

Every flight begins with a fall: Approaching Sexual Violence in *Game of Thrones*

Every flight begins with a fall: Aproximación a la violencia sexual en *Juego de tronos*

Every flight begins with a fall: Abordando a violência sexual em Game of Thrones

María Isabel Menéndez Menéndez, Universidad de Burgos, Burgos, España
(mimenendez@ubu.es)

Marta Fernández Morales, Universidad de Oviedo, Oviedo, España
(fernandezmmarta@uniovi.es)

ABSTRACT | Sexual violence has become the backbone of the fourth wave of the feminist movement. For this reason, we must look towards cultural industries, the mass media and social networks to analyze and discuss this violence, either because they reproduce the so-called *culture of rape* or because they resist it. This paper problematizes the representation of sexual violence in the audiovisual text *Game of Thrones* (HBO, 2011-2019) from the study of three important episodes in which three protagonists are raped: Daenerys Targaryen, Cersei Lannister, and Sansa Stark. The choice of this TV fiction is justified by its cultural resonance and its audience ratings, which have turned it into one of the most watched series in the history of Latin America and the rest of the world. An analysis from the gender perspective allows us to sustain that, although some changes can be perceived from the earliest to the latest aggression, in all cases the selected approach eroticizes sexual violence, inscribes it within a paradigm of idealization of romantic love, or mistreats women as a prerequisite for their empowerment. In this regard, our conclusions prove that David Benioff's and D. B. Weiss' production, unlike the literary work by R. R. Martin on which it is based, uses sexual violence as a narrative resource, instrumentalizing patriarchal violence with the sole aim of shocking the audience.

KEYWORDS: Game of Thrones; sexual violence; rape culture; exploitation.

HOW TO CITE

Menéndez Menéndez, M. I. & Fernández Morales, M. (2020). Every flight begins with a fall: Approaching Sexual Violence in *Game of Thrones*. *Cuadernos.info*, (47), 211-236.
<https://doi.org/10.7764/cdi.47.1908>

RESUMEN | *La violencia sexual se ha convertido en el asunto vertebrador de la cuarta ola feminista; por ello, las industrias culturales, los medios de comunicación y las redes sociales son lugares a los que debemos mirar para analizar y discutir esta violencia, ya sea porque reproducen la denominada cultura de la violación o porque se resisten a ella. Este artículo problematiza la representación de la violencia sexual en el texto audiovisual Juego de tronos (HBO, 2011-2019) a partir del estudio de tres episodios clave, en los que son violadas tres protagonistas: Daenerys Targaryen, Cersei Lannister y Sansa Stark. Se ha elegido esta ficción televisiva por su repercusión cultural y por las cifras de audiencia, que la han convertido en una de las series más vista de la historia en América Latina y el resto del mundo. El análisis desde la perspectiva de género permite sostener que, si bien se perciben ciertos cambios desde la primera de las agresiones hasta la última, en todos los casos se elige un enfoque que o erotiza la violencia sexual o se inscribe en un paradigma de idealización del amor romántico, o maltrata a las mujeres como prerrequisito para su empoderamiento. En este sentido, las conclusiones demuestran que la ficción de David Benioff y D. B. Weiss, a diferencia de la obra literaria de R. R. Martin en la que se basa, utiliza la violencia sexual como un recurso narrativo, instrumentalizando la violencia patriarcal con el único objetivo de impactar en la audiencia.*

PALABRAS CLAVE: *Juego de Tronos; violencia sexual; cultura de la violación; explotación.*

RESUMO | *A violência sexual tornou-se a espinha dorsal da quarta onda feminista e, portanto, as indústrias culturais, os meios de comunicação e as redes sociais são lugares para os quais devemos olhar para analisar e discutir essa violência, seja porque reproduzem a chamada "cultura do estupro" ou porque resistem a ela. Este artigo questiona a representação da violência sexual no texto audiovisual *Game of Thrones* (HBO, 2011-2019) a partir da análise de três episódios principais em que três protagonistas são estupradas: Daenerys Targaryen, Cersei Lannister e Sansa Stark. Esta ficção televisiva foi escolhida por seu impacto cultural e pelos números de audiência, que a tornaram a série mais assistida da história da América Latina e do resto do mundo. Uma análise sob a perspectiva de gênero permite atestar que, embora algumas mudanças possam ser percebidas desde a primeira até a mais recente agressão, em todos os casos se opta por uma abordagem que erotiza a violência sexual, inscreve-se em um paradigma de idealização do amor romântico ou maltrata as mulheres como pré-requisito para seu empoderamento. Neste sentido, as conclusões mostram que a ficção de David Benioff e D. B. Weiss, ao contrário da obra literária de R. R. Martin na qual se baseia, utiliza a violência sexual como recurso narrativo, instrumentalizando a violência patriarcal com o único objetivo de impactar a audiência.*

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: *Game of Thrones; violência sexual; cultura do estupro; exploração.*

INTRODUCTION

Sexual violence has become the backbone of the fourth wave feminism agenda, especially since the #MeToo movement, with which women in the film industry raised their voices in 2017. The slogan was part of a previous initiative of African American activist Tarana Burke.¹ However, it was a post by actress Alyssa Milano on Twitter that sparked a movement with global reach (Pflum, 2018)². As Lori Perkins points out, it is part of a larger wave of change (2017) and crystallizes the claims for justice and reparation that had begun to become massive from demonstrations such as the Argentine *Ni una menos* in 2015³ or the complaints in the United States regarding the impunity of rapes on university campuses and in the army⁴.

The day after the inauguration of a president who had boasted of grabbing women by their genitals, thousands of Americans marched on Washington to claim their right to a life without violence and denounce the president's misogyny (Hartocollis & Alcindor, 2017). Writer and activist Eve Ensler (2017) named Donald Trump Predator-in-Chief, in a play on words with his role as Commander-in-Chief of his country's armies. Even with this leader in the White House, Ensler (2017) stated, they will

1. Burke had launched it on the social network MySpace in 2016. See <https://www.publico.es/sociedad/me-too-tarana-burke-fundadora-invisible-metoo-lider-movimiento.html> o <https://www.eldesconcerto.cl/2018/08/24/la-historia-de-tarana-burke-la-mujer-negra-que-creo-el-metoo-antes-que-hollywood/>.

2. On October 5, 2017, the New York Times ran a story signed by Jodi Kantor and Megan Twohey about how Harvey Weinstein paid for decades for the silence of women he harassed. On the 10th, the New Yorker brought to light testimonies from Weinstein victims interviewed by Ronan Farrow. On the 12th of that same month, actress Rose McGowan –one of Farrow's main sources during his research, who was nevertheless reluctant to see her name published in the first instance, as she recalls in her book *Catch and Kill* (2019)– sent a tweet in which she mentioned having been raped by Weinstein and not believed by Jeff Bezos, head of Amazon, and his study. Five days later, Alyssa Milano used the #MeToo hashtag for the first time and its echo was immense, reaching far beyond the Hollywood industry to include women of various walks of life (see Pflum, 2018). The public confrontation between McGowan and Milano over the use of the hashtag or the instrumentalization of the movement should not detract from what is important: the opening of a space to share experiences and a place of listening for thousands of women who have suffered violence. See McGowan (2017).

3. For a history of this Argentine initiative, see #NiUnaMenos, 2015, in our list of references.

4. Examples of these phenomena are the durational performative action *Carry that Weight* by Emma Sulkowicz as a complaint of the violation suffered by a colleague from Columbia University (*La revolución del colchón...*, 2014) or the news about the record of complaints of sexual harassment in the US military in 2016 (*Sexual assault reports...*, 2017).

not silence us. The cry spread, and on March 8, 2018 there was a *violet explosion* in many parts of the world, especially in Spain, where a jobs and care women's strike orchestrated from the grassroots feminist movement had a strong impact not only economic, but also symbolic (N. Varela, 2019; Menéndez, 2020b).

