (Martin in Alesi 164) as she is aware that, as a queen, not as a fiancée, she will convince Joffrey to spare her father (Alesi 164). However, Joffrey did not grant her the wish and let Eddard Stark to end beheaded. This was the first time she realizes she must do everything in her power to survive. Moreover, Sansa was kept as a captive after Joffrey Baratheon married Margaery Tyrell and later, after she escapes from the King's Landing, was married to Ramsay Bolton, who raped her and treated her like an animal. Regardless of all the suffering throughout the years, Sansa learns how to use her polite manners and beauty to try to achieve her goal. Eventually, Sansa develops from a pawn to a player, and, lastly, to the queen of Winterfell (Alesi 169). Coming back to Arya, from the first episode of *GoT*, the viewers have known that she would become a very important character. In season 5, Arya has entered The House of Black and White, where she was taught how to survive and how to use the faces of

dead people to embrace their physical appearances. She suffered from hunger, stole things, lived on the streets until she managed to leave The House of Black and White and set off to kill the Frey family to get revenge over her dead mother and brother. She manages to do just that and until the end of the show, she killed all her enemies whose names she has been repeatedly whispering every night before sleep. “Valar Morghulis” was her way of saying goodbye to all her enemies before being killed by her hand; she learned those words from Jaqen H’ghar, whom she also says “goodbye” at the end. The cunning, ferocious little Arya Stark takes a fatal turn of events in season 8, episode 3 (“The Long Night”) when she appears out of nowhere when there seemed that everything was lost and kills the Night King. Therefore, she has become truly worthy of her name, Stark, a true hero of *GoT*.

#### 4.4. Comparing femme fatales together

After analysis of the characters individually and some of them in the group, one must answer the following question: Do all the five femme fatales share certain characteristics? Are they anyhow similar? When taking into consideration everything that has already been analyzed and structured about our five women, it is true without a shadow of a doubt that they are all similar in the following: Daenerys, Cersei, Catelyn, Sansa, and Arya all represent the suffering women throughout the series, but somehow manage to stand up on their feet and fight back to get what rightly belongs to them. Cersei lost all her children, even the one she carried in her womb when facing death; Daenerys lost her husband Khal Drogo and her son Rhaego; Catelyn lost her husband Eddard and her son Robb; Sansa and Arya both lost their mother and father. Thus, they all have their reasons to start an inevitable battle for survival; the real femme fatales who do not succumb to men’s will unless they can deceive them and let them win the battle, but never the war. Nonetheless, the main difference between the five women is the difference



between so-called “good queens” and “bad queens”. Apart from this, in the late medieval and early modern kingdoms, it was very common for great attention to be paid to precisely the “bad queens” — marking women who refused to obey the rules prescribed by the society and caused destruction on every step, thus rejecting traditional women roles and producing their ones. Besides, the credit shall also be given to women called “good queens” – amongst all, very religious and pure-hearted women whose major role was to take great care of their children’s education to gain power in the kingdom (Alesi 162). Without a doubt, it is foreseen that Cersei plays a pure role of a “bad queen”, while Catelyn and Sansa play the role of “good queens”. Daenerys and Arya are somehow in between – nor the pure “good queens”, nor the pure “bad queens”. They take this role which fits the best according to the given situation. All in all, all five of them were courageous enough to endure sexual violence, men’s power, ideology of medieval times, and preserve their own identity and self-esteem. However, they were many situations in TV series when all five of them were desperate and did not know how to cope with their lives anymore. Nonetheless, they have found enough strength to move on and continue with the fight, either for The Iron Throne or for revenge. When deeply taken into consideration, all of them are revengeful, regardless of their belonging to “bad queens” or “good queens”; led by an inextricable and excruciating pain from their past lives, mostly done by men. All of them, except Arya, were forced to get married to someone they did not know – Daenerys was forced to get married to Khal Drogo, Cersei was expected to get married to Robert Baratheon, Catelyn needed to be married to Eddard Stark (although, after a long time together, they fell in love with each other) and Sansa was expected to get married to three men – Joffrey Baratheon (despite it, he betrayed Sansa and married Margaery Tyrell), then Tyrion Lannister, and, lastly, Ramsay Bolton. One can easily say that those women were betrayed and dishonoured by men. Although they were privileged to be free women in medieval times, despite a larger number of them who were slaves, inside of their body, in their inner minds they have been feeling like slaves at all

times; they felt they had an invisible collar necklace around their necks, to mark an enslavement from the inside. As time passes by, they were starting to be aware of their value and women tricks to seduce men, be cunning and clever, but chaste, pious, and pure at the same time. Not to show their pain and suffering was the key point to ensure their authority and determination. Until the end of the series, they have managed to do more than any other women at that time would have ever bore. Even death was a better option than to subdue to men and throw away everything well-deserved. They are truly worthy femme fatales in the *GoT* TV series.

