



The Architectural Protagonist of Kings Landing:
A Dynamic Force in the 'Game of Thrones' Narrative



DECLARATION

I, **Amy Galea**, confirm that this work submitted for assessment is my own and is expressed in my own and is expressed in my own words. Any use made within it of the works of other authors in any form (ideas, text, illustrations, tables, etc.) Is properly acknowledged at the point of use. A list of the reference employed is included as part of the work.

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ABSTRACT

Research Question: How does architecture within ‘The Game of Thrones’ act as a silent yet powerful protagonist, complementing and enriching the narrative of specific scenes?

Game of Thrones is a dark fantasy TV series based on a book by George R.R. Martin. It’s known for its violent and dark narrative. In the context of Game of Thrones, the architectural design of sets and locations serves as a silent yet powerful protagonist, complementing and enriching the narrative of specific scenes. The study uses a qualitative case study approach to examine four key scenes from the series, including Joffrey and Margaery Tyrell’s wedding, Cersei’s arrest by the High Sparrow, Cersei watching the Great Sept of Baelor explode from the Red Keep, and Cersei’s coronation.

By delving into existing literature on the concepts of ‘architectural symbolism’ and ‘architectural protagonist,’ and comprehending the process of translating fictional realms into visual representations on screen, a foundational knowledge has been established. This knowledge serves as the basis for the analysis conducted in the chosen case studies.

The case studies involve collecting data, highlighting, and examining the key aspects of the scenes’ narratives through the use of dialogue, narrative summaries, character summaries, and selected frames taken from the key scenes. After collecting the data, the book ‘Reading Architecture: A Visual Lexicon’ is used as a guide to conduct a graphic analysis of the selected scenes, examining how the architecture has used various elements to complement and enrich the specific narratives (Hopkins, 2012).

Through the examination of these scenes and a discussion aimed at exploring the findings of each case study in connection with the research question, the study endeavours to substantiate the term “architectural protagonist” as posited by Thomas Honegger (2004). This contributes to an enhanced understanding of how architecture is pivotal in constructing and enhancing the intricate dark fantasy narrative of Game of Thrones.



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GLOSSARY

Characters:

The High Septon: The highest-ranking religious figure in the Faith of the Seven, responsible for overseeing the religious affairs of the realm.

Ser Gregor Clegane, "The Mountain": A formidable and ruthless warrior in the service of House Lannister, known for his immense size and cruelty.

Qyburn: A former maester expelled from the Citadel who becomes a skilled healer and adviser to Cersei Lannister.

Jaime Lannister: A skilled knight and member of the Kingsguard, known for his combat prowess and complex relationships within the Lannister family.

Cersei Lannister: A central character and member of House Lannister, known for her political cunning and ambition.

Margaery Tyrell: A cunning and strategic member of House Tyrell, known for her marriages to multiple kings.

Joffrey Baratheon: The eldest son of Cersei Lannister, officially recognised as the son of King Robert Baratheon, and a controversial ruler of the Seven Kingdoms.

General:

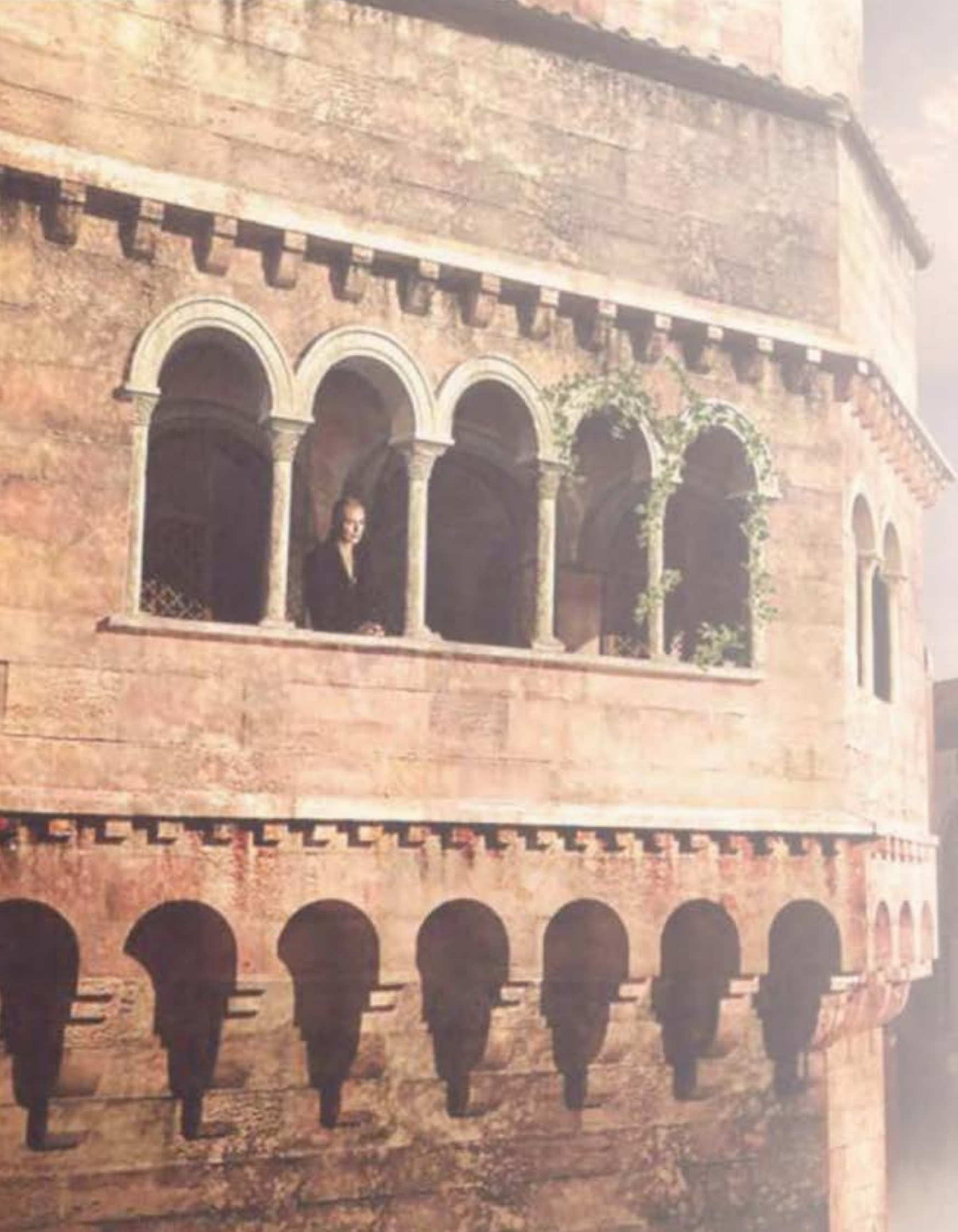
Faith of the Seven: A religious system in the fictional world of "Game of Thrones" (GOT), representing the dominant faith in the Seven Kingdoms. It revolves around seven deities, each symbolising different aspects of life.

The Sept: A place of worship in the Faith of the Seven, resembling a medieval Christian church. It serves as the central religious institution in the series.

Monarchy: A system of government where a single person, known as the monarch, holds supreme authority. The Seven Kingdoms in "Game of Thrones" operate under a monarchy.

Visual Media: A broad term encompassing all forms of media that rely on visual elements, such as television, film, photography, and digital content.

Visual Motif: A recurring and distinctive element or theme in a visual work of art, design, or media that is used to convey a particular idea or concept. They can take various forms, including symbols, patterns, colours, shapes, or specific imagery, and they often serve to reinforce or emphasise key themes.



CHAPTER 01

INTRODUCTION & BACKGROUND RESEARCH

TOPIC SELECTION

Having immersed myself into the subject area of 'architecture and narrative', specifically exploring how architecture is used within digital media, I have come to appreciate how architecture goes beyond just being seen as a backdrop in fictional TV shows and films. Instead, architecture emerges as an element with the ability to aid and complement narratives. Honegger (2004) and various other authors explored this concept in my dissertation, articulating that architecture possesses the potential to actively enhance and enrich the complexities of specific plots and scenes within visual storytelling. This inspired me to explore the role of architecture in complementing the complex, dark fantasy narrative of Game of Thrones.

INTRODUCTION

Game of Thrones is a multi-award-winning, TV series, adapted from the book series: A Song of Ice and Fire, written by George R.R. Martin. Its dark fantasy narrative is defined by its violent atmosphere and frightening world. The show focuses on what horrific actions and extreme lengths people are willing to go to gain power and status. The show focuses on the noble families including the Starks of the north, Lannisters of the west, Baratheons of the Stormlands, and the Targaryens who ruled for centuries. The show spans eight seasons, featuring political intrigue, plot twists, complex characters, and supernatural elements such as dragons and the undead creatures from the far North. The narrative is driven by the struggles among noble families that fight for control over the fictional continents of Westeros and Essos. Westeros (Fig.1) is rich in history, politics, and culture, with varying locations that each have unique and different architectural characteristics that convey the inhabitant's social standing, lifestyle, and traditions.

This dissertation will focus on exploring how the architecture enriches and complements the narrative within selected scenes, situated within two key buildings: The Red Keep, and the Great Sept of Baelor. These reside within the capital city Kings Landing (Fig.2), which is situated in the South of the continent of Westeros (Fig.1). The dissertation will aim to show how architecture plays the role of a key protagonist, alongside the character protagonists, when portraying a successful compelling narrative.

Kings Landing is home to the Red Keep (Fig.3) which is the epicentre of all political affairs, serving as the official residence for the ruling monarch and is where the Iron Throne resides. The Iron Throne seats the ruling monarch of the Seven Kingdoms of Westeros, symbolising the pinnacle of power. The Iron Throne room is where many royal coronations and events are held throughout the TV series. The Great Sept of Baelor (Fig.4) is a key structure that represents the religious influence of the 'Faith of the Seven' in the Seven Kingdoms. Playing a crucial role in the socio-political dynamics, hosting significant social events and legal trials. Both buildings – The Red Keep and The Great Sept of Baelor – function as beacons of hierarchy, towering over the rest of the city, symbolising how powerful the monarchy and religion are within the narrative and the inhabitants of the fictional world.

Using a case study analysis this dissertation will investigate how the architectural protagonist complements and enhances the narrative. The analysis will be divided into four key scenes, focusing on a range of architectural elements. To conclude, a discussion will investigate how the architectural elements have complemented the key scenes narratives, in reference to the research question: How does architecture within 'The Game of Thrones' act as a silent yet powerful protagonist, complementing and enriching the narrative of specific scenes. This will involve utilising the collected evidence concerning the role of the architectural protagonists in the narrative, as demonstrated through the role of the architectural elements within the previous case studies.



Fig 1: Map of Westeros (Concept artists, 2019).

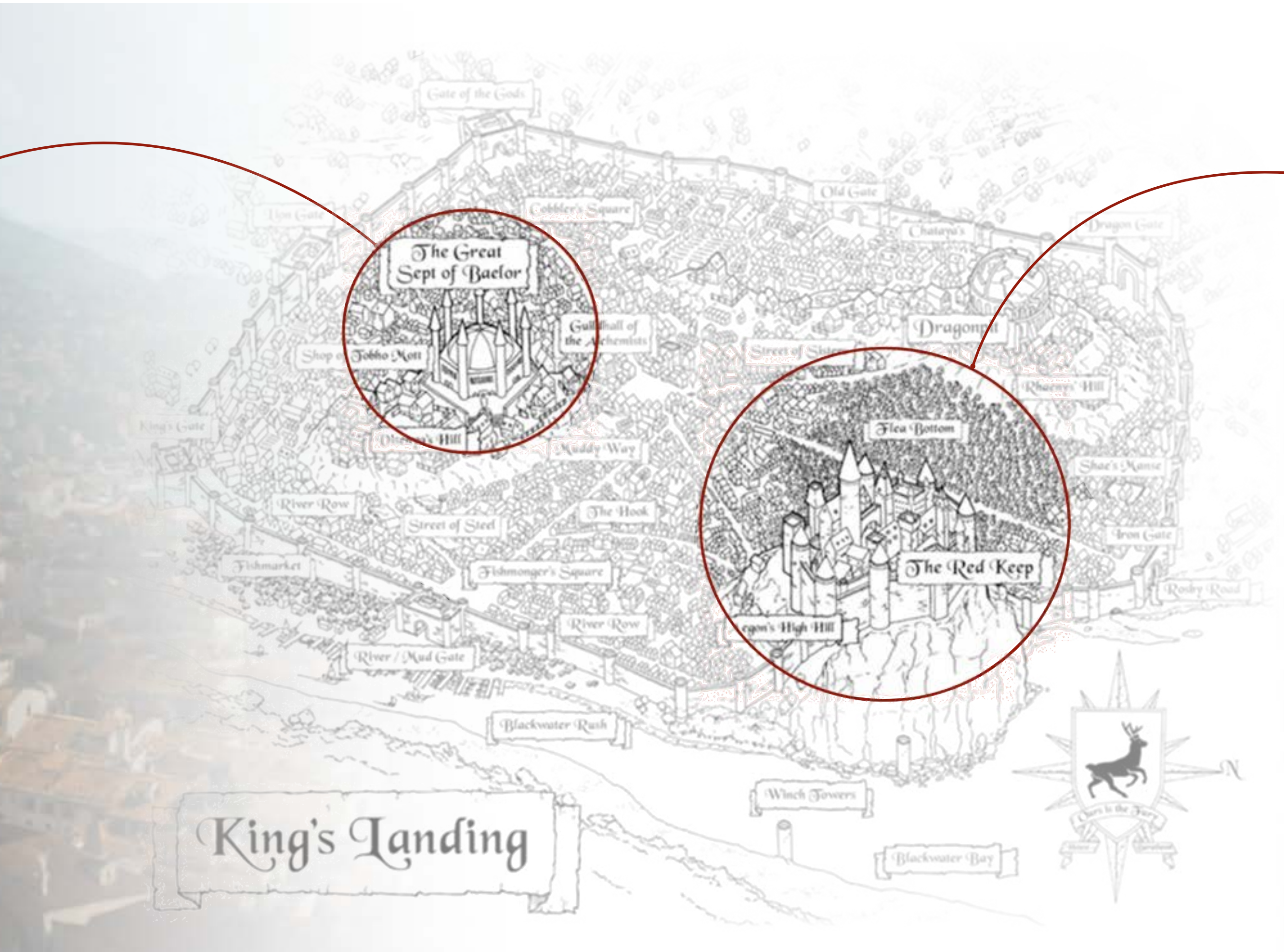


Fig 4: Frame from Season 5, episode 7, The Gift (Martin, et al, 2015)

Fig 2: Map of Kings Landing highlighting two key buildings (Authors own image)

Fig 3: The Red keep concept art (Concept artists, 2019)

LITERATURE REVIEW

INTRODUCTION:

Various authors have explored the term ‘architectural protagonist’ as well as ‘architectural symbolism’s’ role in complementing a narrative, however, there is little information on how architecture complements narrative within specific films or TV series. Within the Game of Thrones, the dark fantasy is made up of various families, cultures, and races that span a spectrum of social classes, languages, built environments, and geographical locations intertwining, to build a complex narrative. There is little information on the role architecture plays specifically in Game of Thrones and how it complements the narrative, however, various authors have explored fictional worlds and narratives such as Harry Potter and Lord of the Rings with regards to architecture’s role in complementing the narrative or character development.

ARCHITECTURAL SYMBOLISM COMPLEMENTING FICTIONAL NARRATIVES

Symbolism in architecture plays a crucial role in conveying meaning, identity, and cultural significance. Through the use of symbols, architects can imbue buildings with layers of interpretation, allowing them to communicate complex ideas, values, and beliefs. According to Astakhova, the significance of symbolic imagery is fundamental in numerous architectural structures, particularly in religious and memorial buildings (Astakhova, 2020). Deciphering the symbolic meaning embedded in architectural forms can pose a challenge, prompting Astakhova to emphasise the necessity of accompanying symbolic forms with vivid imagery, both pictorial and sculptural. These additional symbolic architectural elements serve as a simpler language to communicate the meaning inherent in the architectural design. Astakhova uses the example of The Pentagon, expressing how its shape, and form are used as “a symbol of the US military power (1941-43, architect George Bergstrom)”. The symbol of power is “embodied in the planning structure of the building” (Astakhova, 2020).

Authors such as Holland Young and Nadim Afzal have delved into architectural symbolism and how it is used within visual media. They showcase how the use of symbolic messages and hidden meanings can contribute to the building of narratives, enrich plotlines, and develop character traits in fictional worlds. Young explored the symbolism of medieval castles (Figs.5 & 6), stating their ability to serve as “physical representations of power and affluence”. He suggests that “castles symbolise the obligations and responsibilities associated with nobility, especially when located in the hearts of urban districts.” As well as providing “the ideal backdrop for scenes of political intrigue or for staging epic battles,” Young goes on to name both “Mel Gibson’s Braveheart” and “HBO’s popular Game of Thrones series” as examples of applying the use of medieval castles to complement and enhance their complex narratives (Young, H, 2015, p.52).

