

Daenerys Targaryen in George R. R. Martin's *A Game of Thrones*: Feminist Criticism

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Abstract:

The study analysed a prominent character in George R. R. Martin's A Game of Thrones, Daenerys Targaryen, through feminist criticism. The study employed qualitative document analysis of the novel where discourse in the forms of characters' conversations and the author's narration surrounding Daenerys were interpreted through feminist criticism. The study found seven main themes regarding how Daenerys was portrayed. The first three themes highlight Daenerys' total helplessness in front of men and patriarchal society. The first was her obedience to her brother, Viserys. The second was her forced marriage to Khal Drogo for her brother's interest. Thirdly, despite the marriage, Daenerys had an unequal position to Khal Drogo, with her treated as merely an object of sexual pleasure rather than a partner. The next two themes highlight Daenerys' growing courage to defy Viserys and her elevated position among her husband's people after successfully asserting herself in her marriage to Khal Drogo and being pregnant with his boy child. The next theme was her loss of power due to her husband's loss of power due to ill-health. The last highlights her strong conviction against all odds and her self-made rise to power by "birthing" dragons and coming out of the fire unscathed. All in all, even though most of Daenerys' journey of gaining a certain degree of authority came from her association with male characters, it was her decisive choices and actions that eventually led her to be a leader for her own right.

Keywords: *Daenerys Targaryen, A Game of Thrones, Feminist Literary Criticism*

INTRODUCTION

Among popular novels written by authors by the end of the 20th and the beginning of the 21st century, *A Game of Thrones* by Martin (2011) may be one of the most popular. Originally published in 1996, *A Game of Thrones* by Martin (2011) is the first novel of a series of fantasy novels called “*A Song of Ice and Fire*” by George R. R. Martin. As of 2017, 90 million copies had been sold and the novel had been translated into 47 different languages, suggesting its worldwide popularity. The novel recounts events from multiple points of view and introduced the plotlines about the noble houses of Westeros, with three principal storylines – that happening in the Seven Kingdoms, on The Wall, and across the narrow sea. The novel became the basis of the subsequent novels in the “*A Song of Ice and Fire*” series. The novel also became the namesake of the basis of its HBO television adaptation series, which later became one of the most highly rated television series in the world. Due to its fame, the television show adaptation has also been closely examined by several authors (McKay, 2018; Silva et al., 2015; Steiner, 2015; Terres, 2019; Virino & Ortega, 2019; Wells-Lassagne, 2014), suggesting the popularity of the television adaptation among critics.

Despite the contribution of the aforementioned literary studies, the present study intended to analyse Daenerys Targaryen, a prominent point of view character, through feminist literary criticism. That was because this character was mostly analysed through the portrayal in its television adaptation rather than in the novel (Steiner, 2015; Terres, 2019; Virino & Ortega, 2019). Novels provide minute and much more elaborate details suggesting a character’s personalities, attitudes, and responses to surroundings. Thus, analysing this character as portrayed in the original novel may give justice to this character, and as far as this article is concerned, through the lens of feminism.

Daenerys Targaryen or often called “Dany” was one of the last surviving members of House Targaryen along with her older brother Viserys. 13 years before the events of Martin's (2011) *A Game of Thrones* happened, House Targaryen had ruled Westeros for around 300 years before King Aerys Targaryen was ousted by Robert Baratheon who would be the next king of Westeros. The king and Rhaegar Targaryen, the heir to the throne, were killed in the rebellion. Daenerys was born around the downfall of her father. She was quickly brought to Essos, located across the narrow sea, along with his second and remaining brother, Viserys Targaryen, seven years of age at the time, to avoid being purged. Since then, the two Targaryens lived in exile. This article analysed her life from the age of 13 as depicted in Martin's (2011) *A Game of Thrones* from feminist literary criticism.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Literature is often seen as the representation of society as it often conveys universal and recurring patterns of humans’ behaviours across time and era (Al-Lehaibi, 2014). Law (2012) asserted that literature has been an obligatory element in the curriculum of various language disciplines. Perhaps attributed to this important role of literature, many authors have been investigating literary works using various literary criticisms. Among others, examples include literary works analysed using new criticism (Subekti & Wahyuni, 2021),

ecofeminism (Abbasi & Moslehi, 2016), psychological analysis (Subekti et al., 2020), deconstruction (Heidar & Zamzia, 2012), critical literacy (Subekti, 2017), postmodernism (Karim, 2013), ecocriticism (Hernawati, 2021), and intertextuality (Nurgiyantoro & Efendi, 2017).

