

# **MASS MEDIA AND FEMALE EMPOWERMENT:**

## **The Case of Game of Thrones**



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## SAMMENDRAG

Kvinnelig empowerment (myndiggjøring) og økt deltakelse i diskurs i det offentlige rom er sentrale i helsefremmende arbeid, men møter betydelige barrierer. Massemedia spiller en stor rolle for kvinnelig identitet og empowerment i måten de beskriver og skildrer kvinner, og påvirker derfor helsefremmende arbeid. Målet med denne oppgaven var derfor å analysere hvordan kvinner har blitt fremstilt i media, eksemplifisert ved den populære TV-serien: "Game of Thrones" (GoT), og undersøke den potensielle effekten av denne avbildningen på kvinners empowerment. GoT beskriver 7 forskjellige riker i et mytisk middelalderverden (Westeros og Essos) og mektige familier som feider om å bli konge over de 7 kongedømmer. Hver familie har en eller flere kvinnelige hovedpersoner, som vi følger. Jeg brukte diskuranalyse av alle sekvenser hvor kvinner deltok i sesong 1 og 5 av GoT med fokus på de 8 dominerende kvinner i serien. Denne analysen viste at flere av de dominerende kvinner i serien gjennomgikk betydelig styrking under utviklingen av fortellingen, men etter økt empowerment, var det mange av dem som mislyktes, og falt tilbake til patriarkalsk dominans. Mindre dominerende kvinner i GoT ble fortsatt fremstillet som passive og underdanige og fortsatt utsatt for patriarkalsk dominans. Kvinner i GoT hadde ikke fremgang på deres karakter og evner alene. Noen måtte ty til seksuell manipulasjon eller tilegne seg mannlige karakteristika for å klare seg. Ser på den presentasjonen av kvinner i massemedia over de siste 20 år, framstår også et mønster med kvinner fortrinnsvis i passive roller, selv om det er blitt gradvis bedre over de siste år. GoT framstår som et ytterligere fremskritt hva angår empowerment av de dominerende protagonister, men fortsatt vises mange kvinner i nedverdiggende, passive situasjoner uten empowerment. Massemedia har derfor fortsatt en vei å gå, hva angår understøttelse av kvinnelig empowerment.

## **ABSTRACT**

Female empowerment is a key determinant for effective health promotion. Mass media play a big role for female identity and empowerment in the way they describe and depict women, thereby either enhancing or hampering female empowerment. Several studies have demonstrated significant impact of mass media on empowerment and health promotion. The aim of this thesis was therefore to analyze how women are portrayed in the media, using the very popular TV-series “Game of Thrones” (GoT) as an example, and the potential impact of this depiction on female empowerment.

GoT describes 7 different kingdoms in a mythic medieval world (Westeros and Essos) and powerful families who fight to become the “King of the Seven Kingdom”. Each family has one or more female protagonists, and my study focused on the 8 dominating women in the series. Employing discourse analysis of seasons 1 and 5, I found that several of the dominating female protagonists underwent significant empowerment during the development of the narrative. However, at the peak of their powers they often failed, falling back into patriarchal dominance. Apart from the dominating female protagonists, most women in GoT were still depicted in submissive and passive roles. Women were not empowered based on character and knowledge alone. Some had to resort to sexual manipulation or even acquiring male characteristics to survive. Thus, despite showing a few strong, empowered women, most women in GoT are still depicted as passive, which is in keeping with the dominating portrayal of women mass media over the last 20 years. Thus, media still have some way to go with respect to supporting female empowerment.

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# 1 INTRODUCTION

Improved health for society as a whole, and women in particular, is closely associated with female empowerment, but in many societies throughout the world, female empowerment is still suffering (Ali, 2011). Empowerment theory, as promoted today, sees humans as autonomous individuals, who are responsible for, - and capable of, making free, individual choices, and emphasizes that an important part of the empowerment process is to awake a person's capacity to make such choices (Torp, 2012). Improving gender inequity does not only require policy changes, but also significant changes in male perception of women's roles in society and strengthening of the female identity and voice in the public space. Gender identity is formed through enacting particular gender roles via a variety of interacting forces in society (Mazzarella, 2015; Walter, 2015) and mass media play a big role for all these processes. They affect female self-image and confidence, which are factors of great importance for female empowerment (Andrist, 2003; van Zoonen, 2000). Mass media have been demonstrated to play a major role in shaping women's self-image, confidence and aspirations, which are all key factors affecting female empowerment (Thornham, 2007; van Zoonen, 2000). I therefore wanted to analyze how women are portrayed in mass media with special emphasis on female empowerment. As an example of media portrayal of women I chose the popular Home Box Office (HBO) series, Game of Thrones (GoT), which is viewed all over the world (HBOWatch, 2017), and therefore may affect women in many different societies.

Originally, I was not a big fan of historic, mythical narratives, but family and friends convinced me to watch GoT promising a special and fascinating experience. And fascinating it was. Very quickly, I became absorbed in the GoT universe. In the beginning, Initially I focused on the more empowered protagonists standing up to male dominance, without seeing the general negative image of passive, disempowered women, generally living on the terms of patriarchy in the series.

I also started to associate the GoT narrative with my own line of work, especially related to empowerment issues around female fugitives and immigrants in Norway. Based on my daily contact with girls and their mothers as a health nurse, I have come across many examples of continued disempowerment of these women, despite the fact that they now

live in a liberal society. Many immigrant girls are subject to very strict control by their parents, and some still are subjected to female circumcision. Married immigrant women in Norway are often still forced to marry husbands chosen by their parents and prevented from using anticonception and forced to have more children than they want with adverse consequences for their health. To me the struggle of these women paralleled many of the situations women in GoT were exposed to, despite GoT being fiction and taking place in mythical medieval world.

### *1.1 Aim and research questions*

The considerations above triggered a deeper analysis of the 8 main female protagonists in GoT. The aim was to study how empowerment and disempowerment of women was balanced in GoT and then discuss how it might relate to overall portrayal of women in mass media in relation to female empowerment. This led to the formulation of the following research questions:

### **How is the depiction of women in mass media, exemplified by “Game of Thrones”, regarding to female empowerment?**

- 1. How are the main female protagonists portrayed in GoT?*
- 2. How is female empowerment and disempowerment balanced in GoT?*

### *1.2 Outline of thesis*

Chapter 2 will provide a short thematic introduction to Game of Thrones, its setting, narrative and viewer composition. Chapter 3 will review the background for the research methodology employed. Chapter 4 will show the results of the discourse analysis both in a quantitatively and as narrative. In the discussion in chapter 5 I will first specifically discuss my results and in the later part try to put the findings in a broader context pertaining to possible impact of media on female empowerment.

## 2 THEMATIC INTRODUCTION

### 2.1 *Game of Thrones*

“Game of Thrones” (hereafter GoT) is one of the most popular TV-series ever produced by Home Box Office (HBO). It is based on *A Song of Ice and Fire* novels authored by George R.R. Martin. Across the 5 titles comprising more than 5000 pages his novels have sold more than 58 million copies worldwide, and the fifth title sold 298,000 copies on its first day of publication (Gjelsvik & Schubart, 2016). GoT is currently the most watched show on television, be it via cable, DVD or streaming from the Internet. It premiered on the Home Box Office Cable Channel (HBO) April 17 2011 with the first of 10 episodes of season 1. When it was released on DVD and Blu-ray in the United States and United Kingdom March 2012, it set new sales records for first-week sales of a HBO series. The season 5 finale had 8 million viewers and generated 437,000 Tweets (Gjelsvik & Schubart, 2016). The series also received numerous artistic awards in its first season. Analyses have that 40% of the audience are women (Frankel, 2014). It has been sold to more than 100 countries worldwide, covering all countries in North America and South America; western Europe (except Belgium, Switzerland, Austria), most of Eastern Europe and Russia (except a few Russian republics), Australia-New Zealand, Asia including India and China (but not Laos, North Korea and Japan). The series is not shown in the Middle east, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Iraq and Iran (HBOWatch, 2017).

The books, as well as the series, use a Point of View (POV) narrative, where the different episodes are shown as experienced by the characters in a given scene. Thus, the narrative is not strictly sequential, and in a unique way this grants the characters discursive power by influencing the readers perception of the narrative (Battis & Johnston, 2015).

GoT describes 7 different kingdoms in a mythic medieval world (Westeros and Essos), where powerful families fight for power. Each family has one or more female protagonists, but the majority of those belong to 3 families (Fig. 1):

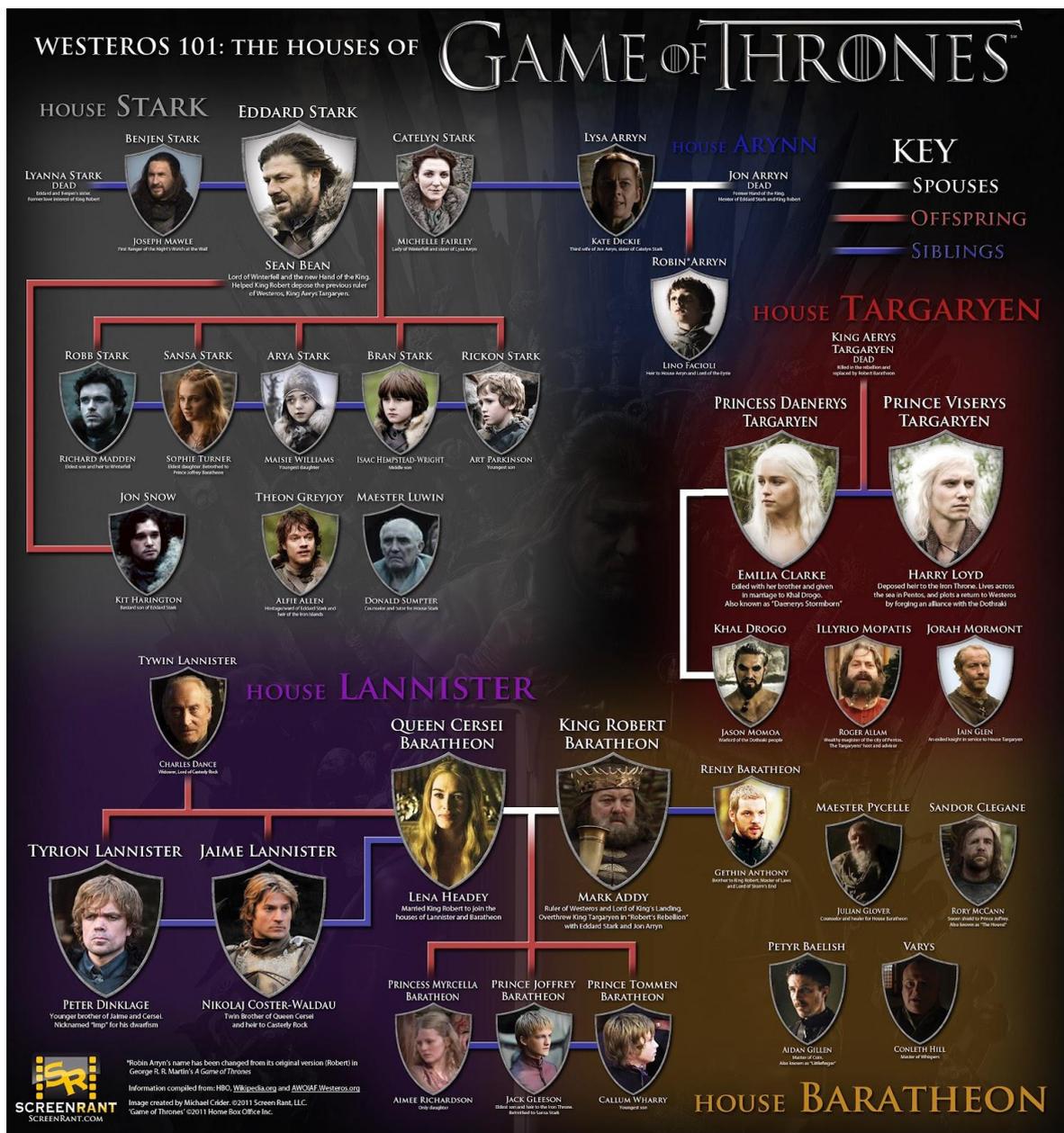


Fig. 1. Pedigrees of the dominating houses in GoT. From Yahoo pictures. Free to share.

The Stark family lives at Winterfell, which is situated up north, close to the “wall”, which separates the 7 kingdoms from the wild and dangerous world outside, where the dangerous “Wildings” and “Deadwalkers”, who are threatening to destroy the 7 kingdoms, reside. One of the dominating women of the first and second seasons is Catlyn Stark, the wife of the King’s hand Eddard Stark and the mother of 5 children Araya, Sansa, Bran, Rob and Rick. Reluctantly she has also accepted a “bastard” child of Eddard Stark, - John Snow. Finally, Theon Greyjoy, originally of the house Frey, is staying at Winterfell as a hostage from a previous war.

*House Lannister* is seated at Casterly Rock in the Westerlands and is headed by Tywin Lannister. Tywin is the head of House Lannister, the richest man in the Seven Kingdoms. He has one daughter, Cersei and two sons: Tyrion Lannister, who is a dwarf, and Jaime, who is conducting an illicit relationship to Cersei. Cersei and Jaime were born as dizygotic twins.

*House Targaryan*: We only encounter the children of this family, the daughter Daenerys Targaryen and son Viserys, who have fled to Essos after the killing of their father, Aerys II Targaryen ("The Mad King"), in Kings Landing by Robert Baratheon. They seek assistance from a group of wild horsemen, the Dothraki, in order to regain power over the 7 kingdoms

At the fringes of these 3 families other families provide female protagonists:

*House Baratheon* lives at Kings Landing headed by King Robert Baratheon of the seven Kingdoms until his early death, being followed as ruler by his wife Queen Cersei, who stems from the Lannister family. Cersei has 2 sons: Joffrey and Tommen Baratheon, and 1 daughter Myrcella. Robert has 2 brothers: Stannis and Renly Baratheon.

*The Tyrell family* lives at Highgarden in the Reach. Margaery Tyrell is the only daughter of Alerie Hightower and Mace Tyrell. Her older brothers are Willas, Garlan and Loras the Knight of Flowers, who is a member of the Kings guard. The Tyrells are one of the wealthiest and most powerful families in Westeros, ruled by the strong-willed grandmother, Lady Olenna, also called the "Queen of Thorns" who serves as an effective mentor for Margaery Tyrell in politics, marriage and court intrigue.

*The Targ Family* lives at Evenfall Hall, on the island of Targ. In GoT, the family is represented by Brienne of Targ. She is the only daughter of Lord Selwyn Targ, Lord of. Her mother died when Brienne was a child and all her 3 siblings died at an early age. Brienne early on in her life chose to become a female Knight and live on those terms only.

The sword rules and huge discrepancies and inequity between the sexes and different societal classes exist (Wilkinson, 2015). GoT shows a society where social interactions are at the same time bound by oaths and commitments between different groups and total lawlessness permits the ruling classes to kill without being held responsible. It is also a society where women, with a few exceptions, have limited power. The series is showing a lot of explicit sexuality both homo- and heterosexual, and rapes (Frankel, 2014). In many aspects the fact that the knights must be noble and protect women also leads to a degrading picture of women as passive, dependent on men unable to defend themselves (Frankel, 2014). The society is semi-religious honoring both female and male gods. Clergy plays a big role in the interaction between kings and also between husband and wives, but also participate in maintaining patriarchy.

The series and books use a lot of themes from Egypt, ancient Rome and the medieval age. A lot of the medieval themes as well as some of the female protagonists have been inspired by the war of Roses (1455-1487). The War of Roses was caused by the financial turmoil following the hundred year war and was primarily a conflict between the houses of Lancaster and York, which is reflected in the conflict by the two principal families of the series the Lannisters and the Starks (Frankel, 2014).

## *2.2 Definition and determinants of health*

The introduction to the “Constitution of WHO as adopted by the International Health Conference, New York from 1846”, defines health as: “Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity” (WHO, 1946). Since then several iterations (WHO, 1986, 1991, 1997, 2000) have updated and modified the definition of health putting it in a social, cultural and ideological context. One abbreviated definition by the UN states that health: “is the ability to live an economically and socially productive life” (Mæland, 2010). Antonovsky stressed the salutogenic approach defining health as a state characterized by a strong feeling of life being structured, manageable and meaningful (“Sense of Coherence” (SOC)), which will increase the resistance towards disease causing stressors in the environment (Antonovsky, 1996). Along similar lines the Norwegian researcher Peter F Hjorth defined health as being: “able to manage the demands of daily life” (Hjorth, 1994).