Nadim Afzal (2023) explored “How Architecture Expresses Character Traits in Middle Earth”, specifically “analysing the Great Dwarven Cities of Moria & Erebor”. Afzal explains how the “Dwarvish architecture” expressed and added layers to the “Dwarven inhabitants” character traits, building on the development of the characters. Afzal explored; the Mines of Moria’s columns and scale (Fig.6), and the City of Erebor’s entrances, and openings (Fig.7 & 8), to evaluate how architecture “can tell the viewer more about the Dwarves as characters” (Afzal, N. R., 2023). Afzal concluded after in-depth analysis that “the culmination of traits/expressions developed around the Dwarves provided fulfilment of the research aim regarding understanding how architecture expresses character traits.” He came to this conclusion After analysing numerous elements including how the geometric nature of Moria’s column design “expressed the pragmatic nature of the Dwarven mind,” and how the “scale of Moria expresses the collapse of an ambitious group of people into loneliness and despair”. Afzal’s conclusions on how the architecture of Moria and Erebor expressed character traits, also enhance how architecture can enrich a fictional narrative by adding to the characters’ complex individual narratives (Afzal, N. R., 2023).

Both authors show how storytellers can take advantage of architectural symbolism and use it to add depth, layers, and a sense of familiarity to their narratives, taking advantage of familiar symbols, and themes, in order to construct relatable environments that an audience can associate with. In an interview with John Hodgeman, George R.R. Martin states his process for creating aspects, such as elements like religion within his dark fantasy narrative begins with the deliberate incorporation of elements from reality, serving as the foundation the audience can relate to. Martin then skillfully adapts and tweaks these elements, introducing his own creativity and imagination as he infuses the narrative with fantastical elements. Finally, Martin elevates the narrative to grand proportions, amplifying its scale. Martin draws upon the example of ‘the Wall,’ a fictional colossal ice barrier demarcating the northernmost realms of Westeros from the uncharted lands beyond. Inspired by his visit to Hadrian’s Wall during a UK trip, Martin adeptly melds historical elements with his imaginative talent. By infusing this real-world experience with the fantastical addition of ice and magnifying its scale, he not only enhances the narrative with relatable elements but also invites the audience to delve into the complex world he has created (Hodgman, J. 2011).



Fig 5: Tyrion and Varys review the defensive strategy on the city walls near the castle at King’s Landing in HBO’s Game of Thrones series (Martin, et al, 2012)



Fig 6: Column Design in Moria (Jackson, 2001, 2:22:11)



Fig 7: Erebor’s Entrance (Jackson, 2012, 2:03:04)



Fig 8: Erebor’s City Openings (Jackson, 2012, 0:03:00)

THE IMPORTANCE OF ARCHITECTURAL NARRATIVES WHEN BUILDING FICTIONAL WORLDS AND SETS

Architecture plays a prominent role in captivating an audience in film and TV, however, what the viewer does not see on screen are the concept design and in-depth planning that has taken place. In 2013 Deborah Riley was appointed the role of production designer, responsible for seasons four to eight of HBO's *Game of Thrones* along with her extensive art department. In 2019, Riley authored the book 'The Art of Game of Thrones' which reiterates the importance of architectural design concerning *Game of Thrones*' complex narrative. The book demonstrates the significant amount of time that went into translating George R.R. Martin's complex fictional literary world, into concept art and architectural designs that make up the fictional world the viewer sees on screen. Figures 9 - 12 show examples of architectural plans and concept art that went into designing the Red Keep and the Great Sept of Baelor.

Blueprints, concept sketches, and models are different ways art departments and construction teams work together to build a set, using a combination of digital and physical techniques. People often believe the material produced is "purely for constructional aims in order to build the end result." However, their purpose is more than just functional and can build upon the narrative a director may have, adding "emotional power to the film" (Katz, S. D. 1991).

Anthony Vindler, an architectural historian, and critic, in 1920 had the idea to interpret space as a dynamic element and with a "conscious expression", as it was previously viewed as static, with no other significant purpose other than to fill a background in a scene. Vindler declares that architecture within films is "no longer an inert background" but rather now participates in the very emotions of the film (Vidler, A. 1994). Tejas Sekhar states how architecture "serves the purpose of reinforcing cultural, societal, or national values," explaining how architecture has more symbolic meaning than simply existing "for aesthetic appeal and obvious structural functions" (Sekhar, T. 2018).



Fig 9: Interior concept art for the Great Sept of Baelor (Concept artists, 2019).

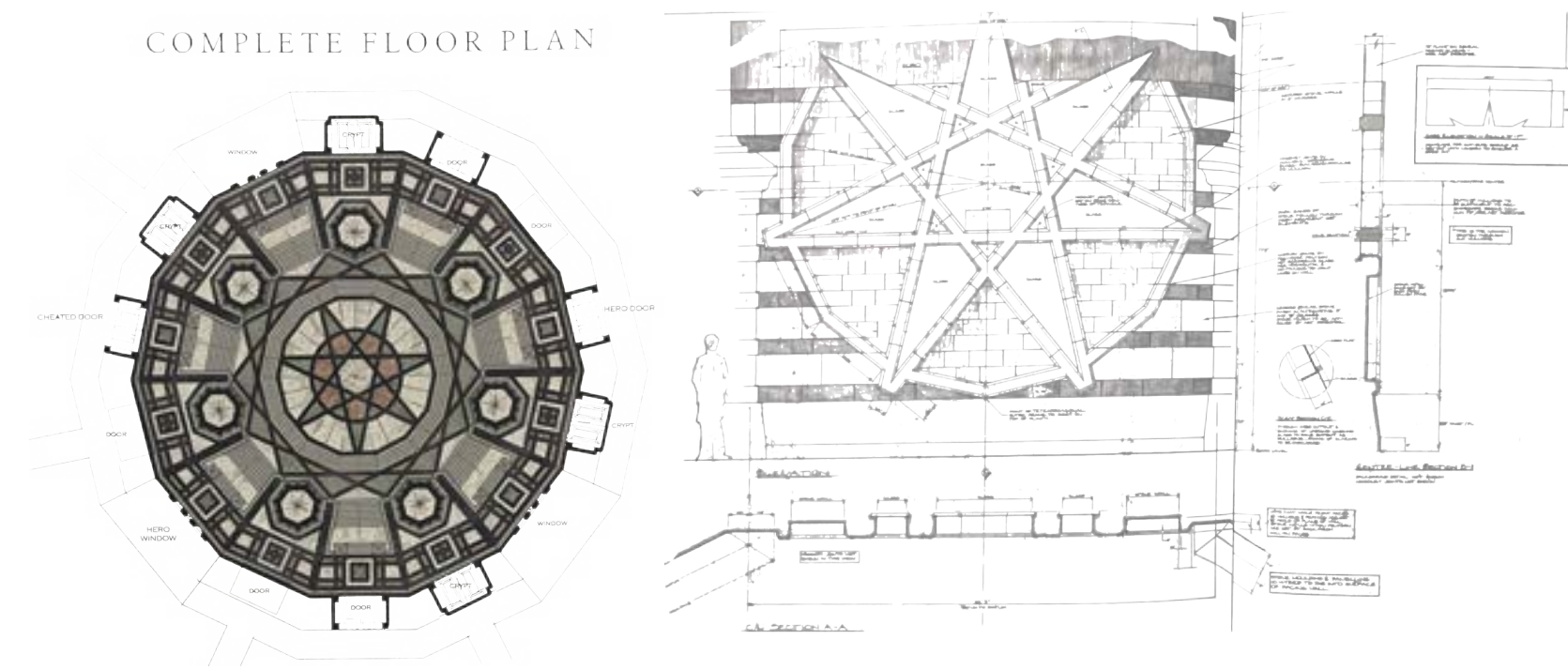


Fig 12: Blueprints, plans, and sketches of the Great Sept of Baelor (Concept artists, 2019).

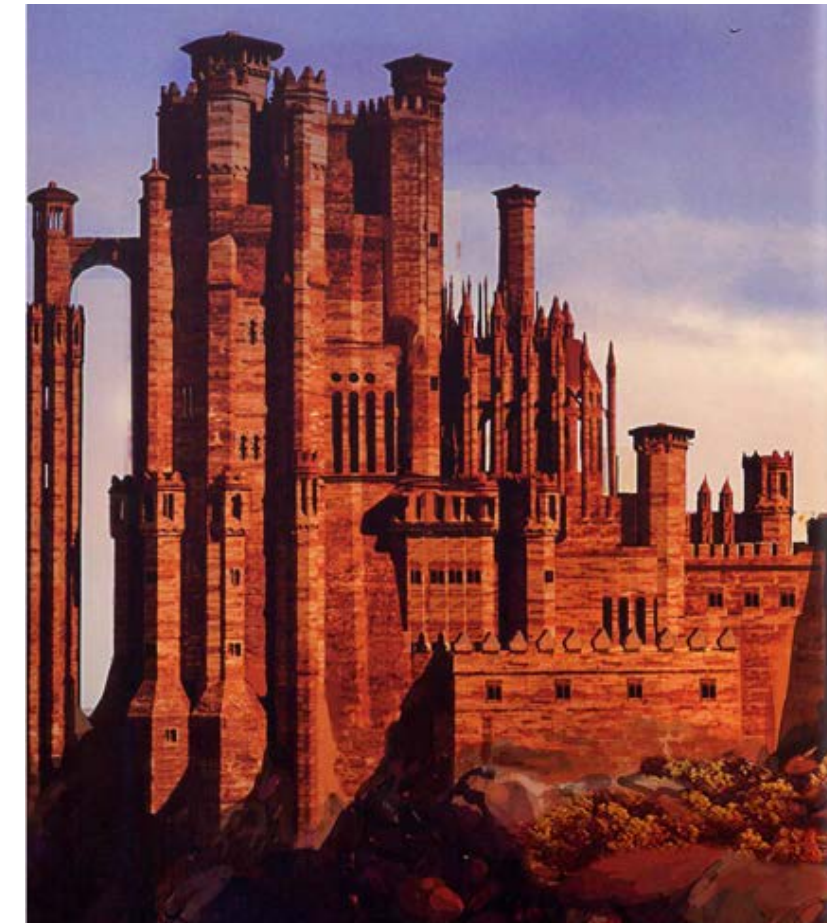


Fig 11: The Red Keep concept art (Concept artists, 2019).



Fig 10: The Red Keep, Cersei's balcony exterior concept art (Concept artists, 2019).

ARCHITECTURAL PROTAGONIST

Thomas Honegger explores the term 'architectural protagonist,' commenting on how architecture within a fictional world "is not merely the backdrop" but holds the power to represent memories, and symbols through a range of architectural elements. These factors can all express a story, backing up Honegger's statement that architecture is "a 'protagonist' in its own right" (Thomas Honegger, 2004).

Throughout this dissertation, the concept of an 'architectural protagonist' will be explored and will explain the key role of architecture in telling a compelling story. This term encapsulates the dynamic nature of architecture, and its ability to enrich fictional spaces using various architectural elements as well as adding depth and symbolism that enhances the narrative.

Andreas Müller states "with every architectural design, an idea is constructed" outlining whom the architecture relates to, and what type of people they might be. Müller is trying to show that; architecture holds the power to capture the essence of its inhabitants and past events (Müller, A). This emphasizes the concept that architecture, as a tangible entity, operates as a discreet protagonist, a visually dynamic yet silent actor that contributes a powerful narrative provoking reactions from its viewer. Anastasia Bower further emphasizes "since the beginning of motion pictures, architecture frequently has played a lead role." The architecture, buildings, and surrounding context can support the "character development, and also help you understand the subtleties of the plot unfolding right in front of your eyes." (BOWEN, A, 2006). Honegger agrees and reiterates the importance of architecture within fictional worlds, by analysing the works of 'Dublin in Joyce's *Ulysses* and London in Dickens' investigating how the architecture provides "not only the background for the action but are often at least as important as the human protagonists" (Thomas Honegger, 2004).

LITERATURE REVIEW FINAL REFLECTIONS

The existing literature by authors such as Astakhova (2020), Anthony Vindler (1994), Thomas Honegger (2004), Tejas Sekhar (2018), Andreas Müller, and Anastasia Bower (2006), all provided insight into architectural symbolism and the evolving view of how architecture has a significant role in complementing and enriching the narrative within fictional worlds. There is very limited literature looking into specific films and TV series', researching how architecture plays a role in complementing their specific narratives and/or characters, other than recent authors Holland Young (2015) and Nadim Afzal (2022).

Holland Young concluded his thesis by stating that there is room for further analysis regarding how "architecture may be used to support the four elements of narrative: plot, theme, character, and setting" (Young, H, 2015, p.146). Inspired by Holland and the rest of the existing literature, this dissertation will explore further how architecture has complemented and enriched the narratives within TV series by specifically focusing on the fictional world of *Game of Thrones* TV series directed by Benioff and Weiss, based on the novel 'The Song of Ice and Fire' written by George R.R. Martin. The gap in knowledge in how architecture complements the *Game of Thrones* narrative, allows this dissertation to explore the key elements of the architectural protagonist and how they enrich key scenes, giving the viewer a better understanding of the complex dark fantasy narrative.

METHODOLOGY

To analyse the architectural protagonist's contribution to the Game of Thrones narrative, in relation to the aims/objectives of this dissertation, various qualitative methods will be employed. The analysis will be illustrated through case studies, investigating four key scenes, set out in chronological order, selected from a range of different episodes in the Game of Thrones TV series. The case studies are set out in chronological order so the developing narrative can be demonstrated clearly and referred to within the analysis. The key scenes were selected to show a range of spaces within the two key buildings - the Great Sept of Baelor and The Red Keep (Fig.14) – with each scene aiming to answer the question: How does architecture within the Game of Thrones act as a silent yet powerful protagonist, complementing and enriching the narrative of specific scenes?

Each key scene will have a selected set of architectural elements for further analysis, analysing elements such as - 'scale, layout and organisation', 'ornamentation and decoration', 'lighting', and 'filming perspective, representation, and framed views'. To understand and analyse how these elements can complement and enhance the narrative – the first step will be to understand and summarise the narrative of the selected scene using dialogue from the TV show. This step ensures there is a clear understanding of what the architectural elements are aiming to complement, providing a foundation to analyse how the elements are playing a role in adding to the narrative.

The second step of analysis will use evidence from the concept art books, existing literature, and real-world comparisons, to understand how the architectural elements complement and enrich the narrative. The third step will use the book 'Reading Architecture: A Visual Lexicon' as a guide in conducting a graphic analysis of the selected architectural elements and develop a range of annotated drawings/ personal sketches that interpret and investigate the evidence explored (Hopkins, 2012). To conclude, a discussion will investigate how each space/key scene has complemented and enhanced their specific narratives, exploring how these architectural elements have an integral role in the communication of the narrative. The overarching goal of this discussion is to demonstrate how the architectural protagonist uses a range of elements to collaboratively function as a central protagonist, thereby contributing to the development of a compelling narrative. Refer to Figures 13 & 14 for a visual overview of the research methods.