The energy that circulated at a transnational level within a diverse feminism and with internal debates, but united in the face of the challenge of sexual violence, received a new impulse when in April 2018 the sentence in the first instance of the case known as *La manada de los Sanfermines* (Sanfermines' herd). After the rape in 2016 by five men of a young woman in Pamplona, who was also recorded with their mobiles and celebrated as part of the fun in the framework of the festivities, the Provincial Court of Navarra decided to convict them of abuse and not sexual assault. This resolution brought thousands of people to the streets and the complaint of misogyny spread from politics to the judicial establishment (Valdés, 2018)⁵. From the initiative on Twitter of journalist Cristina Fallarás, the hashtag #Cuéntalo went viral to share experiences in the first person or on behalf of women who could no longer tell their story. The hashtag became a *door-hashtag* that "in just a couple of days had opened the entrance to the immeasurable pain of hundreds and hundreds of thousands of women attacked, tortured, raped, murdered" (Fallarás, 2019, p. 47). In a few weeks, almost three million testimonies were collected.

All these mobilizations have two points in common: on the one hand, as Nuria Varela points out, the fact that the beginning of the 21st century will be remembered "as the moment when women broke the silence" (2019, pos. 1749)⁶. On the other, they contain both a reaffirmation of the word of women (I believe you) and a shift of the focus to the perpetrators⁷. If Perkins suggested that through the #MeToo one should point the finger and shame the person who exercised these behaviors (2017), Roxane Gay has even proposed that we replace the expression *rape culture* –commented below– by *rapist culture* (2014), to make it clear that we are not talking about abstractions, but about individuals and groups located in places of privilege and, often, of impunity. An example of how these two issues have merged into a feminist complaint is the

5. The follow-up in the press was very important. See for example Albalat (2019) or Chronology of the case... (2019). The case provoked legislative changes that operated on immediately subsequent sentences, although the last herd cases (Arandina, Pozoblanco) returned to sentences of abuse and even the second instance courts diminished some sentences.

6. We have used the Kindle version of Varela's work, which does not provide page numbers, but positions, hence the reference. The same applies to the text by Jana Leo quoted below.

7. On the presence of the motto, see Llanos (2017), Reguero (2019) or <http://mujeresenlucha.es/etiqueta/yo-si-te-creo>.

action *Un violador en tu camino* (A rapist in your way), by the Chilean group Lastesis, replicated in many countries⁸. Debates have arisen about street sexual harassment, and digital tools, political initiatives, and other instruments such as observatories have been created to protect and raise awareness about attacks on women.

Considering the previous examples, and in relation to the interests that concern us, we assume that both the traditional media and the Internet have become places of discussion about sexual violence, either to reproduce the rape culture or to it (Ferraday, 2015). Hence our focus on its representation in contemporary products with a large audience such as the one we bring here, *Game of Thrones*, and whose repercussion is observed in the publication of an abundant academic production such as (and we cite only the most recent) the works of Chaiban and Hazif-Thomas (2020), Grandío-Pérez, Estables and Guerrero-Picó (2020), Menéndez (2020a), Foucher (2019), Rohr and Benz (2019), Marqués (2019), Menéndez and Fernández (2019), or Mantoan and Brady (2018) among others. The audience must also be mentioned as a crucial factor in its repercussion, since *Game of Thrones* has been the serial fiction that has broken all viewing records since its premiere⁹. In Latin America, the first two episodes of the eighth and final season reached more than 30 million streaming views¹⁰. These are unprecedented figures that demonstrate its great penetration in the Spanish-speaking markets.

The television series *Game of Thrones* (HBO, 2011-2019), created by David Benioff and D.B. Weiss, which adapts the literary saga *A Song of Ice and Fire* by American writer George R. R. Martin, began airing in 2011, before these claims went global. However, it is a fact that over time it reduced the problems identified by feminist critics regarding sexual violence and exploitation of the female body. The changes were a fandom effect –very important in transmedia products– and also resulted from pressure from the actresses themselves (López, 2014; Grandío, 2016).

In this work, after a theoretical review of concepts such as the rape culture and a contextual journey through social movements and different initiatives that are currently intensifying the presence in the public debate of sexual violence suffered by women, we conducted a critical analysis of the three violations suffered by three key *Game of Thrones* characters. The analysis first makes a

8. See 'Un violador en tu camino'... (2019).

9. As an example, 33 million people watched the seventh season. Data available at <https://es.statista.com/estadisticas/993197/audiencia-de-las-diferentes-temporadas-de-juego-de-tronos-a-nivel-mundial/>. To this number of views must be added its impact on social networks and merchandising (see *La millonaria audiencia...* (2019)).

10. Data can be seen in 'Game of Thrones gana...' (2019).

brief exposition of the plot of these chapters in relation to the female characters involved, to then show that HBO fiction, despite breaking some stereotypes and offering more opportunities to women than other contemporary productions, is unable to abandon a perspective that feminist critics have identified as a paradigm of sexploitation, understood as the use of explicit sexual material in films and media discourses. Specifically, sexploitation cinema (or sex-exploitation film) is a variety of independent cinema shot on a low budget, very common in the sixties of the 20th century, in which sexual scenes and nudity are exhibited without need; it is a subgenre of exploitation films, films with pornographic content (Church, 2016; Gorfinkel, 2012, 2017; Roche, 2015; Schaefer, 2012). In sexploitation films, the nude is used to excite the public's voyeurism. These narratives operate through a fetishization of sexual aggression and torture is used as a formula for gratifying the audience at the cost of the instrumentalization of the body and the elimination of the agency of female characters.

THEORETICAL APPROACH TO SEXUAL VIOLENCE

Both historical and ethnographic evidence show the universality of the rape experience.

(Rita Segato, 2003, p. 24)

Sexual violence has traditionally been characterized by receiving very little response, even from the justice system, which has been inclined “to *understand* rapes” (Vigarello, 1998, p. 17). Along with institutional blindness, we must consider social impunity, which tends to operate differently according to the perceived quality of the person on whom the violence is inflicted (Vigarello, 1998). Status is key to assessing the measure of evil, which is even more serious the more social importance the victim holds. Since in this type of crime we talk mainly about women or, where appropriate, minors (mostly girls), the place of the person attacked as subordinate is given almost by definition. On the other hand, patriarchy offers only two outlets for the survivor: silence or acceptance. If a woman does not comply with one of these two premises, she becomes guilty. She must be a *victim* (non-agent and passive) forever, preferably keeping what happened to herself, because rape can lead to social death. In addition, she must not take certain attitudes that would make her responsible for her own misfortune¹¹. In the framework of patriarchy, as explained by Vigarello (1998), the universe of

11. Especially striking was the aforementioned case of the victim of the Sanfermines' herd in Pamplona (Spain) in 2016, who in addition to being raped by five criminals was watched by a private detective, and her personal life and activity on social networks exposed during the trial to show that there had been no victimization or trauma.

the aggressor –the division of roles by gender, androcentric justice, etc.– weighs on the development of the process, in which the complacency of society in the face of the thesis of female provocation has a crucial role.

Both in the most violent *coercion patriarchies* (a concept in which we could frame the brutal fictional universe of *Game of Thrones*) and in the more subtle *consent patriarchies* (Puleo, 2005) that surround us in most of the so-called global north, history shows that rape and woman are associated terms. In a framework of unequal distribution of power and resources, the sexual aggression of a part of the male population on the female half of the citizenry becomes a way to demonstrate status, to delimit territory, to terrorize individuals or entire populations, to give free rein to desire, but, above all, to exercise control. Jana Leo affirms in her autobiographical essay *Rape New York* that forcing someone sexually is a form of domestication (2017, pos. 1812) and that rape is “inseparable from the condition of woman” (2017, pos. 1045). We could say that rape, actually, not only has to do with sex, but also –to an even greater extent– with power, and that violence is the means to exercise it. As Inga Muscio describes, although it is viewed as a crime, it is the fundamental, primary, and most destructive way to seize and retain power in patriarchal society. Men who rape use female bodies to show their position (Muscio, 1998). This dominance display does not only subjugate the person who suffers a specific aggression, but the entire female collective: it victimizes not only those attacked, but all women, and the fear of rape serves to keep them in their place (Brison, 1998). As Inés Hercovich suggests, rape is *sexual violence*, and not *violent sex* (2000). Perhaps this is precisely what appeals to the scriptwriters of a series that is eminently about bloody power struggles, like *Game of Thrones*.

