GRAU D'ESTUDIS ANGLESOS

Issues, challenges and choices in adapting George R.R. Martin's

A Song of Ice and Fire into the television show *Game of Thrones*

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ABSTRACT

This project aims to spread one of the most recent perspectives in the field of adaptation studies, Andrea Benyon's introduction of what she refers to as "affective fidelity". The inadequate use of faithfulness as a criterion for judging film adaptations was challenged in the early 90s, and many experts in the field have concluded that novel and film should not be judged by their resemblances, especially since the former is a single-track creation while the latter is a multi-track product. Andrea Benyon shares this stance, but also insists that it is the adapters' responsibility to trigger similar emotional responses as those generated in the source material, given that a successful adaptation is one that can please both knowing and unknowing audiences. In line with this point of view, this project analyzes whether the successful television series *Game of Thrones* (2011-2019) has managed to maintain affective fidelity compared to the text it is based on, George R.R. Martin's book series *A Song of Ice and Fire* (1996-).

Key words: Affective fidelity, adaptation studies, knowing and unknowing audiences, *A Song of Ice and Fire, Game of Thrones.*

RESUMEN

Este estudio tiene como objetivo difundir uno de los enfoques más recientes en el campo de la adaptación literaria, la introducción por parte de Andrea Benyon de lo que ella denomina "fidelidad afectiva". El uso inadecuado de la fidelidad como criterio para juzgar las adaptaciones cinematográficas fue cuestionado a principios de los años 90. Muchos expertos en la materia han llegado a la conclusión de que novela y adaptación no deben ser juzgadas por sus similitudes, dado que no comparten los mismos medios de comunicación. Andrea Benyon comparte esta postura, pero insiste también en que es responsabilidad de los adaptadores generar en su audiencia emociones similares a las que se dieron en el texto en el que se basan, dado que una adaptación exitosa es aquella que puede agradar tanto a nuevas audiencias como aquellas familiarizadas con la novela. De acuerdo con este punto de vista, este proyecto analiza si la exitosa serie de televisión *Juego de Tronos* (2011-2019) ha logrado mantener dicha fidelidad afectiva respecto a la saga de novelas de George R.R. Martin en las que se basa, *Canción de Hielo y Fuego* (1996-).

Palabras clave: Fidelidad afectiva, adaptaciones literarias, audiencia consciente e inconsciente, *Canción de Hielo y Fuego, Juego de Tronos.*

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Project rationale

Game of Thrones (2011-2019) could easily be described as one of the greatest, best produced and written television shows of all time, if not the absolute best. Not only is it the most watched one by a large margin, but it also has great reviews from many experts in the matter around the globe. I myself am a great fan of the show, just as much as I am of the series of novels which it is based on. Persuaded as I am that they will become literary classics in the near future, I decided to take the opportunity to study the transition from book to film, as I am well aware of the recent discussion there has been regarding fidelity in the field of adaptation studies. With that in mind, in this project I plan to support one of the most recent approaches to this debate, namely, Andrea Benyon's idea of adaptations not having to be faithful to the elements of narrative in the adapted text, but having to maintain what she calls "affective fidelity" (2020).

1.2. Main thesis

I argue that the adaptation of the book series *A Song of Ice and Fire* (1996-)*, Game of Thrones,* is a much simpler reading of the narrative elements that form the original source text. Yet the multi-track elements that shape the television show have been able to maintain affective fidelity and trigger similar emotional responses from both knowing and unknowing audiences.

To prove my point, I will analyse a number of different pivotal scenes in the show that, despite displaying major narrative differences from the adapted text, succeeded in triggering a similar emotional response thanks to the use of television's multi-track elements.

1.3. Objectives

Additionally, a number of specific goals have been set for this project in order to reach the main objective of proving the main thesis. These are:

→ Briefly discussing the history of adaptation studies.
→ The inadequate use of fidelity as a criterion for judging film adaptations.
→ Distinguishing between knowing and unknowing audiences.
→ Defining the latest terms of affective and textual fidelity.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This essay focuses on the study of film adaptation, a relatively recent field of study that focuses on the process of translating a piece of literature into film. In the sections that follow, I address the main points of discussion that experts on the matter have dealt with throughout the years, aiming to set a basis for my subsequent analysis of the adaptation of George R.R. Martin novels.

2.1. Original versus copy

In the early stages of film adaptation studies, the idea that literary work was superior to its subsequent film adaptation was defended by many experts on the field. As expressed by Mireia Aragay in *Books in Motion,* "the literary work was conceived of as the valued original, while the film adaptation was merely a copy" (2005, p. 14). In fact, up until the late 1970s adaptation studies resonated with Walter Benjamin's essay "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction", where he claimed that film technology obliterates the originality and uniqueness of a literary work and thus leads towards the "liquidation of the traditional value of the cultural heritage" (Aragay, 2005, p. 12; the quote is from Benjamin, 1968, pp. 223-4). In his article "Beyond Fidelity: The Dialogics of Adaptation" Robert Stam claims that the reasoning behind this popular assumption was mainly derived from a number of superimposed prejudices such as "*seniority,* the assumption that older arts are necessarily better arts; *iconophobia,* the culturally rooted prejudice [...] that visual arts are necessarily inferior to the verbal arts; and *logophilia,* the converse valorisation [...] of the 'sacred word' of holy texts" (2000, p. 58).

Additionally, early adaptation studies emerged mainly from English literature departments and were developed by critics that tended to be somewhat prejudiced in favour of written texts. A frequent reference in those early days was the novelist Virginia Woolf, who Aragay's words depicted cinema "as a rapacious animal of prey or parasite devouring 'its unfortunate victim', literature" (2005, p. 12; the quote is paraphrased from Woolf, 1966, pp. 269-70). It was not until one of the pioneers in the field, George Bluestone, published *Novels into Film* in 1957 that the idea of literary works being superior to their adaptations was first challenged. In his work, Bluestone argues that a film adaptation and its literary source cannot really be judged according to each other's standards since the two media differ on so many levels, the former being linguistic and conceptual while the latter is predominantly visual and perceptual (Bluestone, 1957, p. viii-ix). However, despite seeming like Bluestone was ready to leave

behind the critical paradigm that had been prevalent up until that point, he could not really get rid of the it, stating that novels are far "more complex" than films and that the literary source occupies a higher position because "its history is longer and its materials more refined" (1957, p. 7). Nevertheless, the idea of the two media being incommensurable had already been introduced and in the late 1970's the superiority of literature over films was finally laid to rest by Keith Cohen in *Film and Fiction: The Dynamics of Exchange*. Cohen sets out to explore "the exchange of energies from the movies, an art originally so thoroughly informed by a nineteenth-century sensibility, to the modern novel, whose major innovations will be seen as closely patterned after those in cinema" (Cohen, 1979, p. 3). Therefore, in Aragay's words, "the dynamics of exchange […] work both ways between film and fiction – an argument which instantly undermines claims for the superiority of literature vis-à-vis cinema" (2005, p. 18). This claim paved the way for a new school of thought that would radically change the basis of adaptation studies, a change that was summed up in Linda Hutcheon's *A Theory of Adaptation* when she stated that "one lesson is that to be second is not to be secondary or inferior; likewise, to be first is not to be originary or authoritative" (2006, pp. xiii).

2.2. Fidelity in film adaptation

In combination with the notion that a literary work was superior to its subsequent film adaptation due to the assumptions of *seniority* and *iconophobia*, among others, adaptation studies were also poorly served by a narrow focus on fidelity. Aragay claims that "the discourse of fidelity has exercised a firm, persistent grip within the field of adaptation studies" (2005, p. 12), while Brian McFarlane states in his book *Novel to Film* that "the adducing of fidelity to the original novel as a major criterion for judging the film adaptation is pervasive (and) no critical line is in greater need of re-examination" (1996, p. 8).

In order to re-evaluate such premise, experts on the matter started by questioning the possibility of being thoroughly faithful when adapting literary work. Stam, for instance, points out how the shift from a single-track creation, which can only rely on words, to a multi-track product such as a film, which can count on image, performance and sound, among other elements, "explains the unlikelihood – and I would suggest even the undesirability – of literal fidelity" (2000, p. 56). Expecting a film adaptation to remain faithful to the literary work that it is based on misses the point entirely.

Moreover, the question of fidelity ignores a wider question, a question that Stam also asked in his article: "Fidelity to what? Is the filmmaker to be faithful to the plot in its every detail? [...] Should one be faithful to the physical description of the characters? [...] Or is one to be faithful to the author's intentions?" (2000, p. 57) Ultimately, while as McFarlane puts it, "fidelity criticism depends on a notion of the text as having and rendering up to the (intelligent) reader a single, correct 'meaning' which the filmmaker has either adhered to or in some sense violated or tampered with" (1996, p. 8), the answer to Stam's questions should not ignore the fact that an adaptation is solely a particular reading of the original text, an interpretation made by the adaptors. In the end, an adaptation should not be judged by its resemblance to the original text, but on their own merits.

2.3. Knowing and unknowing audiences

One of the parameters that critics do use correctly to judge a film or a television show is their ability to connect with the audience. When dealing with film adaptations, however, it is necessary to introduce a distinction between spectators who are familiar with the source text and those who are not. Throughout the years scholars have used different terms to distinguish between the two groups, but I feel that Linda Hutcheon's choices are the most inclusive. She differentiates between "knowing audiences" (2006, p. 120), referring to spectators that have read the original text before watching the adaptation, and "unknowing audiences", referring to spectators who have not (2006, p. 120).