Updates to the 1946 UN definition of health have stressed two key determinants of health: “Settings” and “Equity”. Settings constitute defined frames of reference for any type of intervention (Hanson, 2007). Settings also have multiple definitions. Initially it was defined as a physical boundary, within which people interact in certain roles and organizational structures as defined in WHO consensus publications (WHO, 1986): “health is created and lived by people within the settings of their everyday life; where they learn, work, play, and love” (WHO 1986). A broader definition adds social interaction, economics, shared values and norms and the possibility of pursuing leisure activities (WHO, 1991). Bronfenbrenner defined settings as ecological systems at the micro- (individual and immediate family), meso- (extended family, workplace, neighborhood) and macro-levels (politics, values, customs, laws) (Sørensen, Graff-Iversen, Enger-Karlsen, Narum, & A., 2002). In her “ecological model of health promotion” Dooris described settings as complex dynamic systems with inputs, throughputs and outputs (e.g. a university). (Dooris, M. 2009). In my analysis below I will rely heavily on Bronfenbrenners definitions.

Equity has been defined as “differences in the quality of health and healthcare between different populations across race, ethnic, socioeconomic and sexual orientation” (Green & Tones, 2010; Whitehead, 1991). Antonovsky also found that Sense of Coherence and thereby resistance against disease varied with social class, societal and historical circumstances (Antonovsky, 1993a). Numerous analyses have demonstrated the presence of gender-based inequity with women suffering poorer health than men, being most prominent in lesser developed societies (Green & Tones, 2010)

### *2.3 Empowerment*

Empowerment is a precondition for effective development processes and has been embedded as a crucial determinant for success of health promotion in WHO guidance documents (Green & Tones, 2010; WHO, 1986). Together with equity, empowerment is considered a pivotal element of health promotion (Green & Tones, 2010). The term “empowerment” has undergone many different definitions over time from delegating authority to the more elaborate health promotional definitions, such as: “a social process of recognizing promoting and enhancing peoples abilities to meet their own needs, solve their

own problems and mobilize the necessary resources in order to feel in control of their own lives” (Green & Tones, 2010; Hanson, 2007). Or put in simpler terms: “Empowerment is a process helping people to assert control over factors, which affect their health” (Gibson 1991; Tveiten 2007). As emphasized by Bronfenbrenner empowerment can take place at the individual-, group-, society-, and various other organizational (micro-, meso-, macro-) levels. Empowerment is closely related to change in power structures (Laverack, 2004). Power is traditionally defined as the ability to exercise your own choices despite resistance and can be implemented either through authority, force, manipulation or persuasion (Laverack, 2004).

#### *2.4 Female empowerment and health promotion*

Traditionally, interventions related to women’s health have centered around reproductive health focusing on female circumcision, child marriage, prevention of spread of sexually transmitted diseases (STD) including HIV, contraception, pregnancy related illness and mortality, ante- and perinatal health and promotion of breast feeding (Nour, 2008; Temmerman, 2015). These areas are obvious choices with 530,000 women yearly dying in childbirth and 10-20 million will suffer long term complications after childbirth; 130 million having undergone genital cutting; 52 million girls having been married before the age of 18 and over 33 million women and men suffering from HIV infections (Nour, 2008). Limiting partner violence, tackling women’s cancers and other non-communicable diseases, improving nutrition and treating mental illness have, however, also more recently been singled out as important issues (Temmerman 2015) and included in the new UN goals for female health promotion (Bustreo, 2015). Newer research has demonstrated that mortality and morbidity of women in today’s developing world is not only related to reproduction and HIV/AIDS any more, but mainly to chronic diseases (cardiovascular disease, cancer, diabetes) and non-communicable disease (traffic accidents, drug and alcohol abuse). These disease outnumber deaths due to pregnancy and HIV/AIDS by a factor 3-4 in developing countries, as well as the developed world (Raymond, 2005). Two important preconditions for empowerment are change of power structures and expansion of power relations (Green & Tones, 2010). For the individual to seek change in his/her life situation they need to have knowledge of how their conditions differ from that of others, otherwise they will not seek change through empowerment. In order to promote effective empowerment one therefore has to know the fundamental power structures in the

setting in which one is operating, - a key aim of critical discourse analysis (T.A. van Dijk, 2008). Generally, the most effective principle in health promotion seems to be the “bottom up” approach entailing empowerment of people from the grass root level, while “top-down” approaches with initiatives starting from the “ruling” classes are considered less effective. In order to achieve female participation in a “bottom up” approach, however, they need to be present and active in the public space (Green & Tones, 2010).

In the traditional, paternalistic family pattern, which still dominates in most parts of the world, women are at the center of family life and confined the private sphere. The man is the breadwinner, mostly away from home, occupying the public space. Women are the primary caregivers for children and in many cultures for the elderly too; they cook the food and clean the home (Ramirez-Valles, 1998). This may give women a certain empowerment in the home and a central role in health promotion at the micro and meso level, depending on gender balance and religious conviction (Ramirez-Valles, 1998). While dominating in terms of presence at the family level, most of their actions in many societies still have to be accepted by their husband or his family. The contribution of women to processes at the macro levels in most cultures are therefore hampered by their limited participation in the public space due to barriers like poverty, lack of education, family hierarchies and traditionally and religiously determined roles (Ramirez-Valles, 1998; Temmerman 2015). Empowerment affects not only the health and wellbeing of women themselves by lowering the number of child births through anticonception, reducing mortality during child birth and by limiting violence and abuse, but also improves family structure, improves the health and development of children and will have a positive impact on economic development in general (Bustreo, 2015; Ramirez-Valles, 1998). Corwin defined three forms of power: social, economic and political (Corwin, 1978). Based on this definition one might say that women mainly exert social power, while their economic and political power is still limited in **most** cultures. This is important, because dominant groups in the public space shape people’s needs and wants by means of mass media, indoctrination at school and socialization (Lukes, 1974). Therefore, despite the fact that women have great influence on health promotion in relation to children their own health is still suffering mainly due to diseases associated with reproduction and childbirth as well as domestic violence. From a salutogenetic perspective (Antonovsky, 1996), the a restricted and passive roles of women in many societies constitute a significant stressor reducing their sense of coherence.

After the second world war most countries subscribed to the notion that general health of populations, especially in the developing world would improve with economic progress and development of infrastructure (Ramirez-Valles, 1998). In the seventies this approach was reversed, as its failure was obvious. The focus for health promotion, including that of the UN, then changed to grass root, community based initiatives focusing on community health workers (Ramirez-Valles, 1998).

Steps to improve health promotion among women at the grass root level center around improving education as it may alter the traditional balance of power between genders, thus affecting decision making in the family and improve access to healthcare (Caldwell, 1990). The current state of female involvement in the public space, however, hampers their ability to participate more actively in such activities (Ramirez-Valles, 1998).

## *2.5 Depiction of women in mass media*

In the context of this thesis I am defining mass media:” A medium of communication (as newspapers, radio, movies or television) that is designed to reach the mass of the people” (Meriam-Webster Dictionary). In order to collect literature on this issue I performed literature searches of Pubmed, Cinahl, Psychinfo, Idun and Cochrane databases using different combinations of the keywords: female, woman, women, media, mass media, and empowerment.

Gender identity is formed through enacting particular gender roles via a variety of interacting forces, including discourse in the media (Mazzarella, 2015; Walter, 2015). While women over the last years have increased their participation in the workplace, their representation in media production and management is still limited, and whatever region is studied (western, communist, southern societies) women are severely underrepresented in content too (Tuchman, 1978). Thus, with a few exceptions mass media depiction of women has been criticized for being stereotypical portraying women mostly as passive, confined to the home, dependent on the male protagonist and very little to say in the public space, which is male dominated (van Zoonen, 2000). Media depiction of women also has profound impact on female body image, as highlighted in numerous studies. Problems with body image and identity among adolescent girls, has been quoted as a risk factor for the

development of serious diseases like anorexia nervosa (Andrist, 2003; Benowitz-Fredericks, 2012). It has been emphasized that the constant bombardment with slim models in media plays a role for the body image pressure that most adolescents quote as a major stressor (Rysst, 2010). When adolescent girls fail to achieve the extremely thin image they crave, body dissatisfaction results, and disordered eating may ensue. Research of the pediatric and adolescent literature demonstrates that children as young as 5 start having concerns about their bodies, and want to be thinner (Andrist, 2003).

2.5.1 Disney princesses, Teenage magazines, romance novels and soap operas  
Entertainment genres popular among women like romance novels, teenage magazines, soap operas have all been criticized for stereotyping women (Thornham, 2007; van Zoonen, 2000). While boys may be able to challenge the social order in the public sphere, most women are confined to do that in their personal sphere, and teenage magazines, romance novels as well as soap operas cater to this part of women's lives. It has been argued that the induction of passive roles for women by media starts in early childhood with fairytales depicting princesses as passive individuals just waiting for the strong and beautiful prince on the white horse coming to take them away (Anhøj, 2016). Formerly the Disney narrative favored daydreaming to forget eventual bad experiences (e.g. Cinderella) and acceptance of others forming your life (Anhøj, 2016). More recently, however, even Disney has changed the portrayal of female protagonists towards more empowered protagonists, as for example in the recent blockbuster "Frozen". In childhood girls are still conditioned to like pink and from birth to play with dolls, while boys are conditioned to like blue color, given different toys and play aggressive games (Anhøj, 2016; Walter, 2015). In adolescence Teenage magazines focus on romance, fashion, pop-music. Just like romance novels, and soap operas, teenage magazines have been accused of presenting an "all-embracing, suffocating totality of romance and emotion stopping women from thinking about anything else (McRobbie, 1982).

Romance novels are still an essential part of magazines catering to women and enforce the general impression of female behavior promoted by these publications, all over the world, Norway included (Saromaa, 2010). Janice Radway analyzed romance novels in the eighties (Radway, 1984). She found a general pattern in the narrative of these novels where the heroine generally moves from an initial state of loss and isolation into the arms of the hero giving her maturity and fulfillment. Initially men are portrayed as emotionally stunted, but

though the ability of the heroine to “read her man” she nurtures him into a sensitive figure with masculine power and prestige (Radway, 1984). Thus the woman leaves the man in the public sphere while she occupies the domestic space, thus preserving a patriarchal status quo. The popularity of romance novels has been ascribed to a dominant desire for a fulfilled heterosexual relationship among women (Thornham, 2007). The romance novel permits the women to live out their fantasies, while at the same time accepting continued male dominance of the public space (Radway, 1984; Thornham, 2007).

Soap operas have been analyzed extensively in feminist critique of mass media, because they constitute on genre specifically catering to women only, therefore given the name “The matriarchal Soap” (Gjelsvik & Schubart, 2016). As pointed out by van Zoonen (van Zoonen, 2000) the research cited on soap operas mainly relates to an outdated family pattern from a time before a large proportion entered the workplace. Several studies have, however, demonstrated that women today still like the format (Ang & Hermes, 1991) and that soaps may play an important role for the construction of female identity. The research also finds that soap operas are popular, because they offer opportunities to try out different subjectivities, without the risks involved trying the same process in real life (Ang, 1990). The work by Seiter et al. (Seiter, 1989), Katz and Liebes (Katz & Liebes, 1990) found that US working class women used daytime soaps as a well come distraction during their workday. They rarely sat down to watch, but instead had the series running while working, although some used soap watching as a lunch break.

### 2.5.2 Nighttime entertainment

Several analyses of the most popular nighttime entertainment like “Dallas” and “Dynasty” have been published most notably by Ang et al. (Ang & Hermes, 1991; van Zoonen, 2000). Both series have many characteristics in common, they feature male protagonists, and women only play passive roles as objects of sexual desire with an occasional unruly, wild woman trying to undermine the leader of the clan (e.g. Alexis and Crystal in “Dynasty”)(van Zoonen, 2000).

Analyses of these series emphasize the importance of letting the viewer detach themselves from reality, but with the consent of a male dominated society (Thornham, 2007). Crime series, thrillers, legal series dominating nighttime entertainment over the last 4 decades,

e.g. Ironside, McCloud, Columbo, Kojak, Sopranos also show pronounced male dominance (Thornham, 2007).

Not all-nighttime entertainment, however, is following the pattern outlined above with women generally occupying subordinate roles. The crime series Cagney & Lacey was the first to break the traditional pattern, with two female protagonists and narratives focusing on more feminine issues including more focus on the private lives of the two (Thornham, 2007; van Zoonen, 2000). Recently especially Scandinavian series like “Forbrydelsen”, “Broen” have added to the number of crime series focusing on women. It has, however, been argued that when women step into “male narrative as is the case in crime series they nearly always lose their feminine characteristics to become one of the boys (Thornham, 2007). Among non-crime series: “Sex and the city”, have been classified as post feministic advances in media portrayal of women playing along with the third wave of feminism, because they focus on independent women at different ages, wearing flashy clothes, eating at expensive restaurants, attending parties and approaching men on their own terms, - typical third wave feminists (Anhøj, 2016). They are portrayed being obsessed with fashion, make up and hairdo. They also display a very active and varied sex life with multiple partners, but towards the end they still chase a committed, monogamous relationship on patriarchal terms (Anhøj, 2016; van Zoonen, 2000; Walter, 2015). As an example, - Carrie spends most of all seasons in “Sex and the City” trying to satisfy Mr. Big and convince him to marry her, despite all her previous deliberations about bad relationships. In the last sequel of the series she want to marry Mr. Big, concluding that “ a bad relationship, is better than none at all” (Anhøj, 2016). The Alexis of “Sex and the City” is Samantha, who is the most independent of the four girls, pursuing any man she wants without any wish to marry him. Her figure goes against all norms for Disney princesses.

The more recent popular mass media series: “Ally McBeal”, “Bridget Jones” and “Gray’s Anatomy” have also been praised for their narrative going against the paternalistic norm for mass media. In “Bridget Jones” the protagonist is working in Advertising. Despite her successes in her work life, she longs for the ultimate committed husband. It comes in the form of her boss. “Ally McBeal” portrays a young female lawyer in a law firm. This firm is depicted as a highly sexualized environment, where lawyers and secretaries routinely

date, flirt with, or have a romantic history with each other. Despite her independence as a well-qualified lawyer, Ally still lives on paternalistic terms, when it comes to her love life. The *Hospital* series, “*Gray’s Anatomy*”, shows the life of female as male doctors in and outside the hospital. The trend is the same as in *Ally McBeal*, where the female doctors, despite their ability to stand on their own, live their love life on the conditions of the males, in whom they are interested.

## *2.6 Media, female empowerment and health promotion*

Media constitute important determinants of public discourse, balance between spouses at the family level (Letamo & Navaneetham, 2015) and participation in civic debate (Beaudoin, 2006). Several studies have demonstrated the importance of mass media for empowerment and female health promotion especially in less developed societies (Ali 2011; Beaudoin 2006). The impact of mass media in health promotion was demonstrated by a recent study showing reporting that most women are more receptive to health information provided by television campaigns than by other means e.g. Internet searches (Lyu, 2014). One study in Egypt demonstrated the risk of female genital mutilation decreased with increased female empowerment (Afifi, 2009). Also in Egypt it was demonstrated that general anxiety among women declined with increased empowerment (Yount, 2014). Decisions on anticonception, where women experience antagonism from spouses, is heavily influenced by exposure to mass media (Chapagain, 2005; Gulati, 2008) (Letamo & Navaneetham, 2015) as is their attitude towards hormone replacement therapy (Henwood, 2003). These are areas where potential discordance between husband and wife may prevent progress. The same holds for the attitude to child vaccination, where exposure to mass media results in higher rates of vaccination (Gargano, 2015). Mass media exposure may also reduce female exposure to domestic violence (Russo & Pirlott, 2006). One study in Iran, however, reported that higher educated women were more exposed to domestic violence (Moghaddam Hosseini, 2013).

Even soap operas have been used to target health promotional messages to specific audiences. An innovative approach was tested in the urban Northeast of the US, where a soap opera (“*Love, Sex and Choices*”) was created specifically to inform and at the same time entertain 238 high-risk young African American women about HIV risk behavior. The episodes were screened on smartphones provided to the participants in the study

(Jones & Lacroix, 2012). Participants answering questions after each episode secured via weekly e-mail messages and adherence. A control group was only receiving written HIV health promotion messages. After completion of the study both arms exhibited less unprotected sex with men from a levels of 21-22 to 5-6 acts per 6 months. The reduction was 18% higher in the video over the text arm, but not statistically significant different (Jones, 2013). Nevertheless, this approach may hold significant promise in the future. One study in China demonstrated the empowering capacity of so called Photo Novellas, - photos documenting daily life of these women (Wang & Burris, 1994)

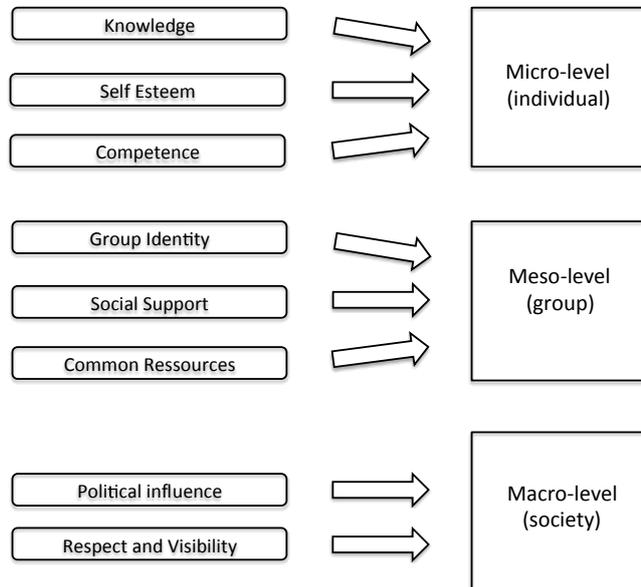
## *2.7 Factors affecting empowerment*

Below I have summarized the main determinants of empowerment as outlined by Green and tones (Green & Tones, 2010) (Fig. 2).