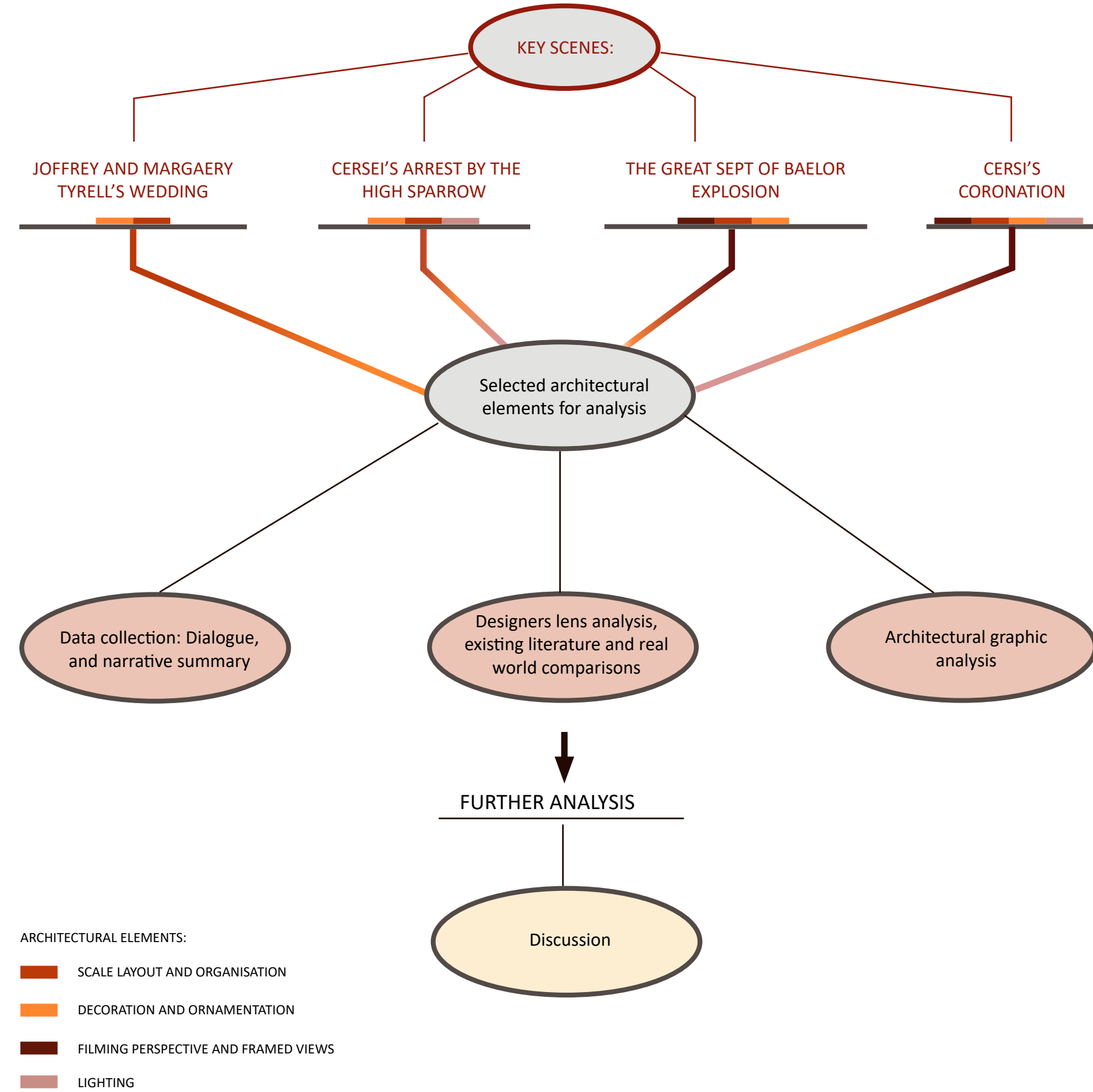


Fig 13: Visual overview of the research structure (Authors own image)

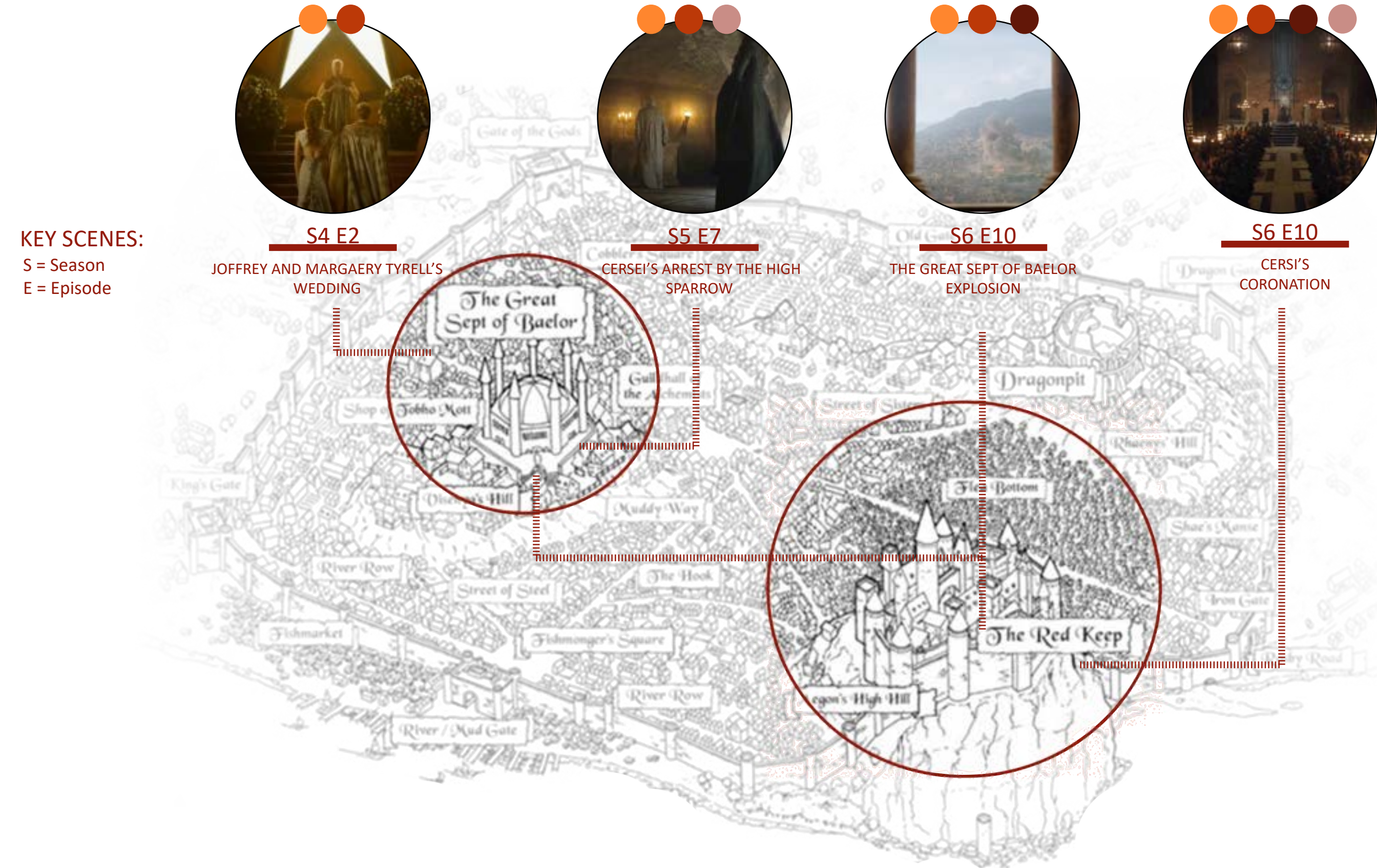


Fig 14: Visual overview of key scenes along with the elements of analysis (Authors own image)



DATA COLLECTION

KEY SCENES:	S4 E2 - 27:20 - 29:00 - JOFFREY AND MARGAERY TYRELL'S WEDDING	S5 E7 - 50:35 - 53:00 - CERSEI'S ARREST	S6 E10 - 10:30 - 17:21 - THE GREAT SEPT OF BAEOR EXPLOSION	S6 E10 - 59:57 - 1:02:00 - CERSEI'S CORONATION			
DIALOGUE: <small>STAGE ACTIONS PERSPECTIVE CHANGES DIALOGUE</small>	<p><i>"MARGAERY and MACE walk down the aisle. MACE hands her to JOFFREY. The pair continue up the steps to the HIGH SEPTON. He places a cape over her shoulders. They clasp hands and they bar bound together.</i></p> <p>HIGH SEPTON: <i>Let it be known that Margaery of House Tyrell and Joffrey of the Houses Lannister and Baratheon are one heart, one flesh, one soul. Cursed be he who would seek to tear them asunder.</i></p> <p>JOFFREY: <i>With this kiss, I pledge my love.</i></p> <p>JOFFREY and MARGAERY kiss. <i>The crowd applauds.</i></p> <p>SANSA: <i>We have a new queen.</i></p> <p>TYRION: <i>Better her than you"</i> (Martin et al, 2014, 27:20 - 29:00)</p>	<p><i>"High Sparrow: you saw her?"</i></p> <p>Cersei: <i>Yes</i></p> <p>High Sparrow: <i>And...</i></p> <p>Cersei: <i>Her accommodation seems sufficient, what happens to her now?</i></p> <p>High Sparrow: <i>Well she and her brother are both been held under fair suspicion, a trial will be held for each of them, will determine if their guilty of any acts that constitute a violation of the tenants of the faith.</i></p> <p>Cersei: <i>Who will stand judge?</i></p> <p>High Sparrow: <i>Seven Septons, as it was in all trials before the Targarians.</i></p> <p>Cersei: <i>Will you be one of them?</i></p> <p>High Sparrow: <i>I will</i></p> <p>Cersei: <i>If one of both of them where to confess before the trial</i></p> <p>High Sparrow: <i>then they will become the mothers mercy</i></p> <p>Cersei: <i>What does the mother mercy in tale?</i></p> <p>High Sparrow: <i>It depends upon the situation, the acts themselves, the degree of contrition,</i></p>	<p><i>Cersei: Thank you High Septon, for bringing them whatever justice they deserve, in the eyes of the seven.</i></p> <p>High Sparrow: <i>Did you know that this chapel is one of the oldest structures in Kings Landing?</i></p> <p>Cersei: <i>I think I may of heard at one point.</i></p> <p>High Sparrow: <i>Baelor built his sept around it but men worshipped here long before him. Who carved this alter? Do you know ?</i></p> <p>Cersei: <i>I'm afraid I don't.</i></p> <p>High Sparrow: <i>No-one does, There's no name on it or anywhere else in the chapel. No, the people who built this place didn't inflict their vanity on those who came after them, the way Baelor did with that great gilded monstrosity up there.</i></p> <p>Cersei: <i>hmm</i></p> <p>High Sparrow: <i>Their faith was clean. Strip away the gold and the ornaments, knock down the statues and the pillars, and this is what remains. Something simple... solid... (HE TAPS) ... and true. The Tyrells' finery will be stripped away, their lies knocked down, their true hearts laid bare for all to see. And so it will be for all of us... high and low alike"</i>(Martin et al, 2015, 50:35 – 53:00).</p>	<p><i>CUT TO: GREAT SEPT OF BAEOR</i></p> <p>MARGAERY hurries over to the HIGH SPARROW.</p> <p>MARGAERY: <i>There's something wrong.</i></p> <p>HIGH SPARROW: <i>You have nothing to fear, Your Grace. The trial will begin shortly.</i></p> <p>MARGAERY: <i>Cersei is not here. Tommen is not here. Why do you think they are not here?</i></p> <p>HIGH SPARROW: <i>If the accused is not here, she will be tried regardless. We cannot escape the justice of the gods--</i></p> <p>MARGAERY: <i>Forget about the bloody gods and listen to what I'm telling you. Cersei understands the consequences of her absence and she is absent anyway, which means she does not intend to suffer those consequences. The trial can wait. We all need to leave.</i></p> <p><i>The HIGH SPARROW scoffs and shakes his head.</i></p> <p><i>CUT TO: GREAT SEPT OF BAEOR - TUNNELS</i></p> <p><i>LANCEL has almost reached the end of the tunnel. He sees green pools of liquid on the ground in front of two barrels with candles in their centers. The candles have almost burned down to nothing. He looks around at the casks lining the walls of the tunnel and pulls himself onward towards the candles.</i></p>	<p><i>CUT TO: GREAT SEPT OF BAEOR</i></p> <p>MARGAERY (to the crowd): <i>We all need to leave now!</i></p> <p><i>MARGAERY hurries over to LORAS. The crowd begins to stir. MARGAERY takes LORAS' chin and lifts his face so his eyes meet hers.</i></p> <p>MARGAERY: <i>Loras. Stay with me.</i></p> <p>MARGAERY ushers him towards the steps.</p> <p><i>CUT TO: GREAT SEPT OF BAEOR - TUNNELS</i></p> <p>LANCEL groans as he pulls himself closer to the candles.</p> <p><i>CUT TO: GREAT SEPT OF BAEOR</i></p> <p><i>MARGAERY hurries towards the exit with LORAS. The crowd begins to panic and also heads towards the exit. Two Faith Militant block MARGAERY's path to the exit.</i></p> <p>MARGAERY: <i>Let me through. Let me through. Get out of my way.</i></p> <p>MARGAERY pushes against the guards. The HIGH SPARROW looks around at the crowd.</p> <p>MARGAERY: <i>Let us through!</i></p>	<p><i>CUT TO: GREAT SEPT OF BAEOR - TUNNELS</i></p> <p><i>LANCEL reaches the candles. He tries to blow out the flame with his breath, but it won't go out.</i></p> <p><i>CUT TO: GREAT SEPT OF BAEOR</i></p> <p><i>MARGAERY looks over her shoulder at the HIGH SPARROW. They stare into each other's eyes.</i></p> <p><i>CUT TO: GREAT SEPT OF BAEOR - TUNNELS</i></p> <p><i>The flame from the candle touches the pool of green liquid and ignites it. The surrounding barrels are ignited and explode in a mass of green flame. LANCEL is incinerated. The explosion travels down the tunnel, igniting all of the barrels.</i></p> <p><i>CUT TO: GREAT SEPT OF BAEOR</i></p> <p><i>The sound of an explosion can be heard. The green flame erupts from the center of the sept, incinerating the HIGH SPARROW and then engulfing the entire sept, killing everyone inside. The sept crumbles from the force of the explosion. The bell from its tower is flung down into the city, smashing into a bystander. The flames rush out from the sept.</i></p> <p><i>CUT TO: RED KEEP - CERSEI'S CHAMBER</i></p> <p><i>CERSEI watches the explosion. She cocks her head back, then smiles, sips her wine, and walks away (Martin et al, 2016, 10:30 - 17:21).</i></p>	<p><i>CERSEI enters, escorted by GREGOR and the Kingsguard. The room is full of nobles and city soldiers. QYBURN stands next to the Iron Throne, holding a crown. CERSEI and GREGOR approach the throne. CERSEI stands in front of the throne. JAIME enters through a side passage and watches.</i></p> <p>QYBURN: <i>I now proclaim Cersei of the House Lannister First of Her Name, Queen of the Andals and the First Men, Protector of the Seven Kingdoms.</i></p> <p>QYBURN places the crown on CERSEI's head. <i>CERSEI sits in the Iron Throne. She and JAIME look at each other.</i></p> <p>QYBURN: <i>Long may she reign.</i></p> <p>ALL: <i>Long may she reign (Martin et al, 2016, 59:57 - 1:02:00).</i></p>
NARRATIVE SUMMARY	To sum up the main point of narrative and plot within this scene, Margery Tyrell (Queen Consort) and Joffrey Baratheon (the King of the Seven Kingdoms) are joining in matrimony in a grandiose ceremony. The wedding, is intended to solidify an alliance between House Baratheon and House Tyrell, whilst also showcasing the opulence of the ruling families, with a lavish display of wealth and power. The scene also highlights the relationship between the power of religion (The Faith of the Seven) and monarchy (The Royal Family) within the TV show.	In the unfolding narrative, tension, and strain had been steadily building between the Faith of the Seven, representing the realm's religion, and the Royal Family and nobility, embodying the monarchy. This escalating discord found its roots in a series of recent arrests orchestrated by the High Sparrow, who held the influential position of the High Septon. The High Sparrow's actions, including the arrests of prominent figures, served as catalysts for the intensifying conflict. Among those apprehended were Loras Tyrell, the queen's brother, accused of engaging in illicit activities, and Margaery Tyrell, the reigning queen, facing charges of perjury. In this scene selected S5 E7 (Martin et al, 2015, 50:35 – 53:00), the pinnacle of this narrative crescendo unfolded when Cersei, the formidable Queen Mother, found herself ensnared in the web of accusations. Her arrest was justified on grounds of incest, adultery, and treason. This intricate web of arrests not only deepened the fissures between the Faith of the Seven and the monarchy but also set the stage for a power struggle with far-reaching consequences in the turbulent political landscape of Westeros.	In the aftermath of a string of recent arrests, including that of Cersei Lannister, tensions between the monarchy and the religious authorities had reached a perilous tipping point. Following Cersei's arrest and subsequent confinement by the Faith, the discord reached a critical juncture. In a bid to circumvent trial, Cersei endured the public humiliation of a walk of atonement, commonly known as the walk of shame, before the people of King's Landing. However, even after this penance, she found herself relegated to isolation within the Red Keep. Her standing in King's Landing diminished significantly, rendering her emotionally and politically vulnerable. During her seclusion, Cersei began orchestrating a retaliatory plan against those who had disgraced her. Aligning herself with Qyburn, a disgraced former maester, the two devised a strategy to reclaim power and eliminate their adversaries. Cersei's journey took a legal turn when she faced accusations of various crimes, prompting her to name the formidable Ser Gregor Clegane, "The Mountain," as her champion for a trial by combat. Unexpectedly, the High Sparrow outlawed trial by combat, leaving Cersei without her intended legal defense. The culmination of Cersei's revenge unfolded in Season 6, Episode 10, from 10:30 to 17:21, known as "The Great Sept of Baelor Explosion." In this gripping scene, Cersei employed wildfire, a highly explosive substance, to annihilate the Great Sept of Baelor along with her enemies. The explosion not only eliminated the Faith of the Seven but also claimed a significant number of nobles, solidifying Cersei's ruthless ascent to power	In the aftermath of the preceding events, Cersei seizes control of the Seven Kingdoms. In the same pivotal episode of Season 6, Episode 10, between 59:57 and 1:02:00, Cersei formally declares herself, taking the title of the first of her name, Queen of the Seven Kingdoms. This momentous coronation unfolds within the grandeur of the Iron Throne room situated in the heart of the Red Keep. Within this scene, you get the sense that Cersei is descending into madness, after her isolation, humiliation, and grief for all her children who have now all deceased, leaving her with power but at the loss of a large sum of her loved ones.			
PLOT KEY WORDS	Religion, monarchy, opulence, grandeur, lavish, alliance, wealth, power, bond, social hierarchy.	Religion, monarchy, tension, strain, vanity, gold, ornaments, statues, pillars, simple, solid, finery, political power struggle, class divisions.	Explosion, elimination, monarchy and religious conflict, emotionally and politically vulnerable.	Power, Madness, violence, war.			
CHARACTER SUMMARY	MARGAERY TYRELL: A cunning ambitious character JOFFREY BARATHEON: A cruel, power abusive, unpredictable character who is known for his sadistic nature, took pleasure in tormenting his subjects and guests, creating an uneasy atmosphere.	CERSEI LANNISTER: A highly ambitious and cunning character with a fixation on power and influence in the political landscape of Westeros. She is willing to employ ruthless and Machiavellian tactics to gain her goals and aims for her family and loved ones and large moral and ethical costs. HIGH SPARROW (HIGH SEPTION): Once a humble and pious character, rose to prominence within the Faith of the Seven, becoming the High Septon. He gained this power by advocating for the rights of the less fortunate and challenging the excesses of the noble class. Despite his apparent ascendance, the High Sparrow's zealotry and rigid moral stance eventually contribute to his downfall.	SIR GREGOR CLEGANE, "THE MOUNTAIN: A formidable and ruthless warrior in the service of House Lannister, known for his immense size and cruelty. QYBURN: A former maester expelled from the Citadel who becomes a skilled healer and adviser to Cersei Lannister.	JAMIE LANNISTER: A skilled knight and member of the Kingsguard, known for his combat prowess and complex relationships within the Lannister family.			