On the one hand, the first group might be the most difficult to please, especially because, as Hutcheon puts it, "knowing audiences have expectations – and demands" (2006, p. 122). The more passionate these fans are about the adapted text, the more expectations they are going to have and the more upset they can potentially be. For instance, Christopher Columbus, director of *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* (2001), said that "people would have crucified me if I hadn't been faithful to the books" (Hutcheon 2006, p. 123; the statement was originally quoted in Whipp, 2002, p. H4). However, as it has been previously discussed, fidelity should not be the criterion used to judge the success of an adaptation. Therefore, finding the balance satisfying the more rabid fans whilst not being handcuffed by their expectations and prevented from exploring different alternatives in your production might be the single most difficult challenge for an adapter.

On the other hand, unknowing audiences must be taken into account as well, since most of the time they make up the vast majority of the audience. Occasionally, in order to please

knowing audiences, adapters tend to rely excessively on the source the production is based on, which may result in their adaptation lacking sense "without reference to and foreknowledge of the adapted text" (Hutcehon, 2006, p. 121). Not bearing in mind unknowing audiences might be even more damaging for a film adaptation that not being completely faithful to the adapted text. For that very reason, Hutcheon claimed that "for an adaptation to be successful in its own right, it must be so for both knowing and unknowing audiences" (2013, p. 121).

2.4. Textual and affective fidelity

Despite adaptation studies trying to move away from fidelity criticism, fidelity is still a concern for knowing audiences and, as such, it cannot be discounted completely from analysis. In fact, I share the perspective presented fairly recently by Andrea Benyon, who argues that adaptations, despite not needing to be faithful to every detail of their adapted text, must try to "trigger the same or similar emotional responses as those triggered by the source material" (2020, p. 186). She calls this phenomenon affective fidelity, which is entirely different from what adaptation studies have taken distance from, namely textual fidelity, which is "how the adaptation represents textual elements such as plot, characters and dialogue" (2020, p. 186).

In the analysis that follows, emotional response is be revealed to be a decisive factor as regards the audience's enjoyment of the television adaptation of Martin's novel series, as emotion is "key to how the adaptation should make the audience feel while they watch" (Benyon, 2020, p. 188).

3. ANALYSIS

In the following section a number of different scenes from the *Game of Thrones* television show are analysed in detail in order to hopefully prove the main thesis stated previously in the introduction.

3.1. Methodology

The methodology to be used for the analysis of each and every scene included in the project consists of three different steps. Firstly, a brief account of their context in the story as written in Martin's novels is provided, so as to establish a basis for the choices made by show runners David Benoiff and D.B. Weiss when adapting each particular scene. Secondly, a

much more detailed analysis of the scene itself is made, focusing specifically on the multi-track elements that shape a television show and simply cannot be used in the novel. Last but not least, a brief conclusion follows focusing on how the adaptors' choices benefitted their goals in the adaptation.

3.2. Tyrion Lannister's trial

3.2.1. Context of the scene

Towards the last chapters of *A Storm of Swords* (2000), Tyrion Lannister is accused by his sister, Cersei Lannister, of poisoning his nephew and king Joffrey Baratheon during the wedding feast to celebrate Joffrey's marriage to Margaery Tyrell. Tyrion is then charged of regicide and forced to prove his innocence in a trial conducted by his own father and Hand of the King, Lord Tywin Lannister. In the novel, the trial lasts for several days with Cersei summoning to court a large number of witnesses to lend credence to her case. In the end, knowing that he will be found guilty, Tyrion ends up demanding a trial by combat.

3.2.2. Multi-track elements on display: image and camerawork

To begin with, the director of the episode in which Tyrion's trial takes place in the show, Alik Sakharov, seemed fully aware of the importance that image has on audiovisual productions and developed a style of shooting that fitted perfectly with what Benoiff and Weiss where looking for as regards this particular scene. It being a scene heavily dependent on words, has no action as such and is set in a single location, the adaptation of Tyrion's trial was bound to run the risk of lacking shots that produced dynamism in the scene. However, in today's television shows, as well as in society, dynamism is a crucial quality that ensures an audience does not quickly lose interest in the product they are consuming. For this very reason, every shot was carefully designed with a purpose, just like every piece of soundtrack that was played, hence the brilliance of this sequence.

Before I start analysing it frame by frame, it is important to understand two basic but very important concepts when dealing with visual compositions, one being the angle of a shot and the other the distance of the shot from the subject. Concerning the first one, in her book *Cinema Studies: The Key Concepts,* Susan Hayward distinguishes between a high-angle and a low-angle shot, claiming that "a high or low camera angle can denaturalize a shot or reinforce its symbolic value" (2000, p. 330). In this connection, a high-angle shot is generally used to make the subject seem powerless and vulnerable, since it can be associated with being looked

down on. On the contrary, a low-angle shot makes the subject look powerful and strong, as it can be linked with the sight of a divine and superior being.

As regards the distance of the shot from the subject, Hayward names seven types of shot ranging from extreme close-up shot to distance shot, the last one also functioning as establishment shot. The interpretation of all of them is quite subjective and the director might use one or another for no specific reason. However, the transition from a distance to a close-up shot, and viceversa, does have a specific connotation. In the interest of this essay, only the first type of transition is considered. As Hayward puts it, "the closer up the shot the more the spectator's eye is directed by the camera to a specific reading" (2000, p. 329). All in all, through the use of these strategies, Sakharov conveys the content of the scene to the audience much better than he could through the use of words.

3.2.3. Analysis of the sequence

The scene begins with a slight low-angle shot of Tyrion, who is confident of his innocence and does not fear the trial. He is accompanied by his brother and Lord Commander of the Kingsguard, Ser Jaime Lannister, who is the wild card used by the adapters for the knowing audience, as he does not play any role during the trial in the books. Tywin is also seen next with a low-angle shot, but his is much more pronounced than Tyrion's, leading the audience to believe that Tywin is in control (fig. 1).

Fig.1: Tyrion (left) and Tywin (right) both portrayed with low-angle shots at the beginning of the trial. (Sakharov, 2014)

After a short speech by King Tommen, followed by his exit from the room, a new shot is presented to the audience, one that hides a much deeper meaning than at first glance (fig. 2). In the frame Tyrion can be seen in the middle, just like Tywin, as they are about to have an intellectual confrontation. The Tyrell family, including soon-to-be Queen Margaery, Oberyn Martell, who is to act as judge alongside Tywin and Mace Tyrell, and Jaime are all placed to

the right of the frame. This is no coincidence, as these are the people who do not wish for Tyrion's death. On the left side, Cersei, who does want him dead, is left alone. However, she is actually not alone, as she is accompanied by her witnesses, hence the witness stand being on the left side of the frame with her. Overall, the utility of this frame is to remind the audience the alliances and loyalties between the different characters involved in the trial. There is one major change in contrast with the novels, which is with who House Tyrell sides with, a change that Benoiff and Weiss made to enhance the hatred between Tyrion and Tywin, as is discussed later in the essay.
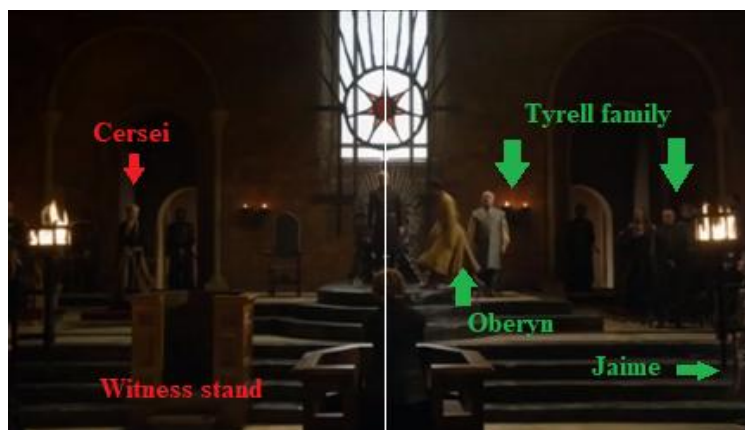

Fig.2: Visual representation of how the trial is going to unfold. (Sakharov, 2014)

Soon after that, the first witnesses begin to give testimony, starting with Ser Meryn Trant, member of the Kingsguard, and then Grand Maester Pycelle. Interestingly enough, since none of them are able to present incriminatory evidence against Tyrion, both are portrayed in a frame that shows Cersei in the back, thus telling the audience she is behind their allegations. The point is highlighted even more when Cersei herself gives testimony and, using the same shot from Tyrion's point of view, she is not more than a blur in the background. Instead, the focus is on Tyrion, since everything Cersei is telling the court is false and irrelevant (fig 3.).
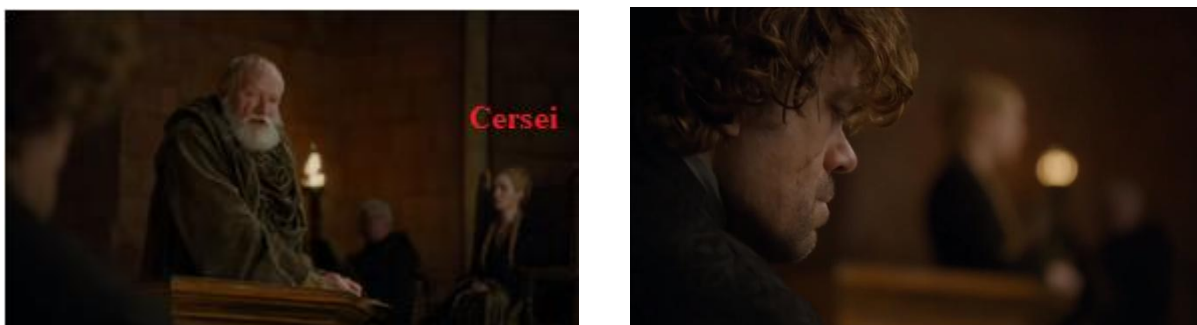

