

Gastronomy, Tourism and Big TV Productions. Reflections on the Case of *Game of Thrones* in Northern Ireland and Girona

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The shooting of big film and TV productions has a significant impact on the places used as filming locations, as already found in our previous studies (Parramon and Medina, 2016, 2017). Regardless of whether natural or artificial landscapes are used to build worlds that physically exist—or have existed—to shape the vast empires of the imagination, the locations used become, if they were not already, cultural tourism destinations. Thus, screen fiction that crosses over into tangible reality is a tourism development model.

Similarly, gastronomic tourism is beginning to truly take hold as a cultural product with its own market, strengthened by the continued expansion of the tourism industry and its need to diversify. In this respect, and as Tresserras, Medina, and Matamala (2007) have pointed out, it is important to bear in mind that gastronomy is also a decisive factor when it comes to planning and taking a trip. In addition, food and drink are some of the main items that tourists spend money on when travelling, and they often want to eat local produce; for them, it is an experience and kind of souvenir. Thus, gastronomic tourism is a market in its own right that, moreover, is an exceptional platform for promoting products, food and drink brands, and even territory brands.

Regarding the link between tourism and gastronomy, it is worth recalling that tourists represent an important factor that should be taken into account in the demand for regional food and drink. Likewise, they are an important asset for food and drink promotion. Tourists are also major consumers of gastronomic routes, the latter being understood as tourism products that link certain attractions within a given territory, always with a well-defined theme that becomes the main focus thereof. At the same time, tourism routes require the involvement and collaboration of the public and private sectors in order to de-

velop a structure that is ultimately of social and economic benefit to all stakeholders (Briedenhann and Wickens, 2004, p. 72) In this regard, and following on from the same authors, it is worth highlighting the fact that significant community participation alongside public sector support throws up interesting opportunities to develop small-scale local tourism products in less developed areas.

Thus, while the two factors already have tourism interest in their own right, film shoots —especially those connected with big productions that are well known nationally or internationally— and gastronomy deserve special attention when they come together. In this article, we propose a reflection on the case of the repercussions of the shooting of the international blockbuster *Game of Thrones* on tourism by observing how those repercussions played out from viewpoint of the promotion of gastronomy. In this respect, we are referring here to two of the locations used as sets for the shooting of *Game of Thrones*: the city of Girona in Catalonia, and Northern Ireland.

In reference to using the city of Girona as a film set, we said that it has impacted in different ways on both the promotion of the city and the tourism perception thereof: promotion of the city as a filming location; tours to the places used in the filming (and the consequent transformation of the perception of its heritage); adding value or tourism interest to certain places that did not have value beforehand; creation of tourism routes based on *Game of Thrones*; creation and sales of merchandise; transformation of local people's relationship with their environment, etc. All these aspects have, in some way or other, transformed the relationship between the city and its visitors and local inhabitants. Some transformations are fleeting while others are longer-lasting. However, regardless of extent of the city's tourism transformation, it is something that must be taken into account and analysed (Parramon and Medina, 2016, p. 316).

Against this backdrop, gastronomy has become an additional aspect for Girona and Northern Ireland that is at least worthy of reflection.

GAME OF THRONES: SOME BRIEF BUT NECESSARY POINTS

The first season of the HBO series *Game of Thrones* premiered on 17 April 2011. Up to and including the sixth season, whose broadcast ended in June 2016, one 10-episode season had been released each year. The seventh season premiered on 16 July 2017 and had seven episodes, as will the eighth and last season of

the series, which will finally be premiered in 2019. Back in 2014, it became the most-watched series in the HBO network, a record that was again broken by subsequent episodes. All seven seasons have been very highly acclaimed by critics and viewers alike, and its followers are considered some of the most devoted fans of any television series ever,¹ a fact that is also interesting when referring to potential phenomenon of a tourist following in search of the filming locations and experiences related to the fictional world in which the adventures and intrigues of those inhabiting it occur.

Created by David Benioff and D. B. Weiss for HBO, the series is based on *A Song of Ice and Fire*, a series of novels by the author George R. R. Martin. The series of books comprises the following volumes: *A Game of Thrones* (1996), after which the television series is named; *A Clash of Kings* (1998); *A Storm of Swords* (2000); *A Feast for Crows* (2005); and *A Dance with Dragons* (2011). The author plans to conclude the series with a further two books: *The Winds of Winter* and *A Dream of Spring*.

FOOD AND DRINK IN *GAME OF THRONES*

In *Game of Thrones*, food and drink play a visible role, albeit not always conscious, as we shall see later. It is noteworthy that, throughout the entire series, we have been able to observe an omnipresent ensemble of food and drink. On the one hand, wine and fresh fruit are products that are associated with the nobility of the Seven Kingdoms. We can find them at almost every meeting or encounter, either in the private rooms of the palaces or the tents of officers at the battle campsites. The abundance of these products, as well as the frequency of their availability, tell us that they are fêted and, to reinforce that message and better characterise those who have them to hand, in the series they are used as an artistic and aesthetic device. So, by choice, an iconographic use is made of fruit, which, for centuries, has been associated with the powerful. A paradigmatic example of this is the oranges painted on the Flemish table of the Arnolfini Portrait by Jan van Eyck (1434) that, as Erwin Panofsky had already identified,²

¹ By the magazine *Vulture*, for example: http://www.vulture.com/2012/10/25-most-devoted-fans.html?mid=nymag_press#photo=25x00014

² See: Panofsky, E. (1934). Jan van Eyck's Arnolfini Portrait. *The Burlington Magazine*

attest to the enormous wealth of a couple who, in 15th-century Bruges, could allow themselves the luxury of buying imported food. Besides that, oranges have other meanings of a religious, social and geographical nature. On the other hand, the lower classes, often depicted in the taverns of Westeros, or those who have chosen to live an austere life, such as the members of the Night's Watch military order, usually drink ale and go without fruit, almost certainly because it represents a foodstuff that is unaffordable and symbolically too elitist. In this respect, it is interesting to note that fresh fruit can also be found in the brothel owned by Petyr Baelish [played by Aidan Gillen], making explicit reference to the fact that, despite being a place at the very bottom of the strict social ladder of the Seven Kingdoms, its clients deserve all kinds of luxury because their buying power is very high in most cases.

