

T.C.

ISTANBUL YENI YUZYIL UNIVERSITY

INSTITUTE OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE DEPARTMENT

ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE PROGRAMME



A FEMINIST ANALYSIS OF *A GAME OF THRONES* BY

GEORGE R. R. MARTIN

MA THESIS

SUKAINA HUSSEIN ABBAS ALSOWAIDI

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ISTANBUL, MARCH, 2024

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I prepared my project following the thesis writing rules of the Institute of Social Sciences at Istanbul Yeni Yüzyıl University, and I hereby declare that;

- I have obtained the data, information, and documents provided within the thesis according to academic and ethical rules,
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14/03/ 2024

SUKAINA HUSSEIN ABBAS ALSOWAIDI

PREFACE

I would thanks to my supervisor Gökçen KARA who provided me with support, advice, and guidance. I also extend my thanks to my professors during my academic journey who contributed to raising my academic level and bestowed upon me a wealth of knowledge.

ISTANBUL, 2024

SUKAINA HUSSEIN ABBAS ALSOWAIDI



ÖZET

GEORGE R. R. MARTIN'İN TAHT OYUNLARI İSİMLİ ESERİNİN FEMİNİST ANALİZİ

SUKAINA HUSSEIN ABBAS ALSOWAIDI

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1996 yılında George R. R. Martin tarafından epik fantastik roman tarzında yazılan Taht Oyunları, karakterlerin güç hırslarının kölesi olduğu ve karmaşık siyasi entrikalar, hileler, ihanetler ve aldatmaca vakalarına bulaştığı Westeros'un kurgusal dünyasını anlatmaktadır. Bu çalışma Taht Oyunları romanı üzerine feminist bir analiz sunmaktadır. Son birkaç yüzyılda feminist teorinin tarihi ve “feminizm” terimi üzerine pek çok hararetli tartışma yapılmıştır. Feminist teoriyi Taht Oyunları'na uygulayarak cinsellik, doğurganlık ve güç üzerinden kadına bakış açısını, kadın arketipini ve varyasyonunu, kadın karakterlerin maruz kaldığı baskıyı ve bu baskıcı duruma tepkilerini anlamak mümkündür. Bu araştırmanın teorik ve pratik sonuçları da tartışılmaktadır. Bu tez aynı zamanda George R.R. Martin'in kadınlara yönelik ataerkil baskıya yönelik eleştirel konumunu da açıklamaktadır. Kadın karakterlerin maruz kaldığı şiddet, sömürü, ötekileştirme, güçsüzlük gibi baskı türlerini anlatmaktadır. Yazarın düşüncelerinin en güzel örneği Buz ve Ateşin Şarkıları dizisi olan, kadın karakterleri tanıttığı, onların baskılarını ve baskıya verdikleri tepkileri gösterdiği Taht Oyunları romanıdır. Toplumda kadına dair önemli konuları ele almaya çalışan Martin, roman boyunca toplumsal cinsiyet eşitsizliğine, kadının köleleştirilmesine, kadının güçlenmesine ve kadın karakterinin nasıl geliştiğine değiniyor.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Feminizm, Baskı, Eşitlik, George R. R. Martin, Taht Oyunları

ABSTRACT

A FEMINIST ANALYSIS OF A *GAME OF THRONES* BY GEORGE R. R. MARTIN

SUKAINA HUSSEIN ABBAS ALSOWAIDI

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Written in 1996 by George R. R. Martin in the style of an epic fantasy novel, *A Game of Thrones* depicts the fictional world of Westeros in which characters are enslaved by their ambition for power and involved in intricate cases of political schemes, tricks, betrayals and deception. This study presents a feminist analysis of *A Game of Thrones*. There have been many heated debates on the history of feminist theory and the term “feminism” itself for the last few centuries. *A Game of Thrones* reveals the female perspective through sexuality, fertility, power, and female archetype and variation. It also uncovers the oppression of female characters who are subjected to it and their reactions to it. The theoretical and practical implications of this investigation are also discussed. This thesis investigates George R.R. Martin’s critical position on the patriarchal oppression against women. It describes the sorts of oppression that the female characters are subjected to, such as violence, exploitation, marginalization, and powerlessness, which are realized throughout this research. The phenomenon is expressed in *A Game of Thrones*, which is a series in *A Songs of Ice and Fire*, that introduces female characters and shows their oppression and their response to the oppression. Showing their attempt to deal with crucial matters about women in society, Martin focuses on gender inequality, women’s enslavement, and women’s empowerment by expressing how the character of women is developed throughout the novel.

Keywords: Feminism, Oppression, Equality, George R. R. Martin, *A Game of Thrones*.

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INTRODUCTION

Words are the only
Jewels I possess
Words are the only
Clothes I wear

Words are the only food
That sustains my life
Words are the only wealth
I distribute among people

The quote by Tuka Ram, translated by Dilip Chitre, underscores the profound significance of words and language. Indeed, language serves as a window into the human soul. Over time, language has evolved, and one of its most profound applications, beyond communication, is in literature. Literature mirrors human desires and needs, both for the author and the reader. Through writing, authors channel their deepest emotions, and readers, in turn, find solace and understanding in those words. Hence, "We explore reality through language, and for many, it replaces reality (. . .) That is what sustains us in solitude. But real solitude, (. . .) when, for some disability or other, you can't talk to even yourself" (Daruwalla, 2001, p.169). Daruwalla claims that language is the primary tool for interpreting and understanding reality. For many, narratives formed through language become perceived reality. Even in loneliness, language is used to engage in self-dialogue that comforts its user. True loneliness, however, is imagined as the inability to communicate with oneself, which underscores the profound importance of language in shaping our existence.

However, literature and Fine Art are paramount disciplines that mirror human emotions and delve into an individual's inner psyche. Through the medium of literature, authors articulate a myriad of emotions ranging from anger and sorrow to ecstasy and love. Literature serves as a gateway to the human soul; thus, many have recognized its unparalleled attributes and harnessed its power for personal gain and the greater good. Literature captures the lived experiences of the past. It offers a lens into how life used to be earlier, enabling us to traverse history. In the novel *Terra Nostra* by Carlos Fuentes, an alternative history is presented where King Philip of Spain weds Queen Elizabeth I. Beyond this intriguing premise, fiction often provides

insights into the lifestyles and sentiments of specific eras (Daruwalla, 2001, p.170). Through fictional narratives, authors can paint vivid pictures of historical periods, capturing not just events but the emotions, attitudes, and daily lives of people of the time.

In essence, literature offers a comprehensive view of historical periods, whether through fiction, novels, or other literary forms. It serves as a portal to the world, enabling readers to step into the shoes of others. Through literature, one can embark on countless adventures, navigate a spectrum of emotions, and experience scenarios that might be inaccessible in their real lives. Consequently, individuals can broaden their perspectives and evolve their thinking based on the experiences of others. The transformative power of reading, rooted in literature, fosters mental growth and expands one's understanding of life. "Men make their history, but they do not make it just as they please; they do not make it under circumstances chosen by themselves, but under circumstances directly encountered, given and transmitted from the past." (Sartre, 1988, p.1). From this quote, it is understandable that through the past, or literature, a person can learn how to succeed. Hence, what a successful person can do is to read the experiences of others and link them to apply them to the present time and to get the best benefit of that benefit.

Literature encompasses a myriad of genres reflecting various facets of life. Themes such as oppression, female trafficking, women's empowerment, women's enslavement, and many others emerge prominently in literary works. These themes, diverse as they are, can be broadly categorized as "feminist theory". The concept of feminist theory, as we know it today, first originated as the term "féminisme" in France during the late nineteenth century, a period marked by significant political upheaval (Easton, 2012, p.99). Easton's exploration of the topic provides a comprehensive understanding of how these themes have evolved and impacted contemporary literature. Persecution against women is clear and widespread in most societies, so feminist theory attempts to solve such crises by presenting specific themes, such as those mentioned above, to identify the problem and find a solution.

Sappho, the ancient Greek poet from the island of Lesbos, is often celebrated as an early figure of female articulation who embodied the essence of feminist theory

before the term existed. Her poetry, with its emotive expressions of love and longing directed primarily at women, challenges the patriarchal narratives of her time and offers a valuable insight into women's lives and intimate relationships in antiquity. This literary legacy is crucial in communicating feminist issues, as it emphasizes the importance of women's voices in literature and highlights women's rich, complex inner lives and strength throughout history. Sappho's work is an early testament to the power of literature as a medium of feminist expression. She championed women's agency and emotional freedom and inspired countless generations to value and pursue equality. Her lyrical mastery and the feminist undertones of her verse have made her an icon not only in the field of poetry but also in the broader discourse on gender and sexuality.

Literature has been instrumental in conveying the message of feminist theory, advocating for women's rights from all backgrounds, and elevating awareness about women's oppression. As noted by Jason Chen, "The general consensus is that oppression is an institutional hierarchy that unjustly harms lower-tier groups." (Chen, 2017, p.421). In his article, *The Core of Oppression: Why is it Wrong?* (2017), Chen delves into the nuanced meanings of various forms of oppression and clarifies the term "harm" implications within this context. He posits that "harm" can encompass social psychological advantages, political advantages, or psychological harm. Additionally, it might denote a deprivation of power, freedom, social esteem, dehumanization, and other factors (Chen, 2017, p.421). Consequently, anyone subjected to these conditions can be considered oppressed. Oppression implies if a woman experiences psychological harm, political imbalance, power deprivation, loss of freedom, and the like, she is undeniably oppressed.

Throughout the ages, women have faced many forms of oppression. They experienced political subjugation, epitomized by the denial of fundamental rights, such as the right to vote. This political struggle is evident in historical accounts: "Feminists differed over strategy and priorities, especially over . . . the strategic importance of the vote . . ." (Moses, 2012, p.764). Beyond political suppression, societal constraints further curtailed women's freedoms. The construct of domesticity was ingrained in women, tying them to their homes under the guise of maintaining a harmonious family environment. Walter mentions, "Home was supposed to be a

cheerful place so that brothers, husbands and sons would not go elsewhere in search of a good time” (Walter, 1966, p.163). This societal expectation limited women’s autonomy, confining them to the boundaries of their own homes.

Among the various forms of oppression highlighted by Chen, the deprivation of self-development capability stands out prominently. Historically, there’s evidence of this deprivation in the realm of literature. Until the eighteenth century, the literary world lacked female authors. While women began to emerge as writers in this era, their numbers were still minimal. Before this period, only an occasional female voice graced the literary stage. This underrepresentation can be attributed to society’s stifling women’s potential for self-growth and development. If society denies a woman the right to nurture her talents and passions, it oppresses her. The erasure of women’s accomplishments from historical records is disheartening. Representing half the human population, it’s sad that women’s contributions to literature and other scientific domains have been historically limited. But the curtailment of self-development isn’t the sole form of oppression women faced; Chen identifies several other modes, such as:

there are seven general ways to understand the primary harm of oppression: (1) political deprivation, (2) economic deprivation, (3) freedom deprivation, (4) social deprivation, (5) psychological harm, (6) the deprived capability of self-develop, (7) some combination of the former (Chen, 2017, pp.421-422).

Women have experienced all seven forms of oppression, as Chen describes. Throughout history, they have endeavoured to secure their freedom, self-development, and equal economic, social, or political rights. In response to these challenges, women have taken actions that can best be described as resistance, striving to cement their significance in history. The eighteenth century, mainly through the writings of Mary Wollstonecraft, marked a pivotal period that spurred women’s progress and undoubtedly contributed to their empowerment. Batliwala described empowerment as “the process of challenging existing power relations and gaining greater control over the source of power” (Cornwall & Edwards, 2014, p.4). This can be understood as a movement aiming for equality with men in various spheres, including politics, society, economics, and personal development. Women’s empowerment began gaining traction in the 1970s as a mechanism to advocate for

women's rights (Cornwall & Edwards, 2014, p.3). It came as a response to the challenges that women face and their oppression.

For centuries, women have faced myriad forms of oppression, including rape, trafficking, underestimation, and humiliation. Feminist theory emerged in response to these injustices. Notably, since the eighteenth century, numerous female writers have risen to prominence, including Mary Wollstonecraft, Barbara Walter, and others. While the term "feminist theory" might not have been in their vocabulary, their primary objective was to advocate for women, shed light on their marginalization, and raise awareness, encouraging women to recognize their challenging circumstances and seek change. They pursued their goals through various literary forms, from poems and short stories to novellas and novels.

Several female authors have significantly raised awareness of women's issues through their writings. Among them, Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* (1792) stands out for its emphasis on the importance of education for women. Wollstonecraft contrasts the opportunities available to men with the limitations placed on women. While society encourages men to pursue professions, women are often pushed towards marriage. Though Wollstonecraft faced criticism, some deeming her ideas romantic and unrealistic, she vehemently defended her positions. She passionately argued for women's equal rights and access to education. Urging women to break free from their societal shackles through education, she championed independence over-reliance on male figures such as fathers, brothers, husbands, or sons. As a result, Wollstonecraft is recognized as a foundational figure in European feminism, with her work receiving widespread attention in European literary circles.

Barbara Walter's *The Cult of True Womanhood: 1820-1860* (1966) critiques women's roles in the nineteenth century. She delves into the era's prevailing expectations for women, encapsulated by "The Cult of True Womanhood." This concept was characterized by four cardinal virtues: "piety, purity, submissiveness, and domesticity. Combined, they defined the roles of mother, daughter, sister, and wife" (Walter, 1966, p.152). A deviation from these virtues risked societal rejection, alienation from family, and, as some believed, even divine condemnation. During

this period, society placed stringent expectations on women, pressuring them to embody these idealized qualities to be deemed worthy or acceptable, especially in the eyes of men. Walter challenges these constraining norms, identifying them as oppressive because they limit women's freedom. Through her work, she aimed to raise awareness about these restrictive behaviours and encouraged women to break free from these moulds and embrace autonomy rather than conforming to societal expectations.

The comprehensive analysis of George R.R. Martin's *A Game of Thrones* (2011) examines the multifaceted portrayal of female characters. It explores the main research questions of how sexuality, fertility and power are represented from a female perspective in *A Game of Thrones*. Moreover, whether archetypal female characters are present in Martin's *A Game of Thrones*, and how do the behaviours and characteristics of female characters differ? Furthermore, what forms of oppression they endure and the unique ways in which these characters use their innate qualities to navigate a landscape fraught with patriarchal challenges.

In literature, Feminist theory has been at the centre of debate for centuries and remains so today. Numerous authors have delved into its history, tracing its origins and evolution. Claire Goldberg Moses, in her 2012 article "What's in a Name? On Writing the History of Feminism," sheds light on the often overlooked history of feminist theory. Moses examines the various terminologies used historically to describe advocates for women's rights, leading up to the adoption of the term 'feminist theory' She contends that while the vocabulary may change, the underlying quest remains constant: securing rights for women. Although the definition of feminist theory can vary across times, places, and individuals, its core always centres on addressing and prioritizing the needs and rights of women.

Furthermore, Feminist theory is incapable of characterizing sexism as the exclusive repressive factor in the lives of women. Feminist theory has to be inclusive, adaptable, and ready to embrace conflict since racism, ethnocentrism, class relations, structural poverty, illiteracy, hunger, and imperialism are all major factors in the oppression of women. But there will be a big payoff if we take these teachings to heart (Moses, 2012, p.733). So, it is a must to view feminist theory from multiple

perspectives.

George R. R. Martin's *A Game of Thrones* has been a focal point for numerous studies in fantasy literature. Adinia Arum Pratiwi, in her 2022 article "Female Subjects Oppression in *A Song of Ice and Fire: A Game of Thrones*," delves into the subjugation faced by the series' female characters. Pratiwi identifies the forms of oppression these characters endure, such as violence, exploitation, and marginalization, and analyzes Martin's critical stance on these issues. A noteworthy aspect of oppression explored in the series is 'powerlessness,' a state characters like Sansa Stark grapple with. Warren D. TenHouten's 2016 article "The Emotions of Powerlessness" offers a deeper understanding of this concept. He elaborates on the myriad emotions tied to powerlessness, including inferiority, depression, fear, anxiety, and shame. According to TenHouten, these feelings emerge when individuals with authority (typically men) exert control over the less empowered (often women), plunging the latter into a cycle of low self-worth. This theme, pivotal to understanding the dynamics of Martin's world, will be examined in further detail in subsequent discussions.

However, other articles show the so-called "Incest" often demonstrated through *A Game of Thrones*, such as David Lester's *Incest* (1972). He proves the psychological and physical effects of incest. He defines it as a forbidden relation between blood relatives or even for those who do not have blood relatives (such as stepfather and stepdaughter). He discusses that incest is considered to be rare "Weinberg (1955) reported that the incident of prosecuted incest participants in the USA is one to two cases per million per year" (Lester, 1972, p.268). Hence, even though it is not common, it is practised by minorities, such as incest, between some characters like Jamie and Cersei Lannister. Additionally, many studies have taken *A Game of Thrones* as an object of analyzing female characters. This thesis tries to make the same, and it will demonstrate feminist theory and its origin. It will also discuss specific terms in *A Game of Thrones*, such as sexual abusiveness, power, female archetype, oppression and female response to it.

1. FIRST CHAPTER. AN OVERVIEW OF FEMINIST THEORY

Feminist theory has been of significant interest in the last few decades. Continuously, feminist theory causes a controversial discussion of what it precisely means. When did it first start? And what groups or criteria does it represent? And do all women who defend their rights accept being called feminists? To answer these questions, it is a must to know the diversity of definitions regarding feminist theory. Feminist theory, in its surface meaning, is mentioned in the Oxford English Dictionary as “advocacy of the rights of women based on the theory of equality of the sexes” (Easton, 2012, p.99). Hence, feminist theory is a movement to defend women’s rights. The origin of feminism is said to be from the French term *féminisme*, which first began in Paris in the late nineteenth century (Easton, 2012, P.99). Its main goal was to defend women's rights.

Feminist theory also refers to the United States of America movement in the late nineteenth century that calls for women’s rights. Continuously, in the twentieth century and in the United States of America, the term feminism was first used to describe a particular set of women’s rights activists who believed that women were exceptional and had a distinct purity. (Jagger, 1983). After these events, individuals and groups concerned with women’s issues were identified as feminists. All of them were united by one belief: women suffer persecution because of their identity as a woman and their gender. On this basis, feminist activists analyzed the possible causes of women’s oppression and developed different mechanisms to confront this violence (Mehrotra, 2001, P.1). They concentrate on highlighting the gender discrimination that women are subjected to and working on confronting these issues.

The writer Offen (1992) has listed (as Mehrotra mentions in her article) several classifications of feminists. She notes that throughout history, the term feminism has undergone major changes, and thus, she categorized feminist theory into several categories to see how it has been viewed over time. The classification of feminist theory is vast, so scholars decided to follow the primary classifications that inspired women to defend their rights everywhere. The division is as follows: “. . . Liberal, Socialist (Marxist), Radical, Eco feminism, Black feminism, Third world feminism, and most recently postmodern directions." (Mehrotra, 2001, p.2). This

classification or labelling indicates a significant change in feminist theory and the pattern of work and thinking over the decades. The hardships of women throughout the world show a substantial variation on the topic (Mehrotra, 2001, pp.1-2). The global struggles women face demonstrate a significant variance on the subject.