##### 5. Women political leaders from past and *GoT*'s femme fatales

Undoubtedly, there has been a notion that Daenerys, Cersei, Catelyn, Sansa, and Arya possess the qualities of the queens from “real” medieval times, therefore, they are comparable to these queens, who are going to be mentioned in further analysis. It should be noted that Daenerys Targaryen is comparable to queen Elizabeth I of England (based on the movie *Elizabeth*, starring Cate Blanchett), as she is seen as her spiritual daughter. Elizabeth has refused to marry to endure a powerful and successful reign without a man to stay in her way. The two women have very much in common, as Clarke once said herself that Elizabeth I was her role-model while preparing for *GoT* season 1<sup>9</sup>. However, Cersei and Arya are also comparable to Elizabeth I, although there is a slight difference in behaviour. Elizabeth claimed the following: “To conclude, I am already bound unto a husband, which is the kingdom of England, and that may suffice you.”<sup>10</sup>. Indeed, the two queens share many similarities: in speeches given to their troops, in dealings with councillors, in behaviour to their subjects, in the view of marriage, and

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<sup>9</sup><https://www.vanityfair.com/hollywood/2015/10/game-of-thrones-cate-blanchettinspired-emilia-clarke>. 12/9/2020. Also see on the two women: <http://history-behind-game-of-thrones.com/tudors/daenerys-as-elizabeth-i> 12/9/2020 And <http://www.themarysue.com/daenerys-targaryen> 12/9/2020

<sup>10</sup> Elizabeth's speech on February 10, 1559, William Camden, *Annales: The True and Royal History of the Famous Empress Elizabeth* (London: B. Fisher, 1625), STC 4497, 27.

in the way they were treated, mostly as princesses and queens (Paranque 242, 243). Moreover, they are the last of their dynasty, both are loved queens, successful monarchs, they engage in love relations. All in all, Daenerys owns the same qualities that once belonged to Elizabeth I; one shall not forget how both of them managed to bring peace to their people and maintain the power as the most valuable ability of any prosperous ruler (Paranque 255). Cersei and Arya once took over the role of a good queen's perfect behaviour, but later transformed into someone revengeful, killer, and sinner, unafraid of their sins, but thoroughly challenging them. Furthermore, when it comes to Sansa Stark and Catelyn Stark, their life is very similar to the life of Elizabeth of York and Elizabeth Woodville. Elizabeth of York inspired *GoT* because she also fought for the English throne just as all our femme fatales did. Elizabeth of York one mentioned the following, concerning the polite behaviour of queens in her time: "A queen ought to be chaste, wise of honest people, well mannered, and not curious [;] in nourishing of her children her wisdom ought not only to appear in feat and works, but also in speaking: that is, to wit, that she be secret and tell no such things as ought to be holden secret. Amongst all, she ought to be timorous and shamefast." (Alesi 162). Queens were particularly expected to overtake the role of the Virgin Mary, as well as to overtake the role of queen wife when a foreign queen arrives; then the queen consort gains high authority over this new, foreign queen (Alesi 161, 163). Yet, just like Elizabeth of York, Catelyn and Sansa, a mother and daughter, were expected to accompany the rules of their kingdom the same way. Basically, as pure the queen is, as better she is – without voice, in captivity, but ready to compel with enemies when threatening to the members of their family, turning into a real picture of a femme fatale woman. Nevertheless, Elizabeth of York had probably not wanted to disrupt the ideologies of the kingdom in times of her reign. Although she did very much to ensure the good future of her children and kingdom's people, she did not fight for her ideals and achievements as much as Daenerys, Cersei, Catelyn, Sansa, and Arya did. They have surely been times when Elizabeth

of York felt that she did not do enough to make herself happy but has been neglecting her chances to ensure herself a better life. Then, many problems and difficulties have been occurring as a result of women's, what was considered, impolite behaviour, and they were often treated and punished badly for their "misdeeds". If a woman, regardless of a queen's title or not, has been taking good care of her children and respected her husband (husband was god-like in their eyes), she was perfect, compared to a housewife of today's society. It seems that our characters from the *GoT* TV series yet possessed much more courage than the queen Elizabeth of York, or the queen Elizabeth I – they have been enjoying a sinful life of pleasures, at the same time taking care of children (if had any), household and husband, with a sweet giggle of victory amongst men.