Beyond this relationship between the product, the social group and the symbolic or moral significance, we find characters from the high nobility drinking ale, as is the case for Tyrion of House Lannister [played by Peter Dinklage] (who is also a heavy drinker of wine) when, in the first season, he wakes up hungry one day and asks for a mug of dark ale with his breakfast. Or when, in the same episode,³ King Robert Baratheon himself [Mark Addy] parleys in the field of the most powerful lord of the North, Ned Stark [Sean Bean].

Besides the products we have mentioned, and leaving aside the usual gastronomic situations, we find that others appear on various occasions whose exceptional nature underscores their importance. We are referring, for example, to the banquets: a setting of power and entitlement par excellence within a social system where political, economic and military relationships are built on a complex network of dependencies, in which the projected image is paramount. In his novel *Il Banchetto [The Banquet]* (1997), Orazio Bagnasco exemplifies the issue in 15th-century Europe thus: «King Ferdinand wanted to surprise the people of Milan at all costs with the splendour and opulence of his hospitality. The sumptuousness of the feasts had to counter the incalculable wealth and elegance of the fashions displayed by the Lombards, while they had been allowed to do so, with their garments woven with gold, pearls and diamonds» (Bagnas-

64(372), 112-127.

³ Season 1 (Episode 2), «The Kingsroad» (dir. Tim Van Patten), broadcast for the first time in the United States on 16 May 2011.

co, 1999, p. 80). In the first season,⁴ the noble House Stark of The North had the honour of hosting King Robert, his family and his entourage in its castle, and offered them a banquet. On that occasion, it was necessary to reflect the Stark's vassalage to the Baratheons by means of a spectacular meal: several types of meat such as pork ribs and a pheasant, cakes accompanied by fruits of the forest, bread and figs —among other types of fresh fruit— were eaten.

Beside this example, appearing throughout the series are various other banquets —often connected with noble or royal weddings— in which, on the one hand, the exercise of power is represented by delicacies that are only within reach of the privileged few and, on the other, the presence of foodstuffs linked to the local area characterises the fictional territories in which such banquets are held. The properties, staging, landscape, etc. tell us as much as possible about those territories. We would recall that George R. R. Martin himself acknowledged that food was used to that end: «World building is part of what gives epic fantasy its appeal, and food is part of that. You can learn a lot about a world and culture from what they eat» (Martin, 2012, pp. x-xi). During the banquet for the wedding of exiled Princess Daenerys Targaryen [Emilia Clarke] to savage warlord Khal Drogo [Jason Momoa]⁵ —fiery and distant compared to the previous Dothraki people— offers delicacies: firstly, the meat of small mammals is served, such as rabbits instead of the meat of large animals; secondly, it seems that the Dothraki prefer grilled meat over oven-baked or boiled meat, which is a nod to their nomadic life, unlike that of the Westeros courts, which were usually established at ancestral seats; and, finally, the fresh fruit —bananas, for example— is tropical or from warmer climes and, therefore, from the viewpoint of the Seven Kingdoms, is from overseas or exotic.

In the lavish wedding —with a tragic ending— of the new King Joffrey Baratheon [Jack Gleeson] to Margaery Tyrell [Natalie Dormer], the cuisine offered reflects the southern sophistication and cosmopolitanism of the capital, King's Landing.⁶ Among jellies, kumquats and dishes full of the most

⁴ Season 1 (Episode 1), «Winter is Coming» (dir. Tim Van Patten), broadcast for the first time in the United States on 9 May 2011.

⁵ Season 1 (Episode 1), «Winter is Coming» (dir. Tim Van Patten), broadcast for the first time in the United States on 9 May 2011.

⁶ Season 4 (Episode 2), «The Lion and the Rose» (dir. Alex Graves), broadcast for the first time in the United States on 13 April 2014.

varied delicacies, a huge wedding cake stands out, from which live doves — those that survive the young king's clumsiness with a sword— emerge; the fact that this demonstration of culinary art by the political centre of the Seven Kingdoms refers specifically to the decadent Rome of Elagabalus is not insignificant. According to Alcalde (1994, p. 27), Elagabalus often offered his guests peas adorned with grains of gold, meat dusted with ground pearls, or lentils dusted with precious stones. On one occasion, he stuffed partridges with live bats, which took flight as teeth were sunk into them. In King's Landing, just like in imperial Rome, urban refinement and its excesses take on a hue of perversity.

Despite the ending at that royal betrothal, where someone's breath is quite literally taken away, the best-known, most-remembered and also the darkest banquet in *Game of Thrones* is the so-called Red Wedding.⁷ On this occasion, Lord Walder Frey [David Bradley] hosts Robb [Richard Madden] and Catelyn Stark [Michelle Fairley] at his home, together with their officers and friends to celebrate the wedding of Edmure Tully [Tobias Menzies] to Roslin Frey [Alexandra Dowling]. Before the massacre takes place, the diners eat fish with vegetables and boiled potatoes, cakes made (seemingly) from rice, bread, dried fruit, fresh fruit and, of course, drink litres and litres of wine, the grand star of all these gastronomic encounters. In fact, Lady Catelyn Stark herself, in the preparatory stages of the feast that she offers at her home in Winterfell and to which we referred earlier,⁸ states that the most important thing on occasions like these is to ensure that there is plenty to drink. Indeed, as numerous sources from the real world would say, a banquet is not a banquet if it is not properly washed down: to give an example, 20,000 litres of wine were drunk in the year of the Lord 1315 during the wedding banquet of Duke Heinrich von Kürten in his Braunschweig castle (Cohnen, 1991, p. 67).