Second wave American feminism created the concept of *rape culture* to explain the prevalence and personal and political consequences of this phenomenon. From the work in their awareness groups, the activists realized the enormous impact that sexual assaults had on their daily lives and began to denounce them as a form of assault based on sex within the patriarchal system, which by then was beginning to be conceptualized. The first mention of the term *rape culture* appeared in *Rape: The First Sourcebook for Women*, edited by Noreen Connell and Cassandra Wilson in 1974. A year later, Susan Brownmiller’s *Against our Will: Men, Women and Rape*, would denounce the passivity of society and justice in the face of the epidemic of sexual assaults, and would include testimonies of raped women, thus contributing to legitimize the words of the victims, until then systematically questioned. On the same dates the documentary *Rape Culture*, directed by Margaret Lazarus and Renner Wunderlich, was screened in the United States. Taking up the ideas of radical feminists, the film exposed the

normalization of rape in American society and included as a novelty not only the voices of abused women, but also of confessed aggressors. These cultural products, along with the mobilizations of the women's liberation movement, laid the foundations for the analysis of sexual violence as a constitutive element and as the most acute symptom of patriarchy.

At the end of the 20th century, third-wave thought and praxis maintained the validity of the idea, although other issues shared the center of the agenda – fundamentally, the need to broaden the focus of feminism to make it more diverse and inclusive. In the 1990s, Emilie Butchwald, Pamela Fletcher, and Martha Roth defined *rape culture* as a network of beliefs that encourages sexist sexual assaults and supports violence against women; a type of society in which violence is perceived as sexy and sexuality is violent (1993, p. vii). Thus, we speak of a structural phenomenon, which goes beyond a specific attack on a dark street or a particularly explicit film. In this culture, male supremacy legitimates raping, beating, and harming, or selling and buying women, because it is understood that they are there to satisfy the needs of men (Dworkin, 1993).

Despite the advances in terms of formal equality in an important part of the neighboring countries, the fourth feminist wave, heir to the financial and values crisis of 2008 and marked by the transnational impulse, intersectionality and the instrumentalization of the new technologies (N. Varela, 2019), has been impelled to retake and update the ideas of those who preceded it. In the 21st century, not only there is not a reduction in the prevalence of rape as a sexist crime¹², but new forms of communication have contributed to making it a more visible problem and with increasingly extreme features of spectacularization. In a neoliberal capitalism where there is massive daily consumption of audiovisual products, this last characteristic makes it necessary and urgent to examine the products with which the public interacts, as well as the echo of sexual violence in popular culture and masses.

If, since the 1970s, feminism has debated on pornography and the responsibility of the media and cultural industries in abuses of female bodies (see Dworkin, 1974 and 1979, or MacKinnon, 1988 among others), nowadays, the access to and circulation of porn and, in extreme cases, snuff, has been facilitated to unsuspected limits. Technological convergence has turned the new screens into privileged mediators for all kinds of entertainment activities, including the viewing of

12. For example, in Spain, crimes against sexual freedom increased by 11.3% in 2019. Specifically, rapes increased by 10.5% according to the Criminality balance published by the Ministry of the Interior (see *Los delitos...* (2020)).

pornography and access to prostitution services (Orte & Ballester, 2019). There is a normalization of the new pornography among the western male population, and even more and more frequent phenomena of addiction to this type of entertainment (Orte & Ballester, 2019). Thus, it should come as no surprise that sexual violence is increasingly associated with fun. Hence the proliferation of group aggressions that are perpetrated, videotaped, and distributed through social networks among an increasingly young male population.

The fourth feminist wave, aware of the perverse forms that traditional domination mechanisms are taking, which are now being trivialized until they become forms of socially accepted leisure, is translating its exasperation into political capital (N. Varela, 2019). A concept that has accompanied us for decades has been revitalized in academic texts, in manifestos and in street actions, and criticisms with a gender perspective are reaching the justice, security forces, politics, education, and the media. In Spain, for example, the most visible consequence (the result of the feminist struggle and of the pressure exerted mainly by women) is the processing of a preliminary draft of the Organic Law of Comprehensive Guarantee of Sexual Freedom, promoted by the Ministry of Equality, which proposes to eliminate the difference between abuse and sexual assault and focuses on the express consent of the victim (Aprobada la tramitación... (2020)). In this context, there are complaints about the association made in *Game of Thrones* between the rapes suffered by Sansa Stark and her empowerment (Salazar, 2019), or the descriptions of the grievances that her character suffers before becoming a leader (I. Varela, 2019).

The media responsibility in the dissemination of violent or pornographic scenes has been studied from various fields (Pacillo, 1998; Sanmartín, 2000; Cummins & Gordon, 2006). As far as we are concerned as analysts of contemporary culture, we assume that our role is not to judge whether certain stories should or should not enter the audiovisual market, but rather what their narrative function and their resonance are once they have been made available to the public. The fact that the product that we analyze was born, developed, and concluded in the context of the 21st century rape culture is a fact. What we explore next is whether the decisions of its creators or screenwriters contribute to strengthening or weakening it, and how they do so through the codes of a fantastic-style serial fiction.

METHODOLOGY

In this work, we analyze three episodes of sexual violence from *Game of Thrones* to show that, although the HBO production premieres as a clearly idiosyncratic offer of that channel –characterized by using the *male gaze* described by Mulvey (1975)

and by the eroticization of violence– the representation of women slightly modified as the narrative evolved, to accommodate to a reality traversed by #MeToo and other related movements. Nevertheless, there is always the suspicion that the changes are only a commercial strategy of the television channel to take advantage of feminist visibility. The debate, which we cannot address here for space reasons, has been featured in the media (see for example Zeisler (2013) or Zas Marcos (2019)). In this regard, we must consider Martin's own statement defining himself as a feminist (Salter, 2013). In any case, we must not forget that the series is a commercial product, and that HBO seeks an audience (as explained later, since its inception it has tried to attract attention using sex and violence). In this paper, we consider that the important thing is that any text can be read from a gender perspective (beyond the will or interests of those who create it), and that in *Game of Thrones* a feminist reading can be objectively constructed in some aspects such as the presence of relevant female characters. However, the representation of rape remains problematic from a feminist analysis.

In the sections that follow, we study the role that sexual assaults against women play in the series, and whether they are described through a complacent or critical gaze. After a theoretical discussion about sexual violence in the series, we conduct an analysis of the three rapes suffered by three key *Game of Thrones* characters. With a comparative approach and applying the gender perspective, our analysis addresses three episodes: *Winter Is Coming* (S01xE01, directed by Tim Van Patten, April 17, 2011); *Breaker of Chains* (S04xE03, directed by Alex Graves, April 20, 2014), and *Unbowed, Unbent, Unbroken* (S05xE06, directed by Jeremy Podeswa, May 17, 2015).

To do so, both authors viewed the HBO episodes in their original English version and later contrasted the information obtained with the Spanish version of George R. R. Martin's books, to construct the story analysis, studying the representations of sexual violence in the selected corpus. According to Puleo (2007), the interpretive approach considers analysis variables such as gender status, norms and sanctions based on gender, stereotypes, or legitimation discourses, among others. Thus, we followed methodological proposals already tested in texts such as those by Mateos-Pérez and Ochoa (2016), Zurian and Herrero (2014) or Menéndez and Zurian (2014). The research, therefore, uses an interpretive approach and a qualitative methodology (Vallés, 1999). After a brief exposition of these episodes' plots regarding the female characters involved, we conduct the analysis.

RESULTS

Game of Thrones and sexual violence

All flights begin with a fall.

(*Cuervo de tres ojos*, in Martin, 2012, p. 164)

The series we study is set in a medieval-inspired universe, with some magical elements and where most women are subjected to a misogynistic and violent structure: “It is based on patriarchy, in which female characters are mostly under the control of some man” (Rojas-La Morena, Alcántara-Pilar, & Rodríguez-López, 2019, p. 22). In a coercive and extremely unequal microcosm, *lords* (feudal lords, kings, and princes) are considered superior: they rule and participate in warfare, stablish alliances and dominate, make decisions that affect other people, and decide the future of their families and their servants. As in any patriarchal society, women have value based on their relationship with the men with whom they live or whom they serve and obey (Sandqvist, 2012). Regarding its representation of female characters, throughout its eight seasons, Game of Thrones has generated controversy for its repeated use of the nude and the instrumentalization of both violence and sex in a story characterized by the breakdown of conventions: the characters are morally ambivalent, they can be killed at any time even if they are protagonists, and there are extremely graphic images of violence (Ferreday, 2015).