Fig 15: Frame 1 (Martin et al, 2014, 27:20)



Fig 16: Frame 2 (Martin et al, 2014, 27:27)



Fig 17: Frame 3 (Martin et al, 2014, 27:37)



Fig 18: Frame 4 (Martin et al, 2014, 27:44)



Fig 19: Frame 5 (Martin et al, 2014, 27:48)



Fig 20: Frame 6 (Martin et al, 2014, 28:20)



Fig 21: Frame 7 (Martin et al, 2014, 28:20)



Fig 22: Frame 8 (Martin et al, 2014, 28:28)

Two planes within the skyline



Fig 15: Frame 1 (Martin et al, 2014, 27:20)

SCALE: SOCIAL HIERARCHY

The scene opens with a panoramic view of King's Landing, highlighting the significant role of scale in the evolving narrative, and emphasising the intricate connection between religion and monarchy. The Great Sept of Baelor and the Red Keep stand tall above the surrounding structures, piercing through the building plane and symbolising the rigid social hierarchy and class structure in King's Landing, as noted by Riley (2019, p119). The architectural scale showcased in the skyline evokes a profound sense of awe within the narrative, highlighting the grandeur of the space. Joye & Verpooten (2013) discuss how scale throughout a skyline complements the monumental significance of a building, and in this scene is used to enrich the unfolding plot. Katherine McLaughlin's observation that churches were designed to inspire "awe and emotion" aligns with the idea that such structures aimed to attract and captivate visitors, emphasising the intentional design decisions to encourage worshippers to look upward, fostering a connection with the divine, these design decisions are also seen within the Great Sept of Baelor (McLaughlin, K, 2023).

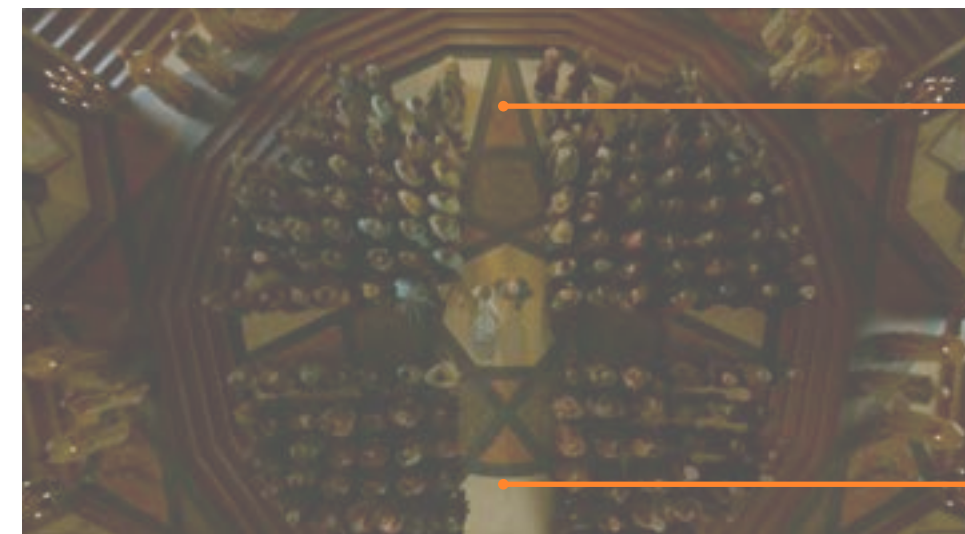


Fig 16: Frame 2 (Martin et al, 2014, 27:27)

SEVEN-POINTED STAR: RELIGIOUS IMPORTANCE

HIDDEN MESSAGE:

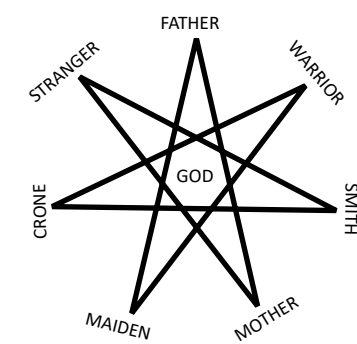


Fig 23: Seven-pointed star diagram (Authors own image)

The seven-pointed star is represented architecturally within the window and decoration, as well as creating the layout and organisation of the Great Sept's floor plan. In the Faith of the Seven, a fictional religion, this star symbolises the "seven aspects of the core deity," with worship extending to three male figures (Father, Warrior, Smith), three females (Mother, Maiden, Crone), and one androgynous deity, the Stranger (Wittingslow, R. M., 2015). George R.R. Martin, inspired by the medieval Catholic church, parallels its central doctrine of a singular God with three aspects: Father, Son, and Holy Ghost (Hodgman, J. 2011). In the real world, historically, there has been a close association between the church and monarchy, stemming from the belief that a monarch's right to rule was derived from divine authority and a mandate from God. This religious doctrine bestowed legitimacy upon rulers, solidifying their power over their subjects. Visual elements such as the symbolism of the seven-pointed star and statues of the seven deities symbolise the monarchy's relationship with the Faith of the Seven, enriching the wedding scene by deepening the historical and real-world religious context.

MARBLE DECORATION - WEALTH, VANITY, AND GRANDEUR

In this scene, intricate marble decorations cover the floor, columns, and interior façade, featuring the prominent seven-pointed star symbol. The use of expensive materials such as marble not only adds grandeur and opulence to the space but also draws parallels to the characteristics often associated with baroque-style architecture, such as grand columns, gold leaf, and natural stones. In baroque architecture, highly embellished domes, colonnades, and ceilings were employed with the intent to awe visitors and attract followers (McLaughlin, K, 2023). The extravagant design of the architecture is crucial to the narrative as it explores the role architecture plays within the monarchy across several generations. This significance is articulated by the High Sparrow, who describes it as a means for people to 'inflict their vanity on those who came after them' (Martin et al., 2015, 50:35 – 53:00).



Fig 19: Frame 5 (Martin et al, 2014, 27:48)

REAL WORLD COMPARISON:

The architectural layout and configuration of Medieval cathedrals often reflects symbols tied to religion. According to Hopkins (2012), the Cathédrale Notre-Dame de Paris showcases this as its layout is derived from the 'Latin cross or Crucifix'. This is the universal symbol for Christianity and holds significant importance in the faith, as it represents the death and resurrection of Christ. Nelly Shafik Ramzy highlights how the interior space and organisation of the repeating arch – an integral interior component, for both structural as well as aesthetic reasons (Hopkins, 2012) – is "divided into three divisions: arcade, clerestory, and triforium. Three is the number of the Divinity revealing itself (Holy Trinity)," showing an example of how the spatial organisation includes hidden messages and complements the religious setting (Ramzy, N. S, 2021). Comparatively, the layout of the Great Sept of Baelor is intentionally designed around the Seven-pointed star— a symbol filled with religious significance in the fictional realm. The design choice of the Sept reflects what is seen within the real world and adds historical narrative depth to the show. The architectural configuration features seven distinct sections in its spatial organisation, connected by the seven-pointed star incorporated into the floor decoration and united under the overarching dome. Each sector within the design is associated with a sculptural representation, emblematic of one of the deities. The skylight integrated into the roof metaphorically embodies the central doctrine, serving as a symbolic representation of the singular deity.

RELIGIOUS SYMBOLISM WITHIN THE GREAT SEPT OF BAELOR

LAYOUT and INTERIOR ORGANISATION: Form, layout and organisation - With hidden symbolism related to the religious setting.

- Layout informed by the religious symbol seven-pointed star.
- Seven pointed star openings
- Statues of the seven deities

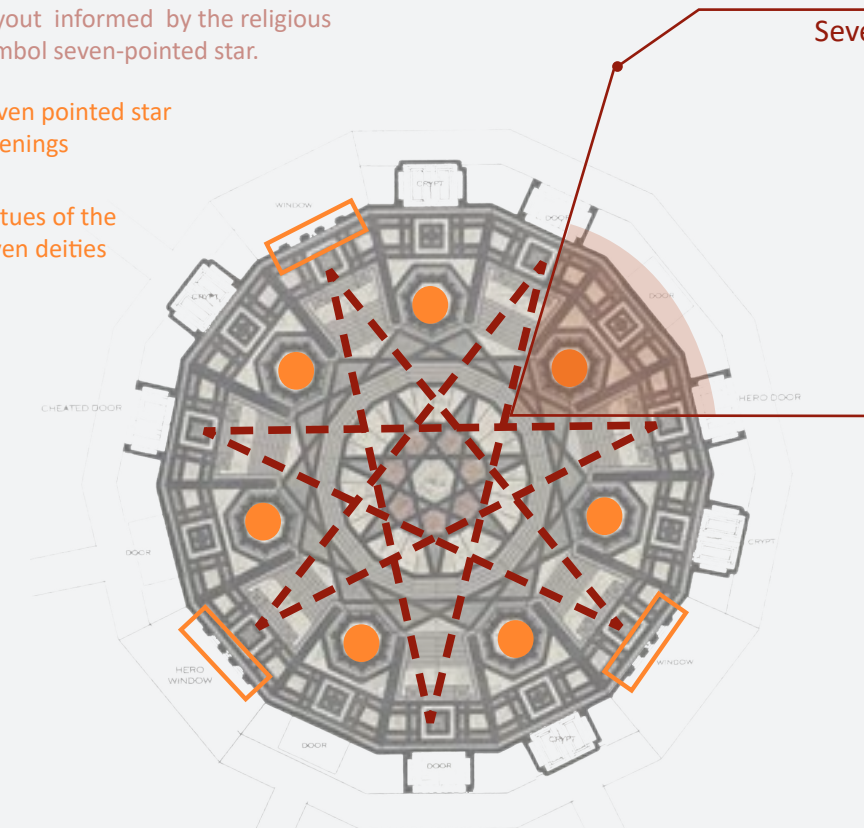


Fig 24: Architectural floor plan for the Great Sept of Baelor (authors annotated, 2023, Concept artists. 2019).

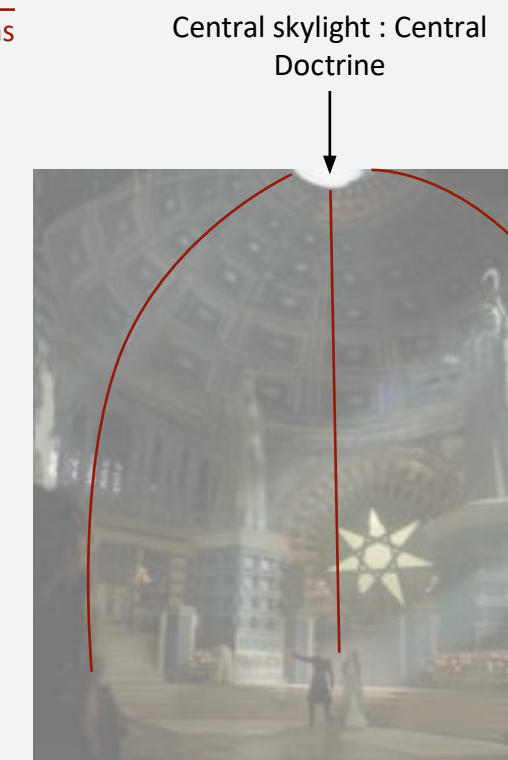


Fig 25: Game of Thrones Concept Art by karakter (authors annotated, 2023, karakter, 2017).

THE CATHEDRAL NOTRE-DAME DE PARIS

LAYOUT: Latin Cross

Latin Cross creates the Cathedrals form, layout and organisation.

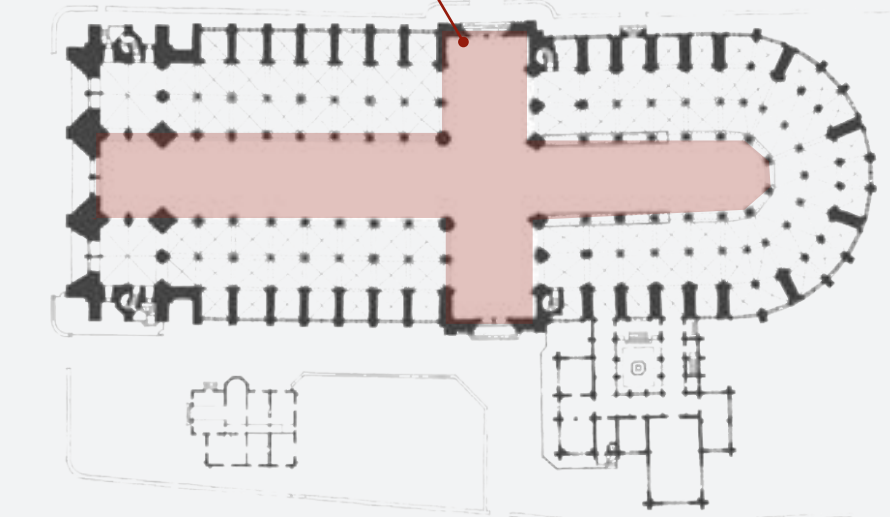


Fig 26: Cathedral layout (authors annotated, 2023, Friends of Notre Dame de Paris. n/a).

INTERIOR ORGANISATION: Nave - three divisions: arcade, clerestory, and triforium.

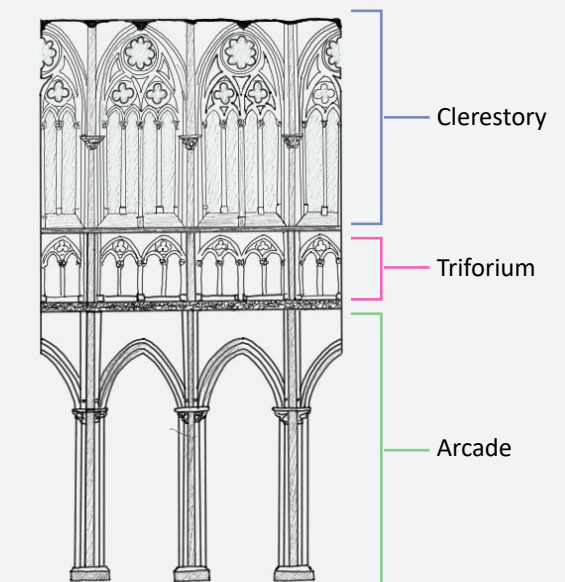
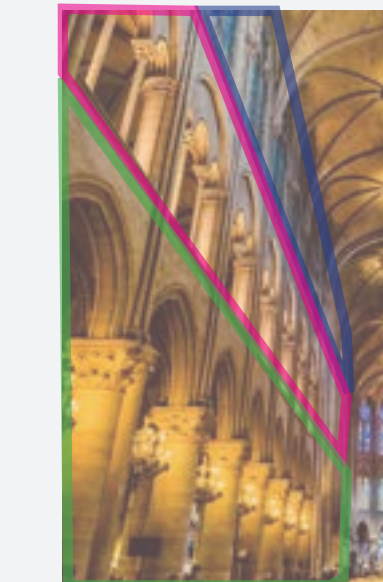


Fig 27: Notre Dame Cathedral interior photograph (authors annotated, 2023, D. Mariottini, 2021)

Fig 28: Notre Dame de Paris interior architectural detail sketch (Authors own image)

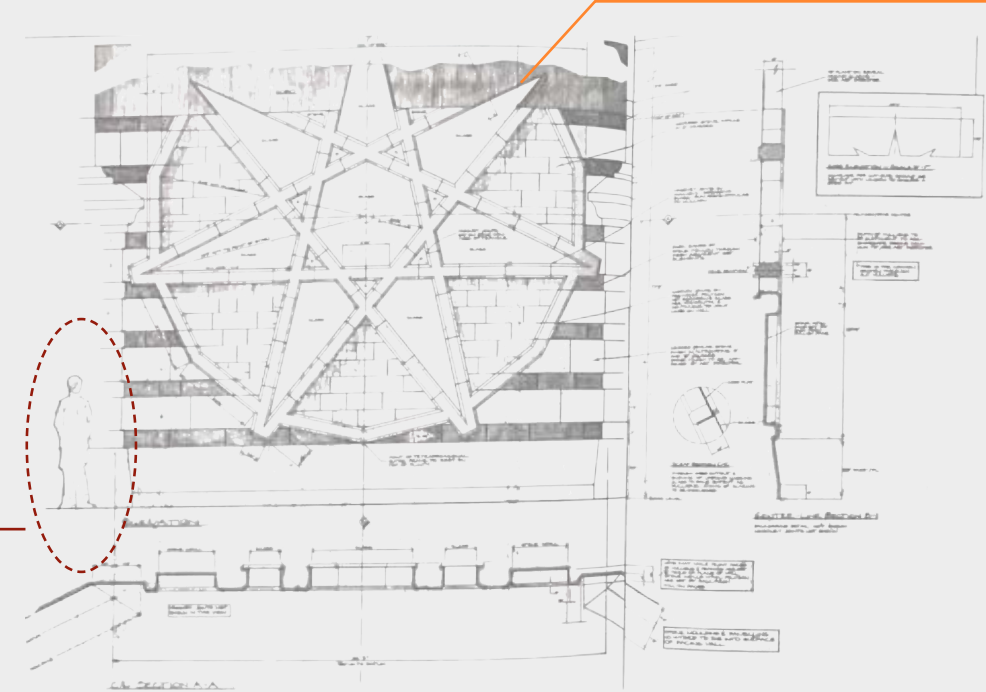
REAL WORLD COMPARISON:

Nelly Shafik Ramzy conducted an insightful investigation into the Cathédrale Notre-Dame de Paris, delving into the use of symbols infused into the architecture. Nelly highlights the utilisation of the gothic trefoil symbol, purposefully integrated into the facades to symbolise the Holy Trinity—Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Within the facades, there is also the use of decorative openings for example of the west façade one of the openings takes the form of a 'Rose window' (Fig.32), a decorative opening filled with multiple interpretations and messages. For example, as explained by Ramzy the Rose Window is characterised by its "radiating pattern", symbolically representing "the iris inside the all-seeing eye of God, with the image of Christ the pupil" (Ramzy, N. S, 2021).