Some historians of the women's movement label some acts that happened in the past as feminist acts and do not label others as feminist. Hence, Claire Goldberg Moses raises the critical question of how historians in the United States classify some groups of women's movements as feminist and others are not. Moses mentions What will happen to our understanding of the word feminist if we put it in a different context (Moses, 2012, p.760). Hence, she proceeds "Although we think we can define words absolutely, it turns out that their meaning changes with time and place" (Moses, 2012, p.760). For example, while talking about black women who stood against slavery and called for the elimination of racism, separate from men who call for women's development and their rights.

And another example is when talking about women of the nineteenth century, it will show that those who can be considered feminists are only upper-class women, perhaps because they could write down what they felt, unlike poor lower-class women who did not find opportunities to express what they think. Is this classification and class prejudice? Then, won't our understanding of feminist theory change? (Moses, 2012, pp.760-761). Of course, it does change; as mentioned earlier, feminist theory changed the concept of time and space, not to mention between different social classes and backgrounds.

Another example is the working women who demand to improve their working conditions, which challenges their colleagues and employers who think all work should be for men only. Or what would happen to the understanding of feminist theory if American Indian feminists had a massive impact on politics, particularly in giving women the right to vote? It is known that American Indian feminists have had a significant impact on feminist theory in the United States of America (US Feminism). In the end, feminist theory is not a past but instead what historians describe the movements that occurred in the past (Moses, 2012, pp.761-762). In other words, women activists in the past were not the ones who called themselves

feminists; it was the new historians who did so. Thus, our understanding of feminist theory will be linked to some category representing it. For example, if black women call as well as men to get rid of slavery and racism and separately call for the rights of women, then this is black feminism (concerns with the rights of black women). So, the meaning of feminist theory changes according to the time and place in which it exists. Hence, “In the practice of women’s history in the United States and Western Europe today, the very word “feminist” is hotly debated, and these debates tell us as much about disagreements concerning present-day politics as they do about the past” (Moses, 2012, p.762). This shows the high disagreement on the term.

Moreover, labelling the women’s movement is not quite acceptable to women. Some did not accept being called a feminist, and others did not accept being part of Offen’s classifications. Hence, “There is no clear-cut understanding or agreement on the term feminism” (Mehrotra, 2001, p.3). Instead, only some women were aware of the diversity of intellectual currents. There have been initiatives to evaluate the performance of these companies in terms of their ratings. Since most individuals did not want to be associated with the word, this labelling process seemed futile (Mehrotra, 2001, p.3). This tagging procedure appeared pointless because most people did not want to be linked with the term.

The difference in how feminists are defined is not only within the same society mentioned above, but every country has a specific definition of feminist theory. Such as Colleen Dryden and others mention in their article that they participate in a gathering of feminists of different ages, colours, and cultural and religious backgrounds. They note that the attendees ranged between 21 and 52 years, and each of them came from a different geographical location and other religions and social backgrounds. While some chose to take the course, others had to (Dryden, et al., 2002, p.114). Hence, “Our different identities were crucial in showing us that there are many kinds of feminisms, that start from different places” (Dryden, et al., 2002, p.114). However, this difference in perspective and strategy, combined with an emphasis on variation within the same cycle, has made them aware that women and men from various backgrounds can discover points of commonality. Even though they are of different races, social classes, genders, and ages, their dedication to gender activism served as a unifying theme for all of their conversations in their

discussion (Dryden, et al., 2002, p.114). Hence, feminist theory is not static; it is a dynamic term. So, when labelling feminists and women into groups and other classifications, it is essential to mention what changes have happened to feminist theory across history from the first time it appeared till nowadays.

Whatever the circumstances, it is essential to mention that by the middle of the 1970s, women in the US working for gender equality had all agreed on the term “feminist” for their work, regardless of whether they were closely associated with the Democratic Party’s liberals or were in support of left-wing organizations; whether they supported a legal strategy or were coordinating in small illegal groups that aimed to raise the consciousness of women or their status was centred on education and employment or on making childrearing and housework equal work with men (Moses, 2012, p.767). In other words, the feminist theory stands for any work that is in favour of women. Hence, “This was the moment in history when use of the term “feminist” was perhaps the most widespread and seemed acceptable to the largest group advocates for women’s equality, even though their views often differs sharply” (Moses, 2012, p.767). Hence, it refers to all who call for women's rights.

From the 1920s to the early 1960s, there was disagreement among female advocates for women's advancement over their theoretical conception of femininity and how to put such conceptions into practice, mainly regarding laws protecting workers. The feminist movement, composed of a few women activists, promoted equal treatment for men and women in the workplace and emphasized the social construction of femininity. And persisted in believing that a self-governing movement centred on women was essential (Moses, 2012, pp.762-763). Put another way, the feminist movement had a very particular connotation in the United States from the 1920s to the 1950s, including a small portion of a much broader group that it now considers advocates for women’s growth and development (Moses, 2012, p.763). Hence, it leads to women's development, self-growth and awareness.

Since 1960, the severe struggle of women began to demand their rights politically. Those who started this movement were women in the US Congress and politicians at the time of the election of John F. Kennedy in 1960 (Moses, 2012, p.765). Hence, “They focused on employment and education, . . . their strategy was

to press for new laws in these areas” (Moses, 2012, pp.765-766). Thanks to their efforts, laws were circulated in favour of women, including the right of women to receive the same salary as men (1963) and women's right to be hired in any work as men (1964). Women were guaranteed their rights politically even though they had not yet called themselves feminists. Feminist theory, in its border shape, appeared in the West at the beginning of the 1970s (Moses, 2012, pp.765-766). Even if women hadn't dubbed themselves feminists yet, women still had political rights granted to them.

Given that they make up the majority of voters in America, women may influence the political execution of the National Organization of Women-sponsored Bill of Rights (Almeder, 1994, p.301). Hence, The first response given to any suggestion that the so-called "tyranny" of childbirth and childcare appears to be a question of personal preference in a nation where legal access to affordable, publicly funded birth control and abortion is guaranteed is that society still needs children and that only women are capable of bearing them, thus ensuring the oppression of the bearers (Almeder, 1994, pp.301-302). Suppose the subject of persecution is the economic persecution of women. In that case, the state must provide so-called maternity leaves that are fully funded while giving them the right to return to their previous workplaces with the same previous salary without interruptions, with fixed seniority. In addition, the state should provide care centres for children over twenty-four hours to ensure the comfort of mothers, even in their spare time, thus reducing the burden on women (Almeder, 1994, p.302). This emphasizes the importance of giving women their full rights so that they can live a decent life

However, a term called “empowerments” was initiated during social change work. The idea of empowerment which can be defined as “Batliwala defined empowerment as ‘the process of challenging existing power relations, and of gaining greater control over the source of power’” (Cornwall & Edwards, 2014, p.4). It has a long history of efforts for change in areas, including community organizing, popular education organizations in communities, and psychology. In the 1970s, collective action and feminist awareness led to early empowerment and development regarding feminist theory on an international scope. In the 1980s and 1990s, “women’s empowerment” emerged as a strategy aimed at creating new power dynamics by

making women and men equal and defending women's rights (Cornwall, & Edwards, 2014, p.3). Women's empowerment became a tactic to protect women's rights and establish equality between men and women to shift the balance of power.

Hence, in works from the 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s, “. . . empowerment was cast as an unfolding process, a journey that women could take alone or together that would lead to changes in consciousness and collective power” (Cornwall & Edwards, 2014, p.4). The assertion that empowerment was not something to be granted by others but rather involved acknowledging power imbalances, affirming one's right to have rights, and working both individually and collectively to demand and introduce systemic reform in favour of increased equality was a constant motif in numerous of these writings (Cornwall, & Edwards, 2014, p.4). Thus, empowerment is achieved by the person and not through the external existing power.

The essence of empowerment is a woman's capacity to take charge of her life, health, and potential to affect global change. Other aspects are control over one's relationships, employment, housing, and free time. The extent to which a woman possesses and is empowered to shape her attitudes is known as empowerment (PHAN, 2013, p.51). In other words, women can impose their being and identity on others and challenge patriarchal societies. This resulted from the continuous obliteration of their identities and personalities, which led to this explosion. Thus, “The process of women's empowerment is dynamic; it is not static over the life course but may vary over time, subject to the accumulation of experience, resources, and achievements as well as of time-varying characteristics like age, marital status and duration” (Lee-Rife, 2010, p.634). Therefore, the term “empowerment” refers to the use of force by marginalized groups such as women. Empowerment may vary according to popular cultures, age groups, life experiences, or political affiliations. Still, in the end, it refers to one goal: the opposition force that challenges the existing societal power.

Empowerment is valuable, especially in working with adolescents and communities, where empowerment may be used to realize emancipatory practices. It means to be empowered by being critically aware of the power relationships that

exist in society and applying this awareness to create constructive changes in society. People who are empowered make choices and take actions that allow them to make meaningful decisions appropriate for their circumstances. Both agency and opportunity are necessary to make decisions and take action; the agency is associated with the capacity to make choices, while the opportunity is associated with the structural circumstances in which the social actor, or social group, lives. However, empowerment may also apply to communities and groups of people rather than only being seen as something that affects an individual (COBURN, & GORMALLY. 2017. P.99). The liberating choices a person makes for liberation is the principle of empowerment, whether this is the liberation of the mind, body, captivity, male's superiority, or freedom from past traumas.

Thus, other scholars such as Nancy Cott say feminist theory appeared in the first two decades of the twentieth century. A new feminist ideology was identified in place of the notion of a woman's sphere that was common in the nineteenth-century feminist movement. It began the twentieth century (Caughie, 2010, p.6). Henceforth, "(. .) feminism, Cott says, was part of a broader rebellious spirit of the early twentieth century that included, for example, the birth control movement and internationalism, as represented by the League of Nations and the International Workers of the World" (Caughie, 2010, p.6). The movement continued to break the standards that limited the possibilities of women until it expanded to the recognition of women's sexual freedom and the abolition of slavery (Caughie, 2010, p.6). women are Struggling to destroy all obstacles and psychological obstacles that stand as a barrier against women's economic independence.

The enslavement of women and the restriction of their sexual freedom were prevalent at the end of the nineteenth century (1880). This was one of the most important reasons that led to the uprising of the women's movement in Western society. In British society, Kathleen Barry mentions that in 1880, the British Home Secretary, Josephine Butler, started an investigation by hiring a Lawyer called T.W. Snagg to investigate trade by English girls to make them work in prostitution. It is found that there was a movement of trade in British women to other countries such as Holland, Belgium and France to work in prostitution against their will, as the pretext to lure them was to provide them with an opportunity to leave the country, which led

to waves of anger against the topic (Barry, 1995, p.105). What has caused anger to increase around the issue of trafficking in women is that the societal oppression that women are exposed to is a matter in itself, a cause for anger, not to mention their trafficking.

As a result of the business of women's trade, the term "white slavery" appeared, as Josephine Butler used it for the first time to refer to all acts of trafficking in women and the violations against them, as she did not use it during her writing, but used it in 1902 at a conference in Paris that was held by several countries to solve the problem of white women's trafficking. The term carried a kind of racial and class prejudice (Barry, 1995, pp.114-115). The naming has caused a series of criticism, "So, in addition to being sweet, innocent, and young, women were victims only if they were white. . . The term eventually embodied all the sexist, classist, and racist bigotry (. . .)" (Barry, 1995, p.115). because black women were also victims, so there was much resentment towards the term. Consequently, many rejected this label. As a result of this, an international conference was held in 1921 in which the term was changed from "white slavery" to "Traffic in Women and Children" in general, and this was the idiom of the League of Nations (Barry, 1995, p.115). On this basis, the name was changed to include trafficking in all women equally, as the harm that women are exposed to from trafficking is the same as among white, black, Indian, or Asian women.

However, in 1902, an international conference was held in Paris, as mentioned above, in which 12 countries agreed to prevent the trafficking of white women, which was ratified in 1904. This agreement obligated governments to implement a maximum penalty for anyone who traffics women and girls in immoral forms. Another act followed the enactment of this law in 1910 in the United States of America (Barry, 1995, p.115). Thus, "This act . . . forbids transporting a person across state lines or international boundaries (exporting or importing) for prostitution or other immoral purposes." (Barry, 1995, p.115). Thus, the trade problem of women was solved, although it still exists in many countries. However, enacting such laws led to the reduction of its abundance. Still, it did not prevent the existence of such persecution against women and children of different nationalities, colours and social classes, especially the poor class, which is the most suffering.

Moreover, enslavement is also a domestic one. Hagar Kotef mentions Grimké, whose writing criticizes women's enslavement by men. Grimké had philosophical, political, and ideological roots in religious discourses. In her writings, she criticized the law giving the husband the right to "give moderate correction" to his wife (Kotef, 2009, p.497). Grimké clarified that this law applies between the master and his slave, as the master can kill his slave with this law, and the same applies to the authority of men over their wives: "The slaveholder does kill his slave by moderate correction, as the law allows; and many a husband, among the poor, exercise the right given him by the law, of degrading woman by personal chastisement" (Grimké, 1988, p.74). In other words, this law gives husbands the right to scold their wives, belittle and insult them, and restrict their freedom. Furthermore, "And among the higher ranks, if actual imprisonment is not resorted to, women are not infrequently restrained of the liberty of going to places of worship by irreligious husbands" (Grimké, 1988, p.74). Men used this law to restrict women's freedom as if they were imprisoned, as some non-religious husbands prevented their wives from practising their religion as part of their control.

Hence, Grimké criticized the laws that restrict women's freedom strongly because this is like raising a pet and not a wife, since the relationship between them is supposed to be based on justice and equality and not the relationship of a master and a slave as the entity of the wife must be respected as a woman and not as a subordinate. Henceforth, the lack of a law of equality between men and women led to the fact that the marriage life of women is complex, and women suffer from it. This is because of the political situation that led women to this situation, and there is another reason for the deterioration of the situation of women. It was found that in the poor class, women suffer from domestic violence and physical harm as well, as the reasons for this are attributed to moral reasoning, as well as the lack of awareness and education among women, which led them to accept such a life (Kotef, 2009, p.504). Awareness about oppression is of very importance because, without awareness, women will never be able to get rid of their oppression. Continuously, Grimké states:

W]omen, among the lowest classes of society, so far as my observation has extended, suffer intensely from the brutality of their husbands (. . .) Brute

force, the law of violence, rules to a great extent in the poor man's domicile; and woman is little more than his drudge. They are less under the supervision of public opinion, less under the restraints of education, and unaided or unbiased by the refinements of polished society (Grimké, 1988, p.80).

Thus, the slavery of women exists at all levels, whether at the political, societal or domestic levels. Women were and still suffer from such slavery. It is worth noting that women's slavery has diminished with the development of our time, but many women in the world still suffer from it; those women who exist in the shadow of every society suffer silently and cry silently. Women also suffer from the control of their husbands over their bodies. Not only that, some of them suffer from the power of their family members over their bodies, which is called "incest". Incest is defined as "Incestuous behavior primarily involves sexual intercourse between a father and his daughter, a mother and her son, or a brother and his sister" (Lester, 1972, p.268). Therefore, incest is one of the things that control the body of a blood relative for a man. This control is often coercive, and in other cases, it is consensual. Still, it is done under the mental and emotional influence of the victim, which makes the victim unable to understand her feelings and believes that her only refuge is the person controlling her.

However, In 1960, there were several movements in the United States, including equality for blacks, anti-American demonstrations in the Vietnam War, and the right to vote. These movements inspired women to shed light on the oppression of women in society, but their voice, in the beginning, was not heard because they are women, and what they defend is women. Initially, they called themselves the Women's Liberation Movement, A small, illegal emerging group (Moses, 2012, p.766). They ". . . organized quite differently from the ways that the women with connections to the Democratic Party leadership had organized . . ." (Moses, 2012, p.766). They carried a question regarding the social relations between men and women, and it was the same as their motto in their movement, which is "the personal is political". They aimed to shed light on why Western governments were disregarding the particular issues that occur in the family environment, such as violence against women, which is justified by the imperative of male power (Moses, 2012, p.766). The slogan carried by these feminist groups indicates that it is not

possible to leave the oppression in the home environment and the constant violence to which men expose women.

Western governments turned a blind eye to the oppression cases of women because, firstly, the majority of them are men. Secondly, they are unable to know what oppression means because of their male-dominant thinking. Men have the psychology and logic of the oppressor, which, as the definition of the term “oppressor” suggests, prevents them from appreciating the seriousness and scope of the issue, so men cannot be expected to comprehend and recognize the nature of women’s oppression. Of course, this is the primary cause of the widespread perception among non-liberals and academics that males have no place in feminist theory fields or teaching women’s studies courses (Almeder, 1994, p.303). The biggest reason for this belief is that men are unable to understand the nature of women or their circumstances, which makes them unable to think in feminist fields.

Chen discusses that “oppression is the deprived capability to develop one’s capacities” (Chen, 2017, p.421). This means depriving women of their capabilities to do activities other than housekeeping. In addition to that, the domestic violence that the majority of women were victims of from the past centuries till nowadays. Henceforth, since women are object to such deprivation and lack of power and social esteem, they are deprived of developing their capacities. Also, they are psychologically and physically harmed, and then they are oppressed (Chen, 2017, p.421). Drawing upon Chen’s insights, if women are subjected to such severe deprivation, face diminished power and societal esteem, and endure both psychological and physical harm, it’s evident that they are, indeed, oppressed.

It is noteworthy that women face various types of oppression, such as class oppression, gender discrimination, and discrimination. As for class oppression, The historical interplay between the development of social class and patriarchal structures was of decisive importance for the oppression of women. Berberoglu (1994) notes that the status of women changed considerably in the course of the development of societies from their primitive state, shifting from a central role to a position of subjugation to male dominance. This change was closely linked to the emergence of class exploitation, which prepared the ground for the institutionalized oppression of

women and manifested itself in various social structures such as slavery, feudalism and capitalism. The normalization of women's subjugation went hand in hand with exploitation in class-divided societies, which encouraged resistance and the struggle for equality within these stratifications.

In the context of capitalist society, particularly in the 18th century, Berberoglu points out how capitalism exacerbated the oppression of women by using them as cheap labour and confining them to domestic tasks, which served the dual purpose of increasing capital accumulation and cementing women's subordinate status. According to Berberoglu, women's liberation is inextricably linked to a radical transformation of the socio-economic system, a move away from a structure based on private profit, which is at odds with the pursuit of women's rights and social significance. The implication of Berberoglu's argument is profound: the struggle for women's rights is not only a struggle against gender discrimination but also a broader struggle against the capitalist system that exploits women as a class. It suggests that women's liberation involves not only the elimination of overt gender inequalities but also the dismantling of the economic structures that perpetuate these inequalities. Only through such systemic changes can the freedoms and rights historically denied to women be fully realized.