At the micro level, knowledge, self-esteem and competence are considered key determinants. For the individual to seek change in his/her life situation they need to have education and know how their conditions differ from that of others, otherwise they will be less inclined to seek change through empowerment. For individuals to be motivated to seek empowerment they also need to have self-esteem to initiate change, participate in civic debate and competence to implement the necessary changes in their life.

At the group (meso) level, group identity will enhance empowerment by clarifying the individuals place in society. Social support at both family and group level and common resources are obvious preconditions for implementations of change. For empowerment changes implemented at the micro- and meso level to gain societal impact, political influence is an obvious must. Political influence of any given group naturally emerges from the respect and visibility this group has gained.

Fig. 2. Factors influencing empowerment in different settings. After (Green & Tones, 2010). See text for further details.



Social capital can be viewed as encompassing the three determinants of empowerment at the meso-level outlined in Fig. 1. One of the more comprehensive definitions by Villalonga et al. (Villalonga-Olives & Kawachi, 2015) states: “Social capital consists of the resources embedded in the social structure (e.g. an organization, a residential community, or a workplace) which facilitate the actions of individuals in them”.

Mittelmark suggested that the possible benefits of strong social relations are better functioning individuals, families, neighborhoods and work groups thus promoting improved physical and mental health. In this definition it is related to the salutogenetic term “lack of coherence” (Antonovsky, 1993b). If the population being targeted for health promotion activities is fragmented and disconnected, i.e. lacking sense of coherence, little progress can be anticipated.

Empowerment at the macro levels depends on political influence and visibility on the social scene. This is where female empowerment really suffers in many societies. Due to lack of influence at the meso level the participation of women at the macro levels where major decisions are made concerning health promotion is still severely limited.

### 3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1 *Ontological and epistemological aspects of my analysis*

Ontology is defined as the philosophical study of the nature of being, becoming, existence or reality as well as the basic categories of being and their relations (Dictionary, 2017). Ontology pertains to the study of our view of the world and the place of humans in this context (Nyeng, 2012). Epistemology describes how we discover, ascertain the world around us, and the validity of the methods employed in this process (Nyeng, 2012). Traditionally research has focused on 3 different ontological and epistemological paradigms: positivism/empiricism, hermeneutic/interpretivism and critical theory (Dieronitou, 2014; Nyeng, 2012; Usher, 1996).

I chose to use discourse analysis as a qualitative research method to study how women are portrayed in mass media. As epitomized by Nyeng: “The aim of qualitative analysis is to describe how reality is perceived and how it is to be human in specific situations” (Nyeng, 2012). The analysis of female portrayal in media and the gender discourse related associated with it, I find is well in line with this description. The aim of qualitative research is not to prove or disprove a specific theory, but rather to get better and deeper understanding of mainly social phenomena (Johannessen, 2010), in this case media portrayal of women. The ontological and epistemological foundation for discourse analysis has traditionally been in hermeneutics, more specifically social constructivism and interpretivism. From an epistemological standpoint social constructivism does not look for a single representation of truth, but varies with the individual perception of social actions and society, thus depending on the social, historical, cultural and political context (Cooper & Thorogood, 2013). My analysis also involved a semi quantitative analysis of empowerment/disempowerment aspects of all discourses involving women in season 1 and 5 of GoT as support for the qualitative analysis.

#### 3.2 *Discourse analysis*

Discourse analysis examines the relation between language and the context in which it is used. The phrase context covers issues like ideologies, gender, identity, ethnicity and culture (Paltridge, 2012). Put in another way: “Discourse analysis examines how language is used to create, maintain and destroy social connections”. This separates discourse from

what has been called the language system, which is a precondition for speaking a language (vocabulary, grammaticism). Michel Foucault, who made significant contributions around discourse analysis stated that discourses organized social experiences to make them understandable for the individuals involved (Sandberg, 2004).

Other more complex definitions include:

1. Discourse is language above the sentence
2. Discourse is language in use
3. Discourse is a form of social practice in which language plays a formal role

Generally the 2 last definition are the most widely used, permitting the pure linguistic analysis to be replaced by a broader view on the role of language in our understanding of social reality (Cameron & Panovic, 2014). The discourse ideally becomes a reflection of people's experiences, feelings, attitudes and concerns, which exist independently of the discourse itself. This ideal is, however, probably never reached. Rather one might look at discourse analyses as a reflection of the "social voices in the community" (Matheson, 2005). A widely used method is so called "critical discourse analysis". At the center of critical discourse analysis stands the question of power and control, and how these elements are exercised (Paltridge, 2012; van Dijk, 2008).

In this thesis, I plan to use discourse analysis to study how women are portrayed in mass media as exemplified in one of the most popular fiction series, currently shown all over the world. I will try to uncover how the power structures affecting women in a patriarchal medieval, albeit mythical society, affect their relations to the opposite sex and children and ultimately their empowerment.

### *3.3 Discourse analysis applied to TV and movies*

Discourse analysis is not limited to written text, but can also be used for analysis of images, movies, commercials etc., with the aim of identifying open as well as hidden messages being conveyed (Paltridge, 2012; Rose, 2012). All visual representations carry with them both open and hidden messages reflecting the social context in which they were formed (Paltridge, 2012; Rose, 2012). The analysis tools and strategies for discourse

analysis of pictures and movies are principally the same as for analysis of texts, taking into account the additional information, which can be gained from the visual scene (Paltridge, 2012).

Various philosophers engaging in the analysis of movies and TV have argued that the reason narratives excite us is due to the fact that they let us recognize, fundamental characters, archetypes, plots or by mixing these in new ways (Matheson, 2005). Discourse analysis of visual media therefore not only involves looking for particular narratives but more the ways by which readers or viewers will draw on those meanings (Matheson, 2005).

### *3.4 Critique of discourse analysis*

In quantitative research results are evaluated based on 2 key elements: reliability and validity. Reliability related to which data are used, how data are gathered and how data are treated and analyzed (Johannessen 2010). Validity is the extent to which a concept, conclusion or measurement is well- founded and corresponds accurately to the real world (Johannessen 2010). Discourse analysis and qualitative research in general have been criticized for this subjective interpretative nature and subjectivity (Paltridge, 2012) causing limited reliability and validity, because no actual quantitative measurements are performed (Johannessen 2010). The critique has emphasized, that an isolated focus on social constructivism may be too narrow, and that discourse analysis can be perceived as a combination of positivistic and hermeneutic approaches (Dieronitou, 2014; Fairclough, 2005). This critique partly stems from the epistemological differences between positivistic and qualitative research. In line with hermeneutic tradition, proponents of qualitative research in general and discourse analysis in particular, would argue that no research could be called objective. This also has bearings on different interpretations of methodological reliability and validity. Inherent in social constructivism, which forms the basis for discourse analysis is the notion that the ways we understand and categorize everyday life are not objective reflections of a world 'out there'. They constitute a product of historically and culturally specific understandings of the world created and maintained through social interaction between people in their everyday lives (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002). Reliability of qualitative research is improved by thorough descriptions of how data were collected and documentation of the whole evaluation process (Johannessen 2010). Validity

of qualitative research is strengthened by longstanding observation in order to gain thorough familiarity with the subject studied (Lincoln & Guba, 1994). Method triangulation involving the use of different qualitative research techniques, e.g. interview coupled with observation will increase validity of the data obtained (Lincoln & Guba, 1994)

In opposition to the positivistic critique pertaining to subjectivity causing lack of reliability, proponents argue that the subjectivity is a strength, because it is by seeing the world through a particular theory that we can distance ourselves from some of our taken-for-granted understandings and subject our material to new questions, thus advancing our understanding of the world we live in (Potter & Wetherell, 1987). Others argue that, while qualitative research sometimes fulfill quantitative reliability and validity criteria, it sometimes has to be judged also by criteria like generality and objectivity (Johannessen 2010). Generality refers to the fact that results obtained in one study can be transferred to other areas of research, while objectivity refers to the results obtained by one researcher can be corroborated by other researchers.

Potter and Wetherell (1987) argued that the validity of qualitative research, discourse analysis included, should be measured on two criteria: "coherence of and fruitfulness". Coherence refers to the coherence of the arguments brought forward in the analysis. Fruitfulness refers to the ability of the analysis to provide new explanations. The criteria are, however, not uniformly accepted. It has been argued that the impression of coherence in a given analysis is subjective and that striving for coherence in arguments may mask opposing voices, thus preserving knowledge following already accepted lines. (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002). Fruitfulness is defined by the ability of a given scientific methodology to produce new knowledge (Potter & Wetherell, 1987). Others have stated that the information should be immediately useful to the informants in order to be fruitful (Tracy, 1995).

### *3.5 Discourse analysis of GoT*

In order to analyze the female discourse in GoT I analyzed the first and fifth season of GoT. I chose the first 5 seasons, because they are the episodes based on the original books. Seasons 1 and 5 of GOT were subjected to detailed discourse analysis in order to assess

eventual changes in the portrayal of the 8 dominating female protagonists as the series progressed. I also viewed Seasons 2, 3, 4 in order to complete the summary narrative for each protagonist, but these seasons were not subject of detailed discourse analysis. The methodology used in this analysis plan is based on the texts by Paltridge (Paltridge, 2006), Fairclough (Fairclough, 1995) and Schneider (Schneider, 2013) outlining the practical steps involved in discourse analysis. Season 1 and 5 were subjected to detailed analysis. The other seasons were used in the narrative summary associated with each female protagonist below. The analysis followed the following steps:

### 3.5.1 Step 1.

I catalogued all sequences in the show showing discourse relating to empowerment/disempowerment of women in that sequence. In season 1 a total of 105 and in season 5 a total of 110 discourses involving women were analyzed. For each discourse I categorized how text and visual expression related to each other and classified whether the sequence showed overall empowerment or disempowerment of the protagonist(s). For this I used an EXCEL spreadsheet (Schneider, 2013). In the spreadsheet empowerment was given the mark +1 and disempowerment was given the mark -1. I could have chosen a more gradual scale for the marking, but was afraid it might increase the subjectivity of the analysis. As I analyzed over 200 discourses I thought a simple +1/-1 marking per episode might better reflect the overall balance of the season.

Season 1 and 5 were compared for potential differences in key categories. I chose not to analyze each empowerment factor on its own, as I found that they usually followed the same pattern when it came to empowerment/disempowerment balance. For seasons 1 and 5 I chose to mark each episode for empowerment/disempowerment at the three setting levels: micro, meso and macro (see attachment 1 and 2). I found the separation into three setting levels useful, as the empowerment/disempowerment balance at the three levels might not necessary be the same. For example Queen Cersei Baratheon was portrayed in several situations where she was disempowered at the micro- and meso level, but still displayed empowerment at the macro levels in her function as de facto ruler of Kings Landing. Some protagonists had no political influence at all (e.g. Arya), and were not marked for macro level discourse accordingly.

### 3.5.2 Step 2

After having marked all discourses in season 1 and 5, I used the filter function of the EXCEL spreadsheet for each protagonist. This isolates all discourses involving that specific protagonist. I then transferred that data to a separate spreadsheet in order to calculate summary statistics for each protagonist through season 1 and season 5 separately (The last page of the EXCEL spreadsheet showing the results for Sansa in season 1 and 5 are shown in attachments 3 and 4). For each protagonist I then calculated the sum of empowerment/disempowerment in season 1 and season 5 in order to compare the two seasons in order to detect eventual changes in empowerment status (attachment 5). The more negative, the more disempowerment, - the more positive, the more empowered did the protagonist emerge. I also tried to calculate the average empowerment/disempowerment index as:  $\text{empowerment/disempowerment sum/number of scenes per season showing the given protagonist}$ , but did not find that this index was more informative. This formed the basis for Table 1. Catelyn Stark was not present in season 5, and Brienne of Tarth, Melisandre and Margaery Tyrell were absent in season 1. Consequently, they were not subject to a comparative analysis between seasons, but still informative in relation to empowerment/disempowerment balance, while they were portrayed in the series. Consequently, their empowerment/disempowerment sums for either season 1 or 5 were calculated (attachment 5).

### 3.6 *Ethical considerations*

All 5 seasons were downloaded from HBO using a paid subscription and the transcripts of dialogue were obtained from the website "Genius" (<https://genius.com/albums/Game-of-thrones>). The show is publicly accessible, therefore issues related to anonymity and privacy are considered irrelevant. Pictures used in the thesis are pictures filtered from Google and Yahoo as not needing copyright transfer for sharing and using.

## 4 RESULTS

In this chapter I will review each of the 8 female dominant female protagonists in GoT. By dominating I mean the females given most screen time and thus most discursive information. The discourse analysis will focus on season 1 and 5 to show eventual changes in empowerment/disempowerment for each woman as the narrative evolves. A total of 114 scenes in season 1 and 119 scenes in season 5 involving female discourse were analyzed (see attachment). I will, however, also provide a short summary how their actions develop from series 1 to series 5. This will involve a short review of seasons 2,3,4 too, to provide continuity between season 1 and 5.

### 4.1 *Narrative*

Game of Thrones describes the fight between 3 powerful families (the Lannisters, Starks, Targaryens) for the Iron Throne and thus the reign over the Seven Kingdoms. At the fringes further 6 families (the Tyrells, Tullys, Martells, Arryns, Greyjoys, and Baratherons) are involved in the scheming and politics involved. Season 1 starts in Westeros at the castle Winterfell, where King Robert Baratheon is visiting together with his wife, Queen Cersei Baratheon, and his son Joffrey Baratheon. King Robert Baratheon asks Eddard Stark to serve as the Hand of the King. As they are old friends, he reluctantly accepts the offer against the wishes of his wife, Catelyn Stark, hoping he will be able to investigate the suspected murder of his mentor and predecessor as hand of the king, Rob Arryn.

In the second scenario, on the eastern continent of Essos, we meet the exiled children of House Targaryen. The house was destroyed by King Robert to claim the throne. Their father was killed and now the children, Viserys and Daenerys Targaryen, are plotting to return to Westeros and unseat King Robert as revenge. To achieve this goal, Viserys Targaryen arranges the marriage of his sister Daenerys Targaryen to the leader of 40,000 Dothraki warriors, Khal Drogo, in return for the use of his army to invade Westeros.

The third scenario at the beginning of the series is situated at the northern border of the Seven Kingdoms, where the sworn brothers of the Night's Watch guard the Wall, a 300-mile-long fortification of ice. The Watch defends the Wall against the wildlings who live

further north.

Later in season 1, the viewer is presented for the 4<sup>th</sup> main scenario of the series, Kings Landing, where Queen Cersei Baratheon and King Robert Baratheon reside.

In the following the narrative will develop further as it is related to the individual women, who are subjected to analysis.

## 4.2 Discourse analysis of female protagonists in GoT

### 4.2.1 Catelyn Stark



Fig. 3. Catelyn Stark being killed at the “Red Wedding”. Downloaded from Yahoo pictures Free to share.

Catelyn Stark is very much opposed to Eddard Stark accepting the Kings offer to move to Kings Landing as his hand:

In a scene where they discuss Eddard Starks impending leave from Winterfell Catelyn is distraught and looking away from her husband:

*CATELYN STARK: I do not want you to leave. 17 years ago you rode off with Robert*

*Baratheon. You came back a year later with another woman's son. And now you're leaving again.*

*EDDARD STARK: I have no choice.*

*CATELYN STARK: That's what men always say when honor calls. That's what you tell your families, tell yourselves. You do have a choice. And you've made it. I can't do it, Ned. I really can't (S1, E1).*

In this dialogue Catelyn for once stands up against her dominating and powerful husband and it shows her fear, that he might bring home another illegitimate child from his next travels or die.

Early in season 1, her youngest son Bran becomes paralyzed after having been pushed from a tower by Jaime Lannister, because he saw Jaime and his sister Queen Cersei Baratheon making love. Shortly afterwards Bran experiences an assassination attempt, which is averted by Catelyn. She therefore follows Eddard Stark to Kings Landing, to warn him that House Lannister were involved. On her return journey to Winterfell she catches the dwarf Tyrion Lannister and takes him into custody. This incites further conflict between the houses and Eddard Stark is arrested for treason when Cersei Baratheon Lannister becomes de facto ruler following the unexpected death of Robert.