This is one of the most problematic characteristics of the HBO drama from a gender perspective: the use of very explicit scenes, including those of sexual violence (Nae, 2015), without a narrative justification. There is consensus that Game of Thrones is an “extraordinarily violent series” (Pomares, 2016, p. 2275), and this explains why specialized literature has been interested in the ways in which women are made visible since, along with the existence of complex and sometimes non-stereotyped characters, there is a hypersexualized gaze where the frequent presence of the female sex as an object to be consumed or annihilated stands out. In this regard, Myles McNutt coined in his analysis of the first season the term *sexposition*, which referred to the use of the nude or the sexual act in conjunction with the communication of information about characters, plot, or mythology in Game of Thrones (McNutt, 2012). As we have suggested regarding the recurrent inclusion of rapes, McNutt points out that the question is not whether naked bodies (almost entirely female) are exposed more or less frequently, but which function these bodies fulfill, often immersed in an act linked to prostitution.

McNutt (2011) states that seeing Tyrion Lannister¹³ or Theon Greyjoy¹⁴ enjoying themselves as prostitutes may contribute to their characterization, but often the staging looks more like laziness on the part of the creators than like an effort to be consistent with the characters' construction.

When the sexual act not only appears as a background landscape, but is portrayed as a rape, and with visual recreation in the suffering of the victims, as we will see in the episodes selected for our corpus, the series by Benioff and Weiss slides from mere exposure to pure exploitation; in other words, it goes from sexposition to sexploitation, to the point that in news and some fan blogs the label *medieval porn*¹⁵ has been applied to its sexual scenes. A regular follower has counted the attacks that appear in Martin's novels and in the HBO episodes, finding that in the books there are 214 rapes or attempted rapes on 117 different victims, while in the series, until 2015, there had been 50, with 29 victims¹⁶. In this regard, Game of Thrones follows the trend of the channel where it is produced, since HBO has specialized in narratives with frequent nudity and explicit sex, especially in historical series populated by "dehistoricized male characters who have magnificent bodies, engage in energetic sex and commit brutal and spectacular violence. They present the erotic spectacle of female bodies being sexually abused and the violent spectacle of male bodies being physically abused" (Glynn, 2012, p. 161). The aggressions in television fiction are much more explicit and, curiously, they are exerted on different characters. It is very significant that the rapes of Daenerys Targaryen, Cersei Lannister, and Sansa Stark, three main characters, do not appear in the literary saga. As Frankel explains, violence against women in this series is something usual that provokes terror: sex and violence combine to excite, to the point that torture also becomes sexual, and women are controlled and subjected before being murdered (2014). Although violence runs through the entire narrative, women suffer more abuse than men, and much of it is perpetrated in ways that

13. Tyrion Lannister is the third son of Lord Tywin and Joanna Lannister, therefore, brother of Queen Cersei and Jaime. He is a character marked by his dwarf condition.

14. Theon Greyjoy is the son of Balon Greyjoy, Lord of Pyke. The character was raised in Winterfell as a ward of Eddard Stark.

15. See, for example Game of Thrones... (2016) or Albertini (2019). Ruth Mazo (2017) suggests that this image of medieval sexuality has been constructed by the contemporary audiovisual industry through products such as Game of Thrones.

16. Information from Rodríguez (2015). Another follower of the series has found similar results (David, 2017). The number of rapes is higher in the books, but the multitude of characters and plots that appear there and that are not part of the audiovisual version must be considered and, above all, the differences in the intention and purpose of these attacks on both supports.

have to do with being female. Almost all of them experience an episode of abuse, aggression, or derogatory treatment by male characters. Women become strong after violence, a turn that feminist critics have rejected, considering unacceptable that they should be attacked in order for them to progress: it seems essential that a young woman, who is also beautiful, should suffer (Cahen, 2019).

RAPE WILL MAKE YOU STRONG, OR HOW GAME OF THRONES WAS WRONG

Rape is not a tool to make a character stronger.

A woman doesn't need to be victimised in order to become a butterfly

(Jessica Chastain, 2019)

We begin the empirical analysis of the corpus with Daenerys Targaryen, whom we meet in the first season of *Game of Thrones* being forcibly married to chief Dothraki Khal Drogo while still a teenager. In the literary version, even though she does not want marriage, the wedding Drogo seduces her with affection and takes his time so that she loses her fear and enjoys the meeting, even asking her expressly if she wishes to continue, to which she responds with a resounding yes. However, in the television version (S01xE01, *Winter Is Coming*) a radical change occurs: Drogo undresses Daenerys and rapes her, while the audience observes a close-up of her face bathed in tears, something that will be repeated in subsequent encounters. The camera tells the public that there has been no consent. However, the development of the story will show us Daenerys in love with Drogo, just as it happens in the novel, but with that enormous difference at the beginning of their relationship. From what has been observed it follows that, before transforming Daenerys into the leader (Khaleesi) who she will later be, for the audiovisual version the character must be turned into a victim if she wishes to progress, suggesting that only a woman who suffers can be successful. At the same time, there is a serious tolerance towards sexual violence, since rape is not only not rejected, but it seems therapeutic, eliminating the aversion that Daenerys felt towards the husband imposed, which is replaced by unconditional love. Daenerys appears at the beginning of the fiction as a girl without any agency, used and abused by an ambitious brother who wishes to regain the throne at any cost. The passage of time will show how she gains autonomy, making decisions for herself and even disregarding the advice of more experienced people. All that empowerment arises after the symbolic birth of a woman who survives fire and becomes a mother of dragons first, and then a political leader. But it must not be forgotten that this fire was that of the funeral pyre of her husband Drogo, and that Daenerys, an inconsolable widow, decides to immolate herself next to the corpse of her loved

one, as occurs in some cultures that sacrifice widows with their husbands. In other words, there is a relationship of continuity and causality between the rape and the power that the character acquires.

The narrative chosen by the audiovisual version, in addition to radically separating itself from what appeared in the novel, especially on the wedding night (Martin, 2012), raises debates such as why television needs to turn violence into a spectacle to get an audience, or if the possibility of using consent is not acceptable to those who write scripts or produce these audiovisual works. Another matter of interest is that the story (also the literary one) builds an idealization of love, with recurring phrases of the type *my sunshine, my love*, which abounds in the construction of an idealized romance that must be above all (including integrity physical) and that, according to texts such as that of Bosch, Ferrer, Ferreiro, and Navarro (2013) is a patriarchal strategy that constitutes the germ of violence against women, since as these authors explain

many of the myths about romantic love arise from patriarchal thought and have a purpose of control over the life and the expectations of people regarding their love and sexual life. These expectations are, mostly, so high and, therefore, so unattainable in real life, that they are unachievable and not meeting them can generate frustration, and from frustration to violence there is only one step (p. 298).

The next rape of interest for our analysis is that suffered by Cersei Lannister in season four. Jaime Lannister, then a character that was modifying his initial role, going from villain to hero, arrives at the sept of Westeros (S04xE03, Breaker of Chains), where his sister/lover watches over the corpse of their son, Joffrey, and commits a sexual assault that is a violation of Cersei but also of the sanctuary that is the septum and of respect for the corpse of his nephew/son. Although the relationship between the brothers appears in Martin's novel, there is also a significant divergence here: in that one, Cersei desires the sexual encounter, while in the audiovisual version she is raped in a long and brutal scene where Jaime is carried away by anger and exerts his will even if there are explicit objections and cries. Why is this episode so substantially modified, if not for sensational reasons? Alex Graves, director of this episode, has pointed out in some interviews that the sexual act is consensual in the end (see Martin, 2014, among others), demonstrating his limited vision of sexual violence and consolidating stereotypes about the refusal of women –the sexist consideration that a no is really always a yes if one insists enough–, as well as all women's fantasy of being raped. If Graves' intention in conceiving this sequence was not to show rape, he has failed miserably, revealing by the way his problematic definition of consent.