Moreover, Gender discrimination is an omnipresent problem that permeates various areas of life, including academia. Pierre W. Orelus, in his article 'Unveiling the Web of Race, Class, Language, and Gender Oppression: Challenges for Social Justice Educators', discusses the struggles female academics face in the education system. The predominantly white male decision-makers often disadvantage female professors applying for tenure or higher academic positions. This bias is reinforced by societal norms that disproportionately attribute childcare and housework responsibilities to women, hindering their career advancement and contributing to false perceptions of incompetence (Orelus, 2012, p.37). Orelus extends this argument to female students, particularly single mothers, who are subject to the same prejudicial norms (Orelus, 2012, p.38). Therefore, inequality exists at all levels, even at the academic level, which is supposed to be one of the finest and most suitable environments for humans. However, discrimination is present once again.

Meanwhile, Emily S. Rosenberg, in her article *Gender* (1990), demonstrates the term “exceptional women”, which refers to the individuals that are labelled as “(. . .) atypical of their sex, those who somehow made it across the gender barrier that delineated the man's world" of foreign affairs” (Rosenberg, 1990, p.117). However, such women are atypical, but the others who do not have the strength to break the barriers appear to be helpless misfits or helpless victims of the masculine system; the problem will be related to their gender, in other words, in them being women and not men. Continuously, the Women's Exceptional approach is based not on culture (a gender system designed to contain and constrain women's social roles) but on biology (This may suggest that being born female) can adequately explain female marginality (Rosenberg, 1990, p.117). The ultimate cause for women being marginalized and discriminated against is their gender (a woman).

Orelus further argues that the intersection of class, race, gender and language is critical to the life experiences of individuals. These factors often dictate socioeconomic status and career opportunities, particularly affecting women, people of color, and those who do not speak the predominant language (Orelus, 2012, p.36). In education, these intersections create a web of oppression in which marginalized groups face systemic barriers that lead to suppression of voice, invisibility, stagnation in career development, and confidence issues. Orelus emphasizes that educators concerned with social justice must recognize and address these inequities. They advocate for a more equitable system in which people are evaluated based on their performance rather than preconceived notions about their identity (Orelus, 2012, p.37). Essentially, Orelus and Rosenberg contribute to the discourse on gender discrimination by highlighting women's systemic barriers in the professional environment, particularly in academia, and the need to break down these barriers for true gender equality.

The work of Pierre W. Orelus is a critical examination of the operation of privilege in institutional settings, particularly in academia. He points out that privilege often accrues to Christian, heterosexual, white, able-bodied men, who have historically and contemporaneously been in control of many institutions. Because of their privileged status, these individuals often occupy influential positions and have significant influence over the operations of these institutions, including decisions

regarding promotions, hiring, and salary setting. This system of privilege thus maintains a status quo in which the privileged continue to thrive while those without such advantages remain marginalized (Orelus, 2012, p. 37). Privileges come to people rather than others. Privileges are granted to people with preferences, such as men rather than women and whites rather than blacks.

However, Orelus notes that the privileges associated with gender do not apply equally to all men; Race plays a crucial role in shaping experiences. Men of colour, particularly black or brown men, face the dual challenges of racism and scepticism in their professional environments. Even within the gender privileges men typically enjoy, men of colour must work harder to establish their credibility and value in predominantly white spaces like U.S. academic institutions. Their skills and achievements are often overshadowed by doubts from their peers and institutions, reflecting the broader societal prejudices they face (Orelus, 2012, p. 38). Through this analysis, Orelus highlights the complexity of discrimination, where race and gender intersect and create unique challenges for individuals. It assumes that educational institutions reflect broader societal attitudes and serve as a microcosm for observing the dynamics of racial, gender, language, and class discrimination. The ongoing doubt and scepticism that men of colour face in academia reveals the deep-rooted systemic biases that continue to exist in society. These findings call for a concerted effort to address and dismantle systemic barriers to achieve a more just and equitable society.

Hence, there are various types of oppression, among them exploitation, powerlessness, and violence. The first kind, exploitation, can be defined as “...taking advantage of another person's vulnerability” (Müller, 2018, p.4). Hence, exploitation results from a class-divided society, where the upper class takes advantage of the lower class; it is, of course, for the benefit of the higher class. Therefore, it is a means of oppression through which the oppressor oppresses others, taking advantage of their vulnerability. The second kind, powerlessness, is “Subjection-inducing acquiescence, where power is an imposition or constraint, working against the interest of those subject to it” (TenHouten, 2016, p.83-84). Acquiescence breeds submission when power is an imposition or constraint that serves the interests of those it governs.

According to TenHouten, four emotions accompany powerlessness: fear, sadness, anticipation-expectation, and acceptance-acquiescence. Grieving people are more inclined to believe that events are determined by random chance and circumstances rather than deliberate actions (TenHouten, 2016, p.86). The pressure placed on the victims by the oppressors who use the method of powerlessness as a form of persecution makes the victim unable to understand that someone can exploit them because of their fragility, so they tend to think that the wrong circumstances or timing is what led them to their current position. Firstly, they are unable to understand that their fragility is the reason they are victims, and secondly, that the persecutor took advantage of this thing in them and used it against them for his benefit.

An adaptive response to the unfavourable experience of social hierarchy is fear. It is a response to the use of power that is thought to be harmful to the interests and well-being of those more vulnerable. Disability can result in unhealthy routines, low expectations, and concerns that skew people's decisions and even their wishes for their own lives. Dread is an adaptive response, and the persistent losses experienced by the weak breed apathy and a tendency to distance themselves from competition for ideological or economic reasons, partly to escape the uncomfortable subjective sensation of dread (TenHouten, 2016, p.87). Moreover, fear can combine with anticipation and lead to severe issues for the victim of powerlessness, such as anxiety. Although anticipation is a resource-seeking, adaptive, and good feeling in and of itself, it may also be accompanied by negative emotions. Limited emotions can be manifestations of powerlessness; anticipation, dread, and worry are a few examples. Pessimism results from melancholy and anticipation (TenHouten, 2016, p.88). Hence, the emotions can combine together to generate worse results, all caused by oppression (powerlessness).

In and of itself, acceptance is a good feeling connected to the pooling of resources or social interaction with individuals or communities. Effective political power exercise has been stated as requiring compliance with hegemony. Submission is a way for those subject to unavoidable power or control to deal with exploitative or dehumanising conditions (TenHouten, 2016, p.87). This means acceptance and anticipation are normal and even positive emotions, but what makes them negative is

their association with other feelings, such as sadness and fear, which leads to generating unbearable feelings that are projected onto the victim by the persecutor. So, women are the most likely to be victims of powerlessness in specific and oppression in general. Women experience more powerful emotions than males, and they better remember emotionally charged situations. They are also quicker and more accurate at recognizing emotional cues. Emotion processing-related brain regions are more active in women. These results were supported by the fact that women in both cultures used words for two main emotions—sadness and fear—and one secondary emotion—shame, at significantly higher rates. There is compelling evidence suggesting that women participate in these three emotions at higher rates than men.

The third kind, violence, can be defined as the oppression many groups suffer through systematic violence, where members must fear random, unprovoked attacks on their persons or property, with no motive but to humiliate, damage, or destroy the person (Kelly, 2002, p.195). When violence is committed against members of a group just because they belong to that group, it is considered systemic. For example, any woman has cause to fear rape. A black guy always knows he is open to harassment or violence, regardless of how hard he tries to break free from the shackles of marginalization or helplessness. Violence against women and girls is not limited to physical abuse; it also includes the widespread awareness among oppressed people that their identification as a group leaves them open to abuse. Persecuted individuals lose their independence and dignity and unnecessarily expend energy only by constantly fearing being attacked by themselves, their family, or their friends (Kelly, 2002, p.196). the oppression does vary, but its aim is only one: to oppress.

Continuously, A significant subject in feminist philosophy is rape. The US Department of Justice estimates that women make up 20% of rape victims. Men commit rape more frequently than women do. The US Department of Justice reports that males perpetrate rapes in 99 per cent of cases. Rape is a terrible crime that men against women mostly commit. It is now known how widespread rape is, how frequently it goes undetected, how many perpetrators know their victims, and how terrible the ramifications of rape are—all because of Susan Brownmiller's seminal 1975 research. In the US, one in six women has either been raped or has had a rape

attempt; 14.8% of women will be raped, and 2.8% will have attempted to be raped. Given the gravity of the crime, its frequency, and the fact that males frequently perpetrate it against women, there is a wealth of feminist writing on rape (Williams, 2015, p.419). Therefore, rape is one of the most dangerous things that women have been exposed to since ancient times and until now. Rape has a terrible psychological impact on women, apart from physical harm. It is considered one of the worst types of oppression that women are exposed to around the world.

It is essential to mention that one of the many kinds of oppression women are subjected to is their being portrayed as a stereotype of specific features. Throughout all of the tragedies, stereotypes about women are present. It contains a straightforward, objective depiction that represents Athens's consensus in the fifth century. This narrative holds that the attributes that define the feminine sex are entirely at odds with the heroic masculine ideal that is extolled in mythology and epic literature. A noble guy can be best described by comparing himself with a lowly girl who represents all he ought not to be. Women are seen as disruptive or inconsequential, and they should be strictly controlled and subservient. Their reckless ego and primal energy, which are not focused on following societal or religious norms, set them apart. The majority of characters in tragedies adopt the stance summarized in the following description, which reduces women to the roles of servants, kids, and monsters (MOSS, 1988, p.516). The worst of all was when the stereotype said that, in contrast to the ideal male image, she was emotionally unstable as a woman. Women weren't very persistent. Rather, they lacked discipline, were conceited, and were as unstable as the moon. They tended to be (unforgivably) promiscuous, immodest, jealous, scared, emotional, deceitful, and spiteful. They were frequently corrupted by their irrational emotions (MOSS, 1988, p.517). Society has bound women to these stereotypes.

However, the portrayal of women in modern literature often reflects the diversity and complexity of female identities in contemporary society. This trend is evident in works such as George R.R. Martin's *A Game of Thrones* and Angela Carter's *Nights at the Circus*. These novels feature a wide range of female characters, from businesswomen to prostitutes to those who challenge patriarchal structures, demonstrating that there is no single stereotypical representation of women. Carter

introduces a fascinating character named Fevvers, who is a cross between a woman and a bird. Fevvers' unique creature, which straddles the line between human and bird, serves as a powerful symbol of the non-stereotypical and fluid identity of women. This figure reflects the idea that female identity can be multi-faceted and diverse, challenging traditional archetypes and stereotypes. Both Martin and Carter, under the influence of evolving perceptions of women today, contribute to the idea that women's identities are diverse and cannot be confined to a single archetype. This reflects a broader cultural shift in recent decades towards recognizing and celebrating the multiplicity of roles, personalities and identities that women can embody.

In Mary Wollstonecraft's writings of feminist philosophy in *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* (1792), she argues that women throughout the ages have been slaves to tyrants. The strongest reason for women to be in such a state of humiliation is the lack of education and the lack of awareness. She presents the concept of awareness to her audience, and she emphasises its importance to women in getting rid of their oppressors. Her work affected not only England but also the whole of Europe: "Mary Wollstonecraft (1759-1797) never visited America in her lifetime, but her book *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* had a considerable impact on the political thought American women's rights advocates in the nineteenth century" (Botting, & Cary, 2004, p.707). The publication of her work in London made her the most prominent figure in primitive feminism in Europe. Hence, Wollstonecraft produces a controversial point of view and vision through which women can reach the political, intellectual and moral levels if they get the same opportunities given to men of political and civil rights and the right to education. Consequently, Wollstonecraft's work was printed more than once during the period from 1792 to 1891 in the United States of America, and she had many readers of both sexes who were interested in her ideas and what she offered (Botting, & Cary, 2004, p.707). That assures me of the importance of her ideas and concepts and their great effect on society.

There are plenty of legislation that prevented women from their rights which are highlighted in *The Cult of True Womanhood: 1820-1860* (1966) by Barbara Walter. This book talks about how society entirely manufactured women in the

nineteenth century. The woman in the Victorian era should have integrated the qualities identified by Walter with four qualities: “piety, purity, submissiveness, and domesticity. Put them all together and they spelled mother, daughter, sister, wife-woman” (Walter, 1966, p.152). When one of these qualities is absent, her husband, her family, and society reject her, as they consider her far from God’s path. Hence, Walter considers them as a “hostage” (Walter, 1966, p.151). Because all that they do is domesticity work, obliged by society, they believe their life is in their home; society institutionalizes them to this idea.

Each one of the four qualities (purity, piety, domesticity, and submissiveness) refers to a specific category, as Walter declares. Firstly, purity or moral behaviour, is significant to women. Without this quality, a woman is no longer a woman; she becomes a fallen angel and something inferior to other women. Losing their purity equals severe pain for them, as they prefer death over it. A man’s lack of purity cannot be held accountable, but it is a crime when it comes to women. Hence, they must keep their purity or virtue until marriage (Walter, 1966, p.154). Thus, this quality is what women must appreciate the most. They think that “purity is the highest beauty... the true pole-star which is to guide humanity aright in its long, varied, and perilous voyage” (Tolles, 1852, p.205). So, chastity is an essential quality that a woman should have because, without it, a woman is considered one of the most despicable in society. She cannot marry, and thus, her happiness is destroyed, as happiness for women in the nineteenth century was only in marriage.

The second virtue is piety, which refers to the religion that the lady has. Men were looking for the four virtues to find in a woman, but if the woman has piety or is pious, then she has all the other three qualities required. They see religion as a gift given by God, sent down from heaven, which leads women to their salvation (Walter, 1966, p.152). And not only their salvation but also the salvation of their husbands and children. If the husband does not go to church or does not pray, the wife has to carry out her husband’s duties on his behalf because he is busy with his work (Walter, 1966, p.151). So, “. . . he could slave his conscious by reflecting that he had left behind a hostage, . . . to all the values which he held so dear and treated so lightly” (Walter, 1966, p.151). Accordingly, when they have a religious wife, they also guarantee their salvation because there is someone who performs their religious

deeds on their behalf, as they agreed to obtain not only material things “good wife” or moral ones, but also their greed to obtain salvation as they think. So, they are greedy on all levels.

It is a custom for women in patriarchal societies to submit to their husbands, as the real woman must feel her weakness, her inequality with her husband, and her need for a protector because she is weak. The last two qualities that women should have to be true women, as the 1800s period claims, are domesticity and submissiveness. What submissiveness means is that the wife should be submissive to her husband (Walter, 1966, p.159). Hence, the meaning of submissiveness is that “A really sensible woman feels her dependence. She does what she can, but she is conscious of inferiority, and therefore grateful for support” (Walter, 1966, p.159). This is because they think that women are not able to think because they are inferior to them, and men also consider women that they are unable to make correct decisions because they believe that women are overcome by their affection.

Last but not least is domesticity, which refers to household duties. Hence, “home was supposed to be a cheerful place so that brothers, husbands and sons would not go elsewhere in search of a good time” (Walter, 1966, p.163). One of the house duties is taking care of the ill ones, especially male patients, where if a man gets sick, a woman must take care of him, which makes her feel important, as some women hope that the man will get sick so that they can have what they claim as the privilege of taking care of the man until he recovers (Walter, 1966, p.164). And not only these works, but other works, that is, everything related to taking care of the house, where the woman works as a maid before her marriage for her father and brother, and after marriage for the husband and children, and so the episode continues.

The above four virtues are, in fact, nothing but what can be called the four sins against women. And what they call True womanhood is nothing but how to make an obedient slave, guided by the curriculum they set for her. Continuously, the nineteenth century witnessed the germination of the female literary community, which appeared at the same time as the growing population of females; its spread led to the re-evaluation of women’s roles and relationships. It came as a revolution

against the previous position of women, which was to be passive and selfless with complete denial of the identity, where women's character is not allowed to be improved (Dutta, 1991, p.2311). Men strongly stand opposed to women's role in literature, where in a letter from Robert Southey to Charlotte Bronte, he says, "Literature is not the business of a woman's life, and it cannot be" (Dutta, 1991, p.2311). He claims that literature belongs only to men. There is no place for women in it.

At the end of the twentieth century and the beginning of the modern twenty-first century, many writers appear to defend female equality even if they do not call themselves distinctly "feminists", such as George R. R. Martin. He does not call himself a feminist, but at the same time, he is not a non-feminist. He supports gender equality and is interested in developing female characters in his novels. The best example of his thoughts is *A Game of Thrones* Novel, which is a series in *A Songs of Ice and Fire*, in which he introduces female characters and shows their oppression, their response to their oppression, he shows gender inequality, women's enslavement, women's empowerment, and how the character of women is developed through the novel.

In an interview about *A Dance with Dragons* (2011), he answered the argument about him being a feminist or non-feminist and stated, "I do not hold myself up as a paragon of feminism. (. . .) I have so many female fans who love my women characters, and I tried to prove a variety of female characters. I try to show that we are all human" (Pratiwi, 2022, p.9). Martin states that all of us are human and should be treated equally. He believes in gender equality. He shows how women are treated and reflects the oppression they are into, how characters are aware of this oppression and how some are ignorant of this fact, being institutionalized to it. It also reflects how characters respond to such circumstances and encourages others to get rid of their enslavement (Pratiwi, 2022, p.9). Even though he is not a feminist, he clearly supports feminism and gender equality.

2. SECOND CHAPTER. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

2.1. George R. R. Martin and *A Game of Thrones*

George R. R. Martin is an American writer interested in genres such as science fiction and fantasy. Before gaining popularity, he worked for a science fiction magazine. He has also edited multiple volumes of the “Wild Cards” superhero series. During the 1980s, much of his work centred around screenwriting. Later, he began writing the series *A Song of Ice and Fire*. The first novel, *A Game of Thrones*, was published in 1996, catapulting his reputation in literature. He has been greatly influenced by science fiction writers, notably J. R. R. Tolkien, an English writer and philosopher. Martin states, “When I read fantasy books by other writers, especially Tolkien and some who followed in his footsteps, there’s always a desire in the back of my mind to respond: ‘That’s good, but I’d approach this part differently’ ” (D’addario, 2017, para. 5). Hence, *A Game of Thrones* is the first novel in the *A Song of Ice and Fire* series and is arguably Martin’s most popular work. The series has garnered significant attention in recent years, especially after being adapted into a TV show. In the novel, Martin employs multiple points of view, weaving the narrative through eight distinct characters, five of whom are women.

While the core of Martin’s work leans towards fantasy and science fiction, he doesn’t shy away from addressing pressing issues. Central themes such as the atrocities of war and accompanying violations, like sexual assault against women, are evident. This is particularly pronounced in *A Game of Thrones*, where he states: “There’s never been a war where it wasn’t, and that includes wars that are going on today. It just seems to me that there’s something fundamentally dishonest if you write a war story and you leave that out” (D’Addario, 2017). Martin employs the technique of Alienation—defined as “a process by which both theatrical and extra-theatrical phenomena are rendered strange” (Féral & Bermingham, 1987, p.461). In his writings, whether intentionally or not. Though traditionally a theatrical method,

Martin effectively adapts it for prose. He possesses the ability to immerse the reader in real life, momentarily detaching them from the narrative of the novel. Through his vivid imagination, he prompts the reader to confront their own reality.