Among the phenomena where literary works mirror real-life society and culture was perhaps the various oppressions experienced by female characters in literary works. In many literary works, women are often viewed and placed in an inferior position to men. Female characters, at the very least, do not possess equal rights and opportunities to male characters (Nurgiyantoro, 2019). What is written in literary works may also mirror with happens in society (Wiyatmi, 2012). The patriarchal system in society is seen as a major reason why women are continuously and systematically oppressed (Ritzer & Stepnisky, 2017). The oppressions experienced by women in many sectors of life had triggered feminist movements whose main goal is to fight the injustices experienced by women and demand equal rights to that of men in society (Habib, 2005; Nurgiyantoro, 2019).

The feminist movements eventually inspired feminist literary criticism with the realisation that oppression towards women in society has been widely reflected in countless literary works, especially by male authors. Feminist literary criticism describes oppression towards female characters in literary works and reconstructs as well as re-reads literary works with more focus on female characters or literary works written by female authors (Wiyatmi, 2012). The work by Mayer (2018), for example, analysed a female Nigerian author, Ifeoma Okoye's novel *The Fourth World from a socialist feminist perspective*. The female protagonist in the novel, a young girl named Chira was forced to be the breadwinner for their family after her father's painful death in a government hospital. The novel also noted many calamitous events mainly caused by the poverty surrounding Chira's life in her neighbourhood, for examples among others, lack of healthcare access led to her neighbour's post-natal death, and the death of a baby, a neighbour's death due to a workplace accident, and Chira's mother's death due to protracted illness (Mayer, 2018). Mayer (2018) noted how Chira, against all odds, could overcome a series of hardships growing up in the "fourth world" in the 21st century amidst the humiliating world of poverty. Other than Mayer (2018), many other authors have analysed literary works like novels using the feminist literary criticism in recent years (Anggraeni et al., 2022; Banu & Mohanagiri, 2018; Darweesh & Ghayadh, 2016), suggesting the popularity of this literary criticism among scholars.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The present study employed qualitative document analysis (Creswell, 2014) using feminist literary criticism to examine the discourse in Martin's (2011) *A Game of Thrones* manifested in characters' speech, conversation, and the author's narration. In this sense, novels can be regarded as discourse (Cook, 1990), derived from a Latin word, "discursus" meaning speech or conversation. Discourse involves, among others, language in situational as well as cultural contexts (Trappes-Lomax, 2004). Hence, the excerpts of interactions among characters and the narration to highlight the portrayal of Daenerys Targaryen in

Martin's (2011) *A Game of Thrones* were analysed through the lens of feminist literary criticism. This literary criticism, according to Barry (2009) involves revaluing women's experiences and examining the representation of women in literature. It also examines power relations – showing the extent of patriarchy, and recognising language's role in making what is constructed and social seem "natural" and given (Barry, 2009).

To present the analysis, the present study presented the findings in the form of relevant themes followed by excerpts about the narration and the characters' dialogues representing each theme. This was followed by the discussion from the feminist perspective. This was in line with the qualitative design employed in this study emphasising rich as well as in-depth descriptions of findings and analysis (Creswell, 2014; Gray, 2014). Though there may be several earlier versions of the novel since its first publication in 1996, for consistent reference tracing, the 2011 edition of the novel (Martin, 2011) was used throughout the report.

FINDINGS

The study found seven major themes regarding the portrayal of Daenerys Targaryen seen from feminist literary criticism. This can be observed in Table 1.

Table 1. Major Themes about the Portrayal of Daenerys Targaryen from Feminism Perspective

No	Themes
1.	Daenerys was obedient to Viserys Targaryen, his brother.
2.	Daenerys was forced to marry Khal Drogo.
3.	Daenerys was merely an object of sexual pleasure in the early days of her marriage with Khal Drogo.
4.	Daenerys defied Viserys after becoming a khaleesi, the wife of a khal.
5.	Daenerys' position among the Dothraki got elevated due to her marriage to Khal Drogo and subsequently being pregnant with his boychild.
6.	Daenerys lost power after Drogo's deteriorating health.
7.	Daenerys demonstrated a strong conviction and rose to power on her own right.