Feminist criticism has been explaining for some time how the incorrect interpretations of women's words by men are normalized, something that is reproduced, for example, in legal processes where the non-feminine is discarded in the face of masculine subjectivity (Marcus, 2002).

In *Game of Thrones* Cersei Lannister was a complex character, who had endured a life that denied her power because she was a woman and who, by losing her son, was also left without a secure relationship in which her influence was crucial. With her rape, also exercised by the only man who respected and loved her, she is *put in her place* and symbolically annihilated through an aggression that allows isolating her. Once again, the issue is not the appearance of a rape in a tale of power struggle where the marginal characters are capable of infiltrating power at the cost of using means that are not always positive, but rather that the aggression against Cersei reflects a regrettable tradition of gratuitous use of sexual violence only for dramatic or recreational purposes. If a rape appears, the further development of the narrative should show how she survives in a rigorous way. The attack on Cersei just happens; nothing changes in any way once it has been perpetrated. In her case, the stereotype is different from the one that appeared in *Daenerys*: that of a suffering victim who is later repaired by her destiny as a leader. Here, it is about a character that has been built from evil, always subjected to the tension between the power that is denied to her and the one that she pursues, a dynamic that also exists in the bond with her brother/lover. At least, revenge was expected from Cersei, and yet it only happens that masculinity is restored to its hegemonic place and the female character seems to abide by it, since there is no subsequent plot in which consequences are derived. Jaime, who has no political power because he has renounced the throne to continue being his sister's lover, uses sexual assault to show her her place in the world. Nothing in his future indicates that he will be punished for wrongdoing. The denouement of the fiction will demonstrate that romantic love triumphs, subjecting the queen to an undignified end for a character who had been powerful and independent but who dies, without any chance of glory, in the arms of her protective lover.

Finally, we must look Sansa Stark, whose rape occurs in the fifth season. The young woman of Winterfell was a child dazzled by the stories of princesses who will travel a painful path to a very distant life than the one planned for someone destined to marry the heir of King's Landing. As a culmination of the suffering that she is enduring –the character is a victim of different types of violence– she will suffer a terrible sexual assault (S05xE06, Unbowed, Unbent, Unbroken) in which there is also Theon present, who loves her like a brother and is forced to look against his will. While Sansa's accepted but unwanted marriage to Ramsay Bolton makes marital rape predictable on their wedding night, the violence of this episode

raises the question again about her role on *Game of Thrones*. In the case of Sansa's rape, which, as already stated, does not appear in Martin's books either, we find something new: it is the beginning of the character's emancipation. This aggression, considering the subsequent journey of the victim, is the only one consistent with the damage –she does not fall in love with the rapist– but that does not make it less problematic. Sansa is a character who grows through the sexual and sexist violence that she suffers, an issue that feminist critics do not consider tolerable because violence should not be used as a rite of passage (Ferreday, 2015)¹⁷. This vision about the consequences is consolidated when in the eighth and final season (S08xE04, *The Last of the Starks*), Sansa mentions the role that violence has played in her maturity. The young lady who dreamed of princes charming and a future as queen is now a cunning and confident woman. The message conveyed is that it would have been impossible to find this new Sansa if she had not been mistreated and, especially, if she had not been raped by Ramsay. With these narrative choices, the series rewards the role perpetrated by the aggressors, eliminating the agency of the violated female subject.

A victim who survives trauma necessarily must change during this difficult process, but Sansa does not reach the end of fiction as Queen of Winterfell by having suffered violence, but by having been able to overcome pain and loss to move on, and for having succeeded in building her own project that includes political leadership. It should be noted, however, that she conquers autonomy and even the crown, although in a secondary way: she is queen in the North, a territory far from the center of power, as an exception and at the cost of being practically alone. It is also interesting to observe the character's aesthetic change: from the fragile beauty of a traditional princess that appeared in the first chapters, with luxurious and beautiful dresses embroidered in pastel colors, to the sober appearance at the end, covered with severe black clothing, similar to a habit, halfway between the sour maiden in traditional tales and the nun secluded behind the walls of some convent. Sansa reinforces a recurring idea in the cultural industries: women who reach power must leave their femininity along the way, become beings without attractiveness or sexual drive, and discard the maternal role. In addition, she consolidates the usual narrative that mistreats women as a prerequisite for giving them some opportunity for empowerment.

17. This issue is very topical in view of the augmentation of rapes performed by increasingly young men who are being influenced by Internet pornography. In this regard, see the interview with psychologist Fuensanta Cerezo (Lucas, 2018).

CONCLUSIONS

It is not a small problem that three of the main women of *Game of Thrones* – Daenerys, Cersei, and Sansa – are raped and that those who avoid sexual assault are those whose appearance is rather masculine, such as Arya Stark or Brienne de Tarth, suggesting that femininity is violable (Cahen, 2019). If it is always a debatable option to use sexual assault for the development of a character, whether victim or perpetrator, doing it three times and with each protagonist arouses suspicion about the objectives of the audiovisual text, which seems to choose a sensational discourse to attract the audience. Both the sexposition and sexploitation displayed in *Game of Thrones* show that its creators have been unable to abandon a reifying and violent masculine gaze (Mulvey, 1975) that, moreover, betrays female fans, very numerous both in the literary and the television versions.

It is not so much a change for production reasons –any adaptation to another medium must make concessions and sacrifices over the original literary version– as it is about the alterations that occur in the story itself. If we think of Daenerys, it is understood that a teenage girl, married against her will to a much older man, is not going to consent sexually. But it is much more difficult to understand the feeling that arises in the character, that she falls passionately in love in what seems like a gratuitous –actually, patriarchal– concession to romantic love. About Cersei, if we look at her rapist, Jaime, we see that she is a chivalrous heartthrob, whose devotion and sense of duty towards her sister/lover is total. Arrogant and cruel as a military man but not in his couple, it is disruptive that he chooses to rape the woman he loves, because this breaks with the logic of the character's construction. As for Sansa, although it is plausible that the wedding night with a man she does not want and who has been characterized by cruelty has to be a violent situation, the option chosen by the script, also forcing it not to be an intimate act –by the presence of a forced voyeur– offers an unnecessary level of exploitation and eroticization of violence. The fact that the character must be subjected to such excessive violence to achieve her own and autonomous destiny returns the story to the stereotype of a good or successful woman: the one who suffers. In addition, it rescues patriarchal imaginaries about rape, not as an aggression, but as one more element of courtship or passion, if not a requirement to achieve a goal. Ferreday (2015) fits this scene at the center of broader cultural debates about rape culture and the representation of sexual violence in popular culture. She highlights the elaboration of stories based on tolerance and the desire not to harm the aggressors (2015) and endorses Projansky's (2001) proposal, who argues that rape is usually a versatile narrative element that allows addressing any social issue.

The problem in our case study is not the rape itself, but how it is used and why it appears, since it is a fact that Westeros is a hostile place for women. In that territory

and in that period, especially when the warfare begins, rape is omnipresent. Thus, for example, Brienne is under constant threat and Arya disguises herself to protect herself. The question, therefore, is not if sexual violence should be represented, but rather its purpose in the text and its way of being constructed, under a critical or a complacent gaze. If *Game of Thrones* is a fiction set in a different time from the current one, it is necessary to observe the story from the parameters that allow understanding the context, but the approach adopted by the scripts invites us to reflect on the role that violence against women plays. After criticism in the media and social networks, both the scriptwriters (all men from the fourth season on) and Martin himself explained that the temporary location in a period traversed by inequality such as medieval times justified the use of this violence, which even operated to give the story realism. In fact, Martin has criticized other fantasy writers for recreating a *Disneyland Middle Ages*, with castles, princesses, and an unrealistic class system. The author has explained that he is inspired by real history and emphasizes that sexual violence has always been part of war, so omitting it would be dishonest. To Martin, a class system means violence, war, and death (Schubart & Gjelsvik, 2016). The true story is written with blood and, for him, his fictions pale before the reality that the chronicles collect.