Out of all the food and drink in the *Game of Thrones* series, there is no doubt that wine is the most significant. Red wine; Lys, Volantis and Arbor sweet wine; Dornish summer wine; Andalos sour wines; and Arbor dry red wine,

⁷ Season 3 (Episode 9), «The Rains of Castamere» (dir. David Nutter), broadcast for the first time in the United States on 2 June 2013.

⁸ Season 1 (Episode 1), «Winter is Coming» (dir. Tim Van Patten), broadcast for the first time in the United States on 9 May 2011.

the latter of which a merchant also uses to poison Daenerys Targaryen; in his scheming, the merchant tells Daenerys that wine from Dorne is pigswill and unsuitable for a princess (although we cannot be sure if that is really what he thought).⁹ Arya Stark [Maisie Williams], momentarily transformed into Walter Frey is also of the same opinion elsewhere in the series.¹⁰ During the course of a banquet that the sham Frey shares with his numerous sons, he proposes a toast with wine, also poisoned by the way: «No more of that Dornish horse piss! This is the finest Arbor gold!» Just as it is in the real world, the quality of wine in fantasy worlds is a hallmark that is so recognisable and shared that it becomes a factor of authenticity suited to endowing the made-up world with sufficient realism; the same resource is used by J. R. R. Tolkien in the chapter «Barrels Out Of Bond» from the novel *The Hobbit* (1937) when describing the wine of the elves of Mirkwood as a delicacy traded between them and the humans of Laketown.

In *Game of Thrones*, wine has multiple functions. Besides acting as a factor of authenticity, it serves to imply that the eternally dissatisfied Queen Cersei Lannister [Lena Headey] has a certain tendency towards alcoholism. Thus, there are several scenes where she appears with a glass of wine in her hand, and perhaps the most memorable of those seen to date is the one where she avariciously sips a dark wine after seeing the centre of religious worship called the Great Sept of Baelor explode.¹¹ Furthermore, wine even has a presence in the plot. As we said earlier, it seems that Arbor wine is the favourite among those who are against Daenerys Targaryen and the Starks. So why does Tyrion Lannister prefer Dornish wine? When he has dinner with Janos [Dominic Carter], the commander of the Night's Watch, they drink the wine that Tyrion usually drinks in every scene; enraptured, Lord Janos asks Tyrion if it is a Dornish wine, and Tyrion confirms that it is.¹² Is that a mistake in the series' script per-

⁹ Season 1 (Episode 7), «You Win or You Die» (dir. Daniel Minahan), broadcast for the first time in the United States on 20 June 2011.

¹⁰ Season 7 (Episode 1), «Dragonstone» (dir. Jeremy Podeswa), broadcast for the first time in the United States on 16 July 2017.

¹¹ Season 6 (Episode 10), «The Winds of Winter» (dir. Miguel Sapochnik), broadcast for the first time in the United States on 26 June 2016.

¹² Season 2 (Episode 2), «The Night Lands» (dir. Alan Taylor), broadcast for the first time in the United States on 8 April 2012.

haps? Or perhaps not. All we can do is ask ourselves what type of wine Lancel Lannister [Eugene Simon] offered to King Robert Baratheon to make him ill before being injured by a boar.¹³

A FEAST OF ICE AND FIRE

A relatively short time after the series had premiered in April 2011, *A Feast of Ice and Fire. The Official Companion Cookbook* was released in May 2012. In the book, the authors Chelsea Monroe-Cassel and Sariann Lehrer offer us a detailed gastronomic journey accompanied by some of the landscapes from the five books of the saga, by the cuisines and the tables «along with a range of recipes from across the Seven Kingdoms and over the Narrow Sea».¹⁴ With their detailed explanation of Mediaeval cuisine —to which the dishes and banquets of both *Game of Thrones* and the books that gave life to the series bear some resemblance— the authors takes us on a journey of recipes, divided into broad territories: The Wall, The North, the southern territories, the previously mentioned capital King's Landing, and over Narrow Sea. Through the recipes in this book, which has already been translated into Spanish, German, Polish and Russian, we can get an understanding of the character of the respective areas. In line with the explanations given by thee same authors (Monroe-Cassel and Lehrer, 2012, pp. 11-12), we shall review the typical food and drink of every territory and even their different regions.

Firstly, The Wall. Due to its extreme situation and cold, much of the food is preserved in some way or other: salt pork or cod, venison preserved in honey, pickles... as well as nuts and dried fruit or berries. To drink: strong ale with an intense flavour and mulled wine to help keep warm. Going down through the continent of Westeros, on the tables of The North, which has a cold climate and is mainly under the control of the Starks throughout the series, we find dishes of game, poultry and root vegetables —it is too cold to grow crops that are not protected by soil— and baked dishes. A heavy, cold-climate cui-

¹³ Season 1 (Episode 7), «You Win or You Die» (dir. Daniel Minahan), broadcast for the first time in the United States on 20 June 2011.

¹⁴ *The Official Game of Thrones Cookbook*: <http://www.innatthecrossroads.com/home/game-thrones-recipes/a-feast-of-ice-and-fire/>

sine for which luxury products like fruit or fish are imported and only served on special occasions. Guided by Monroe-Cassel and Lehrer along the imaginary map created by George R. R. Martin, we arrive at Vale of Arryn, which is fertile and rich in vegetables, honey and meat (e.g., goat meat). Just as fertile is The Riverlands, with a variety of crops and different types of fish, from which trout and pike stand out in particular. The Iron Islands are a harsh, poor territory; according to Euron Greyjoy [Pilou Asbæk], one of the native characters of those islands, all you can find there is rocks and birdshit.¹⁵ Its tables are supplied mainly by what they can get from the sea: fish, seafood, some types of meat and dark bread are the most common products. That is the complete opposite to the fertile prosperous and wealthy Highgarden of House Tyrell, whose banquets offer the very best and most exquisite delicacies, from the most highly-prized types of meat and vegetables to fruit and tarts that provide a sweet climax to the abundant feasts, well washed down with good wines. Further to the south, Dorne represents the dry dessert, with unique foodstuffs like snake. In this dry, hot area, hot chillies and other kinds of Mediterranean-type crops such as olives, dates, some types of citrus fruit and even grapes can be found on its tables. As the capital and the place of residence of the monarch of the Seven Kingdoms, King's Landing is, for Monroe-Cassel and Lehrer, the paradigm of luxury. All kinds of products are exported to its ports and markets, and its cuisine combines abundance with the highest quality of both its products and the dishes served at the court's banquets. Finally, over the Narrow Sea lie the lands of the Dothraki and the Free Cities. Exotic products and dishes such as lobster come together with other, more unique ones, such as crocodile, thorny larvae or dog sausages.