DISCUSSION

Theme 1. Daenerys was obedient to Viserys Targaryen, his brother.

Viserys, Dany's brother, regarded himself as King Viserys though in reality he lived in exile and wielded no power. A powerful merchant, Illyrio, housed the Targaryens in exile. Whilst Viserys thought it was given due to his position as the heir to the throne of Westeros, called the "Iron Throne", Dany knew that Illyrio was no more than a merchant that would sell even a friend for the right price, which was the reality. Nevertheless, she never dared to oppose her brother as it could "wake the dragon" as Viserys put it, "She knew better than to question her brother when he wove his webs of dreams. His anger was a terrible thing when roused. Viserys called it "waking the dragon" (Martin, 2011, p. 29).

Viserys planned to marry Dany off to Khal Drogo, a leader of a Dothraki horde with the intention that the khal would give him soldiers to take back the Iron Throne from Robert Baratheon.

“You still slouch. Straighten yourself” He pushed back her shoulders with his hands. “Let them see that you have a woman’s shape now.” His fingers brushed lightly over her budding breasts and tightened on a nipple. “You will not fail me tonight. If you do, it will go hard for you. You don’t want to wake the dragon, do you?” His fingers twisted her, the pinch cruelly hard through the rough fabric of her tunic. “Do you?” he repeated.

“No,” Dany said meekly. (Martin, 2011, p. 29)

From the excerpts, it could be seen that Dany was powerless and she had no choice but to surrender to her brother's order of marriage to Khal Drogo, despite her not knowing him at all. She was positioned as an object Viserys could sell to gain his dream of getting back the Iron Throne and Dany did not have any courage to go against her brother.

Theme 2. Daenerys was forced to marry Khal Drogo.

When Khal Drogo was about to arrive to see Dany, Viserys asked Illyrio, “Are you sure that Khal Drogo likes his women this young?” (Martin, 2011, p. 33), further indicating Dany’s silenced voice regarding her marriage to Khal Drogo. Viserys never asked Dany’s opinion on her marrying Khal Drogo. He considered Dany his tool to achieve his dream.

Dany desperately begged her brother to cancel the marriage and went home to Illyrio's house. However, Viserys snapped and told her that their "home" had been taken away from them in Westeros. Hence, if Dany desired to go "home", she should marry Khal Drogo.

“I don’t want to be his queen,” she heard herself say in a small, thin voice. “Please, please, Viserys, I don’t want to, I want to go home.”

"Home?" He kept his voice low, but she could hear the fury in his tone. "How are we to go home, sweet sister? They took our home from us!" He drew her into the shadows, out of sight, his fingers digging into her skin. "How are we to go home?" he repeated, meaning King's Landing, Dragonstone, and all the realm they had lost. (Martin, 2011, p. 38)

When Khal Drogo arrived to see whether he was interested in Daenerys, Viserys threatened Dany to make a good impression, highlighting Dany should show she had breasts.

“Smile,” Viserys whispered nervously, his hand failing to the hilt of his sword. “And stand up straight. Let him see that you have breasts. Gods know, you have little enough as is.”

Daenerys smiled, and stood up straight. (Martin, 2011, p. 38)

From the aforementioned excerpts, it could be seen that Dany was sold to Khal Drogo against her will so that Viserys could be given Dothraki soldiers to take back the Iron Thrones. Her sole job was to please her husband so that her husband would eventually give

her brother what he wanted – soldiers to take the Iron Throne. Dany had neither voice regarding her marriage nor any standing position. She was considered merely a ‘trade object’ among males, her brother and his husband.

Theme 3. Daenerys was merely an object of sexual pleasure in the early days of her marriage with Khal Drogo.

Soon after her marriage to Khal Drogo, Dany felt so alone and helpless. She was in the middle of Dothraki horde who had a very different culture and language. She should not fail her brother, however, she was afraid of her husband, a giant figure perhaps twice her size, when they should consummate the marriage.