The most relevant thing here is that, although sexual assaults in the novels obey the type of objectives that Martin describes –to recreate the cruelty of the moment, to explain the motivations of a character, to demonstrate the difficulties that women had to face– in HBO’s fiction it does not seem to adopt any function other than recreational and can even serve to destroy the previous identity of a character, associating it with different ideas and values from their victimization experience. As suggested in the essay *En brazos de la mujer fetiche*, most of the people of our time “have watched television before learning to speak, and that is why we integrate into our subconscious with terrifying ease a concept of fetish culture where *things are valued as ideas and people, as things*” (Etxebarria & Núñez, 2002, p. 47; emphasis in the original). Through the fetishization of scenes of sexual assault, *Game of Thrones* makes its audience assume certain changes in its protagonists’ evolution. Daenerys falls in love with the man who rapes her and becomes (almost literally by magic) a positive figure who will later be a powerful leader. Cersei is a selfish queen, a negative character who must be punished as a villain deserves, i.e., being raped and losing weight in the plot. Sansa is a victim that only after going through brutal invasions of her body can emerge strengthened, her torture providing a dose of gratuitous violence that, at the same time, reinforces the idea of women martyrs against ruthless men.

We must insist: it is not condemnable per se that sexual assaults appear in the stories, even when they are entertainment stories, but they must be described with

rigor and depth, they must have a purpose that makes them understandable and relevant to what is told. The actions and feelings that then drive the survivor should have meaning if the aggression is to exceed the level of mere exploitation, avoiding the normalization of sexual control and the objectification of the women's body. This has not been the case in HBO's fiction. *Game of Thrones* has incorporated significant changes throughout its production, especially in recent seasons, through gazes more accommodating to feminism than in its inception, defined by the strategies of sexposition and sexploitation. Numerous female characters appear in the series, some very complex and capable of agency, which allow us to reflect on many gender issues, such as oppression, the role of motherhood, or political power. However, sexual violence continues to be a resource of patriarchal canonical narration, more as an aesthetic and fetishistic element than as a form of aggression against women for the sake of it, which is instrumentalized with the sole objective of impacting the audience. If we consider that it is the most watched series in the history of television, with unprecedented figures in Latin America, we have no doubt of the interest of critical readings on its representation of sexual violence.

REFERENCIAS

- Albalat, J. G. (2019, July 7). El Supremo sentencia que la víctima de la Manada quedó "totalmente anulada" (The Supreme Court ruled that the victim of La Manada was "totally destroyed"). *elPeriódico*. Retrieved from <https://www.elperiodico.com/>
- Albertini. (2019, May 20). Lo peor de 'Juego de Tronos': las 17 escenas más lamentables de la serie de HBO (The worst of 'Game of Thrones': the 17 most regrettable scenes of the HBO series). *Espinof*. Retrieved from <https://www.espinof.com>
- Aprobada la tramitación de la Ley Orgánica de garantía de la libertad sexual (The processing of the Organic Law to guarantee sexual freedom has been approved). (2020, March 3). Retrieved from <https://www.lamoncloa.gob.es/consejodeministros/Paginas/enlaces/030320-enlace-mujeres.aspx#:~:text=Esta%20Ley%2C%20que%20recoge%20muchas,las%20mujeres%20de%20manera%20desproporcionada>
- Benioff, D. & Weiss D. B. (Scr.) & Nutter, D. (Dir.). (2019). The Last of the Starks (Television Series Episode). In D. Benioff & D.B. Weiss (Prods.), *Game of Thrones*. New York, NY: HBO.
- Benioff, D. & Weiss D. B. (Scr.) & Van Patten, T. (Dir.). (2011). Winter is Coming (Television Series Episode). In D. Benioff & D.B. Weiss (Prods.), *Game of Thrones*. New York, NY: HBO.
- Benioff, D. & Weiss D.B. (Scr.) & Graves, A. (Dir.). (2014). Breaker of Chains (Television Series Episode). In D. Benioff & D.B. Weiss (Prods.), *Game of Thrones*. New York, NY: HBO.
- Bosch, E., Ferrer, V. A., Ferreiro, V., & Navarro, C. (2013). *La violencia contra las mujeres: El amor como coartada* (Violence against Women: Love as an Alibi). Barcelona, Spain: Anthropos.
- Brisson, S. J. (1998). Surviving Sexual Violence: A Philosophical Perspective. In S. French, W. Teays, & L. N. Purdy (Eds.), *Violence against Women. Philosophical Perspectives* (pp. 11-26). Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

- Brownmiller, S. (1975). *Against our Will: Men, Women and Rape*. New York, NY: Simon & Schuster.
- Butchwald, E., Fletcher, P. R., & Roth, M. (1993). Preamble. In E. Butchwald, P. R. Fletcher, & M. Roth (Eds.), *Transforming a Rape Culture* (p. vii). Minneapolis, MN: Milkweed.
- Cahen, A. (2019). *Game of Thrones décodé* (Game of Thrones Decoded). Monaco: Éditions du Rocher.
- Chaiban, J. & Hazif-Thomas, C. (2020). Viols, fantasie adolescente et femmes désenfantées: l'alchimie addictive de la série *Game of Thrones* (Rapes, Teenage Fantasy and Bereaved Mothers: The Addictive Alchemy of the Series *Game of Thrones*). *Annales médico-psychologiques*, 178(4), 415-418. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.amp.2020.02.006>
- Chastain, J. (jes_chastain). (May, 07, 2019). Rape is not a tool to make a character stronger. A woman doesn't need to be victimized in order to become a butterfly. The #littlebird was always a Phoenix. Her prevailing strength is solely because of her. And her alone. #GameOfThrones (Tweet). https://twitter.com/jes_chastain/status/1125567447640285184?s=20
- Church, D. (2016). *Disposable passions: vintage pornography and the material legacies of adult cinema*. New York, NY: Bloomsbury Publishing USA.
- Cogman, B. (Scr.) & Podeswa, J. (Dir.). (2015). Unbowed, Unbent, Unbroken (Television Series Episode). In D. Benioff & D.B. Weiss (Pr.), *Game of Thrones*. New York, NY: HBO.
- Connell, N. & Cassandra, W. (1974). *Rape: The First Sourcebook for Women*. New York, NY: New American Library.
- Cronología del caso 'la manada': de la denuncia a la condena del Tribunal Supremo por agresión sexual (Chronology of the case 'La manada': from the complaint to the Supreme Court's sexual assault verdict). (2019, June 20). *Eldiario.es*. Retrieved from <https://www.eldiario.es/>
- Cummins, W. & Gordon, G. (2006). *Programming our Lives: Television and American Identity*. Westport, CN: Praeger.
- David, S. (2017, September 7). Counting Every Instance of Rape, Death, and Nudity on 'Game of Thrones'. *Vice*. Retrieved from <https://www.vice.com>
- Dworkin, A. (1974). *Woman Hating: a Radical Look at Sexuality*. New York, NY: Penguin Books.
- Dworkin, A. (1979). *Pornography: Men Possessing Women*. New York, NY: Penguin Books.
- Dworkin, A. (1993). I Want a Twenty-Four-Hour Truce during Which There Is No Rape. In E. Butchwald, P. R. Fletcher, & M. Roth (Eds.), *Transforming a Rape Culture* (pp. 11-22), Minneapolis, MN: Milkweed.
- Ensler, E. (2017, August 24). Even with a Misogynist Predator-in-Chief, We Will Not Be Silenced. *The Guardian*. Retrieved from <https://www.theguardian.com>
- Etxeberria, L. & Núñez, S. (2002). *En brazos de la mujer fetiche* (In the Arms of the Fetish Woman). Barcelona, Spain: Destino.
- Falláras, C. (2019). *Ahora contamos nosotras. #Cuéntalo: una memoria colectiva de la violencia* (Now It's Our Time to (Re)count. #Cuéntalo: A Collective Memory of Violence). Barcelona, Spain: Anagrama.
- Farrow, R. (2019). *Catch and Kill. Lies, Spies and a Conspiracy to Protect Predators*. New York, NY: Little, Brown and Company.

