



**THE PORTRAYAL OF THE FEMME FATALE IN
GEORGE R.R. MARTIN'S *A SONG OF ICE AND
FIRE* AND MARGRET ATWOOD'S *THE
HANDMAID'S TALE*: FOUCAULDIAN APPROACH**

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ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE**

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Assoc. Prof. Harith Ismael TURKI**

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TABLE OF CONTENT

TABLE OF CONTENT.....	1
THESIS APPROVAL PAGE.....	3
DECLARATION	4
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	5
ABSTRACT.....	6
ÖZET	7
ARCHIVE RECORD INFORMATION	8
ARŞİV KAYIT BİLGİLERİ.....	9
ABBREVIATIONS.....	10
SUBJECT OF THE RESEARCH	11
PURPOSE AND IMPORTANCE OF THE RESEARCH	11
METHOD OF THE RESEARCH.....	11
HYPOTHESIS OF THE RESEARCH / RESEARCH PROBLEM.....	11
SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS / DIFFICULTIES	11
CHAPTER ONE	12
INTRODUCTION	12
1.1. Femme Fatale	12
1.1.1. Eve.....	13
1.1.2. Cleopatra.....	14
1.1.3. Delilah.....	15
1.1.4. Helen of Troy	15
1.1.5. Lady Macbeth	16
1.1.6. “La Belle Dame sans Merci”	17
1.2. The 19th Century	17
1.3. The 20 th Century	18
1.3.1. Film Noir	18
1.3.2. Neo-Noir	20
1.3.3. Gone Girl.....	21
1.3.4. The Vampire	23
1.4. “VISIBILITY IS A TRAP” (FOUCAULT, 1975).....	25

CHAPTER TWO	33
THE PORTRAYAL OF THE FEMME FATALE IN GEORGE R. R. MARTIN’S A SONG OF ICE AND FIRE	33
2.1. A Song of Ice and Fire	33
2.2. Femme Fatale in The Novel.....	35
2.3. “When You Play the Game of Thrones, You Win or You Die There Is No Middle Ground” (Martin, 1996)	38
2.4. “Tell Khan Drogo That He Has Given Me The Wind” (Martin, 1996)	44
2.5. Melisandre	48
CHAPTER THREE	52
THE PORTRAYAL OF THE FEMME FATALE IN <i>THE HANDMAID’S TALE</i> BY MARGRET ATWOOD	52
3.1. The Concept of Femme Fatale in The Novel	54
3.2. “The Tension Between Her Lack of Control and Her Attempt to Suppress It Is Horrible” (Atwood, 1986).....	57
3.3. “She Clasped Her Hands, Radiant with Our Phony Courage.” (Atwood, 1986)	62
CONCLUSION	67
REFERENCES.....	70
CURRICULUM VITAE.....	76

THESIS APPROVAL PAGE

I certify that in my opinion the thesis submitted by DURAR ALSAMARRAEI titled “THE PORTRAYAL OF THE FEMME FATALE IN GEORGE R.R. MARTIN’S A SONG OF ICE AND FIRE AND MARGRET ATWOOD’S THE HANDMAID’S TALE: FOUCAULDIAN APPROACH.” is fully adequate in scope and in quality as a thesis for the Master Degree.

Title Assoc. Professor Harith Ismael TURKİ

This thesis is accepted by the examining committee with a unanimous vote in the Department of Department of western Languages and literature as a master thesis. 23.10.2020.

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The degree of master by the thesis submitted is approved by the Administrative Board of the Institute of Graduate Programs, Karabuk University.

Prof. Dr. Hasan SOLMAZ

Director of the Institute of Graduate Program

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this thesis is the result of my own work and all information included has been obtained and expounded in accordance with the academic rules and ethical policy specified by the institute. Besides, I declare that all the statements, results, materials, not original to this thesis have been cited and referenced literally.

Without being bound by a particular time, I accept all moral and legal consequences of any detection contrary to the aforementioned statement.

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Signature :

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I realize that this thesis is far from being perfect. Thus, I will be pleased to receive any advice, suggestions, or recommendations, to make this thesis better. And I hope this thesis will be helpful for the readers.

ABSTRACT

This research is an attempt to analyse the aspects of *the femme fatale*, and how the two writers George R. R. Martin and Margaret Atwood portrayed her in their novels *A Song of Ice and Fire* and *The Handmaid's Tale*, with the differences and similarities between the two in portraying these characters in these two novels according to Foucault's theories of power. The first chapter discusses the beginning of *the femme fatale* in literature and art, and explains the reasons that led to create and depict such a character in literature. It also discusses the history of *the femme fatale*, and how it was developed through literature, art, and cinema.

The second chapter discusses the novel *A Song of Ice and Fire*, and how Martin through his story portrayed this term through many female characters, giving different deep details for every one of them, analysing and seeing into the inner reason behind being a *femme fatale* character in this novel. The third chapter deals with Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*, and the difference that Atwood made in picturing the inner intentions of such characters, and how the society of Gilad affect women and how it reinforces the evil side of every person. Then the thesis ends with a conclusion, sums the most important results that figured from this study.

Keywords: Femme fatale, a song of ice and fire, the handmaid's tale, Martin, Atwood, power, manipulation.

ÖZET

Bu çalışma, R. R. Martin'in *A Song of Ice and Fire* ile Margaret Atwood'un *The Handmaid's Tale* adlı romanlarındaki ana karakterlerinden baştan çıkaran kadınları Foucault'un bakış açısı ile incelemektedir. İlk bölümde baştan çıkaran kadın kavramı edebiyatta ve sanatta geçmişten günümüze genel hatları ile ele alınmıştır. Baştan çıkaran kadın motifinin edebiyatta, sanatta ve sinemada kullanım biçimleri tartışılmıştır.

İkinci bölümde, baştan çıkaran kadın motifi R. R. Martin'in *A Song of Ice and Fire* eserinde nasıl yansıtıldığı incelenmiştir. Baştan çıkaran kadın motifinin nedenleri araştırılmıştır. Üçüncü kısımda, Margaret Atwood'un *The Handmaid's Tale* adlı romanındaki baştan çıkaran kadın motifi incelenmiş ve kadınların bu davranışları arkasındaki sosyal ve kültürel nedenler araştırılmıştır. Tez iki romanın baştan çıkaran kadın motifleri arasında benzer ve farklı nedenleri ortaya koymaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Baştan Çıkaran Kadın, R. R. Martin, A Song of Ice and Fire, Margaret Atwood, The Handmaid's Tale, Güç, Manipülasyon.

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ABBREVIATIONS

Etc. : Ve benzeri gibi

ed. : Baskı

Ed. by : Editör

p./pp. : Sayfa/sayfalar

Vol. : Sayı

Vs. : Karşı



SUBJECT OF THE RESEARCH

This study fundamentally aims to clarify through the two novels: *A Song of Ice and Fire* and *The Handmaid's Tale* that the main goal of femme fatale is to gain power, by manipulating men.

PURPOSE AND IMPORTANCE OF THE RESEARCH

The purpose of this study is to highlight how the two writers Martin and Atwood show the femme fatale characters in their novels in different styles, and how it works as a reflection to Foucault's theory of power.

METHOD OF THE RESEARCH

The femme fatale characters of the two novels have analysed according to the theory of Foucault of power. The result of the research enables the reader to realize the range of the effect of Foucault theories on our understanding to the inner goal of these fatale characters.

HYPOTHESIS OF THE RESEARCH / RESEARCH PROBLEM

Both George R. R. Martin and Margaret Atwood portray the concept of the femme fatale in a way that can be seen different outwardly, yet inwardly shares the same desire, which is power.

SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS / DIFFICULTIES

The thesis is limited to the two selected novels of the study. To explore some aspects in these two novels differently, some theories of Foucault are adopted for the analysis.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

“I know the devices of a demon. I was taught as a child about the demon lover. I was told about a beautiful temptress who came to a young man's room. And he, if he were wise, would demand that she turn around, because demons and witches have no back, only what they wish to present to you.” Michael Ondaatje, *The English Patient*.

1.1. Femme Fatale

The image of *the femme fatale* in literature and popular culture is the subject of studies in history, literary studies, film studies, folklore, mythology, gender studies and cultural studies. The fatal woman thrived in different narratives, religious, mythological and literary contexts. The two extraordinary masterpieces *A Song of Ice and Fire* and *The Handmaid's Tale* with all their special fictional places and historical events, are full of various types of female characters. Yet the main goal of this study is to highlight on one kind of woman which is *the femme fatale* character. But first before going through in the many aspects of such character in these two novels, we should know what, who and how is *the femme fatale* in literature?

For centuries *the femme fatale* has been considered as a cultural myth in the West society. She is a familiar yet typical character in Western culture. In the late of the 19th century many artists and writers portrayed women as powerfully and dangerously enticing characters, while wives were expected to be obedient and dependent to their husbands, which reflects the society's fear of increasingly autonomous women “in the late nineteenth century *the femme fatale* is also formulated as clear in the visual arts and literature representations of fatal women drawing upon the archetypes of religion and myth – Judith, Delilah, Lilith, Salome, Circe, Medusa” (Hanson, H., & O’Rawe, C. 2010). Women no longer had to be housewives and started to be as a work force. They became teachers, nurses, lawyers, mannequins, secretaries and so.

The activists achieved inroads towards women's civil and political rights, in the 19th century in France and Northern Europe, and challenged long-term suppositions about a woman's role at home, the work place, and in romantic relationships. In the

world of literature, *the femme fatale* as a figure of woman has grown in through the years. It is an old literary archetype, has roots in varied cultures around the world. According to Mario Praz, the writer of the classic study of romanticism, *The Romantic Agony*: “There have always existed Fatal Women in both mythology and literature, since mythology and literature are imaginative reflections of the various aspects of life, and the real life has always provided more or less complete examples of arrogant and cruel female characters” (Elhallaq, 2015). *Femme fatale* was presented as cold, deceptive and violent character. Using her powers of seduction to destroy her enemies. Though many of these works can be construed as misogynistic, but it proved the response and reaction to the challenges to established definitions of masculinity and femininity during the 19th century.

The term *femme fatale* is literally translated from French as disastrous or deadly woman. Yet *the femme fatale* was never quite fully known. It has been read as rooted cultural stereotype. *Femme fatale* is a seductive, extremely intelligent, and attractive woman with her tendency to use men as a means in many ways either to gain help, sex, power, attention or winning. She may represent the fact that she never really is what she seems to be. A woman which attracts men by an aura of charm and mystery to take the advantages that the man gives her but she doesn't fall in love with a him. Gives only her body but never gives her heart. Seems so sweet on the outside but very rotten and twisted on the inside. Her motives are not necessarily always evil, they may arise from a social or economic need, or a harmful experience. In this context, the concept of *femme fatale* imagines or can be a reflection of something old and eternal in female side, in a new way “In Bible there was Jezebel who was known for being a murderer, prostitute and enemy of God” (Indrasakti, 2018). However, it doesn't mean generalization in this: some contain a few, while others may contain many signs. To further elaborate on the concept, examples of literary, historical as well as mythical figures will be given below.

1.1.1. Eve

Many cultures throughout the history have emphasized the myth of the evil woman, and the demonization of the female gender. Eve, the first woman on earth was also not without flaws, she sought the Tree of Knowledge and famously bit into that apple in the Garden of Eden, and letting all the evil into the world. Ever since, women

have been linked with the connotation of sin. O’Rawe states: “Allusions to the story of the Fall regularly assume Eve to be the archetypal *femme fatale*: she tempts Adam to participate with her in a divinely forbidden act in order to gain illicit knowledge, thus luring him to his death, and with him, the rest of humankind” (Hanson, H., & O’Rawe, C. 2010). Despite Eve was unaware of her sexuality, thus she could not use it for deceptive purposes, but the interpretations pointed to her as a fatale woman.

Many painters depict *the femme fatale* as a sexually appealing human being. Thus the two key elements of such a person are the desire and the destruction. Coumans believes that “artists depicted women as they could ensnare their victim through using seductive charms. Allegations of man’s fear for woman” (Coumans, 2012). This is what the German artist Franz Stuck translated in 1893 through his famous painting the Sin. He referred to Eve in the Garden of Eden. He portrays the bare Eve with a big snake wrapped around her body. Elhallaq states: “Eve's weakness in allowing herself to be deceived and tempted by Satan, in the form of a serpent, is seen as the trigger for original sin, which in turn led to the fall and the expulsion of Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden” (Elhallaq, 2015).

Painters have always reflected women subjects in their artworks. Yet their paintings have different meanings depending on time, their intentions, and events and *femme fatale* was not an exception. For years, many artists have pursued to depict such tendencies of women in their artworks. The painting of Medusa by Michelangelo 1597 portrays “a severed head. Her wide-open mouth exudes a silent but dramatic scream and her shocked eyes and furrowed brow all suggest a sense of disbelief, as if she thought herself to be invincible until the moment” (Totally History, 2012). In the Greek myth, the head of Medusa used by Perseus as a shield in order to turn his enemies to stone, “Regardless Medusa's punishment, she becomes a *femme fatale* using beauty as something lethal, and her name is associated to seduction and dangerous attraction” (Elhallaq, 2015).

1.1.2. Cleopatra

The femme fatale is an archetype in literature, films and arts. The character is regarded as a concealing threat, and the threat being to the men in her life. The first specimen of *the femme fatale* in ancient civilizations in people’s perception is Cleopatra,

who painted by historians as a seduction that is capable of tempting two of the most powerful men in history: Marc Any and Julius Caesar. “Cleopatra is one of Shakespeare’s few female characters for whom sex is a treacherous means for staying in power” (Elhallaq, 2015).

Her power lies in the traditional feminine powers, like her charm and increase sexuality which she uses to get what she wants. Trying to achieve her hidden purpose by using her feminine ploys like her beauty, charm, and sex. Typically, *femme fatale* is most well-known in film noir context, yet its history stretches far back, “The tradition of *the femme fatale* can be traced back to the Sumerian goddess Ishtar as well as the “scarlet women’ of the Old Testament such as Jezebel and Delilah, and the Greek myths of Medusa, Circe and Medea” (Totally History, 2012).