As the hours passed, the terror grew in Dany, until it was all she could do not to scream. She was afraid of the Dothraki... She was afraid of her brother, of what he might do if she failed him. Most of all, she was afraid of what would happen tonight under the stars, when her brother gave her up to the hulking giant who sat drinking beside her with a face as still and cruel as a bronze mask. (Martin, 2011, p. 103)

Though Dany was afraid of her husband, perhaps Dany never thought that she would be treated as merely a sex object rather than a marriage partner.

...every night, sometime before the dawn, Drogo would come to her tent and wake her in the dark, to ride her as relentlessly as he rode his stallion. He always took her from behind, Dothraki fashion, for which Dany was grateful; that way her lord husband could not see the tears that wet her face, and she could use her pillow to muffle her cries of pain. (Martin, 2011, p. 228)

From these excerpts, it could be seen that Khal Drogo did not see Dany as his equal or at least treat her with a certain degree of respect. He only treated her as an object of sexual pleasure. This happened continuously every night until one night Dany felt she could no longer bear it and decided to end her life that night.

Day followed day, and night followed night, until Dany knew she could not endure a moment longer. She would kill herself rather than go on, she decided one night . . . Yet when she slept that night, she dreamt the dragon dream again... There was only her and the dragon. Its scales were black as night, wet and slick with blood. Her blood, Dany sensed.... She felt strong and new and fierce. And the next day, strangely, she did not seem to hurt quite so much. (Martin, 2011, p. 228)

After Dany dreamed of a dragon, she seemed to gain her energy to continue living and ‘conquering’ Khal Drogo, marking her transition into a more recognised figure both in her marriage with Khal Drogo and among the Dothraki.

Theme 4. Daenerys defied Viserys after becoming a khaleesi, the wife of a khal.

As Dany slowly gained Drogo’s favour in marriage, she began to love her new Dothraki family as well as exerted control among the Dothraki. One time, seeing the beautiful

scenery, suddenly Dany felt the urge to feel the ground. She dismounted from her horse, making all behind her come to stop as well, including Viserys, to his fury.

You dare!" he screamed at her. "You give commands to me? To me?"... "Have you forgotten who you are? Look at you. Look at you!"

He was still screaming. "You do not command the dragon. Do you understand? I am the Lord of the Seven Kingdoms, I will not hear orders from some horselord's slut, do you hear me?" His hand went under her vest, his fingers digging painfully into her breast.

"Do you hear me?"

Dany shoved him away, hard.

Viserys stared at her, his lilac eyes incredulous. She had never defied him. Never fought back. (Martin, 2011, pp. 230-231)

When Viserys was overcome with fury and was about to hurt Dany, one of the Dothraki swung his whip around Viserys' throat and yanked him backward.

"Jhogo asks if you would have him dead, Khaleesi," Irri said.

"No," Dany replied. "No."

Jhogo understood that. One of the others barked out a comment, and the Dothraki laughed. Irri told her, "Quaro thinks you should take an ear to teach him respect."

...

"Tell them I do not wish him harmed," Dany said.

...

"Take his horse," Dany commanded Ser Jorah. Viserys gaped at her. He could not believe what he was hearing; nor could Dany quite believe what she was saying. Yet the words came. "Let my brother walk behind us back to the khalasar." Among the Dothraki, the man who does not ride was no man at all, the lowest of the low, without honour or pride. "Let everyone see him as he is." (Martin, 2011, pp. 230-231)

The event depicted in the aforementioned excerpts suggested that the table had turned for Daenerys. For the first time in her life, she dared to defy her brother and even punish him for what he had done. However, this newly acquired courage was heavily attributed to her being a khaleesi, a khal's wife, heavily favoured by him.

Theme 5. Daenerys' position among the Dothraki got elevated due to her marriage to Khal Drogo and subsequently being pregnant with his boychild.

As she now enjoyed her life among the Dothraki, including riding horses with Drogo's khalasar, she began to feel like a real princess. She even rode her horse in front, along with

Khal Drogo suggesting Dany's elevated position considering Dothraki's very patriarchal culture positioning women in a very low position both in marriage and in their khalasar.

