



# A SONG OF CHANGING GENDERS

**A literary gender analysis of  
George R.R. Martin's fantasy series  
"A Song of Ice and Fire"  
focusing on the shifting identities of  
masculinity in postmodern society**

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## SUMMARY

George R.R. Martin's fantasy series *A Song of Ice and Fire* has managed like few other publications of that genre to breach the boundary between fantasy and mainstream literature, essentially because of the TV-show, *Game of Thrones*, which has become a major cultural phenomenon in recent years. Critical commentators of the novel series have mainly vocalized praise of George R.R. Martin's portrayal of gender in the series. However, the scholarship I have encountered focuses almost exclusively on the feminine perspective of the gender discussion and makes very few remarks on the male perspective. This thesis is a means to fill that gap in the scholarship by exploring the male characters and masculinity in the series.

Similarly to how the scholarship on femininity has examined whether George R.R. Martin is enlightened in regards to gender, I have investigated the same; determining to what extent Martin has been able to create complex and dynamic male characters that faithfully represent the identities of masculinity in our postmodern society.

My theoretical approach is based on defining contemporary forms of masculinity in our postmodern society and consequently connecting these forms to George R.R. Martin's series. I have chiefly been influenced by two masculinity scholars, Andrew Kimbrell and Anthony Synnott, who both argue that men have been and still are struggling through various social crises caused by the pressure of having to uphold the ideal of hegemonic masculinity – a form of masculinity that expects men to dominate, succeed and never exhibit vulnerability. In fact, men fall victim to social crises at such a rate that, arguably, our society may not be based on the principles of a patriarchal system any longer. The extent to which women's issues are still the main focus of gender debates in the media today, which is at odds with the social reality, suggests that *men* are now the gender to be marginalized and ignored by society.

My analysis of George R.R. Martin's *A Song of Ice and Fire* is focused on the interpretation of two main male characters, Eddard Stark and Jaime Lannister. They represent two very different forms of masculinity: Eddard embodies the traditional and unchangeable male from a pre-capitalist age defined by feudalism, chivalric ideals and utterly unambiguous lines between masculine and feminine. Jaime embodies many aspects of the postmodern male, who is shaped by complexity, constant evolvment and deep uncertainty of his own self-identification. Eddard's premature death in the first volume, *A Game of Thrones*, symbolizes the end of chivalry and of traditional perceptions of gender roles. Jaime struggles to uphold the hegemonic ideal of dominance, unscrupulousness and emotional detachment – his failure to do so is regarded at first as the quintessential emasculation. However, his ultimate acceptance of his new form of masculinity, which incorporates both heroic courage *and* emotional vulnerability, seems the embodiment of George R.R. Martin's ideal of what a man is capable of becoming in postmodern society: a man willing to reveal his



vulnerabilities and flaws, relinquishing his hold on a dogma of dominance and unavoidable inadequacy, and therefore becoming empowered by accepting who he really is.

Following the two in-depth characterizations of Eddard and Jaime is an investigation into whether George R.R. Martin is equally as enlightened with his less developed characters as he has turned out to be with his mains. I have come to find that in these peripheral characters, George R.R. Martin's gender enlightenment falters. The males are victimized by violence and death far more often and in more explicit detail than the females – and this is mostly regarded as the natural way of things in this universe. In addition, while female villainy is a versatile and diverse concept in the series, male villainy is caused almost exclusively by two traits usually associated with men: unscrupulousness and pleasure at excessive violence. In George R.R. Martin's series, these two personality traits are so commonplace that they are ultimately portrayed as naturally ingrained aspects of masculinity.

In conclusion, while George R.R. Martin mostly deserves the praise he has received for his gender enlightened characterizations, he falls short of the ideal when regarding his peripheral, less developed characters. In these male individuals are found stereotypical attributes, a lack of complexity and high level of victimization not seen in the females. This marginalization of the peripheral males remains chiefly unvisited by the current scholarship on *A Song of Ice and Fire*.



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## 1 INTRODUCTION

When the first volume of George R.R. Martin's series, *A Song of Ice and Fire*, was published (*A Game of Thrones*, 1996) it was well-received by fantasy critics and fans alike, winning three different fantasy and science-fiction awards in 1997. However, the attention that the novel received was almost entirely limited to the fantasy and science-fiction world of literature and thus next to no one outside of the fantasy world had heard of George R.R. Martin (Martin). This changed a decade later, when it was announced that the novels be adapted for a TV-show to be broadcast on HBO. The novels, of which there were four now, experienced a massive revival of interest and the series managed to breach the barrier between the rather limiting fantasy audience and the mainstream, by becoming a major cultural phenomenon.

Due to its delayed reception by a mainstream audience, most critical commentary of the novels was not written until recent years, after the publication of volumes 2, 3 and 4. Most of the empirical commentary concerning *A Song of Ice and Fire* is what would be defined as 'popular' literature: reviews, articles for popular magazines and newspapers, and BA/MA-projects from students from various universities (the quality of which is varying). However, a few commentators with academic background have added their assessments of the series to the popular scholarship – a description of some of these authors is found in the "Methodology" chapter of this project.

Many authors of the empirical commentary agree that Martin's series has been highly influenced by J.R.R. Tolkien and *The Lord of the Rings*, a fact which Martin himself has confirmed in interviews. *The Lord of the Rings* (1954) is celebrated for being the single most defining foundation of the modern fantasy genre. Tolkien's influence is made visible in Martin's novels in various ways, from small things like similarly sounding character names to the crucial ways in which he has decided to develop his narrative. Most authors also agree, however, that while George R.R. Martin clearly has Tolkienesque elements incorporated within his series, he also transcends Tolkien's romantic fantasy traditions and brings his narrative into the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

One perspective, in which most of the critics agree that Martin differs from Tolkien and the traditional ideals of fantasy and romance, is gender. The romance genre is influenced by the chivalric ideals and gender roles of medievalism and in Martin's first volume, *A Game of Thrones*, the women start out by embodying the gender traditions of chivalry and romance. They are dependent on the men in their lives, holding no true power that is not derived from these men, and are expected to uphold the ideals of a proper lady. However, the female characters soon evolve into something very different, dynamic and subversive. As Mark Buchanan writes in his honors essay from the University of British Columbia, "*Martin not only includes female characters in his novels, but has made them integral to the plot, major protagonists, and dynamic characters... Martin is working against the tradition of marginalized female*

*characters in the fantasy genre*"<sup>1</sup>. Buchanan argues that some of Martin's major characters are consciously aware of the performance of gender; they are aware that they live in a patriarchal system and are able to manipulate that system until it works to their own advantage. The critics agree that Martin has created strong and empowered female characters in his novels. They are all unique, three-dimensional and realistic creations, with whom Martin has created a spectrum of different female gender identities, which is rare in the fantasy genre. In her essay "Power and Feminism in Westeros", Caroline Spector agrees with this assessment: "*Throughout A Song of Ice and Fire, Martin establishes conventional medieval fantasy tropes and then destroys them... [By] creating such diverse and fully rendered female characters and thrusting them into this grim and bitter world, Martin has created a subversively feminist tale*"<sup>2</sup>.

There is next to no scholarship (academic or popular) focusing on the male gender and masculinity in *A Song of Ice and Fire*. It is surprising to me that so few gender scholars have examined the male perspective in George R.R. Martin's novel series. The greater majority seem to agree that Martin is enlightened when it comes to gender, creating both male and female characters that are three-dimensional and who each face unique trials and struggle with their own shortcomings and inner corruption. They agree that he brings the traditional standards of fantasy and romance into our contemporary society, in which the male and female genders have become much more equalized in recent years. In today's gender discussion, masculinity receives almost as much attention as femininity – if Martin's series is as enlightened as they say, should the scholarship then not do the same?

As most critics have commented, many of the female characters start out by embodying the traditional gender ideals of fantasy, in the true nature of chivalry and romance. Later, however, these ideals shatter and the girls and women of the novels evolve into fully realized and comprehensive characters. None of these commentators have mentioned the fact that this is also true for the male characters. The boys and men of the series are also expected to uphold the masculine ideals of a medieval knight; a fierce and valiant warrior who always acts in the name of honor and his personal sense of duty. What was true for the women is also true for the men – as gender ideals are shattered, the male characters must also learn to evolve or perish in Martin's universe. A student at the University of Illinois at Chicago, Matthew Williamson, touches shortly on the subject in his research essay before continuing on to his main focus of femininity in the series. He argues that the male characters "*fall into two categories: those who conform to standard male masculinity, and those who are emasculated in some way. Those males who ascribe to the more*

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<sup>1</sup> Mark Buchanan, "A Song of Fantasy Traditions: How *A Song of Ice and Fire* Subverts Traditions of Women in Tolkienesque Fantasy" (Honors essay, University of British Columbia, 2014).

<sup>2</sup> Caroline Spector, "Power and Feminism in Westeros" in *Beyond the Wall: Exploring George R.R. Martin's A Song of Ice and Fire*, ed. James Lowder (Dallas: BenBella Books, 2012), 171.





*masculine side usually die for their hubris or folly*"<sup>3</sup>. Apparently, the only way to survive in Westeros is to reject a binary system of genders.

During the 1970s feminist movement, the literary world underwent a change as female authors began to focus on themes that had earlier been prohibited by social conventions. Feminist Revisionism, for example, was a symbolic gesture that flushed out all past opinions of a patriarchal society and through literature introduced a new age of equality between genders. Their work drew attention to various literary practices that were biased towards women in some way or another. Today a gender enlightened text involves creating female characters that are not only three-dimensional and complicated beings, but also women who are strong because they embrace their femininity in some way, rather than absorbing some traditionally male values that make the women stronger.

Much and more has been written about female gender enlightened literature. But what about male gender enlightenment? Considering all the struggles men face in society today, their social crises and issues, I find it hard to believe that contemporary Western society is still male-dominated (as feminist commentators and a majority of focus on feminism by the media would suggest). And I wonder if this shift in gender roles is not visible in recent fictional literature? Perhaps it is time for some "Masculine Revisionism"?

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<sup>3</sup> Matthew Williamson, "An Examination of Gender in Westeros" (University of Illinois at Chicago, June 2014), 1-2.



## 1.1 PROBLEM FORMULATION

Is George R.R Martin enlightened in regards to his male gender politics?

Throughout this analysis, I define gender enlightenment as the creation of characters that are both *complex* (three-dimensional characters that portray both positive and negative aspects of the human psyche), *dynamic* (personalities that evolve throughout the narrative) and *representative* in one way or another of aspects in contemporary society.

The following sub-questions allow me to answer my main question:

- Do Martin's male characters represent fairly the definition of masculinity in our postmodern society?
- Do Martin's male characters exhibit complexity defined by aspects of their personalities that are both positive and negative?
- Do Martin's male characters evolve throughout the narrative and exhibit true development?



## 2 METHODOLOGY

Primary literature in this project:

1. *A Game of Thrones* (1996)
2. *A Clash of Kings* (1998)
- 3.1 *A Storm of Swords: Steel and Snow* (2000)
- 3.2 *A Storm of Swords: Blood and Gold* (2000)
4. *A Feast for Crows* (2005)
- 5.1 *A Dance with Dragons: Dreams and Dust* (2011)
- 5.2 *A Dance with Dragons: After the Feast* (2011)

George R.R. Martin plans to publish at least another two volumes before the series is concluded<sup>4</sup>.

All references are in accordance with the Chicago Manual of Style. However, references to the primary literature (*A Song of Ice and Fire*, volumes 1-5) are different for simplicity's sake. Following a quote from one of Martin's books will be an in-text reference citing which volume it is from and page number. Therefore, "(1-234)" means page 234 in the 1<sup>st</sup> volume, *A Game of Thrones*. In the versions I own, publishers decided to divide volumes 3 and 5 into two parts each. A citation marked (3.1-234) will therefore refer to page 234 in *A Storm of Swords: Steel and Snow*.

Appendix 7.3 features a plot description of George R.R. Martin's *A Song of Ice and Fire* explaining major events to do with the characters mentioned in the project. It is voluntary reading meant to simplify the plot of this extensive series to someone unfamiliar with the characters and events taking place. By having a deeper understanding of the names and locations mentioned in this report, I hope the reader will feel enriched and be able to form an even more comprehensive understanding of my analysis. Similarly, the character gallery in appendix 7.2 is also meant as an aid for deeper understanding of the complicated plot.

While most of the commentary on George R.R. Martin's series can be described as popular literature, some of the main *academic* works I have researched are Mark Buchanan's honors essay from the University of British Columbia<sup>5</sup>, Rebecca Jones' research article for the Journal of Student Research from the University

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<sup>4</sup> Westeros, official fansite. "How Many Books Will There Be and What Are Their Names?" *The Song of Ice and Fire* Archive.

<sup>5</sup> Mark Buchanan, "A Song of Fantasy Traditions: How *A Song of Ice and Fire* Subverts Traditions of Women in Tolkienesque Fantasy" (Honors essay, University of British Columbia, 2014).



of Wisconsin<sup>6</sup> and the anthology *Beyond the Wall: Exploring George R.R. Martin's A Song of Ice and Fire*<sup>7</sup>. All three publications include research of Martin's gender politics by exclusively examining his portrayals of female characters.

My theoretical approach will focus on defining postmodern masculinity. This enables me to examine whether George R.R. Martin's portrayals of the male characters are representative of gender roles in contemporary society. In many aspects of social life men are challenged; when examining these relations further, the main part of my social analysis of male issues will be based on American society, due to George R.R. Martin's nationality as an American. The texts that have been my main source of research regarding gender and masculinity are Andrew Kimbrell's publication from 1995, *The Masculine Mystique*, in which he argues that masculinity faces a social, political, healthcare and identity crisis, and Anthony Synnott's publication from 2009, *Rethinking Men: Heroes, Villains and Victims*, in which he focuses on the same issues that Andrew Kimbrell did fourteen years earlier and reaches the conclusion that not much has improved for the state of men in America today.

For simplicity's sake, the bibliography has been divided into thematic sections: following references to the primary literature is the scholarship on George R.R. Martin's *A Song of Ice and Fire*, which forms the basis for my problem formulation because of its apparent gap in the gender debate concerning masculinity. Then there is the theoretical literature that is the foundation of both my definitions of postmodern masculinity and of my own conceived "masculine revisionism"; then follow the sources for the statistics on social conditions for men in America. Lastly are references to texts that have not been directly employed in the project – these are mainly genre-related texts to do with fantasy and romance, which have not been wholly relevant to the problem formulation of this project, but which have provided me with a valuable foundation of knowledge after a quite thorough research.

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<sup>6</sup> Rebecca Jones, "A Game of Genders: Comparing Depictions of Empowered Women between *A Game of Thrones* Novel and Television Series", *Journal of Student Research* at University of Wisconsin-River Falls (Volume 1, Issue 3, 2012), 14-21.

<sup>7</sup> Lowder, James, ed. *Beyond the Wall: Exploring George R.R. Martin's A Song of Ice and Fire* (Dallas: BenBella Books, 2012), 169-188.



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### 3 THEORY

In the problem formulation I defined gender enlightenment in a fictional text as, among other things, creating characters that represent aspects of society in one way or another – the characters must provide some form of connection to a past or present reality. In order to answer the main question in this thesis, whether George R.R. Martin is enlightened in regards to his male gender politics, it is therefore necessary to define the characteristics of masculinity in contemporary society. I start by describing the background and characteristics of hegemonic masculinity since it has had a significant influence on men's self-identification today.

#### 3.1 HEGEMONIC MASCULINITY

In today's postmodern society, there is a certain identity ideal that most men strive to uphold. This ideal is heavily influenced by the dominant role that men have held in society since the beginning of our known history. And because it has such ties to men's dominance (over women, over nature, over less civilized peoples) this ideal has come to be known in recent years as hegemonic masculinity. Hegemony is defined in the Oxford Dictionary as "*leadership or dominance, especially by one state or social group over others*"<sup>8</sup>. The days when men dominated every aspect of social life are gone; the feminist movement's lobbying for equality during the last century have made sure of that. The social oppression of women has been diminished extensively in postmodern societies, especially in the Northern hemisphere; however, the masculine ideal has not yet caught up with the social reality. Men are still expected to dominate every aspect of their lives (except for their women).

##### 3.1.1 BACKGROUND AND CHARACTERISTICS

In his publication, *The Masculine Mystique*, Andrew Kimbrell writes of how the hegemonic masculine ideal is intimately tied to the notion of success; success and competition, something that hails back to the Industrial Era and the age of emerging capitalism. Prior to the Industrial Revolution, a man (or woman) was born to a specific station in life and never thought to move up or down from there. The notion of raising oneself to a better position in life is a modern concept; it did not come into existence until the introduction of capitalism and industry. Peasants moved to the cities and for the first time competed against one another for work. They had to outperform one another if they wished to keep their jobs and support their families. Kimbrell calls it "*the enclosure of men*"<sup>9</sup>.

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<sup>8</sup> Oxford's Online Dictionary, "Hegemony". Accessed November 25, 2014.  
<http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/hegemony>

<sup>9</sup> Andrew Kimbrell, *The Masculine Mystique: The Politics of Masculinity* (New York: Ballantine Books, Random House, 1995), 38.

He argues that after the introduction of the Industrial Age men stopped being identified as individuals and began being defined as machines instead. Working hours increased drastically as rural farmers became industrial workers of mills, factories and mines and these men were expected to endure these prodigious labor hours without complaint – or they were likely to be replaced when there was no other work to be had<sup>10</sup>. Kimbrell quotes historian Sidney Pollard,

*“The worker who left his domestic workshop or peasant holding for the factory entered a new culture as well as a new sense of direction... [The] new economic order needed not men but rather ‘part-humans’: soulless, depersonalized, disembodied, who could become members, or little wheels rather, of a complex mechanism.”<sup>11</sup>*

Kimbrell continues, *“Finally subsumed into the industrial mode, men became the “robots” demanded by the industrial system. They became conditioned by the factory clock and the fear of the factory manager, and ended up being virtually absorbed into the rhythms and needs of the machines with which they worked”<sup>12</sup>.*

This notion of the mechanized man is an integral part of the postmodern, masculine identity. Men are not allowed to ‘break down’. It exhibits weakness, which is shameful for a man to admit. He is expected to be constantly running at maximum capacity and reach his goals with single-minded determination. Kimbrell writes, *“They have been forced into a bind, in which their lives and identity are judged on an efficiency basis, yet this very quality ensures dysfunctional relationships and an emotionally deprived existence”<sup>13</sup>.* Men are taught to ignore illness and injury; there is especially shame connected to the issue of impotence, since it is the very symbol of a man’s masculinity, his manhood, which is not functioning properly. The very phrase ‘sexual dysfunction’ has a distinct mechanical ring to it. Kimbrell notes, *“[The] masculine mystique demands that men be able to perform their sexual role in a machine-like fashion. So-called impotence stigmatizes man as a failure”<sup>14</sup>.*

A ‘real man’ is therefore successful in his career. He enjoys competing for a better position at work and he relishes winning even more. He is always striving to do better, to climb upwards in the hierarchy, to earn more money so he can buy a bigger house, another car. He has a personality that is powerful and charismatic enough to do better than his coworkers and yet, even after reaching the very top, he will never be satisfied with the status quo but ever strive to rise even further. As Anthony Synnott writes in his *Rethinking Men: Heroes, Villains and Victims* (2009), *“Men have to compete to prove their masculinity and their worth, or risk being categorized as unmasculine, and they have to be successful, winners, number one,*

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 53.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 52.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 55.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 65.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 213.

*in at least some particular domain, and in their own eyes*<sup>15</sup>. This is how capitalism impacted male identity in today's society; it has become second nature for modern men to act in the name of self-interest. It has become synonymous with masculinity for a man to have the need to rise ever higher in the ranks of his career while ignoring the 'softer', 'female' emotions of his nature like compassion, pity and patience.

Synnott speaks of how America is unique in the way the states expanded west during the 18-19<sup>th</sup> centuries. The creation of a new world in the west, a new *life*, facilitated rapid social mobility and it became the model of masculinity to work one's way up the social ladder to the top. Synnott calls it "*The Self-made Man*" – one who "*made it from rags to riches*"<sup>16</sup>. It was very different from the European traditions of class hierarchy and inheritance, which were the relics of feudalism.

Synnott writes that emerging capitalism is not the only experience from the past that has influenced contemporary hegemonic masculinity. This ideal also has historic ties to chivalry – the knight and warrior ideal dating back to the Homeric heroes of ancient Greek history and probably further<sup>17</sup>. The knightly tales of the eleventh and twelfth centuries have not only been stories of war, but have always included the internal struggles of warriors as well. King Beowulf, from the saga written around 800 AD, was a warrior but "*no killer*"<sup>18</sup>. Chaucer's portrait of the knight in *The Canterbury Tales* (1386) describes a warrior "*as meek as is a maid [...] a verray, parfit gentil knyght*"<sup>19</sup>. The chivalrous knight of wartime became the perfect gentleman in peacetime; courteous, gentle and patient. In contemporary Western society, where war is no longer a natural part of life, the warzone has moved from the battlefield to the corporate office, to a world of business mergers, departmental alliances and hostile takeovers. And the gentleman of the past can be translated into the modern day family man. At the end of the day, he leaves the warlike career race behind and comes home to a wife and children. Therefore, a 'real man' is not only successful in the business world, but within his family as well. He not only has the means to support spouse and children, but also the time to be present and witness every one of his children's experiences. He is a supportive, loving and romantic husband who is more than apt at satisfying his wife sexually. He is happy to make repairs and improvements around the house thanks to his identification as a machine-man<sup>20</sup>, and even though he is a non-violent person he is willing and able to protect his family from danger, should the need arise. These are the ideals of the postmodern gentleman and chivalrous knight – the ideal of hegemonic masculinity.