Comparatively, the Great Sept of Baelor incorporates the seven-pointed star symbol, purposefully embedding it into the interior space using marble, as well as including three large openings taking the form of the symbolic star. This Addition not only adds the symbolic messages of religious teachings but also contributes to the overarching theme of grandeur, wealth, and vanity during the wedding scene as previously examined.

RELIGIOUS SYMBOLISM WITHIN THE GREAT SEPT OF BAELOR

OPENINGS: Seven-Pointed Star



SCALE: SOCIAL HIERARCHY

Architectural drawings of the seven-pointed star opening, from the concept art book by Deborah Riley (2019), portrays the scale of the decorative opening in proportion to people. Scale within the interior decoration enriches the sense of awe and grandeur (Riley, 2019).

Fig 29: Architectural drawings for the Great Sept of Baelor, window details (authors annotated, 2023, Concept artists. 2019).

Large seven-pointed star opening

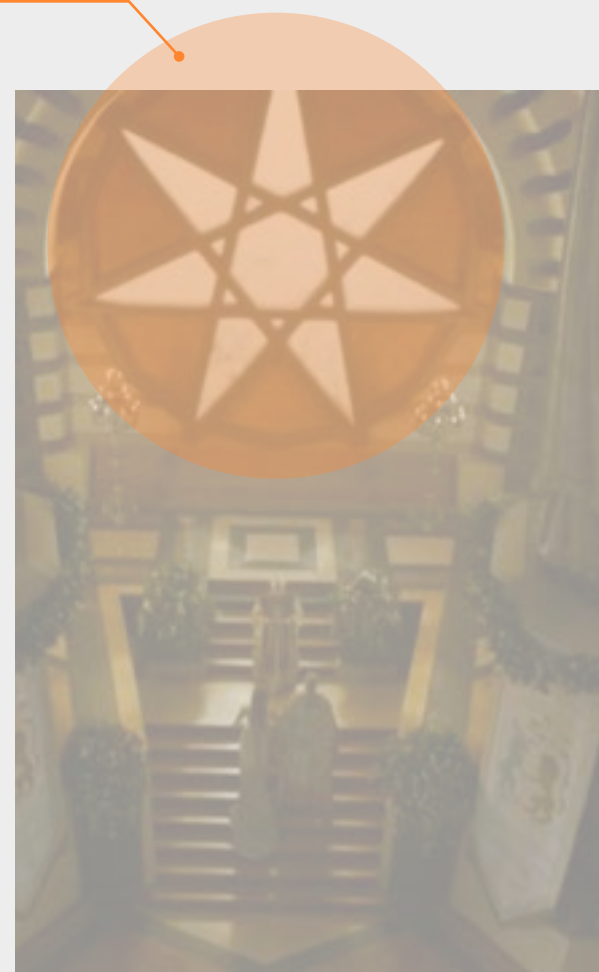


Fig 30: Frame from Season 4, episode 2, The Lion and the Rose (Martin, et al, 2014)

VISUAL MOTIFS: Seven pointed star within the marble floor decoration

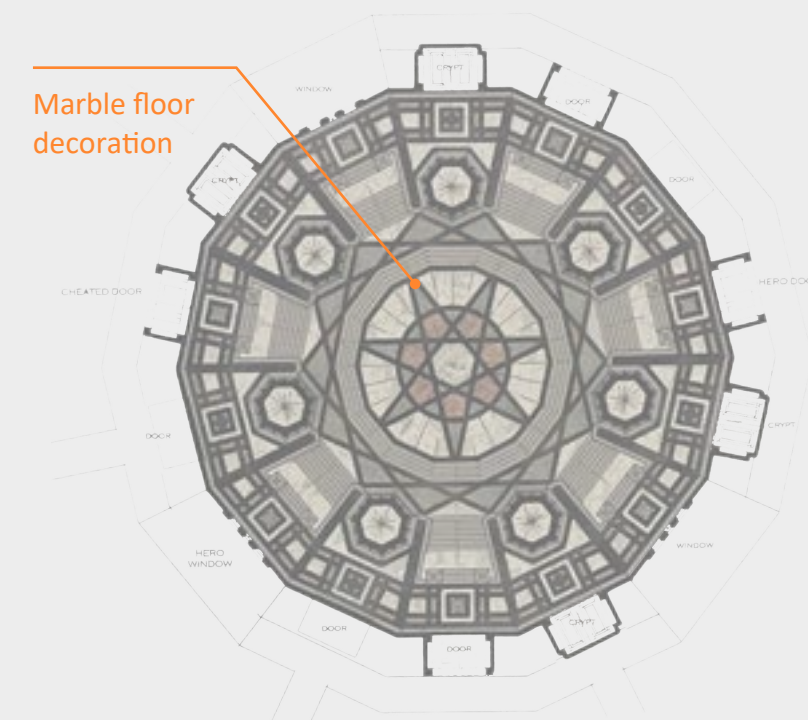


Fig 31: Architectural floor plan for the Great Sept of Baelor (authors annotated, 2023, Concept artists. 2019).

THE CATHEDRAL NOTRE-DAME DE PARIS

OPENINGS: Rose window

Rose Window

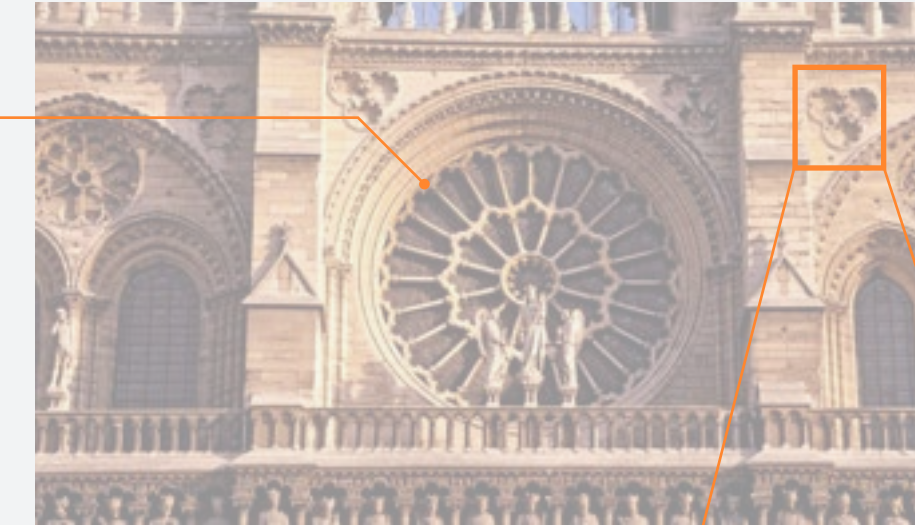


Fig 32: Cathédrale Notre-Dame de Paris; exterior detail of rose window and figures, main entrance. (authors annotated, 2023, various)

VISUAL MOTIFS: Trefoil symbol within architectural facade decoration

HIDDEN MESSAGE:

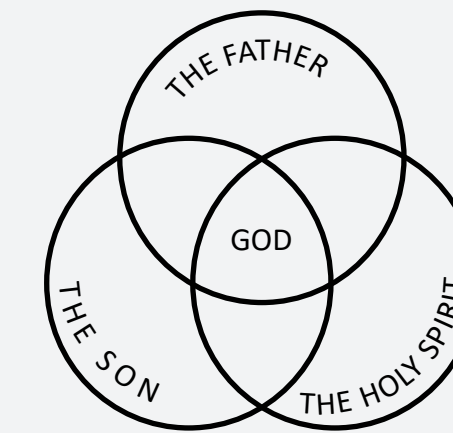
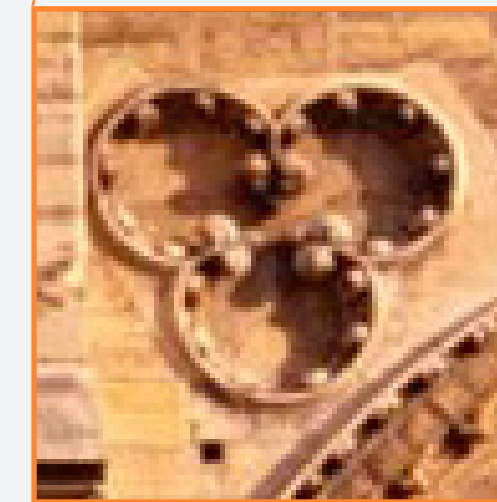


Fig 33: Trinity trefoil diagram hidden message (Authors own image)



IN SUMMARY

This architectural comparison demonstrates George RR Martin's incorporation of religious symbols into his narrative, commonly found in both realistic and historical contexts, then blending them with imaginative elements. (Hodgman, J. 2011). It demonstrates how architectural symbolism effectively conveys hidden messages, enriching the experience for viewers of the TV show by blurring the lines between reality and imagination. Tying elements of reality within the fictional world, enhances the storytelling experience by grounding fantasy in familiar concepts. This is essential for conveying historical significance, particularly in scenes like weddings (Hodgman, J. 2011). Martin's ability to blend the familiar with the fantastical captivates and enlightens viewers about the religious undertones within the narrative. In the key scene selected, architectural elements such as openings, layout, ornamentation, and decorations intensify the narrative's religious significance and reinforce the connection between religion and monarchy in the fictional realm.



Fig 34: Frame 1 (Martin et al, 2015, 50:35)



Fig 35: Frame 2 (Martin et al, 2015, 50:42)



Fig 36: Frame 3 (Martin et al, 2015, 50:49)



Fig 37: Frame 4 (Martin et al, 2015, 51:22)



Fig 38: Frame 5 (Martin et al, 2015, 51:52)



Fig 39: Frame 6 (Martin et al, 2015, 51:59)



Fig 40: Frame 7 (Martin et al, 2015, 52:31)



“Strip away the gold and the ornaments, knock down the statues and the pillars, and this is what remains” (Martin et al, 2015, 52:31)

“Something simple... solid... (HE TAPS) .. and true” (Martin et al, 2015, 52:31)

The architectural protagonist complements the High Sparrows message expressed within the dialogue.

Fig 41: Frame 8 (Martin et al, 2015, 52:41)



Fig 34: Frame 1 (Martin et al, 2015, 50:35)

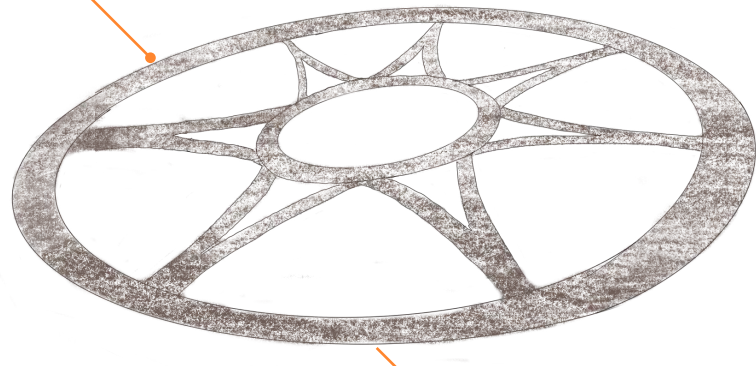


Fig 42: Galea, A. (2023). Floor decoration sketch (Authors own image)

ABSENCE OF DECORATION AND ORNAMENTATION - PURE FAITH

This scene is set within a chapel, one of the oldest structures in King's Landing, situated below the Great Sept of Baelor, as noted by the High Sparrow (The High Sparrow, S5, E7, The Gift, 51:45-53:06). The simplicity of the space and the materials surrounding the characters allows the viewer to focus on the developing tension and conflict between the character protagonists. The chapel shows the absence of grand materials or lavish decorations; instead, it consists of a single stone material, with the only embellishments being the carvings of the Seven-pointed star on the floor and altar. This design choice complements the purity of the faith of those who came before.

SEVEN POINTED STAR

Simply carved into stone, without any other decoration or ornamentation surrounding it, complementing the clean faith of the people who built this space.

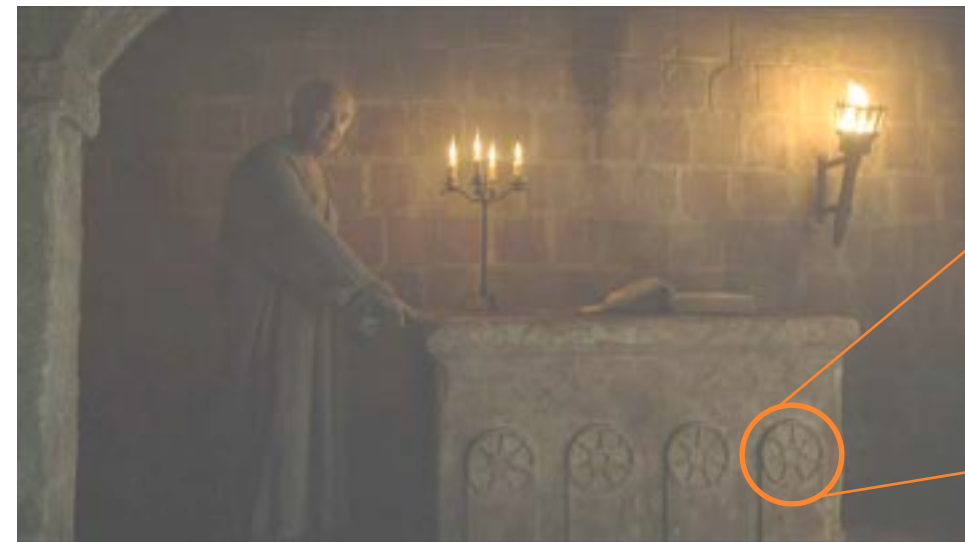


Fig 40: Frame 7 (Martin et al, 2015, 52:31)



CHARACTER PROTAGONISTS DIALOGUE ENRICHED BY THE ARCHITECTURAL PROTAGONIST

The High Sparrow observes the absence of names carved in the chapel's architecture, highlighting that its builders refrained from imposing their vanity on future generations, unlike Baelor and his "gilded monstrosity" above. He interprets the ornate elements of the Great Sept as symbols of nobility and, by stripping them away, emphasises simplicity and solidity in their shared space. In the cited dialogue detailed in the data collection table, the High Sparrow utilises architectural elements as a metaphor for the role of decoration in illustrating social hierarchy. Simultaneously, he references the physical space, asserting its significance with the declaration, "This is what remains" (The High Sparrow, SSE7, The Gift, 51:45-53:06).

The High Sparrow's comparison of the grandeur in the Great Sept to the simplicity of their surroundings underscores his message. The architectural protagonist actively collaborates in delivering this message, creating a synergy between words and space. In this dialogue with Cersei, the High Sparrow's words, and the architectural setting work in tandem, forming a compelling and complex narrative.