“She wheeled her horse about and galloped down the ridge alone... All her life Viserys had told her she was a princess, but not until she rode her silver had Daenerys Targaryen ever felt like one... Dany began to notice the beauty of the land around her. She rode at the head of the khalasar with Drogo and his bloodriders, so she came to each country fresh and unspoiled. (Martin, 2011, pp. 227-228)

As Dany was pregnant with Khal Drogo's child, it was customary to bring her to Vaes Dothrak the “hometown” of all the Dothraki hordes. There, a pregnant khaleesi should consume an entire raw stallion heart whilst priestesses comprising of the widows of slain khals read the meaning of numerous omens in a special ceremony. There, Dany's child in her womb was declared “The stallion who mounts the world” by called the priestesses called the crones. It meant that Dany's child was prophesied to the khal of khals, a khal who would unite all the Dothraki khalasars.

The old woman trembled and looked at Dany almost as if she were afraid. “The prince is riding, and he shall be the stallion who mounts the world.” “The stallion who mounts the world!” the onlookers cried in echo, until the night rang to the sound of their voices.

The one-eyed crone peered at Dany. “What shall he be called, the stallion who mounts the world?”

She stood to answer. “He shall be called Rhaego,” she said... Her hands touched the swell beneath her breasts protectively as a roar went up from the Dothraki. “Rhaego,” they screamed. “Rhaego, Rhaego, Rhaego! (Martin, 2011, pp. 491-492)

After obtaining validation of the ‘future’ of her child, Dany seemed to gain more power within Drogo's khalasar. Nevertheless, once again this power seemed to come from her being pregnant with “a stallion of mounts the world”, Drogo's unborn baby boy. Thus, it could be said that her being pregnant solidified her position, suggesting women are (more) valued when they can bear children, a boy as the continuation of their husbands' family lines on top of that.

Theme 6. Daenerys lost her power after Drogo's health deteriorated.

One day Khal Drogo sustained an injury on his chest after a raid on a fight with a fellow Dothraki in dispute. Dany asked Mirri Maz Duur, a maegi and healer she saved from rape in the raid to treat his injury. After some time, however, the wound festered and Khal Drogo's condition deteriorated and subsequently fell from his horse.

“Khaleesi,” Jhiqui said, “he fell from his horse.”

Trembling, her eyes full of sudden tears, Dany turned away from them. He fell from his horse! ... They could not keep it secret, and Dany knew what that meant. A khal who could not ride could not rule, and Drogo had fallen from his horse. (Martin, 2011, p. 705)

Ser Jorah, an exiled knight from Westeros who was always by Dany's side advised her to flee before Drogo died as once he died, nobody could protect Dany and the child in her womb. Only then she realised all the power she thought she had, came from Khal Drogo. He was the shield keeping her safe.

"Your khal is good as dead, Princess."

...

"Khal Drogo commanded them to keep me safe," Dany replied uncertainly, "but if he dies..." She touched the swell of her belly. "I don't understand. Why should we flee? I am khaleesi. I carry Drogo's heir. He will be khal after Drogo..." Ser Jorah frowned. "Princess, hear me. The Dothraki will not follow a suckling babe.

Drogo's strength was what they bowed to, and only that. When he is gone, Jhaqo and Pono and the other kos will fight for his place, and this khalasar will devour itself. The winner will want no more rivals. The boy will be taken from your breast the moment he is born. They will give him to the dog..."

...

Drogo had been more than her sun-and-stars; he had been the shield that kept her safe. (Martin, 2011, pp. 706-707)

To save Khal Drogo's life, Dany asked Mirri Maz Duur to use magic and she agreed to it. However, in the process, unknown to Dany, the ritual not only cost Drogo's horse but also Dany's child, causing stillbirth with a monstrous appearance. It saved Drogo's life but he was in a vegetative state. Mirri Maz Duur acknowledged that she did it on purpose to avoid more destructions by Khal Drogo and Dany's child if he was ever born. Knowing Drogo's vegetative condition, his khalasar dispersed itself.

A count might show a hundred people, no more. Where the other forty thousand had made their camp, only the wind and dust lived now. "Drogo's khalasar is gone," she said.