The immense popularity of works such as *A Game of Thrones* reminds readers that medieval stories are still relevant to our imagination today. Such stories cause us to rethink enduring questions about morality, politics and the possibility of supernatural influences in our world. They suggest that our ideas of what is possible or safe may not be as solid as we believe. In fact, these stories invite us to consider the world as a place that may be more interconnected, more fascinating, and more magical than we would otherwise like to acknowledge. Schroeder Jr (2016) states this on page 7. In his work, Martin attempts to connect the struggles of the Middle Ages with those of the present, creating a narrative that reflects the ongoing challenges of humanity. He uses a satirical tone to paint a bleak and oppressive picture of the Middle Ages, highlighting the people's brutality, violence and misery, as Young (2017) notes on page 46. Martin's portrayal of women is similar to the experiences of their historical counterparts in medieval England and France, as Vike (2009) describes on page 55. However, as the narrative progresses, some female characters rise in power.

Martin portrays women who face various challenges, such as Catelyn Stark, who seeks justice for an attack on her son, Arya Stark, who is forced to flee her home and live as an outlaw and Cersei Lannister, to name a few. These characters often go against the stereotype that women are the 'gentler sex', a theme that Vike (2009) discusses in more detail on page 56. Through these narratives, Martin not only reflects on the past but also comments on the ongoing struggle for women's power. The enduring appeal of stories set in the Middle Ages reflects their significant influence on our modern imagination. These narratives bring us back to fundamental questions about morality, politics, and the possibility of supernatural elements in our world. They challenge our understanding of what is possible, suggesting that the world might be more interconnected, enchanting, and complex than we often consider. Schroeder Jr. (2016) emphasizes that medieval stories continue to resonate with contemporary audiences, implying that our perception of reality might not be as concrete as we believe.

Martin Generates a satirical narration to depict the Middle Ages in a stark, often negative light. This portrayal emphasizes human brutality, violence, and filth, reflecting the difficult conditions of that era. Young (2017) notes that Martin's representation aligns with the harsh realities of medieval life, particularly for women. This perspective is crucial in understanding the societal norms and challenges of the period, as well as the narrative choices Martin makes in his novel. Martin's depiction of women in his novel parallels the experiences of women in the actual Middle Ages, especially in England and France. Vike (2009) points out that, like their historical counterparts, the female characters in Martin's world endure similar hardships and societal constraints. However, as the story unfolds, some of these women gain power and agency. This progression demonstrates Martin's intent to portray the evolution of female roles beyond their traditional confines.

Characters like Catelyn Stark, Arya Stark, Brienne of Tarth, and Cersei Lannister are central to this theme. Catelyn Stark pursues justice for her son, Arya Stark transforms into an outlaw, and Cersei Lannister navigates complex political and personal landscapes. These characters defy the stereotype of being the "gentler sex," as noted by Vike (2009). Through their stories, Martin explores the nuances of female strength and resilience, offering a counterpoint to the traditional depiction of women during the Middle Ages. Martin's work mirrors the grim realities of the Middle Ages but also highlights the evolution of female characters. These women emerge as powerful figures, challenging traditional gender roles and societal norms and reflecting a shift in the narrative portrayal of women's roles in both history and fiction.

Women in George R.R. Martin's *A Game of Thrones* not only endure the challenges of their medieval-looking world but also use their situation to their advantage. This approach to character development shows how, despite oppression and hardship, these women use their unique skills and intelligence to navigate their societal constraints and ultimately rise to the top. Catelyn Stark, the wife of Ned Stark and the lady of Winterfell uses her noble status as a means to obtain justice for her son, transforming her social position into a means to strengthen her power. This aspect of her character reflects her determination and resourcefulness and illustrates how she manoeuvres within the social hierarchy to achieve her goals. Brienne of

Tarth, a woman warrior from a Nobel family. On the other hand, benefits from her exceptional skills as a warrior. Her skills in combat, which in the context of the novel is typically dominated by men, allow her to create a unique identity for herself. This not only challenges traditional gender roles but also shows her as a character who defies societal expectations through sheer talent and determination.

Arya Stark's (a nine-year-old child of lord Eddard Stark) survival is largely due to her cleverness and adaptability. Her journey from a noble girl to an outlaw is an example of her resilience and ability to persevere under difficult circumstances. Arya's story is a testament to her resourcefulness and survival instincts in a world that is often unforgiving for women. Hence, Cersei Lannister is particularly complex. She is aware of her perceived inferiority in a male-dominated world, but she uses cunning and manipulation to assert her dominance. Vike (2009) notes that Cersei sees all men, including her father, as a threat to her power. Her actions, including the murder of her husband and Eddard Stark, are driven by her desire to maintain and expand her influence. Cersei's character embodies the ruthless pursuit of power, often outmanoeuvring her male counterparts. However, While Martin depicts the suffering of women in a medieval setting, he simultaneously develops these female characters in a way that shows their growth, strength and resilience. This development is a crucial aspect of the narrative, as it not only reflects the harsh realities of their world but also highlights their ability to overcome and manipulate these circumstances to their advantage. In the following sections, we will explore this aspect of the female characters' development in the novel in more detail.

2.2. The Background of *A Game of Thrones*:

George R.R. Martin's series, including *A Game of Thrones*, is a comprehensive saga of seven books. To date, five books have been published, with the remaining two still in progress. *A Game of Thrones*, the first book of the series, was initially published in 1996. This was followed by *A Clash of Kings* in 1998, *A Storm of Swords* in 2000, *A Feast for Crows* in 2005, and *A Dance with Dragons* in 2011, the latest book to be released. The sixth book, *The Winds of Winter*, is currently being written, while the seventh and final volume, *A Dream of Spring*, has yet to be started. Thus, *A Game of Thrones* is a substantial novel consisting of 835

pages divided into 73 chapters.

Although the novel won multiple awards following its first publication, it did not gain widespread fame until its adaptation into a TV series by HBO in 2011, which catapulted it to the status of a New York Times bestseller. This surge in popularity occurred 15 years after its initial release, as noted by Adi (2012). The novel's attraction to a broad readership can be attributed to its adherence to a specific narrative structure and system that makes its epic story comprehensible. Despite its primary classification as an epic, *A Game of Thrones* also encompasses elements from various other genres and cultural beliefs, including science fiction and fantasy. A notable aspect of the series is its portrayal of violence against women, a significant theme throughout the books. This thematic focus makes the series complex and multifaceted, reflecting a range of genres and societal issues.

A Game of Thrones, the first novel in George R.R. Martin's epic fantasy series, revolves around the fierce battle between several royal families on the fictional continent of Westeros for control of the Iron Throne. The main houses involved in this conflict are the Targaryens, Starks, Lannisters and Baratheons. The struggle is characterized by betrayal, political intrigue and shifting alliances. The novel's backstory, which sets the scene for the series' events, includes a significant event known as Robert's Rebellion. This rebellion took place fifteen years before the main events of the novel. The conflict was sparked when Aerys Targaryen II, also known as the Mad King, kidnapped Lyanna Stark. As a result, Robert Baratheon, who was in love with Lyanna, and Eddard Stark, Lyanna's brother, joined forces with other noble houses to wage a war against Targaryen rule, leading to a significant shift in the balance of power in Westeros.

Initially, the Lannisters, including Jaime Lannister, a member of the Kingsguard, swore allegiance to the Mad King. But in a decisive turn of events, the Lannisters betrayed the king. Jaime Lannister assassinated Aerys Targaryen, earning him the infamous title of "Kingslayer" During this turbulent time, Lyanna Stark died of an illness. After the rebellion, Robert Baratheon ascended the Iron Throne. In order to consolidate his rule, he married Cersei Lannister and entered into an alliance with the powerful Lannister family. The Targaryen dynasty was almost completely

wiped out in the rebellion, except for two surviving children, Daenerys and Viserys Targaryen, who were forced into exile. This historical background is crucial to understanding the intricate web of political intrigue, alliances and conflict that unfolds in *A Game of Thrones*, which explores themes of power, loyalty, betrayal and the moral complexities of ruling a kingdom against the backdrop of the rich fantasy world of Westeros.

The Lannisters, known for their cunning and ambition, play a crucial role in the novel's background story. Jaime Lannister, a member of the Kingsguard, betrays and murders Aerys Targaryen II, the Mad King, earning himself the nickname "Kingslayer" During the conflict that led to the fall of the Targaryens, Lyanna Stark, who was a central figure in the rebellion, dies of an illness. As a result, Robert Baratheon ascends the throne and marries Cersei Lannister to consolidate his rule. The only surviving members of the Targaryen family are two children, Daenerys and Viserys, who flee across the Narrow Sea to the Free Cities to reclaim their birthright.

In the present timeline of the novel, the story begins in Winterfell, the stronghold of House Stark in the North. King Robert arrives in Winterfell to appoint Eddard Stark as his Hand (chief advisor) following the mysterious death of the previous Hand, Jon Arryn. At the same time, Robert is trying to arrange a marriage alliance between his son Joffrey and Eddard's young daughter Sansa. When Eddard accepts the post, he is forced to move south with his daughters, leaving his wife, Catelyn and the other children behind. The plot thickens when Eddard Stark uncovers a deadly secret involving the Lannisters. Lysa Arryn, Catelyn's sister and Jon Arryn's widow, reveals that the Lannisters are responsible for Jon Arryn's death. Eddard finds out that Cersei's children are not the rightful heirs of King Robert but are, in fact, the offspring of her incestuous relationship with her brother Jaime. This revelation makes Eddard and his family the target of Lannister's intrigue.

Meanwhile, thirteen-year-old Daenerys Targaryen faces her challenges. Her brother Viserys sells her to Khal Drogo, the leader of the Dothraki, a nomadic warrior tribe. Viserys wants to use this alliance to reclaim the Iron Throne. Daenerys has to endure much suffering, including sexual assault and emotional abuse, especially at the hands of her brother. However, back in Westeros, the political

intrigue escalates when Catelyn Stark captures Tyrion Lannister and accuses him of attempting to murder her son Bran. This act further fuels the conflict between the Starks and the Lannisters. After the untimely death of King Robert, Eddard Stark is imprisoned by the Lannisters for treason, as he poses a threat to Joffrey's claim to the throne. What many do not know is that Cersei Lannister orchestrated Robert's death and Eddard's imprisonment to protect her secret and maintain her power.

Martin's narrative weaves these different storylines together, depicting a world where political ambition, personal feuds and the pursuit of power drive the characters' actions. The novel explores themes of loyalty, honour and the moral complexities of leadership in a world where the line between right and wrong is often blurred. The execution of Eddard Stark, the Lord of Winterfell, by King Joffrey, sets off a cascade of dramatic events, deeply impacting the Stark family and the political landscape of Westeros. Upon learning of his father's imprisonment, Robb Stark, Eddard's eldest son, mobilizes to war against Queen Cersei and the Lannisters to free his father. He garners support from various noble houses, reflecting the respect and loyalty the Starks command in the North; however, despite pleas from his mother, Cersei, and Sansa, King Joffrey shockingly orders Ned Stark's execution. This brutality marks a pivotal moment in the series, escalating the conflict between the Starks and Lannisters.

Sansa Stark betrothed to Joffrey, remains a captive in King's Landing, subjected to physical and emotional abuse at the hands of Joffrey. Meanwhile, her younger sister, Arya Stark, manages to escape the chaos. Despite being only nine years old, Arya faces numerous challenges with resilience and determination. Her journey is marked by her ability to survive and adapt to increasingly difficult circumstances. However, the death of Eddard Stark ignites a fierce desire for vengeance in Robb and Catelyn Stark, as well as their allies. This event solidifies the North's resolve to fight against the Lannisters, setting off a series of battles and conflicts that further entangle the various noble houses of Westeros. Parallel to these events, Daenerys Targaryen, far across the Narrow Sea, harbours her ambitions for revenge against the Lannisters and the Starks. She views them as part of the forces that led to her family's downfall. In addition to these political machinations, Daenerys and others in Westeros are unaware of a looming threat from beyond the

Wall, a supernatural danger that will eventually play a significant role in the unfolding saga. George R.R. Martin's narrative skillfully intertwines these multiple storylines, creating a rich tapestry of intrigue, revenge, and power struggles. The novel explores themes of loyalty, family, and the harsh consequences of political decisions, set against the backdrop of a deeply complex and intricately constructed fantasy world.

2.3. Female Perspective through: Sexuality, Fertility, and Power

In *A Game of Thrones*, the female characters' experiences are characterized by the suffering of sexual abusiveness and brutality and their strategic manoeuvres to gain power. This complex portrayal is highlighted by two key themes: their views on sexuality and fertility and how some exploit their position to gain power. The first aspect is the sexual abuse to which these women are subjected. Incest, defined by Lester (1972) as sexual intercourse between close-blood relatives such as father and daughter or brother and sister, is a common form of abuse in the narrative. This incestuous behaviour, often considered taboo and forbidden due to societal norms, has significant psychological effects. *A Game of Thrones* explores this complexity through various characters and highlights the consequences of the taboo in its fictional setting.

Another important aspect of sexual abuse in the series is the rape, enslavement and trafficking of women. These atrocities are not only acts of physical violence but also mechanisms for exercising control and power. The portrayal of these themes in Westeros is chillingly realistic and highlights the female characters' vulnerability and resilience. Through these themes, *A Game of Thrones* presents a multifaceted exploration of the female experience in a patriarchal society. It exposes the harsh realities women face but also shows how some characters circumvent and sometimes subvert these oppressive systems to gain power and agency. This dichotomy provides a deep understanding of the complex roles and experiences of the female characters within the narrative. It highlights the broader societal and cultural norms within the fictional world of Westeros.

First, female characters' perspectives on sexuality and fertility and their experiences of sexual abuse are important to mention. There are three important

points to note in relation to the sexual abuse of women. The first point is incest, as defined earlier: "Incestuous behavior primarily involves sexual intercourse between a father and his daughter, a mother and her son, or a brother and his sister." (Lester, 1972, p.268). In other words, incest refers to prohibited marriages or relationships between family members or blood relatives. The second point addresses rape, women's enslavement, and trafficking. Regarding the first point, which is incest, two female characters are depicted as being subjected to it: Daenerys Targaryen and her brother Viserys Targaryen.

The Targaryens have a tradition of marrying within their family to keep their bloodline pure. "She had always assumed that she would wed Viserys when she came of age. For centuries the Targaryens had married brother to sister, since Aegon the Conqueror had taken his sisters to bride" (Martin, 2011, p.32) Dany is a thirteen years child, she is abused by her brother physically, emotionally, and sexually. He is continuously threatening her to obey him or else "You don't want to wake the dragon, do you?"(Martin, 2011, p.29). He merchandises her to the Dothraki, a barbarian clan, to get his iron throne by selling her to Khal Drogo (the leader of the Dothraki). He does not only abuse her himself: "He touched her hair, almost with affection." (Martin, 2011, p.29), but also sells her to get an army: "When they write the history of my reign, sweet sister, they will say that it began tonight." (Martin, 2011, p.29). He takes benefit of her by all means and uses her in the most brutal ways.

The second character exposed to incest is Cersei Lannister, together with her brother Jaime Lannister. Unlike the Targaryens, the Lannisters do not normally marry within their family, except for the twins Cersei and Jaime. Unlike Daenerys, Cersei willingly enters into this relationship, which remains a secret. Jaime is determined to protect their relationship at all costs and even tries to kill Bran to keep her secret. "The things I do for love" (Martin, 2011, p.85). Cersei, too, takes extreme measures to protect her secret. She is responsible for the murder of Lord Arryn, the Hand of the King, as he comes close to uncovering her secret. His dying words, "The seed is strong" (Martin, 2011, p.252), allude to the true parentage of her three children with Jaime, not with the king, her husband. In contrast to Daenerys, who

seeks to escape her brother's sexual abuse, Cersei is determined to protect her sexual relationship with Jaime at any cost, even appearing to cherish it.

Your brother? Ned said. Or your lover?

Both. She did not flinch from the Truth. Since we were children together. And why not? The Targaryens wed brother to sister for three hundred years, to keep the bloodlines pure. And Jaime and I are more than brother and sister. We are one person in two bodies (Martin, 2011, p.485).

In her determination to maintain her relationship with Jaime, Cersei shows a willingness to adopt Targaryen-like practices. She perceives her sexual relationship with Jaime as a form of freedom, in stark contrast to her marriage to the King, which she views as a prison. Cersei feels abused by her husband, especially because of his continued affection for Lyanna Stark. She recalls a painful memory: "On the night of our wedding feast, (. . .) he whispered to Lyanna" (Martin, 2011, p.487). This reveals her deep dislike of her marriage. She is so averse to her husband that she refuses to have any connection with him, including the birth of his children. Her confession to Ned Stark further emphasizes this: "Your Robert got me with child once," she said, her voice thick with contempt. "My brother found a woman to cleanse me. He never knew. If truth be told, I can scarcely bear for him to touch me," (Martin, 2011, p.486). Cersei finally resorts to the murder of her husband, King Robert, in order to free herself from what she perceives as a prison. She sees this act not only as liberation but also as empowerment. She justifies both her incestuous relationship with her brother and the murder of her husband on two main grounds. First, she invokes Robert's rejection of her love in favour of his continued affection for the deceased Lyanna. Second, she points to the practice of incest among the Targaryens and uses it as a precedent to rationalize her actions. These reasons form the basis for her justification of her controversial actions and behaviour.

It also seems that Cersei did not really love Robert from the beginning. She uses his enduring love for Lyanna as an excuse to justify her hatred of him, which ultimately leads to his murder. Her true affection has always been for her brother Jaime, as she recalls, "Ever since we were children together" (Martin, 2011, p.485). Cersei even expresses her admiration for the Targaryens, saying, "And why not? The

Targaryens have been marrying brother and sister for three hundred years” (Martin, 2011, p.485). This statement suggests that she is desperately looking for a reason to legitimize her relationship with Jaime. Aware that her actions are widely regarded as unacceptable, she appears to be struggling with inner feelings of guilt and looking for justifications to alleviate them. As the novel is set in a context reminiscent of the Middle Ages, the same social norms and rules apply to its characters. As Tracy (2019, p. 377) notes, a queen involved in a sexual act, whether consensual or not, would be considered a traitor. In such an environment, treason is considered the most serious of crimes. Therefore, Cersei, fully aware of the potential consequences of her actions that could lead to her downfall, perseveres in their relationship. This persistence underlines not only her disregard for social norms but also her willingness to risk everything for her relationship with Jaime.

The second critical point to be addressed is rape which, in turn, is a part of Violence which is oppression. Daenerys Targaryen is depicted as a victim of rape. She is sold to Khal Drogo, the leader of a barbarian clan known as the Dothraki, by her brother Viserys, who views the marriage as a transaction: “He can have her tomorrow, if he likes,” (. . .) “So long as he pays the price” (Martin, 2011, p.100). Viserys arranges this marriage with Drogo in exchange for an army to reclaim his Iron Throne. Daenerys, however, is resistant to this arrangement.

Please, please, Viserys, I don't want to, I want to go home. Home? He kept his voice low, but she could hear the fury in his tone. How are we to go home, sweet sister? They took our home from us! (. . .) I don't know (. . .) she said at last, her voice breaking. Tears welled in her eyes

I do, he said sharply. We go home with an army sweet sister. With Khal Drogo's army, that is how we go home. And if you must wed him and bed him for that, you will (Martin, 2011, p.38).