Fig 41: Frame 8 (Martin et al, 2015, 52:41)



Fig 35: Frame 2 (Martin et al, 2015, 50:42)



Fig 37: Frame 4 (Martin et al, 2015, 51:22)



Fig 38: Frame 5 (Martin et al, 2015, 51:52)



Fig 39: Frame 6 (Martin et al, 2015, 51:59)

SCALE - SMALL SPACES BUILDING TENSION

Along with the simplicity of the space, the use of a small, confined scale, adds to the tension and strain between the characters, creating an uncomfortable atmosphere for the viewer as they see the tension building up to the pinnacle of this narrative crescendo. The characters within this scene serve as metaphorical representations of these opposing forces – monarchy and religion. Swati Chattopadhyay's assertion that small spaces can evoke a sense of threat aligns with the observations of IBR Architects, who highlight that transitioning from a "large to a small space" can result in a threatening atmosphere (Chattopadhyay, S, 2023; IBR Architecture, n/a). The small, confined space within this scene creates a threatening, uneasy atmosphere, adding to the escalating tension in the storyline, and strengthening the narrative.

NATURAL LIGHT AND ARTIFICIAL LIGHT

The confined space and lighting intricately collaborate in this scene, intensifying the suspense embedded within the narrative. Light plays a crucial role in eliciting emotions and evoking feelings in the real world, demonstrating its potential to complement a fictional narrative in visual media (Major et al., 2005, p.25). Within this scene, the interplay between light and shadow attains equal significance. The subtle illumination evident in the frames to the left, reveals a diffused light penetrating the space, skillfully communicating its basement-level setting. Simultaneously, candlelight is employed, a lighting choice often linked to the creation of an atmosphere imbued with mystery and spirituality, as noted by Major et al. (2005, p.25).

The deliberate absence of light within this scene contributes to an atmosphere of unease, suspense, and tension, a characteristic often prevalent in the horror genre. This lack of light and illumination, as noted by Rose (2005), has been integral to instilling a fear factor, further enhancing the narrative (Rose, P., 2005).

IN SUMMARY

In summary, the scene employs scale, lighting, and deliberate simplicity in decoration, to enhance the developing narrative. The strategic use of scale and lighting intensifies the tension and suspense among the characters, while the understated ornamentation reflects the historical purity of the faith. These elements not only complement each other but also elevate the tension that is building within the unfolding narrative. These architectural elements enrich the scene with historical depth and play a crucial role in advancing the overarching narrative, shedding light on the escalating power struggle between the Faith of the Seven and the noble classes in the realm.



Fig 43: Frame 1 (Martin et al, 2016, 01:54)



Fig 44: Frame 2 (Martin et al, 2016, 01:58)



Fig 45: Frame 3 (Martin et al, 2016, 13:43)

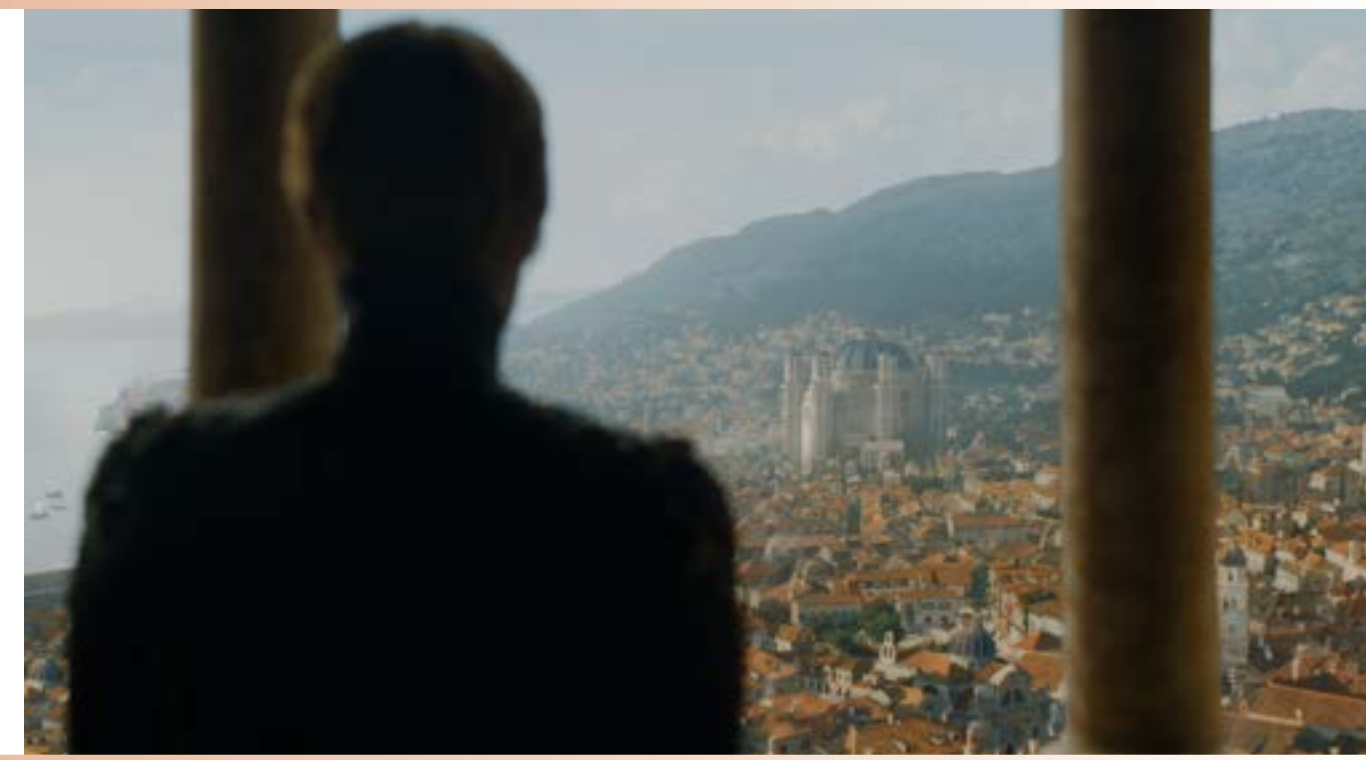


Fig 46: Frame 4 (Martin et al, 2016, 14:16)



Fig 47: Frame 5 (Martin et al, 2016, 14:51)



Fig 48: Frame 5 (Martin et al, 2016, 15:19)



Fig 49: Frame 7 (Martin et al, 2016, 15:24)

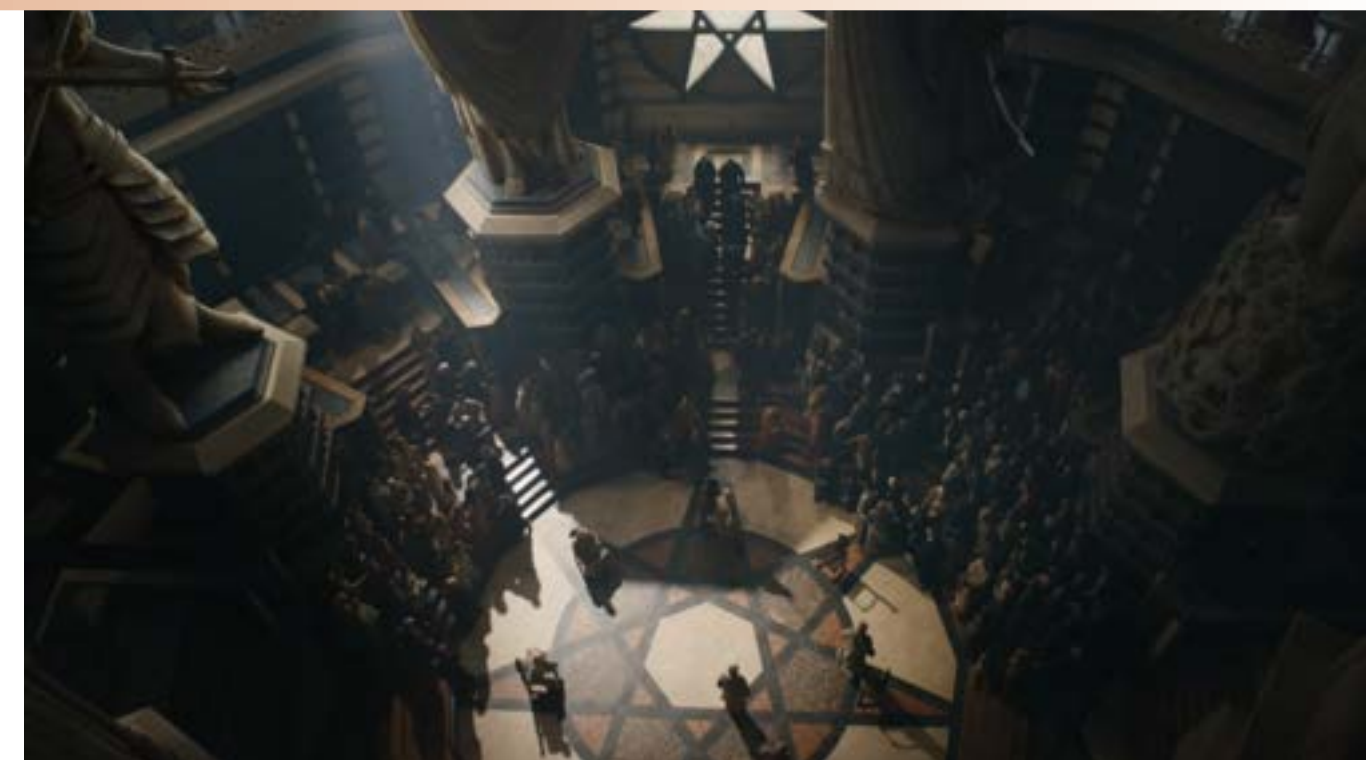


Fig 50: Frame 8 (Martin et al, 2016, 16:02)



Fig 51: Frame 9 (Martin et al, 2016, 16:17)



Fig 52: Frame 10 (Martin et al, 2016, 16:49)



Fig 53: Frame 11 (Martin et al, 2016, 16:49)



Fig 54: Frame 12 (Martin et al, 2016, 16:53)



Fig 55: Frame 13 (Martin et al, 2016, 17:01)



Fig 56: Frame 14 (Martin et al, 2016, 17:10)



Fig 57: Frame 15 (Martin et al, 2016, 17:13)



Fig 58: Frame 16 (Martin et al, 2016, 17:21)

FRAMING THE VIEW OF THE GREAT SEPT - ONGOING MONARCHY AND RELIGION CONFLICT



Fig 44: Frame 2 (Martin et al, 2016, 01:58)



Fig 46: Frame 4 (Martin et al, 2016, 14:16)



Fig 55: Frame 13 (Martin et al, 2016, 17:01)



Fig 58: Frame 16 (Martin et al, 2016, 17:21)

Repeated perspective

The recurring use of the framed view from Cersei's balcony onto the Great Sept, not only enriches the meticulous and strategic nature of Cersei's plans, as outlined in the narrative summary, but it also serves as a poignant reminder to the viewer of the ongoing conflict between religion and the monarchy. Each time Cersei looks down from her balcony, the looming presence of the Great Sept becomes a symbolic reflection of the enduring tension and intricacies between these two powerful forces in the narrative.

In contrast to Case Study 1, which employed a panoramic view of King's Landing to depict the connection between two structures, the chosen perspective from Cersei's chambers deliberately positions her above, symbolising a hierarchical gaze down upon the Great Sept. This deliberate choice in framing accentuates Cersei's calculated authority and dominance within the unfolding narrative.

The use of the technique, repetition with variation, commonly observed in visual media can evoke a curious tension in the narrative, as articulated by Jonathan Auerbach. In his assertion, Auerbach contends that this technique enables the viewer to establish connections between previous and current actions (Auerbach, J, 2000, p.7). Using repetitive visual elements, "such as colours, objects, or camera angles" is often used "to reinforce a theme" as conveyed by Jason Hellerman. Hellerman also explained how repeating visual elements can "establish a sense of continuity or to symbolise themes", he explains this using "The recurring imagery of crows in Game of Thrones" expressing how it "represents various foreshadowing and symbolism." Within the show (Hellerman, J, 2023).

Notably, figures 44, 46, 55, and 58 illustrate this approach. Figures 44 and 46 employ a repeated skyline perspective, reminding the viewer of the escalating tension established between the monarchy and religious parties, and figures 55 and 58, use the same view but with the variation being the destruction of the Great Sept, as Cersei's devious plan unfolds.

LAYOUT: THE STRUCTURE OF THE FAITH

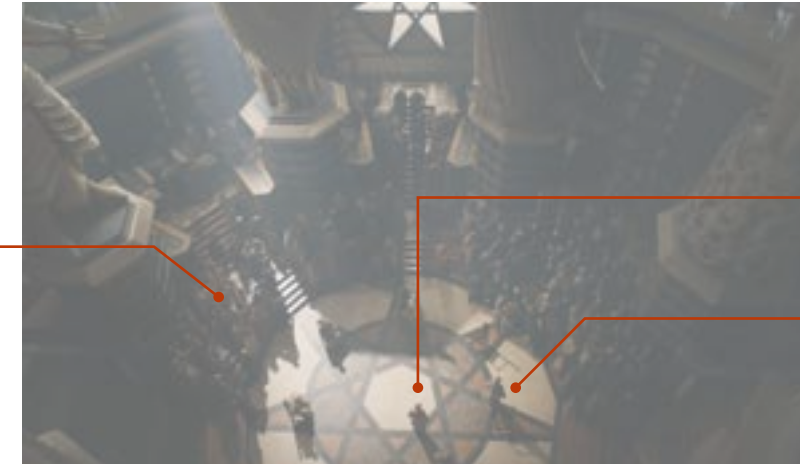


Fig 50: Frame 8 (Martin et al, 2016, 16:02)

Comparison to Case study 1:



Fig 16: Frame 2 (Martin et al, 2014, 27:27)

Nobels and viewers

High Septon

Seven Judges: placed on the points of the star.

Nobels and viewers

Joffrey and Margaery Tyrell

Building on the insights from the earlier examination in Case Study 1, the layout of the Great Sept is designed around the symbolic seven-pointed star. In frame 8, the use of this layout becomes evident as the character protagonists navigate it during the trials. The visual portrayal illustrates the Seven Septons strategically positioning themselves on the points of the star, assuming the role of judges for those undergoing trial. This narrative device reinforces the concept that the Seven Septons are selected within the Faith of the Seven to embody the "seven aspects of the core deity" (Wittingslow, R. M., 2015).

DECORATION AND ORNAMENTATION - ELIMINATION OF THE FAITH

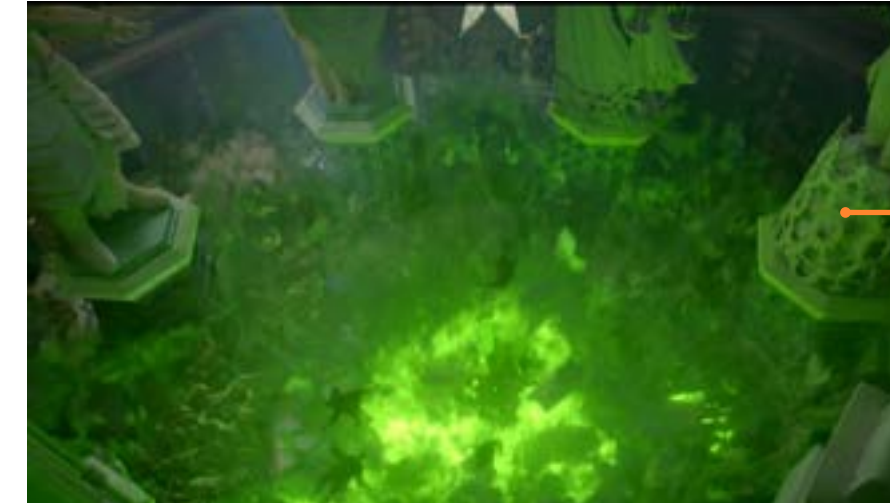


Fig 52: Frame 10 (Martin et al, 2016, 16:49)

Statues of the seven deities



Fig 53: Frame 11 (Martin et al, 2016, 16:49)

Seven pointed star opening

Smaller seven pointed star openings and facade details



Fig 54: Frame 12 (Martin et al, 2016, 16:53)

Large central dome

As highlighted previously, the use of visual repetition possesses the capacity to emphasise themes, establish a sense of continuity, and deepen the narrative. This potency is exemplified through the consistent inclusion of objects or visual elements filled with symbolic meaning, contributing to a more profound and meaningful storytelling experience (Hellerman, J, 2023). Building on this exploration, the visual representation of the seven-pointed star, as evidenced in both Case Studies 1 and 2, serves to maintain a sense of continuity. The statues depicting the seven deities, coupled with the overall grandeur associated with the Great Sept, become recurring visual motifs throughout the narrative. This recurrence is evident not only in Case Study 1 but also in the scene depicting the trials. The deliberate repetition of these elements has been steadily building up, culminating in the impactful moments of destruction portrayed in frames 10, 11, and 12. These frames represent the climax of the conflict between the monarchy and the Faith of the Seven, showing the annihilation of all the visual motifs associated with the religion, along with the character protagonists.