"A khal who cannot ride is no khal," said Jhogo. (Martin, 2011, p. 758)

From this, it is clear that Dany's power and authority thus far came from his husband. Once his husband lost his power, Dany also lost hers. By this moment, she no longer had powerful husband, lost her baby boy, and her husband's khalasar she thought she had. She was almost equally powerless as she was when she was married off to Khal Drogo by his brother.

Theme 7. Daenerys demonstrated a strong conviction and rose to power on her own right.

Seeing Drogo's vegetative state, Dany asked Mirri Maz Duur when Drogo regained his strength.

“When will he be as he was?” Dany demanded. “When the sun rises in the west and sets in the east,” said Mirri Maz Duur. “When the seas go dry and mountains blow in the wind like leaves. When your womb quickens again, and you bear a living child. Then he will return, and not before.” (Martin, 2011, p. 759)

At this point, Dany realised that not only would Drogo come back as he was before, but she would never bear any child. That means she no longer could depend on Drogo for protection and for achieving her dream and she could never bear an heir for anybody. In a world where birthing ability seemed to be the biggest forte a noblewoman could have, Dany's inability to do so may compel her to make her destiny. In the end, she let go her husband of his pain.

Inside the tent Dany found a cushion, soft silk stuffed with feathers. She clutched it to her breasts as she walked back out to Drogo, to her sun-and-stars... She knelt, kissed Drogo on the lips, and pressed the cushion down across his face. (Martin, 2011, p. 761)

She put her three dragon eggs on Drogo's funeral pyre. Dany intended to burn her alive with Dany herself walking into the blazing fire, to which intention Ser Jorah strongly opposed.

“Princess . . .” he began.

“Why do you call me that?” Dany challenged him. “My brother Viserys was your king, was he not?” “He was, my lady.”

“Viserys is dead. I am his heir, the last blood of House Targaryen. Whatever was his is mine now.”

“My . . . queen,” Ser Jorah said, going to one knee. “My sword that was his is yours, Daenerys. And my heart as well, that never belonged to your brother.” (Martin, 2011, p. 799)

...

Please, Khaleesi. I know what you intend. Do not. Do not.”

“I must,” Dany told him. She touched his face, fondly, sadly. “You do not understand.”

“I understand that you loved him,” Ser Jorah said in a voice thick with despair. “I loved my lady wife once, yet I did not die with her. You are my queen, my sword is yours, but do not ask me to stand aside as you climb on Drogo's pyre. I will not watch you burn.”

“Is that what you fear?” Dany kissed him lightly on his broad forehead. “I am not such a child as that, sweet ser.”

“You do not mean to die with him? You swear it, my queen?”

“I swear it... (Martin, 2011, pp. 799-800)

Before she went into the fire, she made a speech in front of the remaining people staying, asserting they were her khalasar.

“You will be my khalasar,” she told them. “I see the faces of slaves. I free you. Take off your collars. Go if you wish, no one shall harm you. If you stay, it will be as brothers and sisters, husbands and wives.” (Martin, 2011, p. 800)

Dany ordered Ser Jorah to bind Mirri Maz Duur. Dany poured the oil over the woman’s head herself.

“I thank you, Mirri Maz Duur,” she said, “for the lessons you have taught me.”

“You will not hear me scream,” Mirri responded as the oil dripped from her hair and soaked her clothing.

“I will,” Dany said, “but it is not your screams I want, only your life. I remember what you told me. Only death can pay for life.” (Martin, 2011, p. 803)

Dany lit the pyre herself and as it was set ablaze, Dany went into the fire full of conviction about what would happen.

Ser Jorah was shouting behind her, but he did not matter anymore, only the fire mattered... Her vest had begun to smolder, so Dany shrugged it off and let it fall to the ground... She heard a crack, the sound of shattering stone... And there came a second crack, loud and sharp as thunder... the voices of the Dothraki raised in shouts of fear and terror, and Ser Jorah calling her name and cursing. No, she wanted to shout to him, no, my good knight, do not fear for me. The fire is mine. I am Daenerys Stormborn, daughter of dragons, bride of dragons, mother of dragons, don’t you see? Don’t you SEE? With a belch of flame and smoke that reached thirty feet into the sky, the pyre collapsed and came down around her. Unafraid, Dany stepped forward into the firestorm, calling to her children... The third crack was as loud and sharp as the breaking of the world.” (Martin, 2011) (pp. 805-806)

The aforementioned excerpts suggested Dany’s conviction of what she wanted to do. She did not care about anybody’s opinions and suggestions. At this point, she had transformed herself into a strong woman with nothing more to lose who was ready to do what was necessary to obtain her goal. And it seemed that her conviction turned out to be right.