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<sup>15</sup> Anthony Synnott, *Rethinking Men: Heroes, Villains and Victims* (Surrey: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2009), 14.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 28.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 16.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 18.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.

<sup>20</sup> Andrew Kimbrell, *The Masculine Mystique: The Politics of Masculinity* (New York: Ballantine Books, Random House, 1995), 62.



## 3.2 CONTEMPORARY MASCULINITY

### 3.2.1 MEN IN CRISIS

It seems clear that no man would be able to live up to this ideal of hegemonic masculinity. The demand alone to be equally successful in both career and family has already proven impossible to meet for most people (men *and* women). In order to be successful in the professional job market (and by successful is meant reaching the very heights of one's career, going as far as it can possibly take you) it is necessary to forego or neglect other spheres of life, like a family. Furthermore, the ideal of every man being a winner in a professional context defies the laws of logic. Trailing in the wake of a single winner will be a handful of losers; those coworkers who did *not* receive that promotion, that raise, that relocation. Therefore, hegemonic masculinity is only one form of masculinity, surrounded by other subordinate forms – and it is one that is impossible to live up to.

The continued struggle for equal rights for women is still highly visible in the media and the gender debate today. The debate focuses especially on equal wages for women in the job market<sup>21</sup> and the discrepant relationship between men and women in elite power positions<sup>22</sup>. However, these debates neglect to mention that men not only inhabit the majority of top positions but are also the main inhabitants of the bottom rungs of society – the homeless, the dispossessed, the sick and the traumatized.

In today's society there are a range of different social issues that target men who have failed in one way or another to uphold the hegemonic, masculine ideal. Their continued struggle to meet the demands upon their male gender is having a detrimental effect on their own wellbeing. And despite the fact that Andrew Kimbrell's book, *The Masculine Mystique*, was published two decades ago in 1995, the social issues that he describes<sup>23</sup> are still highly relevant today and are revisited by Anthony Synnott in 2009<sup>24</sup>. They portray other, subordinate masculinities where men have failed in one way or another to meet the demands made of them by social ideals and are now suffering the consequences.

The ideal from the industrial age of being a machine-man, one who never succumbs to the pressure, is the source of many of the different issues that men face today. Men's work hours have seen dramatic changes since the arrival of capitalism and although the average work week today has been greatly reduced

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<sup>21</sup> The White House Administration, "Equal Pay: Understanding the Basics". Accessed December 20, 2014. <http://www.whitehouse.gov/issues/equal-pay>

<sup>22</sup> Deloitte Global Center for Corporate Governance. "United States", *Women in the Boardroom: A Global Perspective* (Deloitte, third edition, March 2013), 12.

<sup>23</sup> Andrew Kimbrell, "Facing the Facts", in *The Masculine Mystique: The Politics of Masculinity* (New York: Ballantine Books, Random House, 1995), 3-13.

<sup>24</sup> Anthony Synnott, "Chapter 5: Victims: The Wars Against Men", in *Rethinking Men: Heroes, Villains and Victims* (Surrey: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2009), 159-200.

compared to during the Industrial Revolution<sup>25</sup>, the principle behind these work hours has endured: that men must work and continue to work until they are unable to work any more – otherwise they are not ‘real men’. Having one’s entire identity as a man dependent on one’s work has clear damaging effects on the male psyche and physical wellbeing. Men suffer at a much greater rate than women from fatal diseases, work accidents, homelessness, substance abuse, homicides and fatal assault cases, and suicides (for a more detailed description of the statistics supporting this observation, see appendix 7.1 “Statistical Data on Social Crises”).

These issues draw attention to different aspects of postmodern masculinity that have been influenced by the hegemonic ideal. For example, the fact that men suffer from heart attacks, cancer and chronic lung disease at a far worse rate than women is partly caused by men’s unlikelihood to see a doctor, which is indicative of their unwillingness to admit to any sort of physical ‘malfunction’ and weakness<sup>26</sup>. The fact that men fall victim to the vast majority of work accidents and that women are barred from active combat duty in the military (to the malcontent of female soldiers) are indicative of an inherent attitude that women are the frailer sex, which need to be protected; that men are expected to sacrifice their own health for the sake of protecting women. An American study in 2011 interviewed men whose employment was terminated during the global recession that started in America in 2007: “*Some became emotional while talking, even weeping. Many referred to feelings of worthlessness or a loss of dignity after losing their jobs. Depression was common*”<sup>27</sup>. And yet, despite the clear disillusionment following sudden unemployment for many men, depression as a mental illness has primarily been associated with women, who are diagnosed twice as frequently as men<sup>28</sup>. The cold statistics of men’s lives in contemporary society are a clear indication of the struggles they face; and yet most men are still unwilling to accept or admit that there is even a problem, which makes improvement of these matters difficult.

### 3.2.2 THE DEATH OF CHIVALRY

Based on the assessments conveyed by Andrew Kimbrell and Anthony Synott, I would argue that the understanding and supportive family man is connected to the chivalric ideal of the gentleman and embodies one of the aspects of the masculine ideal that a man must try to uphold. However, among men in today’s society it is usually shameful for a man to show emotion, since it signifies weakness and a level of emasculation that is uncomfortable for many men to experience. The traditional meaning of honor was

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<sup>25</sup> Joseph Zeisel, “The Workweek in American Industry 1850-1956”, in *Monthly Labor Review* (Vol. 81, No. 1, January 1958), 23. Accessed December 1, 2014.

[http://groups.csail.mit.edu/mac/users/rauch/worktime/hours\\_workweek.html](http://groups.csail.mit.edu/mac/users/rauch/worktime/hours_workweek.html)

<sup>26</sup> Anthony Synnott, *Rethinking Men: Heroes, Villains and Victims* (Surrey: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2009), 216.

<sup>27</sup> Stephanie Pappas, “‘Mancession’ Shifts Gender Roles” *Live Science*. Accessed November 25, 2014.

<http://www.livescience.com/15695-mancession-recession-shifts-gender-roles.html>

<sup>28</sup> Andrew Kimbrell, *The Masculine Mystique: The Politics of Masculinity* (New York: Ballantine Books, Random House, 1995), 6.

that a man's word was trustworthy and that a shake of his hand was sufficient for him to keep a promise. Capitalism and the valorization of personal ambition in an aggressive business world put an end to that kind of faith in another person – today a man willing to trust someone without some kind of assurance that they will remain honest (eg. a signed contract) is seen rather like a naïve and gullible fool. Synnott argues that the *“ideal of the gentleman is dead or dying. The concept of honour as a prime male value, and duty, might almost be defined as the value of a sucker or loser today. Is a man's word his bond? Is a handshake enough to seal a deal or a bet?”*<sup>29</sup> In George R.R. Martin's *A Song of Ice and Fire*, this decline of the chivalric ideal is embodied in the character of Eddard Stark whose identity is intimately connected to traditional values of honor and honesty. In the emerging society of capitalist ideals, Ned Stark struggles to concede to these new societal norms.

Chivalry in our postmodern world has come to signify a belief that women and children must be protected above all. Implicit is therefore the idea that that makes them more valuable than men. Men are expected to protect women and children – with no protection for themselves<sup>30</sup>. Wars, homicides, suicides all have a majority of male deaths and yet, as Synnott argues, at a legislative level the United States only has a 'Violence against Women Act'. No 'Violence against Men Act' exists, which indicates that the so-called oppressive patriarchy in which we have lived for many years is *“indeed protective rather than oppressive of women – and, by omission, oppressive of men”*<sup>31</sup>. Chivalrous ideals of self-sacrifice and bravery have therefore transformed into a postmodern male sexism that expects men to not only protect women and children, but also *“to work hard and to provide for their families; to do their duty to defend their countries and, if necessary, to die for their countries [...] This male ethic of self-sacrifice, altruism and bravery is a bedrock of male identity”*<sup>32</sup>.

### 3.2.3 REVALORIZATION OF MASCULINITY

In his *Rethinking Men*, Synnott describes the six largest and most influential men's movements that have come into existence since the feminist wave in the 1970s. And he argues that a central issue with all six of them is that they have so far been unable to cooperate in favor of men's position in today's society. Each organization has its own perspective on the male gender in contemporary America – and none of them agree on what the central issues are<sup>33</sup>. The objective of the modern gay rights movement is to eliminate the doctrine of shame connected to homosexuality and aspire towards equal legislation for openly homosexual individuals. The National Organization of Men against Sexism (NOMAS) was founded in 1975 and has

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<sup>29</sup> Anthony Synnott, *Rethinking Men: Heroes, Villains and Victims* (Surrey: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2009), 28.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 175.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 193.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 253.

distinct feminine viewpoints. Members work against traditional masculinity and misogyny and aim to improve women's rights. The National Coalition of Free Men (NCFM), founded in 1977, aims to improve men's rights and work against the advance of misandry. So while NOMAS' focus is on the wrongs done *by* men, NCFM focuses on the wrongs done *to* men. The Promise Keepers (Christian movement founded 1990) and the Nation of Islam (founded 1995) both advocate a spiritual and personal, rather than political, transformation in men's self-identification but their two different faiths "*are not known for their mutual cooperation and affection*"<sup>34</sup> as Synnott puts it. Lastly the mythopoetic movement founded in 1990 seeks "*to connect head and heart, to turn men from a material life to an interior life*"<sup>35</sup>. Thus it rather looks inward and "*does not address systemic discrimination against one sex or the other [...] nor a hypothesized spiritual crisis [...] but rather a positive sense of a masculine self*"<sup>36</sup>. The men's movements are simply too fragmented and contradictory in their goals to have any real political impact. There is no single national organization to combine their efforts and determine a single common incentive, which they can all cooperate on achieving, such as is the case with the National Organization of Women.

Ideals, ambitions and opinions shift throughout history in response to prevailing social and cultural customs. So it is with gender and the notion of masculine heroism. In his 2005 publication, *From Chivalry to Terrorism: War and the Changing Nature of Masculinity*, Leo Braudy writes that in our contemporary society, the clever but physically weak man is more likely to succeed in his career than the uneducated but physically strong man. How does that affect our perception of heroism?<sup>37</sup> Military heroism is still admired in America today. Anthony Synnott describes how a poll in 2007 showed that Americans still consider military experience the most desirable attribute in a president. And he quotes *101 World Heroes* (2007), which argues that "*[we] live in an unheroic age, and an unheroic age has a desperate need for heroism*"<sup>38</sup>. Why has our world become so lacking of the individual hero who rises above the rest? Synnott will argue that past events involving various wars, dictators and tyrannies have taught us that a single individual with too much power is likely to be corrupted by it. We shy away from anyone who risks being corrupted by elitism and violence<sup>39</sup>. Additionally, in order to live up to the hegemonic ideal of masculinity, all men are expected in some fashion to be heroes today, which results in many falling short somehow. The male characters in George R.R. Martin's *A Song of Ice and Fire* support this assessment of Anthony Synnott's, since they cannot

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 254.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 253.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 254.

<sup>37</sup> Leo Braudy, *From Chivalry to Terrorism: War and the Changing Nature of Masculinity* (New York: Vintage Books, Random House, 2005), XIII.

<sup>38</sup> Anthony Synnott, *Rethinking Men: Heroes, Villains and Victims* (Surrey: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2009), 89-90.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 94.

be regarded as true heroes – each and every one of them also possesses aspects of darkness and villainy in addition to courageous heroism.

Andrew Kimbrell argues that in recent years many men have been feeling confused and powerless due to shifting gender roles and the social issues mentioned earlier. In these environs the media has attempted to recapture and portray an excessive and almost caricatured masculinity that might resonate with the average male. As Kimbrell writes, *“The media managers search for resonances to the Wild West, working-class America, and mechanized war in order to convince men that power is their destiny and purpose”*<sup>40</sup>. He argues that,

*“The dominating, controlling, and manipulative power exercised by CEOs and corporations is the favored form of power in our society. The exercise of such power is what our society teaches men to strive for and women to admire. We are told that “power is an aphrodisiac” and that the gaining of power is the crowning accomplishment, the ultimate achievement, of masculinity. The power to dominate, exploit, and control is the final prize for the machine, competition, and profit man. It is the ticket to manhood, freedom, and respect”*<sup>41</sup>.

The power associated with hegemonic masculinity is therefore that which dominates and controls others. It is a negative, Machiavellian form of power that tends to corrupt its subjects and benefits no one but the power-holder himself. As Anthony Synnott argues, however, *“Paradoxically, negative connotations also attach to the lack of power: powerlessness is not a goal, nor is impotence”*<sup>42</sup>. Some of the characters in George R.R. Martin’s series (Littlefinger, especially) are heavily influenced by Machiavelli’s power doctrine, which has no basis in ethics whatsoever, but is solely an attempt to *“scientifically [analyze] how a ruler could gain and maintain power by the most efficacious means”*<sup>43</sup>.

It is important to draw attention to the fact that the Industrial Revolution changed people’s perspectives on the values that comprised the masculine ideal. Former values like honor, duty and honesty lost their worth in this new world of business. A man’s word was no longer to be trusted without an additional assurance of some kind. These traits were replaced by success, self-interest and personal ambition, which became the new driving force for most men. The rest of the older values persisted and kept their position in the masculine ideal, such as dominance, autonomy, control, bravery, self-sacrifice and emotional invulnerability. Some of the new values clashed with the old, such as the natural conflict between self-

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<sup>40</sup> Andrew Kimbrell, *The Masculine Mystique: The Politics of Masculinity* (New York: Ballantine Books, Random House, 1995), 127.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 115.

<sup>42</sup> Anthony Synnott, *Rethinking Men: Heroes, Villains and Victims* (Surrey: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2009), 205.

<sup>43</sup> Andrew Kimbrell, *The Masculine Mystique: The Politics of Masculinity* (New York: Ballantine Books, Random House, 1995), 118.

sacrifice and self-interest. Women and children have always been to be protected and yet self-interest promotes putting yourself first. This signifies that hegemonic masculinity is not one, but multiple different masculinities in order to include all the characteristics that we find worthy in a man.

### 3.3 “MASCULINE REVISIONISM”

#### 3.3.1 FEMINIST REVISIONISM

During the 1970s feminist movement, female literary scholars began to challenge certain gender stereotypes found in myths and fairytales. This practice came to be known as Feminist Revisionism, in which female authors rewrote and revised old stories and fairy tales freely until they no longer expressed principles based on a society dominated by men. They criticized familiar customs and literary conventions that were in various ways inadequate to fully portray or express the experiences of women. As Alicia Ostriker wrote in 1982, “[...] *the language we speak and write has been an encoding of male privilege*”<sup>44</sup> and the dominance of men over women extended into the world of discourse and literature until it became a so-called “*male hegemony over language*”<sup>45</sup>. Breaking down these literary traditions revealed associated social tendencies and created the possibility of facilitating cultural and social change.

Literary conventions include, for example, oversimplification and the use of stereotypes that created two-dimensional and predictable female characters – in old myths and fairytales the female is very often either an innocent damsel in distress or a lethal temptress. Many male authors tended to write from a ‘male gaze’ perspective (known from feminist film studies), inadvertently making the female more passive than the male and objectified as a sexual being rather than an emotional one. And strong women in literature often became empowered only by absorbing characteristics that were seen as traditionally male, like a sense of ambition, the ability to think logically and emotional detachment. A female gender enlightened text in today’s society often involves women gaining confidence and strength by embracing their own sexuality and sense of feminine self, thereby not relying on or absorbing traits associated with masculinity.

#### 3.3.2 “MASCULINE REVISIONISM”

Feminist Revisionism occurred as a response to the oppressed role of women in western society in the 1970s. In today’s society, feminism is still the focus of many productions of media, entertainment, political debates and literature. George R.R. Martin himself has commented,

*“To me being a feminist is about treating men and women the same. I regard men and women as all human – yes there are differences, but many of those differences are created by*

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<sup>44</sup> Alicia Ostriker, “The Thieves of Language: Women Poets and Revisionist Mythmaking”, in *Signs* (University of Chicago Press: Vol. 8, No. 1, autumn 1982), 69.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*

*the culture that we live in, whether it's the medieval culture of Westeros, or 21<sup>st</sup> century western culture*<sup>46</sup>.

Although Martin is expressing views on gender equality, he calls it being a 'feminist', which automatically centers the discussion on the female gender and the feminine perspective. This example signifies how for George R.R. Martin human experience (which in the 1970s was criticized for encompassing all things male) may now increasingly come to encompass all things *female* instead and this practice is now visible in Martin's very phrasing when he speaks. And though it has not been the focus of this project to examine this aspect, I suspect many others of expressing themselves with a similar phrasing – and being unaware of this development in their own language patterns. Anthony Synnott comments that “[*masculinity*] has been largely invisible in the social sciences until recently”<sup>47</sup>, referring to a lack of legislation and healthcare that is focused solely on men and the negative discrepancy against men in the many social issues mentioned earlier in this chapter. Women used to be the ones ignored in many aspects of life – now men are the ones to be inherently ignored.

When contemplating the possible bias against male characters in contemporary literature, I have conceived of certain criteria that help to identify the exact manner in which this bias may have manifested itself within the text. Pointing out possible bias in literature ultimately helps to reveal underlying social issues; revealing social issues is the first step toward facilitating social improvement. The following criteria are necessary for the analysis because the issues faced by men and women in real life are different. While a serious issue for women has been to be sexualized through the 'male gaze' (in fiction as well as reality), men are more likely to be victimized by violence and death in real life. Therefore, the literary analysis must reflect that fact:

- Victimization: Considering the many aspects of social life in which men are the losers today, are the majority of victims of death, violence, alcoholism, depression, and general feelings of powerlessness (etc.) male or female in the series? If male, is it perceived as a natural part of life, an ingrained expectation in all the characters, that it simply *should* be the men who suffer most?

As described earlier in this chapter, men perform the vast majority of dangerous occupations, falling victim to wars and work accidents. This, combined with their lower life expectancy and higher suicide rates, signifies a considerable level of marginalization of men in contemporary society. This treatment as the disposable sex and the gospel of misandry among radical feminists has helped to create a very negative portrayal of men and masculinity throughout the last fifty years:

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<sup>46</sup> Jessica Salter, "Game of Thrones's George RR Martin: 'I'm a feminist at heart'", in *The Telegraph (UK)*, April 1, 2013. Accessed October 15, 2014.

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/women/womens-life/9959063/Game-of-Throness-George-RR-Martin-Im-a-feminist.html>

<sup>47</sup> Anthony Synnott, *Rethinking Men: Heroes, Villains and Victims* (Surrey: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2009), 14.



- Negative Portrayals: Considering the level of marginalization and misandry that has occurred since the 1960s and 70s, are the majority of male characters in the series portrayed in mainly negative or positive terms? For example, do they exhibit any of the traits believed by misandrists to be an unavoidable part of a man's nature (like aggression, emotional detachment and cruelty)?

In the past, women have been subject to a degrading level of simplification in literature to such an extent as to be reduced to a generalized set of stereotypes that became the acknowledged standard for female characters. To always be viewed from a sexual perspective has been a common factor for women in fiction; so has the level of passivity to which they have been ascribed. However, while women have been stereotyped as passive objects of a sexual gaze, so have men been stereotyped as active performers of this gazing. Generalization is therefore just as notable an issue for men, which calls for the last point of analysis:

- Oversimplification: To what extent are the male characters in the series portrayed in stereotypical and oversimplified ways? For example regarding sexuality: are they mostly driven by their own sexuality, brought low because of it or corrupted by it?

George R.R. Martin has commented, "*The pitfalls of lots of other fantasy texts is when writers stray into writing in stereotypes. Male or female, I believe in painting in shades of grey. All of the characters should be flawed; they all have good and bad, because that's what I see. Yes, it's fantasy, but the characters still need to be real*"<sup>48</sup>. It remains to be seen if Martin succeeds in painting shades of grey in all aspects of his series. In the following analysis, I will therefore be examining whether Martin has aspects in his series that are in some way biased against the male characters, a bias that stems from a preconceived notion of how men and masculinity are defined.

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<sup>48</sup> Jessica Salter, "Game of Thrones's George RR Martin: 'I'm a feminist at heart'", in *The Telegraph (UK)*, April 1, 2013. Accessed October 15, 2014. <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/women/womens-life/9959063/Game-of-Throness-George-RR-Martin-Im-a-feminist.html>



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## 4 ANALYSIS

The primary analysis focuses on two of the main male characters of *A Song of Ice and Fire*, Eddard Stark and Jaime Lannister. Eddard Stark was chosen because he is the supreme main character of the first volume, *A Game of Thrones*, with the vast majority of chapters pertaining to him. Jaime Lannister was chosen because even at a glance he displays a deep level of complexity – and an aspect of postmodernity, which suggests that he is highly relevant for the problem formulation in this project. It is the aim of these two analyses to examine to what extent the characters portray facets of contemporary masculinity as it has been defined in the previous chapter, and to determine the level of complexity and development demonstrated by them. Are the main forces that drive these two men inspired by postmodern ideas?

Section 4.2 of the analysis examines the series from the perspective of my own conceived “Masculine Revisionism”, which is inspired by its feminine counterpart – however, the questions asked are based on the characteristics of contemporary masculinity defined earlier in this project rather than the societal conditions existing when Feminist Revisionism first appeared in the 1970s.