Fig.3: Grand Maester Pycelle and Cersei Lannister (left) and Tyrion (right). (Sakharov, 2014)

However, the trial takes a turn for the worse when Lord Varys takes the stand. The man Tyrion once considered a friend betrays him and testifies against him, this time with solid evidence that shows Tyrion had indeed motives to commit regicide. During his testimony a close-up shot of Tyrion is used in this sequence for the first time, as it is the first time he does feel in danger. Moreover, another low-angle shot of Tywin is shown to the audience, this time even more noticeable than the first. This tells the viewer that Lord Varys had always been formed part of Tywin's plans and now Tyrion is against the odds (fig. 4).
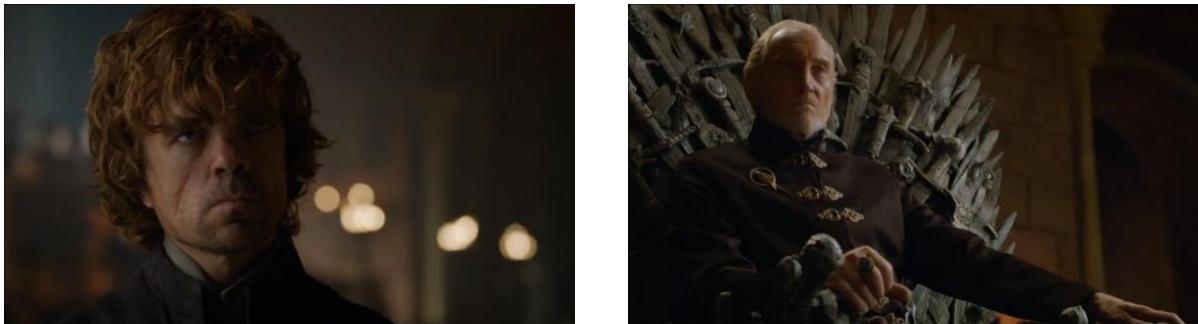

Fig.4: Close-up shot of Tyrion (left) and low-angle shot of Tywin (right). (Sakharov, 2014)

Fully aware that the trial is a mere manipulation engineered by his father and sister, Jaime Lannister now seeks to save his brother from an undoubtedly guilty verdict. During the one and only recess in the trial, he meets with Tywin to negotiate the fate his brother's fate, knowing he could do something to change his father's mind: abandon the Kingsguard and leave for Casterly Rock to continue the Lannister legacy. This is why at the beginning of the meeting Jaime is portrayed with a noticeable low-angle shot, because he is in control. Once Tywin agrees to pardon Tyrion once he confesses, however, the shot of the Lord Commander is more balanced, only slightly lowered. He has obtained what he wished for, but so has his father (fig. 5).
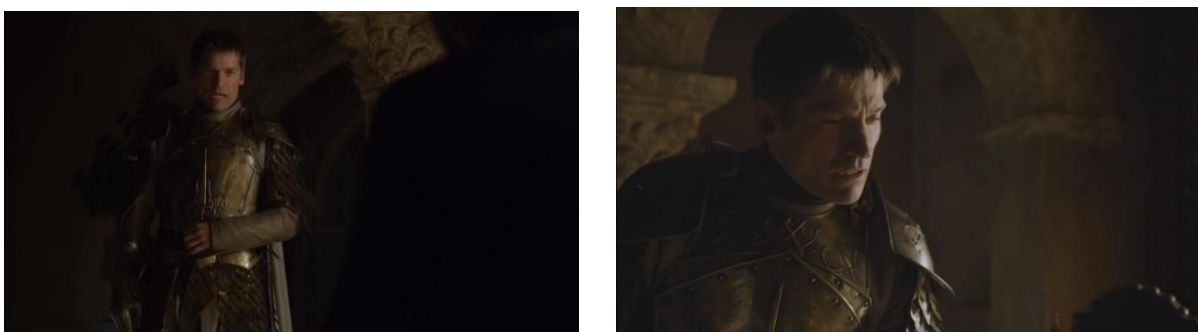

Fig.5: Pronounced low-angle shot of Jaime when in control (left) and then only slightly lowered when the deal is done. (Sakharov, 2014)

Once the trial is resumed, however, nothing goes as planned. Cersei's last witness is Shae, a prostitute and Tyrion's lover, and her betrayal completely shatters Jaime's plans. With her unexpected appearance, the Tyrion and Shae love theme "I am hers and she is mine" is played for the audience in a reworked version that is slower, less joyful. It is the first time in all three sequences – first part of the trial, recess and second part of the trial – that the soundtrack is used and it is left this late to make a stronger impact. With her testimony, Tyrion is completely destroyed. The last person on Westeros he thought would betray him has just done so and he feels utterly humiliated and alone. This is shown through the use of three consecutive close-up shots that are slowly zoom up on him, indicating his total collapse and the sorrow that engulfs him (fig. 6).
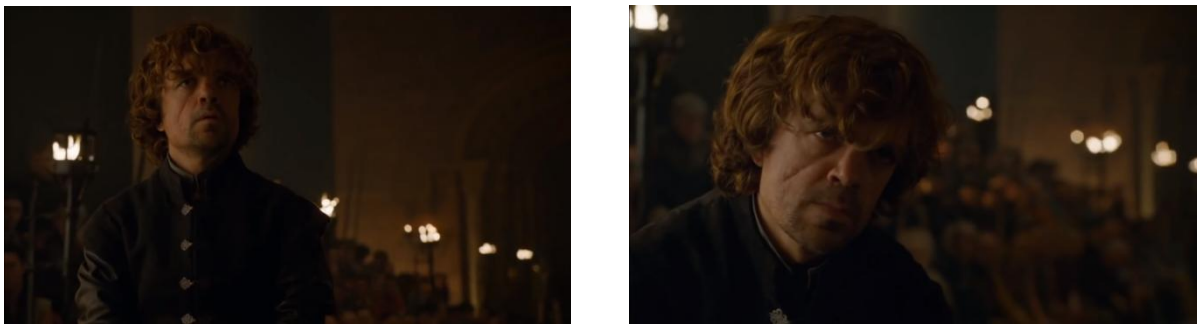
Fig.6: Close-up shot of Tyrion at the beginning of Shae's testimony (left) and at the end of it (right).
(Sakharov, 2014)

Devastated, Tyrion wishes to confess. Here for the first time a high-angle shot is used in the sequence. Tyrion has been utterly defeated – or that is what Sakharov wants his audience to think. Forgetting the deal his brother had done for him, he goes from complete misery to explosive rage and faces the public in attendance, reminding them he saved the city in the Battle of Blackwater Bay. A second theme is then played for the audience, "Rains of Castamere", the theme song of House Lannister, just as it did when Tyrion delivered a motivational speech in said battle. This time, however, it sounds slower, sadder, echoing Tyrion's mental breakdown. During Tyrion's rant a distance shot of the room is shown, with Tyrion standing right in the middle, looking very small in comparison with the rest of people who want him dead. There is no sight of Jaime, who by this time might be the only one who wants to save him, since the Tyrell family does not want to risk their new alliance with House Lannister by siding with Tyrion (fig. 7).
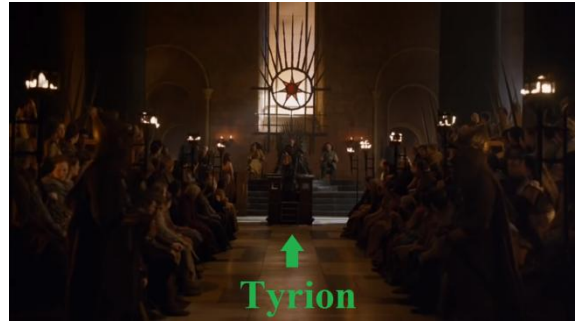
Fig.7: High-angle shot of Tyrion before his rant (left) and long distance shot of the room (right).
(Sakharov, 2014)

Ultimately, snapping at the injustice and public humiliation inflected on him, Tyrion regains composure and proceeds to harangue his father and sister as well. While doing so, Tyrion is pictured in a low-angle shot again. For a brief moment he thought all hope was lost, but now that he has come up with a backup plan he feels in control once more. Here is when he ends up demanding a trial by combat, just as "Rains of Castamere" rises to an epic climax. Tywin, who seconds before had been portrayed in a noticeable low-angle shot to convey his belief that he had the trial under control, is now shown in a slight low-angle shot, just as Tyrion is (fig. 8.). The score is now tied.

Fig.8: Slight low-angle shots of both Tyrion, after demanding a trial by combat (left), and Tywin (right).
(Sakharov, 2014)

3.2.4. Enhancing Tyrion versus Tywin

Benoiff and Weiss' goal when adapting the trial scene was to emphasize the family drama of House Lannister. To do so, not only did they hire Sakharov as the director of the episode, given his skill when using image to lead an audience, but they also made a couple of changes to intensify the intellectual battle between Tywin and Tyrion Lannister in the process, especially knowing how later in the books Tyrion ends up murdering his father.