After her husband Eddard Stark is taken prisoner, Catelyn displays increased empowerment and tries to mobilize forces to go against Kings Landing and the Lannisters. Later she takes a son of the Lannister family, Tyrion Lannister, as prisoner and hears that he has been involved in the assassination attempt in her son Bran. Nevertheless, she is forced to release Tyrion Lannister, the brother of Queen Cersei Baratheon of Kings Landing, when he proves his innocence in a trial by a fight. She then joins her son, Robb Stark, who has gathered an army to fight for his father's freedom. Despite the stakes being very high she supports an armed intervention, and they capture another member of the Lannister clan, Jaime Lannister. She then directly wants to influence the military campaign led by her son.

*ROBB STARK: 18,000. If I go to King's Landing and bend my knee to Joffrey...*

*CATELYN STARK: you would never be allowed to leave. No.*

*Our best hope, our only hope, is that you can defeat them in the field.*

*ROBB STARK: And if I lose?*

*CATELYN STARK: Do you know what happened to the Targaryen children, when the Mad King fell?*

*ROBB STARK: They were butchered in their sleep. (S1.E8)*

However, they move too late and Eddard Stark is executed on the order of King Joffrey Baratheon. Catelyn promises Robb that they will revenge him. She even has to suffer the humiliation at the hands of another son of the Lannister Dynasty, Jaime Lannister. While being her prisoner, he admits to paralyzing her son, without her having the ability to take any revenge, even though he is her prisoner.

At the top of her empowerment and influence, Catelyn Stark is killed along with her son, his wife and most of the Stark banner men in an ambush, while attending the wedding of her brother to Roslin Frey (“The Red Wedding”). So she does not appear after season 4.

#### 4.2.2 Sansa Stark



*Fig. 4. Sansa Stark after abuse from Ramsey Bolton. Downloaded from Yahoo pictures.*

*Free to share.*

Sansa Stark, is the eldest daughter and second child of Lord Eddard Stark of Winterfell and his wife Lady Catelyn, and the sister of Robb, Arya, Bran and Rickon Stark, and half-sister of Jon Snow. Sansa Stark was born and raised at Winterfell and enjoys proper "lady-like"

activities, and is good at sewing, embroidering, poetry, singing, dancing, literature and music. She is often portrayed in contrast with her younger sister, Arya Stark who has neither her looks nor interest in feminine activities. Sansa Stark dreams of being a Queen like Cersei Baratheon Lannister, and as King Robert Baratheon offers to marry his son Joffrey Baratheon to her, she accepts wholeheartedly. She longs for the excitement of the capital and begs her parents to agree to the wedding with King Joffrey Baratheon displaying insecurity and passive attitude. The following exchange takes place while Catelyn is doing Sansa's hair:

*SANSA STARK: Do you think Joffrey will like me? What if he thinks I'm ugly?*

Catelyn wants to support her daughter, but her body language signals despair over Sansa's naivety

*CATELYN: Then he is the stupidest prince that ever lived.*

*SANSA STARK: He's so handsome. (S1, E1)*

As the story proceeds, however, she suffers many humiliations, abuse, and rape, while rejecting her younger sister and even witness the execution of her own father at the hands of King Joffrey. During her stay at Kings Landing, she repeatedly is confronted and later helped by Petyr Baelish, also called Littlefinger, who is master of the coins for the king at Kings Landing, but also runs a brothel.

She tries several times to save her father from execution in Kings Landing, ready to do whatever it takes, but is rejected by her future husband:

*KING JOFFREY BARATHEON: Your sweet words have moved me. But your father has to confess. He has to confess and say that I'm the King or there'll be no mercy for him.*

*SANSA STARK: He will. (S1, E8)*

Ultimately, King Joffrey Baratheon executes Eddard Stark. After the death of her father Sansa Stark suffers total humiliation of Joffrey Baratheon forcing her to have a relationship with him. Moreover, he humiliates her further by forcing to her to look at the head of her

deceased father on a stake, while he tells her that she will have to carry his child:

When King Joffrey Baratheon finally discards her and starts a relation with Margaery Tyrell, she is forced to marry another man, Tyrion Lannister, the dwarf, who is the first man to treat her with respect. When Kings Landing becomes too dangerous to her, the brothel owner Petyr Baelish (Littlefinger) helps her to get away from Kings Landing before she is executed. In the buildup to Sansa Stark leaving Kings Landing she is shown interacting with Margaery Tyrell, who is her absolute opposite: goal oriented, shrewd and merciless, which further highlights Sansa Stark's deficiencies. After having fled Kings Landing she roams about in the countryside without real protection, coming close to a violent death several times, fully dependent on others in total disempowerment, until she eventually is forced to marry the psychopathic ruler at Goods wood, now residing at her former home Winterfell, Ramsey Bolton. In the bedroom at their wedding night he rapes, while her former step "brother" Theon, is forced to watch:

RAMSAY BOLTON: *Lying to your husband on his wedding night, - that would be a very bad way to start a marriage. We are man and wife now, we should be honest with each other, don't you think?*

SANSA STARK: *Yes, sir (with a frightening look in her face)*

Ramsay Bolton kisses her.

RAMSAY BOLTON: *Good. Now take off your clothes.*

Theon starts to leave.

RAMSAY BOLTON: *Oh, no. You stay here Reek. You watch. (To Sansa Stark). Do I need to ask a second time? I hate asking a second time (S5.E6).*

In the last part of season 5, Sansa Stark displays increasing empowerment and musters resistance to the treatment she is suffering from Ramsay Bolton. While trying to flee from him she is threatened by an archeress, who threaten to shoot her. She has, however, finally had enough and shows courage even if it may lead to her death:

SANSA STARK: *I know what Ramsey is. I know what he will do to me. If I'm going to die,*

*let it happen while there's still some of me left.*

#### 4.2.3 Arya Stark



*Fig. 4. Arya with her sword: "Needle". Downloaded from Yahoo pictures. Free so share.*

Arya Stark is the third child and second daughter of Lord Eddard Stark and his wife Lady Catelyn Stark. Like Sansa Stark, Arya was born and raised at Winterfell. Contrary to Sansa Stark, Arya rejects the notion that she must become a lady and marry for influence and power. She wants to determine her own destiny. She is a tomboy bored by embroidery and other "lady-like" pursuits, but fascinated by warfare and loves training in the use of arms. Her stepbrother gives her a sword, called the symbolic name "Needle", possibly referring to it being the way Arya Stark learns domestic skills. Later Arya Stark has a major conflict with her sister after King Joffrey Baratheon catches Arya Stark practicing with a boy, which is killed by Joffrey Baratheon. In this discourse Arya Stark opens up for the possibility of killing her enemies, while the two girls are eating in the kitchen:

*ARYA STARK: I'm practicing.*

*SANSA STARK: Practicing for what?*

*ARYA STARK: The Prince.*

*SEPTA MORDANE: Arya, stop*

*ARYA STARK: He's a liar and a coward and he killed my friend.*

*SANSA STARK: You're an idiot (S1.E3)*

When Queen Cersei Baratheon and King Joffrey Baratheon have Eddard Stark arrested and send guards to take Arya Stark into custody, she has to flee and live on the streets of King's Landing. This is where she views the execution of her father. She is later rescued from

Kings Landing facing a journey of hundreds of miles through a warzone, to get to the Northern Wall. During that travel, she is further educated as a fighter by a Knight “The Hound”, who is later fatally wounded by the female Knight, Brienne of Tarth. In that sequence, Arya Stark shows her ruthlessness by leaving “The Hound” to die a painful death instead of killing him, which he is begging for. She then goes to the city of Braavos where she tries to enter “The House of Black and White”, the home of “The Faceless Men”, while fighting for her life relying on her trusted sword, “Needle”. In the House of Black and White she is forced to wash dead people and later even commit murders for the order, whose leader is called Jaqen H'ghar. Her ultimate goal is to kill all the people on her “list” that have wronged her, her friends or family. She gets the first chance to revenge the murder of her fencing teacher, when she encounters his murderer, Meryn Trant, in a brothel. Disguised as a prostitute she confronts Meryn:

*ARYA STARK: You were the first person on my list, you know. For killing Syrio Forel, remember him? Probably not. I've gotten a few of the others. The Many Faced God stole a few more for me. I'm glad he left me you. Do you know who I am?*

Trant struggles to make a noise through the gag.

*ARYA STARK: I can't hear you.*

She stabs him in the stomach.

*ARYA STARK: You know who I am. I'm Arya Stark. (S5.E10)*

A look of surprise comes across Trant's face, he grunts, and then Arya stabs him in the back. She removes the tape.

#### 4.2.4 Queen Cersei Baratheon



*Fig. 5. Cersei Baratheon with her youngest son Thommen. Downloaded from Yahoo Pictures. Free to share.*

Cersei Baratheon is the widow of King Robert Baratheon. Initially, Cersei Baratheon was in love with her husband, but their love gradually deteriorated. Their relationship worsened further when their first son died shortly after his birth. After her feelings for King Robert waned, Cersei carried on an illicit sexual relationship with Jaime her twin brother, who is the father of her three children, Joffrey Baratheon, Myrcella and Thommen Baratheon. She is noted for her great beauty, but is also coming across as completely ruthless and at times even Machiavellian. Baratheon has faced major adversity in her life. She was devastated by her son's loss and refused to have the body taken from her, forcing Robert to hold her while they took her son from her. In her conversation about this incident she says in a rare display of empathy:

*CERSEI BARATHEON tells Catelyn Stark: I lost my first boy, a little black-haired beauty. He was a fighter too. Tried to beat the fever that took him. Forgive me. It's the last thing you need to hear right now. (S1.E1)*

Early in the series, Cersei focuses all her efforts on her son Joffrey Baratheon, who has become a ruthless king after his father. He is a coward, totally unsuitable for war, which he shows during an attack on Kings landing, and even after a minor *wound* following the attack of a wolf, before he is crowned, she tries to empower him beyond his capacity. She is also convinced that Joffrey Baratheon should marry Sansa Stark at any cost, and in the process she totally lets her own gender down by recommending he goes to prostitutes:

JOFFREY BARATHEON: *Do I have to marry her?*

CERSEI BARATHEON: *Yes. She's very beautiful and young. If you don't like her, you only need to see her on formal occasions and when the time comes, to make little princes and princesses. And if you'd rather fuck painted whores, you'll fuck painted whores. And if you'd rather lie with noble virgins, so be it. You are my darling boy and the world will be exactly as you want it to be. Do something nice for the Stark girl.*

JOFFREY BARATHEON: *I don't want to (S1, E3)*

After the death of King Robert she supports her son when he wants to kill Eddard Stark. This happens when Eddard Stark shows the letter written by King Robert Baratheon, where he stipulates that Eddard Stark should follow him as King. In this sequence Cersei is at the top of her empowerment:

CERSEI LANNISTER: *May I see that letter, Ser Barristan?*

*Protector of the realm. Is this meant to be your shield, Lord Stark? A piece of paper?*

*Cersei shreds Robert's letter to pieces*

BARRISTAN SELMY: *Those were the King's words.*

CERSEI LANNISTER: *We have a new King now. Lord Eddard, when we last spoke you offered me some counsel. Allow me to return the courtesy. Bend the knee, My Lord.*

*Bend the knee and swear loyalty to my son and we shall allow you to live out your days in the gray waste you call home.*

EDDARD STARK: *Your son has no claim to the throne.*

KING JOFFREY: *Liar!*

CERSEI LANNISTER: *You condemn yourself with your own mouth, Lord Stark.*

*Ser Barristan, seize this traitor.*

After her husband's death, her dictatorial father wants Cersei Baratheon to remarry, which she refuses. She continues her conspirations at the court after the death of Joffrey Baratheon and spend a lot of time fighting against Margaery Tyrell, but cannot prevent her from marrying her younger son Tommen Baratheon. In several later scenes Margaery Tyrell ridicules Cersei Baratheon in front of her friends.

Later Queen Cersei Baratheon tries to guide her son, the new king Tommen Baratheon, who is immature and indecisive. He shows total lack of leadership when his whole family including Cersei Baratheon and Margaery Tyrell are imprisoned by the Sparrow, the leader of the religious cult "The Faith of the Seven". In the following discourse Cersei discusses fate with her youngest son Tommen.

*CERSEI BARATHEON: No matter who you are, no matter how strong you are, sooner or later, you'll face circumstances beyond your control. Events you couldn't possibly have anticipated or prevented even if you had. You cannot blame yourself for fate. Your father, your brother, your grandfather-- I was Queen of the Seven Kingdoms and what could I do? Hold them as they left this world. Kissed their heads after they'd gone.*

*THOMMEN BARATHEON: I'll call in the army. I'll take back the sept and kill every last one of them. I'll start a war if I have to.*

*CERSEI BARATHEON: Your happiness is all I want in this world*

*THOMMEN BARATHEON: I know.*

*CERSEI BARATHEON: No you don't. You can't possibly. Not until you have children of your own. I would do anything for you. Anything to keep you from harm. I would burn cities to the ground. That is all that matters. You and your sister. From the moment you came into this world, my boy. My only boy. (S5.E7).*

Cersei Baratheon embraces him and starts crying.

In the religious fanatics she meets people that are impossible to impress and do things her way- She then has to stand trial and suffer humiliating question about her private life:

*CERSEI BARATHEON: I have sinned. I see that now. How could I have been so blind for so long. I want to be clean again. I want absolution. The Crone came to me with her lamp*

*raised high, and with its holy light (S5.E10)*

Ultimately, she is forced to walk naked through the streets of Kings Landing with short hair while subjected to the hate and abuse of the citizens of Kings Landing as the ultimate humiliation. But despite this terrible scenario she remains upright in posture, unflinching, thus still preserving some dignity as Queen (Gjelsvik & Schubart, 2016).

#### 4.2.5 Queen Daenerys Targaryen



*Fig. 6. Daenerys with one of her dragons. Downloaded from Yahoo pictures. Free to share.*

Daenerys Targaryen is the younger sister of Viserys Targaryen and the youngest child of King Aerys II Targaryen, who was ousted from the Iron Throne and killed by King Robert Baratheon.

Upbringing:

After their father's death, her mother, who was pregnant with her, fled to the island of Dragonstone, the ancestral home of House Targaryen, taking Daenerys's brother with her. Her mother died soon after she was born, leaving her an orphan. Later she and her brother were taken into exile by staff loyal to the king. After years trying to raise support to retake the Iron Throne without success, Viserys and Daenerys Targaryen settled in the Free City of Pentos. Eventually, Viserys brokered a deal for her, at the age of 13, to marry *Khal* Drogo of the Dothraki in exchange for an army of 40,000 men. Daenerys Targaryen does

not want to marry Drogo, Viserys, however tells her that she has no choice. On their wedding night, Daenerys Targaryen is resistant but Drogo continues with intercourse regardless in a scene approaching rape. As Drogo's army marches east for several months, Daenerys Targaryen seeks advice on how to best please her husband from her servant Doreah. She learns to make Drogo look her into her eyes while having sex, which improves their relationship. It makes him respect her more.

*DOREAH: No, Khaleesi. You must look in his eyes always. Love comes in at the eyes. It is said that Irogonia of Lys could finish a man with nothing but her eyes.*

*DAENERYS TARGARYEN: Finish a man?*

*DOREAH: Kings traveled across the world for a night with Irogonia. Magisters sold their palaces. Khals burned her enemies just to have her for a few hours. They say a thousand men proposed to her and she refused them all.*

*DAENERYS TARGARYEN: Well, she sounds like an interesting woman. I don't think that Drogo will like it with me on top.*

*DOREAH: You will make him like it, Khaleesi. Men want what they've never had (S1.E1)*

Later she discovers that she is pregnant with Drogo's child. She gets the respect of Drogo and this strengthens their marriage further and as Daenerys Targaryen eats the raw heart of a stallion and names her unborn son Rhaego in honor of her dead brother, Rhaegar Targaryen. Drogo is very proud and his affection for her increases steadily.

Her brother, Viserys, is furious at how Daenerys Targaryen has won the love of the Dothraki and during a drunken party he demands that Khal Drogo pay the agreed price for Daenerys by providing troops for the invasion of Westeros. When Viserys later proceeds to threaten Daenerys Targaryen and her unborn child, Viserys is executed by the Dothraki by pouring molten gold over his head. Despite her love for Khal Drogo Daenerys Targaryen is upset by the cruelty of Khal's army, where it is customary to kill and rape after victory.

Daenerys Targaryen tries to convince Drogo to invade Kings Landing, so their son might claim the Iron Throne, but he is less enthusiastic, and does not feel inclined to honor the bargain. She later survives an assassination attempt by a wine seller ordered by King Robert. The assassination attempt causes Drogo to reverse his decision and now he

promises to conquer the Seven Kingdoms. During the fighting Drogo gets a chest wound, which becomes infected, and gradually weakened by the infection, he finally falls from his horse. Daenerys Targaryen makes sure Drogo is being treated by a slave witch, Mirri Maz Duur. During a fight between the Dothraki, while Drogo is in a vegetative state, Daenerys Targaryen is injured and goes into labor. The baby, however, is malformed and dies. This has a profound impact on the later actions of Daenerys Targaryen.