### 4.1 CHARACTERIZATION OF MAIN MALE CHARACTERS

#### 4.1.1 EDDARD STARK – TRADITION

Andrew Kimbrell has argued that a conversion took place in people’s perspective of the ideal man when society transformed from a mainly agriculturally based form to an industrial one<sup>49</sup>. Traditional values like honor, honesty and duty were replaced by the need for success, self-interest, ambition and the pursuit of power. Eddard ‘Ned’ Stark, Lord of Winterfell and Warden of the North, is the very embodiment of the traditional values that were fundamentally male during the pre-Industrial Age; values that were praised as the ideal of masculinity. He is a firm believer of the strict class system of feudalism, believing that there are fundamental differences in people from different levels of the social hierarchy. Smallfolk and peasants of the realm do not have ideals of honor and duty imposed on them, their lot is simply to survive; these ideals are a burden limited to the nobility. Because of the culture in which Ned has been brought up, he has therefore imposed upon himself a strong social pressure to live up to the ideal that he feels is expected of him – that of a strong and honorable lord, a powerful, dutiful and self-assured man.

Ned believes above all in the value of honor. It is the epitome of the masculine ideal, his version of the hegemonic male, and therefore in Ned’s mind all the valuable characteristics of a man’s identity are connected to honor. Being honest, dutiful, just and a protector of the weak are all honorable traits, which means that honor lies at the very core of a man’s being. A man without honor is nothing. This is one of the

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<sup>49</sup> Andrew Kimbrell, *The Masculine Mystique: The Politics of Masculinity* (New York: Ballantine Books, Random House, 1995), 38.



very first things brought to our attention when we encounter Ned. After removing the head of a deserter he tells his son, Bran, that an oathbreaker is the most dangerous man imaginable, "*The deserter knows his life is forfeit if he is taken, so he will not flinch from any crime, no matter how vile*" (1-14). Losing one's honor is near irreversible from Ned's viewpoint and even the slightest contact with someone dishonorable will make him feel tainted, "*Ned would have welcomed [the rain]. It might have made him feel a trifle less unclean*" (1-344). He feels the utmost contempt for men like Jaime Lannister and Petyr 'Littlefinger' Baelish who have both acted in ways that fail to live up to Ned's honor ideal. The taint of dishonor cannot be erased from a man's being once it has taken root there. Any male characters that Ned encounters are instantly judged on whether they uphold his ideals of an honorable man or not. Those who fail to live up to his standards are free to be met with contempt and disgust. Therefore, Eddard Stark encourages the strict standards of hegemonic masculinity that are demanded by the society to which he belongs.

Honesty is another fundamental value of a man's identity, according to Ned. An innocent white lie to spare his daughter Sansa's feelings does not come easily to him and "*the words were raw in his throat*" (1-304). As Robert lies dying after being gutted by a wild boar, Ned has a chance to ease Robert's mind and vow to protect his children – the children that are not Robert's by blood – and even then he is incapable of saying anything untruthful, "*The words twisted in Ned's belly like a knife. For a moment, he was at a loss. He could not bring himself to lie*" (1-489). The phrasing signifies that it is physically painful for Ned to tell a lie, no matter the situation.

His rigid belief in honesty does him no favors in King's Landing. Court is a place of intrigue, manipulation and deceit, and Ned is like a fish out of water. As he thinks to himself at his first council meeting, "*He had no patience with this game they played, this dueling with words*" (1-186). The capitol symbolizes a society whose traditional customs of feudalism have gradually been replaced by an emerging capitalism. The old values of inheritance, chivalry and social hierarchy have no place here. This development has been supported by Andrew Kimbrell's description of how society evolved during the Industrial Revolution<sup>50</sup>.

Ned Stark is unaware of this societal transition. He is careless with his information, letting people near and far learn of his troubles with Robert and other members of the king's council. He does not realize that in this environment, information is power. And power in King's Landing can be dangerous in the wrong hands. To Ned, power is not something an honorable man will pursue for his own sake but only to further the wellbeing of others, especially his own family. When Robert Baratheon bestows on him the honor of becoming Hand of the King, the second-most powerful man in the Seven Kingdoms, it is the last thing Ned wants, because it necessitates him to leave his home behind to journey south, splitting his family in half in

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<sup>50</sup> Andrew Kimbrell, "Chapter 3: The Enclosure of Men", in *The Masculine Mystique: The Politics of Masculinity* (New York: Ballantine Books, Random House, 1995), 28-44.

the process. The reason he decides to accept Robert's appointment is entirely honorable – the power from being Hand of the King enables him to investigate the murder of his mentor, Jon Arryn, and to protect his family and life-long friend, Robert. His reasoning is based entirely on honorable ideals: protecting the weak, finding truth and bringing dishonorable men to justice.

What Ned does not realize is that his notion of power is outdated – capitalism has entered the capitol and the people of King's Landing are ruled by a modern form of Machiavellian power, one driven by self-interest and ambition. Due to his own standards of honor and honesty Ned is naturally trusting of the people around him, but as he comes to realize too late his views are outdated and result in his downfall. As Anthony Synnott has argued, trust in other people has come to mean naivety and gullibility<sup>51</sup>. While the grasping form of power for power's sake is the life's blood for a man like Littlefinger, it is incomprehensible to Ned who feels nothing but contempt for these modern values. He regards them as the lowest form of dishonor, since they fall short of his traditional masculine ideal and he refuses to make use of them.

Ned's views on honor and power are not the only ideals of his that are outdated. Ned is a product of his upbringing and even though he does not mean to, he is quite gender biased. In his world, men are courageous warriors living up to the chivalric ideal of romance and women are courteous and gentle ladies who live to support their fathers and husbands. Women are the frailer sex to be cherished, while men must sacrifice their own health for the sake of their protection. In practice, this ideal manifests itself as dominance and oppression over the females in Ned's life. Early in the first novel it is clear that Ned holds his children to different standards based on their gender: "*Ned frowned. "He must learn to face his fears. He will not be three forever. And winter is coming"* (1-21). He is speaking of his youngest son, Rickon, who is just three years old and whom Ned is already expecting to start acting bravely, like the man he must grow into. In contrast, at the mention of Sansa marrying Prince Joffrey Ned is appalled at the idea, "*Gods, Catelyn, Sansa is only eleven*" (1-56). Ned expects his boys to grow into men sooner rather than later, while his girls are welcome to stay young and innocent for much longer.

Ned valorizes the hegemonic, masculine ideal of strong, capable warrior-types – skilled in battle, yet honorable above all. During a controversy between him and Robert in a council meeting, Ned reminds Robert of the words he uttered years ago when he pardoned Ser Barristan Selmy, "*I will not kill a man for loyalty, nor for fighting well*" (1-341). Not only is he saying that a loyal man is an honorable one, but also that an enemy with fighting skill can be trustworthy and worth pardoning. It was the raw, physical strength of his combat that saved Ser Barristan's life, which shows the value that men like Ned and Robert lend to a

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<sup>51</sup> Anthony Synnott, *Rethinking Men: Heroes, Villains and Victims* (Surrey: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2009), 28.

man's strength and battle prowess. The same valorization of strength is witnessed in the many instances, where Ned does not wish to appear weak in front of his men and especially the Lannisters.

When Catelyn Stark decides to seize Tyrion Lannister for his supposed crimes against her son, drama ensues. Jaime Lannister's honor and pride are slighted when his brother is captured and he seeks out Ned for revenge. Ned acts as the honorable man and places the blame on his own shoulders, telling Jaime that "[your] brother has been taken at my command, to answer for his crimes" (1-370), when in fact he had no idea what Catelyn did until after the fact. But in order to protect the weaker female, Ned removes her completely from the equation and acts as if her decision was really his command all along. His action is at once both protective and undermining as he hides her influence from the decisions made. While the 'protection' of women in postmodern society may have come to mean oppression of men, as Anthony Synnott suggests when writing about the role of men's self-sacrifice today, that is clearly not the case with Ned. Ned is the embodiment of tradition and as such his actions towards women really are oppressive as well as protective.

The relationship between Ned and his wife, Catelyn, is patriarchal in nature. Lord Eddard is the logical and practical man who soothes his wife's womanly fears. After Catelyn has journeyed to King's Landing to warn Ned of their son Bran's attempted murder, Ned authoritatively gives her commands on how to act upon her return to Winterfell,

*"When the door had closed behind him, Ned turned back to his wife. "Once you are home, send word to Helman Tallhart and Galbart Glover under my seal. They are to raise a hundred bowmen each and fortify Moat Cailin [...] And from this day on, I want a careful watch kept over Theon Greyjoy. If there is war, we shall have sore need of his father's fleet."*

*"War?" The fear was plain on Catelyn's face.*

*"It will not come to that," Ned promised her, praying it was true [...] He felt Catelyn tremble in his arms. Her scarred hands clung to him" (1-195/6).*

Catelyn responds with the classically female, emotional and impractical wish to see her daughters before leaving and Ned must deny her that wish due to the danger that only he sees the full extent of. Throughout the exchange Catelyn expresses the unfounded hopes of a woman, Ned the cool and practical authority of a man. Surprisingly, Catelyn only acts with such 'feminine' passivity when she and Ned are together. When on her own she shows true agency and authority. As she sails south to King's Landing to meet Ned, the crafty Captain Moreo tries to trick gold out of her but she handles him with cunning and perceptiveness – and yet as soon as she arrives: "[she] cried out when she saw him, ran to him, and embraced him fiercely [...] "I feared you'd never come, my lord," she whispered against his chest" (1-191). In an abrupt shift, Catelyn acts as a weak and frightened woman who yearns to be protected and Ned takes over her cunning and her perceptiveness in the following dialogue with Littlefinger. Ned is usually lacking at any skill of manipulation or intrigue, being very open and careless with his information; but during this dialogue it is

Catelyn who makes an error in judgment by trusting Littlefinger, while Ned is portrayed in a much more wary and cautious light,

*"I told Petyr our suspicions about Jon Arryn's death," Catelyn said. "He has promised to help you find the truth." That was not news that Eddard Stark welcomed..." (1-194).*

Ned acts with supreme authority when he is with Catelyn and her passive and submissive behavior only enhances the effect; she is equally as traditional in her gender ideals as he is, feeding his oppression of her just as much as he does. While the ingrained aspect of tradition in both Catelyn and Ned is clearly a deliberate design by George R.R. Martin, the same deliberation is less clear in regards to Catelyn's changing behavior. Her sudden shifts in conduct and attitude seem less thought out on Martin's part.

Ned's traditional view on gender is especially clear whenever he interacts with his daughter, Arya Stark. From an early age she objects to the traditional gender ideal of a romantic lady, preferring to play with swords rather than needles. She would rather be a knight than a lady, a fact that is completely incomprehensible to Ned,

*"Arya cocked her head to one side. "Can I be a king's councilor and build castles and become a High Septon?"*

*"You," Ned said, kissing her lightly on the brow, "will marry a king and rule his castle, and your sons will be knights and princes and lords and, yes, perhaps even a High Septon."*

*Arya screwed up her face. "No," she said, "that's Sansa" (1-248).*

She objects to his old-fashioned views and for some time Ned plays along with what he considers childish play. He hires a Braavosi master of swords to teach her how to fight, but never expects her to become skilled at it, *"Surely she would grow tired of this soon" (1-308)*. He greatly underestimates the power of her conviction that gender roles can be transformed. Tradition is so ingrained in his character that change of any sort in the world he knows is beyond his understanding.

Ned is so rigid in his belief system that he is completely inflexible and unforgiving. He is immovable as stone in his opinions and worldviews and once his mind is made up, it is near impossible to change. The stony certainty that Ned places in his honor, which enables him to set clear boundaries between right and wrong – that same certainty is found in the Stark crypts that *"continued on into darkness ahead of them, but beyond this point the tombs were empty and unsealed; black holes waiting for their dead, waiting for him and his children" (1-39)*. He knows exactly where he will end in death and he exhibits that certainty in every aspect of his living existence. The phrasing in many of Ned's chapters supports this image of him as stone, as immovable. Robert calls him a *"frozen-faced fool" (1-341)*, Ned gives Littlefinger *"a stony stare" (1-494)* and his *"voice was ice" (1-495)* after Littlefinger insults him with his less-than-honorable proposals. In the unlikely event that Ned does waver in his resolve, he does not let anyone know of the fact but keeps his doubts to himself. This is supported by Anthony Synnott and Andrew Kimbrell's shared assessment that

hegemonic men are unwilling to show weakness of any kind. Doubting oneself smacks of a lack of self-confidence, which is out of the question for a dominant and autonomous man like Ned.

Ned believes so strongly in honor that he will always act in its interest so long as it is only *his* life that is at risk; he is willing to give his life in order to uphold the ideal of honor. The only time he feels conflicted is when it is not his own life, but that of his family, that is at risk. After being betrayed by Littlefinger, Ned lingers in a dungeon cell and tells Varys that he will not recognize Joffrey as the rightful king, because his *“word would be as hollow as an empty suit of armor. My life is not so precious to me as that”*. Varys counters, *“And your daughter’s life, my lord? How precious is that?”* (1-613). Two usually harmonious values like honor and family are suddenly at conflict with one another, forcing him to choose between them. As much as he loathes dishonorable men, naturally he does not want anyone to think of him that way, so his inner struggles are connected to his pride as well.

He is the dominant and powerful focal point of his world in the North and rules his keep with autonomous control. As such, Ned is unwilling to show any form of weakness – especially to his enemies. In the North his authority is unrivaled and he sits firmly and comfortably in the role as Warden of the North and ruler of his household. However, this all changes when he journeys south to become Hand of the King. At the first council meeting, he *“[strides] into the council chambers, bone-tired and dressed in borrowed clothing”* (1-185). Here in King’s Landing it is clear from the start that Ned is out of his element. He *strides* with his usual authority, but he is at a disadvantage compared to the other council members. Later the weakening of his physical condition after Jaime Lannister’s vengeful attack is an additional symbol of the gradual decline of his authority,

*“Every eye in the hall was fixed on him, waiting. Slowly, Ned struggled to his feet, pushing himself up from the throne with the strength of his arms, his shattered leg screaming inside its cast. He did his best to ignore the pain; it was no moment to let them see his weakness”* (1-453).

Littlefinger says it clearly, *“Here in the south, they say you are all made of ice, and melt when you ride below the Neck”* (1-186). Ned’s authority and male dominance are characteristics that help him identify himself as a man – their decline once he travels south signifies the decline of his very masculinity, culminating in his execution when he proclaims himself a traitor, deliberately tarnishing his personal image and relinquishing his male pride in the name of protecting his family. To his surroundings it would seem that he discards all honor by declaring that Joffrey, a cruel bastard born of incest between the queen and her brother, is the rightful heir to the Iron Throne. This lie would be the final step to losing what shred of masculinity he has left. Paradoxically, however, his action is in truth the highest form of self-sacrifice as he knowingly sullies his own legacy with the brand of a traitor in order to protect the lives of his children. Thus he manages to act with the utmost degree of honor until the very last.

Ned is haunted by his past guilts. During Robert's Rebellion he was forced to kill three legendary knights, who had sworn to protect the Mad King, Aerys Targaryen. These knights of old were Ned's ideal incarnate. They were his heroes, their names legendary and celebrated across the Seven Kingdoms, and slaying them because they lived by the same honor code that he did has haunted him in nightmares and dark nostalgic flashbacks ever since. The faces of those he has slain "*burned clear, even now*" while the faces of his friends who rode by his side are merely "*grey wraiths*" (1-409) in his memory; this signifies that his guilt has taken precedence in his mind over the good that he wrought during that war. He dreams,

*"And now it begins," said Ser Arthur Dayne, the Sword of the Morning. He unsheathed Dawn and held it with both hands. The blade was pale as milkglass, alive with light.  
"No," Ned said with sadness in his voice. "Now it ends" (1-410).*

Ned's dream has a prophetic light to it, as if he is really saying that this is the end of chivalry, the end of honor, of masculinity and the world as he knows it. When Varys comes to see him in the dungeons after being betrayed, he comments that he has known very few truly honorable men in his life, "*When I see what honesty and honor have won you, I understand why*" (1-611). Ned is of a dying breed. It is clear that he is one of the few honorable men left in King's Landing (and as it turns out, the rest of George R.R. Martin's world) and his honor is no longer empowering, it is crippling. As Littlefinger points out, "*You wear your honor like a suit of armor, Stark. You think it keeps you safe, but all it does is weigh you down and make it hard for you to move*" (1-496).

In Ned's traditional world, titles are earned when a man acts honorably and valiantly to such an extent that it exceeds his current social status. When the council plans to grant a title of lordship to anyone who murders Daenerys Targaryen, "*Ned was disgusted. "So now we grant titles to assassins." Littlefinger shrugged. "Titles are cheap. The Faceless Men are expensive"* (1-347). Littlefinger's approach to the situation is practical. It speaks of an emerging capitalism that celebrates practicality and economy. It is more goal-oriented where the end justifies the means, to the utter disgust of honorable Ned Stark. He cannot accept that titles would be used as political pawns (the fact that women have been used as such through arranged marriage for centuries does not cross his mind, signifying how biased his upbringing has made him towards women). George R.R. Martin has incorporated into the very phrasing that the old world of titles and honors is diminishing. As Ned wakes up injured in the street after Jaime Lannister's attack, it says "*When he opened his eyes again, Lord Eddard Stark was alone with his dead*" (1-372). The use of Ned's title tied to the vulnerability of his position seems to emphasize that titles have no influence any longer. Feudalism and chivalry are dead and Ned, who is the embodiment of these ideals, struggles to exist within this new reality.

As we come to find, Ned has an outdated view of the world. He believes that honesty, honor, justice and duty are still the ideals worshipped by the realm's nobility. But as he gradually realizes, those old ideals





have died out in the south and been replaced by new ideals like ambition, personal success, gaining and retaining power, and being clever enough to trick and manipulate your enemies. His realization of the change that has happened in the society surrounding the royal court symbolizes the change that has taken place in the real world, described by Andrew Kimbrell in *The Masculine Mystique*, as we moved through the Industrial Age to a postmodern society<sup>52</sup>.

In the end, Ned's downfall is brought to pass because of his inability to conform to the new societal ideals. While he is busy archaically worrying about other warriors and their armies, he completely ignores the level of deception and manipulation that is going on in the capitol. Following the death of the king, he brings Robert's will and testament to the throne room as leverage and proof of his own authority and right to the throne; seconds later Cersei rips the will into pieces, saying "*Is this meant to be your shield, my lord? A piece of paper?*" (1-509). She shows clearly that contracts only have power if people lend power to them; otherwise they are simply worthless pieces of paper. Ned, with all his vows and words of honor and his honesty and sense of justice, is at a loss as she rips apart his honor as easily as she does paper. Ned's tragic development within the story symbolizes the end of the traditional values from a pre-Industrial Age in an emerging postmodern society driven by profit and personal success.

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<sup>52</sup> Andrew Kimbrell, *The Masculine Mystique: The Politics of Masculinity* (New York: Ballantine Books, Random House, 1995), 38.

#### 4.1.2 JAIME LANNISTER – EMASCULATION

In contrast to the rather simplistic and unchangeable tradition that is Eddard Stark, Ser Jaime Lannister experiences several transformations throughout the series that repeatedly reinvent his character and his masculinity. Therefore, while Ned is a completely stationary character without any form of evolvement, Jaime is a highly dynamic and complex personality who continuously evolves in response to the events unfolding around him. George R.R. Martin waited until the third instalment of his series, *A Storm of Swords* (2000), to provide Jaime with his own narrative point-of-view chapters. This choice deeply influences the reader's opinion of him in the first two books and results in a drastic reevaluation of his character once his own thoughts and perceptions are made known in the third book and onwards.

The events of the first two books, *A Game of Thrones* and *A Clash of Kings*, are mainly narrated from the viewpoints of the Stark family and especially Eddard Stark is notoriously hostile and distrustful of the entire Lannister family. Being introduced to Jaime Lannister from Ned's viewpoint therefore results in a highly negative portrayal of Jaime. As mentioned in the previous chapter, Ned is immovable in his animosity towards any man who lacks honor and in his opinion, Jaime is one of those men. His distaste of 'the Kingslayer' influences every mention of Jaime in the first book. King Robert says, "*Why should I mistrust him? He has done everything I have ever asked of him. His sword helped win the throne I sit on.*" His sword helped taint the throne you sit on, Ned thought" (1-109). Since the reader becomes intimately acquainted with Ned in the first book, sympathizes with his struggles and recognizes him for an honorable and honest man, his hostility towards Jaime seems justified and the reader naturally sides with him against Jaime.

In addition to Ned's enmity, Jaime performs some seemingly unjustifiable acts in the first book – he pushes young Bran Stark out of a tower window, aiming to kill him but permanently crippling him instead; and he orders the killing of all of Ned's guardsmen in the streets of King's Landing, just to teach Ned a lesson,

*"Still... we wouldn't want him to leave here entirely unchastened, so" –through the night and the rain, [Ned] glimpsed the white of Jaime's smile– "kill his men."*

*"No!" Ned Stark screamed, clawing for his sword. Jaime was already cantering off down the street..." (1-371).*

Jaime's cold smile and the fact that he does not take part in any of the fighting, but lets his men do it for him, reinforces the image of him as the coldhearted and detached villain. At the surface, Jaime seems to embody the ruthless, dominant and aggressive male, which according to Andrew Kimbrell is believed by many radical feminists to be the natural inclination of a man<sup>53</sup>. After Ned's death, his hostile opinion of Jaime is preserved in his wife Catelyn. She acts as an extension of Ned after his death, vocalizing his views so clearly that he might as well still be alive.