1.1.3. Delilah

Delilah is a known example of *the femme fatale*, as Blyth described her “the name of the biblical character Delilah immediately evokes a disreputable and traitorous woman” (Blyth, 2017). Yet the biblical narrative is riddled with ambiguities around her character, or her motives which made her betray him. She bothers Samson to telling her the source of his powers, then she waits until he trustingly falls asleep on her lap. She then calls the Philistines, who shave off his hair, which was his source of strength, leading to his blinding, bondage, humiliation, and eventual death. The Bible does not mention her fate after that. We cannot know whether she felt guilt for what she did or not.

1.1.4. Helen of Troy

The existence of *femme fatale* is old-timer theme, it simply becomes more noticeable in times of social and cultural upheaval. Helen of Troy is also another sample of *femme fatale* in literature. Her motive of greed and power behind the reason that lead her to be *the femme fatale* beside power and freedom. In *The Iliad*, Helen plays the role of an ambiguous *femme fatale* as she brings death to warriors from both the Greek and Trojan sides, “Helen plays the role of a *femme fatale* as she brings death to warriors from both the Greek and Trojan sides including the lives of her husband and lover” (Elhallaq, 2015). She is highly sexualized and seductive.

Because of her ambiguity and deception, many readers do not admire Helen. From the beginning of the epic, she chooses to sleep with a man other than her husband. Then, she made choices on her own, that made her highly sexualized. Helen though she knew the danger in her choices, she chooses to ignore the consequences. That puts her alone handling her fault, for the great danger that she put many men in. Her beauty was unmatched, yet she was irresponsible in her actions. She is not completely good, yet she is also not completely bad. But as a *femme fatale*, she caused this great turmoil.

1.1.5. Lady Macbeth

The femme fatale term can be applied to seductive and evil women, who make their seduction and destruction as their own weapon to subdue the men, like Lady Macbeth. She is a corrupt and selfish person. She uses her own sexuality in order to manipulate gullible men. Everything she does is for her own good; nothing she does is for anything else. *The femme fatale* of Shakespeare does not differ from this description. Lady Macbeth may be considered as the most confusing and intriguing among the others. In fact, some critics “consider Shakespeare a champion of womankind and an innovator who departed sharply from flat, stereotyped characterizations of women common to his contemporaries and earlier dramatists. It would seem impossible to regard Lady Macbeth as anything other than an out and out villain” (AlKadhim, S., & Muhammed, S., 2018).

“Come, you spirits
That tend on mortal thoughts, unsex me here,
And fill me from the crown to the toe top-full
Of direst cruelty.
Come to my woman’s breasts,
And take my milk for gall, you murd’ring ministers,
Wherever in your sightless substances
You wait on nature’s mischief.” (Shakespeare, 2014).

Lady Macbeth has a big influence over the events of the play, and she is the main initiator in the plot to kill the king. She represents the tough force behind the destruction of her husband. She pushed him on to murder king Duncan in order to clear his own path to the Scottish throne. This accident is what brings the desolation for Macbeth. She made

him do what he did only for her unquenchable thirst for power. Despite the fact that Macbeth is presented as brave in the play, Lady Macbeth and through her words and actions proves that he is not. Moreover, she uses her deception to convince Macbeth that all the atrocities he did were necessary for him. The manipulation over others has the effect of making Lady Macbeth appear more powerful, and her reactions makes her appear unhuman. All that made her appears as a terrifying woman to the audience, rather than ambitious woman.

1.1.6. “La Belle Dame sans Merci”

In the romantic era, many examples of *the femme fatale* have been included. John Keats who is one of the great poets of the Romantic era, his poem *la Belle Dame sans Merci* can be seen as set upon the theme of *femme fatale*. He referred to the archetypal of *femme fatale* by portraying a beautiful woman who snares men and leaves them to die. *Christabel* by S.T Coleridge also was another poem which deals with the subject of *femme fatale*. Geraldine is considered as “one of the earliest literary depictions of the female vampire and represents desire and the darker side of human nature” (Elhallaq, 2015):

The lady strange made answer meet,
And her voice was faint and sweet:—
Have pity on my sore distress,
I scarce can speak for weariness:
Stretch forth thy hand, and have no fear! (Poetry Foundation, 2020)

1.2. The 19th Century

The femme fatale becomes a central figure in the nineteenth century. She appeared on the scene of art and literature, and in works of classical mythology, European decadent novels, and various cinematic traditions. By the middle of the nineteenth century, some ambiguity happened in the traditional biblical story of Herod’s party, Salome’s dance, and the execution of Saint John the Baptist. The image of Salome has been depicted through the centuries maybe hundreds of times by Christian artists. The painting *Salome* of Pierre Bonnard in 1900, is a depiction of Salome as *femme*

fatale: “She is best known for demanding and receiving the head of John the Baptist, then dancing in front of her father, Herod with the head on a platter” (Maarten B., 2017).

1.3. The 20th Century

As Alice Munro pointed “To be a *femme fatale* you don't have to be slinky and sensuous and disastrously beautiful, you just have to have the will to disturb” (Goodreads, 2020). In the 20th century, women have experienced significant changes, which they sought through to strived to show the need for independence and desire to make their own decisions and choices and set free from being under the influence of men. The regeneration of these dangerous female characters in both literature and the visual arts served as a warning tale for men and women of that period. She started to appears in the genres of opera and musical theatre, and widely in cinema.

With all the changes of that period, women started to change their looks and lifestyle. These new changes included the sexual liberation and consumption of alcohol and cigarettes among other changes that women did. “The women's position in society, with their growing working independence, the emancipation movements and the new sexual freedom, caused a substantial change in social attitudes” (Mariani, 2019). Marilyn Monroe was considered as the brightest and most famous *femme fatale* of the 20th century. She was an American actress, model, and singer. With all the roles that she played in cinema, she considered one of the most popular sex symbols of the 1950s and early 1960s. She represented the symbol of the changing in attitudes towards sexuality. There were a lot of men who really adored her. Till now, she continues to consider as an icon for beauty.

1.3.1. Film Noir

Many film historians have studied the thirties as the representation of *the femme fatale*, but traditionally, *the femme fatale* has been associated with a series of noir films which starts at the late 1930's. The anxieties in the 1940s and 1950s and historical factors precipitated the emergence of the noir *femme fatale* films: *Double Indemnity* 1944, *The Maltese Falcon* 1941, and *The Big Heat* 1953. “*The femme fatale* is a category as durable, malleable and resistant to definition as noir itself: both terms inevitably evoke more than they describe” (Hanson, H., & O'Rawe, C., 2010). Film noir was an attention

from those concerned in modernity and its discontents, yet it may be considered the most criticised film from academic scholars.

The feminist attention in this form of films stems from its discerning using of the female form and the development of female characters, against the male fears over the growing power and influence of women in politics and the work place. While critical interest rises from the richness and complexity of the core that makes up the noir films, “for other feminist critics, the interest of 1940s’ noir lies in its use of prevailing patriarchal stereotypes that opposed bad, dangerous sexual images of women to good, virginal ones” (Spicer, A., & Hanson, H., 2013).

Film noir and the details included in are picture renaissance in the twenty-first century, including the character archetype of *the femme fatale* which redounded in many film and stage productions. Film Noir depicted feminine heteronormative character set, and its filmic process is complete by using *the femme fatale* characters. It shows through these characters that women struggle is but a consequence to the restrictions that men place on them, “For many critics this ambivalence about women’s place can be attributed in part to the social turbulence of World War II and its aftermath” (Spicer, A., & Hanson, H., 2013). Despite film Noir, like many of arts, includes Judeo and Christian stories, but it also depicted the idea of marriage as unhealthy and restricting. Using the murder as a means to escape, through the personification of the fatal wife or fatal woman.

The femme fatale in this context has always existed, but she simply becomes more effective and productive in times of social rebellions. Film noir shows that women are restricted by the tradition, though it depicts women as dangerous and worthy of destruction. *The femme fatale* played a substantial role in developing the storylines and the plot of the film. According to Irene “Generally, people will easily link the idea that *femme fatale* is the bad women without considering the motive behind her act” (Indrasakti, 2018). The film noir uses characters who suffer for mistakes of other people. Hedy Lamarr, was an Austrian actress, she considered as the major force during the Golden Age of Hollywood between the 1910s and the 1960s. Lamarr starred in her role as a *femme fatale* in various motion pictures, especially her shines through her role as fatale character who seduce Samson in Samson and Delilah 1949. Samson is a hero who is deceived by a *femme fatale* Delilah, a good example of the physical decline of male.

1.3.2. Neo-Noir

later, a derivative term appeared from noir films: neo noir. The concept of neo-noir emerged in the 60s, it was well received. The neo noir films took definite elements of its predecessor. The term neo-noir precisely describes any film contains noir themes, which comes after the classic noir period. Some critics said neo-noir started with Hitchcocks Psycho, but other critics believe it started with Harper1966 or Chinatown1974. Neo noir was concerned with the inner conflict of the society by sharing the classic noir elements: the anti-hero and the *femme fatale*. Neo noir's *femme fatale* was generally smarter and more sexual than the original. "The resurgence of *the femme fatale* in the cinema of the 1980s and 1990s, the argument goes, is indicative of a political climate which took into account the gains of feminism, and was simultaneously hostile to women in the wake of those gains" (Farrimond, 2018).

The neo noir films depict characters that are trying to absconder from their problems, which are related to social identity, technology and memory. They also have some advantages of using of colour and widescreen, and the less restrictions on screen violence than the earlier noir film. But *the femme fatale* of films was not new, yet the depict the composition of this personality was completely opposite to the standards of a classic housewife and women in general of 1940s. It was opposite to everything which deals with motherhood, marriage and housekeeping, and even honest and decent work. Also, film noir portrays the city life as a cruel and unforgiving, cities considered as dangerous places where all kinds of illegal activities happen where the immoral and corrupt characters succeed, this city is used as a character to picture the complexity of the feelings of the characters, that the corruption is so uncontrolled in the city that most citizens live with it as a normal way of life.

By the end of the '70s, the American society shows clear signs of a deep crisis, by increased divorce rates, social disorders. The neo-noir films of the '80s and '90s were a response to increasing numbers of women entering the workforce, and the changes in life and the shape of the women's view towards themselves and their position in the society. In neo-noir, "*the femme fatale* features of erotic seduction and destructive charge that had been a staple of her "classical" ancestors" (Mariani, 2019). It plays a crucial role in drive men to kill innocent persons. She has the ability to revive fear in the hearts

of men. It was hard for audience to believe in that this highly erotic creature of *the femme fatale* is integral part of the classic compassionate female previously existing. The fatale character plays an important figure to represent of truth. She has been used in film as symbol to reflect the women place in the society, and to portray the differences between men and women.

The term *femme fatale* has become a common usage, by embodying the term in characters as Brigid O'Shaughnessy (Maltese Falcon), Phyllis Dietrichson (Double Indemnity), and Ann Grayle (Murder, My Sweet) on noir films. In the early of the last century in America, the idea of *the femme fatale* is intertwining with the changing of gender politics. As a symbol of the new age, Americans were charmed by the rise of the New Woman theme. The shift in gender politics of women was considered as if it represented the centre of all changes of modernization. According to Sylvia Harvey, "the emergence of *the femme fatale* parallels social changes taking place in the 1940s, particularly the increasing entry of women into the labour market" (Antonio, 2015).

The development of the film industry took a great turn in the development of the female character. Through many artworks, women have been depicted in seductive and dangerous way with regard to their positions, costumes, and environment. The artworks also depicted positions of men towards women. The mutation in relations or even in thoughts prompted different deep reflections on art and culture. The contemporary *femme fatale* is as well considered fatale character with all her complexities and motivations. She crosses limits of stratification and race. She can be in many forms, yet she in the core poses an impedance to a patriarchal system. Mary Ann Doane claims that *the femme fatale* "should not be seen as some kind of heroine of modernity, but rather a symptom of male fears about feminism." (Mercure, 2010).

1.3.3. Gone Girl

Despite all the cultures and ideas and technologies change through time, yet the presence of *the femme fatale* still has its effect on audience. As Camille Paglia describes "Feminism has tried to dismiss *the femme fatale* as a misogynist libel, a hoary cliché. But *the femme fatale* expresses woman's ancient and eternal control of the sexual realm. The spectre of *the femme fatale* stalks all of men's relationships with women" (Wise Old Sayings, 2000). Works of fatale characters are sexist way of looking at femininity. It has

been used to seek to minimize the power and complexity of women's character. *The femme fatale* today is still described as having a power as of a witch or female monster, or even a vampire. She is predatory and ruthless. She lures man into committing crimes of passion.

Unlike the idea that women are always expected to be nice, polite, and soft-hearted, which are traditional stereotypes and gender roles coined by patriarchy, the novel *Gone Girl* by Gillian Flynn portrays a woman with superior power, weaken the power of patriarchy in a way makes men respond to her negatively. Flynn as cold-blooded, she did not make an ending suites the male expectations. She made evolved manifestation of *the femme fatale* on a way that never went far enough before. Eliana Dockterman, a staff writer for Time in her article has referred that in *Gone Girl* “nobody can agree if it’s a sexist portrayal of a crazy woman or a feminist manifesto. The answer is it’s both, and that’s what makes it so interesting” (Dockterman, 2014).

Gone Girl is a story premise around a married woman plotting revenge against her husband. Amy as a *femme fatale* character rejects the traditional gender roles and patriarchy. “Amy in *Gone Girl* is *the femme fatale* of neo-noir. She is beautiful, manipulative, and very good at fooling men for her own benefit. She uses her attractiveness as a way to control men, mainly attempting to change them into something that suits her desires” (Vahlne, 2017). She is an ideal woman, very lovely, clever, and ambitious yet she is also quite complex character. As a classic *femme fatale*, she engaged men on the terms that they had set for her and worked according to the persona they demanded of her, yet she used her beauty and her intelligence to rig the roles that male set. She did not work against the patriarchy system, but also worked to destroy it. Amy Dunne as *femme fatale* in the *Gone Girl*, brings several impacts not only on the male characters, but also by Amy’s parents, Rand and Marybeth Elliot. Also her inability to remain in a romantic relationship is an integral part of her character as a *femme fatale*.

Although, *femme fatale* characters have never been restricted to noir or neo noir films, it appeared in horror, historical, epics and mythological films throughout history. *Femme fatale* archetype did not stop after the mid-20th century. It continues to be an existing and recognized particularly for film and TV directors. In Basic instinct film “the female character has total control of the circumstances and defiantly uses sexual

attraction to seduce body and soul of the unfortunate men sitting in front of her” (Mariani, 2019). *The femme fatale* is not only a nightmare for a man, she was also his fantasy: a woman in charge of her own sexuality who'd take charge of his as well. She also wants from him to commit murder; she wants an irrational act to please her. She exerts intellectual and sexual power.