A MEDIAEVAL AND NON-MEDIAEVAL CUISINE

The point of reference used by Monroe-Cassel and Lehrer, based on George R. R. Martin's own words, is Mediaeval cuisine: «Unlike my world of Westeros or the real-life middle ages, the twenty-first century is a golden age, at least where food is concerned» (Martin, 2012, p. xi); similarly, the title of the author's preliminary note to the book is «Stocking a Medieval Kitchen» (Monroe-Cassel

¹⁵ Temp. 7 (cap. 1), *op. cit.*

and Lehrer, 2012, p. 3) is a full statement of intention. In fact, what we see being eaten in *Game of Thrones* matches up pretty much with what we think was being eaten in, for example, the 12th century, although that, in itself, is hard to establish: «Before that time [the 13th century], food customs are not well-known [...]. Due to a lack of expert sources they must be studied indirectly by examining agricultural practices and trading» (Pastoreau, 1994, p. 91).

The historical recreation of food and drink in the *Game of Thrones* television series is in keeping with reality and, with the exception of a few nuances, may reflect some characteristics of the main characters' social groups. As a general concept, food and drink gave Mediaeval society the chance to the highlight social differences of groups and places (countryside/city) alike. Bread is an omnipresent product, but the further down the social ladder one is, the more, poorer-quality bread is consumed. In this respect, we must establish a relationship between more food diversity/higher food quality and the privileged social groups, and between less food diversity/lower food quality and those groups that are lower down on the social ladder. In parallel, fresh food may be readily available in coastal towns, but may not be in inland locations. Whereas the diet of the privileged classes consists of a lot of bread plus a lot of wine and a variety of other products, the diet of the lower classes basically consists of bread plus some root vegetables and, to a lesser extent, cheese and meat, whenever possible. This wealth of products can be seen in any season of the series, albeit only in halls inhabited by the members of the Great Houses of the Seven Kingdoms. Similarly, if we review the scenes of humble places where people are eating, such as the tavern, and look at the lowest social groups, such as the peasants, we will see that the menu consists of a stew or simple soup accompanied by bread and ale. It is significant that the menu of the Night's Watch is based on the same items, and that the stew is served in earthenware bowls and the beer is served in mugs made from the same material, which was the simplest one for crockery in the Middle Ages. This enables us to confirm that the Night's Watch has an austere diet, in this instance due to the moral code but not to the lack of financial resources, since its members come from the nobility of the Seven Kingdoms. This is in keeping with reality, since those sombre watchers of The Wall remind us of the military orders of Mediaeval times.

Besides the quantity and diversity of products, quality was important in the Middle Ages. People were concerned about the state of the foodstuff and

the condition of it, in accordance with parameters of taste at that time. Fresh products can be classified into this group. They run the risk of perishing very quickly, so the supply radius is smaller than it is for other products. Two paradigmatic cases are fruit and fish. Regarding the first product, about which we could write much more than space constraints allow us to, it should be said that, towards the end of the Middle Ages, the ruling classes consumed a lot of fruit despite the fact that it was a foodstuff that had many dietary warnings and restrictions placed on it. As far as fish is concerned, it had to be salted, dried or smoked to preserve it so that it could be shipped to inland areas far from the coast. In contrast, fresh fish could be offered in the markets of coastal towns. That reality seems to have been maintained in the Seven Kingdoms. While the Lannisters have fresh fish available in King's Landing, the savages beyond The Wall eat salted or dried fish. However, it is surprising to find that, in the Winterfell of the Starks and on Iron Islands, dried and salted fish is also commonplace. Perhaps it is a production oversight, but the reading we could make is that the fishing industry is not characteristic of the Kingdom of the North or of the islands, whose economy is based on sacking and pillaging.

That said there are two considerations that need to be made regarding the supposed Mediaevality of *Game of Thrones*. The first one relates to our own object of study, gastronomy, but now with a focus on how the products are consumed rather than the products themselves. As we have already seen, the banquets in the series are particularly revealing moments when it comes to food and drink and the experiences in the fictional world of Westeros. However, the banquets are not quite as Mediaeval as we may have thought: «overexaggeration —as seen in the *chansons de gestes*— of the opulence of the royal feasts in the period in question [basically the 12th century] should be avoided. These came later. [...] our period is not yet the one of food snobbery or culinary refinements» (Pastoreau, 1994, p. 95). This, of course, does not invalidate exceptional situations like the wedding banquet of Duke Heinrich von Kürten, to which we referred earlier. The second deserves a more detailed discussion, but here we are only going to point it out as a general consideration: the screen staging of the world imagined by Martin contains many visual elements that are not strictly Mediaeval, despite the feudal social relationships on which the plot is based. Thus, from the architectural elements ranging in style from Romanesque to Baroque, to the Renaissance decorations and armour, and even clothing that is

reminiscent of 20th-century fashions, there is no desire in *Game of Thrones* to portray the real Middle Ages, but instead —as befits fiction and, in particular, epic fantasy— the desire is to invent a Middle Ages that that will ultimately not be such. Rather, it will be something new, different and suited to the needs of another world. Similarly, although in this instance based on different considerations, the Mediaevality of today's monumental ensemble of Carcassonne does not correspond to the real Middle Ages, but to a certain Romantic idea promoted by Eugène Viollet-le-Duc, the person in charge of its restoration between 1852 and 1879. To conclude this issue, we shall give another example, which is now a classic: one that is probably the best adaptation of the Arthurian legend contained in the Matter of Britain, the film *Excalibur* (dir. John Boorman, 1981), which does not offer any staging that is really Mediaeval. Instead, it is inspired by the 19th-century Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhoods' pictorial models.