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<sup>53</sup> Andrew Kimbrell, *The Masculine Mystique: The Politics of Masculinity* (New York: Ballantine Books, Random House, 1995), 16.

Jaime seems to be the very embodiment of the hegemonic masculine ideal. His physical appearance is that of a tall, handsome and strong man *“with flashing green eyes and a smile that cut like a knife [...] This is what a king should look like, [Jon] thought to himself as the man passed”* (1-48). Like a proper man with a strong masculinity in evidence, Jaime has a temper and is easily provoked into aggression, for instance after his brother Tyrion has been captured by Catelyn Stark:

*“Your brother has been taken at my command, to answer for his crimes,” Ned Stark said. Littlefinger groaned in dismay. “My lords –” Ser Jaime ripped his longsword from its sheath and urged his stallion forward. “Show me your steel, Lord Eddard. I’ll butcher you like Aerys if I must, but I’d sooner you died with a blade in your hand”* (1-370).

Jaime and Ned are portrayed as two dominant males clashing in the streets to nurse their own feelings of slighted pride, while Littlefinger stands between, tries to mediate caution between these testosterone brutes and groans at their male stupidity, which solves nothing.

The warrior ideal of battle and victory is what Jaime Lannister lives for and he succeeds at it by being a brilliant fighter and army commander. Once the Starks and the Lannisters go into open conflict on the battlefield, Jaime is soon *“covering himself with glory”* (1-591) and this warrior-aspect of his character pervades many of his actions outside of combat as well. Whenever there is a threat of violence in the air is the time when Jaime feels most at ease, most in control of the situation, often acting with humor and mockery: *“Lannister raised his head. “Lady Stark,” he said from his knees. Blood ran down one cheek from a gash across his scalp, but the pale light of dawn had put the glint of gold back in his hair. “I would offer you my sword, but I seem to have mislaid it”* (1-676). The reason that he is able to act with such calm is that he is genuinely unafraid of dying – as long as it will happen while he has a sword in his hand. Jaime believes that dying in glorious combat would be the highest of honors, which makes him a reckless and fearsome warrior. Similarly to Ned Stark, Jaime encourages the demands of hegemonic masculinity upon men that they should be willing to sacrifice their own lives for the sake of honor, glory and the protection of the weak. In addition, the fact that Jaime is exceedingly comfortable with violence suggests the notion that it is a natural part of a man’s identity – that men have a natural affinity with violence, which seems a less deliberate idea to be expressed on George R.R. Martin’s part.

Growing up Jaime dreamed of becoming the kind of knight that others admired, one whose renown would go down in history after his accomplishments in battle. He is an active and energetic man and feels ill at ease at the royal court in King’s Landing, being much more comfortable on the road with his fellow soldiers. Similarly to Ned Stark, Jaime has no patience for the intrigue, manipulation and plays for power that are continuously happening around the royal court. In fact, he and Ned are similar on quite a few accounts, however unlikely they are to ever admit it. Jaime, too, has only disdain to offer men like Littlefinger who try

to avoid physical fighting by using whatever deceitful and vile means are possible in order to succeed in their goals. But Jaime differs from Ned in that he is aware of the level of deceit that exists around any position of power. Unlike Ned, he is not naïve but understands the new societal circumstances emerging where friends and foes alike are likely to stab you in the back for an edge in the political game. And while Jaime grew up with the same ideals as Ned's (of honor, honesty and the protection of the weak), as an adult he has come to realize that these ideals are rarely carried out by the realm's elite families and leaders. As an adult he has accepted what is also Anthony Synnott's conclusion: that one's masculinity has to be *proved* to others in order to exist at all and ruthlessness is preferable to 'soft', 'feminine' emotions that might call his manhood into question<sup>54</sup>.

In a rare moment of truth (helped along by a flagon of wine), Jaime expresses his disillusionment at the pressure imposed upon honorable men,

*"So many vows... They make you swear and swear. Defend the king. Obey the king. Keep his secrets. Do his bidding. Your life for his. But obey your father. Love your sister. Protect the innocent. Defend the weak. Respect the gods. Obey the laws. It's too much. No matter what you do, you're forsaking one vow or the other." He took a healthy swallow of wine and closed his eyes for an instant, leaning his head back against the patch of niter on the wall" (2-720).*

He acknowledges that the ideal he was taught to uphold as a boy is too big a challenge. It is impossible to satisfy everyone and impossibly wearying to try. Jaime is a knight of the Kingsguard, sworn to defend the king with his life – while his father is an excessively ambitious man who is constantly fighting to increase the power of their House, the Lannisters, even if that fight encourages him to work against the crown. From a young age, obeying your king and obeying your father has often meant opposing actions for Jaime, making him intimately acquainted with the mental struggles of honorable men and laying the foundation for his divergence from the traditional ideals of chivalry. In addition, this can also be said to symbolize men's struggles to uphold the hegemonic ideal, because too much is asked of them.

Jaime's finest hour as a young man, when his head was still filled with dreams of honor and greatness, was when King Aerys chose him as the newest member of his Kingsguard. Jaime was fifteen and the youngest ever to be chosen for that honorable station. But not long after, he comes to realize that Aerys only chose him to spite his father, Tywin Lannister. A knight of the Kingsguard remains so for life, relinquishing any claim to an inheritance; therefore Tywin is robbed of his heir and left with Jaime's younger brother, Tyrion, a dwarf and huge disappointment to their ambitious father. *"That was the first time that Jaime understood. It was not his skill with sword and lance that had won him his white cloak [...] Even now, all these years later, the thought was bitter"* (3.2-35). This knowledge shattered any joy that Jaime felt at his promotion,

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<sup>54</sup> Anthony Synnott, *Rethinking Men: Heroes, Villains and Victims* (Surrey: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2009), 14.

diminished his own role in achieving it. He was irrelevant in the matter, simply a political pawn, and this act of robbing him of his personal agency turned him onto a path of bitterness. It served as a harbinger of his future emasculation and suggests a complete role reversal of genders, as it is now the male who is used as a pawn and left with no agency of his own.

His appointment as a knight of the Kingsguard is further tainted as he slowly learns the true nature of the king he is sworn to protect. A king is expected to be the very best a man can be – righteous, great and driven by integrity and a force of justice – but the Mad King Aerys is cruel, vicious and corrupted by power, and his sanity gradually deteriorates. He finds satisfaction in torture and brutal murder, while Jaime's vow forces him to stand aside and let the king do what he will,

*"[...] Jaime and Jon Darry had stood at guard outside [the queen's] bedchamber whilst the king took his pleasure. "You're hurting me," they had heard Rhaella cry through the oaken door. "You're hurting me." In some queer way, that had been worse than Lord Chelsted's screaming. "We are sworn to protect her as well," Jaime had finally been driven to say. "We are," Darry allowed, "but not from him" (4-261).*

When it seems that the woman, Brienne, is about to be raped by the men who have captured her and Jaime, he tells her to "go away inside" because it will be quicker that way and less brutal and he thinks to himself, "That was what he'd done, when the Starks had died before him, Lord Rickard cooking in his armor while his son Brandon strangled himself trying to save him" (3.1-418). Whenever Aerys performed his sickening murders, Jaime had stood by because he could do nothing else. His thoughts show us that he feels his experiences with Aerys were those of a mental rape, equally as damaging as a sexual assault would be. It was the deepest form of emotional violation as he stood there and watched, and tried to hold on to his own honor as brave men were murdered before his eyes.

When Aerys, consumed with paranoia and insane fears, orders the entire capitol city burned to the ground Jaime can stand by no longer and kills the king before he murders thousands of innocents. He regards this act as his finest hour – for all of ten minutes, until Ned Stark and other noble lords arrive to realize what he has done and damn him for an oathbreaker. Everyone agreed that Aerys had to die (if not Jaime, then Robert Baratheon or Ned Stark would have had to kill him after they rose in rebellion against him). But Jaime was a sworn member of the Kingsguard, his sole purpose since his appointment that of protecting the king's life, laying down his own if needed – and therefore he lost all honor the day he went back on that vow. At the time of Aerys' murder, society in Westeros seems to have still been ruled by the ideals of chivalry, honor and duty – Jaime's act of killing Aerys was based on a modern and more practical way of thinking, one in which the end justified the means. Unfortunately for Jaime, society then was still ruled by a rigid upholding of the chivalric ideal and any reasonable arguments he may have uttered in his own defense were ignored.

His decision to kill the Mad King has shaped the rest of his life in incontrovertible ways, intermingling both his highest glory and his deepest shame. From that day on, Jaime is met by constant contempt and scorn from men who consider themselves honorable, *“They called him the Lion of Lannister to his face and whispered “Kingslayer” behind his back”* (1-48). But one of the core traits that define Jaime Lannister is defiance, something that has seeped into his very appearance – on his breastplate is sewn a golden lion *“roaring its defiance”* (1-48). He is a powerful and above all *proud* man. When met with constant ridicule and disgust by those who think of him as a lesser man, Jaime gives up trying to defend his actions against Aerys. Gradually he becomes the man they all think him to be: the Kingslayer. *“Believe what you will, I’m past caring what people say of me”* (2-718), he tells Catelyn Stark while a captive in Riverrun. If this reaction of Jaime’s is indicative of how men have reacted to the dogma of misandry for the past few decades, it seems to signify that the act of man-hating only manages to reinforce and, indeed, cultivate a negative behavior in men. Jaime’s conduct indicates that misandry breeds the very behavior that it condemns.

His Kingslayer-persona is the character introduced to the reader in the first two books. This persona is all that Ned Stark, his wife, and all the other people who deem themselves honorable believe Jaime to be: dishonest, treacherous, coldhearted, uncaring and selfish. This persona is all that radical feminists have portrayed *men* to be in general, according to Andrew Kimbrell<sup>55</sup>. When Catelyn calls him Kingslayer to his face, the lion lashes out:

*“I don’t think I’ll fuck you after all, Littlefinger had you first, didn’t he? I never eat off another man’s trencher. Besides, you’re not half so lovely as my sister.” His smile cut. “I’ve never lain with any woman but Cersei. In my own way, I have been truer than your Ned ever was. Poor old dead Ned. So who has shit for honor now, I ask you? What was the name of that bastard he fathered?”* (2-722).

There is a harsh element of truth to his words, but the cruelty is pervasive and makes Catelyn’s disgust of him even deeper. When Jaime lays siege to Riverrun, the old knight Brynden ‘Blackfish’ Tully comes out to parley with him and their conversation is a clear example of how other men’s contempt provokes Jaime into defiantly giving them exactly what they want – playing into their hands, as it were, all in the name of concealing the hurt he feels at this treatment,

*“The girl has been pardoned. No harm will come to her. You have my word on that.”*  
*“Your word of honor?” Ser Brynden raised an eyebrow. “Do you even know what honor is?”*  
*A horse. “I will swear any oath that you require.”*  
*“Spare me, Kingslayer”* (4-637).

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<sup>55</sup> Andrew Kimbrell, *The Masculine Mystique: The Politics of Masculinity* (New York: Ballantine Books, Random House, 1995), 16.

Jaime swore a vow to Catelyn when she freed him from the dungeons to never harm a Stark or Tully again. But when the Blackfish throws insult after insult in Jaime's face, his resolve to be honorable weakens and he thinks to himself, *"He would need to storm the castle. Well, what's one more broken vow to the Kingslayer? Just more shit in the bucket. Jaime resolved to be the first man on the battlements"* (4-639). Just like that he slips into the Kingslayer-persona, giving up on redeeming himself. Everyone seems dead set on treating him like a villain, so why not give them what they want? It is easier and far less hurtful. Gradually, Jaime starts to believe everything that people say of him until the Kingslayer-persona is who he is. He embraces the villainy of the Kingslayer as a defense mechanism to not appear weak. As both Andrew Kimbrell and Anthony Synnott argue, emotional invulnerability is a central characteristic of hegemonic masculinity, the masculine ideal which the Kingslayer mostly succeeds at upholding. His humor in dangerous situations, his laziness and boredom all express indifference, as if he could not care less what happens to him or what people think of him: *"You should be the Hand." "Gods forbid," a man's voice replied lazily. "It's not an honor I'd want. There's far too much work involved"* (1-77).

Once Jaime is provided with a narrative voice of his own, it soon becomes clear that the indifference is just an act; one that he has kept going even to himself for many years. *"Jaime had decided that he would return Sansa, and the younger girl as well if she could be found. It was not like to win him back his lost honor, but the notion of keeping faith when they all expected betrayal amused him more than he could say"* (3.1-287). He is unable to admit to himself that his decision to reunite Catelyn Stark with her daughters is an attempt to reclaim his honor; instead he convinces himself that it is just in the name of some private joke. This 'amusement' smacks of bitterness, though he is unable to recognize it as such. By the time Jaime's chapters make an appearance in the third book, he has accepted wholeheartedly that he is a lost cause who will never regain his honor. It has become a usual practice of his to use his perceived dishonor as a defensive argument,

*"Urswyck spread his hands. "What Timeon means to say is that the Brave Companions are no longer in the hire of House Lannister. We now serve Lord Bolton, and the King in the North." Jaime gave him a cold, contemptuous smile. "And men say I have shit for honor?"* (3.1-293).

Jaime has learned to use his own perceived dishonor as a counterattack; something his brother Tyrion is very apt at doing and from whom he has mastered this tactic. Being a dwarf, Tyrion has been met by ridicule and scorn all his life and in the first book he tells the bastard, Jon Snow, of the harsh lesson life has taught him: *"Never forget what you are, for surely the world will not. Make it your strength. Then it can never be your weakness. Armor yourself in it, and it will never be used to hurt you"* (1-54). At one point, Jaime thinks back to his youth when one of the greatest knights of the realm, Ser Arthur Dayne, Sword of the Morning, slew an outlaw and robber called the Smiling Knight. The outlaw was a madman, cruel and vicious, and in Jaime's mind his Kingslayer-persona has become the equivalent of the Smiling Knight, using

humor and cruelty as a defense mechanism to hide the fact that he is not invulnerable to emotional hurt, “[He] had wanted to be Ser Arthur Dayne, but someplace along the way he had become the Smiling Knight instead” (3.2-342).

Prior to his own narrative chapters, when he still embraces the Kingslayer-persona wholeheartedly, there are a few instances when cracks become visible in his emotional armor, signifying that he may not be as invulnerable as he seems. When Catelyn visits him in the dungeons of Riverrun, he asks her, “*If there are gods, why is the world so full of pain and injustice?*” She replies “*Because of men like you*” and he counters “*There are no men like me. There’s only me*” (2-715). Catelyn perceives his words as arrogance, as if he means to say that he is superior to other men – a cut above the rest, one of a kind, a warrior unique in his skill and bravery in battle: “*There is nothing here but arrogance and pride [Catelyn thought], and the empty courage of a madman. I am wasting my breath with this one. If there was ever a spark of honor in him, it is long dead*” (2-715). However, in hindsight Jaime’s words seem rather to express that he is not the man she believes him to be, that he has been misunderstood and only wishes not to be categorized as a villain because there is more to his personality than the cruelty and the lost honor. As she turns to leave, he calls her back and apologizes for his discourtesy – for once he seems vulnerable, wishing not to be left in the dark dungeon alone, yearning for company even if it is that of his enemy. This exchange between Jaime and Catelyn is symbolic of men in a postmodern society objecting to the image that radical feminists have been wont to impose upon them; that they are naturally inclined towards a coldhearted and arrogant behavior that is unavoidable.

After Catelyn receives news of the deaths of her youngest sons, Bran and Rickon, she disregards the orders of her son and king, Robb Stark, in a fit of motherly grief and sets Jaime free from the dungeons. With his freedom she hopes to buy the freedom of her two daughters in King’s Landing. But she does not trust him to hold to his word, so she sends him along in chains accompanied by the female knight, Lady Brienne of Tarth, whose mission it is to see Jaime safely to King’s Landing and then to return with Catelyn’s daughters. Brienne is a tall and strong woman who is clearly uncomfortable in her own body: “*Out of armor, her body seemed ungainly, broad of hip and thick of limb, with hunched muscular shoulders but no bosom to speak of. And it was clear from every action that Brienne knew it, and suffered for it. She spoke only in answer, and seldom lifted her gaze from her food*” (2-315). She is a highly capable sword fighter and has an intelligent mind. If she had been born a man, she would have upheld all the ideals of a hegemonic male in a chivalric age. Unfortunately for her, she is not a man and that fact has caused her to be ridiculed and mocked for her entire life. Needless to say, the Kingslayer sees her as an easy target for mockery as they commence their journey south to King’s Landing – however, meeting Brienne ultimately changes Jaime’s character in such drastic ways that he is virtually unrecognizable by the end of their journey.





The Kingslayer's mockery of Brienne always refers to her sexuality, her lack of femininity and the challenge she poses to traditional gender roles,

*"My name is Brienne," she repeated, dogged as a hound.*

*"Lady Brienne?" She looked so uncomfortable that Jaime sensed a weakness. "Or would Ser Brienne be more to your taste?" He laughed. "No, I fear not. You can trick out a milk cow in crupper, crinet, and chamfron, and bard her all in silk, but that doesn't mean you can ride her into battle" (3.1-21).*

The Kingslayer is portrayed as a merciless predator who strikes as soon as he senses weakness. He amuses himself on the journey by imagining Brienne wearing Cersei's silk dresses and repeatedly comparing her to a cow. He refuses to call her by her name and insists on calling her "wench" instead, and at first it is meant as a derogatory term. However, Brienne soon snaps back with well-known insults to his lack of honor and cruelty and for once, one senses an underlying layer of guilt in Jaime's reactions:

*"A man who would violate his own sister, murder his king, and fling an innocent child to his death deserves no other name."*

*Innocent? The wretched boy was spying on us. All Jaime had wanted was an hour alone with Cersei" (3.1-21).*

Jaime readily disregards Brienne's insults about violating his sister and murdering his king – in his mind, the love between him and Cersei is the purest thing in his life and no violation; and murdering King Aerys was his finest deed. However, the mention of Bran and the way he pushed him out the tower window clearly makes Jaime uncomfortable. He starts justifying his action to himself, arguing internally how the boy was hardly innocent and how Jaime had been feeling jealous and lonely on the road without Cersei, as if to say that he was not in his right mind. But his self-defense sounds perilously close to guilt, showing the first real crack in his Kingslayer-armor. Jaime grew up with the ideals of chivalry and even now, as the Kingslayer, insulting and mocking a woman does not feel right to him. It is discourteous and somehow hearing the insults that he knows so well from a *woman* cuts him deeper than ever before. He does not have the same need to lash back and mend his pride when a woman is the one who shows contempt.

In truth, Brienne and Jaime are very similar characters. Both have raised almighty walls to hide their emotional vulnerability, unwilling to show weakness of any kind. Brienne does less well at acting indifferent to the ridicule and scorn, while Jaime has managed quite successfully at seeming invulnerable to the many insults by hiding behind his Kingslayer-persona. On the eve of battle when they first meet, Brienne says to Catelyn Stark, *"You don't feel so helpless when you fight. You have a sword and a horse, sometimes an axe. When you're armored, it's hard for anyone to hurt you" (2-589).*

Soon an involuntary respect grows for Brienne as she shows strength, bravery and cleverness as they journey south, *"Brienne considered [the crossroads] briefly, and then swung her horse onto the southern road. Jaime was pleasantly surprised; it was the same choice he would have made... Well, she may be ugly,*

but she's not entirely stupid. *Jaime gave her a grudging smile*" (3.1-154). The land has been ravaged by war and they are surrounded by bands of outlaws and 'soldiers' who will switch allegiances twice a day if it earns them more riches – men who have been corrupted and consumed by the war, turned into vicious and bloodthirsty rapists and murderers while glorying in the gory violence. Brienne and Jaime's common goal of getting him safely to King's Landing creates a connection between them and gives them an incentive to cooperate with one another.

However, they are captured by the Brave Companions who soon threaten to rape Brienne and thereby awakening in Jaime a long forgotten urge to protect the female sex: *"Ugly and stubborn though she might be, the wench deserved better than to be gang raped by such refuse as these"* (3.1-292). He saves Brienne – for another night at least – with cleverness and earns a beating for it. They each try to protect the other from beatings and torture, deepening their feelings of sympathy and respect towards one another. In the end, however, there is nothing to stop the Brave Companions from proceeding to cut off Jaime's sword hand at the wrist for no other reason than personal pleasure at bloodshed and seeing a man brought low, especially a nobleman such as Jaime.

This is the most pivotal turning point in Jaime's development as a character. The loss of his sword hand symbolizes the end of his hegemonic masculinity, of his identity as a warrior and of his Kingslayer-persona. And since his entire identity is intimately tied to the warrior ideal and his physical fighting skill, this turning point results in a complete loss of self in the days following. *"Urswyck leaned over and slapped him lazily across the face. The sheer casual insolence of it was worse than the blow itself. He does not fear me, Jaime realized, with a chill"* (3.1-295). Fear has been a well-used part of Jaime's defensive arsenal since he was old enough to pick up a sword. It is the reason men have whispered Kingslayer behind his back instead of spitting it in his face. Losing that aspect of his character terrifies him, for a Kingslayer without fear is nothing. *"But Jaime's walls were gone. They had taken his hand, they had taken his sword hand, and without it he was nothing. The other was no good to him. Since the time he could walk, his left arm had been his shield arm, no more. It was his right arm that made him a knight; his right arm that made him a man"* (3.1-417). He is treated with constant ridicule and mockery, which shames and emasculates him more and more. He has never experienced anything of the like and the agony of this *powerlessness* feels much worse than the physical burn of his wound. He weeps at the unbearable pain and is taunted even more for his weakness. The Kingslayer-persona has been ripped away and left him with nothing and soon he is wishing for death to end his torment. This state of being that has been forced on him is an exaggerated symbol of what men in a postmodern society go through when they lose their jobs. The descriptions of how men feel who have been forced into unemployment are very similar to the emotions that Jaime goes through at the loss of *his* employment as a warrior and help to explain why some men who are forced into

unemployment proceed to lose everything in their lives, become estranged from their families and end up living on the streets.