Despite her pegging, Daenerys finds them to be in vain. She is extremely obedient to her brother, fearing that any refusal on her part might lead to physical abuse. At the beginning of the novel, Daenerys appears as an undeveloped character, completely submissive to her brother's will. This subservience extends even in the face of physical and sexual abuse from Viserys, as she neither talks back nor defends

herself, a stance that only changes towards the end of the novel. Consequently, Daenerys passively surrenders to Drogo, who rapes her without any resistance from her side. She is forced to endure the Dothraki, known for their cruelty and brutality, as Martin describes, “they were beasts in human skins, (. . .)” (2011, p.103). Overwhelmed with fear “(. . .) of what would happen tonight under the stars, when her brother gave her up to the hulking giant who sat drinking beside her with a face as still and cruel as a bronze mask” (Martin, 2011, p.103). She is unable to take any action; she resigns herself to her fate, tormented by the thoughts of her impending ordeal

Daenerys is first raped by Drogo and then subjected to further sexual violence by the entirety of the Khalasar (the Dothraki). This series of events is also seen as rape, showing that she continues to be victimized in this setting “Daenerys Targaryen wed Khal Drogo with fear and barbaric splendour in a field beyond the walls of Pentos, for the Dothraki believed that all things of importance in a man’s life must be done beneath the open sky” (Martin, 2011, p.99). Daenerys is also threatened with rape by Drogo’s followers. In Dothraki culture, it was customary for the blood riders to share not only the wine and the Khal’s tent but also his wives. Martin writes: “(. . .) Bloodriders shared the Khal’s wine, his tent and even his wives (. . .) Daenerys was relieved that Khal Drogo did not adhere to these ancient customs” (2011, p.391). This passage emphasizes Daenerys’ relief that Drogo protects her from such practices. However, it also suggests that if Drogo had allowed it, Daenerys might not have resisted or done anything about such advances, reflecting her vulnerable and subordinate position in this society.

While Daenerys initially lacks the power to defend herself, her character undergoes a significant development. She eventually asserts her authority to prevent the further victimization of others by declaring, “(. . .) I do not want rape” (Martin, 2011, p.668). This change in her character is evident in her interactions with Mirri Maz Duur and other women who are raped by Drogo’s men during their raids. When Daenerys condemns these acts, she is told, “This is the way of wars. These women are now our slaves to do with as we please” (Martin, 2011, p.670), underlining the theme of the enslavement of women in the story.

The third point is female trafficking. Characters such as Irri, Jhiqui and Doreah are portrayed as slaves to Daenerys, described as “Dothraki girls who were taken as slaves when Drogo destroyed their father’s khalasar (. . .)” (Martin, 2011, p.235). Martin’s narrative, therefore not only highlights the plight of individual characters such as Daenerys and Mirri Maz Duur but also addresses broader issues such as the trafficking of women, highlighting its prevalence and the suffering associated with it. Hence, Trafficking in women, a brutal practice that was widespread in the past, was not seriously addressed until the international conference in Paris in 1902. This conference, attended by 12 countries, aimed to prevent trafficking in women at all levels (Barry, 1995, p.115). Despite these efforts, trafficking in women still exists in various forms.

In his novel, George R.R. Martin takes up this issue and shows how women, regardless of their social status, are exposed to human trafficking. High-born ladies, in particular, are often married off for social, financial or political gain. Sansa Stark, for example, is betrothed to Prince Joffrey, not for love but for the political benefits her marriage would bring when she becomes queen. Her mother arranges the eventual marriage of Arya Stark as part of a political deal: “It is also agreed that your sister Arya, when she returns safely to us, will marry Lord Walder’s youngest son Elmar (. . .)” (Martin, 2011, p.650) in order to secure Lord Frey’s support for her brother Robb. The marriage of Lysa Tully to Lord Arryn and the marriage of Catelyn Tully are also for political reasons: “Lord Arryn was a dutiful husband, but their marriage was for politics, not passion.” (. . .) “Just like my own.” (Martin, 2011, p.366). Cersei Lannister’s marriage is also a decision made by her family. These arranged marriages entered into without the women’s consent, can be equated with a form of rape. Continuously, for women from lower classes, the situation is often even worse. They are abducted as slaves and used for sexual purposes. Martin’s depiction of these practices in his novel reflects the grim reality of trafficking in women and illustrates its impact on different social classes.

Second, female characters’ perspectives on power are also important to mention. As it is mentioned in the first chapter, empowerment is “the process of challenging existing power relations, and of gaining greater control over the source of power” (Cornwall, & Edwards, 2014, p.4). therefore, women challenge the existing power

structure and seek greater power and control. They are continuously defying the patriarchal society, representing the empowerment that feminists are using and showing lately. However, Women's perspectives on power vary significantly among different characters. Some, like Cersei Lannister, associate power with authority, commanding armies, possessing wealth, exhibiting physical strength, and employing strategic cunning. Others, such as Catelyn Stark, see power in wisdom, leveraging their wit and intelligence to resolve issues and achieve their goals. Then there are those who perceive power through innocence, like the nine-year-old Arya Stark, who finds strength in defending herself and her loved ones. Each character's unique view of power will be explored in detail.

Cersei Lannister is often considered the most malevolent and powerful character. Her pursuit of power is relentless, and she won't hesitate to eliminate anyone who stands in her way. Her power manifests in several ways: she controls a formidable military force, including knights; she is a master manipulator; she strategically eliminates her adversaries. Additionally, her brother Jaime and their children are central to her sense of power and influence. Firstly, Cersei commands formidable military forces with deeply loyal followers such as the Hound, the Mountain, and Littlefinger (Lord Baelish), with her brother Jaime being the most significant among them. Her influence is so extensive that it instils fear in even the most respected men, like Ned Stark:

The queen has a dozen knights and a hundred men-at-arms who will do whatever she commands (. . .) enough to overwhelm what remains of my own household guard. And for all I know, her brother Jaime may be riding for the King's Landing even as we speak, with a Lannister host at his back (Martin, 2011, p.513).

Cersei is a woman of intelligence and foresight. Aware of the potential consequences of her secret relationship with her brother, she prepared for any emergencies from the moment she married and became queen. Over the years, she meticulously planned to accumulate power and secure the loyalty of her followers, ultimately succeeding in her endeavour. This transformation turned her into a formidable threat to all. Her craving for power is palpable, as described by George R.

R. Martin: “(. . .) and my sweet sister Cersei lusts for power with every waking breath” (2011, p.368). Her formidable presence is such that she can instil fear in others, exemplified when she fearlessly confronts Ned Stark with the words, “And what of my wrath, Lord Stark?” (Martin, 2011, p.488). Which emphasises her power and ability to harm others.

Secondly, Cersei’s ability to manipulate those around her is a key aspect of her power. She skillfully manipulates a range of characters, including her husband Robert, Sansa Stark, and her cousin Lancel Lannister. A notable instance of her manipulation is when she persuades Robert to order the death of Arya’s wolf, which risks Robert’s friendship with Ned Stark. This action aligns with her broader strategy to isolate the king from his trusted advisors, like Lord Arryn and Ned, making him more susceptible to her influence. Cersei effectively uses psychological tactics, as illustrated when she challenges Robert’s ego by saying, “I had not thought you so niggardly. The king I’d thought to wed would have laid a wolfskin across my bed before the sun went down” (Martin, 2011, p.157). By provoking his pride, she ensures that he will act to prove her wrong, thus falling further under her control. Cersei also demonstrates her manipulative prowess through her dealings with her cousin, Lancel Lannister. Understanding her husband’s vulnerability to alcohol, she cunningly exploits this weakness. She directs Lancel to continually supply the king with alcohol, effectively orchestrating a scenario that leads to her husband’s demise:

The king himself said as much. He blamed the wine
who gave the king this wine?

A stalwart boy, (. . .) cousin to the queen. I hope the dear sweet lad does not
blame himself (Martin, 2011, p.507).

Cersei’s ruthless nature becomes evident in her dealings with her husband, King Robert. She eliminates him once she deems him unnecessary, particularly when her son comes of age and becomes a more viable instrument for her to wield power. For Cersei, Robert is merely a tool, a ‘toy’ to be discarded when no longer of use. Her strategic thinking is always directed towards maintaining and increasing her control. Furthermore, Cersei demonstrates manipulative skills through her use of Sansa Stark. Following the imprisonment of Ned Stark, whom she accuses of

treason, Cersei takes Sansa as a hostage. This move is calculated to weaken the Stark family's position. She then exploits Sansa's affection for her son Joffrey, manipulating the young girl's emotions to serve her own ends.

She is sweet thing now, but in ten years, who can say what treasons she may hatch?

The blood will tell. I have only to remember how your sister set her wolf on my son.

I'm not like Arya, (. . .) She has the traitor's blood, not me. I'm good,

You must write to your lady mother, and your brother

We will tell you what to write, child

I'll (. . .) I'll write the letters, Sansa told them (Martin, 2011, p.549-551).

Cersei's manipulation extends beyond mere control and warps Sansa's perception of her own family. She convinces Sansa that her father, Ned Stark, is a traitor despite this being untrue. By making Sansa feel ashamed of her heritage and falsely labelling her father as a traitor, Cersei uses this perceived dishonour as leverage. She persuades Sansa to write to her family, urging them to cease their rebellion against the new king and swear fealty to him. This tactic highlights Cersei's ability to identify and exploit personal vulnerabilities to her advantage. She bends people to her will, compelling them to submit to her authority. This skilful manipulation cements her reputation as a cunning and devious character.

Thirdly, as previously mentioned, Cersei shows no hesitation in eliminating anyone who poses a threat to her power, her children, or anything she holds dear. She perceives any threat to her authority as a direct challenge and deals with it accordingly. This is exemplified when she orchestrates the death of a young boy simply because he annoys her son, Joffrey. George R. R. Martin captures this sentiment: "That murder lies at the Hound's door, him and the cruel woman he serves" (2011, p.221). Furthermore, her ruthlessness is evident in her decision to murder Lord Arryn after he discovers the truth about her children's paternity. She opts for poison, a method often stereotypically associated with women in her context, as Martin notes: "Or Cersei's. It's said poison is a woman's weapon" (2011, p.436). continuously, Cersei openly defies her husband's dying wish for Ned Stark to become the protector of the realm. She goes to great lengths to ensure her authority

remains unchallenged, even attempting to force Ned to obey her despite knowing that her son is not the legitimate heir. This is vividly illustrated when she brazenly destroys the letter written by the king, symbolizing her utter disregard for the king's final orders and her ruthless pursuit of power.

Is that meant to be your shield, my lord? A piece of paper? She ripped the letter in half, ripped the halves in quarters, and let the pieces flutter to the floor.

Those were the king's words, Ser Barristan said, shocked.

We have a new king now, Cersei Lannister replied. Lord Eddard, when last we spoke, you gave me some counsel. Allow me to return the courtesy. Bend the knee, my lord. Bend the knee and swear fealty to my son, and we shall allow you to step down as Hand and live out your days in the grey waste you call home (Martin, 2011, p.528).

Cersei's fear of betrayal and treason is deeply ingrained, likely influenced by witnessing the downfall of the Mad King. This fear drives her to always be prepared and to take preemptive action. She views anyone not wholly loyal to her as an enemy. Although she often presents herself as forgiving and gentle, especially in her public speeches, this is merely a façade. Behind her seemingly innocent demeanour lies a ruthless will to destroy her adversaries. For instance, she feigns courtesy as a high-born lady by offering Lord Stark the chance to bend the knee. However, this is just a ploy; her real intention is to see him submit before ultimately eliminating him. Cersei's fondness for manipulation is akin to playing a game she is determined to win at all costs. She aptly summarised this: "When you play the game of thrones, you win or you die. There is no middle ground" (Martin, 2011, p.488). Her fear urges her to eliminate her enemies and win at all costs.

Cersei's character can be seen as a reflection of certain mythological archetypes, particularly those of women who harbour disdain for men. This is reminiscent of the Danaids in Greek mythology – the fifty daughters of Danaos who were forced into marriage, killed their husbands, and the sons of their uncle Aigyptos (Power, 1990, p.7). They developed a hatred for all men as a result of this coercion. Similarly, Cersei seems to demand the downfall of men to feel satisfied, a trait possibly stemming from her experiences within her own family. As a child, Cersei

felt overshadowed by her twin brother Jaime, who received more attention and regard. This sense of inferiority likely fueled her ambition to become queen as a means to assert her own power. Additionally, her brother Tyrion is indirectly responsible for their mother's death during childbirth, a loss that might have further embittered Cersei towards men. Her father's preference for her brothers over her could also have contributed to this sentiment. Thus, Cersei's perceived animosity towards men and her viewing them as threats to her power could be a product of these familial dynamics. Throughout the novel, her antagonists are predominantly male, indicating a pattern of whom she perceives as enemies.

Jaime Lannister plays a pivotal role in the manifestation of Cersei's power. Rather than viewing him as an individual, Cersei sees Jaime as an embodiment of her ambitions, amplifying her own drive for dominance. Their combined intellect and strength form a unified, potent force, a concept Cersei herself articulates: "And Jaime and I are more than brother and sister. We are one person in two bodies" (Martin, 2011, p.485). In Cersei's eyes, Jaime is akin to a shadow, a devoted adherent, and a skilled warrior instrumental in her strategic victories. Cersei's relationship with Jaime, as well as with her son, is intricately interwoven with her insatiable desire for power. Genuine affection is rare; she primarily regards them as a means to an end in her political machinations. This is most evident following King Robert's death, as she manoeuvres her son into a position of power, thereby extending her own influence. This relentless pursuit of authority, achieved by any means, is the cornerstone of Cersei's character.

Catelyn Stark's perspective on power is rooted in wisdom and rationality. She exemplifies the use of reasoning and analytical thinking in her decision-making process. Her approach to power is encapsulated by the values of "Family, Duty, Honor" (Martin, 2011, p.173). The motto of her family. In the novel, she is portrayed as one of the most sane and reasonable characters. Catelyn's capacity to employ her wit, even in the most challenging situations, is a testament to her strength. This is vividly illustrated when she encounters Tyrion Lannister, whom she suspects of attempting to murder her son. She persuasively convinces the noblemen to take him into custody, declaring, "This man came a guest into my house, and there conspired to murder my son, a boy of seven" (Martin, 2011, p.292). Catelyn is an

influential character, characterized by her intelligence, strength, and capability for revenge. She embodies the qualities of a leader, demonstrating both foresight and the ability to take decisive action:

A good dozen swords had responded to the Stark woman's plea for help: (. . .) Oh, the Stark woman had been clever, no doubt of it. Force them to make a public affirmation of the oaths sworn her father by the lords they served, and then call on them for succor, and her a woman, yes, that was sweet (Martin, 2011, p. 325-326).

Catelyn Stark's leadership prowess is such that it commands loyalty from every man in the inn. She skillfully wields her political influence as a House Stark and Tully member to manipulate situations to her advantage. Her judgment and decision-making abilities are astute; she is well aware of the implications of capturing a Lannister. However, her decision to seize Tyrion is calculated and not driven by emotion. Before seeking assistance, she already has a comprehensive plan in mind, choosing her words with great care to avoid revealing her true intentions. Catelyn employs deception, falsely claiming that she is headed to Winterfell to mislead any would-be trackers. This strategic misdirection showcases her cunning and the depth of her tactical thinking. "Often and loudly," she agreed. "No doubt your friends will ride that way when they come after us. I wish them good speed." (Martin, 2011, p.328). Catelyn possesses a unique foresight, enabling her to anticipate future events and meticulously plan to overcome any potential obstacles. Her wisdom and intelligence are complemented by her exceptional intuition, which she has honed through her experiences. These qualities make her an admirable character with remarkable traits.

Like her mother, Catelyn, Arya Stark, despite being only nine years old, demonstrates a remarkable ability to survive in challenging situations. Arya, often rehearsing, said, "Fear cuts deeper than swords. Arya would not be afraid" (Martin, 2011, p.343). Her words showcase her power to control her emotions and maintain bravery, crucial traits that have saved her on numerous occasions. She successfully evades the guards conspiring against her father, embodying a level of calmness and strategic thinking akin to an experienced knight. Her ability to recall and apply survival advice she has learned is a testament to her extraordinary character and resilience:

All that Syrio Forel had taught her went racing through her head. Swift as a deer. Quiet as a shadow. Fear cuts deeper than swords. Quick as a snake. Calm as still water. Fear cuts deeper than swords. Strong as a bear. Fierce as a wolverine. Fear cuts deeper than swords. The man who fears losing has already lost. Fear cuts deeper than swords (Martin, 2011, p.535).

Arya Stark views power primarily as a means of survival and self-defence. For her, the rule of survival is non-negotiable, and her focus is more on defence rather than aggression. Arya understands the necessity of self-reliance and does not wait for others to rescue her. Her approach to justice is personal; she prioritizes her own sense of justice over political or societal norms, opting to take matters into her own hands. This independence is symbolized by her possession of a sword and her eagerness to learn how to use it from an early age. Arya seems to intuitively understand the importance of being prepared to defend herself. This foresight is evident in a critical moment when enemies nearly capture her. As Martin (2011, p.538) describes, “She stuck him with the pointy end, driving the blade upward with a wild, hysterical strength.” This scene illustrates her physical strength, mental fortitude, and determination to survive against all odds.

Arya’s inherent nature plays a crucial role in her ability to defend herself. She is often characterized by her fierce and wild disposition. This trait is recognized and remarked upon by her family members. Her father refers to this trait as a kind of “wolf blood,” acknowledging her untamed spirit: “Ah, Arya. You have a wildness in you, child. ‘The wolf blood,’ my father used to call it” (Martin, 2011, p.221). Similarly, her brother Jon sees her as a formidable fighter despite her young age, saying, “My sister Arya could tear him apart, and she’s not yet ten” (Martin, 2011, p.450). Arya harnesses these natural qualities to her advantage, transforming her innate wildness and fierceness into a source of strength and power. This aspect of her character is not just a passive trait but an active resource she utilizes effectively, especially in situations where survival and self-defence are paramount.

2.4. Archetype of female characters

A Game of Thrones by George R.R. Martin introduces a variety of characters and avoids stereotypes, especially in portraying people from different social classes

and women. The novel introduces a range of characters, from kings, both noble and ignoble, to barbarians, savages, slaves and people of different ethnic backgrounds, which proves the Archetype of female characters in modern literature and denies the classical stereotype of female characters. This diversity in the portrayal of characters extends particularly to the novel's portrayal of women. Hence, Unlike other novels, such as *The Great Gatsby* by F. Scott Fitzgerald, where female characters are predominantly portrayed as submissive and weak, *A Game of Thrones* offers a more complex and diverse portrayal of women. Sansa Stark, for example, is portrayed as a vulnerable and gentle character, while her sister, Arya Stark, is portrayed as much stronger and more independent. Daenerys Targaryen is also a character who strives to overcome oppression and challenge patriarchal norms.