IN SUMMARY

In summary, this scene skillfully employs the technique of repetition and variation, serving as a poignant reminder to the viewer of the persistent conflict between the monarchy and the faith. It also highlights the character protagonists' use of the Great Sept's layout, further reinforcing the religious symbolism embodied by the star during the trials. Furthermore, the carefully chosen frames during the explosion exhibit deliberate repetition of visual motifs linked to the faith, effectively complementing the significant narrative actions that unfold.



Fig 59: Frame 1 (Martin et al, 2016, 59:57)



Fig 60: Frame 2 (Martin et al, 2016, 1:00:20)



Fig 61: Frame 3 (Martin et al, 2016, 1:00:39)



Fig 62: Frame 4 (Martin et al, 2016, 1:00:43)

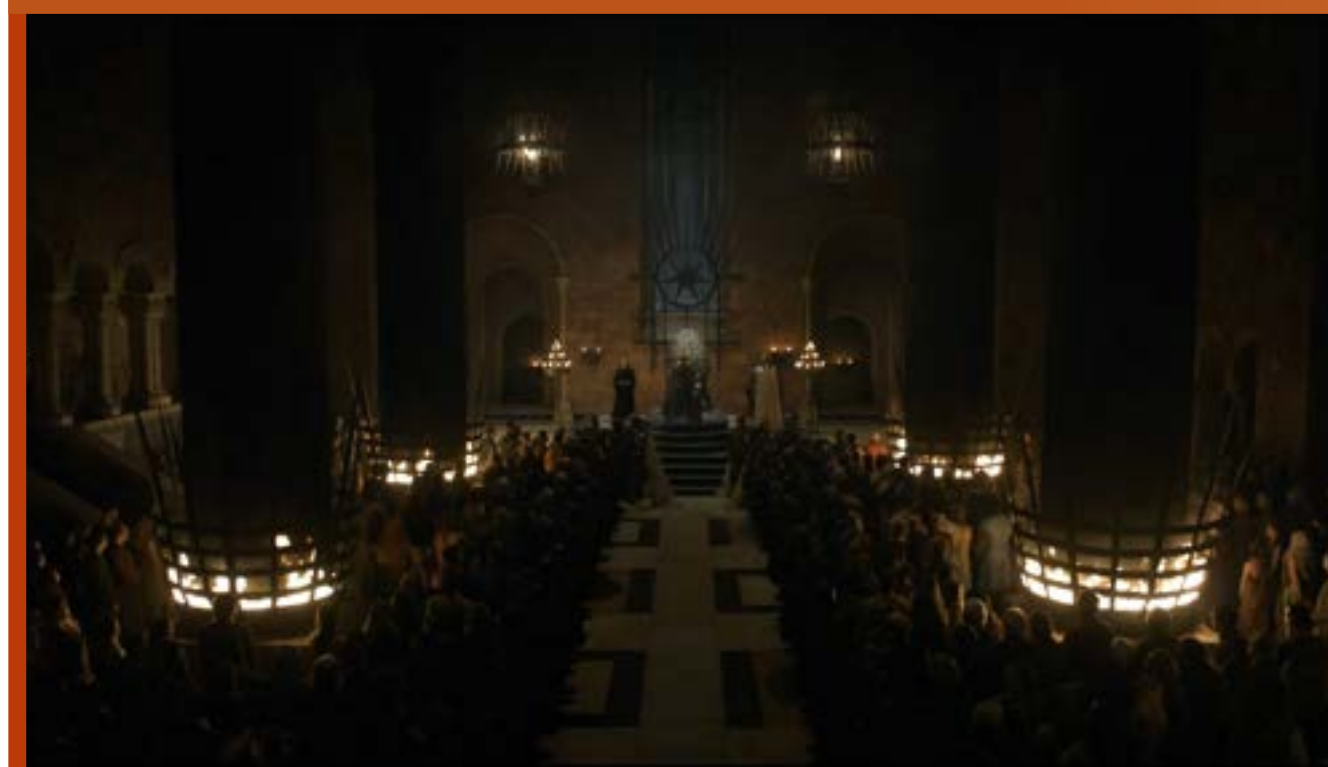


Fig 63: Frame 5 (Martin et al, 2016, 1:00:48)



Fig 64: Frame 6 (Martin et al, 2016, 1:00:52)



Fig 65: Frame 7 (Martin et al, 2016, 1:00:57)



Fig 66: Frame 8 (Martin et al, 2016, 1:01:43)

CERSE'S CORONATION
CASE STUDY 4

OPENING VIEW OF KINGS LANDING



Fig 59: Frame 1 (Martin et al, 2016, 59:57)

Building upon the insights from Case Study 1, where the skyline was used strategically to underscore the intricate relationship between the monarchy and faith, Case Study 3 introduces a notable change in perspective. This shift, positioning the monarchy above the faith, serves as a visual representation of the developing conflict between the two forces that have been steadily escalating throughout the narrative. This scene shown in frame 1, marked by the destruction of the Great Sept, vividly accentuates the climax of this conflict, leaving the Red Keep as the sole dominant force within the capital city, King's Landing.

SCALE : INTIMIDATION, POWER DISPLAY



Fig 62: Frame 4 (Martin et al, 2016, 1:00:43)

Architectural drawings featured in Deborah Riley's concept art book depict the columns within the Iron Throne room, illustrating their size relative to people. The scale of these columns within the interior space serves to convey a compelling sense of intimidation, strategically employing scale as a powerful visual element within the narrative. Fawcett in the Architecture Design Notebook, states how in some cases architects have used a "stripped classical architectural language" within monumental architecture to symbolise the sense of power, enforcing intimidation over its users (Fawcett, A. P, 2003).

IRON DECORATION : VIOLENCE, DESTRUCTION AND WAR.

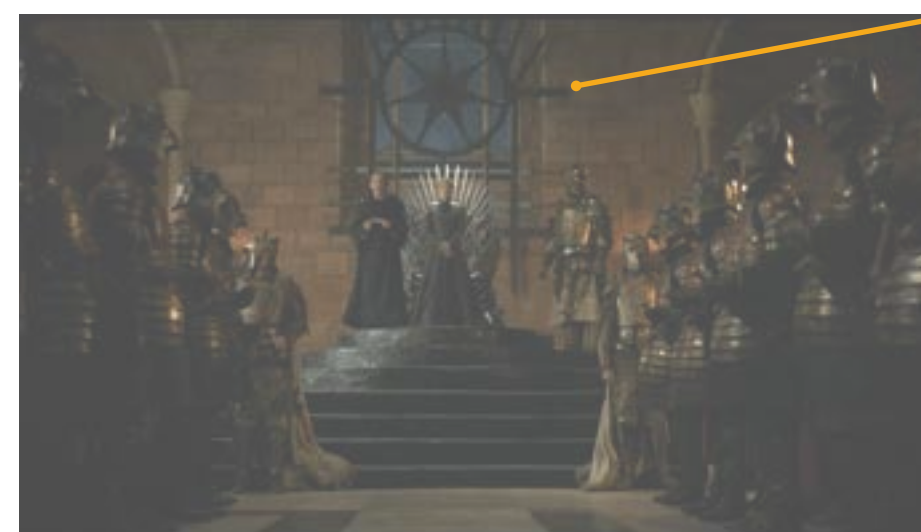


Fig 65: Frame 7 (Martin et al, 2016, 1:00:57)

Riley's observation highlights the dynamic nature of the throne room, which undergoes a redesign for every monarch's succession, be it a King or Queen. This redesign is not merely a cosmetic change; rather, each transformation serves as a deliberate communication of both the ruler's personality and the overarching ambiance linked to their reign (Riley, D, 2019, p125).

During the iron throne room's redesign, the columns underwent a transformation with the addition of iron decoration—a material frequently associated with weaponry and violence, as highlighted by Wells (2020). The presence of iron decoration intricately envelops the columns and helps form the construction of the symbolic Iron Throne itself. The imagery of swords around the Iron Throne has great historical significance and is important to the fictional narrative, as it is described as being constructed from the melted and twisted swords of Aegon the Conqueror's defeated enemies. Throughout the scene, the repeated use of this material in the decoration highlights the charged and intense atmosphere, creating a fitting setting to the recent shocking destruction and acts of war detailed in the narrative summary.

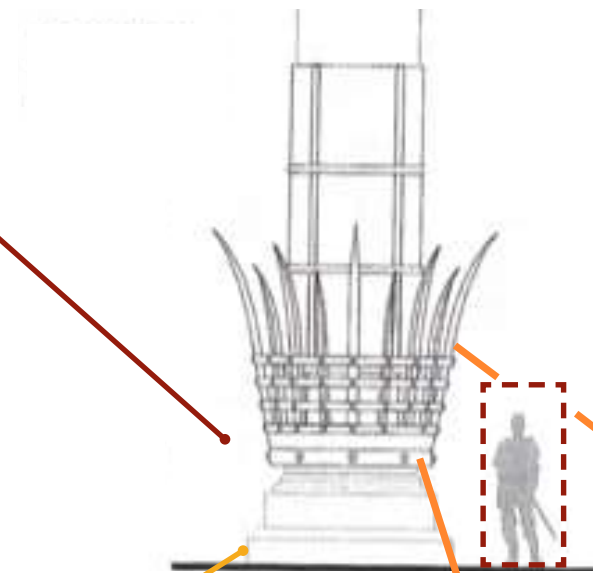
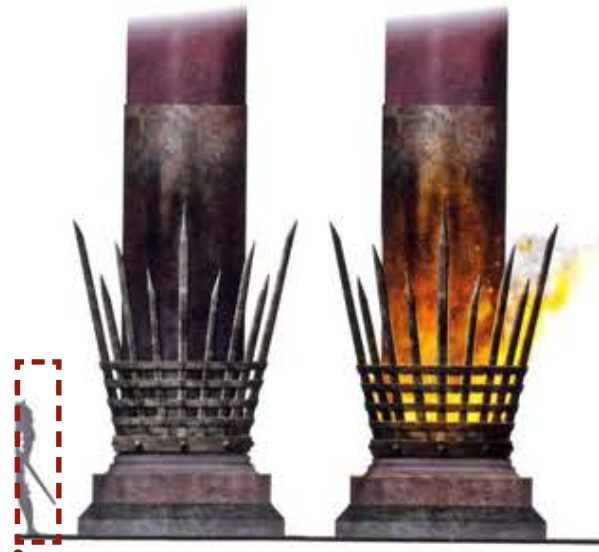


Fig 67: Architectural drawings of the Iron Throne Room columns (authors annotated, 2023, Concept artists. 2019).

COMPARISON: THE IRON THRONE ROOM'S ADAPTABILITY WITH THE NARRATIVE

Reiterating the point made earlier, it is worth noting that the throne room undergoes a redesign with each new monarch's succession. This emphasises the adaptability of the architectural elements under analysis within these case studies, highlighting their ability to be adapted within the same space to convey different narratives and themes. Showing this adaptability during season one, Robert Baratheon's reign, Riley states that "the throne room's columns were encircled by a relief of leaves" a decorative element that enriches a sense of grandeur (Riley, D, 2019, p125). Whereas within the frame taken from Cersei's coronation during season six, the viewer sees columns encased with Iron decoration, complementing the sense of violence complementing the recent events within the narrative.

SEASON 1

SEASON 6



Fig 67: Season 1 Iron Throne room (Martin et al, 2011, 21:43)

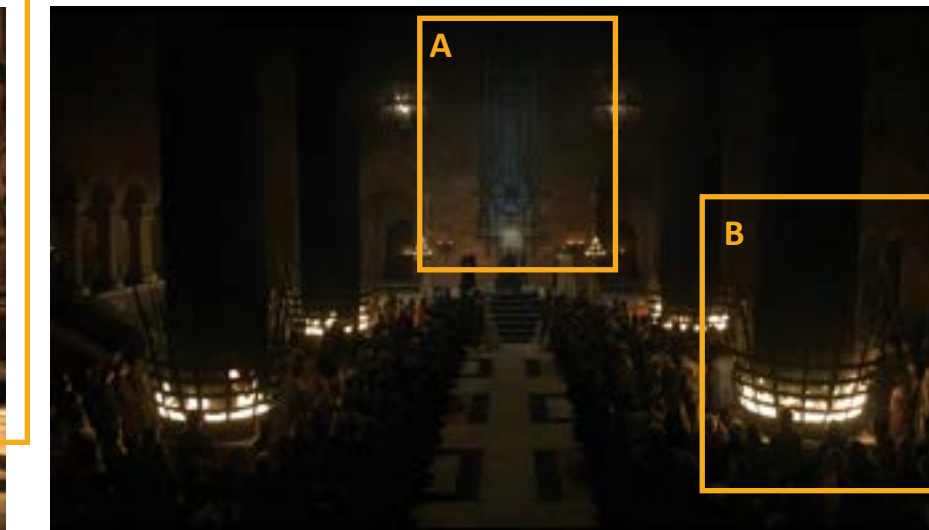


Fig 63: Frame 5 (Martin et al, 2016, 1:00:48)

DIFFERENCES:

A: DECORATION ON THE OPENINGS

B: DECORATION ON THE COLUMNS

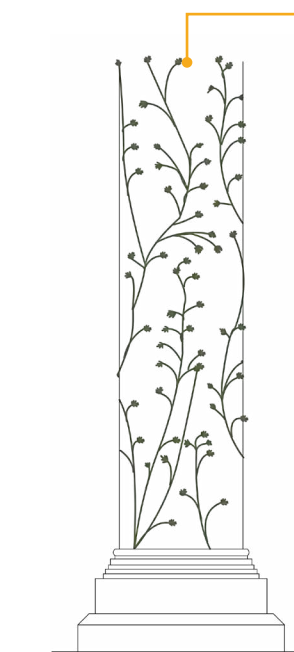


Fig 69: Architectural drawing of season 1 column detail for the Iron Throne room (Authors own image)

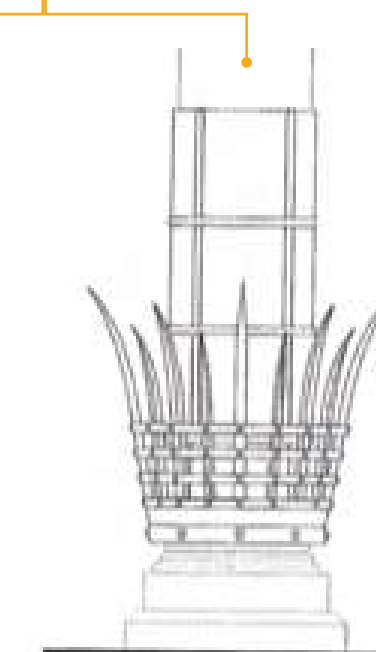


Fig 70: Architectural drawings of the Iron Throne Room columns (authors annotated, 2023, Concept artists. 2019).

LIGHTING

Within the comparison the discernible contrast in lighting becomes evident; Figure 62 exhibits a markedly darker ambiance, relying on artificial light, whereas Season One's frame is notably brighter and more illuminated. Figure 67 introduces a stained-glass window, skillfully designed to "engulf light and colour," symbolising the power, divinity, and wealth associated with the space (Major et al., 2005, p.31; Anderson, D., 2021). Contrarily, figure 51 portrays a distinct shift – the removal of colour within the main opening, accompanied by iron bars encasing it. This alteration, coupled with the transition from natural illuminating light to artificial light around the columns, contributes to a heightened atmosphere of suspense and fear.

IN SUMMARY

In summary, the analysis of frame 1 showcases a pivotal shift in perspective, positioning the monarchy above the faith and accentuating the intensifying conflict. Architectural elements, such as the scale of columns and the incorporation of iron decoration, are examined for their symbolic association with power and intimidation. The comparative explores the redesign of the throne room for each monarch's rule, highlighting the deliberate change in lighting, decoration, and ornamentation to communicate the monarch's personality and ongoing narrative. Comparisons between seasons emphasise this adaptability, illustrating how architectural elements convey diverse narratives.

The main purpose of this research is to answer the question of how architecture within Game of Thrones acts as a silent yet powerful protagonist, complementing and enriching the narrative of specific scenes. The analysis of the case studies chosen demonstrates the diverse ways in which architectural elements serve to complement and enrich specific themes, convey concealed messages, and contribute nuanced layers to the evolving plot within a scene (Fig.71). These architectural components possess the ability to elevate a narrative by crafting an atmosphere that resonates with viewers or employing symbolism that embeds hidden messages and historical depth as stated by Astakhova (2020), thereby complementing the narrative.

Architectural elements play a crucial role in enhancing the grandiose ceremony of the wedding storyline (Case Study 1), showcasing the opulence of ruling families and symbolising wealth and power. This ceremony serves as a focal point, emphasising the significant relationship between religion and monarchy, two powerful forces in the fictional world. The strategic use of scale, and religious symbolism in decoration and ornamentation, contribute to the narrative, enriching the atmosphere of awe and emphasising the grandeur of the ceremony. The lavish marble material accentuates the intricate decoration, highlighting the wealth associated with this event.

The synergy between scale and lighting within Case Study 2 contributes to the building tension between the faith and the monarchy. The deliberate absence of decoration and the simplicity of religious symbolism align with the character protagonist's (High Sparrow's) dialogue. He highlights how architectural decoration and ornamentation in monumental structures can be used to project vanity, wealth, and power. Expressing that by stripping away these elements the truth and purity of the space is revealed. He states this to explain how nobility may use finery to conceal lies and hide their true intentions.