Brienne becomes his unlikely savior. The men make her clean up Jaime whenever he has been sick from the pain or soiled himself in the saddle and she does so gently. *“His world shrunk to the throb of agony that was his phantom hand, and Brienne pressed against him. She’s warm, at least, he consoled himself”* (3.1-415). After having his masculinity ripped from him it soothes him to be taken care of by a woman, even one such as she, because it is his manhood that needs mending more than his actual hand. And finally, she jars him back to life by calling him a coward for thinking of giving up:

*“Jaime, what are you doing?”*

*“Dying,” he whispered back. [...]*

*“Are you so craven?”*

*The word shocked him. He was Jaime Lannister, a knight of the Kingsguard, he was the Kingslayer. No man had ever called him craven. Other things they called him, yes; oathbreaker, liar, murderer. They said he was cruel, treacherous, reckless. But never craven. [...] Craven, Jaime thought, as Brienne fought to stifle her moans. Can it be? They took my sword hand. Was that all I was, a sword hand? Gods be good, is it true? The wench had the right of it. He could not die”* (3.1-416).

The defiance that made him create the Kingslayer-persona instead of succumbing to the contempt and disdain after killing Aerys makes an appearance again and convinces him to continue living. At first he attempts to hide his weakness,

*“Is that a slight on the honor of my House?” Jaime picked up the cheese knife with his good hand. “A rounded point, and dull,” he said, sliding his thumb along the edge of the blade, “but it will go through your eye all the same.” Sweat beaded his brow. He could only hope he did not look as feeble as he felt.*

*Lord Bolton’s little smile paid another visit to his lips. “You speak boldly for a man who needs help to break his bread”* (3.1-512).

Soon he realizes that his weakness is so obvious that he might as well give up trying to hide it. Slowly he recovers from his trauma and starts to act with humor again – but after the destruction of his inner Kingslayer, his sense of humor is no longer mocking towards others but rather self-deprecatory, *“What is this woman to you?” “My protector.” Jaime had to laugh, no matter how it hurt”* (3.1-425). His sense of humor is no longer a defense mechanism to hide weakness. He brings attention to it instead and thinks it ironic and comical that the brave knight should need protection from a woman. There is an element of bitterness involved as well, but he is no longer as adverse towards admitting weakness. This is one of the major differences that have followed in the wake of Jaime’s ‘emasculatation’. He confides in Brienne, admitting to feeling doubt, fear and pain at being branded as an oathbreaker. He admits how deeply the prejudice against him hurts and almost admits to Brienne and to himself how he wishes above all to reclaim

his lost honor, to redeem himself in the eyes of the world. This process of finally admitting weakness is not an easy one. At first Jaime tries to make excuses for his trust in Brienne, a trust solely based on the fact that she is an honorable person – excuses like thinking he must still be feverish, lightheaded and not himself. After having bared his soul to her, Jaime is in a highly vulnerable position as she does not speak for a long time, *“Has my tale turned you speechless? Come, curse me or kiss me or call me a liar. Something”* (3.1-507). The silence is insufferable and so is her passivity. He needs a reaction from her in order to gauge if it was a mistake telling her. But he gradually realizes that his trust in her is not a weakness; it is a restored belief in the chivalric ideals that he thought had died within him long ago. After a while he no longer thinks of it as being naïve... He simply has faith.

Before being captured by the Brave Companions, Jaime manages to get hold of a sword and though still chained, he and Brienne fight each other at the river’s edge. Jaime has seen her stand up to outlaws and is eager to pit his own strength against hers. The ensuing struggle is described in distinctly sexual tones,

*“The swords kissed and sprang apart and kissed again [...] He pinned her against an oak, cursed as she slipped away, followed her through a shallow brook half-choked with fallen leaves. Steel rang, steel sang, steel screamed and sparked and scraped, and the woman started grunting like a sow at every crash [...] They rolled, kicking and punching until finally she was sitting astride him”* (3.1-289/90/91).

When the outlaws find them struggling, Jaime thinks to himself, *“She looks as if they caught us fucking instead of fighting”* (3.1-291) with her clothes all askew and her face red with embarrassment. At first Jaime thinks of Brienne more as a man than a woman, which makes it easier for him to come to terms with the respect that he is starting to feel for her. Thinking of her as a fellow soldier is less discomforting than admitting that she is a woman. In this way do the boundaries between masculine and feminine merge where Brienne is concerned. Although he would never think to find her physically attractive, big and mannish as she is, she is nonetheless the object of his awakening sexuality after losing his hand, *“Jamie caught a glimpse of the thick blonde bush at the juncture of her thighs as she climbed out. She was much hairier than his sister. Absurdly, he felt his cock stir beneath the bathwater”* (3.1-504). Brienne therefore not only helps him regain some of his old strength and defiance, but his sexuality as well. The fact that she is the only woman to ever see his true vulnerability, learn his innermost secrets and not judge him for what she found, has made him capable of recognizing the real beauty of her character. The attraction is therefore a much deeper and stronger emotion than a purely physical one – and while Jaime would never describe his relationship with Cersei as purely physical, he has never let his twin sister see the depths of his soul the way he lets Brienne see. After acknowledging this fact, Jaime is suddenly capable of recognizing some of Brienne’s physical beauty, *“Blue is a good color on you, my lady,” Jaime observed. “It goes well with your eyes.”* She does have astonishing eyes. *Brienne glanced down at herself, flustered”* (3.2-432). Previously Jaime has been unable to recognize these flashes of true beauty in the tall and awkward woman.

Early in their relationship, after Jaime has been released by the Brave Companions to return to King's Landing for a ransom, he has a prophetic dream that takes place at his childhood home of Casterly Rock. *"The Rock"* (3.2-39) weighs down on him with the expectations of his father as he is forced to descend into the underbelly of the dungeons. He panics, terrified of facing the guilt and demons of his past that he knows await him in the caves down below, and wishes he had a sword so he could fight his way out even though he knows a sword cannot help him destroy his inner turmoil. Cersei appears with a torch only to turn away and abandon him in the dark, but suddenly Brienne appears with two swords and they slay the shadows of his demons together. The message of the dream is clear: Brienne is the one to help him recover from his past – and while this message remains obscure to his waking psyche, when he wakes the next day inexplicably he decides to return to the Brave Companions and save Brienne who is still a captive. He jumps into a bear pit to save her, exhibiting true heroism as he saves the damsel in distress and reconnects with the hero inside that has been constrained and suppressed by his Kingslayer-persona who only ever acted bravely for the sake of his own interest. He does not recognize the significance of the fact that he only found true bravery after losing his ability to fight. As they are riding away, Brienne asks him, *"... you were well away. Why come back?" A dozen quips came to mind, each crueler than the one before, but Jaime only shrugged. "I dreamed of you," he said"* (3.2-49). Henceforth, Jaime is unwilling to accept the insults and ridicule that she grew up with, for example from a man she was supposed to wed as a young girl,

*"She was a sow in silk, though most sows have bigger teats [...]" Connington glanced into the pit. "The bear was less hairy than that freak, I'll –"*  
*Jaime's golden hand cracked him across the mouth so hard the other knight went stumbling down the steps [...]"You are speaking of a highborn lady, ser. Call her by her name. Call her Brienne"* (4-459/60).

His temper is fierce, his anger swift and spontaneous. In this moment he is less than rational as he acts instinctively to defend a woman he respects and admires (– maybe even loves? That remains to be seen until the series has been concluded). As the narrative develops, it becomes clear that Brienne has a positive effect on Jaime, and that her influence stays in effect later when circumstances separate them from one another.

When he and Brienne finally return to King's Landing they are met by the news that Catelyn and Robb Stark are dead and therefore Catelyn's daughters cannot be returned to her. Brienne idolizes the virtues of chivalry above all and losing this quest results in a loss not so very different from Jaime's, although in a milder form. Jaime thinks to himself, *"Since that day Brienne had been like one half-dead. Even calling her "wench" failed to provoke any response. The strength is gone from her"* (3.2-272). By now Jaime's use of the word "wench" has become affectionate rather than mocking, taking on a completely different meaning than at first. Jaime is worried about this woman who has become the most unlikely of friends, so he decides to send her on a new quest. He realizes that an honorable cause to fight for is bread and butter for

Brienne. She needs purpose, so he provides it for her: He sends her out to retrieve Sansa Stark who has disappeared from King's Landing and make sure she makes it back to her next of kin (Arya Stark is believed dead). He gives her a Valyrian greatsword to help on her quest, one his father gave to him upon his return, and asks her to name it Oathkeeper. *"Her big hand wrapped tight around Oathkeeper. "I will. And I will find the girl and keep her safe. For her lady mother's sake. And for yours"* (3.2-435). Her response to him expresses that Catelyn Stark is no longer the only person she fights for; Jaime has earned her respect above all and he is worthy of her fealty as well. Her faith in him enables him to hope for a regaining of his lost honor. He replies brusquely, clearly uncomfortable and finding it difficult to react to gratitude and respect, being as unused to it as he is – which testifies to the defensive walls he has surrounded himself with and his lingering discomfort with 'soft' emotions like gratitude and compassion.

His appointment as Lord Commander of the Kingsguard signifies a new beginning for Jaime and he determines to fight for honor henceforth, to do his duty to the new king (his own son, Tommen) and to no longer be coerced by his father into putting family before crown, because he has come to regard that as dishonorable behavior. *"Ser Gerold Hightower had begun his history, and Ser Barristan Selmy had continued it, but the rest Jaime Lannister would need to write for himself. He could write whatever he chose, henceforth. Whatever he chose..."* (3.2-436).

However, starting a new and honorable way of life is not a simple matter. Jaime is still met by contempt wherever he goes and it becomes clear that his personal reputation relies on the actions of his family as well as his own. The power of association is strong. Even after his father's death, his past actions have the ability to tarnish Jaime's own reputation. He is judged from a generalized perspective and simply assumed to be as vile and treacherous as others of his family as if he had a personal hand in all the wrongs ever committed by a Lannister or a Lannister ally,

*"This defiance serves no purpose, ser. The war is done, and your Young Wolf is dead."*

*"Murdered in breach of all the sacred laws of hospitality."*

*"Frey's work, not mine."*

*"Call it what you will. It stinks of Tywin Lannister."*

*Jaime could not deny that. "My father is dead as well"* (4-637).

As Jaime returns to King's Landing his father and Cersei, who have not been present to experience the transformation he has undergone, are expecting to see the Kingslayer-persona return to King's Landing. Conflict arises as all three characters realize that each of their ambitions and ideals have changed in a fundamental way. Jaime's movement away from his family pervades the very phrasing of his narrative, *"In his white cloak and white scale armor, Jaime felt out of place amongst that river of red"* (4-255). Even though Jaime has been met by repulsion and disgust by those hinting at his incestuous relationship with Cersei, he has always felt that the love he bears for his twin is the purest and best thing about him. His very

first sentence in his very first narrative chapter expresses the importance Cersei holds for him, *“An east wind blew through his tangled hair, as soft and fragrant as Cersei’s fingers”* (3.1-18). Their connection is a deep and visceral thing that has existed for both of them since birth. *“Even in the womb”* (3.1-286) he loved her, Jaime thinks to himself. However, their new relationship is soon defined by bitterness and contempt. Jaime claims Cersei’s body as soon as they meet again, in the sept beside the body of their dead son Joffrey – his action shows a desperate need to reclaim his manhood in the most primitive and carnal of ways. And while this love has always been a very emotional and relentless compulsion on his part, Cersei has become increasingly corrupted by power over the years as she has lived as queen in King’s Landing, and her love for Jaime is increasingly called into question. While Jaime has never lain with another woman because that would violate their pure love, Cersei feels free to use her sexuality as a tool for achieving her political goals while he is away. Traditional gender roles of hegemony are therefore reversed as Cersei coldly uses sex for her own aims and Jaime cherishes the intimacy whenever they are together.

Jaime gradually realizes that he has not *lost* his masculinity – rather he is moving towards a new *form* of masculinity, one that is honorable and emotional and unafraid of showing vulnerability. After his father’s death, his aunt surprises him by saying *“... but Tyrion is Tywin’s son, not you. I said so once to your father’s face, and he would not speak to me for half a year”* (4-568). Although Jaime has the appearance of a Lannister, tall and strong and golden-haired, he does not have his father’s propensity for ruthlessness or cruelty. Tyrion may not have been provided with the long legs of a proper man, but his mind has the capacity of coming up with the most nefarious and cunning ploys just like his father. Jaime’s true nature, on the other hand, is more inclined towards compassion and protectiveness, a part of his nature that has been denied ever since he became embittered to the brutality of his father’s politics.

Cersei, however, starts to feel nothing but contempt for him; she prefers his Kingslayer-persona and hegemonic ideal, cruel as it was,

*“All I want is you.” He made to touch her cheek. Old habits die hard, and it was his right arm he lifted.*

*Cersei recoiled from his stump. “Don’t... don’t talk like this. You’re scaring me, Jaime. Don’t be stupid. One wrong word and you’ll cost us everything. What did they do to you?”*

*“They cut off my hand.”*

*“No, it’s more, you’re changed”* (3.2-279).

Cersei’s increasing revulsion for Jaime’s stump symbolizes her increasing revulsion for the ‘soft’ man he is becoming. She wants to restore the ruthlessness and the strength of the Kingslayer, a persona that compliments her own cruelty and ruthlessness, but Jaime starts acting with increasing compassion and emotion, *“I crossed a thousand leagues to come to you, and lost the best part of me along the way. Don’t tell me to leave.” “Leave me,” she repeated, turning away”* (3.2-279). For the first time in his life, Jaime

starts to recognize the manipulative aspect of Cersei's nature. Her main focus has become to maintain her own level of power, while she sees enemies everywhere and orders assassination after assassination with ease, willing to kill every last person in the world who might be a threat to her position. Jaime starts to compare her to the Mad King in his mind, recognizing the signs of corruption and paranoia. Similarly to Ned Stark and Robert Baratheon's relationship, Jaime attempts to be Cersei's voice of reason, tempering her rage with words of caution and patience (Cersei also starts drinking like Robert did, hinting at an inner turmoil that she cannot express another way). By now, Jaime has completely discarded the Kingslayer-persona who was known for his recklessness and impatience, signifying that his true nature is nothing like that façade he created in the past. Looking to the past now, he recognizes the madness that was his love for Cersei, *"As I was fucking her, Cersei cried, "I want." I thought that she meant me, but it was the Stark girl she wanted, maimed or dead."* The things I do for love. *"It was only by chance that Stark's own men found the girl before me. If I had come on her first..."* (4-517). All Jaime ever did was for love and he would have done anything for the object of his affection, suggesting that he is at his core an infinitely emotional person – an aspect of his character that has been suppressed, denied and destroyed for years as he lived up to Cersei's (and society's) ideal of a man, performing the most vile acts to please her.

When Cersei's vindictive power plays backfire and she is threatened with execution, she summons Jaime, pleading for his help. It is a point of no return for Jaime when he decides to ignore her summons and leave her to her fate. He has abandoned the Kingslayer-persona completely, one that Cersei is intimately connected to and which he has come to realize is toxic for him. It was never who he really was and from this point on he can never turn back.

As he settles into his new role as Lord Commander, he does so with a deep sense of humility, something the Kingslayer-persona never would have admitted to. He feels unworthy to be counted among the renowned and honorable knights who came before him, *"How could the Kingslayer belong in such exalted company?"* (3.2-339). Jaime was taught by his predecessors that *"All knights must bleed, Jaime," Ser Arthur Dayne had said [...]* *"Blood is the seal of our devotion"* (4-139). This lesson supports Anthony Synnott's assessment that self-sacrifice is a central element to that of being a knight (or man). If he does not bleed, he is not a true knight; he is not a true *man*. The position of Lord Commander of the Kingsguard is all he ever strived for, and yet now that he has achieved it, his own sense of guilt and lack of confidence make him feel as if he is tainting this noble office. That he did not earn it. But as he encounters the same scorn and contempt from the new knights of the Kingsguard that have been chosen by Cersei, his natural defiance lashes out. The man he has become refuses to be judged by men who from his perspective have even less honor than he – they were ready to obey their previous king, Joffrey, without qualms as he ordered them to beat his betrothed, Sansa Stark, for his own twisted pleasure. Jaime refuses to show weakness in front of his new 'brothers', judging that it would be lethal to do so. He feigns the capability of



fighting with his left hand, uses threats and cutting remarks to make them all submit to his authority – all the while praying that they not find out exactly how vulnerable he is: *“Though fat, aging, and never more than ordinary, Ser Boros could still have hacked him into bloody pieces.* But Boros does not know that, and neither must the rest. They feared the man I was; the man I am they’d pity” (3.2-345).

Jaime’s first attempt at *knowingly* reclaiming his honor is when he frees Tyrion from the dungeons of King’s Landing after the dwarf lost his trial for the murder of Jaime’s son and king, Joffrey, and is to be executed,

*“You’ll have to help me with my last words, my wits have been running about like a rat in a root cellar.”*

*“You won’t need last words. I’m rescuing you.” Jaime’s voice was strangely solemn” (3.2-489).*

Tyrion notices the change in his brother who has always behaved with a detached sense of humor, even in the most dire of circumstances. Jaime has been gripped by the same heroism that made him jump into a bear pit, one-handed and without a weapon, to save Brienne. While leading Tyrion to freedom he resolves to be completely honest for once. He confesses to a long-hidden truth kept from Tyrion by Jaime and their father; that the woman Tyrion fell in love with as a young man in fact was not merely a hired whore as he had been told by Jaime to put an end to the relationship. Tywin manipulated Jaime into thinking that the lie was in Tyrion’s best interest, but their father’s cruelty tainted the whole experience and when Tyrion learns the truth he lashes out at Jaime with fierce rage and hatred,

*“You poor stupid blind crippled fool. Must I spell every little thing out for you? Very well. Cersei is a lying whore, she’s been fucking Lancel and Osmund Kettleblack and probably Moon Boy, for all I know. And I am the monster they all say I am. Yes, I killed your vile son.” [Tyrion] made himself grin. It must have been a hideous sight to see, there in the torchlit gloom. Jaime turned without a word and walked away” (3.2-492).*

Tyrion proceeds to murder their father in an impulsive act of vengeance before fleeing King’s Landing. His violent reaction puts an irrevocable blemish on Jaime’s grand act of heroism and destroys any pride he might have felt at saving his brother’s life. Up until this moment he felt liberated and hopeful for a future bright with honorable intentions – and with one fell act out of grief and rage, Tyrion rips all the positive away from him. Tyrion is unaware of the deep impact his words and actions have on Jaime’s character; but despite what others think, Jaime is not a strong man emotionally. He is haunted by his old demons and without Brienne present in the city to help him overcome them, slowly but gradually Jaime slips back into the Kingslayer-persona. It is history repeating itself, as he has now lost once more the fragile conviction that he has a chance to reclaim his lost honor.

*“Edmure raised his hands from the tub and watched the water run between his fingers. “And if I will not yield?”*

Must you make me say the words? *Pia was standing by the flap of the tent with her arms full of clothes. His squires were listening as well, and the singer. Let them hear, Jaime thought. Let the world hear. It makes no matter. He forced himself to smile*" (4-648).

His worthless reputation has become the object of his own intense loathing. He hates the Kingslayer-persona by now and the things it enables him to do. Everyone will always believe the worst of him and while he tries to feel indifferent and defiant as he did before, he is now defined by a deep sense of bitterness. Without Brienne near to remind him of the good in him and the valorization of chivalric ideals, he succumbs to feelings of hopelessness and bitterness instead.

But in Brienne's absence, he finds solace in another unlikely companion. Ser Ilyn Payne, the royal executioner, had his tongue cut out by the Mad King many years ago when he dared speak against him and since then his silence has inspired terror and fear in all who meet him. Jaime, however, finds it liberating confiding in this man who is physically unable to pass on his secrets to others. Payne has had his own sort of crisis to deal with as he lost all ability to communicate with others (his very name seems symbolic of the trauma he has had to overcome) and these two broken men find a common cause in training Jaime's left-hand sword fighting. Their training is a source of both hope and devastating failure for Jaime as he attempts to reconnect with his old strength, and Ser Ilyn is a vault in which he can pour all his secrets, doubts, hidden wounds and hopes for the future.

In King's Landing, Jaime's father had a golden hand crafted for him to hide the stump and remind people of his continued power and wealth simply from being a member of the Lannister family. But Jaime comes to regard this golden hand as a corrupt and dishonest object, often connected to his feelings of bitterness and confusion for Cersei,

*"The golden hand was the occasion for much admiring comment over supper, at least until Jaime knocked over a goblet of wine. Then his temper got the best of him. "If you admire the bloody thing so much, lop off your own sword hand and you can have it," he told Flement Brax"* (4-446).