First, the addition of Jaime Lannister in place of Ser Kevan Lannister makes the drama even greater. In the books, the offer of pardoning Tyrion if he confesses is made by Kevan after the first day of trial and Jaime does not become involved in the storyline until after the trial by combat. Adding Jaime in advance serves Benoiff and Weiss' purpose perfectly, as the Lord Commander of the Kingsguard is loved by both father and son. Additionally, knowing audiences immediately remember Jaime's love for Tyrion, so they might wonder how he is going to behave during the trial, thus keeping the intrigue for both knowing and unknowing audiences.

Secondly, as I previously mentioned, the role of House Tyrell in the story is also changed to enhance the family conflict. In the books, the Tyrells are furious with Tyrion just as Cersei is because they think that by poisoning Joffrey's wine, he could have killed Margaery as well had she drunk from the goblet. Therefore, Tywin's motives for wanting his son dead are intelligently hidden behind the Tyrells fury in Martin's novels. By having Mace Tyrell and his family play a secondary role in the television show, Benioff and Weiss succeeded in making Tywin and Tyrion's intellectual battle more personal and dramatic.

3.3. The Red Wedding

3.3.1. Context of the scene

Having married Jeyne Westerling in the midst of the War of the Five Kings in *A Storm of Swords* (2000), the sixteen-year old King in the North Robb Stark heads back to the Twins to restore his alliance with House Frey. The coalition had fallen apart after Robb betrayed a former agreement with Lord Walder Frey, a settlement that had betrothed the King in the North to one of Lord Frey's many daughters. Needing his mother's and House Tully bannermen in order to regain the North, a new agreement is reached between Robb and Lord Frey, one that will make Lord Edmure Tully, heir of House Tully, marry Roslin Frey. During the wedding, however, in total breach of the guest right,[1] the Freys shockingly slaughter the northern people, in the process murdering main characters such as Robb Stark and his mother Catelyn Stark.

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[1] An ancient custom in Westeros that forbids both host and guest from harming each other once the guest has drunk and eaten at the host's table.

3.3.2. Multi-track elements on display: soundtrack

The Red Wedding is probably the most tragic and unexpected event in *A Song of Ice and Fire,* a series of novels that became very popular precisely owing to Martin's capacity to surprise the reader. The sequence is so cruel and shocking that show runner Weiss claimed in Season Three Special "Inside the Red Wedding" that the chapter alone "was one of the primary reasons that we wanted to make this show" (2013, 0:52-0:55). When adapting it for television, director David Nutter knew such a pivotal scene needed to make a strong impact on the audience, and thus he used all the elements at his disposal to guide them through a rollercoaster of emotions. One of said elements is the use of sound, especially since it also plays a major role in unveiling the betrayal in the books. Combined with the camerawork of the scene, as well as with the performance from the actors and actresses, the adaptation of the Red Wedding is nothing short of phenomenal.

Ahead of the analysis of the sequence, it is key to understand that the soundtrack of an audiovisual production includes any sound, music or song that is played during the show. Even the lack of sound, or silence, is part of the soundtrack of the production, contrary to popular belief. This is why it is incorrect to associate the term soundtrack solely with the music produced for a show. Instead, there needs to be a distinction between music and soundtrack, the former being part of the later. Additionally, when dealing with soundtrack, there is another distinction that needs to be introduced. According to Susan Hayward, in the world of cinema there are diegetic and non-diegetic sounds, the first being a kind of sound "that 'naturally' occurs within the screen space (such as an actor speaking, singing or playing an instrument on screen)" (2000, p. 85). A non-diegetic sound, however, "refers to the sound that clearly is not being produced within the on-screen space (such as voice-over or added music)" (2000, p. 85). With that in mind, it is important to notice that in *Game of* Thrones the majority of the music that is played during the show is non-diegetic. Understanding these distinctions is massively important in order to enjoy Nutter's work when adapting the Red Wedding.

3.3.3. Analysis of the sequence

The sequence begins with Lord Edmure and Lady Roslin's wedding feast. The first image that is shown to the audience is a shot of the band in charge of the music for the wedding, a symbolic decision made to stress their importance later in the evening (fig. 9). During the first part of the sequence, the action is accompanied by a fast-paced composition largely played using string and percussion instruments.

Fig.9: The band at Lord Edmure and Lady Roslin's wedding feast. (Nutter, 2013)

Whilst the music is playing, the setting of the action is introduced, as well as the distribution of the main characters in the room. This is masterfully done by Nutter, as he shots together Lady Talisa and Lothar Frey laughing together, as well as Lady Catelyn and Walder Rivers (fig. 10).[2] These shots strengthen the narrative contrast that follows, as the victims are framed laughing with their murderers. However, once the characters begin to interact with one another, the music that had been playing until then is relegated to the background, now playing very quietly, as if it does not have any importance at all.

Fig.10: Lady Talisa and Lothar Frey (left) and Lady Catelyn and Walder Rivers (right). (Nutter, 2013)

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[2] In *A Song of Ice and Fire,* Robb's wife is Lady Jeyne Westerling, the daughter of an important house that had lost power in recent times. For reasons that will be argued in section 3.3.4, the character was completely rewritten in *Game of Thrones* and Robb married healer Talisa Maegyr instead

In the following scenes, Nutter continues to give unknowing audiences subtle clues as to the scheme that the Freys are plotting behind the scenes. The first sign is the tension that can be felt between Lord Roose Bolton and Lady Catelyn. Both characters are supposedly allies, but the distance Lord Bolton keeps from his king's mother is odd if proxemics is taken into account. Even more suspicious is the fact he refuses to drink wine during the feast, claiming it "dulls the senses" (Nutter, 2013, 37:37) (fig. 11). These clues, watched in retrospective, do exhibit Lord Bolton's role in the Red Wedding. However, they are very cleverly hidden behind the laughter of the main characters and, most importantly, behind the casual and easy-going music in the background.

Fig.11: Lord Bolton keeping an awkward distance with Lady Catelyn (left) and refusing to be served wine (right). (Nutter, 2013)

After a brief, kind-hearted scene between Robb and Talisa, the bedding of Lord Edmure and Lady Roslin takes place.[3] From this moment onwards, the audience is guided through Lady Catelyn's point of view, not only because she is the first one to realise what is truly happening, but also because she is the one who will suffer the most. Additionally, it seems as if Nutter wants the viewer to experience her suffering as much as she does so as to make the sequence as impactful as possible. Once bridegroom and bride have left the room, the action goes back to Talisa, who is sharing the news that she is pregnant with Robb and the audience. Their kissing is shown to the audience through Catelyn's eyes. Here, the music that has been playing throughout the feast can still be heard while Catelyn smiles, slowly fading out. As soon as the door closes, however, the music changes to "Rains of Castamere", the theme of House Lannister, and now Catelyn turns to look at the band with a much more worried expression, her face being zoomed in a close-up shot indicating her concern (fig.12).

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[3] The bedding is a wedding tradition from Westeros where male guests carry the bride to her chamber while undressing her. Female guests do the same with the bridegroom. It is intended to provide evidence that the marriage has been consummated.

The band had been there the whole time, playing their song, but now everything has changed. This period from 41:45 to 42:18 in the episode does not have any words in it, just the transition from a song to another with the sound of a door closing and Michelle Fairley's acting. However, no words could have described such a drastic change in the atmosphere.

Fig.12: Lady Catelyn content at the sight of his son kissing his wife (left) and terrified upon hearing "Rains of Castamere" (right). (Nutter, 2013)

In order to understand why this is such an emotional moment in the sequence, one must understand that "Rains of Castamere" has been used multiple times up until this point in the show. It was sung once by Bronn the mercenary before the Battle of Blackwater Bay and whistled by Tyrion Lannister a couple of times while he was Hand of the King, both times as diegetic music. However, and most importantly, the song accompanied the Lannisters as non-diegetic sound multiple times throughout the show. Therefore, it was safe to assume that the audience would easily spot the song and consequently feel as terrified as Catelyn does at this point

"Rains of Castamere" continues to be played during Arya's subplot outside the castle, indicating that the two storylines have finally merged together. Once the action returns to the castle, Nutter shows the audience the image of Catelyn and Robb, alone and unprotected before the terrible fate that awaits them. Catelyn is in a medium close-up shot, whereas Robb is in a long-shot, which implies how the former is aware of the imminent danger they are about to face while the latter is not (fig. 13). Not long after that, Lord Walder Frey, in a much higher position than the king himself to symbolically denote his authority over him, asks for the music to be stopped. The slaughter of the northern people is about to begin.