THE INFLUENCE OF TOURISM ON *GAME OF THRONES* FILMING LOCATIONS

In the introduction to *A Feast of Ice and Fire*, the author of the literary saga George R. R. Martin reveals an important secret in the foreword: he does not cook (Martin, 2012, p. ix). He says that it is better to eat than cook and acknowledges that «Food is one of life's great pleasures, and I am all in favour of pleasures» (Martin, 2012, p. ix). Along the same line, he asserts the importance of food in *Game of Thrones*: «It is true that I spend a lot of words in my books describing the meals the characters are eating. More than most writers, I suspect» (Martin, 2012, p. x). Further on, he adds: «I like writing about food, and my readers —most of them, anyway— seem to like reading about it» (Martin, 2012, p. xi). If we combine the fact that, as George R. R. Martin himself mentions, the readers of *Game of Thrones* are interested in the gastronomy appearing in the books and the series, with the fact that, as we mentioned earlier, the followers of the series are considered some of the most devoted fans of any serialised television production ever, the connection between both is, at the very least, interesting. If we then add in the tourism factor, the triangle is completed in a very suggestive way, as we shall see in the following sections of this article.

As already analysed by the authors of this article in previous works (Parramon and Medina, 2016, 2017), the places in our physical world used as lo-

cations to make the world imagined by George R. R. Martin and HBO come to life in *Game of Thrones* cannot fail to be affected by such filming. The very policy of selecting outdoor locations for the series consciously uses the media from the start, well before the arrival at the chosen territory of the camera crew, cast and modern-day travelling court that a contemporary television blockbuster needs. Thus, the tourism promotion potential that such selection represents a very considerable factor.¹⁶ While it is clearly difficult to objectively quantify the economic or cultural aspects of the tourism impact of *Game of Thrones* on the places it visits, it undeniably offers them global projection, which, on the face of it, is positive. This is the case for the city of Dubrovnik in Croatia, which, after being transformed into several corners of the Seven Kingdoms, has seen a significant rise in its tourism income. This is also the case for Spain, with specific enclaves in Seville, Osuna and San Juan de Gaztelugatxe; for the entire country of Iceland; and, of course, for the two cases that we shall focus on in the following sections: Girona and Northern Ireland.

On the one hand, Northern Ireland, where all the seasons of the series have been filmed and where the production company's studios are also located, can be considered one of the most important real enclaves of *Game of Thrones*. On the other hand, Girona is a location where filming has left a very important mark despite only being used in one of the seasons. This city was the object of analysis in our previous two studies, as referred to earlier.

GASTRONOMIC EXPERIENCES IN GIRONA THAT ARE WORTHY OF THE HIGH NOBILITY

Having referred to the delicacies of the banquets of the Westeros nobility, the incorporation of *Game of Thrones* as a gastronomic experience into the city of Girona has been done by two highly renowned people, the «nobility of gastronomy» if you will: Jordi Roca, who, among other distinctions, holds the

¹⁶ So considerable that there are some places where filming has not occurred that actually use the imagined world of Westeros as an attraction. For example, Syria's Ministry of Tourism's video of the half-destroyed city of Aleppo set to the *Game of Thrones* soundtrack by the Iranian-German composer Ramin Djawadi. *Syrian Tourism*, 2016. Mentioned in the newscast *Telediario* (Televisión Española-TVE1, October 6, 2016). See: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WuxRAztKOvs&app=desktop>.

2014 World's Best Pastry Chef title, and the award-winning bartender Marióna Vilanova. Their Westeros-related creations are the fruits of their artistry in high gastronomy and high cocktail making. While their proposals are first-rate offerings in their own right, they involve a consistent, documented approach to points of reference in the series. Moreover, their creations are managing to hold their ground over time as attractive products of undeniable quality, unlike other food and drink offerings inspired by *Game of Thrones* that, in most cases, did not make any contribution other than using names related to the Seven Kingdoms and, consequently, did not manage to become consolidated in the establishments offering them.

In his famous Girona-based ice-cream parlour called Rocambolesc, Jordi Roca—one of the three brothers behind the three-Michelin-starred El Celler de Can Roca that Restaurant Magazine considers to be the best restaurant in the world—offers a gastronomic experience that transports the consumer to the tumultuous world imagined by George R. R. Martin. At Rocambolesc, he invites us to experience nothing less than a reproduction of the gold prosthetic hand of the character Jaime Lannister, nicknamed the Kingslayer, played by the Danish actor Nikolaj Coster-Waldau. A while ago, and with his characteristic sense of humour, Jordi Roca ventured into the productive union between film and gastronomy with his *Helado Oscuro* [*Dark Ice Cream*], a creation that imitates the helmet of Darth Vader, the villain in the film by George Lucas. The hugely popular Star Wars' expression «the dark side» is translated into Spanish as *el lado oscuro*. So, *Helado Oscuro* is a words play. After filming *Game of Thrones* in Girona, it was time for the metal hand of the attractive Kingslayer to take the stage, once again with an amusing word play. On the box of the golden lolly, the pastry chef says he comes from Can Roca Casterly, clearly alluding to Casterly Rock, the fictional ancestral seat of the powerful House Lannister. The choice of main ingredients for his ice cream also plays on the name of the saga, *Song of Ice and Fire*: despite it being a lolly, the blood orange and mango flavour is fiery (Parramon and Medina, 2016, p. 319).