1.3.4. The Vampire

The figure of the vampire *femme fatale* appears in Christian folklore as a deity, related to the death and rebirth, and the excessive sexuality. *The femme fatale* portrayed in many films and art forms in metaphorical horror way. She appeared as a vampire, fallen angel, witch or sorceress. Hanson has clarified “Vamp, a term which comes from the word ‘vampire’, is used to describe a glamorous and exotic woman who is known as a heartless seductress” (Hanson, H., & O’Rawe, C., 2010). The vampire woman reflects the horror, which in this context typifies the powerful woman as a direct threat. Some of the characteristics of the external appearance of the femme vampire include: charming eyes, thick lips, long wavy red hair, and long legs with pair of high heels. There is no more extra embodiment for the powerful woman than terrifyingly and seductive.

The painting *Love and Pain* (1893) by the Norwegian artist Edvard Munch, “It has also been called *Vampire*, though not by Munch” (Tutt Art, 2010), portrays a woman with long red hair kissing a man on the neck. She represents a kind of character who entices men by her irresistible seductive charm, then transforms into a snake or a swine or another animal which reflect the devil nature of these fatal women, leaving men into the danger or death. Yet the artist himself claimed that it is just a painting shows a woman kisses a man on his neck.

In the Nineteenth-Century, the vampire was characterised for his ability to be himself in a relationship with his victim. The female vampire portrayed as more intimate and irresistible to victims of both sexes. The vampire *femme fatale* portrayed in a patriarchal society in a decadent, licentious and lesbian pictures. The glory was from male not female. *A Fool There Was* 1915 by Frank Powell, is a film which “takes its title from a poem called “The Vampire” by Rudyard Kipling, and uses quotes from the poem throughout the movie” (Tvtropes, 2014). It is a silent film of a Vampire who has three male victims, who all suffer at the hands of this *femme fatale*. One of them falls

completely under her control, and he loses his family, his job, his social standing. In the end he becomes a drunker.

Femme vampires have been part of vampire movie for ages, but recently that they have got the equality with the men. In the 1990's, the female vampire became popular in media and television, especially vampire movies and television series. According to Film historian David J. Hogan "the first cinematic appearances of female vampires were in a genre which he calls the 'cinema of lost women', as he labels the films made in the first decades of the twentieth century, in which women are deliberately living their lives without men" (Coumans, 2012).

It becomes markedly less strange that the vampire world is largely mixed now in books and TV. Leading to assume that the changing nature even in the productions of vampire promise that women will be survive. *The femme fatale* "has appeared and continues to appear in horror films, epic and mythological sagas, melodramas, pornographic films and, more generally, thrillers and detective movies - especially today, at a time when traditional genres tend to merge and new, particular sub-genres are constantly created" (Mariani, 2019). *The femme fatale* also becomes popular in video games. Like the policewomen, robots or the supernatural creatures which are very independent and responsible. The men are attracted to the movies or the computer screens by using an attractive design for the female bodies of and the female heroines.

For different reasons, the concept of *the femme fatale* considers catchy to both men and women, which led many feminist theorists to discuss their position towards these characters, taking into consideration that *the femme fatale* is a product of the masculine imagination, reflects the male anxieties about women. *The femme fatale* also as a term appears as the name of Britney Spears's album in 2011, and in the lingerie line launched by burlesque star Dita Von Teese. The concept still a live despite all the arguments and debates about.

Through this study, *the femme fatale* of George R. R. Martin's *A Song of Ice and Fire* and Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* will be examined in detail, and how the two writers depicted this archetype in their novels through many characters. The study will also explore through many characters, how these new novels worked as a

mirror reflected all the previous description of *the femme fatale*, and in the same way how these two writers portrayed them in unique style.

1.4. “VISIBILITY IS A TRAP” (FOUCAULT, 1975)

The study adopts a Foucauldian approach to analyse the two novels in this study. Through these two novels, the researcher will analyse the *femme fatale* characters of the novels according to the theory of power of Foucault. The researcher will clarify how power effects of the actions of these *femme fatale* characters, whether as their fatale behaviour or as their own goal which they seek to win.

Michel Foucault (Paul-Michel Foucault) (1926–1984) is a name that evokes passion. As Foucault clarified: “Man is a thinking being” (Martin, Gutman, Hutton, 1988), his writing touched mostly on every aspect of the human condition, and many of his adages are still vastly quoted. Foucault is considered one of the most influential philosophers in recent history, and as one of the most mentioned thinkers not only for his work for sociology, but also for anthropology, cultural studies, psychology, gender studies, gay and lesbian studies, philosophy, and literary criticism, and he has served as theoretical inspiration in multitude of disciplines. Through his works, he opens up new ways for acting and thinking about ourselves. His philosophical approach to power distinguished by innovative, effort, and frustration. Over thirty years after his death, still his works are characterized as complex, daring and often in conflict with the prevailing views of his time.

The theory of Foucault states that “the philosophy is not a disengaged body of knowledge, but rather a committed and sometimes even a painful activity” (Nica, 2015), as the greatest philosopher, a huge number of scholars has been pointed to the closeness between the French thinker Foucault and Nietzsche, and that is due to retrieval that Foucault did to the Nietzschean legacy. According to Harcourt “Foucault’s manuscripts, as he might have said, play with Nietzsche’s words, in the same way that young artists often work on old masters” (Harcourt, 2019). As “the Will to Power” is considered a central thought in the philosophy of the German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche, the Foucauldian analysis is also a form of analysing based on the theories which say that power is based on knowledge and that power reproduces knowledge by shaping it in accordance with its anonymous intentions.

In this context, Roger Kimball stated his opinion in Foucault's theories. He clarified:

“Basically, Foucault was Nietzsche’s ape. He adopted some of Nietzsche’s rhetoric about power and imitated some of his verbal histrionics. But he never achieved anything like Nietzsche’s insight or originality. Nietzsche may have been seriously wrong in his understanding of modernity: he may have mistaken one part of the story—the rise of secularism—for the whole tale; but few men have struggled as honestly with the problem of nihilism as he. Foucault simply flirted with nihilism as one more “experience.” (Kimball, 1993).

Foucault through his life and works, did not support the idea that philosophy can or must expose the hidden parts or of the core of things. Yet philosophy is a field of analysis, and philosophers must continually toil. Foucault’s approach was unconvincing for those who think that philosophy still needs to identify eternal essences, and they found Foucault’s theory too risky.

Making a clear definition of power is still able to attract attention, which is often crossed by enormous simplifications and misleading analogy which make understanding the term more difficult. Power for many people can be understood as the ability of a dominant thing to impose its will over the will of the powerless thing, near to the meaning of possession or something owned by those in power already. Power basically does inhere in individuals, including even those who are under surveillance or punished. But in the view of Foucault, power is not something that can be possessed. It is something that can act as a strategy. He argued through his works that power is not a substantive, static, and ontological power, as conceived by classical thinkers. Through his philosophy he gave an idea that power somehow does not inhere in the individuals who work in the institutions, but in the institutions themselves, as he states: “power is tolerable only on condition that it masks a substantial part of itself. Its success is proportional to an ability to hide its own mechanisms” (Foucault, 1978), which makes it seem as if power inheres in the prison, the factory, or the school and so on. Through his lectures, he discussed that power does not have a centralised core, but it has many separated roots and different origins.

The entire works of Michel Foucault are considered as the most important and innovative theoretical productions of the 20th century. His two most referenced works, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (1975) and *The History of Sexuality: Volume One* (1976), are considered the central roots of his analyses to the concept of power. His main focus was on power and what this concept can implicate. He argued through his works that power does not as include violence, despite violence may be a part of some power relationships, which always entails a set of actions effectuated upon another person's actions and reactions, yet power does not consider violence. According to O'Farrell, Foucault divided power into types: "sovereign power, disciplinary power, and pastoral power" (O'Farrell, 2019). Foucault is one of the writers who admitted that power can be a necessary, productive and positive strength in society, and it is a central thing in the relations between society, individuals, groups and institutions, and a source of social precision and conformity. In our modern society, power is in general exercised through different of institutions.

For most scholars, Foucault's name is considered as synonymous with the word power. Despite all his analysis for power, he did not develop an overarching theory of power. Through his works, Foucault inaugurates a unique way of thinking about power. He claims that we must refuse to treat power as philosophers have treated. For Foucault, power is a unitary and homogenous thing:

"It differentiates individuals from one another, in terms of the following overall rule: that the rule be made to function as a minimal threshold, as an average to be respected or as an optimum towards which one must move. It measures in quantitative terms and hierarchizes in terms of value the abilities, the level, the 'nature' of individuals. It introduces, through this 'value-giving' measure, the constraint of a conformity that must be achieved" (Foucault, 1975).

Foucault assumed that power is something that exists universally in a diffused form. As he also argued that the concept of power should include the subject of freedom to make a clear study of it, because the power that comes from the side against enslavement is a recalcitrance. The concept of power for Foucault does not derive from a single overarching origin, yet power is in fact a dynamical network of relations which create certain historical appearances. Moreover, Foucault states: "Power is everywhere;

not because it embraces everything, but because it comes from everywhere. And “Power” insofar as it is permanent, repetitious, inert, and self-reproducing, is simply the over-all effect that emerges from all these mobilities, the concatenation that rests on each of them and seeks in turn to arrest their movement” (Foucault, 1978). He hypothesized that power does not always assume just one form, and so, a given form of power can cohabit alongside with other forms of power, or even come into a conflict with it. He also argued about many points in relation to power. He offered definitions that directly opposed to more traditional liberal and Marxist theories of power, which put him in a contrast with them. Chomsky has described Foucault in interview with him: “Foucault is an interesting case because I’m sure he honestly wants to undermine power but I think with his writings he reinforced it.” (Chomsky, 2003).

The concept of power is one of the central concepts of political philosophy. Through his work *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault seeks to analyse punishment in its social context. He argues about how the new methods of power do not work according to what makes power effective and accepted, as he states: “Discipline ‘makes’ individuals; it is the specific technique of a power that regards individuals both as objects and as instruments of its exercise. It is not a triumphant power...it is a modest, suspicious power, which functions as a calculated, but permanent economy.” (Foucault, 1975). His particular position he could be said to have taken remains hotly contested. Scholars have disagreed regarding supporting him or disagreeing with him, as Gaventa states: “His work marks a radical departure from previous modes of conceiving power and cannot be easily integrated with previous ideas, as power is diffused rather than concentrated, embodied and enacted rather than possessed, discursive rather than purely coercive” (Gaventa, 2003). But what can be generally agreed about, is that he had a new approach about politics.

In an interview with Daniel Zamora, he states: “It’s undeniable that Foucault always took pains to inquire into theoretical corpuses of widely differing horizons and to constantly question his own ideas” (Jacobin, 2014). Foucault believed in possibilities of action and opposition, as he was an active social and political commentator, and he was well known in France for his political activism. He argued that the new form of government is still sought to control people’s bodies, by controlling their minds. According to him, discipline is a form of power which indicates about telling the

individuals how to act, and defining to what is considered normal for their behaviour. “Is it surprising that prisons resemble factories, schools, barracks, hospitals, which all resemble prisons?” (Foucault, 1975). It shows that the disciplinary power was one of many shapes of power over the past hundred years.

Foucault’s theory also draws our attention to consideration that the war and not sovereignty, is political strategy. “The perpetual penalty that traverses all points and supervises every instant in the disciplinary institutions compares, differentiates, hierarchizes, homogenizes, excludes. In short, it normalises” (Foucault, 1975). His work showed that the disciplinary power can be considered as only one of many forms that power has come to take over the past hundred years. In his later works, he suggests to replace the term government with the power-knowledge. Foucault’s approach to power sees it as an everyday socialised and embodied event. As he declared: He described the discipline in his book *Discipline and Punish* as: “It is not a triumphant power...it is a modest, suspicious power, which functions as a calculated, but permanent economy” (Foucault, 1975).

Power-knowledge which is a term introduced by Foucault. Power and knowledge are not independent entities, but inextricably related. Knowledge is an exercise of power and power on the other hand is a function of knowledge. He debated: “that power and knowledge directly imply one another; that there is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time power relations” (Foucault, 1975). The French postmodernist addresses the relationship between power and knowledge, and how they have been used as a form of social control. He argued that knowledge and power are intimately bound up, that one is not separate from the other. In this context, the term power means every chance of pushing through one’s own will within a social relationship. He offered the broadest conclusion for power in his work *The Will to Knowledge*.

Moreover, *The History of Sexuality* appeared only a year after his work *Discipline and Punish*. It consists of a four-volume study of sexuality in the Western world, as also traces the emergence of some of the concepts, types of knowledge, and the social institutions of government which have contributed to shaping modern

European culture. First three volumes were published before Foucault's death in 1984, and the fourth volume, *Confessions of the Flesh* was published after his death in 2018. In Volume 1, Foucault discusses the idea that western society suppressed sexuality from the 17th to the mid-20th century due to the rise of capitalism and bourgeois society. He also argues that discourse about sexuality from the Seventeenth century has been increased continuously, particularly in the Nineteenth century, and freed during the twentieth century. He clarified "What is peculiar to modern societies, in fact, is not that they consigned sex to a shadow existence, but that they dedicated themselves to speaking of it ad infinitum, while exploiting it as the secret" (Foucault, 1978).

In *The History of Sexuality* Foucault analyses power and how sexuality can represent a resource of power. In fact, we can extract from this work that sex and power are symbiotic. Sexuality in this meaning can be used as a primary technology of power, as he states:

"Of course, it had long been asserted that a country had to be populated if it hoped to be rich and powerful; but this was the first time that a society had affirmed, in a constant way, that its future and its fortune were tied not only to the number and the uprightness of its citizens, to their marriage rules and family organization, but to the manner in which each individual made use of his sex" (Foucault, 1978).

Foucault through this work, argues that power uses sex, and that it requires obedience through domination, obedience, and subjugation. He also discusses that power is everywhere and working in all directions. Sexuality in this meaning is not power repressor, but an effective path to power. As he stated: "The essential point is that sex was not only a matter of sensation and pleasure, of law and taboo, but also of truth and falsehood, that the truth of sex became something fundamental, useful, or dangerous, precious or formidable: in short, that sex was constituted as a problem of truth" (Foucault, 1978). Foucault believed that there is an undeniable dynamic power related to knowledge, that the people who had power impacted on the knowledge. Importantly, he believed that the power exists in all relationships, that the dynamics between power and knowledge in relationships has an influence on sexuality.