Later the witch Mirri Maz Duur admits that the ritual that saved Drogo drew its power from the death of Daenerys Targaryen son, causing the stillbirth and monstrous appearance of the child. Daenerys Targaryen is appalled by the lifelessness of Drogo and smothers him with a pillow. Later, for the first time she orders the killing of a person, namely, Mirri Maz Duur, whom she holds responsible for the death of both Drogo and her son. She orders her adviser Ser Jorah Marmont to burn the witch.

DAENERYS TARGARYEN: *Ser Jorah, bind this woman to the pyre. You swore to obey me.*

*(To the crowd) I am Daenerys Targaryen Stormborn of House Targaryen of the blood of old Valyria. I am the Dragon's daughter. And I swear to you that those who would harm you will die screaming.*

MIRRI MAZ DUUR: *You will not hear me scream.*

DAENERYS TARGARYEN: *I will. But it is not your screams I want. Only your life (S1 E10).*

Then she constructs a funeral pyre for Drogo's body and ties Duur to it. She places the 3 dragon eggs on the pyre too, and after a speech to the remaining Dothraki she steps into the blaze from the pyre. The events leading to Khal Drogo's death illustrate her empowerment as queen (Khaleesi). The following morning it is revealed that she has survived, and three newly hatched dragons are clinging to her body. Ser Jorah and the remaining Dothraki fall to their knees, proclaiming Daenerys Targaryen their queen and leader. Later she proceeds to conquer several cities including the city of Meereen, but although she thinks she is setting slaves free they rebel against her together with the former ruling slaveholders in the city. In dealing with these conflicts she becomes increasingly ruthless, but also encounters a lot of resistance, which makes her doubt her ability to lead.

BARRISTAN: *The Sons of the Harpy will hear that message.*

MOSSADOR: *Make them very angry.*

DAENERYS TARGARYEN: *Angry snakes lash out. Makes chopping off their heads that much easier. Find the men who did this and bring them to me. (S5.E1)*

She also tries to create a more human environment by outlawing gladiator fights, but also here she meets a lot of resistance, much to her surprise. Her rule in Meereen is plagued by her indecisiveness and ambivalence when it comes to using power.

#### 4.2.6 Melisandre



*Fig. 7. Melisandre at war. Downloaded from Yahoo Pictures. Free to share.*

Melisandre is also known as "The Red Woman", and is a priestess with magical abilities. She is portrayed as a beautiful woman with red hair, - always dressed in red. Melisandre believes that Stannis will be able to convert the people of Westeros into followers of her religion, and seduces him to follow her directions. She is encountering a lot of resistance at the court of King Stannis Baratheon, most notably from his trusted adviser Davos Seaworth, who believes she is leading their king in the wrong direction. She also uses her sexuality to dominate and humiliate Stannis and his sexual abilities:

In season 4, she insists that Stannis goes to Castle Black to help the Night's Watch. In season 5, she remains at the Wall with The Night's Watch and Stannis. Later on, Melisandre tries to seduce the Night's Watch commander, Jon Snow:

JON: *You're not cold, my lady?*

MELISANDRE: *Never. The Lord's fire lives within me, Jon Snow.*

She takes his hand to her face.

MELISANDRE: *Feel.*

Jon feels her face.

MELISANDRE: *Are you a virgin*

JON: *No*

MELISANDRE: *Good. (S5.E10)*

Jon, however, refuses to be intimate with her. Eventually, she leaves the Northern Wall with Stannis and Davos in order to conquer Winterfell. On the way they are encountering bad weather with snow and she convinces Stannis to kill his own daughter as an offer to the gods, in order to improve the weather situations, which he does.

MELISANDRE: *The year is now, my Lord. For you we offer up this girl, that you may cleanse her with your fire and that its light may lead our way.*

SELYSE: *If we don't act then we'll all starve here all of us, but if we make this sacrifice...*

MELISANDRE: *Accept this token of our faith, my lord and lead us from the darkness.*

*Lord of Light show us the way!*

SHIREEN: *Mother, please mother! Mother, please mother!*

SELYSE: *I can't*

STANNIS: *There is no other way, she has the King's blood*

MELISANDRE: *Lord of Light protect us, for the night is dark and full of terrors!*

SHIREEN: *Mother, don't do this please! Please help! Don't do this! Please, father!*

*Mother, help!*

Melisandre lights the pyre. Selyse runs towards the pyre and is stopped by Stannis' men. Shireen burns as Melisandre, Selyse, and Stannis look on, Melisandre pleased, Selyse horrified, and Stannis conflicted (S 5, E 9).

Soon after the killing of Stannis daughter, Melisandre declares that the bad weather stopping Stannis campaign has been lifted, but despite the good news half of Stannis' forces desert him. She then rides back to the Wall, where she is accosted by Jon Snow and

Davos. Later during the stay at the wall she sees Jon's dead body, guarded by Ser Davos and a few Night's Watches' brother loyal to Snow, she is in shock and returns to her chambers, undressing and removing her necklace and hence revealing her true self, an old witch.

#### 4.2.7 Margaery Tyrell



*Fig. 8. Margaery with Thommen at Kings Landing. Downloaded from Google pictures. Free to share.*

In GoT Margaery Tyrell is portrayed as a, ruthless, goal oriented and determined operator. She's an expert at the mind games at the court, where Sansa Stark is still a beginner, and the two are portrayed as complete opposites in several scenarios. Margaery Tyrell has even managed to become popular among people at Kings Landing and even gained the attention of future kings. It is obvious she has learned a lot from her grandmother, and mentor: Lady Olenna.

Margaery Tyrell first appears in the second season, following her marriage to the bisexual prince Renly, who has a relationship with her brother Loras. She makes it clear that her ambition is to be the Queen of Westeros, and that anything less is unacceptable. She accepts the activities of her husband while pursuing her long-term goals.

In season 3, Margaery Tyrell has relocated to King's Landing. She swiftly proves that she is one of the few people capable of controlling King Joffrey Baratheon, which makes her

an enemy to queen Cersei Baratheon, who ultimately goes against her. She also keeps a friendship with Sansa Stark, probably in the belief that it may bring her closer to Joffrey Baratheon.

In the fourth season she finally marries Joffrey Baratheon, but is widowed hours later when he is poisoned at the wedding. Arrangements are then made to wed her to Joffrey Baratheon's younger brother Thommen Baratheon, to whom she quickly ingratiates herself.

In season 5, Margaery Tyrell and Thommen Baratheon get married, and she finally becomes the Lady of the Seven Kingdoms. She dominates the inexperienced and insecure young king, also in bed. She taunts his mother Cersei Baratheon over her triumph, and tries to convince Thommen Baratheon to send Cersei away from the capital. She openly taunts and ridicules queen Cersei Baratheon:

*MARGAERY TYRELL: Oh, forgive me, I haven't been at Court for long, I get so confused. What's the proper way to address you now? Queen Mother or Dowager Queen?*

*CERSEI BARATHEON: There's no need for such formalities.*

*MARGAERY TYRELL: In any event, judging from the King's enthusiasm, the Queen mother will be a queen grandmother soon (hinting at Cersei's age and her abilities with the young King)*

*CERSEI BARATHEON: Won't that be a lovely day (her facial expression signaling disdain for Margaery).*

*MARGAERY TYRELL: Can you imagine the celebrations? They'll ring the bells all day and night.*

*CERSEI BARATHEON: Remember. Anything you need. (S5, E5)*

Margaery Tyrell smiles. Cersei Baratheon leaves. Margaery Tyrell's smile fades. It returns when her friends begin laughing, and she turns back around. Cersei Baratheon walks away with her two guards, still able to hear the laughter.

Cersei Baratheon, however, later has her arrested by The Faith of the Seven as revenge. Later during her imprisonment, she has a major confrontation with Cersei Baratheon in her cell, where she accuses Cersei Baratheon of masterminding her imprisonment

#### 4.2.8 Brienne of Tarth.



*Fig. 9. Brienne of Tarth in the process of killing Stannis Baratheon. Downloaded from Yahoo pictures. Free to share.*

Brienne of Tarth is the ultimate female warrior and Knight in GoT. She has great difficulties getting married due to her resistance to marriage and less than favorable looks. Her last suitor, Ser Humphrey Wagstaff, wanted Brienne to become more feminine after their wedding. Brienne said she'd try, if he could beat her in combat. In their fight, however, Brienne was the victor. This trauma to her husband eventually ruined their marriage.

As a reward for winning a Knights tournament, Brienne is made a member of Renly's personal guard, the Rainbow guard; shortly after, when she is helping Renly prepare his armor for battle, he is assassinated. She is immediately accused of his murder and has to flee with Catelyn Stark. When Catelyn Stark later frees Jaime Lannister to send him back to King's Landing in exchange for her daughters Sansa and Arya Stark, she orders Brienne to act as his escort. During their travel to King's Landing Jaime has to save her on several occasions from rape and death. Upon arriving at Kings Landing, Jaime gives Brienne his new Valyrian steel sword, renames it Oath keeper and sends her out so she can continue her mission to find and return Sansa and Arya Stark.

She is tasked by Catelyn Stark with bringing Jaime Lannister back to King's Landing.

During this travel they are caught by bandits, who threaten to rape and humiliate Brienne. Ultimately, however, she is saved by Jaimies intervention.

In the fifth season, Brienne frees Sansa Stark from Ramsey Bolton. Initially Ramsey has his guards chase Brienne away, but she persists and gets her out. Later in the narrative Brienne finds and kills Stannis Baratheon, to revenge his killing of his brother Renly, for whom she worked earlier. In this situation she is at the top of her game as a knight, albeit Stannis I lying wounded and helpless in the snow:

*BRIENNE: I do not fight for the Boltons. I'm Brienne of Tarth. I was Kings guard to Renly Baratheon. I was there when he was murdered by a shadow with your face. You murdered him with blood magic.*

Brienne approaches him and unsheathes her sword.

*BRIENNE: In the name of Renly of House Baratheon, first of his Name, Rightful King of the Andals and the First Men, Lord of the Seven Kingdoms, and Protector of the Realm, I, Brienne of Tarth, sentence you to die. Do you have any last words?*

*STANNIS: Go on, do your duty.(S5.E10)*

#### *4.3 Summary of discourse analysis and empowerment/disempowerment balance.*

Table 1 shows the sums for each of the 8 female protagonists resulting from the analysis of individual discourses involving women in Seasons 1 and 5. The table is followed by a short verbatim summary correlating the quantitative results obtained to individual empowerment factors as experienced by each protagonist. The table shows the number of episodes analyzed for each protagonist in each season followed by the sum of empowerment/disempowerment. The sum represents the sum of +1 and -1 scores allocated for each scene and protagonist at the micro (individual), meso (group) and macro (societal) level. Protagonists, who were not present in both serie are listed for the sesons, in which they were show. For further details see Methods section and Excel spreadsheets attached.

**Table 1.** Average empowerment/disempowerment balance for female protagonists of GoT in season 1 and 5.

Protagonist	Season 1				Season 5			
	No. episodes	Micro level	Meso level	Macro level	No episodes	Micro level	Meso level	Macro level
Arya Stark	16	1	3		22	-10	-10	
Sansa Stark	17	-8	-8	-5	15	3	-2	-3
Cersei Baratheon	18	-1	-1	-1	26	-3	-3	-3
Daenerys Targaryen	24	2	6	7	26	4	4	8
Catelyn Stark	26	1	1	-1				
Margaery Tyrell					7	0	0	0
Melisandre					6	3	1	2
Brienne					7	8	8	1

#### 4.3.1 Micro (personal) level determinants of empowerment

**Knowledge:** All the female protagonists are well educated and have had a secure and good upbringing, albeit on patriarchal terms. Cersei Baratheon complains about Jaime being taught to fight, while she was taught to “smile, sing and please”. For Melisandre, however, we get little information with respect to upbringing. For Catelyn Stark and Sansa knowledge is mainly associated with classical household activities. For Arya Stark and Brienne knowledge is channeled into weapons use and fighting. Cersei Baratheon, Margaery Tyrell and Melisandre do not display other knowledge than that associated

scheming at the courts and how to use their femininity to tempt men and move forward. For Melisandre her religious knowledge is an additional advantage. Daenerys Targaryen displays naivety and total lack of political knowledge initially, but then in a wise way accumulates knowledge on how to gain Drogo's trust and later how to rule as a queen.

**Self-esteem:** Born into noble families all female protagonists display significant self-esteem early on in season 1, but later on the self-esteem of Sansa and Arya Stark suffer severe losses at Kings Landing and the House of Black and White. Cersei Baratheon also suffers a major setback, when dealing with the religious fanatics of Kings Landing.

Catelyn Stark exert significant power within the family as reflected in her scores in season 1, but when she tries to expand her rule to the meso and macro levels she suffers major setbacks.

**Competence:** Catelyn Stark is the competent mother and wife at Winterfell in season 1, but as soon as she gets outside her castle her competence becomes less and less important and even within Winterfell she must accept the presence of Jon Snow the bastard son of Eddard, although she despises him. Sansa Stark displays pronounced ability as a seamstress early on, but this is overshadowed by the severe humiliations she suffers later on in season 1. Arya Stark gradually becomes a competent fighter with her sword "Needle", but this does not help her at the House of Black and White where she is totally disempowered. Cersei Baratheon is a competent ruler, but her powers in season 1 are stunted by her husband, and after his death by Joffrey Baratheon and later Margaery Tyrell and religious fanatics in season 5.

### **Overall development of empowerment/disempowerment at the micro level.**

The score for Catelyn Stark in season 1 is only slightly positive. This reflects her the start of her disempowerment after Ned leaves the castle. For Arya Stark and Cersei Baratheon the increasing disempowerment at the personal level are reflected in the more negative scores at the micro level for season 5 in Table 2. After her longstanding troubles, Sansa Starks self- esteem improves late in season 5 giving rise to the most significant improvement at the micro level in season 5. Daenerys Targaryen quickly gains respect from the Dothraki due to her flexible attitude and eagerness to learn. Moreover her mythical powers being "Mother of the Dragons" further increases her respect among the Dothraki. Daenerys Targaryen development is reflected in the improvement of scores between season 1 and 5 in Table 2. The difference is not very pronounced as she already in

season 1 displays significant improvement of her knowledge. The scores for Margaery Tyrell, Melisandre and Brienne of Tarth are all positive in season 5. For Margaery Tyrell, this is caused by her clever scheming at the courts giving her influence of king Thommen Baratheon, thereby reducing the influence of Cersei Baratheon. Melisandre uses her religious powers and femininity to have king Baratheon kill his own daughter. Brienne's score is caused by her successes in helping Sansa Stark and through her killing of king Baratheon.

#### 4.3.2 Meso (group) level determinants of empowerment

**Group identity and social support:** In the analysis I found the two determinants difficult to separate. They are therefore considered together in this verbatim analysis, as they are closely linked. Born into noble families the group identity is strong for most female protagonists. For Melisandre, we know very little about her upbringing and background. Catelyn Stark displays a strong group identity early on, but loses it gradually as she leaves the confines of Winterfell. After her husband dies, she has the support of her oldest son, but feels without social support, which is peaking when she is killed at the "Red Wedding". Arya Stark remains loyal to her family throughout GoT, which is reflected in her positive group score in Table 1. Sansa Stark, however, is ready to give up her family loyalty in order to marry Joffrey Baratheon. Together with her subsequent humiliations at Kings Landing this action is reflected in a very low meso level score in tale 2. Cersei Baratheon is portrayed as a loner in her social environment, without anybody to turn to except for brother Jamie, with whom she has an illegitimate sexual relationship. This is the basis for a -1 score in the empowerment/disempowerment score. When she loses Joffrey Baratheon, her isolation increases, and her downfall becomes complete with the "March of Shame" in the last episode of season 5. Daenerys Targaryen had very little group identity in early parts of series 1 with a brother abusing her. Later, however, she adapted herself to a life with the Dothraki and got accepted. Then her empowerment further increased as a respected queen, as reflected in very high empowerment scores. Margaery Tyrell shows a very strong group identity mediated through her strong grandmother Oleanna. Later on, she easily adapts to other groups like the court at Kings Landing, and develops into a powerful player. Her only setback is the imprisonment by the religious fanatics. Melisandre and Brienne of Tarth emerge as having very little group support, mostly left on their own. Nevertheless, Brienne comes across as being quite empowered at the group level due to her fighting abilities.

**Common resources:** At Winterfell Catelyn Stark has lots of resources being a noble lady, but after having to leave the estate she has very little resources, - finally resulting in her death. Arya Stark and Sansa Stark more or less suffer the same fate. Being queens both Cersei Baratheon and Daenerys Targaryen have plenty resources. For Daenerys Targaryen, due the social support she receives, it results in further empowerment. For Cersei Baratheon the opposite, because of lack of group level support.