He dislikes the dishonesty the hand symbolizes, since it conveys that he is as strong as ever – he thinks of it as *"a golden lie"* (4-442). As Jaime takes to the road with Ser Ilyn and a band of soldiers to set the war-ravaged land to rights, he removes the fake hand and refrains from wearing it. This is an act of revitalization for Jaime. Leaving the nest of vipers that is King's Landing and his sister behind lets him breathe freely again and his dedication to honor and honesty slowly returns. The small acts of justice and chivalry he performs hereafter help to mend his torn and fragmented soul. As he orders the hanging of a band of rapists and outlaws (men similar to the Brave Companions who cut off his hand), he thinks to himself, *"It felt good. This was justice. Make a habit of it, Lannister, and one day men might call you Goldenhand after all. Goldenhand the Just"* (4-450).



Brienne's influence on his character again takes effect and enables him to act honorably in several situations. He saves the girl, Pia, from rape and later encourages his squire to initiate an innocently romantic relationship with her simply because it would make them both happy. *"He could make her a washerwoman, he supposed. His squires did not mind raising his tent, grooming his horse, or cleaning his armor, but the task of caring for his clothes struck them as unmanly"* (4-455). The phrasing suggests that Jaime fails to see the logic in the squires' thinking, which in turn suggests that Jaime's perception of masculinity has changed. After suffering such a tremendous slight to his own masculinity, he regards these small issues as inconsequential. He continues to act chivalrously on the road: he orders his soldiers to eat their own provisions instead of straining the resources of peasants who are already hard-pressed to survive; he stops some of his Lannister allies from mentally tormenting Ser Edmure Tully (Catelyn Stark's brother) while he is their captive because he feels pity for the man, and instead he treats Edmure with the respect owed his station; he treats Robb Stark's widow with courtesy and gentleness, protecting her from her own mother's harsh treatment; and he acts with courtesy and honor towards Lord Blackwood who yields his castle to him after a long siege. He declines Blackwood's offer of supper, thinking to himself, *"The castle was starving; no good would be served by Jaime stealing food from their mouths"* (5.2-122). It is Brienne's influence that has now made Jaime a champion of *good*. It is said that the true nature of a gentleman lies in the manner in which he treats his enemies – Jaime's kind behavior is a testament to how far he has distanced himself from the Kingslayer-persona and the cruel nature of the hegemonic masculine ideal.

As Jaime tells his son and young king, *"The world is full of horrors, Tommen. You can fight them, or laugh at them, or look without seeing... go away inside"* (4-143). These are the options Jaime's life has been defined by. During the reign of the Mad King, Jaime hid himself away inside and sheltered his own sanity by thinking of Cersei whenever Aerys struck at innocents with his sadistic tendencies. As Kingslayer he learned to laugh off the pain and raise a wall of indifference to hide his own vulnerability. Yet losing his sword hand has become the best thing that ever happened to him because once freed from the restraining bonds of a hegemonic ideal, he has now found, hidden deep within himself, the courage to fight the horrors of his past and move towards a sense of self that is true to his nature.

## 4.2 “MASCULINE REVISIONISM”

### 4.2.1 VICTIMIZATION

As described in chapter 3.2.1 “Men in Crisis”, there are many social issues in contemporary society that especially men struggle with and yet Andrew Kimbrell and Anthony Synnott will both argue that men are still often marginalized in for example legislation and healthcare, thereby treated as the disposable sex. Is this form of marginalization evident in George R.R. Martin’s *A Song of Ice and Fire*? Are the male characters victimized by violence and death more often than the female characters? And is this an expected aspect of the male gender in Martin’s world, that men *should* risk their own well-being for the sake of protecting women, protecting their honor and personal image?

The world of *A Song of Ice and Fire* is a violent one. As the War of the Five Kings commences in *A Clash of Kings* (second volume), the Seven Kingdoms are torn asunder by war. In Tolkienesque fashion, the narrative follows the highborn families and members of nobility, whose deaths are often explicitly described. Both men and women are victimized by the war; however, the violence done against the male characters is much more frequent, and explicitly and graphically detailed. Throughout the series men die violently, including many of the main characters: Eddard Stark is decapitated, King Robert Baratheon is gutted by a boar, Viserys Targaryen is burnt to death when a pot of molten gold is poured over his head, Robb Stark is stabbed at a feast, Prince Joffrey Baratheon is poisoned and chokes to death at his own wedding, Tywin Lannister is shot by a crossbow while in the privy, Lord Commander Mormont of the Night’s Watch is stabbed by his own men, Sandor Clegane (the Hound) is cut down by soldiers-made-outlaws, Renly Baratheon is stabbed in the back inside his tent by a conjured shadow, Prince Oberyn Martell has both his eyes torn out and his head smashed while fighting Gregor Clegane (the Mountain), Prince Quentyn Martell is burnt to death by dragons... In addition are the males who suffer torture and mutilation, yet survive: Jaime Lannister’s hand is cut off, Tyrion suffers a sword stroke across his face, scarring him for life and Theon Greyjoy is tortured for months, has the skin peeled off his body and his penis dismembered.

In contrast, the violence done to the female characters is far less pronounced. Women are often threatened with violence but it is seldom carried out to any great effect, as when Sansa Stark is threatened by King Joffrey,

*“Boros shoved a meaty hand down the front of Sansa’s bodice and gave a hard yank. The silk came tearing away, baring her to the waist. Sansa covered her breasts with her hands. She could hear sniggers, far off and cruel. “Beat her bloody,” Joffrey said, “we’ll see how her brother fancies –”*

*“What is the meaning of this?”*

*Suddenly Sansa was free. She stumbled to her knees, arms crossed over her chest, her breath ragged. “Is this your notion of chivalry, Ser Boros?” Tyrion Lannister demanded angrily” (2-442/3).*

Rather than being beaten, Sansa is humiliated by having her body forcibly bared and she is soon saved from further embarrassment, brought to Tyrion's chambers where she is treated with compassion and kindness. While there is much talk of rape in Martin's world, not a single one is witnessed by the reader throughout the series. When captured by the Brave Companions, Brienne is threatened with rape and death multiple times, but in the end Jaime is the one to suffer when his hand is cut off. The closest equivalent to rape is Daenerys' wedding night with Khal Drogo, but any disapproval from readers is brought on rather as a reaction to Daenerys' tender age of thirteen and her subjection to an unwanted marriage rather than any sort of sexual assault. Considering the savage nature of the Dothraki horse tribes and their clear dominance over women, Daenerys' new husband is surprisingly tender and patient,

*"Dany was flushed and breathless, her heart fluttering in her chest. He cupped her face in his huge hands and she looked into his eyes. "No?" he said, and she knew it was a question. She took his hand and moved it down to the wetness between her thighs. "Yes," she whispered as she put his finger inside her" (1-103).*

As Leo Braudy writes in his *From Chivalry to Terrorism: War and the Changing Nature of Masculinity*, war enforces like no other an extreme version of male behavior as the ideal model – one that is driven by physical prowess and the male proclivity for competition. Within George R.R. Martin's universe, men are expected to risk their own lives for the sake of protecting women, following orders and doing their duty, thereby proving their own masculinity,

*"Form up," [Tyrion] shouted as he leapt to the ground. The gate moved under the impact of another blow. "Who commands here? You're going out."  
"No." [...] Sandor Clegane wrenched off his helm with both hands and let it fall to the ground.  
[...]  
"Yes." Tyrion faced him. [...]  
A sellsword stepped up beside him. "We been out. Three times. Half our men are killed or hurt. Wildfire bursting all around us, horses screaming like men and men like horses –"  
"Did you think we hired you to fight in a tourney? Shall I bring you a nice iced milk and a bowl of raspberries? No? Then get on your fucking horse. You too, dog" (2-760).*

Tyrion Lannister is usually a character driven by self-preservation and a healthy survival instinct and yet when placed in the middle of a siege, the dwarf mounts up and heads into one of his first proper battles because no one else is willing. This action indicates that even the most unlikely of men, who has never been adept at physical fighting or particularly interested in risking his own life, has the ability and the inclination to go to war. His bravery is also a very Tolkienesque indication that heroism can be found in the most unlikely of creatures, going against all customs of masculine heroism. This point is emphasized when Samwell Tarly, a fat and cowardly boy from the Night's Watch, is the only character so far in the series to have slain a White Walker.

In regards to the main dimensions of gender roles in the series, it is arguably a central characteristic that many of the male characters are increasingly emasculated and gradually lose their dignity in one way or another, while the female characters mainly either gain empowerment or are powerful from the very beginning and manage to uphold that power. Eddard Stark's authority declines as soon as he travels south and culminates in his execution; Jaime Lannister loses his sword hand and enters an identity crisis in which he attempts to redefine his lost masculinity; Theon Greyjoy is held captive and tortured until his entire identity has been stripped from him and he has forgotten his own name; Khal Drogo's increasing feelings of tenderness towards Daenerys enables a sorceress to strike at him and kill him, because his guard is down; Viserys Targaryen is feared by Daenerys at first, but gradually she recognizes him to be whiny and ignorant and comes to pity him; and Tywin Lannister, the most respected, feared and brilliant tactical battle commander in the Seven Kingdoms is murdered while on the toilet in the most undignified of deaths.

In contrast, Arya Stark gradually liberates herself from the constraining gender ideals of her childhood and enters training to become an assassin and slay those who hurt her family; Sansa Stark loses any delusions she had growing up about chivalry in the real world and learns to survive in cruel and dangerous surroundings; Margaery Tyrell marries two kings and survives the death of both of them, managing to navigate the scheming royal court in King's Landing; Cersei Lannister murders her oppressive husband and king, Robert Baratheon, and for a time rules the realm on behalf of her son, Joffrey; Melisandre, the red priestess, gains increasing levels of power and influence over Stannis Baratheon until he all but follows her every word; and Daenerys Targaryen is liberated from the constraining bonds of an oppressive brother and husband, seizes her own destiny and becomes master of her own universe like no other female character in the series.

The vast majority of victims of violence, mutilation, torture and death in the series are undoubtedly male, and at least when regarding war and combat it is expected of men to take the risk in order to protect women as well as children. Executions and torture are not something most of the male characters would let a woman suffer through. An example is Cersei's walk of shame in *A Dance with Dragons* (book 5.2): she is condemned for murder, fornication and treason against the crown and her punishment is to walk naked through the streets of King's Landing while enduring the harassment and ridicule of the people around her. Once the shameful walk has ended, she is absolved of all her sins and can go back to her life as it was. Humiliation and being sexually objectified seem to suffice as punishment for the women, while the men are simply unceremoniously killed, signifying a biased belief that men's lives are disposable while women's lives are too valuable to squander in such a manner.

#### 4.2.2 NEGATIVE PORTRAYALS

In *The Masculine Mystique*, Andrew Kimbrell narrates some of the more radical opinions of feminists and misandrists. According to him, Women's Studies have turned into a systematic attack on masculinity where they vocalize opinions like: *"women empower themselves by realizing that all their troubles result from patriarchy"*<sup>56</sup>. The gospel of misandry among radical feminists, the hegemonic masculinity ideal that men must uphold and the emerging custom of depicting men in the media as comical and ridiculous – these practices may be traceable in literary male characters. While misandry is less prevalent in the gender debate today, some of its notions have survived; for example the fact that some negative character traits have become automatically associable with masculinity, like cynicism, emotional detachment, self-interest, a strong drive for power and money, manipulation, intimidation, the act of seeking conflict rather than avoiding it, aggression, polygamy as opposed to monogamy, being sex-oriented as opposed to love-oriented, and being more willing to initiate war than women are<sup>57</sup>. This begs the question of whether the male characters in *A Song of Ice and Fire* are portrayed in negative terms to a lower or higher degree than the female characters.

I would argue that there are three female characters that can be described as 'villains' in Martin's series. They are complex personalities whose actions provide them with a certain level of evil agency in the plot, while still facilitating a small level of understanding and sympathy on behalf of the reader. Cersei Lannister is ruled by her need to be recognized as an equal to the men surrounding her at the royal court, which in itself is an understandable sentiment. Unfortunately, her temper, ignorance and extreme demand for vindication whenever she feels wronged destroy any feelings of sympathy one might have for her initially. She manages to alienate all her true allies and surrounds herself with fools, effectively digging her own grave.

Melisandre, the red priestess supporting Stannis Baratheon, is ruled by her fanaticism and faith in a cruel and savage religion that demands human sacrifice,

*"When the red star bleeds and the darkness gathers, Azor Ahai shall be born again amidst smoke and salt to wake dragons out of stone. The bleeding star has come and gone, and Dragonstone is the place of smoke and salt. Stannis Baratheon is Azor Ahai reborn!" Her red eyes blazed like twin fires, and seemed to stare deep into his soul" (3.1-349).*

The nature of this religion explains why Melisandre can be defined as a villain. She is no more or less than a fanatic willing to sacrifice for her god any man, woman or child by burning them alive.

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<sup>56</sup> Andrew Kimbrell, *The Masculine Mystique: The Politics of Masculinity* (New York: Ballantine Books, Random House, 1995), 19.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 17.

Shae is the prostitute that Tyrion falls in love with; she then betrays him and he strangles her to death in a fit of grief and rage when he discovers her in his father's bed. She is ruled, above all, by her sense of self-preservation; when Tyrion falls from grace she does not hesitate to leave him behind. From an objective perspective, self-preservation does not seem completely unreasonable considering Shae's station in society and the struggles she faces to stay alive. The reason for one's animosity towards her is that Tyrion is such a sympathetic character and anyone that harms him will likely lose the reader's sympathy. The elements of villainy in each of these female characters are caused by very different motivations, making female villainy a multi-faceted and diverse entity in the series.

In contrast, almost all of the male 'villains' in the series are portrayed as such by the presence of either an inclination towards excessive violence, or a complete lack of scruples. These are the two main proponents of male villainy in George R.R. Martin's narrative. The sheer amount of male characters that exhibit unscrupulousness is so great that this characteristic has almost become the norm for male gender in Martin's series; and those who are not in possession of this trait stand out as an 'other', subordinate form of masculinity that is separate from the custom. Characters like Tywin Lannister and Roose Bolton are relevant examples of men who value unscrupulousness, ambition and cruelty; Tywin is provided with a slightly more complex character development than Roose when certain aspects of his childhood are revealed, which partly explain his brutality and ambitions. However, both men seem to be the embodiment of detached male cynicism and cruelty, as is shown in the following tale of how Roose Bolton met the mother of his bastard, Ramsay:

*"I was hunting a fox along the Weeping Water when I chanced upon a mill and saw a young woman washing clothes in the stream. The old miller had gotten himself a new young wife, a girl not half his age. She was a tall, willowy creature, very healthy-looking. Long legs and small firm breasts, like two ripe plums. Pretty, in a common sort of way. The moment that I set eyes on her I wanted her. Such was my due [...] This miller's marriage had been performed without my leave or knowledge. The man had cheated me. So I had him hanged, and claimed my rights beneath the tree where he was swaying. If truth be told, the wench was hardly worth the rope. The fox escaped as well, and on our way back to the Dreadfort my favorite courser came up lame, so all in all it was a dismal day" (5.1-499/500).*

Roose exhibits both a condescension for lower classes of society and an ingrained arrogance born of belonging to a higher station. He also expresses an almost psychotic lack of empathy and indifference to the emotions of others. The only quality of his that breeds any sort of positive feeling towards him is his brilliant tactical and political mind, which can only be admired for its single-minded determination.

Excessive violence is the other central proponent of male villainy in George R.R. Martin's series. Characters like Joffrey Baratheon, Ramsay Snow, Ser Gregor Clegane (the Mountain), the men who cut off Jaime Lannister's hand and almost every man residing on the Iron Islands – these male characters all let



themselves be driven by aggression, blood thirst and dominance over others. Martin's world is filled with men willing to kill for a word in the most savage of ways – and taking great pleasure in the act itself, which rules out the possibility that these men feel pressured into acting this way in order to confirm their hegemonic manhood. This savagery in the male gender is so pronounced in the series that it, similarly to unscrupulousness, borders on being depicted as customary male behavior. Refraining from giving in to this bloody aggression is thereby regarded as being a choice beyond the ordinary, something that resists the natural inclinations of masculinity.

#### 4.2.3 OVERSIMPLIFICATION

The three female 'villains' I mentioned earlier (Cersei, Melisandre and Shae) each have sympathetic elements to their personalities – vulnerabilities, weaknesses and strengths. Similarly, the mostly sympathetic female characters have small elements of villainy in them, suggesting that George R.R. Martin has succeeded in creating three-dimensional and human female characters. Melisandre is the female character that comes closest to being portrayed in a stereotypical fashion; she embodies the traditional lethal temptress,

*"Melisandre moved closer. "With another man, though... a man whose flames still burn hot and high... if you truly wish to serve your king's cause, come to my chamber one night. I could give you pleasure such as you have never known, and with your life-fire I could make..."*  
*"... a horror." Davos retreated from her" (3.1-347).*

However, the motivation that drives her is a fanatic religious belief, which is not solely associated with femininity in the traditional sense. Cersei Lannister's treachery and deception are characteristics of the classic female villain, but the fact that she fails in all her endeavors and gradually manages to dig her own grave is not.

The negative portrayals of males, on the other hand, are closely related to stereotypes, because the preconceptions of masculinity are a main proponent in the identification of many of these male villains. They are cruel, unscrupulous, excessively violent and driven by self-interest and fail to exhibit any sort of vulnerability or humane behavior. Ser Gregor Clegane, the Mountain, is a principal example of the excessively violent and sadistic male monster who relishes bloodshed and the dominance of women,

*"Elia of Dorne," they all heard Ser Gregor say, when they were close enough to kiss. His deep voice boomed within the helm. "I killed her screaming whelp." He thrust his free hand into Oberyn's unprotected face, pushing steel fingers into his eyes. "Then I raped her." Clegane slammed his fist into the Dornishman's mouth, making splinters of his teeth. "Then I smashed her fucking head in. Like this." As he drew back his huge fist, the blood on his gauntlet seemed to smoke in the cold dawn air. There was a sickening crunch" (3.2-401/402).*

Almost all of the male characters (both main and peripheral) are driven in some way by their sexuality, either by being portrayed as men whose downfall is brought about because of their sexual urges or by

being portrayed as sadistic sexual predators who feel no remorse at using, dominating and assaulting women. Robb Stark, Jon Snow, Tyrion Lannister, Khal Drogo and Ser Arys Oakheart can all be argued to have suffered from their sexual need. Robb Stark experiences a moment of weakness with a highborn virgin and is duty-bound to wed her, which invariably leads to his assassination after he broke off his existing engagement to a daughter of the proud and vindictive Lord Walder Frey. Jon Snow falls in love with a wildling woman who continually attempts to seduce him and finally succeeds, which results in an increasing respect for her people; consequently he is betrayed by his fellow brothers of the Night's Watch because they feel he has become too sympathetic to the wildlings' cause. Tyrion Lannister puts his trust in the prostitute, Shae, who betrays him after a lengthy affair. Khal Drogo, the brutish and savage warrior, is tamed and domesticated by Daenerys through sex and his resulting softness towards her enables a sorceress to move close and poison him. Ser Arys Oakheart is seduced by the Princess Arianne of Dorne and manipulated into kidnapping Princess Myrcella (Cersei Lannister's daughter), which leads to his death. Cersei is portrayed as a master temptress, who utilizes her own sexuality to manipulate men who are unable to think straight when near her,

*"He frowned. "The Wall is cold."*

*"And I am warm." Cersei put her arms about his neck. "Bed a girl and kill a boy and I am yours. Do you have the courage?"*

*Osney thought a moment before he nodded. "I am your man."*

*"You are, ser." She kissed him, and let him have a little taste of tongue before she broke away. "Enough for now. The rest must wait. Will you dream of me tonight?"*

*"Aye." His voice was hoarse" (4-284).*

Varys the eunuch is a very interesting character to examine from this perspective. He is a very mysterious character, whose true agenda stays hidden throughout the series, only to be revealed slightly as late as the fifth book. Not a single one of the other characters trusts him, because he keeps his motivations hidden from the world. Varys himself has commented that *"[truly], no one loves a eunuch"* (1-609) when Eddard Stark shows his distrust, which connects other men's distrust of him to the fact that he has no reproductive parts. Because with no sexual urges he is free of the compulsions that force other men to act in accordance with their sexual needs. It makes him unpredictable, to which it inevitably follows that the other characters therefore *are* predictable.

Many of the males with villainous traits are identified as such because they lack a complexity that might provide them with a few redeeming qualities and enable the reader to feel a modicum of sympathy and understanding for them. An issue with many of the lesser developed male characters (those denied their own narrative chapters) is a lack of involvement as the plot progresses. A character like Littlefinger is an example of this lack of development. He is present for most of the major events throughout all five books, always featuring as the puppet master playing political games with the utmost skill. He has a hand in most

of the events that take place and therefore has essential influence upon the plot – and yet his personality undergoes no form of development whatsoever. He is the embodiment of the post-Industrial Age masculinity described by both Andrew Kimbrell and Anthony Synnott as valorizing success, profit, personal ambition and rags-to-riches. He is a firm advocate for a Machiavellian form of power, letting wolves and lions tear themselves apart while he lies in wait in his foxhole until the opportune moment.