Meanwhile, on the menu of her Girona-based Nykteri's Cocktail Bar, Marióna Vilanova has two cocktails inspired by *Game of Thrones*. Both are very striking, consciously teamed with the use of a hibiscus flower in their presentation and have fine-sounding names, as befits the staging of the series and even its ability to add made-up terms and expressions to our vocabulary. In chrono-

logical order, the first cocktail that Nykteri's offered after Girona became linked to the filming of the series was the *Khaleesi*; a powerful cocktail, judging by the sound of its name, its spectacular look and by the quantity of nuances on the palate. *Khaleesi* is one of the numerous titles of power held by Daenerys Targaryen, one of the saga's most charismatic characters. The presentation refers directly to the three dragons of Daenerys: the orange-coloured golden berry alludes to the white and gold dragon Viserion; the intense-green colour of the cocktail itself to the green and bronze dragon Rhaegal; and the hibiscus flower to the black and red dragon Drogon. Finally, «its flavour and the intensity of its ingredients are like the very evolution of the character, a crescendo from sweet innocence to dangerous majesty» (Parramon, 2015).

While the shaken, refreshing *Khaleesi* is more spring-like, Nykteri's second cocktail associated with *Game of Thrones* refers directly to the series' most famous expressions and, consequently, is a spicy offering to warm the consumer up in the coldest winter months. Its name, if course, is «Winter is Coming». Mariona Vilanova tells us:

The name comes from a conversation I had with one of my customers while I was immersed in the creative process for autumn and winter cocktails, and someone said to me 'Winter is Coming', so I decided to use it because it sounded really good. I did several tests because it had to be something that reminded me of winter. The spices used in mulled wine at German Christmas markets are wintery for me, and now there's a big trend for hot, spicy flavours, I thought it would be right. Because the name came from *Game of Thrones*, it had to be something very powerful that was both visually appealing and highly contrasting. When you see something as red as the «Winter is Coming» cocktail, you imagine that it's going to be sweet and sickly, but it isn't. Just like in the series, in this cocktail nothing's quite what it seems. Passion red, a bestial colour that refers to the bloodthirstiness of the saga, the cocktail contains sloes, the spiced drink I mentioned, vodka —the spirit that is traditionally drunk to beat the cold— and apple cider from Girona, because a link with the city was needed. Since fog is quite common in Girona in winter, we looked for a white recipient to put dry ice in to create the effect of winter fog when serving the cocktail in sharp contrast to the powerful red of the cocktail itself.¹⁷

¹⁷ Interview conducted by the authors of this article in Girona on 27 January 2018.

Since late 2005, when it was known that the *Game of Thrones* court would arrive in Girona to turn a number of the heritage elements of this city in the north of Catalonia into various Westeros sets, its use as a filming location has had different impacts on tourism promotion, but there is no question that, alongside guided tours, the gastronomic experience has been particularly successful and long-lasting. As we pointed out earlier, in real places linked to fictional worlds, tourism elements as typical as souvenirs —things you buy or keep to remind you of a holiday, place or event— merge with merchandise —goods that are sold or distributed as publicity that are linked to something such as a film, a series or, to a lesser extent, a book (Parramon and Medina, 2016, p. 317). Similarly, enterprises and entrepreneurs bank strongly on offerings of an experiential nature (Parramon and Medina, 2016, p. 320). In this respect, high-quality gastronomy is an experience that, as demonstrated by the cases of Jordi Roca and Mariona Vilanova, is highly capable of turning imagined worlds into tourism nodes; in tourism speak, a «node» is a place of interest, a point that, for one reason or another, triggers curiosity and encourages people to visit it and see it from a particular angle.

NORTHERN IRELAND, THE GASTRONOMY OF WINTERFELL AND OPTING FOR *GAME OF THRONES* AS A MAJOR TOURISM RESOURCE

Alongside Dubrovnik in Croatia, Northern Ireland is perhaps the filming location that has managed to establish the closest link between its tourism brand and the popular series, and has even reached an agreement with HBO to use the logos and images of the series in its tourism promotion activities. As noted by Redondo (2016):

The magnitude of *Games of Thrones* has undeniably exceeded all expectations. It has become a global phenomenon in many areas. One of those areas is tourism, which has turned out to be a mother lode that no-one could have predicted. Those countries that have been lucky enough to offer up some of the locations appearing in the series have attracted a new audience, one that is very keen to visit the film sets where the intrigues of the Stark, Lannister, Targaryen, Greyjoy, Baratheon, Bolton and company play out. Indeed, one of the basic pillars of the *Game of Thrones* saga is the selection of locations where the blockbuster is filmed. In a very prominent position is Northern Ireland, where Titanic Studios (one of Europe's leading studios) is located. Some

of the landscapes and monuments of that territory have been used as film sets on numerous occasions, especially in the first three seasons of the series. [...] The *Games of Thrones* route in Northern Ireland has become a great excuse for enjoying the beautiful collage of ruined castles and abbeys, the dizziness of looking down over sharp cliffs like swords made from Valyrian steel, the volcanic basalt causeways made for the giants to walk on, fairy-tale forests and, in short, some of the most photogenic landscapes in Europe, following in the wake of one of the best television series of all time.

In fact, there are about 20 series' locations in Northern Ireland. Its landscapes, castles, villages, caves, etc. have been used to create Winterfell, Castle Black Quarry at Magheramorne, Dragonstone island at Downhill Strand, the Iron Islands and the Westeros forests at Tollymore Forest, among quite a few others. However, one important fact that we cannot ignore under any circumstances is that Belfast, Northern Ireland's capital, is where the famous Titanic Studios are located, the headquarters of the series' filming, where the interiors and even some of the exteriors are created.

Northern Ireland has created whole series of routes around the region in search of the places where the series was filmed, recreating events that were filmed there and also linking those territories to the world imagined by George R. R. Martin and HBO's scriptwriters. Such routes are promoted on the official tourism websites of Northern Ireland and jointly on those of Ireland in general (see www.ireland.com), and some inbound tourism firms are already offering specific products related to the series. Of particular note is *Game of Thrones* Tours, with head offices in Belfast, which offers tours around the series' locations in Northern Ireland, from Belfast, Derry, Dublin and Tollymore. The tours offered are give the following names: «Iron Islands and Giant's Causeway Adventure», «Winterfell Locations Trek» and «Tollymore Forest Trek».