Fig.13: Lady Catelyn and King Robb in medium close-up and long-shots respectively (left) and Lord Walder Frey in a symbolical position of authority over the king (right). (Nutter, 2013)

While Lord Frey is slowly delivering his speech, the action instead focuses on Catelyn's perspective again. Her worse fears are confirmed when she looks at Roose Bolton and he looks back at her, smiling. Close-up shots of both characters are shown when Catelyn notices Lord Bolton is wearing a coat of mail, exhibiting very different but intense emotions: in Roose, the satisfaction of a man who knows his masterpiece is about to succeed; in Catelyn, the fear of what is about to happen (fig. 14). In a desperate attempt, she slaps Lord Bolton and tries to warn Robb, but it is too late. The massacre begins.
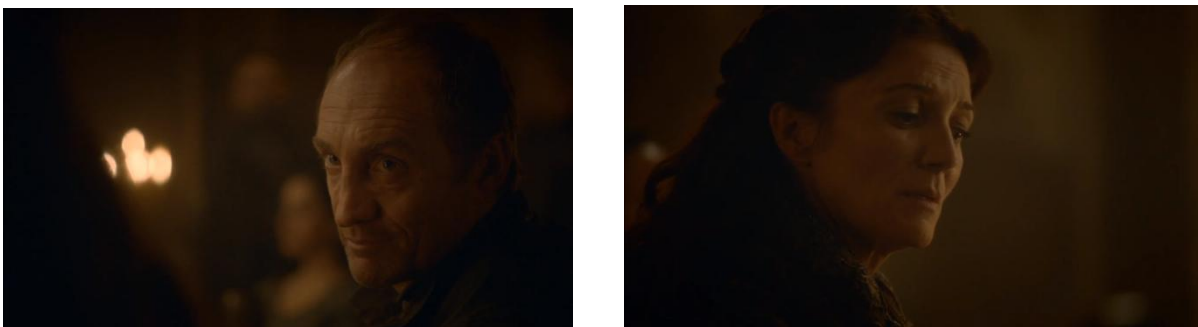

Fig.14: Close-up shots of Lord Bolton (left) and Lady Catelyn (right). (Nutter, 2013)

As soon as the annihilation starts, the theme song "The Lannisters Send their Regards*"* starts to play in a very fast, hectic pace, adapting to the chaos the scene is echoing. This time, however, the music is non-diegetic and is only played for the audience. The viewer quickly realises that when the band that had been previously playing during the feast is now framed in the same angle using crossbows instead of instruments. A long-distance shot is played a few seconds later as well to display the slaughter that has happened in the span of a few seconds (fig. 15).

Fig.15: The band now firing their crossbows (left) and a long-distance shot of the room (right). (Nutter, 2013)

Lady Talisa is the first one to fall and with her, her unborn child. Lothar Frey's multiple stabbing in her stomach not only is cruel and heartless, but also sends a message to Robb before his own death. Nutter captures it perfectly, focusing on Talisa's bloody stomach with Robb crawling towards her in the back. Nutter is showing the audience that Robb has lost it all, wife, child and kingdom, everything he loved. A close-up shot of Robb is then displayed and "The Lannisters Send their Regards" plays now quietly in the background, with a much slower tempo. The focus now is on the performance of Richard Madden, who does a brilliant job in portraying Robb's misery (fig. 16).

Fig.16: King Robb crawling towards her dead wife and unborn child (left) and close-up shot of his suffering (right). (Nutter, 2013)

For a brief moment, the viewer experiences Talissa's death through the eyes of Robb, since he is the one her death will affect the most. However, as it was previously mentioned, Nutter made the sequence through Catelyn's point of view for the interest of the sequence, so he quickly moves to show Robb's death from her side. She takes hostage Lord Frey's wife and begs for mercy in a last attempt to save his first son's life. Nevertheless, her efforts are in vain as Lord Bolton stabs the king's heart and delivers his iconic line, "the Lannisters send their regards" (Nutter, 2013, 48:45). Having lost her husband and believing to have lost three of her five children, Robb was Catelyn's last hope of rescuing her daughter Sansa and

reuniting what was left of the Starks. Losing him meant losing everything she had left, so when she witnesses the death of his son, Catelyn becomes insane and screams in agony in a close-up shot manifesting her deep sorrow before cutting Lord Frey's wife throat (fig. 17)

Fig.17: Lord Bolton stabbing King Robb through Lady Catelyn's point of view (left) and close-up shot of her agony (right). (Nutter, 2013)

Before Walder Rivers ends her misery by cutting Catelyn's throat, the last eighteen seconds of the episode are filled with nothing but silence and a long and slow zoom to Lady Stark, from 49:00 to 49:18 (fig. 18). Furthermore, for the first time in the television show, the ending credits lack any music as well. The reasoning for this choice is David Nutter's use of soundtrack. He wanted the audience to end the sequence feeling as Catelyn does, traumatized, empty, dead, and as such, he chose the lack of sound to transmit those feelings rather than using any music. The use of silence here is brilliant and certainly achieved its purpose.

Fig.18: Medium close-up shot (left) and close-up shot of Lady Catelyn's final moments (right). (Nutter, 2013)

3.3.4. Aggravating the sorrow of House Stark

In *A Song of Ice and Fire,* Martin's goal with the Red Wedding was to emphasise the fall of the King in the North and his army, so he put much more effort in the death of Robb Stark's bannermen than the show did. Additionally, House Westerling was involved in the conspiracy through Robb's wife, Jayne Westerling, and consequently she did not attend the

wedding. However, the chapter where the Red Wedding unfolds in *A Storm of Swords* still saw the sudden death of two major characters in Catelyn and Robb and it quickly became a fan favourite due to its unexpectedness.

Realising what had made the chapter so great, Benioff and Weiss decided to emphasise the tragedy of House Stark by adding the death of Robb's queen, Lady Talisa, alongside the unborn child they were going to have. To do so, the plot with House Westerling was entirely removed, reducing in the process the number of participants in the conspiracy and making it easier to understand as well. Instead, they introduced a healer with whom Robb falls madly in love with during the war. The show runners gave her plenty of screen time and a kind and loving personality, just so her death and the death of the child she was carrying made the event even more emotional. Moreover, she was the wild card that also kept knowing audiences wondering what was going to be her role when everything unfolded.

3.4. Cersei Lannister's walk of atonement

3.4.1. Context of the scene

After starting a campaign to remove House Tyrell from positions of influence and authority in *A Dance with Dragons* (2011), Queen Regent Cersei Lannister is arrested for regicide, deicide, incest and treason by the new High Septon, the so-called High Sparrow, following Ser Osney Kettleblack's confession of having murdered the last High Septon obeying her orders. Conscious that the odds are against her in the trial that is to come, Cersei's only hope lies in a champion that would fight for her cause in a trial by combat. To procure one, she must return immediately to the Red Keep, where her eight-year old son, King Tommen, and the rest of her allies reside. However, the High Sparrow only agrees to it as long as Cersei submits to a walk of atonement, a punishment in Westeros only given to women in order to humiliate them for their adultery.

3.4.2. Multi-track elements on display: performance

Cersei's walk of atonement could very well be one of the toughest scenes to watch in *Game of Thrones*, a renowned show for the terrible fate its main characters have to face, as well as for some of the most tragic deaths in television history. What makes the sequence even more traumatic for both knowing and unknowing audiences is the lack of words used towards the

last part of the sequence, where Cersei walks from the Great Sept of Baelor to the Red Keep completely naked, stripped from all the power and dignity she once had. In the novels, the scene is described from Cersei's point of view and the reader is aware of the rollercoaster of emotions she goes through during the whole event through her own thoughts. In the show, however, unable to reproduce what Martin had wrote, show runners Benoiff and Weiss were handcuffed from a storytelling point of view. To tackle the challenge, they trusted director David Nutter again, as well as Lena Headey, the actress who plays Cersei Lannister, in order to tell a story that could parallel the emotions that the chapter in the novels had aroused, thus keeping an affective fidelity. To do so, they had to rely on other strategies of communication other than language, otherwise known as non-verbal communication. Ultimately, the end-result not only achieved their goal, but went on to create one of the most iconic sequences in the show.

In the interest of the analysis that follows, two of the many subcategories of non-verbal communication that Nutter used in the sequence are introduced. The first one is proxemics, the use of human space and the effects it can have on social behaviour. In his foundational work on the matter *The Hidden Dimension* (1966), Edward T. Hall described four different interpersonal distances between humans: intimate distance, personal distance, social distance and public distance (1966, p. 116-125). Frome these four, the one that is considered later in the analysis is personal distance, in particular the breach of it. In his work, Hall comes to describe a series of personal experiences with German people about the intrusion in personal space and how that triggered discomfort, anger and anxiety in the invaded (1966, p. 132-138). Later in the book he discusses how Japanese people, accustomed to be in larger crowds more often, have come up with the strategy of avoiding eye contact when feeling their personal space invaded in order to reduce the levels of discomfort (1966, p. 149-154). Therefore, it is safe to assume that eye contact plays a key role in proxemics.

The second one is kinesics, the non-verbal behaviour related to body motion such as facial expressions or gestures. In 2004, Paul Ekman revisited his previous work in kinesics by writing the essay "Emotional and Conversational nonverbal signs". In this paper, Ekman redefined the types of body movements he had previously established in 1969 alongside Wallace V. Friesen. He now distinguishes between emblems, illustrators, manipulators, regulators and emotional expressions. In favour of the analysis, only the later is considered in the analysis of the sequence. With this in mind, emotional expressions are displays of emotion made through facial and body gestures (2004, p.46). In the section that follows, the

focus is made on facial expressions, especially since Ekman believes that "the face is one of the primary sites of emotional expressions. [...] I believe posture, the positioning of the head and body, is also recruited into the signal of some of the emotions" (2004, p.46). Additionally, the deliberateness of these expressions is analysed as well, since they are not always to be sincere. Ekman names feigned expressions "referential expressions" and defines them as "a facial movement that refers to an emotion that is not felt by the person showing it" (2004, p.47).