*“So,” Lord Petyr continued after a pause, utterly unabashed, “what’s in your pot for me?”  
“Harrenhal.”*

*It was interesting to watch his face. Lord Petyr’s father had been the smallest of small lords, his grandfather a landless hedge knight; by birth, he held no more than a few stony acres on the windswept shore of the Fingers. Harrenhal was one of the richest plums in the Seven Kingdoms, its lands broad and rich and fertile, its great castle as formidable as any in the realm... [...]*

*Littlefinger took a moment to adjust the drape of his cape, but Tyrion had seen the flash of hunger in those sly cat’s eyes. I have him, he knew. “Harrenhal is cursed,” Lord Petyr said after a moment, trying to sound bored” (2-250).*

This is one of the very rare moments when Littlefinger shows a hint of vulnerability; otherwise his detached amusement and sharp intelligence always stay in place. The only aspect of vulnerability indicated regards his childhood when he was in love with Catelyn Tully (now Stark) and challenged the much older and stronger Brandon Stark to a duel for her hand in marriage. Ever since that humiliation he has resented the traditional form of physical masculinity, instead valuing mental prowess and the art of manipulation. His boyhood, while providing depth to his character, is long gone by the time the narrative of the first book begins and Littlefinger’s nature stays the same throughout the series. He has one cause, personal ambition, and seeks it with single-minded determination without suggesting even a hint of emotion. The boyish love he once bore Catelyn Stark has transformed into a dark desire for her daughter, Sansa, and yet he is not ruled by that desire. Power and how to gain it is always at the forefront of his mind.

Khal Drogo, Daenerys’ horse lord husband, is a two-dimensional character lacking any sort of complexity. He is a marginalized figure who is only present in order to embellish Daenerys’ character. As soon as Dany’s personal empowerment enables her to evolve beyond what Khal Drogo can provide, he is killed in order to liberate her further from any constraining male bonds. Another two-dimensional character is Ser Alliser Thorne, a man of the Night’s Watch. The sole purpose of his presence in the narrative is to act as an antagonist to our hero on the Wall, Jon Snow. No such marginalized characters like these two exist among the females. Each and every woman in *A Song of Ice and Fire*, main character or peripheral, portrays both strengths and weaknesses, vulnerabilities, light and dark.

The fact that every one of George R.R. Martin’s stereotypical characters is male is quite telling. As soon as one moves away from the main characters in the series and starts focusing on the peripheral characters, it



seems that Martin has developed his females more fully than the males. Undoubtedly Martin is aware that if he were to create a stereotypical or predictable female (one whose villainy, for example, was based entirely on traditionally feminine traits like frailty, excessive emotion and passivity) he would be criticized for it immediately. He has been very adept at creating fully developed and well-rounded females and seems to have forgotten to do the same for the males, whose peripheral presence fills out the vacuum with their lack of scruples, their excessive love of violence and their natural aptitude for cruelty.



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## 5 CONCLUSION

Men's movement scholars like Andrew Kimbrell and Anthony Synnott have argued that men today are struggling with the expectations of past ideals; by examining statistical data to do with social conditions in contemporary society it does express that men are in some sort of crisis. They fall victim to a range of different social issues at a much more serious rate than women, like various illnesses, work accidents, military deaths, crime and violence, substance abuse, unemployment and homelessness. According to Andrew Kimbrell and Anthony Synnott, this crisis has been brought about by the demanding expectations of a hegemonic ideal that has become impossible to uphold. This ideal demands from men limitless success in almost every aspect of their lives and the constant concealment of weakness and vulnerability. The extensive pressure imposed upon men (by women, by other men and by themselves) has resulted in social issues that are negatively discrepant towards them.

The continued struggle for equal rights for women is still highly visible in the media and the gender debate today. But if men are indeed in such crisis, how can our society still be patriarchal in nature? For countless years, the masculine ideal has been associated with hegemony and the oppression of nature, of other men and of women. But the cold facts of men's position in society suggest that masculinity today is defined by a confusing mass of contradictions, opposing attitudes and, above all, crisis. Postmodern society seems to no longer be determined by the principles of a patriarchal system.

Social conditions are often visible in the various productions of the arts. It used to be that women in fictional literature mirrored the oppression and marginalization of women in real life. Now that social conditions seem to be shifting, it has been worth asking in this thesis whether the gender perspective in literature has done the same.

Several scholars and a score of critics, fans and literary commentators have all researched the female gender perspective in George R.R. Martin's fantasy series, *A Song of Ice and Fire*, while the aspect of masculinity in Martin's series has not been awarded a similar focus. This thesis has been written with the aim of rectifying that apparent gap in the scholarship. Since it has already been concluded by many that George R.R. Martin has managed to create empowered and subversive female characters in a literary genre usually defined by feminine generalization and simplification, I have asked myself whether Martin is equally as enlightened regarding the male characters in his series. I have defined gender enlightenment as the creation of complex and dynamic characters that represent some aspect of real life, of contemporary society, and have analyzed two main male characters of the series based on these criteria.

Eddard Stark's character is the embodiment of tradition and the pre-capitalist male who values the virtues of a feudal society of inheritance and social hierarchy. As George R.R. Martin's universe is increasingly identified by postmodern ideals of personal ambition and the pursuit of success, Ned Stark's outdated

principles and beliefs are unable to save him, as his authority and dominance gradually decline in this new world defined by rules he does not understand.

Ned's outdated perspective on gender is heavily influenced by chivalry and the past ideals of romance, when men were honorable knights and women were gentle ladies. While Ned's intentions are noble, as he regards women as beings to be cherished and protected, in practice his actions are suggestive of suppression and infantilization. When attempting to protect his wife, Catelyn, he unwittingly belittles her by robbing her of agency and concealing her part in the events taking place. Catelyn's own behavior only reinforces this oppressive relationship, signifying that she is equally as supportive of traditional gender roles as he is. As static as Ned is in regards to values of honor and duty, he is equally as immovable concerning gender roles; men and women answer to strictly different manners of conduct to which there is a complete lack of ambiguity.

At first I saw it as a sign of complexity and development in Ned's character, when he decided to proclaim himself a traitor who plotted to remove Joffrey, the rightful heir, from the Iron Throne. When this rigidly honorable and exceedingly righteous man decided to lie and discard his own honor for the sake of protecting his children I interpreted his loss of honor as the culmination of his decline. His personal crisis and inner turmoil constituted the complexity I was searching for in a three-dimensional and dynamic character and my interpretation of him was influenced by this belief. However, after analyzing Jaime Lannister's character and learning what complexity in Martin's series *really* is, I realized how static and unchangeable Ned Stark is. Sacrificing his own life and legacy to protect his family constitutes the highest of honorable actions, which means that he in fact does not change at all throughout the first book but retains his honor until the very last. Rather, I have come to realize that his premature death is the most significant aspect of his character. He dies two-thirds into the first volume and it is George R.R. Martin's deliberate choice for this plot development to symbolize the death of tradition and the end of comfortable certainty of fixed gender roles, as new rules of society and definitions of gender move into position. Ned represents the man who is unable to adapt to the new age.

In contrast, Jaime Lannister is a highly complex and dynamic character who is a much more reliable representative of postmodern masculinity. Therefore, he is infinitely more interesting when aiming to answer the problem formulation of this thesis (and the length of Jaime's analysis reflects that interest). One's initial impression is that he manages to uphold the hegemonic ideal of a masculine self; he is largely a victorious warrior, handsome and charismatic, and so emotionally detached that he finds amusement in all experiences of life, no matter how dire, because he is above all indifferent to all the events taking place. But once he is given a voice of his own in the third volume of the series this veneer of amused indifference starts to crack; and it shatters completely when he loses his sword hand, and his masculinity and entire

identity with it. Prior to losing his sword hand, Jaime struggles against exhibiting any of the 'softer' qualities of humanity that have usually been associated with femininity. His feigned indifference, constant amusement and emotionally detached behavior are all a means to conceal his anxiety at having his masculinity called into question.

The calculated and unscrupulous nature of his father, and the sadistic nature of the king he was sworn to protect, result in Jaime's early divergence from the traditional ideals of chivalry as he realizes that men rarely live up to these ideals of honor and justice. The condemnation that Jaime must suffer through after killing the king is reminiscent of the condemnation men in modern society have had to endure in the past few decades as the gospel of misandry was introduced by radical feminists. Jaime's disillusionment and consequent, defiant response is to become the coldhearted and cynical personality that they all believe him to be: the Kingslayer-persona. Here George R.R. Martin suggests that misandry indeed breeds the very behavior that it condemns.

Losing his sword hand is the most crucial turning point for Jaime. This act symbolizes the end of his hegemonic masculinity, his identity (his *occupation*) as a warrior and his Kingslayer-persona. The consequent period of emasculation and crippling powerlessness almost succeeds in claiming his life, but the nearness of a woman saves him. Despite her manly appearance, Brienne awakens Jaime's sexuality and helps to reconnect him with his lost masculinity. She also awakens in him long-dead chivalrous urges to protect her and others unable to defend themselves. He finally accepts an inner longing to reclaim his honor and to be acknowledged as someone other than the Kingslayer.

But the process is a complicated affair. Vacillating between his Kingslayer-persona and the new form of masculinity emerging within him, Jaime struggles to find purchase in his new identity as an emotional man and this movement back and forth is a testament to the complexity of his character. It symbolizes the dynamic nature of masculinity in our postmodern society where the boundaries between genders have shifted, converged and transformed and men are struggling to define themselves. Gradually, Jaime learns to accept his new form of masculinity. The development of his character signifies a critique of the hegemonic ideal, by pointing out its flaws and arguing that a man can be courageous, strong and heroic *and* show emotion and vulnerability without it diminishing his self-identification as a man. I believe that Jaime's character constitutes George R.R. Martin's ideal of what a man should be, or rather what he is capable of being, in a postmodern society where masculinity is a vague and ambiguous term.

In addition to examining two of the main characters in the series, I decided to investigate whether George R.R. Martin was equally as enlightened in the portrayal of his more peripheral characters, as I have found him to be in his main male characters. I had a presumption that he might not be as attentive to the pitfalls one must avoid when creating gender relations in his peripheral, and therefore less developed, characters.





In the past, Feminist Revisionism managed to facilitate cultural and social change by revealing literary traditions and their underlying social tendencies. Inspired by this practice, I have therefore attempted to point out possible issues in George R.R. Martin's series that might, down the line, similarly facilitate social improvement for men.

I have come to find that in the more peripheral male characters, Martin's gender enlightenment falters. Men are victimized by violence and death at a far higher rate than women in the series and it is often regarded as the natural state of the world that it should be so. The males are expected to sacrifice their own lives for the sake of protecting the women, as when Tyrion Lannister rides into battle when no one else will, into a situation that seems all but hopeless – his act is portrayed as both heroic and right, as he embraces the ingrained courage within himself. The violence against men is described often and in great detail, while violence against women rarely progresses beyond a threat. Consider the fact that Jaime Lannister's hand is cut off on the first day of their capture by the Brave Companions, while Brienne is threatened with rape every day without it ever coming to pass.

Female villainy in the series is a multi-faceted and varied concept, caused by diverse and individual elements of the female characters' personalities. In contrast, male villainy is almost exclusively caused by either a lack of scruples or an enjoyment of excessive violence; these two traits have become largely associated with men after many negative portrayals from radical feminists and, in fact, in George R.R. Martin's series these traits are so commonplace that they have become naturally inherent aspects of masculinity in these peripheral characters. In addition, there are examples of some highly simplified male characters with no trace of development or real depth. Khal Drogo, the horse lord husband of Daenerys Targaryen, is an overly masculine and almost animalistic character who rarely speaks and exists solely to embellish her character. Once Daenerys has no more need of him he is removed from the narrative and she is able to evolve beyond his primitive world.

In conclusion, while the peripheral female characters also show depth and complexity, the peripheral male characters are largely lacking of these elaborative aspects. Their presence seems rather to fill up the background with their pleasure at excessive violence, lack of scruples and natural aptitude for cruelty. In this publication of Martin's, which has been chiefly praised as a work of gender enlightenment, men have still been marginalized to a certain extent, a fact which has remained mostly unexamined by scholars and other commentators so far. That said, George R.R. Martin has succeeded in creating diverse and dynamic main characters, both male and female. In the character of Jaime Lannister he has embodied many of the struggles that men face in postmodern society as they attempt to define their own identities in a society with continuously evolving gender roles. *A Song of Ice and Fire* is an excellent example of the development of complex gender roles in a genre acknowledged for the lack thereof – but there is room for improvement!



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## 7 APPENDICES

### 7.1 STATISTICAL DATA ON SOCIAL CRISES

In the following are statistical facts that support the notion that men and masculinity are in crisis today. The sheer amount of social issues that target men more frequently than women are a testament to that fact. I have chosen not to include this chapter in the main report because it seemed unnecessary to include a description this detailed in order to illustrate the fact that men in America today are struggling on many accounts. However, I always felt that the information here helps greatly in emphasizing the severity of the issues men face, which is why it has been included here instead.

Men's work hours have seen dramatic changes since the arrival of capitalism. During pre-capitalist, feudal times people did not work very long hours, since they were dependent on the rise and setting of the sun and the changing seasons. In 1850, however, the average workweek was comprised of almost 70 hours – 52 weeks a year<sup>58</sup>. And even though labor movements and increased technology have reduced those prodigious work hours throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the average amount of hours worked in the United States today is still higher than it was prior to the Industrial Revolution. In the following are a range of different social issues in which especially men are the victims. These issues are connected to the fact that many men overwork themselves in order to never be viewed as weak or emasculated. Andrew Kimbrell calls it the masculine mystique – the need to uphold the hegemonic masculine ideal in order to be called a man:

- Heart disease, cancer and chronic lung disease have been the three most fatal illnesses in the United States in recent years and they target men far more often than women (although women's statistics are gaining on the men due to more women pursuing ambitious careers)<sup>59</sup>. The pressure and stress of having to outperform oneself every day in order to keep moving upwards in one's career is one main reason for this disproportionate negative rate for men. Although Kimbrell's statistics are twenty years old, they have not changed much today:

*“For men between the ages of twenty-five and sixty-five, the death rate from heart disease is about three times that of women in the same age group. Though heart attacks are also the number-one killer of women, almost three-quarters of women who*

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<sup>58</sup> Joseph Zeisel, “The Workweek in American Industry 1850-1956”, in *Monthly Labor Review* (Vol. 81, No. 1, January 1958), 23. Accessed December 1, 2014.

[http://groups.csail.mit.edu/mac/users/rauch/worktime/hours\\_workweek.html](http://groups.csail.mit.edu/mac/users/rauch/worktime/hours_workweek.html)

<sup>59</sup> Center for Disease Control and Prevention. “National Vital Statistics Report: Volume 63, No. 1 to Present”, 30-32. Accessed November 27, 2014.

[http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/nvsr/nvsr63/nvsr63\\_09.pdf](http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/nvsr/nvsr63/nvsr63_09.pdf)

*die of heart attacks are seventy-five or older. By this time the average man has been dead for two years*<sup>60</sup>.

Synnott also notes men's unwillingness to visit a physician, "*this apparent failure in self-care [as he calls it] is partly a consequence of the traditional male values of stoicism and self-reliance going beyond R.W Emerson to the warrior ideal*"<sup>61</sup>.

- Higher equality between the genders in the last four or five decades has brought with it a higher proportion of women in the job market. But while women comprised 43% of the workforce in the United States in 2012, men fell victim to 92% of all job-related deaths in the same year<sup>62</sup>. Part of this discrepancy has to do with the fact that most work accidents happen in physically demanding jobs, like construction – thus primarily male-dominated industries. However, men are much more likely to take on dangerous tasks in favor of female workers, expressing the idea that women are still the frailer sex that needs to be protected. Emphasizing this notion is the fact that female soldiers in the U.S military have been barred from joining the infantry and live combat units in Iraq and Afghanistan, because of the belief that their presence will undermine "*unit cohesion*"<sup>63</sup>.
- The global recession starting in 2007 had a major impact on employment in the United States. 8,000,000 people lost their jobs during the recession. Three-fourths of them were men, since especially male-dominated industries (eg. factories, agriculture, construction and transportation) took the highest toll. An American study in 2011 interviewed different men whose employment was disrupted during the crisis: "*Some became emotional while talking, even weeping. Many referred to feelings of worthlessness or a loss of dignity after losing their jobs. Depression was common*"<sup>64</sup>.
- The majority of homeless people in the United States are single adult males. On any given night in January 2013, there were over 600,000 people living on the streets – approximately 67% of them were adult males. The reasons for their homelessness are connected to gender-specific social issues; men are more likely to be veterans suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder and less likely to seek help for their mental illness or substance abuse. Additionally, for someone

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<sup>60</sup> Andrew Kimbrell, *The Masculine Mystique: The Politics of Masculinity* (New York: Ballantine Books, Random House, 1995), 4.

<sup>61</sup> Anthony Synnott, *Rethinking Men: Heroes, Villains and Victims* (Surrey: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2009), 216.

<sup>62</sup> U.S Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics. "Fatal work injuries and hours worked, by gender of worker, 2012", 8. Accessed November 27, 2014. <http://www.bls.gov/iif/oshwc/cfoi/cfch0011.pdf>

<sup>63</sup> CNN, "By the numbers: Women in the U.S. military", Accessed December 3, 2014. <http://edition.cnn.com/2013/01/24/us/military-women-glance/>

<sup>64</sup> Stephanie Pappas, "'Mancession' Shifts Gender Roles" *Live Science*. Accessed November 25, 2014. <http://www.livescience.com/15695-mancection-recession-shifts-gender-roles.html>



whose work is an integral part of their identity, unemployment can mean losing all direction in life so that homelessness seems the only option<sup>65</sup>.

- As mentioned, winning competitions (of any sort) is a core characteristic of the postmodern male. It lets him distinguish himself among his equals and show off his masculinity for admiration. This notion is distinctly embodied in the practice of sports, where the lean and hard physical ideal must be upheld by men and boys in order to achieve victory. In 2013, the U.S Food and Drug Administration estimated that 550,000 high school students had used anabolic steroids at least once in their lives. 70% of these were young men<sup>66</sup>. Side effects of using this illegal drug and other growth hormones include *“fertility problems, impotence, high blood pressure and cholesterol, and heart and liver abnormalities”*<sup>67</sup> – and yet in spite of these detrimental effects, young men are willing to risk their own health in order to fulfill the current stereotype of what a man ‘should’ look like. It is worth mentioning that the boys who fail to meet the physical demands of the masculine ideal are often bullied in school and will grow up to resent the traditional definition of physical masculinities – and resent the men who manage to live up to that ideal, be they athletes or powerful and charismatic career men.
- Alcoholism and drug addiction have always been a man’s crisis. With the freedom men have enjoyed in society in the past and a higher affluence than women, they have had easier access to indulging themselves with drink and substance abuse. While an increased level of equality between the genders has also resulted in an unwelcome rise in women’s alcoholism and drug addiction, the statistics are still vastly negative towards men, who comprise two-thirds of addicts and two-thirds of all drug- and alcohol-induced deaths in America<sup>68</sup>.
- Kimbrell writes, *“As of 1992, men were about three and a half times more likely to be victims of murder than women”*<sup>69</sup>, and this statistic has only grown worse over the last twenty years. Men were the victims of 80% of all homicides and fatal assault cases in the United States in 2012<sup>70</sup>.

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<sup>65</sup> U.S Department of Housing and Urban Development. “The 2013 Annual Homeless Assessment Report (AHAR) to Congress”. Accessed November 28, 2014.

<https://www.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/ahar-2013-part1.pdf>

<sup>66</sup> U.S Food and Drug Administration. “Teens and Steroids: A Dangerous Combo”, November 2013. Accessed December 1, 2014. <http://www.fda.gov/ForConsumers/ConsumerUpdates/ucm373014.html>

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism. “Alcohol Facts and Statistics”. Accessed November 27, 2014. <http://www.niaaa.nih.gov/alcohol-health/overview-alcohol-consumption/alcohol-facts-and-statistics>

<sup>69</sup> Andrew Kimbrell, *The Masculine Mystique: The Politics of Masculinity* (New York: Ballantine Books, Random House, 1995), 5.

<sup>70</sup> Center for Disease Control and Prevention. “National Vital Statistics Report: Volume 63, No. 1 to Present”, 32. Accessed November 27, 2014.

[http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/nvsr/nvsr63/nvsr63\\_09.pdf](http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/nvsr/nvsr63/nvsr63_09.pdf)

- Men comprise the vast majority of suicides. In 2012, there were 40,600 suicides in the United States – 79% of these were male<sup>71</sup>. Andrew Kimbrell quotes a parent in the introduction of his book, *“They called to say that our son had taken his own life. He’d shot himself. We knew that he’d been depressed, but he never said anything. He never told us he was in trouble. He never asked for help”*<sup>72</sup>. The unwillingness among men to admit weakness because it is viewed as unmasculine has a highly damaging effect on American men in our society.
- Depression as a mental illness has primarily been associated with women, who are diagnosed twice as frequently as men. However, gender psychologist Christopher Kilmartin writes that *“evidence from differential rates of substance abuse, incarceration, and especially suicide calls into question the assumption that men are less susceptible than women to depression”*<sup>73</sup>. Men’s unwillingness to admit their supposed weakness is a reason why health personnel are unable to recognize the signs of depression and other mental illnesses. Without a proper diagnosis, therefore, many men are left underdiagnosed and undertreated.