Moreover, through *The History of Sexuality*, Foucault analyses power and the resources of power. He states:

“the idea of "sex" makes it possible to evade what gives "power" its power; it enables one to conceive power solely as law and taboo. Sex -that agency which appears to dominate us and that secret which seems to underlie all that we are, that point which enthrals us through the power it manifests and the meaning it conceals, and which we ask to reveal what we are and to free us from what defines us-is doubtless but an ideal point made necessary by the deployment of sexuality and its operation” (Foucault, 1978).

He showed power to be a central force, and arranged by an authority which exercises full control over the individuals, through the threat or even through display of violence. Foucault also argued that power implies different options of reaction. He underlain his argument on sexuality, and how power can be reached by control but not by punishment. Foucault through this work has clarified the complex relations between power and sex, and how the power can work in a dispersive manner, appears on the surface in a very different dynamic way. Through his theory, he identified that body and sexuality have a direct spot of social control, as he clarified “Finally, the notion of sex brought about a fundamental reversal; it made it possible to invert the representation of the relationships of power to sexuality, causing the latter to appear, not in its essential and positive relation to power, but as being rooted in a specific and irreducible urgency which power tries as best it can to dominate” (Foucault, 1978).

Moreover, he discussed that the relationship between power and sexuality is corrupted when sex viewed as an unbalanced natural force that power opposes and restrict: “What is peculiar to modern societies, in fact, is not that they consigned sex to a shadow existence, but that they dedicated themselves to speaking of it ad infinitum, while exploiting it as the secret” (Foucault, 1978). Accordingly, feminists have been able to rethink gender as a cultural means. As the Australian philosopher and feminist theorist Elizabeth Grosz states: “The various theorists discussed and sometimes criticized here have helped make explicit the claim that the body, as much as the psyche or the subject, can be regarded as a cultural and historical product” (Grosz, 1994).

For someone who has a reputation for being difficult, dense or obscure, Foucault once stated:

“I don't feel that it is necessary to know exactly what I am. The main interest in life and work is to become someone else that you were not in the beginning. If you knew when you began a book what you would say at the end, do you think that you would have the courage to write it? What is true for writing and for a love relationship is true also for life. The game is worthwhile insofar as we don't know what will be the end” (Martin, L., Gutman, H., & Hutton, P., 1988).

His great works can be seen also important to anyone looking to better understand the ways of how power works in social life, especially how the ideas structure our personal experiences and senses of self. In this study, I will analyse in details *the femme fatale* characters of the two novels according to Foucault's theories of power, a power which is different as a goal, from one fatale character to another. The first novel is *A Song of Ice and Fire* and the second is *The Handmaid's Tale*, and through these two I will show the points of the difference of the ways that the writers made, to reflect the meaning of the power through many characters that dedicated themselves to having and achieving power.

CHAPTER TWO

THE PORTRAYAL OF THE FEMME FATALE IN GEORGE R. R. MARTIN'S *A SONG OF ICE AND FIRE*

“The things we love destroy us every time” (Martin, 1996).

2.1. A Song of Ice and Fire

Recent fantasy novels have started to allow women's greater prominence within novels, in the writings whether of female and male authors. And one of the most famous is a series of epic fantasy novels *A Song of Ice and Fire* by George R. R. Martin. The position of the female characters cannot be understood without taking a look into the novel's details.

George R. R. Martin, who has been an amateur of fantasy and science fiction in literature since childhood. He began writing and selling monster stories to other children for pennies in Bayonne, New Jersey. Then he became passionate in that after discovering comic books as a young reader, and realising that books did not have to be about ordinary stories. By the age of forty-eight, he published the first masterpiece of five volumes *A Game of Thrones* of his series *A Song of Ice and Fire*, which was “inspired by the Wars of the Roses” (Gjelsvik, Schubart, 2016). After his first book, he decided that it should be a trilogy. But after finishing the second book, *A Clash of Kings* 1998, he decided that the trilogy should be a quintet: *A Storm of Swords* 2000, *A Feast for Crows* 2005, and *A Dance with Dragons* 2011. Harris stated that: “*A Song of Ice and Fire* will become the most popular fantasy series published since J.R.R Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* novels were published from in 1954 and 1955. *A Song of Ice and Fire* has sold 45 million copies in the U.S. and an astronomical 90 million copies worldwide” (Harris, 2019) and “the Spanish science fiction association handed it an ignotus for the best foreign novel” (lowder, 2012: 14).

A Song of Ice and Fire as a work of fantasy imitates a medieval Europe, yet the novel is not a representation of a specific historical period or geographical place. The time that Martin creates contributes to the creation of unlimited space, which made him free from any concerns of value of any era. Also Martin switches the narrative point of

view in every chapter of the book which in order to make the reader move with him from one character's mind to another. Some critics admitted that the story has a postmodern character, while some writers wrote that the story may spout from the headlines and the international politics of the present. As Masters describes "A *Song of Ice and Fire* presents a postmodern take on high fantasy by removing definitive good and evil" (Masters, 2012).

In an interview with TIME in 2017, Martin elucidated by his answer for a question if there were moments that he has been influenced by the politics of the president George H.W. Bush, he said:

"I think probably, to some extent, I have. I did not set out to do so. I'm not writing allegory either, but I live in these times, and it's inevitable that they're going to have some influence on me. But during the process of writing these, I probably would have been much more immersed in the politics of the Middle Ages and the Crusades and the Wars of the Roses and the Hundred Years' War" (D'addario, 2017).

This fantasy series has received praise for the assorted portrayal of women and religion. Yu states: "the world Martin had created became a global phenomenon, and his readership reached heights few authors have ever found" (Yu, 2018). The novel exhibits the overlap between the nostalgic wish to return to the old days and the unavoidable realism, which can be consider as the corner stone upon in the novel. Martin through his story and the world he creates challenging the classical versions of high fantasy by using more realistic human characteristics to the characters and events. And this what makes it very unique work and an excellent piece of high fantasy which though it still staying true classical standard, yet in the same time breaks the form with new standards and variety.

In 2011, the novel has been adapted by HBO into a television series planned to run for eight seasons. The series became very famous and international, and was admired by critics for its story, complex characters, range, and also the production values. Both the television *Game of Thrones* and the book series *A Song of Ice and Fire* have its passionate fans all over the world, "And most concerned feel that Game of Thrones – in its current incarnation as a television series – earns every bit of its hyp" (Armstrong, 2016). *The Game of Thrones* TV series became a worldwide coverage more than

anything before on television and on internet. Also *The Game of Thrones* comprised various fan activities, and computer games.

The fantasy story of *A Song of Ice and Fire* has the power to attract audience and readers. Kyriazis in his article describes Martin as “a cunning man. To plot such a devious and utterly, brutally realistic exposure of the best and worst of human nature is a mark of genius. Just as he understands how and why his characters will react in every situation, he also understands what the readers” (kyriazis, 2019). Martin creates a world that is viewed through the points of view of characters, through their own understanding of the truth and their behaviour in the events. This gave the reader the opportunity for reasoning on the present through the past, and drawing connections from their own experience. As Lowder wrote down that “the chaotic creative process of George R.R. Martin's controlled, which may challenge critics and readers alike, but it's also the stuff from which great literature is born” (lowder, 2012).

2.2. Femme Fatale in The Novel

‘feminist at heart’

A Song of Ice and Fire by Martin and its treatment of women is one of the most hotly debated issues in popular culture. In an interview with the Telegraph UK, George R.R. Martin called himself a “feminist at heart.” (Salter, 2013)

The story contains a series of female roles, ages, ranks, and personalities that are introduced to the readers through characters: Cersei Lannister, Catelyn Stark, Sansa Stark, Arya Stark, and Daenerys Targaryen. Characters that have desires, dreams, ambitions, and duties. Martin in his book creates a world with a focus on the growth of female characters and their impact in the story on this world. Though the world that he has created is not exactly woman-friendly, where rape and sexual violence presented threats to all the female characters, but the misery and restriction which he created lends the rich development for the female characters. He has declared in an interview with him:

“I wanted to present my female characters in great diversity, even in a society as sexist and patriarchal as the Seven King doms of Westeros. Women would find

different roles and different sonalitics, so women with different talents would find ways to work with it in a society according to who they are” (Frankel, 2014).

Through reading and diving in the females' life of the story, we can feel the sense of regarding women without deficiency as men, and as all human. The women in the story possess the strength of their own, which manifests through the various trials they face. In an interview with CBC, Martin answered a question about how he created his women: “I have always considered women to be people” (CBC, 2012). Despite the rape, torment, oppressive religious structures, and the death of family members, the female characters have found figure out ways to cope with these obstacles. Bronfen believes, “The behaviour of *the femme fatale* is seen as a tool to escape and overcome the values and restrictions of male-dominated society” (Bronfen, 2004). In fact, the relationship between women and power exposes the complex work of gender in the world of Martin. Gjelsvik states: “Martin draws on both social realism and historical fiction, turning his genre writing into pitch-black fantasy, which holds torture, terror, sexual abuse, murder, and suffering” (Gjelsvik, Schubart, 2016).

In *A Song of Ice and Fire*, femininity and fatales work as a natural resource which all characters have and draw upon. Women of Westeros realize this from birth and they are expected from them to embody it in society. The highly engaging characters like Daenerys Targaryen, when she was young, she was incapable of attaining powerful positions without a partnership with a powerful man, as Drogo gave her. But his death gave her the opportunity to be the mother of dragons. On the other hand, the sexuality in Westeros and fertility of women are considered an important element in order for them to gain power, which can be seen clearly through the character of Cersei Lannister. She used her power that she gained to preserve her family and to empowering the throne for her family.

The story is based around medieval times. The women were not even close to being thought of as equal to men. But Martin’s female characters in his book have the full characteristics of their world as queens, mothers, healers, witches and more. Martin said in an interview “I believe in great characters. We're all capable of doing great things, and of doing bad things. We have the angels and the demons inside of us, and our lives are a succession of choices” (Renfro, 2019). The events take place in a fanciful kingdom

which is called Westeros. The world of Westeros is a cruel world where everyone seems to die rather than win. This place has characters of all races, professions and social segments. The core of the story is the fighting for the throne between several noble families. One of the major ways to win is by marriage. Marriages were political and woman become an important tool, and considers as means to alliances between houses. “Myrcella is a princess. Some would say this is what she was born for” (Martin, 1998).

This position makes these women do the extreme and what they are capable of doing against all odds that men put on them. Gjelsvik states that: “But where it comes to fiction, the women of Westeros have already changed history, by engaging fantasy world where women take the lead” (Gjelsvik, Schubart, 2016). The reader is led to see, feel, and affected with the strength and depth of the female characters which have the same as intricate struggle for the Iron Throne. And how femininity runs as a natural resource for the female characters. But these female characters who show power and use their charm and wiles to gain the throne, also have a side of weakness in their emotions, which leads very few women characters who resort to get ahead or playing the game of thrones. In fact, those who play their fatale roles are often far more successful in achieving their goals than those who refuse it or do not learn how to get the advantages from it. Though most of the men believe that power resides with the most masculine figures, in the world of Westeros, the men often act like dolls or like roadblocks in the life of women. Usually men keep disregarding women around them, but in the end, women hold their powerful influence in the politics and on men.

The story has debated many issues which made it an interesting subject, especially in the social media. Considering that the social media may be considered as one of the appliances which helped both the novel and the series to reach this great success. The work continued to make a resonance on its audience, as it inspired many articles, web pages, and even critical works, which makes it very successful piece of literary work. But this great fantasy story as many critics have stated has received many counter opinions. The writer and columnist Sean T. Collins wrote in his article that the women characters in the book are:

“All the mistakes they make, all the mishaps that befall them, all the atrocities they’re subjected to, all their personal shortcomings, stacked up in stacked-deck fashion

to suggest that they're all uniquely a) caricatured on sexist grounds, and b) singled out for punishment by the author qua their womanness" (Collins, 2011).

In an answer to the question if that women like watching Game of Thrones, the publication's deputy bureau chief in New York Angela Watercutter wrote in her article that "according to statistics provided to Wired by Nielsen, approximately 2 million women are tuning in to the show on average each week – about 42 percent of Thrones' total 4.8 million viewers" (Watercutter, 2013). In an interview with The Telegraph, Emilia Clarke explained how playing the role of Daenerys Targaryen taught her more about female empowerment and her feminism "It's given me a real insight into what it feels like to be a woman who stands up to inequality and hate" (Park, 2017). "I don't know if I sympathize with her. I admire her." In that words Lena Headey described the character Cersei that she played. She added in an interview with her "I love playing Cersei. I'm very intrigued to see what happens to her! She's so layered, endlessly. Every time you think you know her, there's another depth of insecurity or fury or resentment or drive or grief" (D'addario, 2017).

Writers who create worlds of fiction and fantasy, hardly focus on the development of female characters and their involvement in the story. Masters states: "Martin dispels this narrative by placing characters that are far more human in a fantastical world that is much closer to our own" (Masters, 2012). This chapter is an attempt to prove that George R.R. Martin's contribution to show female characters, and how the theme of *femme fatale* works as an engine for the female characters of his book, like the characters: Cersei Lannister, Daenerys Targaryen, and Melisandre.

2.3. "When You Play the Game of Thrones, You Win or You Die There Is No Middle Ground" (Martin, 1996)

The idea of *the femme fatale* suggests that women can only get what they want through manipulating, artifice, and seduction rather than through making any kind of achievement. It shows that the sex which the fatale uses is a tool which makes women gain and win their way through a male world. Cersei is a kind of character that pictures the women whose employed in this kind of approach as a lifestyle, by using words above, she answered Ned Stark, warning him from what he did and what he thinks about her and her brother Jaime.

Cersei Lannister is the greatest and hardest to understand character in the book. She is the queen to the seven kingdoms in Westeros, which is the title that she has dreamt of nearly whole her life. She gained this title through her marriage with the king Robert Baratheon. She realized after a short time that the first and only love Robert was Lyanna Stark, the dead sister of Ned Stark. She entered the marriage with a hope of having love and a real relationship with her husband, yet she could not have, she lived in an empty marriage with him:

“Drink and stay quiet, the king is talking. I swear to you, I was never so alive as when I was winning this throne, or so dead as now that I’ve won it. And Cersei . . . I have Jon Arryn to thank for her. I had no wish to marry after Lyanna was taken from me, but Jon said the realm needed an heir. Cersei Lannister would be a good match, he told me, she would bind Lord Tywin to me should Viserys Targaryen ever try to win back his father’s throne.” (Martin, 1996).