All this tourism linkage has also led, as it has done on the case Girona that we commented on earlier, to the creation of a whole series of merchandise and souvenir products that exploit the imagined world of the series that is associated with the territory: T-shirts, keyrings, mugs... and even the odd cloak, helmet or sword. However, the most interesting thing to point out here is the creation of specific gastronomic products linked to the series, which take advantage not only of the link between them and the filming locations, but also other accessory but equally as interesting aspects that we shall analyse below,

mainly through the specific case of The Cuan Guesthouse in the Northern Irish village of Strangford.

THE KING'S BANQUET AT WINTERFELL

The small, quiet village of Strangford in County Down is on the north-eastern coast of Northern Ireland, facing —or more or less in the line of sight of— the relatively close Isle of Man. It has around 500 inhabitants according to the latest Census, a figure that increases considerably in the summer period.

The village is set within a landscape that allows a variety of sports and physical activities to be done in nature, from walks to cycling routes and even sailing or canoeing tours. One of its trump cards is that it is strategically located a few kilometres from and has easy access to the region's various sights and monuments, such as the frequent ferry to neighbouring Portaferry, places like Downpatrick and the Interpretation Centre of Saint Patrick (the Patron Saint of Ireland), the Giant's Causeway (a UNESCO World Heritage Site), etc. Castle Ward (16th-18th centuries) and Audley's Castle (16th century) are especially well-known nowadays because, in the *Game of Thrones* series, they were the family residences of House Stark, the rulers of Winterfell.

Using CGI, Castle Ward and its stables, as well as its adjacent towers and buildings, become the main courtyard of Winterfell Castle. As a result, it has become a must-see location on the *Game of Thrones* routes. High numbers of tourists visit the stables, Castle Ward and Audley's tower, which is also part of the ensemble owned by the National Trust, a conservation organisation serving England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

The proximity of this monumental ensemble combined with relatively easy access led the small village of Strangford and —located in it— The Cuan Guesthouse to be chosen as the team's residence while filming the first season. Given the remarkable success of *Game of Thrones*, this small, welcoming establishment decided to base one of its main lines of international promotion on the series by offering a stay in one of the very rooms that the stars of series had stayed in. Thus:

«Why not choose from one of our Winterfell bedrooms where the following cast members stayed?»:

Room 1 - Jon Snow - Kit Harington
 Room 2 - Arya Stark - Maisie Williams
 Room 3 - Ned Stark - Sean Bean
 Room 4 - Night Porter
 Room 5 - Queen Cersei (Lannister) - Lena Heady
 Room 6 - Catelyn Stark - Michelle Fairley
 Room 7 - King Robert Baratheon - Mark Addy
 Room 8 - Bran Stark - Isaac Hempstead Wright
 Room 9 - Joffrey Baratheon - Jack Gleeson

For the unconditional fans of the series, being able to use the very rooms that the series' cast members had stayed in adds a mythomaniac element to the stay, which serves as a veritable attraction that deserves to be taken into account. However, what we are most interested in highlighting here about The Cuan's strategy is the creation and promotion in its restaurant of what it has called the «King's Banquet at Winterfell», an original, well-narrated menu based on George R. R. Martin's books, which brings to life some of the passages from those books in dishes that recreate a Mediaeval look seasoned with the literary creation about House Stark.

Firstly, visitors who choose this menu will find themselves sitting down to not only a thematic dinner —or lunch, on request— that recreates a banquet at Winterfell, but also a thematic breakfast, «Breakfast at Winterfell», based on a passage from the first book of the saga, *A Game of Thrones*, and reproduced on the guesthouse's website: «There was much more than Catelyn asked for: Hot bread, butter and honey and blackberry preserves, a rasher of bacon and a soft boiled egg, a wedge of cheese, a pot of mint tea. And with it came Maester Luwin.» And that list of foodstuffs, together with optional coffee, is precisely what The Cuan's «Breakfast at Winterfell» offers.

We have reproduced below the literarily narrated menu for the «King's Banquet at Winterfell»:

«After all had been seated, toasts were made, thanks were given and returned, and then the feasting began.» *Game of Thrones, Ice and Fire* by George R. R. Martin

«The Great Hall of Winterfell was hazy with smoke and heavy with the smell of roasted meat and fresh-baked bread»

«They ate oaten porridge in the morning and Pease porridge in the afternoon.»
Crusty White Bread with Medieval Pease Porridge

«Guests gorged on cod cakes and winter squash.»
Cod Cakes on a bed of Buttery Winter Squash

«‘Hungry again?’ he asked. There was still half a honeyed chicken in the centre of the table. Jon reached out to tear off a leg, then had a better idea. He knifed the bird whole and let the carcass slide to the floor between his legs. Ghost ripped into it in savage silence.»
Honeyed Roasted Chicken with Roasted Onions in Gravy

«Ben Stark laughed. —As I feared. Ah well. I believe I was younger than you the first time I got truly and sincerely drunk—. He snagged a roasted onion, dripping brown with gravy, from a nearby trencher and bit into it.
It crunched.»

«Such food Bran had never seen... venison pies chunky with carrots, bacon and mushrooms...»
Venison Pie

«... and afterwards bowls of iced blueberries and sweet cream.»
«[Sansa] drank a glass of buttermilk and nibbled at some sweet biscuit as she waited, to settle her stomach.»
Iced Blueberries in Sweet Cream with Sweet Biscuits

The banquet setting is rounded off, firstly, by tableware that tries to reproduce Mediaeval-inspired motifs linked to the series, including crockery that was specifically commissioned and acquired for this menu; secondly, by clothing and accessories —the House Stark banner, fur-edged cloaks, swords, etc.— that recreate the Winterfell atmosphere; and, thirdly, though no less important, by gastronomic and aesthetic details that are full of symbolism and even visual impact, such as the portions of butter made in specific moulds that reproduce the wolf motif appearing on the House Stark banner.