#### 4.3.3 Macro (societal) level determinants of empowerment

**Political influence, respect and visibility:** These 3 determinants are also considered together, as they are closely linked. Through season 1, Catelyn Stark is portrayed as being influential at her local level. After Eddard Stark's death, she tries to gain increasing political influence, but fails miserably, when she interferes in her son's campaign. She even promises her son Robb away to marry one of Elder Frey's daughters in order to get free passage for the Stark army. Her attempt to gain increased political influence ultimately causes her death as she is lured to the "Red Wedding". Arya Stark and Sansa Stark are depicted having the respect and visibility of noble children, but later lose these as they are left more and more alone. Throughout GoT, Arya Stark is portrayed as having no political influence at all, and therefore this determinant has not been assessed for her. Sansa Stark is also mostly portrayed as a pawn in the political process, but late in Season 5 she starts to gain increasing political influence, after she leaves Ramsey. Daenerys Targaryen gains increasing political influence and remains decisive in the 3 main conflicts with her brother Viserys, her husband Drogo and the witch Mirri Maz Duur. Cersei Baratheon has a lot of visibility and political influence, but she is not empowered by it. She is not really respected in Kings Landing and her influence is modified by her husband, as well as Jaime, Joffrey Baratheon, Margaery Tyrell and the religious fanatics. As reflected in the increasing negative score she leaves season 5 less empowered. Margaery Tyrell and Melisandre exert some political influence through their close relationships to King Joffrey Baratheon and King Stannis Baratheon, respectively. The political influence of Brienne is very limited as she has very little contact to rulers, except for her killing of King Stannis Baratheon.

#### 4.4 *Other factors affecting the discourse in GoT*

Sound and lighting are factors that play a role in the so-called "multimodal" approach to discourse analysis of video and movies. I will not go into great detail about this issue, as I consider the text spoken most important for my analysis. It is, however, worth noting that

the majority of female protagonists (Catelyn Stark, Arya Stark, Melisandre and Brienne of Tarth) are mostly depicted in a dark and colorless environment, with simple brown, grey or black clothing and limited light with mainly dark and grey shading in castles or in the field in bad weather with a lot of low frequency sounds. The clothing of the “warriors” Arya Stark and Brienne is masculine and unglamorous, presenting them outside the system of eroticized objectification (Gjelsvik & Schubart, 2016). This may also signal a miserable future for these women, their empowerment included.

On the contrary Daenerys Targaryen in particular, but also Cersei Baratheon and Magarey Tyrell are generally shown in a sunny, multicolored, light environment exhibiting colorful, magnificent clothing enhancing their function as a sexual spectacle (Gjelsvik & Schubart, 2016). The Display of power transmitted via clothing is maximal in the discourse (S1, E7), where Cersei dismantles the power of Eddard Stark. She is standing on a podium with King Joffrey and radiates power through the elaborate garment, jewelry, hair and cool relaxed demeanor. The scene is seen from Eddards POV making him look up at Cersei and Joffrey, further enhancing the difference in power st that moment (Gjelsvik & Schubart, 2016). Daenerys Targaryen is often shown in wide landscapes using a lot of wide screen pictures with symphonic music. This could be taken as one way of showing her promise for the future. Her dresses and jewelry are also elaborate, and she usually addresses her people from an elevated position. Sansa Stark alternates between the dark surroundings in the North and the sunshine at Kings Landing in line with her development into a more empowered woman later in the series.

Another element of the multimodal analysis of media, is the expressions and actions of the people depicted on screen. There is the doubt in Catelyn Stark’s face, when Sansa Stark presses on with her wish to marry Joffrey Baratheon and the depressive look on Aras face, as she faces hardship. In line with her ruthless actions, Cersei Baratheon is always cool and composed, showing very little emotion, with a few exceptions like her walk of shame and when her sons are facing resistance and difficulties. Daenerys Targaryen always shows a clear, enlightened face, not only showing empathy, but also open for learning and further development.

## 5 DISCUSSION

In the following, I will first discuss the results, then limitations of my own analysis regarding portrayal of women in GoT and the balance between empowerment and disempowerment in this depiction. Later in the discussion I will elaborate on how these results relate to the overall media picture and ultimately possible effects on female empowerment and health promotion.

### 5.1 *Portrayal of female protagonists in GoT*

The principal areas of interaction Westeros and Essos in GOT are two different settings with distinct physical boundaries and firm organizational structures, i.e. kingdoms and fiefdoms at the societal level. At the micro-level the different families have their conflicts and intrigues. In the public space, men possess most leadership roles with a few exceptions (Daenerys Targaryen, Cersei Baratheon) and women are generally confined to deal with issues within the family, raise children and be exiting sex partners for their husbands. At the meso- and macro-level the life of individual citizens, and women, in particular, is profoundly influenced by random violence, rape, forced marriages, imprisonment and other forms of abuse from the omnipotent ruler.

The author of the “Song of Ice and Fire” novels, which form the basis for GoT, George R.R. Martin, has stated that all his characters should be ambiguous, exhibiting significant flaws in their personality too (Battis & Johnston, 2015). This also holds true for all the dominant females in the series. Cersei Baratheon is a good mother, but at the same time revengeful and ruthless. Catelyn Stark comes across as passionate towards her children, except for Jon Snow, whom she hates. Daenerys Targaryen develops some ruthlessness even Macchiavellian traits along the way (Gjelsvik & Schubart, 2016), executing several of her opponents, but she learns the hard way that you cannot impose freedom on a people and rule with the heart only (Gjelsvik & Schubart, 2016). Arya Stark and Brienne have both chosen to live on patriarchal terms as knights, and give up traditional family life altogether. Both are killers of men, which in some way empower them, but they pay a hefty price by being isolated and always on the run.

GoT shows empowered women with power and political influence, and therefore a big step forwards in media depiction of women. An important aspect around these women is the fact that, despite the misogyny they face in a patriarchal society, they still achieve empowerment. It is during these transformations, that negative and positive aspects of their character, are exposed. However, the women being portrayed as having the most power and influence in the first 5 seasons of GoT, Cersei Baratheon and Daenerys Targaryen, both make repeated mistakes threatening their rule as the narrative progresses. Cersei Baratheon becomes so vindictive, and obsessed by her sons, that she is unable to rule effectively despite significant empowerment. She is portrayed as constantly manipulating her environment, suspicious of other women and unkind. Ultimately these traits result in her downfall and total humiliation by a religious cult. Female empowerment has often been considered important for the development of a more humane society, and Daenerys Targaryen tries to implement measures to promote humanization. This is shown during her rule of Meereen, where she faces a riot, after refusing to let gladiator games to continue. Despite the opposition of the people, she is unable to compromise on her humanistic ideals, which leaves her open to attack. Even though their empowerment is based on male virtues, Brienne of Tarth and Arya Stark are shown as totally disempowered in serious conflicts with men (e.g. Arya with Jaqen H'ghar at the House of Black and White, and Brienne's imprisonment by the pirates). During the latter, Brienne, who has killed several men in combat, ultimately ends up being saved by a man she despises, - Jaime Lannister.

Initially, Daenerys Targaryen gets valuable advice from her adviser, Ser Jorah Mormon. Later she discards him as adviser, and that is when her troubles begin. Later she turns to Tyrion Lannister for advice. Thus, even though she has power, she is unable to rule effectively without help from a male, leaving her somewhat disempowered. The same holds for Catelyn Stark, after she loses her husband. Sansa Stark is portrayed as naive and totally dependent on others, a "silly girl", perfectly adapted to a stereotypical femininity, a cliché of fanciful girlhood" (Gjelsvik & Schubart, 2016). All the humiliations happening to her are orchestrated by others (Battis & Johnston, 2015), and she just tries to adapt to the circumstances, even accepting the execution of their father by Joffrey Baratheon and giving up on her own sister on the way. Thus, when the empowered women in GoT get involved in the public space and typical male domains, like warfare and politics, they are prone to fail. In many instances the bravery of Brienne, Arya Stark and craftiness of Cersei

Baratheon, Margaery Tyrell and Melisandre do better than that of their male protagonists. However, in other situations they still need male advice to be effective.

For Daenerys Targaryen and Melisandre, additional empowerment is provided by mythical dragons and supernatural powers. The inclusion of mythical elements like dragons, direwolves and the supernatural healing powers of Melisandre have several functions in GoT. They are used as symbols of power (Daenerys Targaryen and her dragons) or (Sansa Stark and Arya Stark's direwolves) (Battis & Johnston, 2015). The killing of Sansa Stark's direwolf on Cersei Baratheon's command signals the disempowerment of Sansa Stark, while Arya Stark still flies high by making her wolf get away from Kings Landing. The mythical elements may also increase the element of escapism, which, as discussed below, has been identified as an important factor for women's consumption of soaps and nighttime entertainment (van Zoonen, 2000). The appearance of mythical creatures and supernatural elements are in line with medieval storytelling tradition, which GoT tries to copy, but also facilitates empowerment (Battis & Johnston, 2015)

Upbringing of the female protagonists of this analysis generally takes place in a noble house, where they are taught the classical female duties, cooking, sewing etc. From early on they are primed to get married to a nobleman, who can increase the influence of their own family, with Sansa Stark and Margaery Tyrell being prime examples. Daenerys Targaryen is also more or less sold to Drogo by her brother to further his political ambitions, without any consideration for her own wish. Thus, there is very little in GoT promoting an upbringing shaping future female empowerment. The girls are taught to become good housewives, who should not interfere with the business of their husband. Brienne and Arya Stark are portrayed as exceptions to the rule, but the tomboy Arya Stark is told in no uncertain terms by her father in season 1, that marriage is what will be expected of her. The fates of Arya Stark and Brienne also underscores that if you go against the will of your family, you are on your own in a dangerous world. They both experience severe humiliation, being dominated and abused by men, but ultimately other men will have to save them. It is striking, that most female protagonists of GoT lose their mother early in life. This may be one reason why they turn to males, to guide them early in life. Sansa Stark turns to Littlefinger, Cersei Baratheon to her brother (because she hates her father), and Daenerys Targaryen to Ser Jorah Mormont. This again leaves the

impression that women, empowered or not, cannot progress without male influence and guidance. Margaery Tyrell breaks this rule with her grandmother being her main guidance.

In GoT religion seems to preserve patriarchy. The vast majority of interactions between empowered protagonists (e.g. Cersei Baratheon, Daenerys and Arya Stark) and the religious elements of GoT (The Sparrow and the Temple of the Dead), leads to disempowerment. This reaches a climax in the humiliating, naked walk of Cersei Baratheon through the streets of Kings Landing. For Melisandre religion is empowering Melisandre. She is the messianic witch (Gjelsvik & Schubart, 2016), and as such is despised by other women. She is empowered through her witchcraft, but even more so by her sexuality. She reinforces her powers over a weak King Baratheon through her religion and magical powers mixed with sexuality. In this respect, it is interesting that studies in Southern Norway also have documented the repressive role of religion on female empowerment by preventing women from developing beyond the traditional family pattern (Magnussen, 2012). Similar results have also been reported for Italian women (Cullen, 2013).

## *5.2 Balance between empowerment and disempowerment of female protagonists in GoT*

In the patriarchal, medieval society of GoT we encounter a mixture of very empowered women and other women, who are portrayed as submissive and sexualized. All dominating females display significant flaws, some even Machiavellian traits like Cersei Baratheon and Daenerys Targaryen, in keeping with the authors wish to depict multidimensionality in his characters (Gjelsvik & Schubart, 2016). Several are pawns in political games, where marrying the right powerful man is key. Margaery Tyrell is a typical example of this policy, being exploited in a political power play by her family through marriage to the young Kings of Kings Landing. Daenerys Targaryen, is also used by her brother in this way.

Despite their empowerment the dominating female protagonists are subjected to male dominance. There are at least four instances with explicit sexual violence until season 5 (Docktermann, 2015). Despite this sexual degradation GoT highlights that empowered women like Daenerys Targaryen can grow from rape victim to ruler. Also Sansa Stark, after all her terrible experiences, finally maturing into a powerful woman with firm

opinions with manipulative skills (Docktermann, 2015). On the other hand Cersei Baratheon emphasizes sex as a way to dominate men, when talking to Sansa Stark. Margaery Tyrell uses the same approach. This is an area, where GoT is crossing new boundaries for mass media entertainment. The response among women to these depictions, differ. Some consider the depiction utterly degrading (Gjelsvik & Schubart, 2016), other look at it as a subversively feminist tale. They praise the narrative of women gaining power with tenacity and strength despite male resistance as a kind feminist pleasure (Gjelsvik & Schubart, 2016). The actress Emilia Clarke who plays Daenerys Targaryen consider her own figure utterly empowering (Gjelsvik & Schubart, 2016). It has even been stated that the “the women may be carving out new roads in the gendered terrain of GoT and also mapping new territory in women’s engagement with transmedial fantasy” (Gjelsvik & Schubart, 2016). Nevertheless most of the women in GoT are still confined to bedrooms, dungeons, castles and brothels, with little participation in the public space (Docktermann, 2015; Gjelsvik & Schubart, 2016).

The women enjoying the highest degree of freedom and least influence from patriarchy seem to be Arya Stark and Brienne, although Arya Starks freedom is only temporary. Their portrayal breaks with traditional depiction of women in television shows characterized in postfeministic critique of media as being sexualized manipulators (Gjelsvik & Schubart, 2016). Their unattractive clothing further emphasizes this notion, as is Brienne’s refusal to be called “lady”. They go against others, mainly men, framing their existence and the notion that good women are virtuous, shy and sensitive (Anhøj, 2016), but they pay a hefty price for their attitude. Arya Stark is completely disempowered while staying at the House of Black and White, and Brienne becomes a very lonely figure. Despite trying to live on male terms, they are left on their own most of the time, roaming around the country side, subjected to utter humiliation at the hands of men. The temporary empowerment followed by disempowerment of several female protagonists in GoT is not dissimilar from that of the female protagonists in Ibsen’s plays. In “The wild duck” Hedvig is empowered for a while, but ultimately she chooses to take her own life after patriarchal challenges from Gregers. Similarly, Hedda Gabler, chooses to shoot herself after a long period where she was the one to dominate men. Only Nora in a “Doll’s House” is able to leave her husband and end their marriage without taking her own life. These issues were succinctly summarized by Ibsen himself in a critique of patriarchy: ” A woman cannot be herself in

modern society, since it is exclusively male society, with laws made by men and prosecutors and judges who assess feminine conduct from a masculine standpoint” (Meyer, 1974). As the narrative progresses, most of the dominating protagonists develop masculine sides to their personality during the development of the narrative. Daenerys Targaryen develops from a young, naive, sexualized figure into a forceful and ruthless queen. Cersei Baratheon, also a feminine, sexualized protagonist, despises the men on her council and considers herself superior to them, and states: “I should have been born as a man”.

The women are brought up to fulfill usual female duties in the home, and even when they try another path, like Arya Stark, they are brought back to reality by their parents: They want to ensure they ultimately marry a powerful man, to preserve the political status of the family. The emphasis in GoT is on being good mothers, whether it is being mother to many children like Catelyn Stark or dragons and peoples like Daenerys Targaryen. The mother figures portrayed center around the classical mother figures by Hollywood convention: the good, bad, heroic and silly, weak or vain mother (Gjelsvik & Schubart, 2016), but in line with the complicated figural structure of GoT none of the mothers portrayed fit into one category only. The 2 dominating mother figures of GoT are Catelyn Stark and queen Cersei Baratheon. Catelyn Stark is the perfect mother at Winterfell for all her children except Jon Snow, whom she hates and wants to send off to the wall. Cersei Baratheon comes across as a conflicted and sometimes bad mother, who loves her children, but at the same time is unable to control her monstrous son Joffrey Baratheon and ultimately herself corroborating in murder of a lot of children on his command.

The women in GOT cover a whole spectrum of attitudes in dealing with the society they live in: from the very weak to the very strong representing a wide variety of female archetypes (Frankel, 2014). According to Jungian thinking people will tend to identify with the archetype that is closest to their own archetype (Jung, 1975). The array of female protagonists in GoT provides a chance for all women to find their archetype, with whom to identify. This identification has been cited as an important aspect of female consumption of TV-series and amplifies the subconscious messaging associated with that protagonist (van Zoonen, 2000). Several different mother archetypes, Cersei Baratheon, Catelyn Stark and to a certain extent Daenerys Targaryen are portrayed. As good mothers their love for their

children is unlimited, but at the same time interferes with their political influence. For Catelyn Stark, it means death and for Cersei Baratheon it means a life focused on revenge and an incestuous relationship to her brother. Despite Eddard Stark's betrayal of their marriage, Catelyn Stark remains loyal to him, although she openly displays her hate for Jon Snow. However, when she must exert power against prisoners from the Lannister family, one of which, Jamie Lannister, injured and paralyzed her son, she is unable to execute, appearing rather helpless, even when mocked by Jaime Lannister. Her relation to her oldest son becomes strained, as she undermines him in his decision making during his campaign. Through these decisions, she shows a negative side dominated by irrational, impractical and non-strategic behavior. A mother who loves her children too much to see reason (Frankel, 2014). Daenerys Targaryen is mainly portrayed as a hetaera archetype, with a lot of nudity at the start of the series. Her beauty causes her to be exploited by her brother, Viserys Targaryen and Drogo leading to initial disempowerment. Later she becomes more empowered, but experiencing constant challenges to her empowerment. This could lead some women to conclude, that maybe empowerment leads to more trouble than gain. The nudity of Daenerys Targaryen has, however also been interpreted by some to signal cleansing and transition from a suppressed to an empowered women and therefore together with her power of the dragons associated with pride (Gjelsvik & Schubart, 2016).