Foucault describes the effect of the sexuality as a driving force of one's behaviour in his work *The History of Sexuality*: “What is peculiar to modern societies, in fact, is not that they consigned sex to a shadow existence, but that they dedicated themselves to speaking of it ad infinitum, while exploiting it as the secret” (Foucault, 1978). Foucault has seen the power as the main driving force in humans, and Martin applied this in his novel. Cersei as a woman lives and grows up on the concept of the importance of the power for both men and women. She, through all her life, pursues to increase her power in her world, and in order to do so, she does not hesitate to use a large panel of cunning strategies. In a cruel medieval world like Westeros, power is considered the only tool that can provide the safety and pleasure for people.

Cersei has the ability to influence the men around her according to her desire, whether it is money, or sex or even position. According to Foucault: “the truth of sex became something fundamental, useful, or dangerous, precious or formidable” (Foucault, 1978). Thus, her manipulation arises from her awareness of the differences in power between men and women in her society. With her son Joffrey, she endeavours to control and dominate him in order to give her the power of all the seven kingdoms in Westeros. She intended to make him king after his father's death even if he was still very young. “Robert Baratheon is dead,” his father told him. “Your nephew reigns in King’s

Landing.” That did take Tyrion aback. “My sister, you mean.” (Martin, 1996). She plants in him her evil and demonic thoughts and intentions. using him as her father did with her, she aims to rule through her son and to destroy her enemy. making him grow as a monster with a shape of king.

The main source of Cersei’s behaviour in such a way comes from being hail from a wealthy family. Among her two brothers, she has the most similarities with her father. Her pride and cruelty enhance with every passing year, along with every controlling she has over every man around her. Cersei was called a Lannister even when she was married to a Baratheon. She supported the Lannisters rather than the Baratheons as a queen or even as a mother of Joffrey. Her loyalty remained within House of Lannister. As Varga states: “The lion is without doubt the king of the animal kingdom, the rest are no match for him and he is the ultimate predator. All of these traits can be seen in Cersei as well” (Varga, 2015). Yet her father Tywin Lannister did not really love her. He used her only as an appliance to increase Lannister power, and as a means of linking House Lannister to the Crown.

Throughout the novel, she has been portrayed as the anchor that her family relies on, especially her father through to increase the power of the family by her marriage with the king. “I am Joffrey’s regent, not you, and I say that Myrcella will not be shipped off to this Dornishman the way I was shipped to Robert Baratheon” (Martin, 1998). As a family, the Lannisters go as far to seize the influence held by the city and the religious authority in Westeros. According to Foucault: “power is tolerable only on condition that it masks a substantial part of itself. Its success is proportional to an ability to hide its own mechanisms” (Foucault, 1978), the Lannisters go beyond the limits applied by the religious authorities in town, beside all the deception and killing that the family did to reach the throne and satisfy their lust for strength.

As Foucault states in his book *The History of Sexuality*: “The essential point is that sex was not only a matter of sensation and pleasure, of law and taboo, but also of truth and falsehood, that the truth of sex became something fundamental, useful, or dangerous, precious or formidable” (Foucault, 1978), the sexuality of Cersei in this meaning works as an effective path to power. Foucault through his works has argued that there is a certain dynamic power related to knowledge, and the people who had

power impacted on the knowledge, and in the end this dynamic has an influence on sexuality. Cersei knows that and uses it for her entire life, she had her own knowledge of how she can use her sexuality with the many male characters around her, in order to win the throne.

Despite that, through all the story, Cersei does not wear armour or fight to win, she uses her manipulation to do. According to Foucault: “The essential point is that sex was not only a matter of sensation and pleasure... the truth of sex became something fundamental, useful, or dangerous, precious or formidable” (Foucault, 1978). Cersei as a *fatale* was aware of the power of sex. She uses her sexual power over her husband Robert Baratheon and her brother Jaime Lannister. She is not ashamed to seduce men to get her way, she even attempts with Ned:

“She put her hand on his good leg, just above the knee. “A true man does what he will, not what he must.”...Her hand touched his face, his hair. “If friends can turn to enemies, enemies can become friends. Your wife is a thousand leagues away, and my brother has fled. Be kind to me, Ned. I swear to you. You shall never regret it.” (Martin, 1996).

Moreover, Cersei also has a sexual relationship with Osney Kettleblack. She seduces him in order to revenge on Margaery Tyrell. Even if he was only a man of the guards of Westeros, she used him against her enemies, without any consideration of her feelings or his or even anyone's. As Jaime describes Cersei in the fourth book *A Feast for Crows* “Cersei is a lying whore, she’s been fucking Lancel and Osmund Kettleblack and probably Moon Boy for all I know” (Martin, 2005). Cersei seems to run circles around men in King's Landing, even if those men happen to be related to her like her husband and brother. The wicked queen is a good name that reflects her bad intentions, and her will to orchestrating the horribleness one after another in Westeros.

Even her name, Martin chooses this name Cersei that may possibly “inspired from the Greek sorceress, Circe” (Baby Names, 1996). Martin through this character depicted *the femme fatale* in its full aspects. Cersei in her traditionally feminine style, her flowing and wavy hair, colourful gowns are all meant to influence the men around her. She uses the fear response of people around her to control them. Gloria Makjanić wrote about Cersei in her article “Although Cersei’s potential is mostly overlooked by

the men in her life, she is shown to be very good at pulling the strings behind the scenes and manipulating things to go her way” (Makjanić, 2018). She is considered as a hateful woman. Her motivations are not good, and her actions lead to the pain and suffering of others. She devotes her sexuality to being her source of power, and it was her only source that she has at that time. “You little fool. Tears are not a woman’s only weapon. You’ve got another one between your legs, and you’d best learn to use it. You’ll find men use their swords freely enough. Both kinds of swords.” (Martin, 1998).

Unlike other female characters, she always puts her needs first and destroys anyone and anything that stands in her way. May this behaviour has cost her sometimes, yet it helped her many times. She plans for the death of Robert very well. She knows how to manipulate him even from a distance. She lies, cheats, and murders to reach to her way to gain the throne, as Bronfen states: “She entertains a narcissistic pleasure at the deployment of her own ability to dupe the men who fall for her, even as she is merciless in manipulating them for her own ends” (Bronfen, 2004). Though her actions are not justified, she may have done them as a way to conceal her inner sense of deep frangibility. Her mother died when she was four years old, and her father was Lord Tywin Lannister the richest man in the Seven Kingdoms who put her into a loveless marriage with the king.

The only way that Cersei was able to rebel against everything was through engaging in a romantic relationship with her brother. As Foucault referred in his theory that the Power and knowledge are not independent entities but inextricably related, Cersei uses her knowledge of her world and the needs of men around her to reinforce her position in the society, and gain more power over everyone. As a result, these two relationships made her the wealthiest, most powerful, and invincible female character in Westeros. Cersei was aware of the common disapproval of her relationship with her brother, so she kept it in secret even from her own children Joffrey, Tommen and Myrcella who are Jaime's children. She did what she could do to keep their relationship covert. Her hiding of her relationship led her to arrange for the deaths of John Arran and Lord Stark.

Moreover, Cersei is the real epitome of *the femme fatale* in the novel. Elhallaq states: “Despite the different portrayals of *the femme fatale* in literature, two of the key

features are always associated to her: a refusal to submit to conventional rules controlling the man-woman relationship, and she is amoral or beyond the common tradition of morality” (Elhallaq, 2015). Yet the relationship between her and King Robert is a kind of dominance and submission. With all her power and commands, yet her husband Robert has the ability to command her. “How many times must I tell you to hold your tongue, woman?” Cersei’s face was a study in contempt. “What a jape the gods have made of us two,” she said. “By all rights, you ought to be in skirts and me in mail.” (Martin, 1996). This portrays her as bitter woman lives without love towards her husband.

Furthermore, she hopes that may find the king the one who would give her love, yet he did not. In her explicit confession to Ned Stark, she describes the adoration of her husband to Lyanna: “The night of our wedding feast, the first time we shared a bed, he called me by your sister’s name... He whispered Lyanna.” (Martin. 1996). This conception throughout the novel displays the bitter relationship with her husband. All these facts in her life increase her greed to reach the power. But along the way, with her continuous attempts to hide that weakness from others, she loses her sense of her humanity. She cares not about her duties or her role as a queen. The only thing she loves and cares about was her children. Her love to her children means to her more than anything or anyone in Westeros. Lena Headey, the actress who played the role of Cersei Lannister said in an interview about what is most admire in Cersei: “I’ve always said that she loves her children beyond all reason – and she never, ever gives up. If she was in a fight with a tiger, she would just stay there until it gave up. So, I admire that. Her tenacity” (Maitland, 2019).

Cersei is considered as the most notorious bad character in the novel. She engages the audience with her extraordinary cruelty and her lack to the moral motivation, as Tyrion describes her: “She is greedy. Greedy for power, for honor, for love.” (Martin, 2011). She can be seen as the major fatale character in this fantasy story, gathering many of the characteristics of *the femme fatale* in literature whether her own character, or her perverse relationships with people around her. Although she was unable to take the Iron Throne for herself, yet she uses her influence on whoever does, as this influence represents her best thing she can do as a fatale character. She has all the advantages when

it comes to find the people who will support her, and control them easily, especially the close men around her in Westeros.

Under all circumstances, she played her part in order to gain all the advantages around her. Impacted the emotions of women and men toward her in a way, to stabilization more of power to her and to win the game of thrones. Her personality, her actions, her strength, and character development, make her one of the dangerous and successful characters in the first book.

2.4. “Tell Khan Drogo That He Has Given Me The Wind” (Martin, 1996)

As the basic logic for Foucault is power, the basic logic in this novel is also power. Foucault in his book *The History of Sexuality* clarifies that “Power is everywhere; not because it embraces everything, but because it comes from everywhere” (Foucault, 1978), Martin used this meaning in building the characters of the novel, who seek to reach the power in diverse ways. Through his story, Martin has created some striking and remarkable female roles. He made some of the most complex and cruel female characters in fantasy literature. The world of Westeros built like a reflection of how a world of high fantasy work that humans running it.

Daenerys is an expatriate queen that never saw her country. She starts out her story in the novel as a 13 years old girl. She was raised by her brother Viserys Targaryen, the son of the dead Aerys Targaryen and true heir to the Iron Throne. Viserys constantly keeps telling that they must return home and take what is theirs. Daenerys is similar to Cersei, used as an intermediary for political alliance. in order to gain army and return home, he sold her to Kahl Drogo. Her brother tells her, “And if you must wed him and bed him for that, you will.” He smiled at her. “I’d let his whole khalasar fuck you if need be, sweet sister, all forty thousand men, and their horses too if that was what it took to get my army” (Martin, 1996). Daenerys who is called also Dany accepts this by coercion. “she has no choice but to conform to them because those are the notions Viserys... and many of the harmful ideas that come with it” (Varga, 2015). She suffers from forced marriage, rape and persecution.

After time with Drogo, her relationship with the Khal turns to be love. She becomes bold, and she starts to take command in her daily life. With a help of her handmaidens, she starts to control her sexual life too. With such a power, she starts losing her fear for her abusive brother. Dany has three dragon eggs which were given to her as a wedding present. She is attracted to them from the first moment she touches them:

“Irri fetched the egg with the deep green shell, bronze flecks shining amid its scales as she turned it in her small hands. Dany curled up on her side, pulling the sandsilk cloak across her and cradling the egg in the hollow between her swollen belly and small, tender breasts. She liked to hold them. They were so beautiful, and sometimes just being close to them made her feel stronger, braver, as if somehow she were drawing strength from the stone dragons locked inside” (Martin, 1996).

Foucault argues through his theory that power is inherent in all social relations in all its different shapes, whether in the family or in the hierarchies of government and any other social institutions. Daenerys has been used by her brother to make his dream true and win the power, but in the same way she used her power to revenge on him. Strongly motivated by a desire for equality and justice, she does not even feel sorrow after Khal Drogo kills her brother by melted gold on his head. She always thinks that even when her brother has the only dream of taking back the kingdom, he is not yet an effective leader. “He was no dragon, Dany thought, curiously calm. Fire cannot kill a dragon” (Martin, 1996).

Daenerys is the only woman who is completely independent in the story. Her role can be understood as the combination of feminine beauty and masculine power. Throughout the novel, she controls her actions. She learns how to use her sex with men. Considering it her own way to change and progress in her future, she accepts the whole new culture and language of Drogo and uses herself as a means that gives her influence over her husband. Her control over her sexuality with Drogo might actually be what gives her the power to not fear, and allows her to begin speaking up for herself as a Khaleesi which make a large-scale change. We are told in the novel that she feels elicits the power from her husband, “Dany kissed him lightly on the cheek. It heartened her to

see him smile. I must be strong for him as well, she thought grimly. A knight he may be, but I am the blood of the dragon” (Martin, 1998).

Foucault’s concept of power argues that all social relations are relations of power, and sex can be used as a tool to win that, as he states: “Sex -that agency which appears to dominate us and that secret which seems to underlie all that we are, that point which enthrals us through the power it manifests and the meaning it conceals” (Foucault, 1978). Accordingly, Daenerys through the time she spends with Dothraki, she learns the importance of sex, power, and violence which are intertwined in this culture. Wherefore, she gains through her relationship with Drogo and her sexual control over him the advantage of creating an opportunity for herself in the world, “She turns something that had previously been used against her into an advantage, taking the power away from her oppressor” (Reeves, 2017).

Likewise, Renfro sees that: “Daenerys Targaryen is one of the most brilliantly complicated fictional characters ever written precisely because of the way we were rooting for her — and how that admiration was flipped to horror when we saw what the Mother of Dragons was capable of” (Renfro, 2019). She has a spiritual bond with the three dragon eggs from the first moment when they were only stones. She felt their power, and did not want to lose a source of power in her life. When Drogo dies due to black magic, her power becomes nothing. In the funeral of Drogo with the dragon eggs under the effect of fire, she became the mother of dragons. She considered them as her children from the moment the dragons hatched from the eggs. They have been treated as an ensure survival for her, and giving her indefinite power. Her attraction to them is integral part from her attracted to power. She knew that the use of her dragons can give her more political power. They helped her along her road, yet the dragons are only a small part of who she has become.