In 2016, the reporter Josh Barrie published an online report¹⁸ recounting his own experience as a diner at The Cuan’s Winterfell banquet:

¹⁸ https://munchies.vice.com/en_us/article/nzkdvx/i-went-to-winterfell-to-eat-a-game-of-thrones-banquet

I'm seated alone at a table in a small guest house in County Down, Northern Ireland, about to embark on a 'Game of Thrones Winterfell Banquet'. Despite it being lunchtime on a bright summer's afternoon, hessian wall hangings stretch from ceiling to floor and there are candles alight in the corner. Chunky, green crockery is arranged in front of me and at the centre of my table sits a wedge of butter in the shape of a dire wolf. In this small pub, I've stumbled into a medieval fantasy.

Besides the above-mentioned thematic menu and breakfast, the guest-house also organises events and dinners linked to the series like, for example, the «*Game of Thrones* Murder Mystery Night»¹⁹: «From 'Game of what...?' to a banquet in Winterfell: Nobody could have predicted something of this magnitude».²⁰

Using the world associated with the *Game of Thrones* series seems to have been a major tourist attraction for both The Cuan, as the establishment involved the most, and the small village of Strangford, which now has more inbound tourism than ever. A local source told us that it was impossible to say how many people, but there were certainly a lot more. In the village's small newsagent's, among the newspapers, magazines and snacks, it is possible to find T-shirts bearing the faces or phrases of some of the main characters of the series, as well as a variety of series-related souvenirs.

In an interview by Josh Barrie in 2016, the owner of The Cuan made several observations:

'We've been here for 25 years', says Caroline McErlean, owner of the guest house along with husband Peter —both of whom greet me dressed in cloaks worn by extras on the show. 'Before, we were doing OK, ticking along. Now, business really is fantastic. The show has changed things here immeasurably. When the first season began, we were asking, 'Game of what?' Now, it's massive. Nobody could have predicted something of this magnitude.'²¹

¹⁹ <http://www.thecuan.com/2016/01/game-of-thrones-murder-mystery-night/>

²⁰ https://munchies.vice.com/en_us/article/nzkdvx/i-went-to-winterfell-to-eat-a-game-of-thrones-banquet

²¹ https://munchies.vice.com/en_us/article/nzkdvx/i-went-to-winterfell-to-eat-a-game-of-thrones-banquet

During our stay at The Cuan, the owner confirmed the success of the business, and the increase in the number of tourists seeking the *Game of Thrones* atmosphere and gastronomy:

For people it's an attraction (...). We've really noticed it, both in the number of people who want to stay in the room of one character or another and in the Winterfell banquet. People stay to have dinner and sleep, and they have breakfast in the restaurant. (...) *Game of Thrones* attracts people, and that's very good!

CONCLUSIONS

As we found in one of our articles preceding this study (Parramon and Medina, 2017), film or television shoots have increased tourism interest in certain destinations in recent years. Certain elements, such as adding value or tourism interest to certain places and landscapes; the assumption, by local populations, of the imagined world of the series as part of their own local—and exportable—imagined world; and the creation of tourism routes based on *Game of Thrones* as part of an awareness of the value of things imaginary to the construction of a tourism node. All these aspects have transformed, in some way or other, the relationship between those territories that have been film sets for the series and their visitors and inhabitants.

From the data available on the tourism and economic impact of filming *Games of Thrones* in places as different and distant as Northern Ireland, Girona, Dubrovnik, Malta, Iceland and Andalusia, three main aspects can be deduced. First, and as we pointed out in our previous work (Parramon and Medina, 2017), there is an undeniable economic impact. The second relevant aspect is found in the realisation that, on every occasion, filming in a location and that location's subsequent appearance in the series triggers diverse tourism activities and exploitations that are lasting. How long they last in the different locations nevertheless depends on the relationship between the series and the territory. For example, the case of Northern Ireland—with the huge number of outdoor shoots and the headquarters of some very important studios—is not the same as that of Girona, where only one of the seasons of the series was filmed. However, and delving deeper into this issue, the third interesting aspect is the realisation that every place that *Game of Thrones* has visited has, in some way or oth-

er, managed to find a commercial and cultural strategy in the link between its own iconography and that of the pseudomythical imagined world of Westeros.

Against the backdrop presented above, it should be noted that, on the one hand, the locations where *Game of Thrones* was filmed have seen another level of products added to their usual range of souvenirs, one that is closely connected with the idea of merchandising and whose objective is to render the experience of something made up, which only exists in the plot of the series, real and long-lasting. On the other hand, gastronomy has gradually positioned itself and gained strength as a tourism promotion strategy by bringing its food elements into the mix. In some cases, they are heritage elements in their own right, with imagined worlds that go beyond the established order and cross over into territories of fiction connected with the series and the books that gave life to it.

The *Game of Thrones* phenomenon has exceeded expectation and crossed borders. Visitors seek experiences that transport them in time and place, that make them part of their favourite fictional scenes, that make them feel different, even if only for a while. Experiences that they can enjoy that, in short, give them something to remember.

Despite the fact that main motive for travelling in the cases studied — Girona and particularly Northern Ireland— was to visit and become immersed in the locations where *Game of Thrones* was created, we find that gastronomy has also become an effective attraction that helps to make that a real, pleasant experience. When The Cuan Guesthouse decided not only to create certain dishes inspired by the books and the series, but also to recreate an environment, a dinner service, and to provide the diners with clothing suited to the occasion, etc., we can see that what people are really seeking is the fullest possible experience. And this has produced excellent results, as the Girona-based bartender Mariona Vilanova acknowledges:

Everything around *Game of Thrones* attracts people. I get clients who tell me ‘I’ve heard you make *Game of Thrones* cocktails, and I’ve come across tour guides passing in front of the bar who recommend their clients go in and have some *Game of Thrones* cocktails. The two cocktails have been very successful because there are a lot of fans of the series’.²²

²² Interview conducted by the authors of this article in Girona on 27 January 2018.

Or, as the owner of the Strangford establishment said in our interview: ‘Nobody could have predicted something of this magnitude’.

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