Essentially, *A Game of Thrones* does not conform to a single stereotype in its portrayal of women. Instead, the series takes a pluralistic approach by assigning different aspects of their personalities to the various characters, offering a rich and diverse portrayal of women and people from all walks of life. Martin's selection of female characters from the gentle Sansa Stark to the resilient Arya Stark to the ambitious Daenerys Targaryen, illustrates the diverse and dynamic nature of women. These characters show different strengths, weaknesses, and complexities, and they avoid one-dimensional portrayals. Thus, he skillfully presents a range of female characters, all differentiated by their backgrounds, strengths and personalities, even if they come from similar backgrounds. This diversity helps to explore and illustrate different female archetypes.

The portrayal of female archetypes and non-stereotypical identities of women is represented in contrasts between the female characters in the novel. Arya Stark and Sansa Stark, for example, despite sharing the same family and upbringing, have distinctly different personalities. Arya is portrayed as fierce, independent and rebellious, often rejecting traditional female roles. In contrast, Sansa initially embodies the traditional, rather stereotypical image of a young noblewoman who values courtesy and elegance and harbours romantic notions of chivalry and nobility. Another example of contrasting characters is Catelyn Stark and her sister Lysa Arryn. Catelyn is portrayed as a strong, pragmatic and family-oriented woman who is heavily involved in the political and social affairs of her family. Lysa, on the other

hand, is portrayed as unstable and paranoid, strongly influenced by her fears and personal worries. Through these comparisons, Martin introduces different female characters and explores a range of female archetypes. Each character embodies different facets of womanhood, from strength and resilience to vulnerability and complexity. This portrayal challenges simplistic views of women and shows them as multi-dimensional beings with a wide range of emotions, motivations and roles. The diverse female characters in *A Game of Thrones* thus contribute to a richer, more nuanced understanding of the female archetype in modern literature.

The character of Sansa Stark is initially portrayed as the embodiment of the traditional ideals of a young noblewoman in a feudal society. Her greatest ambition is to marry Prince Joffrey and become queen, a goal that matches her romantic notions of nobility and court life. She is desperate for Joffrey's love and approval, even when he treats her cruelly, as is made clear in a scene in which she expresses her concern for him: "My poor prince. Have no fear. I will ride to the fortress and get help for you" (Martin, 2011, p.152). In contrast, Joffrey's contempt for her is shown when he says: "'Then go,'" he spat at her. "And don't touch me.'" (Martin, 2011, p.152). Sansa's view that marriage is the pinnacle of a girl's aspirations leads her to prioritize her relationship with Joffrey over her familial ties. This is evident in the incident when she is willing to lie to protect Joffrey even though she knows he attacked her sister Arya: "I don't know," she said through tears (. . .) "I don't remember. Everything happened so fast, I didn't see anything" (Martin, 2011, p.156). Her decision to lie is partly based on her fear of the king and partly on her fear of losing Joffrey's affection.

In addition, Sansa's desire to be seen as obedient and to come to terms with her perceived future as Joffrey's queen leads her to betray her family on another occasion. She informs Queen Cersei of her father, Eddard Stark's plans because she believes it will endear her to the Lannisters and secure her position. Sansa's early character traits, such as her naivety, her adherence to romantic ideals and her prioritization of personal desires over familial loyalty, show her to be a fragile and somewhat misguided young girl. However, it is important to note that her character evolves significantly over the course of the series, gaining complexity and resilience as she faces the harsh realities of the world she lives in:

Why else should you have come to me and told me your father's plan to send you away from us, if not for love?

It was for love, Sansa said in a rush. Father wouldn't even give me leave to say farewell. She was the good girl, the obedient girl, (. . .) You have to let me marry Joffery, I'll be ever so good a wife to him, you'll see. I'll be a queen just like you, I promise.

A child born of traitor's seed will find that betrayal comes naturally to her, not me. I'm good (Martin, 2011, p.548-549).

In *A Game of Thrones*, which the Middle Ages inspire, the character Sansa Stark embodies many of the ideals of womanhood as described by Barbara Welter in "The Cult of True Womanhood: 1820-1860" Welter outlines four cardinal virtues of true womanhood: purity, piety, domesticity and submissiveness. In her quest to be an ideal match for Prince Joffrey, Sansa strives to embody these virtues, especially submissiveness, as she believes it will make her more desirable and suitable for her role as future queen. Sansa's quest to conform to these societal expectations reflects the general challenge women face in a patriarchal society, where they are often judged and defined by their adherence to these prescribed roles. In Sansa's case, this is further complicated by her family background, as she is the daughter of an accused traitor. The label "traitor seed" not only stigmatizes her because of her family's perceived crimes but also underscores the societal tendency to judge women (and even young girls like Sansa) based on factors beyond their control rather than their individual merit or deeds.

Sansa's struggle to fulfil these societal expectations while maintaining her identity and navigating the novel's dangerous political landscape underscores the complexities women face in historical and fictional patriarchal societies. It also reflects the broader theme in George R.R. Martin's work, in which he challenges and explores traditional gender roles and societal norms through the journey and development of his characters. The character of Sansa Stark initially embodies the traditional ideals of a young noblewoman in a feudal society, particularly in terms of her ambitions and ideas about her role. Her thoughts and dreams are largely shaped by these social expectations. Sansa's submissiveness is, as already mentioned, one aspect of the traditional virtues she embodies. She is also characterized by purity and

piety and often prays to the old gods of her family. Her desire for domesticity and to be a good wife is reflected in her hopes for her future with Joffrey. She envisions fulfilling her role by giving him an heir: “I will give him a son with golden hair, and one day he will be king of the whole realm,” (Martin, 2011, p.479). Sansa thought of herself as a perfect wife, a role that is highly valued in her society, reflects her internalization of these social norms.

Furthermore, Sansa places her hopes and the fate of her family in her future with Joffrey. She believes that once she is married to him and ascends to the queen, she will have the influence to secure her father’s freedom: “Until then, she and Joffrey would be married. Once she was queen, she could persuade Joff to bring her father back and pardon him” (Martin, 2011, p.551). This reflects not only her naivety but also the limited agency she perceives outside of her marriage. She sees her future husband as the key to her father’s safety and her own well-being, thus emphasizing the dependence and vulnerability that her position as a young woman in a patriarchal society entails. Sansa’s character, particularly in the early parts of the series, thus epitomizes the challenges faced by women who are constrained by rigid societal roles and expectations. However, her journey through the series shows a clear growth and a gradual shedding of this initial naivety as she faces the harsh realities of her world. Sansa tries hard to be in a lady-like shape, an image that Arya despises:

Why would you want to ride a smelly old horse and get all sore and sweaty when you could recline on feather pillows and eat cakes with the queen?

I don’t like the queen, (. . .) She won’t even let me bring Nymeria.

A royal wheelhouse is no place for a wolf” Sansa said (Martin, 2011, p.143).

Arya Stark does not feel bound by the rules of society, unlike her sister Sansa, who seems to readily accept and even defend these norms that Barbara Walter criticizes. Sansa, for example, doesn’t mind being separated from her direwolf and abides by the rules imposed on her. Sansa seems unable or unwilling to break social roles, unlike Arya. Arya defies the expectations of her society in her own unique way. Her behaviour is often the opposite of what is considered ‘ladylike’ according to the norms of her world. Despite the criticism she faces, Arya sticks to doing what she enjoys and living her life according to her own ideas. Arya is aggressive against

“lady-like” image when others tells her to be a Lady “will marry a king and rule his castle, and your sons will be knights and princes and lords” (Martin, 2011, p.256). While her response “No,” she said, “that’s Sansa.” (Martin, 2011, p.256). She denies the gender role imposes on her and struggling to live the way she desire.

What Sansa Stark dreams of is akin to a nightmare for Arya Stark. Arya perceives her sister’s ambitions as foolish and has no desire to emulate them. She rejects the idea of being reduced to merely bearing children to achieve glory vicariously. Arya seeks her own path to glory, aspiring for roles typically reserved for men in their society, like a king’s councillor, as she expresses in Martin’s novel (2011, p.256). Her ambition is to be recognized for her own merits, not for the achievements of others. Arya is acutely aware that she is often judged and treated based solely on her gender and longs to be seen and respected as an individual in her own right. Thus, the contrast between the two characters is on many scales.

The two sisters' contrast can be seen in their appearance and style. Sansa, the epitome of traditional femininity, is portrayed as submissive and conforming to social norms and expectations. This is also reflected in her dress and grooming: she often wears elegant sky-blue silk dresses, her auburn hair is carefully washed and curled and she wears silver bracelets that emphasize her ladylike image. This adherence to societal norms starkly contrasts Arya, who embodies a rebellious spirit against conventional gender roles. Arya’s appearance often reflects her inner defiance. She is usually seen in a rough, unkempt state, rejecting her sister’s polished look in favour of a style that suits her nonconformist attitude. “She found Arya on the banks of the Trident, trying to hold Nymeria still while she brushed dried mud from her fur (. . .) Arya wore the same riding leathers she had worn yesterday and the day before” (Martin, 2011, p.140). Arya prefers her unusual, comfortable look, unlike her neat and tidy-looking sister, which shows the difference in her personality.

Sansa and Arya’s wardrobe is indeed a reflection of their different personalities and values. Sansa, who is passionate about royal elegance, prefers luxurious silk robes that symbolize her aspirations to be a cultured woman. Her choice of clothes is a testament to her desire to embody the quintessence of a lady as defined by her society. However, this aspiration comes at a high price. At the age of

just 11, Sansa is so immersed in these ideals of ladylike behaviour that she unintentionally forgoes the pleasures and freedoms of childhood. She is so moulded by society's expectations of femininity that she willingly sacrifices her youthful spontaneity and freedom in her eagerness to become a woman. In stark contrast, Arya's indifference to her appearance emphasizes her preference for adventure, freedom and the unbridled joy of her youth. Her casual, often unkempt clothing shows that she rejects societal norms and wants to live a freer, more unbridled life. Unlike Sansa, Arya is not constrained by the traditional ideals of femininity. Instead, she values her freedom and the opportunity to go her own way, unencumbered by the rigid expectations that govern her sister's life.

Arya's resistance to the societal and familial expectations placed upon her is a defining aspect of her character. Her family, acknowledging the challenge, remarks on the difficulty of moulding her into a traditional lady. This sentiment is encapsulated in the quote, "Your mother and I have charged her with the impossible task of making you a lady" (Martin, 2011, p.221). Arya's response to these pressures is both adamant and defiant; she declares, "I don't want to be a lady!" (Martin, 2011, p.221). Signalling her refusal to conform to the prescribed norms of femininity. Arya's rebellion extends beyond just gender roles; she also challenges the class distinctions of her time. Her interaction with Mycah, a commoner, is a striking example of this. By choosing to train and befriend Mycah, she says, "I asked Mycah to practice with me" (Martin, 2011, p.221). Arya deliberately breaks the barriers of class, treating him as an equal and a friend, a concept that is alien and even shocking to the nobility.

Arya believes in her own strength and capabilities, as evidenced by her aspiration to be as strong as her brother Robb, reflecting her desire for equality and her rejection of the limitations imposed by her gender and class. Arya's journey is not just a personal quest for identity but also a broader statement against the societal constraints that seek to define her. She is determined to forge her own path, guided by her values and beliefs rather than the expectations imposed upon her by society. Throughout the narrative, Arya frequently finds herself compelled to assert her identity. She is not just affirming her gender as a girl but also embracing an activity

that defies societal norms: swordsmanship. This struggle is exemplified in a scene where a character mistakes her for a boy, commenting, “And this must be your son. He has your look,” Arya firmly responds, “I’m a girl” (Martin, 2011, p.348). The misconception of her gender stems from her non-conformity to traditional feminine roles.

Arya’s behaviour doesn’t align with that of a typical boy; rather, she simply acts in a manner true to herself as a girl. This raises a pivotal question: should a female who doesn’t adhere to stereotypical ladylike conduct not be recognized as a girl? It’s imperative to acknowledge that every individual, irrespective of gender, deserves respect for their self-identity, free from societal scorn. Interestingly, Arya’s sword master, who also serves as her dancing instructor, repeatedly addresses her as a boy despite her objections. This repetition underscores the deep-rooted gender stereotypes in their society and highlights Arya’s resilience in maintaining her true self amidst these challenges:

That is not the way, boy.

Listen to him, boy.

It was the third time he had called her “boy”. “I’m a girl,” Arya objected. (Martin, 2011, p.223-224).

Although he trains her, he cannot yet reconcile the concept of a girl wielding a sword; his understanding is firmly rooted in the traditional pairing of boys and swords. Consequently, she finds herself in a struggle to assert her identity beyond societal norms. Arya’s disdain for the conventional role of a lady does not equate to a rejection of her femininity. Rather, her aversion lies in the constraints imposed by societal expectations. In fact, she fiercely defends her feminine identity. Through her journey, Arya endeavours to demonstrate women’s empowerment, advocating for self-development and independence and emphasizing that women can grow and flourish by embracing their own power and strength. Arya proves her identity in one of the most pivotal acts of bravery: confronting and overcoming challenges that defy traditional gender roles:

Who is the father of yours, boy,

I'm not a boy, she spat on them. I'm Arya Stark of Winterfell, and if you lay a hand on me my lord father will have both of your heads on spikes (Martin, 2011, p.346).

Arya's journey transcends mere proof of identity; she harnesses it to challenge and even intimidate others. Initially, her claim to identity was simply a response – "I'm a girl." However, in her pivotal speech, she boldly declares her name for the first time, marking a significant step in confronting societal expectations. This moment signifies her evolution and feminine development in the face of persistent gender discrimination. Arya embodies the frustration felt by every girl forced to conform to rigid norms, simultaneously representing the quest for freedom that many seek. In stark contrast, Sansa embraces the traditional role expected of her, aspiring to marry Prince Joffrey and embody the ideal of a proper lady and queen, as illustrated by the quote: "Sansa was made of sterner stuff. A great lady knew how to behave at tournaments" (Martin, 2011, p.295). Despite the close age gap, "Sansa could never understand how two sisters, born only two years apart, could be so different" (Martin, 2011, p.143). Arya displays more education, reason, and rebellion than Sansa: "The women are important too" (Martin, 2011, p.73). Her sword training is a physical endeavour and a symbolic assertion that women are indispensable and equal to men.

Arya's indomitable spirit and quest for autonomy resonate with her family. Her brother Jon and father, recognizing her fierce and free soul, support her divergence from traditional feminine roles. They encourage her to challenge the notion that girls must conform to societal expectations of being ladylike, not warriors. This support not only empowers Arya but also serves as a beacon for societal change, suggesting that girls are capable of more than just being ornamental figures in society. The image of the sword is pivotal in Arya's narrative of women's empowerment. It symbolizes not only a weapon but a tool of liberation and identity "(. . .) 'I have something for you to take with you, and it has to be packed very carefully.' Arya's eyes went wide. Dark eyes, like his. 'A sword,' she said in a small, hushed breath... 'You'll have to work at it every day. '" (Martin, 2011, p.97). This dialogue encapsulates Arya's journey, symbolizing her commitment to forge her own

path, challenging traditional gender roles and societal norms. However, The sword gifted to Arya by her brother Jon marks the genesis of her journey into feminine power. Distinguished from the conventional paths of princes and ladies, Arya benefits from the unique support of her father, mother, and brother, who encourage her strength and independence.

In contrast, her sister Sansa, raised in the same environment, opts for a traditional role, adhering to societal expectations of a lady. The sword, which Arya aptly names Needle, becomes a potent symbol of her rebellion against societal norms. It's a clever inversion of her disdain for needlework; she transforms a source of frustration into a tool of empowerment. Arya's renaming of the sword signifies her approach to challenges: repurposing her fears and dislikes into strengths, albeit in a different form. While Arya is mastering her sword, Sansa excels in needlework, as noted in the text: "Sansa's needlework was exquisite" (Martin, 2011, p.68). Arya Stark preferred swordsmanship to household chores such as sewing. One of the persecutions that Arya faced was the attempt to strip her of her identity by calling her a boy, as explained previously, which is the same suffering that Jane was subjected to, but the difference is that the latter tends towards realism, while the former tends toward fantasy.

The divergence in the sisters' paths is further highlighted by their responses to their father's execution. Arya's reaction is one of action and vengeance. Her grief and anger propel her forward as she channels these emotions into a drive for survival and retribution: "Arya wriggled between Baelor's feet and threw herself into the crowds, drawing Needle. She landed on a man in a butcher's apron, knocking him to the ground" (Martin, 2011, p.726). This response indicates a deep emotional complexity; her grief does not manifest in tears but in a fierce determination to avenge and survive. Sansa's response, in contrast, is characterized by depression and despair. She is deeply traumatized, not only by her father's death but also by the betrayal of Joffrey, whom she once loved: "She drew the curtains around her bed, slept, woke weeping, and slept again. When she could not sleep, she lay under her blankets shivering with grief" (Martin, 2011, p.741). Sansa's reaction represents a loss of hope and a yearning for rescue, in stark contrast to Arya's self-reliance:

“Perhaps I will die too” (Martin, 2011, p.742). These contrasting paths of Arya and Sansa in the face of adversity exemplify different responses to trauma and challenges. Arya, armed with her sword, symbolically and literally fights back, seizing control of her destiny. Sansa, on the other hand, is engulfed by her sorrow and remains confined within the expectations and limitations of her societal role. This contrast underscores the diverse ways individuals navigate and respond to the trials of life.

In the intricate tapestry of character archetypes within George R.R. Martin’s narrative, Catelyn and Lysa Stark present a compelling contrast as the wise and the fool, respectively. Despite being sisters, their paths and methods of navigating the world around them diverge significantly. Catelyn Stark embodies a multifaceted approach to empowerment, utilizing her femininity as a tool for influence and political manoeuvring. Her roles are diverse: a nurturing mother, the devoted Lady of Winterfell, a shrewd influencer, and a canny politician. Her diplomatic prowess is notably displayed when she negotiates with Lord Frey, an instance where she leverages her position and acumen for strategic gain: “I will go,” (Martin, 2011, p.644). This negotiation, while perhaps seeming unfair due to the betrothal of Arya and Robb to Lord Frey’s children, is a testament to her necessity-driven, pragmatic approach.

Catelyn’s brand of empowerment contrasts with that of other characters like Cersei or Arya. She doesn’t solely rely on overt displays of strength or defiance. Instead, she navigates within the societal frameworks, utilizing the influence of her husband’s and son’s names when necessary. Her wisdom lies in understanding the power dynamics of her world and manoeuvring within them effectively rather than challenging them head-on. This nuanced portrayal of Catelyn as a woman who wields her intelligence and understanding of politics subtly yet effectively adds depth to the narrative. It highlights the different ways women in the story find strength and influence, whether through traditional means or by challenging societal norms. Catelyn’s character illustrates that power and wisdom can also be found in diplomacy and negotiation, complementing the more direct, rebellious approaches of characters like Arya. Catelyn Stark’s character is not only defined by her diplomatic skills but also by her keen perception and intuition, especially in understanding

hidden political agendas and motives. Her ability to discern the true intentions behind words and actions is a crucial aspect of her leadership and political savvy.