3.4.3. Analysis of the sequence

The sequence of Cersei Lannister's walk of atonement is divided into four different scenes. The first two focus on her confession, while the last ones target her utter humiliation. In this short span of fifteen minutes, Lena Headey shows an impressive emotional range, going from manipulative and cunning to frightened and broken. In the first scene, she is visited by Unella, Septa of the Faith of the Seven, who asks her to confess for her sins. A pronounced low-angle shot is used when filming the devoted sister, while Cersei is depicted in a high-angle shot (fig. 19). The contrast is made to tell the audience that the queen is in a very vulnerable state against the power of faith.
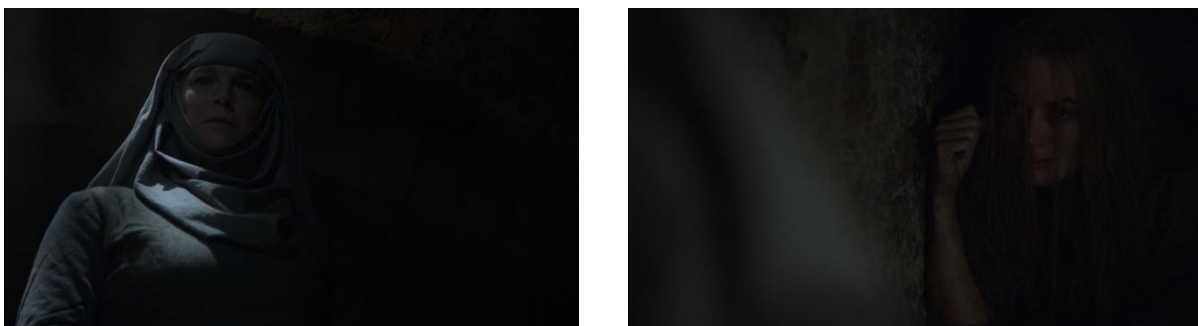

Fig.19: Pronounced low-angle shot of Unella (left) and high-angle shot of Cersei (right). (Nutter, 2015)

Shortly after, the action moves to the second scene, where Cersei confesses to the High Sparrow to being guilty of one of the many charges she is accused of. Like in the previous scene, a high-angle shot is used to illustrate the queen's vulnerability, while his High Holiness is always depicted in a low-angle shot. Focusing now on Headey's performance and emotional expressions, it is worth to notice how her eyes move slightly throughout the scene. See that when telling the truth, her look is steady and determined, her eyes firm on not sharing any signals of weakness. She is plotting her escape and playing her innocent role magnificently, like she has done a dozen times in the past. However, when being accused of

far more serious crimes, feeling pressured and cornered, her eyes move vaguely to her right, showing anxiety and doubt (fig. 20). Being imprisoned for so long has weakened her will and fear is well and truly taking over her spirit.

Fig.20: Close-up shots of Cersei when telling the truth (left) and later lying (right). (Nutter, 2015)

After learning the fate that is waiting for her, the sequence enters its third scene. From now on, language plays a minimal role in the development of the action. Instead, Headey's performance is the main source of communication[4]. In this segment, for instance, not a single word is said. Under the vigilant look from Unella, two members of the Faith of the Seven cut Cersei's long, blond hair, dispossessing her of her identity, her pride. She is being deformed and as such, "Rains of Castamere" is played in a minor scale with dramatic shades that represent her deformation. Cersei's facial expression, however, remains inflexible during the traumatic event. She does not want reveal her intentions nor give Unella the satisfaction of seeing her suffering. Yet it is a referential expression, because when the Septa and her companions leave, her distress is clear to see for the audience (fig. 21).
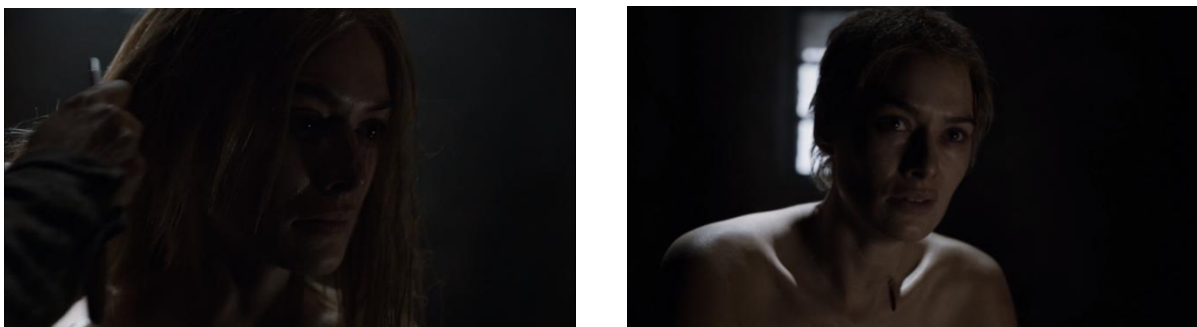

Fig.21: Close-up shots of Cersei's facial expression while having her hair cut (left) and later, just after Unella leaves (right). (Nutter, 2015)

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[4] Wanting to focus on the emotions on her performance in such traumatic filming, Lena Headey chose not to be nude for the entirety of the sequence. Instead, actress Rebecca Van Cleave shot these next two scenes and the show's visual effects team merged the two performances together, combining Headey's facial expressions with Van Cleave's physical movement.

Last but not least, the sequence enters its four and final scene, where Cersei does the walk of atonement. In the first stages of the scene, standing in front of the people of King's Landing, the queen holds her head high, unwilling to show any weakness in front of those who want her to suffer. Again, however, this is a referential expression. Notice how, while the High Sparrow is giving his speech, Cersei has a very subtle but noticeable spasm in her left arm when his High Holiness accuses her of falsehood and fornication. The sole idea of being judged for charges she knows she would be found guilty of terrifies her, and in response she is unable to control her body. From that point on in the speech, Cersei stops listening to the High Sparrow and instead isolates herself, focusing her sight on her goal: the Red Keep. This is made clear to the audience by using a medium shot of the queen, slowly zooming on her eyes (fig. 22). She has stopped seeing the people in front of her; instead she only discerns where her only hope is.
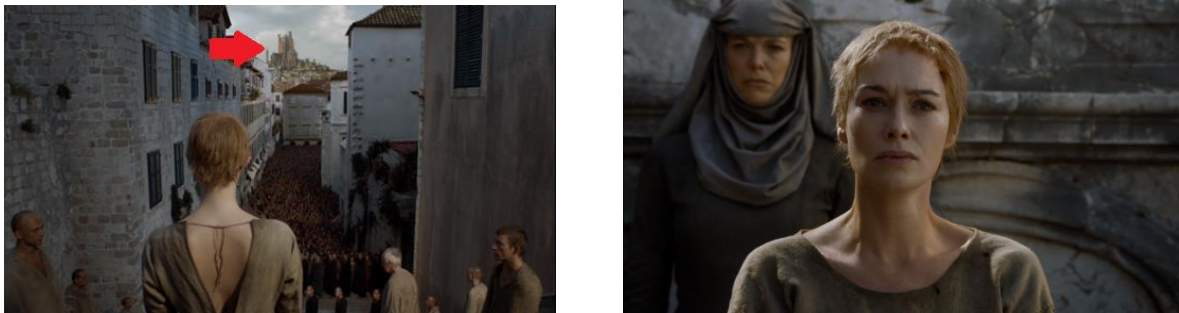

Fig.22: Long-distance shot of the city of King's Landing with the Red Keep in the horizon (left) and medium shot of Cersei, focusing her sight on it (right). (Nutter, 2015)

Once her High Holiness is done speaking and the queen's clothes are removed, a completely nude Cersei begins to walk down the stairs of the Great Sept of Baelor. Bear in mind the subtle close-up shot of the queen's feet when she is stripped of her clothing. Her toes move slightly, denoting her inner insecurity. She still holds her head high wanting to exhibit strength and pride, but her body keeps betraying her. Shortly after, Cersei begins to merge with the people of the city in her path to the Red Keep, always accompanied by the guards of the Faith of the Seven and Unella. The first stretch of the atonement is moderately calmed, with Cersei only having to endure profane abuse from the citizens and Unella behind shouting 'shame' repeatedly. At this time, people still respect the personal space that the guards have formed for her and thus she keeps advancing. This is shown by different medium and long-distance shots made from the citizens' perspective (fig. 23). Notice as well how Cersei does not make eye contact with any local that dares to insult her, protecting herself

from feeling invaded. However, as the tension continues to escalate and the streets begin to narrow, her personal space is repeatedly assaulted, with people throwing filth and even hitting her.
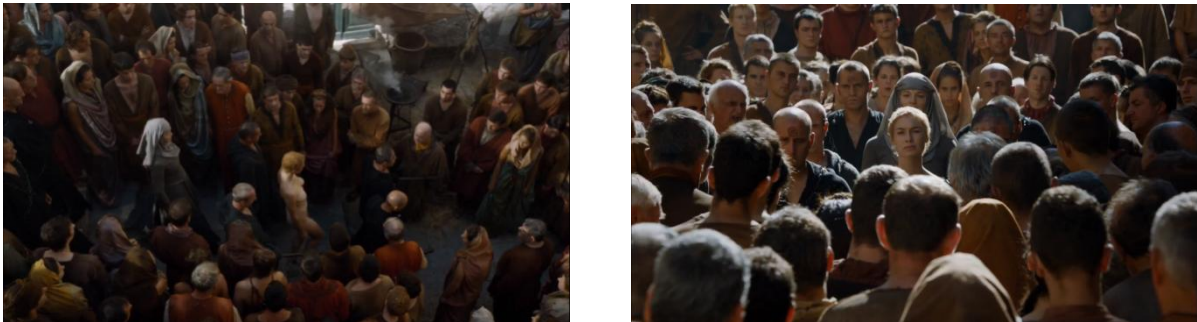

Fig.23: Long-distance shots of Cersei's personal space being invaded during the atonement. (Nutter, 2015)

In spite of continuous verbal and physical attacks, Cersei tries desperately to hang on and continue. However, the abuse is too much to bear and she ends up falling on her knees. This is the hardest point in the atonement for the queen and her agony and pain are represented by a second close-up shot of her feet (fig. 24). In the first take, her feet were clean and immaculate, symbolising her mental state at that point, still unstained. Now they are bloody and dirty, depicting the consequences the atonement is having in her state of mind. Additionally, just like the first time, her toes are trembling. Nonetheless, on this occasion it does not depict uncertainty and insecurity, but agitation and panic. At this point, if she is unable to stand up again, the guards might not be enough to save her life.