... her clothes turned to ash, her beautiful hair all crisped away . . . yet she was unhurt.

The cream-and-gold dragon was suckling at her left breast, the green-and-bronze at the right. Her arms cradled them close. The black-and-scarlet beast was draped across her shoulders, its long sinuous neck coiled under her chin... Wordless, the knight fell to his knees. The men of her khas came up behind him. Jhogo was the first to lay his arakh at her feet. “Blood of my blood,” he murmured, pushing his face to the smoking earth. “Blood of my blood,” she heard Aggo echo. “Blood of my blood,” Rakharo shouted...

As Daenerys Targaryen rose to her feet, her black hissed, pale smoke venting from its mouth and nostrils. The other two pulled away from her breasts and added their voices to the call, translucent wings unfolding and stirring the air, and for the first time in hundreds of years, the night came alive with the music of dragons. (Martin, 2011, p. 806)

To the shock of Ser Jorah and the remaining Dothraki, Dany was unhurt and around her were three newborn dragons. The big fire and Mirri Maz Duur's life triggered the hatching

of the three dragon eggs, the first in over a hundred years. Witnessing the event first-hand, the remaining Dothraki who used to regard Dany as merely the wife of a dead khal now considered her their true leader in her own right, uttering a famous Dothraki phrase, "blood of my blood".

Generally, regarding the portrayal of Daenerys in *A Game of Thrones* by Martin (2011), several points can be highlighted. George R. R. Martin put Dany as a prominent point of view character. In most parts of her narrative, she was pictured as either a weak woman in such an inferior position or a woman with a certain degree of control and power. However, the latter was attributed to Dany's association with male characters, for example, being a wife of a mighty Khal Drogo and being pregnant with his baby boy. It was only when Dany was deprived of all these associations, she could make a big decision that eventually led to her initial rise to power as the one coming out of fire unburnt and 'birthing' dragons in more than a century. In this sense, it may also be interpreted that George R. R. Martin pictured Dany as someone who could assume a leadership position only after losing or sacrificing so much. The Dothraki's and Ser Jorah's acknowledgement of Dany also came after they witness her being unburnt of fire, an ability only a few Targaryens throughout history had, with three dragons by her side on top of it. This suggested how almost difficult it was for women to get acknowledged in *A Game of Thrones* universe.

The aforementioned being said, the journey of Daenerys Targaryen as a character in Martin's (2011) *A Game of Thrones*, despite leading to the character's top ending, was full of stories of oppression towards her either physically, emotionally, or socially. Thus, as a whole, the portrayal of Daenerys Targaryen may not be very feminist. Indirectly, it may suggest among others the following: to obtain power women firstly need the approval or the favour of men, women's power comes from men, women should bear children to feel worthy, and it takes so much sacrifice for women to finally have voice and power on their own right.

CONCLUSION

The portrayal of Daenerys Targaryen in Martin's (2011) *A Game of Thrones* seen from feminist criticism may not be as straightforward as it may seem. What seems to be a big feminist character in the novel may be portrayed through a not-so-feminist lens. Whilst some readers, especially the feminist ones, may be satisfied with her whole character arch from a meek young girl to a khaleesi birthing dragon, minute details on the process of how she became what she became may solidify the patriarchal message rather than challenging it.

Furthermore, Martin's (2011) *A Game of Thrones* has other female point-of-view characters that could also be further analysed using the same or different literary criticism. In literature classes, for example, teachers could ask learners to deconstruct these female character arcs freely in reader-response criticism. Alternatively, learners can also compare a female character in Martin's (2011) *A Game of Thrones* with a female character in another novel by the same author. Then, differences or similarities could be identified through an intertextuality lens.

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