- Ferreday, D. (2015). *Game of Thrones*, Rape Culture and Feminist Fandom. *Australian Feminist Studies*, 30(83), 21-36. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08164649.2014.998453>
- Foucher, G. (2019). *Les Femmes de Game of Thrones* (Women in Game of Thrones). Paris, France: Ynnis Éditions.
- Frankel, V. E. (2014). *Women in Game of Thrones: Power, Conformity and Resistance*. Jefferson, MO: McFarland & Company.
- Game of Thrones gana el trono de audiencia en América Latina (Game of Thrones Wins the Audience Throne in Latin America). (2019, April 4). *Dinero.com*. Retrieved from <https://www.dinero.com/>
- Game of Thrones: Medieval fantasy or glorified softcore porn? (2016, April 20). *CBC Radio*. Retrieved from <https://www.cbc.ca/>
- Gay, R. (2014). *Bad Feminist*. New York, NY: Corsair.
- Glynn, B. (2012). The Conquests of Henry VIII: Masculinity, Sex and the National Past in *The Tudors*. In B. Glynn, J. Aston & B. Johnson (Eds.), *Television, Sex, and Society: Analyzing Contemporary Representations* (pp. 157-173). New York, NY: Continuum.
- Gorfinkel, E. (2012). The Body's Failed Labor: Performance Work in Sexploitation Cinema. *Framework: The Journal of Cinema and Media*, 53(1), 79-98. <https://doi.org/10.1353/frm.2012.0009>
- Gorfinkel, E. (2017). *Lewd looks: American sexploitation cinema in the 1960s*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.
- Grandío, M. M. (2016). *Adictos a las series. 50 años de lecciones de los fans* (Addicted to Series. Fifty Years of Fan Lessons). Barcelona, Spain: Editorial UOC.
- Grandío-Pérez, M. D. M., Estables, M. J., & Guerrero-Picó, M. (2020). Juego de Tronos, personajes femeninos y polémicas mediáticas. Estudio de recepción entre la audiencia hispanohablante (Game of Thrones: feminine characters and media controversies. Reception study among Spanish-speaking audiences). *Historia y comunicación social*, 25(1), 27-33. <https://doi.org/10.5209/hics.69224>
- Hartocollis, A. & Alcindor, Y. (2017, January 21). Women's March Highlights as Huge Crowds Protest Trump: 'We're Not Going Away'. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from <https://www.nytimes.com>
- Hercovich, I. (2000). La violación sexual: Cuando consentir es resistir (Rape: When Consenting Means Resisting). In A. M. Daskal (Ed.), *El malestar en la diversidad. Salud mental y género* (The Malaise in Diversity. Mental Health and Gender) (pp. 135-148). Santiago, Chile: Isis Internacional.
- La millonaria audiencia de 'Game of Thrones' en Latinoamérica (The millionaire audience of 'Game of Thrones' in Latin America). (2019, April 26). *El Tiempo*. Retrieved from <https://www.eltiempo.com>
- "La Revolución del Colchón": la original campaña de una joven violada en Columbia University ("The Mattress Revolution": the original campaign of a raped young woman at Columbia University). (2014, October 23). *Infobae*. Retrieved from <https://www.infobae.com>
- Lazarus, M. & Wunderlich, R. (Prods.). (1975). *Rape Culture* (Documentary Film). Cambridge, UK: Cambridge Documentary Films.
- Leo, J. (2017). *Violación Nueva York* (Rape New York). Barcelona, Spain: Lince.

- Llanos, H. (2017, November 16). 'Hermana, yo sí te creo', un texto para apoyar a la víctima de La Manada ('I Believe You, Sister', a Text in Support of the Victim of the 'Wolf Pack'). *Verne/El País*. Retrieved from <https://verne.elpais.com/>
- López, F. J. (2014). Juego de Tronos. En la nueva era dorada del drama televisivo, o ganas o mueres (Game of Thrones. In the New Golden Age of TV Drama, Your Win or You Die). *Frame*, 10, 144-149. Retrieved from <http://fama2.us.es/fco/frame/frame10/monografico3/5.8.pdf>
- Los delitos contra la libertad sexual aumentaron un 11,3% en España en 2019 y, en concreto, las violaciones un 10,5% (Crimes against sexual freedom increased by 11.3% in Spain in 2019 and, specifically, rapes by 10.5%). (2020, February 20). *Europa Press*. Retrieved from <https://www.europapress.es/>
- Lucas, A. (2018, June 27). "Violar se ha convertido en un rito de iniciación para entrar en el grupo" ("Rape has become a rite of passage to enter the group"). *La Opinión de Murcia*. Retrieved from <https://www.laopiniondemurcia.es>
- MacKinnon, C. (1988). *Pornography and Civil Rights: A New Day for Women's Equality*. Minneapolis, MN: Organizing Against Pornography.
- Mantoan, L. & Brady, S. (2018). *Vying for the Iron Throne. Essays on Power, Gender, Death and Performance in HBO's Game of Thrones*. Jefferson, MO: McFarland & Company.
- Marcus, S. (2002). Fighting Bodies, Fighting Words: A Theory and Politics of Rape Prevention. In J. Butler & J. W. Scott (Eds.), *Feminists Theorize the Political* (pp. 385-403). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Marqués, D. (2019). Power and the Denial of Femininity in Game of Thrones. *Canadian Review of American Studies*, 49(1), 46-65. <https://doi.org/10.3138/cras.49.1.004>
- Martin, D. (2014, April 21). Breaking Down Jaime and Cersei's Controversial Scene With Last Night's Game of Thrones Director. *Vulture*. Retrieved from <https://www.vulture.com>
- Martin, G. R. R. (2012). *Juego de Tronos (A Game of Thrones)*. Barcelona, Spain: Gigamesh.
- Mateos-Pérez, J. & Ochoa, G. (2016). Contenido y representación de género en tres series de televisión chilenas de ficción (2008-2014) (Chilean Televisions Series. Themes, Content and Gender Representation (2008-2014)). *Cuadernos.info*, (39), 55-66. <https://doi.org/10.7764/cdi.39.832>
- Mazo, R. (2017). *Sexuality in Medieval Europe, Doing unto Others*. London, UK: Routledge.
- McGowan, R. (@rosemcgowan). (2017, October 12). *I told the head of your studio that HW raped me. Over & over I said it. He said it hadn't been proven. I said I was the proof* (Tweet). Twitter. <https://twitter.com/rosemcgowan/status/918567880865628161?s=20>
- McNutt, M. (2011, May 29). *Game of Thrones*. 'You Win or You Die'. *Cultural Learnings*. Retrieved from <https://cultural-learnings.com>
- McNutt, M. (2012, April 8). *Game of Thrones*. 'The Night Lands' and Sexposition. *Cultural Learnings*. Retrieved from <https://cultural-learnings.com>
- Menéndez, M. I. & Fernández, M. (2019). ¿Madre no hay más que una? Maternidades reales, mágicas y simbólicas en Juego de Tronos (There Is But One Mother. Real, Magical, and Symbolic Motherhood in *Game of Thrones*). In M. Visa (Coord.), *Representación de la maternidad en la ficción contemporánea* (Representation of motherhood in contemporary fiction) (pp. 295-309). Bern, Switzerland: Peter Lang.