Fig.24: Close-up shots of Cersei's feet at the beginning (left) and towards the end of the atonement (right). (Nutter, 2015)

Feeling powerless against the cruelty of the citizens of King's Landing, Cersei turns her sight to the Red Keep once more. The stunning fortress was her last hope before the atonement and it is now as well, more than ever. She had looked at it before, in the Great Sept of Baelor,

with pride and dignity still in her facial expression. Now however, she looks at it with desperation, her eyes starting to shed tears in a close shot of her suffering (fig. 25). The referential expression she was trying to perform is almost fractured at this point, but Cersei Lannister gathers her last forces and keeps on walking.

Fig.25: Close-up shot of Cersei's facial expression (left) and long-distance shot of the Red Keep (right). (Nutter, 2015)

Ultimately, the queen arrives home. "Rains of Castamere" is played in a minor scale once more, depicting Cersei's complete breakdown. When entering through the gates, the referential expression she had endured during the atonement finally shatters and she starts to cry inconsolably. Nevertheless, her broken expression at this very moment heavily contrasts with the one she shows just a minute after. Following the end of her atonement, Maester Qyburn introduces to her the champion that will fight for her cause in the trial by combat that is to come and suddenly her face, previously full of emotions, is now empty of any sentiment other that hatred (fig. 26).
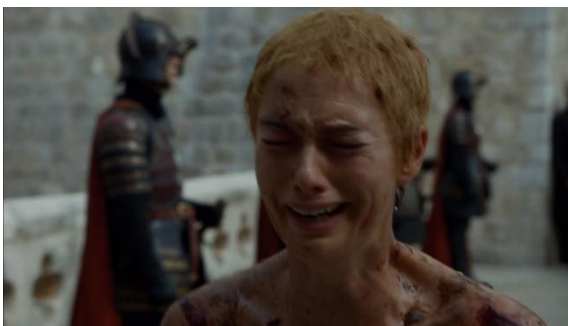

Fig.25: Close-up shots of Cersei's facial expression after the atonement (left) and after being introduced to her new champion (right). (Nutter, 2015)

3.4.4. Empowering Cersei

Cersei Lannister's walk of atonement served two purposes in Martin's *A Song of Ice and Fire.* Firstly, to make the reader emphasise with who up until this point had been one of the most infamous villains of the series. Martin stated in an interview for *Collider* that he is not a fan of good and bad characters, heroes and villains. Instead, he claims to prefer "writing about grey characters and human characters. Whether they are giants or elves or dwarves, or whatever they are, they are still human, and the human heart is still in conflict with the self" (2013). And secondly, to establish a basis for Cersei's next step in the series, as she does play a big role in the series finale.

Aware of the second point, show runners Benioff and Weiss decided it was important to keep Cersei as strong as possible in the eyes of the audience for the seasons to come. Consequently, they decided to omit a number of Cersei's thoughts during the atonement. To begin with, in the books the queen's physical appearance plays a big role in the event. Cersei, who had always been described as one of the most beautiful women in the seven kingdoms, now comes to terms with the fact that she is aging. She realises her breasts are now sagging and dangling on her chest, as well as the fact she also has stretch marks in her stomach due to her three pregnancies. Cersei's beauty is possibly the most reliable weapon she has in her arsenal in the books and she loses it with her atonement. For this very reason, Benioff and Weiss decided not to focus her attention on her own body, to strengthen her position in the battles to come.

Similarly, Cersei's mental breakdown in the books is greater than in the show. In the atonement, the queen hallucinates with many characters that have played big role in her life, like her father Tywin or her brother Tyrion. After the event, she is heavily traumatized and never fully recovers from it, losing part of her sanity due to such terrifying experience. In the process, Martin makes her as well a very unpredictable character. Following that path, the show runners decided to use the atonement to make of Cersei a very unpredictable character too, but one that is it for pure hatred and resentment towards the rest of the world, instead of being it due to craziness.

3.5. Battle of Blackwater Bay

3.5.1. Context of the scene

In the climax of the War of the Five Kings, self-proclaimed king Stannis Baratheon and his bannermen launch a naval attack on King's Landing to seize the throne at the end of *A Clash of Kings* (1998). With most of his manpower gone to fight the Starks in the Riverlands, Hand of the King Tyrion Lannister organises the city's defences. Conscious that the lack of soldiers might cost House Lannister the throne, Tyrion schemes a new plan to save the city involving a highly destructive substance his sister Cersei Lannister had order to be produced en mass: wildfire.

3.5.2. Multi-track elements on display: setting

Having omitted a number of battles that occurred in *A Game of Thrones* (1966) due to budget reasons in season one, show runners Benioff and Weiss knew they needed to deliver with the Battle of Blackwater Bay. The clash between Houses Lannister and Baratheon is the climax of the second novel in Martin's series and a large number of events that occur in season two lead up to this point. Skipping it would have seriously hurt the narrative for the audience and knowing audiences in particular would have felt massively disappointed. Therefore, despite Martin claiming in HBO's season two special *Creating the Battle of Blackwater Bay* that it was "potentially a budget buster no matter who wrote it" (2013, 1:12-1:15), the battle was eventually filmed.

That being said, one may wonder why the sequence was so expensive to film. According to Weiss, the reason was the setting of the action itself, more specifically having to build the battlements of King's Landing and a real-size ship they used for filming the naval attack (2013, 2:44-2:58). The setting for these scenes needed to be incredibly realistic in order to provide authenticity to the battle, so rather than loaning a ship, the producers decided to build a battle galleon that met the historical references a ship of that period would have. Furthermore, Stannis' fleet was made out of hundreds of these battle galleons, and half of them were destined to sink in the sea, so the filming needed to be improved using the expensive CGI or Computer Generated Imagery, commonly known as "visual effects".

Lately in the field of cinema there has been an intense debate whether the uses of CGI have either improved or worsen the quality of audiovisual productions. In his book *Digital Visual Effects in Cinema. The Seduction of Reality*, Stephen Prince shares the view that a number of

film enthusiasts have had during the last decades: "the idea that computers generate pictures makes the resulting images seem soulless and inhuman in comparison with analog modes that are crafted by human hands" (2012, p. 225). However, Prince himself defends the use of CGI, stating that "without visual effects, we have no cinema" (2012, p. 221). Additionally, he states that the use of visual effects have always existed in the world of cinema, claiming that "filmmakers used every mechanical device they could devise to overcome the constraints of time, space, and budget governing what might be filmed" (2012, p. 221). This would be the case of the Battle of the Blackwater, an amazing sequence that would have been impossible to film without the help of CGI.

Last but not least, the sequence of the clash was directed by Neil Marshall and it lasted the entire episode. As Marshall describes it in the season two special, there are three different battles in the space of one: a naval attack, a beach landing and an assault on the city walls (2013, 2:03-2:14). Due to the longevity of the battle itself, only the naval attack is analysed in the project.

3.5.3. Analysis of the sequence

The sequence of the naval attack begins with an establishing distance shot of the battlements of King's Landing, with the Red Keep patent in the background. The show regularly uses the city of Dubrovnik in Croatia as setting for the capital of Westeros, especially given that it still has its city walls and is located near the sea. However, a new setting for the battlements of the city was built for this episode, one where there was enough space to film an army prepared for battle inside of it. The new setting was built in Magheramorne, in Nortern Ireland, and according to Marshall it was designed "to fit in with the architecture that they are also filming over in Dubrovnik, the certain turrets and battlements (…) so it all seemesly blended to one at the end of the day" (2013, 7:02-7:15). Thanks to CGI and the visual effects team, the two settings were merged together to produce these establishing shots before the battle. In the left picture in figure 26 the blue battlement is the setting located in Magheramorne, whereas the rest of the shot that was seen in the actual episode was added with CGI from previous takes on the city of Dubrovnik (fig. 26).