According to Foucault: “the great confinement on the one hand; the correct training on the other” (Foucault, 1975). Accordingly, Daenerys’ special skill was adapting to every environment she lives with and learning from her previous lessons. “If I look back I am lost” (Martin, 1996). Dany had turn into fearless leader, continues her dominance through every city she conquers. Though gained control over her clan, yet still an inconsequential power. She becomes more and more harsh and by the time, as

Varga describes her, “suffers from excessive pride or, as the Greeks call it, hubris” (Varga, 2015). She plans to go back to Westeros and face her enemies.

In order to get that, she uses every man around her to expand her control. Ser Jorah Mormont, who had sworn to her, he also has strong feelings to her. He respected and admired her. Although she knew that, she used it for her own benefit. “I am his queen, but I will always be his cub as well, and he will always guard me. It made her feel safe, but sad as well. She wished she could love him better than she did” (Martin, 1998). She could not love him, yet she used his love in the way she wanted. As Foucault states that sexuality: “is doubtless but an ideal point made necessary by the deployment of sexuality and its operation” (Foucault, 1978). So, like the way she loved Drogo, Ser Jorah is another character that she utilizes to get power and win the throne.

Aside with Ser Jorah, another man that Daenerys took the advantage of being with him, he was Daario. Daenerys used his license to kill to provide her the feeling of being save with power:

“Daario Naharis was flamboyant even for a Tyroshi. His beard was cut into three prongs and dyed blue, the same colour as his eyes and the curly hair that fell to his collar. His pointed mustachios were painted gold... his doublet was sewn with brass medallions in the shape of dandelions, and ornamental goldwork crawled up his high leather boots to his thighs. Gloves of soft yellow suede were tucked into a belt of gilded rings, and his fingernails were enameled blue” (Martin, 2000).

His admiration to Daenerys’ beauty, put him in an illusion of love. Daenerys was infatuated with him, yet she knew than she cannot never marry him. Again and like what she did with Drogo, she used her sexuality, beauty, and position to manipulate him according to her needs. Whether that needs were physical, or for her advantages “it is undeniable that her strength and power rely on the willingness of men around her” (Varga, 2015).

Her pursuit to power made her using her body, wealth, attract, and name on men, as her advantage and special way in the world of kings and warriors. Despite the great differences between Daenerys and Cersei which can be seen in their dealing with being

the queen of Westeros, yet their similarities took place the fatale character, and how the directed the man around them only for their own interests.

2.5. Melisandre

“Her deep voice flavored with the music of the Jade Sea. As ever, she wore red head to heel, a long loose gown of flowing silk as bright as fire, with dagged sleeves and deep slashes in the bodice that showed glimpses of a darker blood-red fabric beneath. Around her throat was a red-gold choker tighter than any maester’s chain, ornamented with a single great ruby. Her hair was not the orange or strawberry color of common red-haired men, but a deep burnished copper that shone in the light of the torches. Even her eyes were red . . . but her skin was smooth and white, unblemished, pale as cream. Slender she was, graceful, taller than most knights, with full breasts and narrow waist and a heart-shaped face. Men’s eyes that once found her did not quickly look away, not even a maester’s eyes. Many called her beautiful. She was not beautiful. She was red, and terrible, and red” (Martin, 1998).

Melisandre is a very interesting and multifaceted character, that shares with the other characters the battle for the Iron Throne in the novel. She represents the classic *femme fatale* archetype, with her dark red robe, red lipstick, red shoes, and other trappings “more commonly known as the Red Witch, or Red Lady” (McKay, 2018). As the characters of Martin behave ambiguously, Melisandre blends heroism with obsequiousness. She is a mysterious woman who heeds her sensuality, and bewitches men, “one of the few characters who possesses genuine magical abilities” (Baird, 2017). She is a wise woman and has the ability to see the future in the flames. Melisandre is more opportunistic than the others fatale characters. Like Cersei, she is strong but she gains her apparent power as a seducing woman. She is assiduous to use her sexuality and serve men to gain her target, motivations, and powers.

Foucault clarifies in his book *The History of Sexuality* “Sexual activity was located within the ... parameters of life and death, of time ... and eternity” (Foucault, 1978)³⁶, which is considered as a basic concept for *the femme fatale* characters. Melisandre is a representative of the priestess, who uses her very plotting power to influence nobles. As a fatale woman, she uses all her seductive power to charm Stannis.

This lust for strength and authority goes as far to Melisandre even trying to seize the influence held by the Stannis and the religious authority in that place.

Melisandre through the story has mysterious origins, unclear when or how she had magic, which can even be a mystery to herself. She conceals her desires, remains attempting to surpass of what society sees acceptable in order to gain power over her body and on men in a twisted dirty way, as she performs most of her acts while she is nude. She controls men when she sees their desire and their fear from her. Melisandre is a priestess and she possesses a religious power, yet becomes a parody of religious and political power instead of embodying it. She lacks usual wisdom. Though she is gifted with great powers of prophesy and all her magical superiority, but she totally misunderstands her role. Baird states, “Melisandre's problem is that she has trouble interpreting the visions. This is because she is trying to make the visions match her own desires, rather than seeing them objectively” (Baird, 2017). She gets everything completely wrong in her prophesies. She represents the damages of organizing religion and cult practices which may be translated by some as Martin’s intention.

Melisandre was taken from her mother hundreds of years ago when she was a child. She has been sold to the Red Temple of R'hllor. Her real purpose was finding Azor Ahai and beating the Great Other. She saw in Stannis Baratheon the geed expedient to fulfil her goals, and he is destined to defeat the Great Other, which represents the antithesis of her god. She is a kind of character who is willing to do everything to win her cause. “My brother is young and strong, and he has a vast host around him, and these rainbow knights of his. Melisandre has gazed into the flames, and seen him dead.” (Martin, 1998). The effect of her visions on Stannis and his dictions makes him look like a haunted person in the eyes of his people, especially Ser Davos. Martin shows her independent vision and power when he states in an interview “Melisandre has gone to Stannis entirely on her own, and has her own agenda” (Reddit, 2020).

In order to make Stannis win, she gave him counsels from the lord of light. She charmed and controlled him completely, and took part in every aspect of his life leaving him to conceive that the world’s survival depends on the choices that she makes. She made him do whatever it takes to wins, even solicited him to kill his younger brother. “Devan said the king scarcely slept of late...Only the Lady Melisandre can soothe him

to sleep.” Is that why she shares his pavilion now? Davos wondered. To pray with him?” (Martin, 1998). As an audience, we see the fatale woman despite she despises the societal constraints, is often rewarded for her ambition, and delights in a highly performative sexualised femininity. Here, her magic and her control over Stannis made her seen like the Lady Macbeth of Shakespeare's tragedy Macbeth. Both fatale's intentions were to do whatever it take to reach what they want, without taking care of the consequences of what they have make.

William Shakespeare and Martin both as unparalleled writers, connect the reader with the story on a deeply personal level, which leads the reader to be affected by the behaviour of the characters. Lady Macbeth was a young woman without prophetic powers, yet she sides with the Witches, and uses her seductive power over her husband to make him do such wicked deeds. On other hand, Melisandre also has that charm qualities which captivate in a courtly way. But not like Lady Macbeth, she is a real witch. Lady Macbeth like Melisandre, plays her role as the seductive woman, instigates evil deeds by using her sexually charged language. Fraser sees the connection of both characters in the following quotation: “Melisandre is part-Three Witches, part-Lady Macbeth, as she not only shares the vision that starts Stannis’ doomed Iron Throne campaign, but she also ensures that he follows through” (Fraser, 2019).

By using her magic, she breeds two shadow monster. One of them kills the rival and brother Renly. She creates a force of evil which enables Stannis to win “she uses her verbal charms to dominate over him and propel him further towards his destruction” (Elhallaq, 2015). She speaks to every man she meets with a glamor, in an attempt to gain power over them. Even with Ser Davos, she tries to apply her wizardry on him, to make him like Stannis and like others “I can smell the fear on you, ser knight,” the red woman said softly. “Someone once told me the night is dark and full of terrors. And tonight I am no knight. Tonight I am Davos the smuggler again. Would that you were an onion.” She laughed. “Is it me you fear? Or what we do?” “What you do. I’ll have no part of it.” (Martin,1998).

Throughout the entire plot, it is clear that all the families are trying to fight their way to the throne with the power, with the purpose of securing their families and beloved. Yet Melisandre is aloof character, she fights others in her pursuit to gain power.

Power that she saw in the shape of the lord of the light, which as she states, he has the power of all. As Foucault hypothesized in his theory of power that the power does not take only one form, but many given forms of power can cohabit alongside with each other: “Power insofar as it is permanent, repetitious, inert, and self-reproducing, is simply the over-all effect that emerges from all these mobilities, the concatenation that rests on each of them and seeks in turn to arrest their movement” (Foucault, 1978). In this context, Melisandre repeatedly uses her natural power of being a *femme fatale*, and the power of the religion to reach an advance position and gain the power over others.

As Martin declares she is the most misunderstood character “Maybe Melisandre” (Reddit, 2020). She can be considered as a stray character. In a different way from other *fatale* characters, despite her control over Stannis and others but she gains nothing. Her ambition to defeat the Great Other also gave her nothing. It can be seen as she used Stannis for her destinations, he in return uses her to have power and reach the throne. He used her to increase his power in return and to fulfil her prophecy that she saw between the flames. Despite the fact that Melisandre may seem different from the other *fatale* characters in this novel, yet she has all the qualities that make her seem as a traditional *femme fatale*, substantially and fundamentally.

These three female characters of *A Song of Ice and Fire* very well portray the different aspects of *the femme fatale* character. They are very thirsty for having power, whatever the way that they use to have it. Power represents as their destination, and their road to reach it is by using their sexual seducing over men around them. All the three characters manipulate men around them only to gain power and satisfy their own desire of controlling men, and using them as a tool according to their own wishes. Their behaviour reflects Foucault theory of the effect of sex, as he states: “The essential point is that sex was not only a matter of sensation and pleasure, of law and taboo, but also of truth and falsehood, that the truth of sex became something fundamental, useful, or dangerous, precious or formidable: in short, that sex was constituted as a problem of truth” (Foucault, 1978). *The femme fatale* characters of *A song of Ice and Fire* use their feminine wiled only to reach the point of having power over others in the society of Westeros.

CHAPTER THREE

THE PORTRAYAL OF THE FEMME FATALE IN *THE HANDMAID'S TALE* BY MARGRET ATWOOD

“Atwood is our high sorceress, a very grownup one, with a truly unnerving knack for auspicious timing. Her best work combines psychological acuity with audacious curiosity; she is as good at recreating the politics of the playground. She is both deadly serious and surprisingly playful, and it is to her that readers have turned as a way of making sense of the world” (Allardice, 2019).

Margaret Eleanor Atwood is a Canadian author born in 1939. She has been considered as one of the superior writers and the most popular one in Canada. In her childhood, she writes morality plays, poems, comic books. By the age of the teen, she started writing poetry. Later she took her Master's degree in 1962 at Radcliffe College, Massachusetts. She has been work as a full-time writer since 1972, then she holds a variety of academic positions. Malek states: “Her first publication was a book of poetry *Double Persephone* in 1961, and later *The Circle Game* (1964), which received the Governor General's Literary Award for Poetry (Canada)” (Malek, 2020). Atwood in addition to her writing of poetry, she is a very famous novelist, short stories and critical studies writer. Her major works have been translated into over thirty languages.

Atwood best known for her novels. While she was analysing the contemporary civilian life and sexual politics, she created quite strong and complex women characters. Like “*the Handmaid's Tale* 1986, *Alias Grace* 1996, *The Blind Assassin* 2000, and *Oryx and Crake* 2003” (Malek, 2020). The main reason that stands behind the great success of her works is the divide between literary fiction and genre fiction, and her use of the gothic fiction, also she has discussed other political and philosophical themes in her works, in addition to her concern for human rights in the recent years. In an interview with her, she declares:

“I suffer more vicious attacks, more personal attacks, in Canada, because that's where I'm from” (Morris, 1990).

Her fictional portrayals gave a very wide attention to wide topics. Fallon states: “Atwood’s adept style renders the grim atmosphere of the future quite palpably. But the didacticism of the novel wears thin; the book is simply too obvious to support its fictional context. Still, Atwood is quite an esteemed fiction writer, the author of such well-received novels” (Fallon, 2017). Many feminist critics have praised her works for her portrayal of women's inequality within society, the relations between the sexes, motherhood, and relations between women. In fact, many feminists have used her writing as a product of the movement, as the position of women was considered an issue in most of her works. Topics like the women’s rights and their role in the society, the positivity and negativity of technology on people around the world have been always considered as topics which preoccupied her. As Dickson states in her article *A Woman's Worst Nightmare* about Atwood:

“She writes that when she asked a male friend why men feel threatened by women, he answered, "They are afraid women will laugh at them." When she asked a group of women why they feel threatened by men, they said, "We're afraid of being killed” (Dickson, 1996).

The Handmaid’s Tale is considered as the novel that brought Atwood to the literary stardom, which became “the bestselling classic feminist text” (Bjerke, 2008). *The Handmaid’s Tale* has sold millions of copies worldwide and has appeared in staggering numbers of translations and editions. McIntosh states in an article as: “The novel was so highly anticipated” (Boyd, C., Lewis, J. & McIntosh, A. 2019). The novel also has been adapted into a film, opera, a television series, and other media.

Throughout this novel, Atwood as a writer reframes the world into a story which describes a totalitarian regime of America in the future. Her science fiction which many critics show its distinction from the real world and events, yet still a fiction that works to reflect out the real crimes against humanity. This translates Atwood's idea of challenging the systems of power, and gives voice to whom are voiceless. In his article, Delany wrote “Miss Atwood, at 33, has thereby outsoared her previous status as a widely-respected younger poet, author of five volumes of verse; she has become the literary standard-bearer of a resurgence of nativism and nationalism in Canada, eclipsing established Canadian writers of more cosmopolitan outlook” (Delany, 1998).

This chapter is an attempt to enter Atwood's world through the characters of the novel *The Handmaid's Tale*, which is different from the world that Martin has created, and discover how she portrays *the femme fatale* archetype in this story in a different way from the previous story.