### *5.3 Consequences for female identity and empowerment*

Current mass media representation of women, - GoT included, provide the pleasures of self-recognition in the private sphere, and a shared woman's culture, they can identify with and fantasize about. It has been pointed out that compared to other contemporary television shows (West Wing, Downtown Abbey, The Wire), GoT has a very high number of female protagonists, who are in more situations than in previous series portrayed as equals to men, albeit constantly subjected to male prejudice and misogyny (Gjelsvik & Schubart, 2016). It has been characterized as a mixture of fantasy, soap opera, adventure, misery and romance. Contrary, however, to the majority of previous series the good does not always prevail and justice is seldom served (Gjelsvik & Schubart, 2016). At the same time, however, the portrayal of women as passive prevents them from gaining increased recognition in the public space, leaving that space to the men (Thornham, 2007). Despite the focus on a few female "wave breakers" like Daenerys Targaryen and Margaery Tyrell, the gender discourse in GoT is still similar to previous mass media productions over the last 20 years

like Dallas and Dynasty. It is operating on mostly patriarchal terms and depicting women in mainly submissive roles. In its depiction of suppressive sexuality, GoT has taken suppression of women one step further than previous mass media series with repeated rape scenes, pornographic elements and a significant emphasis on prostitution. Many consider the wedding night of Daenerys Targaryen with Khal Drogo, borders on rape. Daenerys Targaryen is just a child at the time her marriage (Gjelsvik & Schubart, 2016). Sansa Stark's wedding night with Ramsey Bolton constitutes obvious rape (Gjelsvik & Schubart, 2016). Both sequences could be seen as legitimizing such criminal behavior, and such depiction works against improving the conditions of the huge number of women still suffering rape and domestic violence all over the world (USAID, 2017) (Statistics/UN, 2011). Studies in Norway have reported that the perception of young women's attitude to sex and rape is heavily influenced by media, often leading them to blame themselves for accepting sexual encounters against their will (Berggrav, 2015). The portrayal of rape in the context of GoT further strengthens this trend. It has also been stated that the negative message associated with rape and domestic violence in GoT as being somewhat muted by showing other marriages based on mutual respect (Eddard and Caterlyn Stark Stark and by the fact that Daenerys Targaryen later on gains the full respect of Drogo (Gjelsvik & Schubart, 2016). In the forced, short marriage between Tyrion Lannister and Sansa Stark, Tyrion Lannister shows Sansa Stark a lot of respect, but ultimately this marriage is considered very negative in Sansa Stark's perception. Some authors also make the point that the perseverance of the women in GoT showing empowerment against all odds further supports female empowerment (Gjelsvik & Schubart, 2016). Some of the discourses involving women in GoT can therefore be considered a step backwards compared to earlier mass media series like "Sex in the City". GoT shows women, who are unable to attain powerful positions in society unless they partner up with powerful men, who make all major decisions pertaining to political alliances between families and determine when to start wars. Men preserve their power by threatening with, or actually committing rape of other kinds of sexual abuse. On the other hand many women will have to resort to sexual favors to men in order to get a voice in the public discourse and move ahead in society (Gjelsvik & Schubart, 2016). This circular structure of devaluation (Thornham, 2007) as displayed in GoT has significant consequences for women's participation in the public space and thus hampers female empowerment (Thornham, 2007). If a woman is bombarded with media messages telling her to be happy with status quo, she will be less

inclined to seek change. Especially in more developed societies this change seems to be slowly happening with more women being given empowered roles in news media and entertainment (van Zoonen, 2000).

According to Habermas discourse in the public space will only be productive and lead to positive societal development, if it takes place between counterparts at equal standing (Eriksen & Weigård, 1999). This is not the case when it comes to the current discourse between genders in most areas of the world. The massive patriarchal dominance of major societies in the world leaves out women from public discourse. The dominating portrayal of women by mass media delays the development of less patriarchal societies by contributing to continued suppression of female empowerment (Shiva, 1993). However, from the popularity of these series among women, it seems that female audiences to a certain degree accept this state of affairs, even in progressive countries like Norway, where gender equality has developed the most. One reason may be that the series despite its misogyny provides women with a “Gallery of memorable television heroines”, with which women can identify (van Zoonen, 2000). Another explanation, which is in keeping with dominating aspects of soap operas discussed above, is related to the role of female fantasy, based on the notion that the heroines of GoT are mythical, and therefore their sexual abuse is perceived as being non-real and irrelevant to the ongoing feministic rape culture debate and may even foster fantasies about a rape free world (van Zoonen, 2000).

#### *5.4 Limitations of the analysis*

The reliability of my analysis is limited by the subjective nature of my evaluation of the female discourse in GoT and choice of key citations, but my semi-quantitative analysis would tend to increase the reliability of the data obtained due to the large number of discourses analyzed. In order to limit the subjectivity of the quantitative analysis, I chose to use +1 and -1 as empowerment/disempowerment scores instead of using a more detailed gradation. This would tend to let the large number of discourses add to reliability. The validity of my analysis would have been strengthened by the use of interviews to actually measure the impression of GoT by present day women, but I would have to involve women from under developed countries too, which would have been a significant logistical challenge. As alternative research methodologies, I could have chosen to use ethnographic or interview analyses, but I would have been lacking input from areas of the world where female

disempowerment is most pronounced for logistical reasons. With respect to external validity (generality), I think the results of my analysis could be transferable to other areas in society like crime prevention, education and labour policies, where full female empowerment is still lacking. I can be accused of promoting a feminist view on GoT and mass media. I would, however, submit that this critique of my objectivity is countered by the statements from the UN highlighting the profound inequalities women are subjected to in major parts of the world (Bustreo, 2015) thus corroborating a critique of the conditions women live under in major parts of the world. Also the publications by Asian authors highlighting the suppression of women in this region (Samarasinghe, 2008) would lend support to the critique emerging from my analysis.

### *5.5 Implications for health promotion*

Mass media have been shown to have profound impact on female empowerment and health promotion (Ali 2011; Beaudoin 2006). Significant improvements in mass media portrayal of women have taken place, but the majority of female depictions in media still work against female empowerment and health promotion in women (Bustreo, 2015; Temmerman 2015). The isolation of women at the home and the ensuing limited participation at the macro level prevent women from building group identity and thus a stronger voice in the public debate (Torgersen, 2010). The control of decisions and actions affecting their health, which constitute the integral parts of health promotion (WHO, 1986) are disadvantaged for women for these reasons, leaving them with less control over their own health. This, will tend to preserve the current state, with women being placed in subordinate and oppositional roles (Green & Tones, 2010) (Moghaddam Hosseini 2013). The lack of access to education, which also results from societal discrimination further limits the ability of these women to improve their situation. (Samarasinghe, 1993; Shrestha, 2003). Apart from showing some empowered female protagonists, the portrayal of women in GoT does not contribute to significant changes to this state. They are still mainly educated in matters related to good housekeeping and being a perfect wife for your husband, and the more advanced public discourses are performed by men only (“the maesters”).

## 6 CONCLUSION

GoT sends a mixed message, when it comes to female empowerment. Contrary to previous mass media series, it depicts several empowered women being in command over extended periods of time. However, they all land in situations where they become heavily dependent on male intervention and patriarchal dominance. Some women in GoT resort to sexual manipulation of men to succeed. A new twist of GoT is the introduction of female warriors seeking empowerment in male terms. Many women in GoT are, however, still portrayed as disempowered, dependent on men, confined to the home, raising children, and pleasing the man. Even the dominant female protagonists are raised to become good housewives at their husband's disposal, and are at times manipulated by men. In its portrayal of sexual violence against women, GoT represents a step back compared to previous media successes. Despite its shortcomings in relation to female portrayal, GoT still signals some improvement over previous blockbuster series. Hopefully mass media will progress even further in coming years towards more actively promoting female empowerment. Social media, where each woman can create her own universe based on her own needs has the potential to further enhance this development (Neiger, 2012).

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## 8 LIST OF ATTACHMENTS

1. First and last page of EXCEL spreadsheet showing the marking of all 114 discourses involving women in season 1, episodes 1-10 of Game of Thrones
2. First and last page of EXCEL spreadsheet showing the marking of all 119 discourses involving women in season 5, episodes 1-10 of Game of Thrones
3. Last page of EXCEL spreadsheet the marking of all discourses involving Sansa in season 1, episodes 1-10 of Game of Thrones.
4. Last page of EXCEL spreadsheet the marking of all discourses involving Sansa in season 5, episodes 1-10 of Game of Thrones.
5. Summary statistics showing average and sum empowerment/disempowerment balance for each of the 8 female protagonist studied in this thesis.

## *8.1 Attachment 1*

First and last page of EXCEL spreadsheet showing the marking of all 114 discourses involving women in season 1, episodes 1-10 of Game of Thrones. Plus 1 denotes empowerment of the protagonist in the discourse, while Minus 1 overall denotes disempowerment.

	A	B	C	D	E
1	<b>GOT Season 1 - Episodes 1-10</b>	Protagonist	MICRO	MESO	MACRO
2	<b>S1E1</b>				
	SEPTA MORDANE (to SANSA): Fine work, as always. Well done. SANSA: Thank you. SEPTA MORDANE: I love the detail that you've managed to get in this corners. ... Quite beautiful ... the stitching ... [As she murmurs to SANSA about the embroidery, ARYA struggles with her needlework and listens to the arrows hitting and the male laughter outside.]				
3		Sansa	1	1	
	CASSEL: Lord Stark. My lady. A guardsman just rode in from the hills. They've captured a deserter from the Night's Watch. [NED grimaces.] NED: Get the lads to saddle their horses. [THEON departs.] CATELYN: Do you have to? NED: He swore an oath, Cat. CASSEL: The law is law, my lady. NED: Tell Bran he's coming, too. [CASSEL nods and departs.] CATELYN: Ned. Ten is too young to see such things. NED: He won't be a boy forever. And winter is coming. [NED departs. In the courtyard, ROBB and JON gather the arrows. CATELYN turns and glares down on JON. He looks at her and walks away.]				
4		Catelyn	-1	-1	
	[Scene shifts to bells ringing at Kings Landing. In front of the Iron Throne, surrounded by druidical looking celebrants, lies the body of JON ARRYN. Up in the balcony, CERSEI watches the scene below as JAIME approaches.] JAIME: As your brother, I feel it's my duty to warn you: You worry too much. It's starting to show. CERSEI: And you never worry about anything. When we were seven, you jumped off the cliffs as Casterly Rock. One hundred foot drop into the water. And you were never afraid. JAIME: There was nothing to be afraid of until you told father. [In a whisper, mimicking] We're Lannisters. Lannisters don't act like fools. CERSEI: What if Jon Arryn told someone? JAIME: But who would he tell? CERSEI: My husband. JAIME: If he told the king, both our heads would be skewered on the city gates by now. Whatever Jon Arryn knew or didn't know, it died with him. And Robert will choose a new Hand of the king, someone to do his job while he's off fucking boars and hunting whores. Or is it the other way around? And life will go on. CERSEI: You should be the Hand of the king. JAIME: That's an honor I can do without. Their days are too long, their lives are too short.				
5		Cersei	-1	-1	
	Scene shifts to a raven approaching Winterfell. [CATELYN crosses a busy courtyard and finds NED in the godwood.] CATELYN: All these years and I still feel like an outsider when I come here. NED: You have five northern children. You're not an outsider. CATELYN: I wonder if the old gods agree. NED: It's your gods with all the rules. CATELYN: I am so sorry, my love. NED: Tell me. CATELYN: There was a raven from Kings Landing. Jon Arryn is dead. A fever took him. I know he was like a father to you. NED: Your sister. The boy ... CATELYN: They both have their health. Gods be good. [pause] The raven brought more news. The king rides for Winterfell. With the queen and all the rest of them. NED: He's coming this far North, there's only one thing he's after. CATELYN: You can always say no, Ned.				
6		Catelyn	-1	-1	
	[Scene shifts to the Winterfell great hall where a great banquet is being prepared.] CATELYN: We need plenty of candles for Lord Tyrion's chamber. I'm told he reads all night. MAESTER LUWIN: I'm told he drinks all night. CATELYN: How much could he possibly drink? A man of his ... stature. LUWIN: We've brought up eight barrels of ale from the cellar. Perhaps we'll find out. CATELYN: In any case, candles.				
7		Catelyn	1	1	

	A	B	C	D	E
	<p>Cersei and Lancel are having one of their rendezvous on her bedchamber. Cersei is reading a message while Lancel speaks, naked.</p> <p>Lancel Lannister: I can't believe we're actually at war. Was it this exciting last time, when you were young? What does it say? Have we captured Robb Stark yet? What's our next move?</p> <p>Cersei Lannister: Stop talking. Get back into bed.</p>	Cersei	-1	-1	-1
112	<p>Daenerys Targaryen: Ser Jorah?</p> <p>Jorah Mormont: Gently, gently.</p> <p>Daenerys Targaryen: My son – where is he? I want him. Where is he?</p> <p>Jorah Mormont: The boy did not live.</p> <p>Daenerys Targaryen: Tell me.</p> <p>Jorah Mormont: What is there to tell?</p> <p>Daenerys Targaryen: How did my son die?</p> <p>Jorah Mormont: He never lived, my princess. The women say –</p> <p>Daenerys Targaryen: What do the women say?</p> <p>Jorah Mormont: They say the child was –</p> <p>Mirri Maz Duur: [entering the tent] Monstrous, twisted. I pulled him out myself. He was scaled like a lizard, blind, with leather wings like the wings of a bat. When I touched him the skin fell from his bones. Inside he was full of graverworms. I warned you that only death can pay for life. You knew the price.</p> <p>Daenerys Targaryen: Where is Khal Drogo? Show him to me. Show me what I bought with my son's life.</p> <p>Mirri Maz Duur: As you command, lady. Come. I will take you to him.</p> <p>Jorah Mormont: Time enough for that later –</p> <p>Daenerys Targaryen: I want to see him now.</p> <p>They leave the tent/yurt, following Mirri Maz Duur to the place where Drogo is lying.</p> <p>Daenerys Targaryen: The khalasar is gone.</p> <p>Jorah Mormont: A khal who cannot ride is no khal. The Dothraki follow only the strong. I'm sorry, my Princess.</p> <p>Daenerys Targaryen: Drogo! [in Dothraki] My sun and stars. [in the Common Tongue, to the rest] Why is he out here alone?</p> <p>Jorah Mormont: He seems to like the warmth, Princess.</p> <p>Mirri Maz Duur: He lives. You asked for life, you paid for life.</p>	Daenerys	1	1	1
113	<p>Across the Narrow Sea, Daenerys is tending to Drogo and his wounds inside a yurt.</p> <p>Daenerys Targaryen: [in Dothraki] Do you remember our first ride, my sun and stars? If you are in there, if you haven't gone away, show me. You're a fighter. You've always been a fighter. I need you to fight now. I know you're very far away, but come back to me, my sun and stars.</p> <p>We cut to Daenerys standing with her head pressing against Drogo's chest, now visibly more distressed.</p> <p>Daenerys Targaryen: [crying] When the sun rises in the west and sets in the east. Then you shall return to me, my sun and stars.</p> <p>Daenerys kisses Drogo, then uses a pillow to smother him.</p>	Daenerys	1	1	1
114	<p>Yoren: You're Arya now, hear me? Arya the orphan boy. No one asks an orphan too many questions, 'cause nobody gives three shits. What's your name?</p> <p>Arya Stark: Arya.</p> <p>Yoren: You've a long way to travel, and in bad company. I've 20 this time – men and boys all bound for the Wall. Your lord father gave me the pick of the dungeons, and I didn't find no little lordings down there. This lot – half of them would turn you over to the King quick as spit for a pardon. And the other half would do the same, except they'd rape you first. So keep to yourself – and when you piss, do it in the woods alone. You stay with this lot, boy. And stay or I'll lock you in the back of the wagon with these three.</p> <p>Arya bumps into a fat recruit, Hot Pie.</p> <p>Hot Pie: Watch yourself, midget.</p> <p>Lommy Greenhands: He's got a sword, this one.</p> <p>Hot Pie: What's a gutter rat like you doing with a sword?</p> <p>Lommy Greenhands: Maybe he's a little squire.</p> <p>Hot Pie: He ain't no squire. Look at him. He looks like a girl. I bet he stole that sword.</p> <p>Lommy Greenhands: Let's have a look. [wrestles Arya to the ground]</p> <p>Hot Pie: I could use me a sword like that.</p> <p>Lommy Greenhands: Take it off him.</p> <p>Hot Pie: Give it here, midget.</p> <p>Lommy Greenhands: Look at him! You'd better give Hot Pie the sword. I've seen him kick a boy to death.</p> <p>Hot Pie: I knocked him down and I kicked him in the balls and I kept kicking him until he was dead. I kicked him all to pieces. You better give me that sword!</p> <p>Arya Stark: [pointing Needle at Hot Pie] You want it? I'll give it to you. I already killed one fat boy. I bet you never killed anyone. I bet you're a liar. But I'm not. I'm good at killing fat boys. I like killing fat boys.</p> <p>Hot Pie bumps into Gendry, Robert's bastard.</p> <p>Gendry: Your like picking on the little ones, do you? I've been hammering an anvil these past 10 years.</p> <p>When I hit that steel, it sings. Are you gonna sing when I hit you? [Hot Pie leaves, scared. Gendry talks to</p>	Arya	-1	-1	-1
115	<p>Rakharo: [picking up the dragon eggs from their chest, speaking in Dothraki] Is this your command, Khaleesi? [Daenerys nods, Rakharo places the eggs next to Drogo's funeral pyre]</p> <p>Jorah Mormont: Drogo will have no use for dragon eggs in the Night Lands. Sell them. You can return to the Free Cities and live as a wealthy woman for all your days.</p> <p>Daenerys Targaryen: They were not given to me to sell.</p> <p>Jorah Mormont: Khaleesi, my Queen, I vow to serve you, obey you, to die for you if need be, but let him go, Khaleesi. I know what you intend. Do not.</p> <p>Daenerys Targaryen: I must. You don't understand.</p> <p>Jorah Mormont: Don't ask me to stand aside as you climb on that pyre. I won't watch you burn.</p> <p>Daenerys Targaryen: Is that what you fear? [kisses Jorah on the cheek, then speaks to the rest of the Dothraki and Lhazareen who stayed with her] You will be my khalasar. I see the faces of slaves. I free you. Take off your collars. Go if you wish, no one will stop you. But if you stay it will be as brothers and sisters, as husbands and wives.</p> <p>Mirri Maz Duur is shown tied and bound by rope.</p> <p>Daenerys Targaryen: Ser Jorah, bind this woman to the pyre. You swore to obey me.</p> <p>[to the crowd] I am Daenerys Stormborn of House Targaryen of the blood of old Valyria. I am the Dragon's daughter. And I swear to you that those who would harm you will die screaming.</p> <p>Mirri Maz Duur: You will not hear me scream.</p> <p>Daenerys Targaryen: I will. But it is not your screams I want. Only your life.</p> <p>Daenerys walks towards the pyre and lights it on fire with a torch. Mirri Maz Duur starts uttering some incantations which quickly turn into screaming. Daenerys walks into the burning pyre as her dress catches fire. The flames engulf everything, and the screen fades to black.</p> <p>We then cut to the next day in the morning. Jorah goes to the pyre to see if there's anything left of it. Amidst the smoke, a naked Daenerys appears, covered in soot and carrying three baby dragons in her arms and back.</p>	Daenerys	1	1	1
116					