Catelyn's acute perception is evident when she recognizes the true nature of a letter ostensibly from her sister: “‘This is Cersei’s letter, not your sister’s,’ (. . .) ‘I know the sound of a threat, even whispered. They have Sansa hostage’” (Martin, 2011, p.601). This moment highlights her ability to see beyond the surface, understanding the deeper machinations at play, particularly in the perilous and deceptive world of Westerosi politics. Catelyn’s intuition regarding the character of individuals around her is similarly astute. Her assessment of Bronn is a case in point: “‘Courage he had, and strength, but there was no kindness in him, and little loyalty’” (Martin, 2011, p.363). This observation foreshadows Bronn’s later allegiance to the Lannisters, underscoring Catelyn’s ability to accurately gauge the true nature of those she encounters.

Beyond her political and intuitive acumen, Catelyn is a significant influencer, especially in guiding her son Robb, the young leader. She advises him with a blend of maternal insight and political wisdom: “‘Robb—these are your bannermen, not your friends. You named yourself battle commander. Command.’” (Martin, 2011, p.604). Her influence extends beyond mere advice; she instils in Robb a sense of responsibility and the need to wield his power and charisma wisely for the benefit of their community and realm. Hence, Catelyn’s leadership is marked not just by strategic acumen but also by a deep sense of responsibility and loyalty. She is driven by a desire to protect her family and people from the destructive forces she perceives in characters like Cersei Lannister. Her actions and decisions are not motivated by self-interest but by a commitment to the greater good and the welfare of her community. This blend of maternal instinct, political foresight, and moral integrity makes Catelyn Stark a multifaceted and compelling character in the saga.

Catelyn Stark’s influence extends far beyond her immediate family, inspiring not only her son but also the lords of the North in a significant movement to save Lord Eddard Stark. Her skills in leadership and diplomacy are not simply inherited traits. If they were, her sister Lysa would possess them, too, but she does not. Instead, Catelyn’s abilities are the result of deliberate effort and learning. She honed

her skills through careful observation of her father, her husband, and other political figures, choosing to actively develop herself and her capabilities. In contrast, Lysa succumbs to her unhappy circumstances, choosing escape and avoidance over action and improvement. She remains isolated, unwilling to confront or change her reality. This difference in attitude and approach between the sisters is striking.

Catelyn's devotion to her family is unwavering, as reflected in her adherence to the words "Family, Duty, Honor," (Martin, 2011, p.173). Her bravery and determination to protect her family are evident: "My father may be dying behind the walls of Riverrun. My brother is surrounded by foes. I must go to them." (Martin, 2011, p.606). She embodies the values deeply ingrained in her heritage, in sharp contrast to Lysa, who remains sequestered within her castle, prioritizing her own safety over the well-being of her family: "My sister is not about to stir beyond her Bloody Gate." (Martin, 2011, p.601). While Catelyn confronts her enemies with resolve, ready to end threats decisively, Lysa exhibits cowardice, seemingly resigned to her fate and heavily influenced by destiny. Lysa's character is reminiscent of a classic protagonist who accepts her downfall and subsequent fate, which in her case means coexisting with the Lannisters: "I never meant to fight them! Gods, Cat, do you know what you've done?" (Martin, 2011, p.375). She embodies a belief that women are inherently weak and incapable of revenge, self-protection, or leadership. However, Catelyn's actions and choices stand as a stark refutation of Lysa's beliefs. She demonstrates that women can indeed be powerful, self-reliant, and effective leaders, capable of influencing significant events and safeguarding their families and values. Her character serves as a beacon of strength and empowerment in a world where such qualities in women are often undervalued or overlooked. Catelyn is a wise character who believes in women's empowerment:

A woman can rule as wisely as a man, Catelyn said.

The right woman can, (. . .) Make no mistake, Cat. Lysa is not you.

If truth be told, I fear you may not find your sister as (. . .) helpful as you would like (Martin, 2011, p.366).

Catelyn Stark's character is an example of wisdom and adaptability, traits that have repeatedly proven crucial to her survival and success. Her willingness and ability to constantly evolve make her a dynamic character in George R.R. Martin's

narrative. She embodies the concept of continuous personal growth, always learning from her experiences and adapting to new challenges. In direct contrast, her sister, Lysa, is portrayed as a character who lacks this ability to grow and adapt. She is portrayed as a person who is overwhelmed by her circumstances and cannot muster the strength or discipline to move on or face her challenges effectively. This is emphasized in the text: "... let me say that grief can unbalance even the strongest and most disciplined mind, and the Lady Lysa was never like that..." (Martin, 2011, p.253). Lysa's character is essentially static, content with stability and unable to embrace change or growth. This contrast between the sisters is an important theme in the story. Catelyn's dynamic character allows her to navigate the complex and often dangerous political landscape of Westeros with acumen and resilience. Her development as a character is characterized by her reactions to the various trials she faces, and she shows a depth and complexity that is lacking in Lysa.

On the other hand, Lysa represents a static archetype, unable or unwilling to move beyond her established patterns of thought and behaviour. She remains constrained by her fears and limitations and cannot adapt to the changing circumstances around her. This stark difference between the sisters highlights their individual characteristics and emphasises the broader themes of adaptability, resilience and personal growth in the face of adversity. Catelyn's dynamic character is a testament to the potential for development and strength in challenging situations, while Lysa's static character serves as a cautionary tale of the consequences of stagnation and fear-driven inaction.

Catelyn Stark's character can be analyzed as the embodiment of wisdom, a remarkable capacity for development and dynamic adaptability. She is a profound influencer, a skilful politician and a diplomat who firmly believes in the power of women. Her actions demonstrate a strong sense of responsibility and a deep commitment to her family and values. On the other hand, Lysa's character stands in stark contrast to this. She is portrayed as incapable of personal development and remains static throughout the narrative. Her character is characterized by a misguided attachment to fate, a strong dependence on others and a lack of responsibility. Lysa is portrayed as having surrendered to her circumstances, as submissive, lacking common sense, and exhibiting a fragility that defines her interactions and decisions.

2.5. Oppression and female response

The theme of oppression is indeed a central and multi-layered element manifesting itself in the experiences of various characters. Each character's reaction to oppression is unique and reflects their individual circumstances, personalities and resilience. Thus, Daenerys Targaryen reflects the experiences of many young girls in the Middle Ages, characterized by limited personal freedom and control by male relatives. Her brother, Viserys, exerts a significant degree of control over her conscious and unconscious mind, representing a form of oppression that affects her deeply. The main reason to oppress Dany is her gender; gender discrimination is what leads to her oppression and the reason that her brother sells her to a barbarian clan. This oppression affects Daenerys' mental stability in the early stages of her narrative. Viserys' treatment, which includes manipulation, violence, and emotional abuse, contributes to her initial feelings of helplessness and vulnerability. His dominance over her life is not only physical but also psychological, affecting her thoughts, beliefs and perception of the world. Hence, she is a victim of exploitation, powerlessness, and violence.

Daenerys' journey from this point of mental instability is marked by her gradual transformation and empowerment. She begins to assert her identity and free herself from Viserys' control, a process that is both challenging and transformative. As she gains new experiences, particularly through her marriage to Khal Drogo and her interactions with other characters, she develops a stronger sense of self and a clearer understanding of her power and agency. This development of Daenerys' character is a crucial aspect of her story. It illustrates how she overcomes the mental and emotional constraints placed on her by her brother and moves from a state of oppression and vulnerability to one of strength and leadership. Her journey is emblematic of resilience and the ability to rise above difficult and oppressive circumstances. "Yet that night she dreamt of one. Viserys was hitting her, hurting her (. . .) He struck her again. She stumbled and fell. "You woke the dragon," he screamed as he kicked her. "You woke the dragon, you woke the dragon." (Martin, 2011, p.100). Her brother does not only abuse her physically but also psychologically.

Dany's dreams are a mirror of her waking nightmare. The abuse she suffers at the hands of her brother — physical beatings, violence, psychological torment and, as already mentioned, sexual assault — casts long shadows on her subconscious. This relentless violence where her brother takes advantage of her vulnerability (exploitation) has not only scarred her psyche but also transformed her dreams into echoes of the oppression she is subjected to. The fear (emotion accompanying powerlessness) he instils in her exerts an overwhelming influence and manifests in her as a compulsion to appease him - a tragic consequence of his omnipresent control. Viserys has implanted deep-seated obedience in her psyche through relentless threats and abuse, in other words, through violence, exploitation, and powerlessness, controlling her subconscious and forcing her to be submissive. This control is so pervasive that it warps her belief system and convinces her that she must comply with its demands.

Although Viserys is abusive to Dany, she is still concerned about his well: “I’ll give my brother his presents tonight” (Martin, 2011, p.392); this suggests that her need to please him may also have arisen from a fear of violating societal norms. The crushing weight of the patriarchal structures that dominate her world has awakened in her the fear of resisting and led her to conform under the pretence of pleasing him, even though she struggles internally with the feeling that her actions are forced and fundamentally wrong. Despite enduring relentless abuse at the hands of Viserys, Dany remains deeply concerned about his well-being and safety. Her inquiries about his whereabouts and the comment, “He ought to have come by now, for the feast. You ought to have gone with him, to keep him safe” (Martin, 2011, p.495). This highlights her enduring attachment and loyalty to her brother. Her reflections on their relationship further illuminate this complex dynamic: “He is my brother (. . .) and my true king (. . .) The only one. He is all I have” (Martin, 2011, p.496). This shows acceptance-acquiescence to her oppressor (emotion related to powerlessness) where Dany accept the oppression imposed by her oppressor and defends it. These sentiments reveal how Dany’s perceptions are shaped by both the societal norms she’s been raised under and the manipulative influence of Viserys.

He represents not only familial connection but also her link to a past and a lineage that she holds sacred. In a world where she feels isolated and bereft, clinging to this familial bond, even one as destructive as it is with Viserys, provides her with a sense of identity and purpose. Even though her brother is abusive, she insists on him getting what he desires (an army), and she says, “(. . .) Yet Khal Drogo would say he had you as a gift. He will give Viserys a gift in return, yes (. . .) in his own time” (Martin, 2011, p.388). Thus, she kept defending him: “It is not right to make him wait.” Dany did not know why she was defending her brother, yet she was (. . .)” (Martin, 2011, p.388). despite his cruelties, underscores the complexity of her emotions and the depth of her conditioning under his influence and the broader societal expectations.

Dany’s speeches and actions reveal the extent of Viserys’ dominance over her mind. That she defends him despite his abuse and the fact that he has essentially sold her to a “barbarian” speaks to the deep psychological control he exerts over her. This control is so ingrained that she is often unaware of its influence. As a result, she mistakes her actions, which are born of fear, which is an emotion caused by powerlessness, for love and loyalty. Her concern for Viserys, despite his treatment of her, is evidence of the complex psychological conditioning she has undergone. She is subconsciously programmed to put his needs and desires above her own, making her a tool for his ambitions. Her cautious thought expresses this dynamic: “You don’t wake the dragon” (Martin, 2011, p.29). This symbolizes not only the physical violence that she will be subjected to but also acceptance-acquiescence to her oppressor's will and desires, as well the emotion of anticipation-expectation, which is the fear of waking his dragon (making him angry): her constant vigilance and submission to Viserys’ unpredictable temperament.

The relationship between Dany and Viserys is anything but equal. It is based on an imbalance of power, where he exerts control and she must submit. It is not a partnership based on mutual respect and care, but Viserys manipulates Dany to achieve his political goals and uses her as a pawn in his quest for power. This toxic dynamic underscores the tragic reality of Dany’s situation, where her sense of love and duty is overshadowed by fear and submission. Viserys is indeed a significant

obstacle in Dany's life, hindering her personal development and freedom. His oppressive control and abuse have stifled her development and self-realization. The moment Dany begins to stand up for herself is a crucial turning point in her journey. When he aggressively pushes her to the ground, her reaction to this act of violence is her first step towards freeing herself from the psychological shackles her brother has imposed on her.

However, the following act of defiance is more than just a reaction to physical aggression. It symbolizes Dany's awakening self-assertion and the dawning realization that she does not have to live under her brother's tyrannical control. Wollstonecraft emphasizes this level of awareness and self-realization, which can be particularly shown in Dany's awareness of her oppression. Dany's awareness is the first step to putting an end to her oppression. It is her first step towards asserting her own identity and agency and stepping out of the shadow of fear and intimidation that Viserys has cast over her life:

Take his horse, Dany commanded Ser Jorah. Viserys gaped at her. He could not believe what he was hearing; nor could Dany quite believe what she was saying. Yet the words came. Let my brother walk behind us back to the khalasar. Among the Dothraki, the man who does not ride was no man at all, the lowest of the low, without honor or pride. Let everyone see him as he is (Martin, 2011, p.231).

This moment is crucial to the development of Dany's character. It marks the beginning of her transformation from a passive victim of her brother's whims into an independent individual capable of making her own decisions and standing up to oppression. It is a testament to her inner strength and the resilience of her spirit and marks the beginning of her journey to self-empowerment and her eventual rise to a position of power and influence. Hence, when Viserys attacks Dany, expecting her usual submissive and pained reaction, he is surprised by her newfound defiance. Used to controlling her through intimidation and terror, he is unprepared for her resistance. Dany's act of pushing him away and standing up to him is a significant moment of self-determination for her. This act is depicted very vividly in the text: "Dany pushed him away, hard (. . .) She had never resisted him. She had never

resisted” (Martin, 2011, p.230-231). This confrontation with Viserys is a crucial turning point where she begins to unravel the oppressive dynamic that has defined their relationship.

Dany’s growing resistance and assertiveness towards her oppressor are driven by two key factors: her high social status and the support of her husband. Her marriage to Khal Drogo transforms her from a displaced exile in the Free Cities to a Khaleesi, a Queen of the Dothraki. This transformation changes her position of power considerably. As a Khaleesi, she is no longer just Viserys’ younger sister, who is dependent and powerless. She now enjoys respect and authority within the Dothraki culture, an impressive warrior society. This change in social status empowers Dany and gives her a sense of identity and strength independent of Viserys. Her role as Khaleesi provides her with a platform and the means to challenge the dynamics that once made her vulnerable and subordinate. It is this newfound power, both personally and in terms of her position that allows her to break free from Viserys’ control and pave the way to becoming a strong, independent leader.

In the Dothraki Khalasar, Viserys’ status is presented in stark contrast to that of Dany. To the Dothraki, he is merely a commoner without authority or respect, in stark contrast to Dany, who relishes her role as Khaleesi. This shift in the power dynamic becomes clear when Dany asserts her authority and commands, “Tell them all to stay. Tell them I command it” (Martin, 2011, p.227). This moment is significant because it shows not only that she is aware of her own power but also that she is able to exert that power over Viserys - a reversal of the long-standing relationship dynamic between the two. Dany’s newfound self-awareness becomes even more apparent as she reflects on her actions, saying, ““I hit him,” she said with astonishment in her voice” (Martin, 2011, p.232). This suggests that she is becoming more aware of her ability to resist and challenge Viserys and is surprised. She moves out of the role of victim and becomes an empowered person who can do something about her oppressor. In addition, the support and love of her husband, Khal Drogo, plays a crucial role in her transformation. For Dany, Khal Drogo’s love is not just an emotional bond but a source of strength and empowerment. His love gives her the

security and confidence to assert her will and challenge the existing power dynamic. In the harsh world of the Dothraki, where strength and power are paramount, the Khal's wife gives her a level of status and protection she had never experienced before. This newfound support system is crucial to her development from a submissive, controlled younger sister to a confident and self-assured Khaleesi.

Dany's journey evolves from a life in the shadow of fear, symbolized by her fear of awakening the "dragon" in Viserys, to an embrace of her own mighty power, an awakening of her inner dragon. This transformation marks a profound shift from a life characterized by subservience and fear to one of confidence and authority. The phrase "awakening the dragon" initially expresses that she feels afraid and subjugated under Viserys' volatile and oppressive nature. As the story progresses, however, Dany undergoes a significant metamorphosis, influenced primarily by her role as Khaleesi and the power she gains through Khal Drogo's support. She transforms from a fearful, controlled figure to a self-possessed and commanding presence who embodies the essence of the dragon she once feared - a symbol of strength, resilience and power.

You are the one who forgets himself, Dany said to him. Didn't you learn anything that day in the in the grass? Leave me now, before I summon my khas to drag you out. And pray that Khal Drogo does not hear of this, or he will cut open your belly and feed you your own entrails (Martin, 2011, p.394).

Dany's transformation from a submissive and threatened figure to one who wields political power is impressive. Initially, she had to endure oppression, especially when her brother sold her. Over time, however, she evolved and used her newfound authority and political influence to stand up to her oppressor. This transformation is reminiscent of Catelyn, who strategically uses her political acumen to negotiate with male opponents. Similarly, Dany uses her political power to intimidate her brother, Viserys, in order to free herself from his tyranny. Furthermore, she uses her husband not only as a symbol but also as a tool of intimidation. In doing so, she shows how skillfully she uses both her social status and her marital alliance to smash the structures of her oppression.

After being marginalized and overshadowed by her older brother, Dany's rise to Khaleesi marks a significant change in their hierarchy. As she gains power and status, her brother's influence and prestige diminish accordingly. This reversal of roles is a testament to Dany's resilience and strategic acumen. Initially, he used her for political gain and sold her out to the Dothraki; however, in a dramatic turn of events, Dany gains control of her own destiny, her husband, and the Dothraki people. In doing so, she frees herself from her brother's manipulation and weakens his status by lowering him to a position of lesser importance. Her journey from a pawn in her brother's political games to a formidable leader is a powerful narrative of empowerment and regaining power.

The second character that is oppressed is Mirri Maz Duur, a minor character in George R.R. Martin's tale, is portrayed as a victim of sexual violence, exploitation, and enslavement. Her subjugation occurs after the attack by Khal Drogo's Khalasar. Martin uses her character to illuminate the grim reality of war in medieval settings, particularly the prevalence of sexual violence against women. This aspect of the narrative reflects a broader commentary on the abuse of power and the victimization of those deemed weaker in society. The narrative suggests that women's perceived biological vulnerability often makes them targets of abuse and oppression in a world that favours the survival of the fittest. This system, dominated by powerful genders or races, perpetuates inequality and exploitation. In response to this systemic oppression, the women in Martin's world find various means to assert their power and agency. Some, like Dany, use their social and political status to fight their oppression. Others seek protection through alliances with male partners, which is a common device in the context of the story. Then, there are characters like Mirri Maz Duur who choose the path of revenge. Mirri's use of poison as a weapon — referred to as "a woman's weapon" — is emblematic of her resorting to covert, strategic means to confront and challenge her oppressors. These different responses illustrate the complex ways in which women navigate and resist a hierarchy that often marginalizes them.

The story of Mirri Maz Duur is a poignant example of personal action in the midst of oppression, where the concept of rebirth and independence introduced by Charlotte Perkins Gilman is obvious in her actions. She is oppressed by Khal Drogo

Khalasar and faces dire circumstances. Her response to this oppression is a calculated act of revenge against Khal Drogo himself, which she achieves through the use of poison. This act means more than just retribution. It shows that Mirri Maz Duur has taken the initiative herself in a situation in which she seemingly had no power. By poisoning Drogo, she uses her limited power to deal with the source of her oppression: "You must say the prayers I give you and keep the lambskin in place for ten days and ten nights," she said. "There will be fever, and itching, and a great scar when the healing is done." (Martin, 2011, p.674). The previous act of defiance is a pivotal moment in the story, illustrating the complexity of the power dynamic and how far the oppressed can go to gain a sense of control and justice in their lives.