3.1. The Concept of Femme Fatale in The Novel

“It’s impossible to say a thing exactly the way it was, because what you say can never be exact, you always have to leave something out, there are too many parts, sides, crosscurrents, nuances; too many gestures, which could mean this or that, too many shapes which can never be fully described, too many flavors, in the air or on the tongue, half-colors, too many. But if you happen to be a man, sometime in the future, and you’ve made it this far, please remember: you will never be subject to the temptation or feeling you must forgive, a man, as a woman” (Atwood, 1986, P:126).

Many contemporary novelists have devoted some of their works to reflecting this horrible world we live in. And Atwood is one of the novelists that is concerned with demonstrating that women are oppressed in Western society, and their options are very limited. As an environmental activist and a member of the Canadian Green party and joint honorary president of the Rare Bird Club, Atwood has some ability to clarify some sides of irresponsibility in our world.

The Handmaid's Tale is the most explicit one among her novels in her protest against the mistreatment of women in society. *The Handmaid's Tale* has become the most resonant novel of Atwood. The reason behind that is its substantiation to the importance of the feminist issue, and the women's identity. According to Fallon:

“Atwood has said in the past that *The Handmaid's Tale* was written to answer the question: if there was a totalitarian regime in the US what form would it take? The Testaments sets out to show how such a regime collapses. What makes them turn into something else? What makes them fall apart?” (Fallon, 2017).

Atwood through this story, has presented to the readers the compulsory of the question and rejection of the current patriarchal stance and the intention to silence women, and reject social and biological roles. The story of the novel is set in the Republic of Gilead, which has been established by a movement calling itself the Sons

of Jacob. After nuclear war and while the world-wide pollution spreads, the laws of Gilead have been set forming from teachings of Bible. The government of this society takes the extreme in order to step to disenfranchise women. Women regardless of their status, become enslaved to men according to their ability to bear children, yet they are denied from their duties of motherhood. These women start working as maids for their masters and commanders while depriving them of their individuality and all privacy. They work only to gratify their masters' sexual desires as application for the situated law of Gilead. Women are only capable of ovulation and insemination.

In an interview with Atwood, she mentioned:

“When I first began thinking about *The Handmaid’s Tale* way back in 1981’ – that’s interesting: apparently I was thinking about it as early as 1981 – ‘I thought it was a very strange sort of book for me to be writing. Also I was afraid people would think it was merely paranoid. Like many books, *The Handmaid’s Tale* began with the question, What if? I guess I was tired of having people say, ‘It can’t happen here.’” (Penguin, 2019).

The scientific and technological advancements that took place during the twentieth century allowed humans to become quite devastating, whether to the planet and to themselves. In *The Handmaid’s Tale*, Atwood foretells dystopian future of the political and social power by utilization women only to breed children, ignoring their human basic rights. Where all women who have taken from their families considered as only capable of ovulation and insemination, “There is no such thing as a sterile man anymore, not officially. There are only women who are fruitful and women who are barren, that’s the law” (Atwood, 1986). These facts which make the novel not seen far from reality, and what already happened in the real world.

The laws of Gilead are formed from the teachings of the Bible. They treated women as subhuman. Women are not allowed to read or to vote, or even to have a normal life. The young heroine of the novel feels caught in the sex role trap that she has been dragged to, and she has to break it or risk losing her identity and self-respect. The biggest fear in Gilead is the waking of women and fight for their will and freedom against men. Making woman restricted between only two choices: disciplined or punished. There is no other choice for them. Their lives have been already decided how and with who, and

in which circumstances they should live, and being only what they want from them which is being maids for them.

Furthermore, through the behaviour of the power of Gilead, it can be seen that men are afraid of what women can do. Their application of their power on women denote that they are not powerful after all. The novel shows how this repressive system and social structures and practices used women against the women, or what is called the aunts to lead the maids, which leads to the complicity of many female characters against each other, and make them seem as a weapon works against each other. Maqbool referred in her article to the symbolism which the novel suggests: “This tale represents modern woman’s predicament of being exploited and isolated because of the forced role imposed on her by society and her foremost fear of being used and rendered helpless by male authority” (Maqbool, 2015).

The bad treatment in Gilead of the women in *The Handmaid’s Tale* represents a permanent horror. According to Gray, the novel: “As a cautionary tale, Atwood’s novel lacks the direct, chilling plausibility of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and *Brave New World*. It warns against too much: heedless sex, excessive morality, chemical and nuclear pollution. All of these may be worthwhile targets, but such a future seems more complicated than dramatic” (Delany, 1998). Despite the above portrayal of the role of women in the story in the society of Gilead, there are some characters that have source of power. Like the Aunts in the story which may have power as much if not maybe more than the commanders have. These characters with their power represent *the femme fatale* archetype in the novel. Their using of their power over men and women makes them act as the force of evil of the world.

The Handmaid’s Tale with its unfamiliar topic attracted the attention of all women, whether writers, critics, feminists or the like. It became as a central discussion topic on website blogs of women around the world. Also *The Handmaid’s Tale* as a story unveils the unseen ways that affect us as women and as human beings in this world. Elhallaq states: “The various manifestations of *the femme fatale* both in literature and in mythology are somewhat more complex. She may appear as a high society lady, bejeweled and surrounded by wealthy people; on the other hand, she may appear as a low class woman or girl who is striving to change her living style” (Elhallaq, 2015).

In this chapter, there will be clarifying details of how Atwood shows *the femme fatale* archetype in this story. Through the most powerful women characters like: The Commander's wife Serena Joy and Aunt Lydia.

3.2. “The Tension Between Her Lack of Control and Her Attempt to Suppress It Is Horrible” (Atwood, 1986)

She is known as the Commander's Wife. Serena Joy is a woman unable to have children. Before Gilead, she was a famous singer for her emotional music on television. She was also used to give advices about how suppose the women to be as housewives. In order to get a child, she had Offred's services. Offred with these words above, describes Serena Joy's behaviour, and how she had a part in creating this policy of this society.

Serena Joy can be seen as the most poignant puzzle in the novel, and might be the most complex character in the entire book. She is like a combination of power, oppression, and pain. She inflicts pain on others, and sometimes others inflict it on her. During the novel, we can see that Serena has been an advocate for traditional values, and even she uses her power to activate the idea that inspired a puritanical movement that created Gilead. Pushed because of her inability to conceive and being without a child, her desire to create such a world comes from her awareness of her unsteady position in the society. This explains her frustration throughout the novel.

The power of Serena through the events of the story over other women reflects the Foucault theory of power, as he shows in the following words: “We are informed that if repression has indeed been the fundamental link between power, knowledge, and sexuality since the classical age, it stands to reason that we will not be able to free ourselves from it except at a considerable cost” (Foucault, 1978). Her harshness with both men and women, makes her the perfect tool to represent the social oppression of Gilead. She works to satisfy her own needs, ignoring her natural feminine role, and defying the patriarchal system that defined women role in taking care for husband and children. “Despite her apparently submissive status as a Wife, there is a harsh toughness and masculinity about Serena Joy. She lacks femininity...unlike her husband, has no weakness of ‘nature's norms’ and therefore no susceptibility” (Husseini, 2017).

According to Foucault, “it is the moving substrate of force relations which, by virtue of their inequality, constantly engender states of power, but the latter are always local and unstable” (Foucault, 1978). Serena is the maker of the values which became law in Gilead. The social system which relies upon the idea of making willingness of women to oppress other women. She is more an architect of Gilead than Fred. Her speeches about the holiness of the home and the role of women at home were only words “putting women in their “right” places – taking care of household, kitchen or beds of influential men” (Šefčíková, 2018). Serena does not do what she herself said or describe.

Serena is depicted as an antithetical woman character, who simply wants to make women within a society as her own vision of the place of women in the world. Her own description did not fit her, since she does not have the possibility even to have children. Instead, she only made speeches for what others should do, as the novel describes her:

“She wasn’t singing anymore by then. she was making speeches. She was good at it. Her speeches were about the sanctity of the home, about how women should stay home. Serena Joy didn’t do this herself, she made speeches instead, but she presented this failure of hers as a sacrifice she was making for the good of all” (Atwood, 1986).

In spite of having arthritis, she lacks of sympathy with anyone, “She can be compared to the wicked stepmother of fairy tales” (Laurea, 2018). As a fatale character, she does not see herself as a bad character, even if she does hurt other women’s lives. As Foucault argues through his work *Discipline and Punish* how the new methods of power do not work according to what makes power effective and accepted, the society that Serena helped to create was forcing the handmaid to be in a sexual relation with the Commander under the eyes of the Commander’s wife. In fact, the only work of the maid is to bring a child for the commander, as Šefčíková states: “because of Serena’s inability to conceive, every two years there is a young woman coming to live in her house to have sex with her husband every month, while she is watching” (Šefčíková, 2018).

Foucault in his work *Discipline and Punish* seeks to analyse punishment in its social context. He analyses through the book how the torture was considered as a part of most investigations. According to Foucault, the main goal of the institutions was to make power operate more efficiently. This scenario in many ways is similar to the one in *The Handmaid’s Tale* in the sides of domination and subjugation of the maids. Where the

government of Gilead to make sweeping changes to law, in order to make a societal domination. Continuously, Serena with all her arrogance, she forces Offred to be under her command. Despite it was an insulting process to her, she watches Offred with her husband in a sexual interaction, with a sense of anger and control: “It has nothing to do with passion or love or romance or any of those other notions we used to titillate ourselves with. It has nothing to do with sexual desire, at least for me, and certainly not for Serena” (Atwood, 1986).

Her desire to create the world that she wants, makes her blind towards other's suffering, controlling their lives as dolls. Offred describes her as follows: “Serena Joy lets go of my hands. “You can get up now,” she says...There is loathing in her voice, as if the touch of my flesh sickens and contaminates her... she continues lying on the bed, gazing up at the canopy above her, stiff and straight as an effigy.” (Atwood, 1986). Also, her sense of control over the other's life shown when she convinces Offred to have a sex relationship with the household's driver Nick, in order to make her get pregnant when the Commander could not, “she despises Offred and barely communicates with her” (Laurea, 2018). She uses her only to strength her advantages by having a child, which was considered as a power in Gilead's society. Her insistence to do what she want to do has made her lose her sticking of the laws of Gilead. The vision of Serena of making an ideal world cannot be without the existence of Gilead, and at the same time Gilead cannot exist without Serena Joy's vision and desire for making such a world.

Though she manipulates her husband and encourages him to make this society which will serve what she seeking to, this sexist society divested her from power and forced her in the role of the good wife. This change in power effects on her relationship clearly with her husband. The imbalance that she felt after being excluded her from being an effective member in Gilead destroyed their relationship. According to Elhallaq, she “understands that she challenges the conventional norms and values of the society, therefore, enters into it by performing the role of the domestic woman that fits the values, to serve her own purposes of economic autonomy and social advancement” (Elhallaq, 2015).

Foucault's concept of power argues that all social relationships seek power only. He argues that power is inherent in all social relations, in the social institutions, or within

the families. In this story, Serena as a fatale character uses her husband as a stair only to reach her goal of having power. The concept of *the femme fatale* as Farrimond states: “it is important to acknowledge that this range is by no means infinite, and is shaped by its industrial and cultural context” (Farrimond, 2018). Despite all her power that she gained more than any of the other women and her ability to control others’ life, Serena’s antifeminist causes her not getting her way and her wishes as much as she thought she would:

“A man is just a woman's strategy for making other women. Not that your father wasn't a nice guy and all, but... there's something missing in them, even the nice ones. It's like they're permanently absent-minded, like they can't quite remember who they are... They aren't a patch on a woman except they're better at fixing cars and playing football, just what we need for the improvement of the human race, right?” (Atwood, 1986).

Serena Joy as a fatale character in this novel, she manipulates her husband when she convinces him of the idea of being with a maid only to have a child, as she convinces him to destroy others’ lives and control them according only to their desires. She helps him to develop this idea to become as complete society. Serena, despite she does not seem using her body seducing over others, she uses her own ways to control her husband. Moreover, even when her husband starts to feel some emotions towards Offred or other women, he could not leave her. He seems to be afraid of her power over him, and she has the ability to destroy him and end his progress. Serena controls him completely in a way that he may seem as a toy to her and she plays him as she wants.

In this context, Serena can be seen similar to *the femme fatale* character of Amy in *Gone Girl*. Both characters’ behaviour reflects their control over their husbands according to their needs and social appearance. They both plot revenge on their husbands. Yvonne Strahovski who played Serena joy’s character in the TV series, describes Serena in an interview with Matt Grobar:

“She’s now such a despicable person, but where did that come from? I didn’t ever think that it started in that sort of despicable way. It felt like she was always trying to focus on an issue: Humanity is at stake. Our human race is going to be extinct if we keep going down this path, so what can we do about it? I think she was incredibly

passionate about inspiring women to keep with their biology and focus purely on that” (Grobar, 2018).

The suffering of so many women around her is caused by her own ideas. In fact, characters like Serena represent like the bond that binds Gilead. The journalist Rapana states a quote of Atwood: “We still think of a powerful man as a born leader and a powerful woman as an anomaly” (Rapana, 2020). Her ideas reflect Foucault's theory of power-knowledge. Serena uses both her power over her husband and her knowledge of the women's world the role of being a female in this society to create her own social control. She uses her knowledge of the effect of the sex over men to control the men around her, both her husband and Nick, which can be seen as a translation to Foucault's words: “the truth of sex became something fundamental, useful, or dangerous, precious or formidable: in short, that sex was constituted as a problem of truth” (Foucault, 1978).

Thus, although she is the engine behind a society that gave her the advantage and power by being the Commander's Wife, she becomes like anything in this society, owned and controlled by society. She puts herself in a position of power, yet she puts herself in a cage at the same time, “although Serena was clearly an agent of Gilead, she, too, has been trapped by its oppression” (Callaway, 2008). She never predicted she would fall victim to the law which she shared to create. This shows as long as she wanted to live in the society that she helped to build, she has to also follow the same rules. She does not imagine she would be in a world that would not be allowed her to read her own book, yet that the world she sought to make.

In this context, *the femme fatale* of this story may see superficially different from other fatale characters, yet she shares the same origins off seeking for power and the subjugation others according to personal needs. Kulperger states: “Atwood's *femme fatale*, however, destabilises these boundaries: there are no clear cut evil/perpetrator and good/innocent women and the myth of the monstrous *femme fatale* explodes” (Kulperger, 1998). Serena despite she is a fatale character with all the misery that she helped to make, the reader may feel some sympathy towards her, after she starts to aware of all the horrors that she helped to create.