The repetition of architectural elements examined in Case Study 1, including layout, decoration, and ornamentation, serves to amplify the religious impact and historical depth within Case Study 3's selected scene. The strategic use of perspective heightens the building tension during Cersei's revenge. Through the repetition with variation technique, viewers are consistently reminded of the ongoing conflict between religious and monarchy groups. This conflict is effectively communicated by a change in perspective within the skyline, positioning Cersei's view to look down on the Great Sept.

In Case Study 4, the culmination of lighting, perspective, decoration, and scale strategically contributes to the heightened display of power during Cersei's coronation following her vengeful actions in Case Study 3. This power shift is emphasised using scale, creating an atmosphere of intimidation for both the inhabitants and the viewer. Additionally, decoration plays a pivotal role in enhancing the overarching theme of war, violence, and the imposing force of intimidation over others.

The comprehensive analysis across all four case studies highlights the capacity of architectural elements to complement and enhance their narratives. Whether imbued with symbolic meaning, offering a sense of reality and familiarity, enriching the atmosphere, evoking specific feelings or emotions, or collaborating intricately with the character protagonist through dialogue, these factors collectively articulate a compelling story. Thomas Honegger's (2004) exploration of the term 'architectural protagonist,' encompasses these various elements, and resonates profoundly with the viewer (Thomas Honegger,2004). Applying this definition and considering the demonstrated ability of architectural elements to contribute meaningfully to the narrative, it becomes evident how the architecture of King's Landing emerges as a dynamic protagonist—a powerful force with the character protagonists in the Game of Thrones narrative.

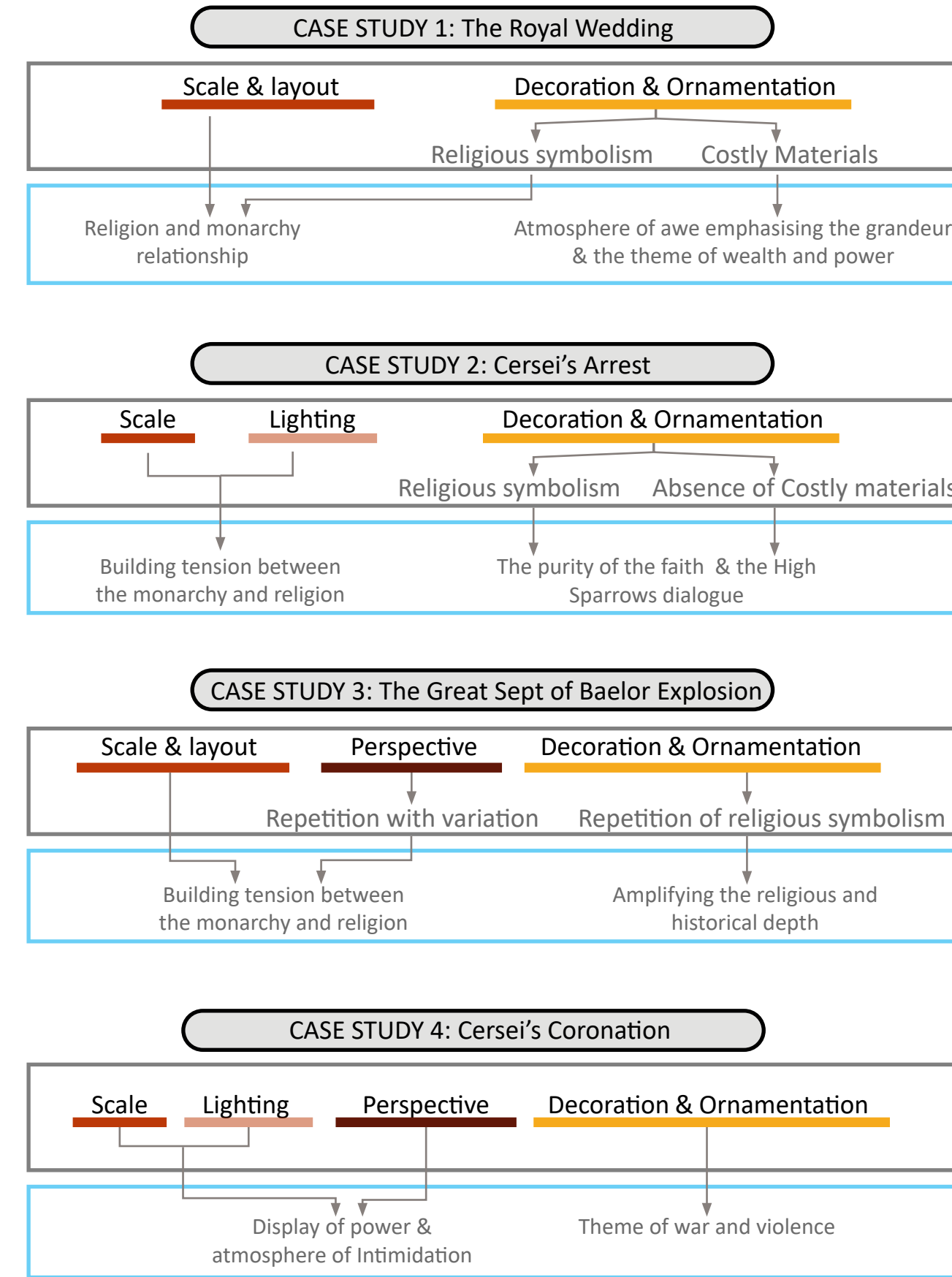


Fig 71: Discussion diagram (Authors own image)

Architectural Elements How the elements complement the narrative



CONCLUSION

This dissertation aimed to explore the role of architecture in Game of Thrones, specifically the term “architectural protagonist” and how architecture contributes to the communication of the complex storyline. The research sought to answer the question: How does architecture within ‘The Game of Thrones’ act as a silent yet powerful protagonist, complementing and enriching the narrative of specific scenes? Through the scrutiny of four case studies, analysing key scenes and their architectural elements, revealed instances that successfully link back to the research question, highlighting the substantial role played by architecture in elevating selected scene’s narratives.

As detailed in the discussion, each case study underscores how architectural elements collectively build a compelling narrative. Through their ability to; be filled with symbolic significance, provide a sense of reality and familiarity, enrich the atmosphere, evoke specific emotions, or collaboratively enhance a character protagonist’s message, collaborating with the dialogue. The discussion concludes by emphasising that the evidence explored within the case studies, combined with the definition of an architectural protagonist and the examination of architectural symbolism from existing literature, establishes architecture in Game of Thrones as an architectural protagonist in the creation of a complex narrative.

Future analysis could further explore the adaptability of the architectural protagonist, comparing the evolution of a space and how it adapts to narrative changes, as exemplified in Case Study 4’s Iron Throne Room. This avenue of research is not confined to Game of Thrones and has the potential to extend to other forms of visual media.



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FIGURE LIST

Background images:

[Cover Page] Galea, A. Authors edited, Concept artists. (2019). The Red Keep [JPG]. In Riley, D. R. & Revenson, J. R. (2019). THE ART OF GAME OF THRONES (p.116-117). HarperCollins Publishers.

[Abstract page] Galea, A. Authors edited, karakter (2017). Game of Thrones Concept Art by karakter [JPG]. medium. <https://medium.com/@conceptrootsocial/game-of-thrones-concept-art-by-karakter-8db8a2caf565>

[Contents Page] Galea, A. Authors edited, Martin, R.R.G., Benioff, D., Weiss, D.B. (Writers), & Sapochnik, M. (Director). The Gift (Season 5, episode 7) [Television series episode]. In Benioff, D., McAtackney, L., Newman, C., Cogman, B. (Producers). Game of Thrones. (May 25, 2015)

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[Chapter One] Galea, A. Authors edited, Concept artists. (2019). Cersi on the balcony of the Red Keep [JPG]. In Riley, D. R. & Revenson, J. R. (2019). THE ART OF GAME OF THRONES (p.130). HarperCollins Publishers.

[Chapter Two] Galea, A. Authors edited, Concept artists. (2019). The Great Sept of Baelor concept art [JPG]. In Riley, D. R. & Revenson, J. R. (2019). THE ART OF GAME OF THRONES (p.160). HarperCollins Publishers.

[Chapter Three] Galea, A. Authors edited, Martin, R.R.G., Benioff, D., Weiss, D.B. (Writers), & Sapochnik, M. (Director). The Winds of Winter (Season 6, episode 10) [Television series episode]. In Benioff, D., Weiss, D.B., McAtackney, L., Newman, C., Spence, G. (Producers). Game of Thrones. (Jun 27, 2016)

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Figure 5: Martin, R.R.G., Benioff, D., Weiss, D.B. (Writers), & Taylor, A. (Director). The Prince of Winterfell (Season 3, episode 8) [Television series episode]. In Benioff, D., Weiss, D.B., Caulfield, B. (Producers). Game of Thrones. (May 21, 2012)

Figure 6: Jackson, P. (Director). Osborne, B., Jackson, P., Walsh, F., Sanders, T. (Producers). (2001). The Lord of The Rings. [Film]. New Line Cinema.

Figure 7: Jackson, P. (Director). Jackson, P., Walsh, F., Cunningham, C., Weiner, Z. (Producers). (2012). The Hobbit. [Film].

Figure 8: Jackson, P. (Director). Jackson, P., Walsh, F., Cunningham, C., Weiner, Z. (Producers). (2012). The Hobbit. [Film]. Warner Bros. Pictures.

Figure 9: Concept artists. (2019). Interior concept art for the Great Sept of Baelor [JPG]. In Riley, D. R. & Revenson, J. R. (2019). THE ART OF GAME OF THRONES (p.160). HarperCollins Publishers.

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Figure 12: Concept artists. (2019). Blueprints, plans, and sketches of the Great Sept of Baelor [JPG]. In Riley, D. R. & Revenson, J. R. (2019). THE ART OF GAME OF THRONES. HarperCollins Publishers.

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Fig 23: Galea, A. (2023). Seven-pointed star diagram (Authors own image)

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Fig 25: Galea, A. authors annotated, 2023, karakter (2017). Game of Thrones Concept Art by karakter [JPG]. medium. [https://medium.com/@conceptrootsocial/game-of-thrones-concept-art-by-karakter-8db8a2caf565`](https://medium.com/@conceptrootsocial/game-of-thrones-concept-art-by-karakter-8db8a2caf565)

Fig 26: Galea, A. authors annotated, 2023, Friends of Notre Dame de Paris. (n/a). CATHEDRAL LAYOUT [PNG]. friendsofnotredamedeparis. <https://www.friendsofnotredamedeparis.org/notre-dame-cathedral/architecture/layout/>

Fig 27: Galea, A. authors annotated, 2023, Notre Dame Cathedral interior photograph, D. Mariottini (2021). Contemporary Vision for Notre Dame’s Interior Receives Approval Sparking Controversy [JPG]. archdaily. <https://www.archdaily.com/973482/contemporary-vision-for-notre-dames-interior-receives-approval-sparking-controversy>

Fig 28: Galea, A. (2023). Notre Dame de Paris interior architectural detail sketch (Authors own image)

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Fig 30: Martin, R.R.G., Benioff, D., Weiss, D.B. (Writers), & Graves, G. (Director). The Lion and the Rose (Season 4, episode 2) [Television series episode]. In Benioff, D., Weiss, D.B., Newman, C., Spence, G. (Producers). Game of Thrones. (Apr 14, 2014)

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Fig 32: Galea, A. authors annotated, 2023, various. (erected 1162; continued work until 1879). Cathédrale Notre-Dame de Paris; exterior detail of rose window and figures, main entrance. Retrieved from https://library-artstor-org.libaccess.hud.ac.uk/asset/ARTONFILE_DB_10310489256

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Figs 59 – 66: Martin, R.R.G., Benioff, D., Weiss, D.B. (Writers), & Sapochnik, M. (Director). The Winds of Winter (Season 6, episode 10) [Television series episode]. In Benioff, D., Weiss, D.B., McAtackney, L., Newman, C., Spence, G. (Producers). Game of Thrones. (Jun 27, 2016)

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Fig 67: Galea, A. authors annotated, 2023, Concept artists. (2019). Architectural drawings of the Iron Throne Room columns [JPG]. In Riley, D. R. & Revenson, J. R. (2019). THE ART OF GAME OF THRONES. HarperCollins Publishers.

Fig 68: Martin, R.R.G., Benioff, D., Weiss, D.B. (Writers), & Kirk, B. (Director). The Wolf and the Lion (Season 1, episode 5) [Television series episode]. In Benioff, D., Weiss, D.B., Huffam, M. (Producers). Game of Thrones. (May 16, 2011)

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Fig 71: Galea, A. (2023). Discussion diagram (Authors own image)

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Fig 72: Martin, R.R.G., Benioff, D., Weiss, D.B. (Writers), & Graves, G. (Director). The Lion and the Rose (Season 4, episode 2) [Television series episode]. In Benioff, D., Weiss, D.B., Newman, C., Spence, G. (Producers). Game of Thrones. (Apr 14, 2014)

LITERATURE REVIEW

ANALYSIS OF ARCHITECTURAL STYLES IN THE GAME OF THRONES

There is a limited literature on how the architectural involvement specifically complements and enriches events and scenes within the TV series ‘Game of Thrones,’ however, recently Prayaga S Das (2023) has made comparisons between the fictional world and real-world architectural styles, specifically analysing the Gothic influence. In doing so Das is one of the first authors to analyse the importance of fictional architecture in relation to the Game of Thrones complex narrative. As well as making the following conclusion: “Since these features of Gothic Architecture bind and connect the settings and characters together, Game of Thrones can be classified as a Gothic work.” Das came to this conclusion by arguing that the series largely takes inspiration from a range of historical and architectural symbolism, with the utilisation of diverse architectural styles that serve to elevate and enrich the narrative of the TV series. The fictional architecture is explained to be “serving as visual metaphors that support the concepts, characters, and relationships that define the Game of Thrones universe” (P.S. Das, 2023).

A range of architectural elements “resemble qualities of gothic design”, for instance within the capital city King’s Landing (fig 71), there is a range of “pointed arches, tall spires, and exquisite detailing” with the aim that the gothic influence will intensify the medieval and fantastical ambiance within the Tv show. This is an example of how the “usage of various architectural designs elevates and enhances the storyline” (P.S. Das, 2023).

ARCHITECTURAL PROTAGONIST’S ADAPTABILITY

Architecture also holds the ability to “continually adapt itself to new experiences and understandings.” If architecture can change and adapt to enhance a narrative, does it play an equal role as the character protagonists? – This is a question that this dissertation will try to answer within the context of the fictional world of Game of Thrones. Kimber explored architecture’s role in the current discourse of architectural narrative, and how it “suggests that a series of events or impressions of space can be ‘read’ through a sequencing of spaces and views within a building.” (Kimber, L. 2010)

Deborah Riley also emphasised the political importance of the capital when stating that “Kings Landing needed to exude majesty and influence while seeming cold-hearted and dangerous” (Riley, 2019 p112). This demonstrates how much thought and detail went into the architectural design of Kings Landing to emphasise the rich history of the city described within George R.R. Martins books.



Figure 72: Capital City Kings Landing (Martin et al, 2014, 27:20)

No Specific Ethics Risk Declaration

Form A

APPLICABLE TO ALL STUDENTS and STAFF

Please type your answers; hand written forms will not be considered by the ethics panel.

Undergraduates and taught postgraduates, please complete and return via email to your Project / Dissertation Supervisor along with the required documents (shown below)

Staff and research students, please complete and return via email to the school research office sadapgradmin@hud.ac.uk along with the required documents (shown below)

Project Title:	The Architectural Protagonist of Kings Landing: A Dynamic Force in the 'Game of Thrones' Narrative How does architecture within 'The Game of Thrones' act as a silent yet powerful protagonist, complementing and enriching the narrative of specific scenes?
Name:	Amy Marie Galea
Student number:	U2160084
Course:	Architecture / Architecture (International) (RIBA part 1) Ba(HONS)
Supervisor:	Dr Danilo Di Mascio
Project start date:	01/10/2023

In signing this declaration, I am confirming that my proposed project does not involve:

- direct contact with human participants (e.g. interviews or questionnaires)
- direct contact with animal participants
- access to identifiable personal data for living individuals not already in the public domain
- increased danger of physical or psychological harm for researcher(s) or subject(s)
- research into potentially sensitive areas
- use of students as research assistants
- joint responsibility for the project with researchers external to the University.

My proposed project does not therefore require an ethics review and I have not submitted a Research Ethics Application Form.

If any changes to the project involve any of the criteria above, I undertake to resubmit the project for approval.

Researcher Signature: A.Galea Date: 22/02/2024

Supervisor Signature: *Danilo Di Mascio* Date: 22/02/2024

The procedure below does not need to be actioned:

For Research students or staff, this section should be completed by the Ethics Panel:

In signing this Declaration, I confirm that I have reviewed the proposed project and am satisfied that that it does not involve any specific ethics risk as defined by the School policy.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Name & Role: _____