Fig.26: Representation of the establishment shot of the battlements of King's Landing (left), and the same shot that aired on television (right). (HBO, 2013)

Following the establishment shot, the action now turns to the characters, with successive close-up shots of those who fight in the Lannister side. First Sandor Clegane, then Lancel Lannister, followed by King Joffrey Baratheon and last but not least, Tyrion Lannister, who is also depicted in a slight low-angle shot. Unlike the rest, he has a plan. All of these shots expose the pressure these characters are feeling prior to the battle. In addition, the sound of military drums resonates during the first stages of the clash as diegetic music, increasing not only their tension, but the audience's as well. Shortly after, a long-distance shot of the ships emerging from the fog is shown, followed by a low-angle shot of King Stannis. He is way more confident than Tyrion is. Nevertheless, these breathtaking shots of the Baratheon fleet were made thanks to CGI. In the set, only one full-size galleon had been made, so it had to be duplicated numerous times. Not only that, but the sea water, as well as other effects such as the fog or moon light had to be added by the visual effects team, since filming these shots in open sea would have been almost impossible. To do so, they used a technique in visual effects called chroma key, one that allows removing the background through the use of a green screen (fig. 27).
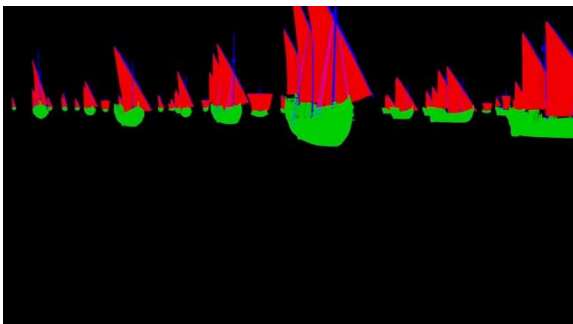

Fig.27: Duplication of the galleon through CGI (left) and the green screen used to perform the chroma key technique (right). (HBO, 2013)

Once the power of Stannis' fleet is revealed, King Joffrey spots what appears to be the only ship fighting for the Lannister side, slowly approaching its enemy. Ser Davos Seaworth, Hand of King Stannis, realises there are no soldiers on board and most importantly, notices the green liquid that the ship has been pouring around them, the wildfire. Notice how before Ser Davos spots the danger, a quick close-up shot of the battlements is made, this time focusing on the arrival of Hallyne the Pyromancer. A clever sequence revealing what is about to happen. On another note, the scene detecting the wildfire was originally programmed to be made using CGI. However, in order to save the budget for the big explosion, Marshall decided to film it himself using more primitive by equally effective visual effects (2013, 12:38-12:52). A back of a ship was quickly built and placed on rails, while a liquid with a fluorescent dye was made as well. Then, all it took was to take advantage of the camera angles to film what otherwise could have been a very expensive take (fig. 28).
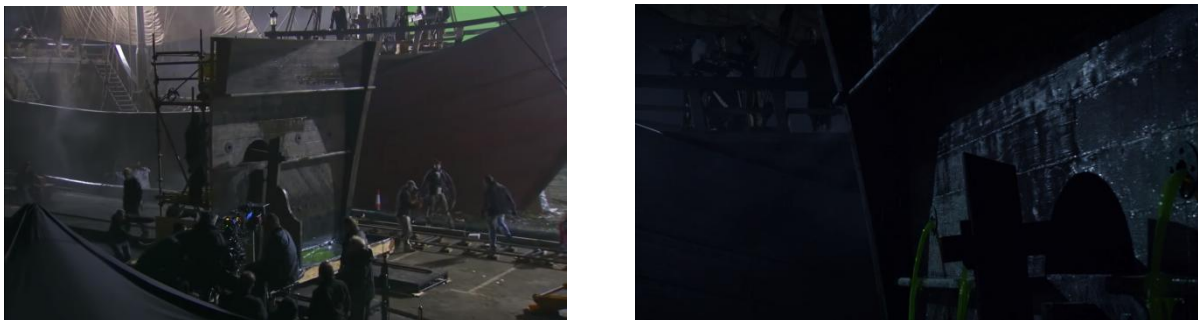
Fig.28: The back of the ship placed on rails (left) and the shot that ended up airing on television (right). (HBO, 2013)

Right after that, the action moves on to the climax of the battle. Tyrion Lannister gives the signal and his friend and mercenary Bronn shoots a flaming arrow at the wildfire poured in the sea, destroying half of Stannis' fleet in one of the most breathtaking scenes of the entire show. Conscious of the impact the image of the explosion would have on the audience, the visual effects team, lead by Rainer Gombos, discussed how they should make the fire look in order to make it seem magical, even unnatural given the amount of ships it would sink (2013, 13:42- 14:02). In the end, they were inspired by napalm explosions and the fire tentacles that come out of the core of said explosions. Additionally, the nature of the scene lead the producers to film the entirety of the battle at night, given that it would help reduce the costs of CGI. On that, Weiss claimed that "it was a production decision but was also an aesthetic decision since there was a strong fire element both with the wildfire and how the fire plays into the Hound's storyline" (2013: 9:38-9:44).
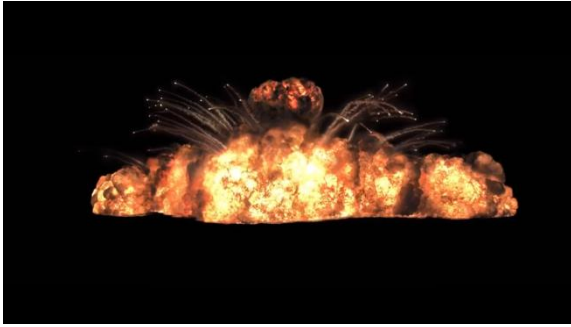
Fig.29: Napalm explosion (left) and the wildfire explosion that aired in television (right). (HBO, 2013)

After the explosion, chaos reigns supreme in the action. Ser Davos tries to warn his son Matthos but ends up getting caught up in the big blast. His sudden and violent fall was performed by a stunt double using the chroma key technique (fig. 30). Notice how in the Lannister side only King Joffrey and Hallyne the Pyromancer smile at the explosion during the close-up shots that depict their reaction. Only they enjoy such cruelty. In the meantime, dozens of Baratheon's soldiers jump desperately to the sea trying to save their lives, but quickly begin to realise that wildfire cannot be extinguished with seawater. To film these agonic scenes, the show's crew built a water tank next to the battle galleon, since filming these scenes late at night in Magheramorne would have been too dangerous (fig. 30). To create the effect of sea waves, they used a 45 gallon drum on levers, pushing it repeatedly in the water. They also used smoke tubes and real fire to simulate the effects of wildfire. In the end, King Stannis gathers the remaining soldiers despite the pleading of one of his soldiers and commands them to prepare to land.

Fig.30: Ser Davos fall using the key chroma technique (left) and the water tank and all the visual effects involved (right). (HBO, 2013)

3.5.4. Magnifying the battle's climax

In Martin's novel, the Battle of Blackwater Bay unfolded very differently as to how it took place in the show. King Stannis was not present during the naval attack. Instead, his grace and his army stood in the Kingswood waiting for his fleet to arrive and gain naval superiority. Additionally, Tyrion's plan was far more unpredictable in the books, as he placed the vessels with wildfire in many of the Lannister ships, hoping they would explode in the midst of the battle. The resulting explosion caused many casualties in both sides, making Tyrion's plan cruel and suicidal. Nevertheless, the consequences of the battle were the same, a catastrophic blow for the Baratheon side and a great victory for the Lannisters and their new allies, the Tyrells.

Aware of the increasing popularity of Tyrion's character, show runners Benioff and Weiss decided to redesign the dwarf's plan and removed the huge sacrifice of life he made in the book. Otherwise, he could have lost much support from the audience. In addition, by redesigning his plan they knew when the explosion was going to happen, so they decided to use that to their advantage. The arrow shot by Bronn and the sound of military drums were used to increase the tension felt by the audience during the sequence. In the end, the explosion was a sudden and unexpected event in the novels, whereas in the show all the multi-track elements that shape any audiovisual production were leading to it.

4. CONCLUSIONS

This project has already established how in the past, the differences between source text and adaptation made the later feel like a copy, a secondary version that could never reach the greatness set by their original. Filmmakers were handcuffed from the start when adapting a novel, and any changes they made to the narrative elements compared to the source text were always going to be heavily criticised. *Game of Thrones* has not been an exception to this rule. Despite the new school of thought that emerged in the early 90s defending that novel and film should be judged separately, the large fan base of Martin's series *A Song of Ice and Fire* has always been ready to condemn any variations the show runners decided to implement in their story.

That being said, the aim of this project was to prove that despite these variations, *Game of Thrones* is able to trigger similar emotional responses from both knowing and unknowing audiences, thus maintaining Andrea Benyon's newest concept of affective fidelity. To do so, I

have shared how different directors from the show have relied on multi-track elements that shape an audiovisual production to tell their own version of the story. In this paper it has been explained how Sakharov used different styles of camerawork to enhance the intellectual battle in Tyrion's trial between the former and his father Tywin. These techniques made their encounter more dramatic and did not need to rely on the involvement of House Tyrell.

Similarly, David Nutter used House Lannister theme song "Rains of Castamere" as a prelude of the Red Wedding. The transition of non-diegetic to diegetic music, followed by the lack of sound after Robb Stark's death, made the slaughter as intense as in the books, despite not focusing on the deaths of Robb's bannermen. Nutter was in charge of filming Cersei Lannister's walk of atonement as well, and despite not saying a word, Headey transmitted as much emotion with her performance and use of referential expressions as her character did through her thoughts in the novels. Last but not least, Marshall's use of CGI in the Battle of the Blackwater made the sequence as breathtaking as any reader could have imagined when reading the books.

Therefore, I firmly believe that despite being a simpler reading of the novels and omitting plots and characters that one could think are irreplaceable, Benioff and Weiss' *Game of Thrones* kept affective fidelity through the use of film's multi-track elements.

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