- Menéndez, M. I. & Zurian, F. (2014). Mujeres y hombres en la ficción televisiva norteamericana hoy (Women and Men in the US Television Drama Today). *Anagramas*, 13(25), 55-72. Retrieved from <https://revistas.udem.edu.co/index.php/anagramas/article/view/974>
- Menéndez, M. I. (2020a). Entre la Garra y la Aguja: masculinidad hegemónica frente a personajes en los márgenes en *Juego de Tronos* (Between the Longclaw and the Needle: Hegemonic Masculinity vs. Marginal Characters in *Game of Thrones*). In F. J. López, I. Raya & J. Lozano (Coords.), *Winter is over. (Re)analizando el fenómeno televisivo Juego de Tronos* (Winter is over. (Re) analyzing the television phenomenon Game of Thrones) (pp. 119-132). Madrid, Spain: Editorial Fragua.
- Menéndez, M. I. (2020b). Periodismo e xénero em tempos do #Metoo (Journalism and Gender in the #MeToo Era). *Tempos Novos*, (274), 12-15.
- Mulvey, L. (1975). Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema. *Screen*, 16(3), 6-18.
- Muscio, I. (1998). *Cunt. A Declaration of Independence*. New York, NY: Seal Press.
- Nae, A. (2015). Remediating Pornography in *Game of Thrones*: Where Sex and Memory Intertwine. *[Inter]sections*, 6(18), 17-44. Retrieved from <https://intersections-journal.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/Andrei-Nae-article-1.pdf>
- Orte, C. & Ballester, L. (2019). *Nueva pornografía y cambios en las relaciones interpersonales* (New Pornography and Change in Interpersonal Relationships). Barcelona, Spain: Octaedro.
- Pacillo, E. L. (1998). Media Liability for Personal Injury Caused by Pornography. In S. French, W. Teays, & L. N. Purdy (Eds.), *Violence against Women. Philosophical Perspectives* (pp. 139-151). Ithaca, NY & London: Cornell University Press.
- Perkins, L. (2017). Introduction: Why This Book? In L. Perkins (Ed.), *#MeToo. Essays about How and Why This Happened, What It Means, and How to Make Sure It Never Happens Again* (pp. 1-6). Riverdale, UT: Riverdale Avenue Books.
- Pflum, M. (2018, October 15). A year ago, Alyssa Milano started a conversation about #MeToo. These women replied. *NBCNews*. Retrieved from: <https://www.nbcnews.com/>
- Pomares, F. (2016). Poder, política y género en la nueva televisión. La construcción del imaginario catódico del mundo de Poniente (Power, Politics, and Gender in the New Television. The Construction of the Cathodic Imaginary in the World of Westeros). In C. Mateos & F. J. Herrero (Coords.), *La pantalla insomne* (The Sleepless Screen) (pp. 2774-2790). Santa Cruz de Tenerife, Spain: Sociedad Latina de Comunicación Social.
- Projansky, S. (2001). *Watching Rape: Film and Television in a Postfeminist Culture*. New York, NY: New York University Press.
- Puleo, A. (2005). El patriarcado: ¿una organización social superada? (Patriarchy: An Outdated Social Organization?). *Temas para el debate*, 133, 39-42.
- Puleo, A. (2007). Introducción al concepto de género (Introduction to the Concept of Gender). In F. Plaza & C. Delgado (Eds.), *Género y comunicación* (Gender and communication) (pp.13-32). Madrid, Spain: Fundamentos.
- Reguero, P. (2019, January 26). Hermana, yo sí te creo: cómo llevar la perspectiva de las víctimas de la calle a los juzgados (I Believe You, Sister: How to Introduce the Victims' Perspective in the Court Room). *El Salto*. Retrieved from: <https://www.elsaltodiario.com/>

- Roche, D. (2015). Exploiting Exploitation Cinema: An Introduction. *Transatlantica. Revue d'études américaines. American Studies Journal*, 2. <https://doi.org/10.4000/transatlantica.7846>
- Rodríguez, A. (2015, June 18). Sobre la trivialización de las violaciones en Juego de Tronos (On the trivialization of rapes in Game of Thrones). *Hipertextual*. Retrieved from <https://hipertextual.com>
- Rohr, Z. & Benz, L. (2019). *Queenship and the Women of Westeros. Female Agency and Advice in Game of Thrones and A Song of Ice and Fire*. London, UK: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Rojas-La Morena, Á. J., Alcántara-Pilar, J. M., & Rodríguez-López, M. E. (2019). Sexo, violencia y estereotipos en el brand equity de una serie. El caso de Juego de Tronos (Sex, Violence, and Stereotypes in a Series' 'Brand Equity'. The Case of Game of Thrones). *Cuadernos de Gestión*, 19(1), 15-40. <https://doi.org/10.5295/cdg.170906ar>
- Salazar, D. (2019, May 7). La violación no fortalece: Un reclamo feminista contra Game of Thrones (Rape Does Not Make You Stronger. A Feminist Query against Game of Thrones). *Mexico.com*. Retrieved from <https://www.mexico.com/>
- Salter, J. (2013, April 1). Game of Thrones' George RR Martin: 'I'm a feminist at heart'. *The Telegraph*. Retrieved from <https://www.telegraph.co.uk>
- Sandqvist, E. (2012). *Politics, Hidden Agendas and a Game of Thrones: An Intersectional Analysis of Women's Sexuality in George R. R. Martin's 'A Game of Thrones'*. Luleå, Sweden: Luleå University of Technology.
- Sanmartín, J. (2000). *La violencia y sus claves (Violence and Its Keys)*. Barcelona, Spain: Ariel.
- Segato, R. L. (2003). *Las estructuras elementales de la violencia (The Elementary Structures of Violence)*. Buenos Aires: Prometeo.
- Schaefer, E. (2012). The Problem with Sexploitation Movies. *Iluminace*, 24(3), 148.
- Schubart, R. & Gjelsvik, A. (2016). Introduction. In R. Schubart & A. Gjelsvik (Eds.), *Women of Ice and Fire. Gender, Game of Thrones, and Multiple Media Engagements* (pp. 1-16). New York, NY: Bloomsbury Publishing.
- Sexual Assault Reports in U.S. Military Reach Record High: Pentagon. (2017, May 2). *NBC News*. Retrieved from <https://www.nbcnews.com>
- 'Un violador en tu camino', el performance feminista, da la vuelta al mundo ('A rapist on your way', the feminist performance, goes global). (2019, November 11). *Milenio*. Retrieved from <https://www.milenio.com>
- Valdés, I. (2018). *Violadas o muertas. Un alegato contra todas las "manadas" (y sus cómplices) (Raped or Dead. A Plea against 'Wolf Packs')*. Barcelona, Spain: Península.
- Vallés, M. (1999). *Técnicas cualitativas de investigación social: Reflexión metodológica y práctica profesional (Qualitative Techniques of Social Research: Methodological Reflection and Professional Practice)*. Madrid, Spain: Síntesis.
- Varela, I. (2019, May 15), Yo voto a Sansa (I Vote for Sansa). *Pikara Magazine*. Retrieved from <https://www.pikaramagazine.com>
- Varela, N. (2019). *Feminismo 4.0. La cuarta ola (Feminism 4.0. The Fourth Wave)*. Barcelona, Spain: Ediciones B.

- Vigarello, G. (1998). *Historia de la violación. Siglos XVI-XX* (A History of Rape, 16th-20th Centuries). Madrid, Spain: Cátedra.
- Zas Marcos, M. (2019, May 6). Éxodo de apoyos en 'Juego de tronos': el muro del patriarcado no ha caído en Poniente (Exodus of supports in 'Game of Thrones': the wall of patriarchy has not fallen in Westeros). *Ver Tele!* Retrieved from <https://vertele.eldiario.es/>
- Zeisler, A. (2013, June 7). Does It Matter Whether “Game of Thrones” Is Feminist? *BitchMedia*. Retrieved from <https://www.bitchmedia.org/>
- Zurian, F., & Herrero, B. (2014). Los estudios de género y la teoría fílmica feminista como marco teórico y metodológico para la investigación en Cultura Audiovisual (Gender studies and Feminist Film Theory as a Theoretical and Methodological Framework for Research in Audiovisual Culture). *Área Abierta*, 14(3), 5-21. https://doi.org/10.5209/rev_ARAB.2014.v14.n3.46357
- #NiUnaMenos, vivxs nos queremos (#NiUnaMenos, We Want to Live). (2015). Buenos Aires, Argentina: Milena Caserola.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

MARÍA ISABEL MENÉNDEZ MENÉNDEZ, associate professor of Audiovisual Communication and Advertising at the Universidad de Burgos. She holds a Ph.D. in Philosophy and a degree in Journalism, and her academic career is focused on the feminist analysis of the discourses produced by cultural industries. As a result, she has published more than a hundred articles, monographs, and chapters in collective works. In 2009 she obtained the III Prize for Research on Gender Violence from the Universitat de les Illes Balears.

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7373-6885>.

MARTA FERNÁNDEZ MORALES, Ph.D. from the Universidad de Oviedo and associate professor at the same institution. Her research focuses on American cultural manifestations, especially literature, film, and television. She is the author of four books and editor of eight others, and her work has appeared in journals such as *Feminist Theory*, *Television and New Media*, *Women's Studies*, *L'Atalante*, and *Atlantis*. She has been main researcher of two R+D+i projects and has participated as a researcher in national and international projects.

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9116-3950>