3.3. “She Clasped Her Hands, Radiant with Our Phony Courage.” (Atwood, 1986)

Despite that *the femme fatale* as an archetype is connected with the portrayal of noir film, it proved that it could move between different genres. The appearance of these characters has never been simply restricted to noir, on the contrary, they become so familiar to the audience in the contemporary cinema. In fact, the idea of *the femme fatale* becomes as an attraction in contemporary critics, audience and media producers.

The Aunts are the group of women charged to introduce the handmaids to the new society and make them accept their new fates. Aunt Lydia main job is to clarify the instruction for handmaids before they become handmaids. Although, the Aunts work with the system of Gilead, they attempt to redefine the identities of the handmaids by using deceptive arguments that they have a new kind of security and freedom in Gilead's society “There is more than one kind of freedom, said Aunt Lydia. Freedom to and freedom from. In the days of anarchy, it was freedom to. Now you are being given freedom from. Don't underrate it” (Atwood, 1986). The biggest lie that Lydia tells herself that she punishes the handmaids for their own good, and to protect them.

Through the novel, it can be seen the value of the wives and aunts are more than the handmaids, even though they are not giving birth. Despite is what Aunt Lydia explains to the handmaids, is that having a child is the thing what makes the women valuable. As Bradley describes the character “Aunt Lydia, the imperious instructor who indoctrinates handmaids into Gilead's new world order. She is a figure immune to cajoling or deceit; she is ruthless” (Bradley, 2019). She keeps to blame and describe the women before Gilead as lazy women that concerned with many topics around the world but not with birth the children. The same in the case of Serena, Aunt Lydia does not have children. Her speeches about the ideal women are only words that do not even herself live. “you are a transitional generation, said Aunt Lydia. It is the hardest for you. We know the sacrifices you are being expected to make... For the ones who come after you, it will be easier. They will accept their duties with willing hearts!” (Atwood, 1986).

According to Foucault: “Power is everywhere” (Foucault, 1978), power is considered as the main driving force in humans and working in all directions, which can be see through Aunt Lydia's behaviour. Through the novel, she is manipulates with the

handmaids with unreal facts only to serve her purposes and to reach a higher position and power in this Gilead's society. She is thrilled at inflicting pain on women around her, who they are more vulnerable than she is. Lydia finds in Gilead the perfect system to her, where she can release all her vindictive feelings under the shape of institutional care. A corrupt institution, which devoid from empathy and love.

The femme fatale seems to embody a specific type of contemporary feminisms. Farrimond states: "If *the femme fatale* is read as a realist character, contending with the struggles of women in the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, then issues surrounding her power in sexuality also become less problematic" (Farrimond, 2018). Aunt Lydia throughout the novel works to serve the male values for her survival. As a fatale character, she manipulates others only for her believes. She leads the women in remaking themselves as Handmaids, and twist Biblical passages to provide an explanation for this new life. "Aunt Lydia said it was best not to speak unless they asked you a direct question. Try to think of it from their point of view she said, her hands clasped and wrung together, her nervous pleading smile. It isn't easy for them" (Atwood, 1986).

According to Foucault "Sex is the explanation for everything" (Foucault, 1978). Despite Aunt Lydia do not use her sexuality over other men in a direct way, yet she considers as a fatale character, as Elhallaq describes her: "she behaves in a mannish manner much closer to word fatale than the word femme" (Elhallaq, 2015). She uses the maids as tools for her to manipulate men and the commanders to reach power in the society. She teaches the maids to be good and perfect with their commanders, which benefits her to strengthen her position in Gilead and gain power as an aunt. She also exploits her power over others according to her desires severely.

Like Serena Joy, Aunt Lydia does not use her sexual attraction to seduce commanders, yet she controls them and other men according to her purposes. She can be seen as a snake of this story, she hurts every person she meets. She lies and changes the truth in ways that she is the only one who gets benefits from the situation. As a *femme fatale*, the main purpose of her is to gain power over others, and use men as tools to be a more powerful woman. She keeps manipulating commanders by giving them what they need in the way she wants. Her knowledge of her own position in this society, and

what she is able to do over others make her seem as a reflection to the theory of Foucault about power, as he states: “that power and knowledge directly imply one another; that there is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time power relations” (Foucault, 1975).

The femme fatale as an archetype offers the powerful image of feminine power. The sexual performance and feminine display as one of the characteristics of *the femme fatale*. Farrimond referred that: “Although, as Neale points out, *femme fatale* types appeared in a range of generic forms in classical Hollywood, the range and representation of *the femme fatale* has expanded significantly as genres begin to bleed into one another, and increasing numbers of subgenres and offshoots appear” (Farrimond, 2018). Aunt Lydia as a rigid character does not offer this, she does not offer her feminine seduction for men, yet she uses the maid to do so, “Men are sex machines, said Aunt Lydia, and not much more. They only want one thing. You must learn to manipulate them, for your own good” (Atwood, 1986).

Her position and the power that she has in Gilead represents the female power as represented in contemporary cinema. Aunt Lydia is a pathological enforcer of the order. She switches modes between ruthlessness and vulnerability, “There is more than one kind of freedom, said Aunt Lydia. Freedom to and freedom from. In the days of anarchy, it was freedom to. Now you are being given freedom from. Don’t underrate it” (Atwood, 1986). She reflects the power that she has in order to hide her feelings of shame about her own repressed desires, which made her made her seem such a monster.

Like the frequently quoted description of Foucault for the power: “power is not an institution, and not a structure; neither is it a certain strength we are endowed with; it is the name that one attributes to a complex strategical situation in a particular society” (Foucault, 1978), Aunt Lydia in this context uses manipulation as a life style over everyone around her to reach a higher position in society and more power. Aunt Lydia by herself does not represent one figure of power, yet she belongs to a system works to reflect the concept of the power in the society through these characters. The sentence: “Gilead is within you” (Atwood, 1986) that she keeps using it over the maids reflects

the fact that Gilead is within her already, and all what she does want is to put Gilead in the maids' head too.

Despite she acts her role very well with the maids by pretending that she cares for their lives and their suffering, all the maids know her real intention and her fake concern. As women, all the maids feel that all her need was to keep her position in Gilead and keep her power over them, as Offred describing: “Aunt Lydia thought she was very good at feeling for other people” (Atwood, 1986). Furthermore, Aunt Lydia represents the kind of person who is pleased to watch the world burn, if that meant reinforce his own power. Bradley states: “Lydia seems consistently torn between satisfaction with her own cleverness and, if not remorse, then at least a resigned acknowledgment of who and what she has become. In her eyes, Lydia did what she had to do to survive” (Bradley, 2019).

Ann Dowd the actress who played the role of aunt Lydia in the TV series of *The Handmaid's tale* answered in interview to a question of what is it that attract her to the character, she states: “I would say their strength. What is it they want in their given circumstances” (Wood, 2018). She also added about Aunt Lydia: “Her perspective is quite different, of course. She feels that the world is lost... And she knows that unless she takes an extremely strong stance and approach, that the balance will not be righted” (Wood, 2018). In Dowd's perspective, Aunt Lydia does not want to control herself. The actress believes her strict implementation of Gilead's rules come from her feelings of insecurity.

Moreover, Aunt Lydia through her behaviour with the maids, looks like the Nurse Ratched from *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*. Both used the violence for the thrill. She keeps talking about the suffering she endured but not that the handmaids have, by torturing them with steel cables or removing the unnecessary parts from their bodies. She shows them that she takes care of them, but in the real she very mistreated them. Through this cruel portrayal of such a character, Aunt Lydia is manipulating Handmaids to shape them according to the standards of Gilead's perfect woman, “The Republic of Gilead, said Aunt Lydia, knows no bounds. Gilead is within you. Doctors lived here once, lawyers, university professors. There are no lawyers anymore, and the university is closed” (Atwood, 1986). Aunt Lydia can be describing as the most female oppressor

and sadistic in Gilead. It seems that everything she says and does is a fabrication of the truth, and her motive “although it too is often ambiguous” (Mercure, 2010), is usually greed.

According to Foucault: “the great confinement on the one hand; the correct training on the other” (Foucault, 1975). In *The Handmaid’s Tale*, the maids are undergoing to many medical examinations and different rituals, while on other hand, the aunts reinforce their position in this society with control over the lives of the handmaids. Aunt Lydia represents a central part of Gilead’s society. She contributes in the process of making such a regime. Laorea states: “Also the concept of freedom has been skilfully manipulated, as Aunt Lydia highlights while brainwashing the Handmaids at the Rachel and Leah Re-education Center” (Laorea, 2018). Yet in return, she has been used by Gilead in a sign that she can internalize the maids, and watches them in a close because she is a woman just like them, which can be seen as an example of internalized sexism. Through a woman like Aunt Lydia, Gilead society makes the women sustaining the male dominated regime against other women in the society.

The femme fatale characters of this novel seek to have power in the society of Gilead. They seduce men around them and control them only for their own purposes. They are willing to reach power as it represents their own way to survive in Gilead society. Moreover, the aunts work with commanders only to have power, yet at the same time using the maids to satisfy commanders also to gain power over them and over everyone in Gilead, which best reflects the theory of Foucault of power, as he states: “power is tolerable only on condition that it masks a substantial part of itself. Its success is proportional to an ability to hide its own mechanisms” (Foucault, 1978). So, they cover their intentions by being as members in the government, yet they seduce commanders according to their own needs which enable them to gain power.

CONCLUSION

Throughout this thesis, I have argued how George R. R. Martin's and Margaret Atwood portrayed *the femme fatale* characters in their novels *A Song of Ice and Fire* and *The Handmaid's Tale*.

The Femme fatale is considered as a subject of studies in history, literary studies, film studies, folklore, mythology, gender studies and cultural studies. Especially in the West society, it is considered as a cultural myth for centuries. The term *femme fatale* refers to a seductive, intelligent, and attractive woman, who has the ability to use men as a means in many ways either to gain help, sex, power, attention or winning. *Femme fatale* has been considered as an important symbol to develop the artists throughout history, up to the modern times.

The motives of fatale characters are not necessarily evil but may arise from a social or economic need, or a harmful experience. Traditionally, the concept of *femme fatale* is associated with a series of noir films which starts at the late 1930's. The fatale character started to play an important figure to represent truth, and the term *femme fatale* becomes common usage in the film industry and becomes so familiar to the audience in the contemporary cinema. In fact, it starts working as an attraction for critics, audiences and media producers.

In *A Song of Ice and Fire*, Martin presented many women characters who possess the strength of their own, which is manifested through various trials they face. The theme of *femme fatale* works as an engine for the characters in this novel. Their femininity and fatality work as a natural resource which all characters have and draw upon. In fact, females who play their fatale roles are more successful in achieving their goals than those who refuse it or do not learn how to get the advantages from it. Like Cersei Lannister, who represents the greatest *femme fatale* in the book, she uses the manipulation, artifice, and seduction as a lifestyle in order to make any kind of achievement she wants. Cersei, in order to increase her power, she does not hesitate to use a large panel of cunning strategies. As a fatale character she uses the manipulation in order to win.

Martin through such a character, portrays *the femme fatale* in full aspects, in her traditionally feminine style, her flowing and wavy hair, colourful gowns are all meant to influence and control the men around her. Martin also creates the most complex and cruel female in fantasy literature, Daenerys Targaryen, who uses her fear as a response to control men around her, as she played her role well to influence the men according to her desire, whether was money, or sex or even position. Daenerys works like Cersei, directed the men around her only for her own interests, and to win the throne. Melisandre, on the other hand, with her dark red robe, red lipstick, red shoes represents another *femme fatale* character in the novel. An opportunistic character, who conceals her desires, and keeps attempting to surpass of what society sees acceptable in order to gain power. The concept of power as Foucault has seen it works as the main driving force in humans, and Martin works to reflect this meaning in his novel.

Martin through his fantasy novel, depicted *the femme fatale* character in her full description, making her seem to be as a perfect fatale character, with all glory and strength. Moreover, he added some incredible personal details for this character, making her seen as an extraordinary character, that the reader is unable to hate or ignore her. On the other hand, Atwood creates an aggressive, cold hearted, and deceiver character in *The Handmaid's Tale*. Despite the fact that the female characters in this novel can be seen as different from the previous one, the similarity between the two is the search for power as a goal for all *the femme fatales* of the two stories, as Foucault hypothesized in his theory that power is actually inherent in all the social relations whether in the family or in the hierarchies of government or any other social institutions. *The femme fatale* of Atwood can be seen as a tough female, who works only for her own purposes, ignoring and destroying everything stands between her and her goal to gain power.

The Handmaid's Tale with its unfamiliar topic attracted the attention of all women around the world, whether were writers, critics, or feminists. Serena Joy represents a combination of power, oppression, and pain. She represents the character who is advocate for traditional values. Her inability to conceive worked like the basis of her vision of making Gilead. Manipulating her husband and pushing him to make this society which serve what she is seeking to. All her cruelty and selfishness make so many women around her live in suffering. Aunt Lydia as a pathological enforcer of the order,

is another *femme fatale* in the novel. Her power that she has in Gilead represents the female power which has become familiar in contemporary cinema.

Like Serena, Aunt Lydia despite she does not have children which is what makes the women valuable, she is considered to be so important figure in Gilead. As a fatale character, she manipulates both the Commanders and the handmaids with unreal facts, as she also twists Biblical passages only to reach a higher position and power in Gilead, as Foucault clarifies through his theories that power works as the main driving force in humans and working in all directions. Aunt Lydia even does not use her sexuality on men to manipulate them, yet she uses the maids as tools in order to control them to gain more power in Gilead. She exploits her power over others according to her desires and her goals.

The different *femme fatale* characters in this study all share the goal of having power. The concept of power for each character worked as an inner motivation to seduce and manipulate. Their behaviour might be seen superficially different, but in deep we can see they all share the same desire. The desire we may all share in one way or another but a few of us who announce it.

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All the seasons of the series The Handmaid’s Tale.

The movie Gone Girl.

CURRICULUM VITAE

Durar H. Alsamarraei, born in Iraq 23-07-1991, finished my school in Iraq during the war. I came here to Turkey to finish my MA studying. It was great opportunity to study in such a great university like Karabük University.