## 8.2 *Attachment 2*

First and last page of EXCEL spreadsheet showing marking of all 119 discourses involving women in season 5, episodes 1-10 of Game of Thrones. Plus 1 denotes empowerment of the protagonist in the discourse, while Minus 1 overall denotes disempowerment.

	A	B	C	D	E
1	<b>GOT season 5 - Episodes 1-10</b>	Protagonist	MICRO	MESO	MACRO
2	<b>S5E1</b>				
	<p>A younger Cersei and her friend Melara are walking in the woods.</p> <p>MELARA: We shouldn't be out here alone.</p> <p>CERSEI: Why not?</p> <p>MELARA: If your father hears...</p> <p>CERSEI: He'll never know we've been gone.</p> <p>MELARA: But if he finds out...</p> <p>Cersei takes her hands.</p> <p>CERSEI: You don't need to be afraid of my father.</p> <p>They walk until they see a hut with smoke coming out of it.</p> <p>MELARA: Are you sure?</p> <p>CERSEI: Yes.</p> <p>MELARA: We shouldn't go in.</p> <p>CERSEI: Of course we should.</p>				
3		Cersei	1	1	
	<p>A fire is burning and various plants are hanging from the ceiling. They hear a shriek then...</p> <p>MAGGY: Get out. Get out!</p> <p>MELARA: Let's go...</p> <p>CERSEI: No.</p> <p>MAGGY: Listen to your friend.</p> <p>CERSEI: They said that you were terrifying. With cat's teeth and three eyes. You're not terrifying. You're boring.</p> <p>MAGGY: You don't know what I am.</p> <p>CERSEI: I know you're a witch and you can see the future. Tell me mine.</p> <p>MAGGY: Everybody wants to know their future. Until they know their future.</p> <p>CERSEI: This is my father's land. My land. Tell me my future or I'll have your two boring eyes gouged out of your head.</p> <p>Maggy chuckles then hands Cersei a knife.</p> <p>MAGGY: Your blood. Give me a taste.</p>				
4		Cersei	1	1	
	<p><b>CUT TO: CERSEI'S FACE - KING'S LANDING - MODERN DAY</b></p> <p>Cersei gets out of a cart to a funeral procession outside of the Great Sept of Baelor. She walks to the top of the stairs.</p> <p>PRIEST: Your grace, we are honored by your presence. The mourners are waiting.</p> <p>CERSEI: They will keep waiting. I want a moment alone with him.</p> <p>PRIEST: But your grace, many of these lords and ladies have travelled day and night to be here...</p> <p>Cersei starts walking away.</p> <p>PRIEST: From all seven kingdoms...</p> <p>CERSEI: They will wait.</p>				
5		Cersei	1	1	1

	A	B	C	D	E
	<p>Cersei is huddled in the corner. She shudders as the door opens.</p> <p>SEPTA: Confess. Confess.</p> <p>Cersei looks up to the Septa.</p> <p>INT. GREAT SEPT OF BAEOR - HIGH SPARROW'S ROOM</p> <p>Cersei is knelt before the High Sparrow in the room where she was taken away.</p> <p>CERSEI: I have sinned. I see that now. How could I have been so blind for so long. I want to be clean again. I want absolution. The Crone came to me with her lamp raised high, and with its holy light--</p> <p>HIGH SPARROW: You wish to make a confession?</p> <p>CERSEI: Once I've confessed, will I be free?</p> <p>SPARROW: Your Grace will be dealt with according to her sins.</p> <p>CERSEI: The Mother have mercy then. I lay with a man outside the bonds of marriage, I confess.</p> <p>SPARROW: Name him.</p> <p>CERSEI: Lancel Lannister.</p> <p>120 SPARROW: Your cousin. And the King's squire.</p>				
	<p>Cersei is carried to the top of the steps, in front of a massive crowd of King's Landing citizens.</p> <p>SPARROW: A sinner comes before you. Cersei of House Lannister, mother to his Grace King Tommen, widow to his Grace King Robert. She has committed the acts of falsehood and fornication. She has confessed her sins and begged for forgiveness. To demonstrate her repentance, she will cast aside all pride, all artifice, and present herself as the gods made her, to you. The good people of the city. She comes before you with a solemn heart. Shorn of secrets. Naked before the eyes of gods and men. To make her walk of atonement.</p> <p>The septas remove her robe. She stands naked before the citizens of King's Landing, who gasp. They force her to start walking down the stairs.</p> <p>SEPTA: Shame. Shame. Shame. (rings bell)</p> <p>The septa repeats "Shame. Shame. Shame." and rings the bell through the duration of Cersei's walk. Cersei is escorted by the Sparrows through the crowd of people. Silence at first, but once one man yells "Cunt!", she begins to be heckled.</p> <p>CROWD: Bitch! Whore! All hail her royal tits!</p> <p>They begin pelting her with food. A prostitute runs in front of Cersei with her breasts out.</p> <p>WOMAN: I've had half as many cocks as the queen!</p> <p>The sparrows force her out of Cersei's way. A man with his penis out runs in front of her later in the walk.</p> <p>121</p>				
		Cersei	-1	-1	-1

### 8.3 *Attachment 3*

Last page of EXCEL spreadsheet showing the marking of all 17 discourses involving Sansa in season 1, episodes 1-10 of Game of Thrones. Plus 1 denotes empowerment of the protagonist in the discourse, while Minus 1 overall denotes disempowerment.

This list was formed using the filter function of EXCEL permitting isolation of scores for individual protagonists.

Summary statistics at the bottom of the spreadsheet show average and sum empowerment/disempowerment balance calculated for Sansa in season 1.

This is shown for one protagonist only to demonstrate the principle behind the calculation employed for each of the 8 protagonists. The results for all protagonists are shown in Attachment 5.

	A	B	C	D	E
	dungeons, a guard on patrol kicks his feet waking him up. Then walks on. Meanwhile, in the Throne room, new roles are being announced by Grand Maester Pycelle. Grand Maester Pycelle: It is also the wish of His Grace, that his loyal servant Janos Slynt, Commander of the City Watch... While Grand Maester Pycelle is speaking, Sansa walks by a few familiar faces. Sansa Stark: Ser Aron. Grand Maester Pycelle: Be at once raised to the rank of Lord. Sansa Stark: Lord Gyles. Grand Maester Pycelle: And granted the ancient seat of Harrenhal, and that his sons and grandsons shall hold this honor after him, until the end of time. In the place of the traitor Eddard Stark, it is the wish of his Grace that Tywin Lannister, Lord of Casterly Rock and Warden of the West, be appointed Hand of the King. Lastly, in these times of treason and turmoil, it is the view of the Council that the life and safety of King Joffrey be of paramount importance. Cersei Lannister: Ser Barristan Selmy. Barristan Selmy approaches. Barristan Selmy: Your Grace, I am yours to command.				
15		Sansa	-1	-1	-1
16		Sansa	-1	-1	-1
	As Joffrey leaves with Meryn Trant and the Hound, he passes by Sansa. Marillion is still screaming and begging in the background. Joffrey Baratheon: You look quite nice. Sansa Stark: Thank you, my lord. Joffrey Baratheon: Your Grace. I'm King now. Marillion: (screaming) Stop! No! Joffrey Baratheon: Walk with me. I want to show you something.				
17	Sandor Clegane: Do as you're bid, child.	Sansa	-1	-1	-1
	row of spears in the Red Keep. Trant and Clegane follow behind them. Joffrey Baratheon: And as soon as you've had your blood, I'll put a son in you. Mother says that shouldn't be long. The pikes have impaled heads on them. Sansa looks away. Sansa Stark: No! Please, no! Joffrey Baratheon: (pointing at one of the heads) This one's your father. This one here. Look at it and see what happens to traitors. Sansa Stark: You promised to be merciful. Joffrey Baratheon: I was. I gave him a clean death. Look at him. Sansa Stark: Please let me go home. I won't do any treason, I swear – Joffrey Baratheon: Mother says I'm still to marry you. So you'll stay here, and obey. Look at him! Sansa looks up at the head of her father. Joffrey Baratheon: Well? Sansa Stark: How long do I have to look? Joffrey Baratheon: As long as it pleases me. Do you want to see the rest? Sansa Stark: If it please Your Grace. Joffrey Baratheon: That's your Septa there. (shot of the impaled head of a woman with the traditional Septa headscarf) I'll tell you what, I'm going to give				
18		Sansa	-1	-1	-1
19					
20	Count	17			
21	Average		-0,44	-0,44	-0,71
22	Sum		-8	-8	-5

#### *8.4 Attachment 4*

Last page of EXCEL spreadsheet showing the marking of all 16 discourses involving Sansa in season 5, episodes 1-10 of Game of Thrones. Plus 1 denotes empowerment of the protagonist in the discourse, while Minus 1 overall denotes disempowerment.

This list was formed using the filter function of EXCEL permitting isolation of scores for individual protagonists

Summary statistics at the bottom of the spreadsheet show average and sum empowerment/disempowerment balance calculated for Sansa in season 5.

This is shown for one protagonist only to demonstrate the principle behind the calculation employed for each of the 8 protagonists. The results for all protagonists are shown in Attachment 5

	A	B	C	D	E
14	<p>Qyburn enters the cell and bows.</p> <p>QYBURN: The trial will take place. The High Sparrow will be presenting a substantial case against you.</p> <p>CERSEI: The charges?</p> <p>QYBURN: Fornication, treason, incest, the murder of King Robert.</p> <p>CERSEI: All lies.</p> <p>QYBURN: Of course, Your Grace. My concern is that The Faith does not adhere to the same standards of proof as the crown. And I hope you'll excuse me for saying it, but belief is so often the death of reason.</p> <p>CERSEI: I wish you'd said it sooner. Any word from Jaime?</p> <p>QYBURN: I'm afraid not. Your Grace, Grand Maester Pycelle has summoned your Uncle Kevan back from Casterly Rock to serve as Hand of the King. He now presides over the small council.</p> <p>CERSEI: Tell him I need to speak to him.</p> <p>QYBURN: I implored him to visit you but he would not.</p> <p>CERSEI: What about my son, the king? If you can visit me then surely the king--</p> <p>QYBURN: Your arrest, and Queen Margaery's arrest, the king has not taken well. He remains in his chambers, his servants often find his food in the hall. Left untouched.</p>	Sansa	1	-1	
15	<p>INT. STANNIS'S CAMP - MELISANDRE'S TENT</p> <p>Melisandre looks at the icicles hanging outside her tent and sees that they are melting.</p> <p>EXT. STANNIS'S CAMP - DUSK</p> <p>Melisandre walks to find Stannis, stepping in a pile of mud on the way.</p> <p>INT. STANNIS'S CAMP - STANNIS'S TENT</p> <p>Stannis straps his armor on.</p> <p>MELISANDRE: The Lord of Light has made good on his promise, my king. His fires have melted the snows away. The way ahead is clear.</p> <p>STANNIS: We ride for Winterfell.</p> <p>MELISANDRE: And you will take it. The Lord has shown me Bolton banners burning. You will receive what is yours by right.</p> <p>Melisandre wraps her arms around Stannis. He brushes her off then exits the tent. She follows after him.</p>	Sansa	1	1	
16	<p>Pan across the ground to reveal all but one of Stannis's men are slaughtered alongside various banners and shields with his sigil. Stannis hobbles away from these men, using his sword as a crutch. Two Bolton men arrive on horse and kill the lone survivor of Stannis's men. They charge at Stannis, one slices his leg, but he kills them both with a dagger and sword then falls to the ground.</p> <p>Stannis leans onto a tree and groans. He looks down to his bleeding leg with a resigned look, then looks up to the sound of a horse riding.</p> <p>STANNIS: Bolton has women fighting for him.</p> <p>Cut up to Brienne of Tarth.</p> <p>BRIENNE: I do not fight for the Boltons. I'm Brienne of Tarth. I was Kingsguard to Renly Baratheon. I was there when he was murdered by a shadow with your face. You murdered him? With blood magic?</p> <p>Stannis is silent for a long moment.</p> <p>STANNIS: I did.</p> <p>Brienne approaches him and unsheathes her sword.</p> <p>BRIENNE: In the name of Renly of House Baratheon, First of his Name, Rightful King of the Andals and the First Men, Lord of the Seven Kingdoms, and Protector of the Realm, I, Brienne of Tarth, sentence you to die. Do you have any last words?</p> <p>STANNIS: Go on, do your duty.</p>	Sansa	1	1	
17					
18	Count	15			
19	Average		0,2	-0,125	0,5
20	Sum		3	-2	2

## 8.5 *Attachment 5*

Summary statistics showing average and sum empowerment/disempowerment balance for each female protagonist studied. The calculations were based on filtering of the spreadsheets for Season 1 and 5 shown in attachments 1 and 2 for each protagonist.

	Protagonist	Micro	Meso	Macro	Protagonist	Micro	Meso	Macro	
Arya									
		16				22			
Average			0,06	0,18	-1,00		-0,45	-0,45	#DIV/0!
Sum			1,00	3,00	-1,00		-10,00	-10,00	0,00
Sansa									
		17				15			
Average			-0,44	-0,44	-0,71		0,20	-0,13	0,50
Sum			-8,00	-8,00	-5,00		3,00	-2,00	2,00
Cersei									
		18				26			
Average			-0,05	-0,05	-0,06		-0,11	-0,11	-0,12
Sum			-1,00	-1,00	-1,00		-3,00	-3,00	-3,00
Daenerys									
		24				19			
Average			0,08	0,25	0,33		0,20	0,20	0,40
Sum			2,00	6,00	7,00		4,00	4,00	8,00
Catelyn									
		26							
Average			0,04	0,04	-0,06				
Sum			1,00	1,00	-1,00				
Margaery									
						7			
Average							0,00	0,00	0,20
Sum							0,00	0,00	1,00
Melisandre									
						6			
Average							0,43	0,14	0,50
Sum							3,00	1,00	2,00
Brienne									
						7			
Average							1,00	1,00	1,00
Sum							8,00	8,00	1,00