## 6. Conclusion

The analysis presented in this paper made clear that it is certain how women's rights and roles will always be a major topic for consideration. The femme fatales presented in this paper have shown how a battle has still been fought and still has not ended; the war for the achievement of women's gender equality to men is yet to be won; more clearly, women are still fighting to have the same rights as men. Throughout this paper, five femme fatales from the *GoT* TV series have been analyzed: Daenerys Targaryen, Cersei Lannister, Catelyn Stark, Sansa Stark, and Arya Stark, modelled after the Queen Elizabeth of England and Queen Elizabeth of York. The analysis consisted of the following sections: introduction; femme fatale archetype; historical context; analysis of mentioned five female characters, at the same time providing examples from some of the episodes from the eight seasons of *Game of Thrones* TV series; conclusion; and summary of the key points. Besides, the characteristics of the femme fatale archetype made five women from the analysis even more effective: Daenerys' beauty and thirst for the crown; Cersei's cunningness, seduction abilities and the will to rule on The Iron Throne;

Catelyn's wisdom and intelligence; Sansa's attractiveness, emotional coldness and intelligence; and Arya's great abilities of manipulation, revenge, and destruction. *Game of Thrones* has truly been showing how women's life has always been much more difficult to take when comparing to men's lives, especially of women like Daenerys, Cersei, Catelyn, Sansa and Arya. However, despite having been granted the wishes and rights, five women have done everything to secure their place in the new Westeros and Seven Kingdoms.

Furthermore, the analysis of this paper has shown the characteristics of the women leaders from the past who are connected to women from the *Game of Thrones* TV series. The femme fatale archetype has been used to represent the named characteristics of five females from the TV series, as well as of women from film noir. Also, five women from Game of Thrones have been analyzed with precisely given examples from the TV series: Daenerys Targaryen, Cersei Lannister, Catelyn Stark, Arya Stark, and Sansa Stark. To emphasize similar characteristics between the characters, Cersei and Catelyn, as well as Sansa and Arya have been compared together, except of Daenerys, who has been characterized separately as the protagonist of the TV series. Nevertheless, the historical context has also been explained to provide readers with the main information before the bare analysis of this paper. In the end, it should be clear how the femme fatale archetype has affected *Game of Thrones*, but also the popular culture itself and its relevance to the future making of similar TV series.

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## 8. ANALIZA ARHETIPA FATALNE ŽENE U TV SERIJI *IGRA PRIJESTOLJA*:

### Sažetak i ključne riječi

Ova teza je objašnjena ukazivanjem na analizu TV serije *Igra Prijestolja*. Glavni problem rasprave bio je pronaći karakteristike arhetipa fatalne žene kod pet analiziranih žena iz *Igre prijestolja*, u odnosu na srednjovjekovno razdoblje i neke od povijesnih filmova. Fokus teze bio je na zastupljenosti spola, feminizma, seksualnog nasilja i zavodljivih metoda koje su žene koristile u ovom razdoblju. Štoviše, usporedba je napravljena između žena političkih vođa, poput kraljice Elizabete I. i kraljice Elizabete od Yorka, te između Daenerys Targaryen, Cersei Lannister, Catelyn Stark, Sansa Stark i Arye Stark iz fiktivne TV serije. Zastupljenost rodne nejednakosti, arhetipa fatalne žene i vladajućih metoda detaljno je analizirana uz dane primjere iz serije. Teza je također potvrdila značaj postojanja arhetipa fatalne žene od prošlih vremena do danas.

Ključne riječi: *Igra prijestolja*, arhetip fatalne žene, seksualno nasilje, Elizabeta I., Elizabeta od Yorka, srednjovjekovna vremena.

## 9. ANALYSIS OF FEMME FATALE ARCHETYPE IN *GAME OF THRONES* TV

### SERIES: Summary and key words

This thesis has been explained by pointing out the analysis of the *Game of Thrones* TV series. The main problem for discussion was to find the characteristics of the femme fatale archetype in five analyzed women from *Game of Thrones*, concerning the medieval period and some of the historical movies. The focus of the thesis was on the representation of gender, feminism, sexual violence, and seductive methods used by women in this period. Moreover, the comparison had been made between women political leaders, such as Queen Elizabeth I and Queen Elizabeth of York, and between Daenerys Targaryen, Cersei Lannister, Catelyn Stark, Sansa Stark, and Arya Stark from the fictional TV series. The representation of gender inequality, femme fatale archetype, and ruling methods have been analyzed in detail with the given examples from the series. The thesis also affirmed the relevance of the existence of the femme fatale archetype from past times until present times.

Key words: *Game of Thrones*, femme fatale archetype, sexual violence, Elizabeth I, Elizabeth of York, medieval times.