The actions of Mirri Maz Duur in George R.R. Martin's tale are imbued with irony and deep self-awareness. She resorts to cunning and deception, knowing full well that her actions could have dire consequences, including her own death. Her willingness to sacrifice her life underscores a deep conviction: Freedom from slavery is worth more to her than life itself, especially when "all the rest is gone," as Martin writes. Her decision to poison Khal Drogo is not only an act of personal revenge but also a pre-emptive strike to prevent others from suffering her fate. She sees her act as a way to break the cycle of violence and exploitation by Drogo, potentially saving countless other women from similar suffering. Although Mirri Maz Duur could be seen as a villain in the story, her character can also be interpreted as a tragic heroine, especially from the perspective of female empowerment and resistance.

Mirri Maz Duur's story is a poignant commentary on how far people can go to fight their subjugation and save others from a similar fate. This duality of her character — a villain in the eyes of some, a saviour in the eyes of others — adds a layer of complexity to Martin's portrayal of individuals navigating and resisting oppressive systems. Since Mirri Maz Duur is a victim of not only gender discrimination but also class discrimination (higher class abuse imposed on her) then, her second reaction to her oppression and the abuse she endured under Khal Drogo's Khalasar is a significant and destructive act that follows Drogo's death. This reaction can be seen as a continuation of her first act of defiance — the poisoning of Khal Drogo. Her actions have far-reaching consequences, not only for Drogo but for his entire Khalasar:

Ko Pono left first, naming himself Khal Pono, and many followed him. Jhaqo was not long to do the same. The rest slipped away night by night, in large bands and small. There are a dozen new Khalasars on the Dothraki sea, where once there was only Drogo's (Martin, 2011, p.758).

The calculated move by Mirri Maz Duur underscores the depth of her determination not only to avenge her personal suffering but also to disrupt the power structure that has enabled such suffering. Her actions lead to a significant change in the dynamics of the Khalasar and show the impact one individual can have against a seemingly insurmountable force. This story arc is a powerful statement on the themes of resistance and retribution in George R.R. Martin's world. Through her actions, Mirri Maz Duur embodies the struggle of the oppressed against their oppressors and shows how far individuals can go to achieve justice, even at great personal sacrifice. Her story vividly illustrates the complex interplay of power, revenge and the struggle for dignity and autonomy in the face of overwhelming adversity.

Mirri Maz Duur's actions after the death of Khal Drogo cause considerable political turmoil within the Dothraki community. Her intervention goes beyond personal revenge; it sets in motion a chain of events that fundamentally disrupts the political and social order of the Dothraki. By creating divisions within the once-united Dothraki Khalasar, Mirri Maz Duur effectively dismantles their system of life. This result underscores the fragility of seemingly powerful structures and how they can be overturned by unexpected forces. Her ability to wield such influence, especially as a woman without formal political power, is a testament to her ingenuity and understanding of the deeper dynamics at play in Dothraki society. Hence, her use of magic as a means to weaken one of the most powerful tribes illustrates a theme common in George R.R. Martin's works: the power of the marginalized to effect meaningful change. This narrative choice highlights the complexity of the power dynamic, where strength and influence can come from unconventional sources. In this context, Mirri Maz Duur is more than a character out for personal revenge. She symbolises the potential for political upheaval and change coming from the least expected quarters.

The third character that is oppressed is Sansa Stark. She is exposed to three

kinds of oppression: exploitation, powerlessness, and violence. Firstly, exploitation is explained earlier in Cersei manipulating Sansa to write letters to her family (p.54). In the theme of powerlessness, Cersei and her son, initially a prince and later king, leverage their high political status as members of the southern royal family to impose their will on Sansa, who hails from the North. The Northerners, accustomed to a harsh environment, often raise animals, including wolves. Joffrey and his mother look upon Sansa's possession of a wolf with disdain, reflecting a cultural divide and the royal family's disapproval of such practices. This disapproval is forcefully imposed on Sansa, leaving her with little choice, which is to comply, maintain favour, and avoid losing her betrothed, Joffrey.

The power dynamic is further highlighted in the incident involving the wolf's attack on Joffrey. Cersei uses this event as a pretext to eliminate the wolf, subtly expressing her satisfaction in controlling the situation. Martin describes the queen's expression when she mentions having a wolf as "so soft and quiet" (Martin, 2011, p.201). Indicating the undercurrents of power play and manipulation. This situation exemplifies the imbalance of power between the characters and Sansa's forced subservience in a politically charged environment. Thus, Cersei and Joffrey wield their power to systematically strip Sansa of everything connected to her family and heritage. Hence, Sansa suffers from class oppression and exploitation since the latter is a result of class-divided societies. So, Sansa is a victim of class oppression by using the means of exploitation by Cersei and her son, Joffrey. Their goal is to reshape her into an obedient and submissive figure, embodying the secondary emotions of shame and powerlessness that often accompany such a state, as described by TenHouten (2016, p.88). This transformation is deemed necessary for Sansa, who is to be the future wife of Joffrey. However, Joffrey's cruelty extends beyond emotional manipulation:

I want to show you what happens to traitors.

Sansa shook her head wildly. I won't. I won't.

This one is your father, he said. This one here. Dog, turn it around so she can see him.

That's your septa there (Martin, 2011, p.747-749).

Joffrey takes tangible steps to sever Sansa's ties to her past and loved ones. He goes as far as orchestrating the deaths of those close to her, like Septa Mordane and her father, and gruesomely displays their heads to Sansa. This act of violence is not just a display of power but also a methodical effort to break her spirit and erase her connections to her Northern roots and family identity. Through these actions, Joffrey and Cersei not only exert control over Sansa but also aim to redefine her identity according to their own designs and purposes. Joffrey's actions lead to Sansa's isolation, effectively cutting her off from any support or connection to her past. By using his political power against Sansa, who is politically weak and vulnerable in the context of the royal court, he ensures her subjugation. This dynamic is a clear representation of oppression through powerlessness, as Sansa is unable to resist or counteract Joffrey's authority and control. In this scenario, her oppression is not only a result of physical or emotional abuse but also the result of a stark imbalance of power and political influence that leaves her isolated and powerless. Hence, four emotions are integral to the experience of powerlessness: sadness, fear, acceptance-acquiescence, and anticipation-expectation (TenHouten, 2016, p.86). Sansa Stark embodies these emotions as she endures the overpowering control of her oppressor:

Sansa looked at it calmly, not seeing it at all. It did not really look like Lord Eddard, she thought; it did not even look real. How long do I have to look?

Joffrey seemed disappointed. Do you want to see the rest?

If it please Your Grace (Martin, 2011, p.749).

The fear and sadness she experiences are evident in the situations described earlier. Her acceptance of the high social power imposed upon her is also apparent, indicating a forced compliance with her circumstances. Sansa seems to accept the social and political power imposed on her, which leads her to be obedient and accept degradation. According to TenHouten (2016, p.87). There are two types of acceptance: one with the possibility of escape, which leads to less severe consequences, and one without escape, which leads to grief and depression. In the narrative, Sansa chooses a form of escapism and imagines her situation as unreal and temporary. She stops crying over her father's fate and puts herself in a difficult

situation, but with minimal consequences, so that she can eventually move on. This is her way of coping with oppression. Although she seems to accept her circumstances outwardly, she does not grant Joffrey the satisfaction he seeks, subtly resisting his control. Her reaction to the oppression is, therefore, to survive and not to satisfy Joffrey's ego:

The knight was on her before she could think, yanking back her hand as she tried to shield her face and back-handing her across the ear with a gloved fist. Sansa did not remember falling, yet the next she knew she was sprawled on one knee amongst the rushes. Her head on ringing. Ser Meryn Trant stood over her, with blood on the knuckles of his white silk glove.

Will you obey now, or shall I have him chastise you again?

Sansa's ear felt numb. She touched it, and her finger-tips came away wet and red. I (. . .) as (. . .) as you command my lord (Martin, 2011, p.744).

As mentioned earlier, the goal of an oppressor is often to humiliate, destroy, and harm the person he oppresses. In Joffrey's case, this includes both physical and emotional abuse towards Sansa. His actions are not only aimed at humiliating Sansa herself but, by extension, her entire family. This serves his political interests, as taking Sansa hostage is a strategic move in a larger political game. Joffrey's behaviour also reflects his need to boost his ego, especially after an earlier incident in which Arya's wolf overpowered him, causing him embarrassment and fear. Martin vividly describes this incident by describing Joffrey's "anxious whimpering" and his plea "No," he said, "don't hurt me. I'll tell my mother" (Martin, 2011, pp.151-152). This event probably hurt Joffrey's pride, especially because he was defeated in front of Sansa and Arya, two young girls. In response to this humiliation, Joffrey turns his attention to Sansa and tries to regain his sense of superiority by treating her badly. His actions are driven by a desire to assert his dominance over Sansa and thus regain the power and control he thought he had lost during the incident with Arya's wolf. This dynamic between Joffrey and Sansa is a clear example of how personal insecurities and the desire for power can manifest as oppressive behaviour towards others.

Although Sansa initially appears in the novel as a static character who is barely able to react to her circumstances, she undergoes a significant change towards the end. This change is triggered by a series of traumatic events, in particular, the execution of her father, Eddard Stark, which she has to witness. Joffrey's actions during this event reveal the extent of his cruelty and manipulation. Although Sansa pleads for mercy, Joffrey interprets the concept of 'mercy' in a twisted, ironic way, leading to her father's execution. He justifies this by saying, "He was a traitor. I never promised to spare him, only that I would be merciful, and I was. If he had not been your father, I would have had him torn to pieces or flayed, but I gave him a clean death" (Martin, 2011, p.743). The traumatic experience of Sansa marks a turning point for Sansa. Not only does she suffer emotional violence through the realization of Joffrey's true nature, but she must also endure physical violence. Her understanding of Joffrey's false love and the realization of her predicament awaken her desire for revenge. This shift in Sansa's character (from a naive girl to someone who wants to respond to the violence and betrayal she has suffered) illustrates her evolving perception of the world and her role in it. It is a journey from victimhood to a stronger position, albeit one born out of pain and suffering:

but along the inner edge of the walk was nothing, nothing but a long plunge to the bailey seventy or eighty feet below. All it would take was a shove, she told herself. He was standing right there, (. . .) You could do it, she told herself. You could. Do it right now. It wouldn't even matter if she went over with him. It wouldn't matter at all (Martin, 2011, p.750).

Sansa's evolution in response to her oppression is gradual but significant. Initially, she struggles to fully grasp the extent of her abuse and the reality of her situation with Joffrey. This realization is poignantly captured when she reflects, "He did not hate her, Sansa realized; neither did he love her. He felt nothing for her at all. She was a ... a thing to him" (Martin, 2011, p.745). This understanding that she is merely an object for Joffrey's cruel amusement marks a critical moment in her journey. Mary Wollstonecraft stresses This kind of realisation, where she entuses women to be aware of their surroundings and realize their oppression because awareness is the only way to resist oppression.

Sansa's experiences of abuse range from Joffrey's contemptuous spitting at the start of their engagement to the brutal killing of her father and physical assaults, as detailed by Martin: "he hit her twice, left to right, and harder, right to left. Her lip split and blood ran down her chin" (Martin, 2011, p.750). These incidents cumulatively contribute to Sansa's growing awareness of her oppressed state. Ultimately, Sansa reaches a point where she contemplates killing Joffrey, even if it means sacrificing her own life. This thought of resistance signifies a crucial shift in her character. Sansa evolves from a passive victim to someone who recognizes her oppression and contemplates drastic measures to resist. The change in her marks a subtle but powerful assertion of her agency, reflecting her journey towards evolving.



CONCLUSION

At the end of the twentieth century and the beginning of the twentieth-first century, many writers start to realize the importance of awareness about female oppression, trafficking, enslavement, rape, control over the body, and empowerment. Many pieces of research have arisen about female development. Also, many novels have appeared about the same topics. One of the important writers who talk about these crucial matters is George R. R. Martin in his novel *A Game of Thrones*, a part of the series of *A Song of Ice and Fire*, which is the subject of the study. Martin, in gender equality, presents how badly women were treated and are still treated badly and being oppressed in the past and in the present. He also presents how some characters are ignorant about their oppression. Hence, they did not take any procedure to stop it. Meanwhile, other characters who are aware of their oppression take a procedure to stop that oppression. So, he reflects on the importance of awareness of female psychology, which can make them take a step to defend on themselves. Thus, he highlights the importance of awareness just as Mary Wollstonecraft highlights it in her book *A Vindication of the rights of women* (1792) about the importance of awareness and education.

Although Martin's works are mostly about fantasy, he includes some important issues, such as the problems that women face in society or life, which he mentions in his novel *A Game of Thrones*. It briefly is about a conflict between the royal families on the thrones. In the middle of these conflicts, many female characters are suffering; some of them are oppressed, others are using their suffrage to gain power, and others are responding to their oppression. There are also female characters who are raised in the same environment. Yet, each of them develops utterly different personality than the other, proving the diversity of women. So, he mentions three main aspects in his novel: first, the female perspective through sexuality, fertility, and power. Second, an archetype in female characters. Third, oppression and females respond to it. However, one of the crucial matters that Martin demonstrates is sexual abusiveness against women, such as rape and female trafficking and enslavement. Female trafficking and rape is one of the most essential matters that Martin tries to demonstrate. Hence, trafficking is based on events

mentioned earlier in Europe in the last centuries. Thus, the novel is filled with female characters who are being trafficked all along the novel. Such as females from high social ranks, such as the royal families, for political purposes, or from a low social rank who are victims of war assaults and invasions.

Martin highlights Archetypes in female characters. There are many variations in the type of women presented by Martin. He presents women as either leaders, enslaved people, submissive, or women with power. He presents a diverse range of women in his novel. He shows these differences in female characters. Through these archetypes, he tries to prove that women's identities can be multi-diverse and non-stereotype. Therefore, this study proves that women's personalities differ from one woman to another. Their personalities do not follow a single stereotypical system, which is common in the patriarchal system, which states that women are submissive and unable to do anything or achieve anything. This study also shows the diversity of power and that sometimes, the only solution left for women is to use violence and leave their gentle nature as a means of power to survive, even if the use of power varies among different characters. For example, they sometimes have to use deceptive actions to reach what they desire. This highlights that women should use all sources of power to survive, empower themselves, and reach what they seek.

Therefore, it encourages multiple roles for women and criticizes male society's characteristics associated with women, as Barbara Walter criticized in her book *The Cult of True Womanhood: 1820-1860* (1966). Therefore, it concludes that it is necessary to generalize the multiple images of women's gender identities, as well as to defeat the stereotypes that were widely used in the past and until now. It also turns out that women are capable of reaching high levels in society, jobs, and the academic field, just like men. There must be an archetype, difference, and variation in female characters, or their characters will not evolve. Or, they would not be able to break the stereotype of women being capable only of domestic tasks, and they would not be able to resist patriarchal societies. Also, it is a must to limit the stereotype of women being associated with certain features, but they are capable of more than that.

One of the crucial matters that this study sheds light on is oppression and the female response to it among the many characters such as Dany. Dany's character

develops through the novel till she finds a way to respond to her oppressor. Dany grows to realize that her brother is depriving her of developing herself and her freedom; thus, she starts to be aware of her oppression and finds a solution to her situation. Hence, Dany first stops Viserys's physical violence over her; she stops him from beating her. The power that develops in her is because of her husband and her social status as the Khaleesi (the queen of the Dothraki). She uses her social status to empower herself, to develop herself, and to respond to her brother's oppression. She went from being afraid of waking her brother's dragon (being angry) to waking her dragon. Moreover, Dany went from being a scared, controlled, submissive, powerless character to being powerful, threatening, authority, and political power. She uses the increase of her social hierarchy as the Khaleesi to destroy her brother's hierarchy and social status. She responds to her oppression by gaining power and gaining a higher social status.

This study demonstrates how Martin mentions what is going on in real life. In the Medieval, trafficking, raping, and enslaving women was something common. So, Martin wants to demonstrate the issues women were confronting and encourage them to take resistant attitudes towards their oppression. However, one of the most important reasons for abusing women in general is powerlessness. Mirri Maz Duur was a victim of powerlessness; since she is biologically weak, then she is an object of abusiveness and oppression. However, unlike Dany, who uses her social status to respond to her oppressor, Mirri Maz Duur uses another weapon: poison. She uses poison and witchcraft to kill her oppressor, Khal Drogo, and to dissociate his whole Khalasar. She destroys political opponents, and that was the reason for her abusiveness. She is not content with killing Khal Drogo, but she causes massive destruction for the political power that rule the Khalasar, and this is how she responds to her oppression.

Therefore, women in contemporary society must look up to such personalities, who were weak and oppressed initially, like most women, but who derived their strength from within themselves. These characters rebirth themselves and find independence independently without needing help from anyone. Therefore, this message focuses on the necessity of women resisting patriarchal society and oppression without relying on an intrusive external force because such liberation

only comes from the person himself. Continuously, female trafficking, rape, enslavement, and inferiority are things that Martin highlights in his novel *A Game of Thrones*. And that's to raise people's awareness about the problems that women are facing. He also, in his way, tries to put an end to the assaults against women, whether by raising the level of awareness to people so that people start to make themselves and others stop these behaviours or by raising the level of awareness to women so that they can take action to stop their oppression. Thus, sexual abuse is a brutal act. Therefore, women must resist it just like Mirrie Maz Durr resisted sexual abusiveness against her.

However, many female characters react to their oppressor once they become aware of their oppression. That's why this study highlights the importance of awareness to women because if women are unable to realize their situation and are aware of their oppression, then they will not be able to get rid of their situation and will always be stuck in their oppressed environment. But, since they are educated and aware of oppression, no one can oppress them. So, it sends a message to all women to be aware and educated about oppression and its different kinds and to use all the sources of power to respond to it but logically, not in a fancy way, such as reporting to the police or any governmental institutions. This study shows that we are living in a developed era, a modern one, where women must not be unaware or uneducated about essential things such as oppression. Also, the power to reduce oppression exists; many governmental institutions fight for women's rights. He also motivates women to save themselves by themselves and not to wait for others to present help.

Therefore, the important question will be how awareness affects female characters like Sansa. How she would have behaved if she had known of Joffrey's true nature from the beginning is intriguing and opens up possibilities for further exploration. Her initial ignorance of Joffrey's character led her to miss numerous warning signs, resulting in long-suffering and mistreatment. Hypothetically, if Sansa had been aware of Joffrey's ineptitude and vicious tendencies from the beginning, her reactions and strategies in dealing with him might have been very different. This awareness could have prompted her to adopt a more cautious or even resistant attitude towards Joffrey, potentially altering the course of her experience at the royal court. Such a hypothetical scenario raises how knowledge and awareness affect an

individual's choices and resilience in oppression. It also touches on broader issues such as manipulation, innocence and its loss in the context of political and personal power dynamics. Exploring these possibilities could provide deeper insights into Sansa's character development and the broader narrative themes in George R.R. Martin's work.



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