All the issues above have resulted in a major difference in life expectancy between men and women. In 1920, the life expectancy of the genders was about the same<sup>74</sup>. As I write, there is a six-year gap in the life expectancy of the white American male and female (an intersectional approach between Caucasians and African-Americans would reveal an even more dramatic difference in life expectancy)<sup>75</sup>. The cold statistics of men’s lives in contemporary society are a clear indication of the struggles they face; and yet most men are still unwilling to accept or admit that there is even a problem, which makes improvement of these matters difficult.

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<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

<sup>72</sup> Andrew Kimbrell, *The Masculine Mystique: The Politics of Masculinity* (New York: Ballantine Books, Random House, 1995), xii.

<sup>73</sup> Christopher Kilmartin, “Depression in men: communication, diagnosis and therapy”, in *Journal of Men’s Health and Gender* (Volume 2, No. 1, 2005), 95-99.

<sup>74</sup> Andrew Kimbrell, *The Masculine Mystique: The Politics of Masculinity* (New York: Ballantine Books, Random House, 1995), 4.

<sup>75</sup> World Life Expectancy, website accessed December 1, 2014.

<http://www.worldlifeexpectancy.com/usa/life-expectancy>

## 7.2 CHARACTER GALLERY

### - Eddard Stark, Lord of Winterfell and Warden of the North

- his wife, Lady Catelyn of House Tully
- their children:
  - Robb, eldest son and heir, fifteen years of age
  - Sansa, eldest daughter, eleven
  - Arya, younger daughter, nine
  - Bran, second youngest son, seven
  - Rickon, youngest son, three
- his bastard son, Jon Snow, mother unknown, fourteen
  - Jon's lover, Ygritte, a wildling woman

### - Robert Baratheon, King of the Seven Kingdoms, Lord Protector of the Realm

- his wife, Queen Cersei of House Lannister
- their children:
  - Prince Joffrey, heir to the Iron Throne, twelve years of age
  - Princess Myrcella, eight
  - Prince Tommen, seven

### - Tywin Lannister, Lord of Casterly Rock and Warden of the West

- his children:
  - Ser Jaime Lannister, Cersei's twin brother and lover
  - Tyrion Lannister, born a dwarf
- Brienne of Tarth, Jaime's friend and protector
- Shae, prostitute and Tyrion's lover

### - Stannis Baratheon, King Robert's younger brother, proclaims himself king after Robert's death

- his wife, Queen Selyse of House Florent
- his red priestess, Melisandre

### - Renly Baratheon, Robert's youngest brother, proclaims himself king after Robert's death

- his wife, Queen Margaery of House Tyrell
- his lover, Loras Tyrell, Queen Margaery's brother

**- Men of the Night's Watch:**

- Jeor Mormont, Lord Commander of the Night's Watch and Jon Snow's guide
- Samwell Tarly, member of the Night's Watch, self-proclaimed coward and Jon Snow's friend

**- The royal court in King's Landing:**

- Petyr 'Littlefinger' Baelish, member of the king's council, Catelyn Tully's childhood friend
- Varys the eunuch, member of the king's council
- Ser Barristan Selmy, Lord Commander of the Kingsguard
  - Other knights of the Kingsguard:
    - Ser Meryn Trant, Ser Boros Blount, Ser Osney and Ser Osmund Kettleblack, Ser Arys Oakheart, Ser Preston Greenfield, Ser Mandon Moore
- Ser Gregor 'the Mountain' Clegane, bannerman to the Lannisters, savage warrior
- Sandor 'the Hound' Clegane, Gregor's younger brother, Prince Joffrey's protector

**- Balon Greyjoy, Lord of the Iron Islands, instigated a failed rebellion against King Robert a decade ago**

- his children:
  - Theon Greyjoy, eldest son, raised as ward with the Starks in Winterfell
  - Asha Greyjoy, daughter and warrior

**- Roose Bolton, Lord of the Dreadfort, bannerman to the Starks in the North**

- his bastard son, Ramsay Snow

**- Daenerys Targaryen, Mad King Aerys' daughter, self-proclaimed queen and Mother of Dragons**

- her husband, Khal Drogo, leader of the Dothraki horse tribe
- her older brother, Viserys Targaryen, heir to the Iron Throne
- her advisor, Ser Jorah Mormont, Jeor Mormont's exiled son



### 7.3 PLOT DESCRIPTION OF A SONG OF ICE AND FIRE

A king rules the Seven Kingdoms of Westeros from the capitol city of King's Landing. In the North, the Wall separates the realm of civilized men from that of the wildlings beyond. The Wall is manned by an ancient brotherhood, the Night's Watch, men sworn to protect the realm from northern threats. Outside the king's control, in the East across the Narrow Sea, are the free cities of Braavos, Pentos and Myr and the slaver cities, Astapor, Yunkai and Meereen. Surrounding these cities tribes of savage horse lords, the Dothraki, continuously roam the grasslands.

Eddard 'Ned' Stark of Winterfell and Robert Baratheon of Storm's End are boyhood friends. During the Rebellion fifteen years prior to the opening chapter of *A Game of Thrones*, Robert (supported by Ned) rises against the Mad King, Aerys Targaryen, and claims the throne. King Aerys is slain by a member of his own Kingsguard, Jaime Lannister of Casterly Rock, while Robert defeats Aerys' heir, Prince Rhaegar Targaryen, upon the battlefield. Since then has been an era of peace, only shortly interrupted ten years ago when Balon Greyjoy's rebellion was quelled (and his young son Theon Greyjoy came home to Winterfell with Eddard Stark to be raised as a ward, a glorified hostage).

In this universe, seasons can last several years and just as the first book begins, a long summer that has lasted a decade is coming to an end and Winter is Coming.

#### *A Game of Thrones, Book 1:*

A threat is gathering north of the Wall, one still unknown to the rest of the realm. Supernatural beings called White Walkers stalk through the icy woods, slaying men of the Night's Watch and raising them from the dead again as mindless, blue-eyed wights.

It has been fifteen years since Robert Baratheon claimed the Iron Throne and in Winterfell, Ned Stark rules as Warden of the North when he receives news that his childhood mentor, Jon Arryn of the Eyrie who has served as Hand of the King (the king's most trusted councilor), has died and King Robert is riding for Winterfell. With him travel also his queen, Cersei Lannister; his heir, Prince Joffrey, and the queen's brothers, Jaime and Tyrion Lannister. Jaime serves as a knight in the Kingsguard, while Tyrion has the physique of a stunted dwarf and has had to rely on his wits rather than his sword arm all his life.

Before their arrival, Ned and his six children find a dead direwolf in the woods – the children adopt the six wolf pups that are still alive, one for each to raise as their own.

Ned accepts the position as Robert's new Hand, replacing the deceased Jon Arryn, and also accepts the betrothal between his eldest daughter, Sansa, and the crown prince, Joffrey. Deciding that there must always be a Stark in Winterfell, only Ned and his four youngest children are planning to travel south with the king's party – his wife Catelyn and eldest son, Robb, are to stay in Winterfell to manage the north in his



absence. Before the king's party have departed, however, Ned's son Bran mysteriously falls from a tower window and is left in a coma (in reality, Bran stumbles upon Cersei and Jaime Lannister, twin siblings, in the throes of passion so Jaime pushes him out the window to conceal the truth). When Bran wakes he is not only paralyzed from the waist down but also cannot remember why he fell, but another attempt is made on his life when a man is sent to kill him in his bed with a dagger. In addition, a message in the night from Jon Arryn's widow, Lysa, claims that Jon Arryn was murdered by the Lannisters, the queen's family. Ned Stark and his two daughters depart for the capitol with the king, leaving Catelyn and three sons in Winterfell. Due to events long in the past, there is no love lost between Ned and the Lannister family and tensions rise on the journey south. Prince Joffrey's cruelty results in the unreasonable killing of Sansa's wolf pup and Arya forces her wolf pup to run away in order to save its life.

At court in King's Landing, Ned Stark investigates Jon Arryn's murder with the help of Littlefinger, who sits on the king's council and is Catelyn's childhood friend. Unbeknownst to Ned, however, the deceitful Littlefinger is the person behind Jon Arryn's murder and the second attempt on Bran's life. His aim is to incite war between the Starks and Lannisters for his personal gain. Encouraged by Littlefinger, Catelyn Stark decides to seize Tyrion Lannister on the road and bring him to her sister, Lysa (Jon Arryn's widow), for the trial of Jon Arryn's murder and the attempt on Bran's life. Tyrion survives the ordeal by using his wits and departs. Prior to his release, however, Jaime Lannister attacks Ned Stark in the streets of King's Landing as revenge for his brother's capture and Ned is grievously wounded.

Gradually, Ned's investigation reveals the truth: that King Robert and Queen Cersei's children are not his by blood; they are the result of her life-long affair with her twin brother, Jaime. Joffrey, therefore, is not the rightful heir to the throne – King Robert's brother, Stannis, is. Ned confronts Cersei with the truth and informs her that he plans on revealing everything to the king as soon as he returns from his hunt. But Cersei brings about King Robert's death before Ned has that chance. Ned is betrayed by Littlefinger and thrown in the dungeons of the Red Keep on the grounds of treason and plotting against the rightful king, Joffrey.

Ned is offered a chance to live out the rest of his life in exile on the Wall, if only he will confess to his treason and proclaim Joffrey as the rightful heir to the Iron Throne. He agrees to keep his daughters safe, but Joffrey is more vindictive than anyone realized. After Ned's faux confession, Joffrey demands his execution anyway and Ned Stark is decapitated.

Ned's wife, Catelyn, and their eldest son, Robb, go to war against the Lannisters in retaliation for his death, manage to capture Jaime Lannister on the battlefield and keep him imprisoned at Riverrun. Robb's bannermen proclaim him King-in-the-North and emancipate themselves from King Joffrey's unjust rule. Meanwhile, Tywin Lannister (Joffrey's grandfather) sends his son Tyrion to King's Landing to rule as Hand of the King on his behalf.



While all this takes place, there are two smaller plotlines developing simultaneously. **Jon Snow**, Ned Stark's bastard son, starts a new life at the Wall as a member of the Night's Watch. He befriends the self-proclaimed coward and fat boy, Samwell Tarly, and proves his worth to his commanders. He is appointed personal steward to Lord Commander Mormont as a means to groom him for command later in life. His wolf pup finds a dismembered hand in the silent woods north of the Wall and leads the men to the corpses of two rangers of the Night's Watch. That same night, one of these corpses comes alive again and attempts to murder the Lord Commander in his bed, but Jon Snow and his wolf save him. Lord Commander Mormont decides that the Night's Watch will ride out beyond the Wall with almost the entirety of their strength, three hundred men, to find out the truth of these 'wights' that will not die.

The third plotline concerns **Daenerys Targaryen** and her brother, Viserys. They are the surviving children of Mad King Aerys and have lived in exile across the Narrow Sea all their lives, because King Robert wants them both dead. Viserys dreams of nothing else than reclaiming his birthright, the Iron Throne, so he sells Daenerys to the master of the horse tribes, Khal Drogo, in exchange for an army of savage warriors that can help him conquer the Seven Kingdoms of Westeros.

At her and Khal Drogo's wedding, Daenerys is gifted with three dragon eggs, petrified in stone by the ages. Terrified at first of what married life entails, she is taught the art of lovemaking by her handmaiden and gradually gains empowerment as Khal Drogo's queen. Her sadistic and selfish brother Viserys is killed by her husband after he threatens her life and Daenerys learns that she is pregnant. After a failed assassination attempt ordered by King Robert (who is anxious to quell any risk of rebellion), Khal Drogo vows to travel west in vengeance and conquer the Seven Kingdoms for his beloved queen. But before he has a chance to make good on his word, a sorceress from an abused tribe of peasants manages to trick Daenerys and poison Drogo who dies. Daenerys loses her unborn child. She then proceeds to walk into the fires of Drogo's funeral pyre with her petrified dragon eggs and emerges from the ashes with three live dragon hatchlings. Dazzled by the magic, the highly woman-oppressive Dothraki people proclaim her the Mother of Dragons and vow to follow her, even though she is a woman.

**[Following the events of the first book, almost every main character journeys out on their own so the following description will deal with each person in turn, instead of chronologically from book to book]**

**Jon Snow:** Jon travels north of the Wall with the Night's Watch. Along the way they make camp at the wildling, Craster's, keep. Craster has been marrying his own daughters for years and sacrifices his baby boys to the White Walkers to appease them, so that they do not bother him. At the old fortress, the Fist of the First Men, Jon's wolf finds an ancient cache of daggers and arrows made of obsidian ('dragonglass') in the snow that Sam takes with him and later he manages to kill a White Walker with one of the daggers.



Jon and another Night's Watchman, the legendary Qhorin Halfhand, go ranging farther north on their own and capture a wildling woman, Ygritte. Jon is unable to kill her as ordered and sets her free instead, which results in his and Qhorin's capture by the wildlings soon after. Qhorin knows the wildlings will never let him live, so he convinces Jon to feign switching sides and joining the wildlings – the way to convince them is to kill Qhorin. Jon unwillingly does as he is ordered by his commander and is brought before the King-beyond-the-Wall, Mance Rayder. He lives with the wildlings, faking his allegiance, and is seduced by Ygritte. He realizes that the wildlings have combined the strength of all their different tribes and races and are now marching south as one to assault the Night's Watch. They are fleeing from the death-defying White Walkers who are moving down from the lifeless north.

Jon is sent south of the Wall with a small group of wildling rangers to ambush Castle Black, the main fortress of the Night's Watch, but he manages to escape them and warn Castle Black of the impending attack. Only a handful of men have returned from the Fist of the First Men after they were attacked by White Walkers and blue-eyed wights – Lord Commander Mormont was slain by his own men who deserted and turned south at the onslaught of the walking dead.

In the following battle at Castle Black, Ygritte is slain. As one officer after another is killed, Jon Snow is given command of defending the Wall against the army of a hundred thousand wildlings journeying down from the north. Soon, however, they are saved by the arrival of Stannis Baratheon and his southron army who have journeyed up from Dragonstone to do their duty to the realm. Stannis fashions himself King of Westeros after the death of his brother, Robert, and the apparently incestuous birth of Joffrey. Stannis offers Jon the title of Lord Stark, Warden of the North (that of his father, Eddard) but Jon declines, deciding that the Night's Watch are his brothers now. Following the battle, those brothers elect Jon as their new Lord Commander.

Jon Snow's increasingly lenient decisions regarding the wildlings brand him as a wildling-sympathizer among his fellow brothers who consequently betray him and attempt an assassination, the consequences of which are yet unrevealed at this point in the series.

**Bran:** After Bran Stark is pushed out of a tower window at Winterfell by Jaime Lannister, he lies in a coma for weeks and finally awakens to find himself paralyzed from the waist down. His brother, Robb, and mother, Catelyn, have departed Winterfell to wage war on the Lannisters and Bran is alone with his youngest brother, Rickon, their wolves and servants. As he comes to terms with his new condition, the connection to his wolf pup deepens and he finds that he can enter the wolf's body and control it through 'wolf dreams'. Two children, Jojen and Meera Reed, arrive to Winterfell – like Bran, Jojen has magical abilities and believes that Bran has a destiny to fulfill deep in the wastelands of the north.





Winterfell is left vulnerable after Robb Stark's departure with all his soldiers and becomes an easy target for capture by Theon Greyjoy, who grew up at Winterfell as Lord Stark's ward – a glorified hostage after his father, Balon Greyjoy's, failed rebellion against the crown ten years before. Bran and Rickon Stark escape Theon's capture by hiding in the crypts for days; and in order not to appear weak in front of his men, Theon fakes their deaths by killing two unknown peasant boys of the same age and burning them until they are unrecognizable. Soon after Roose Bolton's bastard son, Ramsay Snow, arrives at Winterfell, seizes Theon and claims the spoils for himself. Theon spends the next several months, if not years, being tortured and mutilated by Ramsay until he is himself completely unrecognizable and has even forgotten his own name. In the end he escapes Ramsay and is reunited with his sister, Asha Greyjoy.

Winterfell has now been abandoned and it is safe for Bran, Rickon and the two Reeds to leave the crypts and journey north. Rickon, however, is too young and is sent south with one of the servants, a wildling woman called Osha. Bran is carried on the back of the strong but simple-minded stable boy, Hodor. Bran continuously trains his new ability of entering his wolf's body until he can do it while awake as well. He experiments with entering Hodor too and controlling him. At the Wall, they encounter Samwell Tarly and one of Craster's daughters, Gilly, who are fleeing south from the White Walkers. Sam leads Bran and his companions through the Wall and promises not to tell Jon Snow that his younger brothers are still alive.

After a long and perilous journey far to the north through wight-infested country, Bran, his wolf, Hodor, Jojen and Meera Reed arrive to where Jojen's dreams told him they should go. They find shelter beneath the roots of a great tree and here encounter the long-forgotten race of Children of the Forest, or greenseers, who have been believed dead for thousands of years. Bran begins training to become a greenseer as well, whose purpose is still unclear.

**Catelyn/Robb Stark:** Robb Stark, guided by his mother Catelyn, commences a war against the Lannisters after his father's unjust execution. In the meantime, the deceased King Robert's two brothers, Stannis and Renly, have each declared their intent of claiming the Iron Throne and are on the verge of battling each other. As a tactical maneuver, Catelyn is sent south to parley with each of them and suggest combining forces against the Lannisters. Stannis is a rigidly dutiful man to an extreme degree, however, and refuses to cooperate with anyone else because his is the strongest claim as the oldest living brother of the previous king. He is accompanied by the red priestess, Melisandre, who hints that those would-be kings without a proper claim will meet their just end. That same night, while Catelyn is present, Renly is assassinated in his tent by a conjured shadow shaped like Stannis, the product of Melisandre's dark sorcery. Also present is Brienne of Tarth, a member of Renly's kingsguard. Brienne, a female knight, is blamed for the murder and is forced to flee with Catelyn Stark.

Back at Riverrun, Catelyn receives news of the deaths of her two youngest sons, Bran and Rickon, and in a fit of motherly grief she decides to release Jaime Lannister from imprisonment, hoping to buy her two daughters' freedom with his. She sends him on his way to King's Landing in chains, accompanied by Brienne of Tarth who has sworn to return with her daughters, Sansa and Arya. After Catelyn's action is discovered, she is confined by her son, Robb, the King-in-the-North. Robb returns to Riverrun with a wife, a young highborn girl that he shared a night of indiscretion with and as a result felt honor-bound to wed. However, he was already engaged to one of Lord Walder Frey's daughters as a means to secure Frey's military support. Walder Frey is an exceedingly proud and vindictive man who does not abide to have his honor slighted, so he proceeds to use whatever heinous means he can to bring about Robb Stark's downfall. At the staged wedding between one of his daughters and Robb's uncle, Edmure Tully, Frey's men murder both Robb and Catelyn and all their companions at what is henceforth known as the Red Wedding.

**Sansa Stark:** Following her father's execution, Sansa Stark is held hostage in King's Landing for months. She is still betrothed to King Joffrey, but her naïve dreams of her gallant fiancée are soon shattered as he torments her and threatens her with beatings day after day. Soon after her betrothal to Joffrey is broken, she is forced to marry Tyrion Lannister as a part of a political ploy that lends the Lannisters claim to the north. Sansa's repulsion to Tyrion's physical appearance blinds her to the compassionate and gentle man he is. On the wedding night he does not force her to consummate the marriage, instead telling her that he will never ask that of her unless she wants him to; her poorly concealed disgust hurts him deeply. Soon Joffrey is to marry Margaery Tyrell instead, Renly Baratheon's widow. Margaery befriends Sansa who confesses Joffrey's true nature. Unbeknownst to Sansa, her tale inspires Margaery's family to have Joffrey killed at their wedding in order to save Margaery from the same terrors that Sansa has had to suffer through.

Joffrey's murder is blamed on Tyrion Lannister, whose animosity towards his nephew and his sister Cersei is well known to all – not to mention his wife, Sansa's, animosity towards Joffrey after the way he has treated her. Littlefinger, who unsurprisingly had a hand in Joffrey's murder, smuggles Sansa out of the capitol and brings her to her aunt Lysa in the Eyrie. Littlefinger weds Lysa and then kills her soon after, and Sansa is manipulated into staying with him and posing as his baseborn daughter. Littlefinger's agenda gradually becomes clear: by controlling both the little Lord Robert (Lysa's son and heir to the Eyrie) and Sansa (who most believe is the only Stark child still alive), Littlefinger controls the domains of both the Warden of the North and Warden of the East.

**Arya Stark:** Following her father's execution, Arya manages to escape King's Landing and travels north with a group bound for the Wall and the Night's Watch. She plans on finding her bastard brother, Jon Snow. However, the war-torn lands soon separate her from her companions and she is captured by Gregor



Clegane, bannerman to Tywin Lannister and a sadistic warrior. He brings her and others to Harrenhal where they labor as servants. She befriends the smith's apprentice, Gendry, who is one of the deceased King Robert's bastards (although that truth is unknown to anyone living) and saves three of the other captured hostages from a fire, among them the man Jaqen H'ghar. In payment he offers to kill three men for her, so as to even out the balance for the lives she saved – he turns out to be a master assassin. And as he departs Harrenhal, he tells Arya that if she ever needs help she should go to the House of the Many-Faced God in Braavos and tell the people there his name.

After she flees Harrenhal, Arya is captured again and recognized for her true identity by the Brotherhood Without Banners, who are led by the knight, Beric Dondarrion, who has died several times and been brought back to life by the magic of his friend, the red priest Thoros of Myr. She and Gendry stay with the Brotherhood until they capture Sandor Clegane, the Hound – the vicious Gregor Clegane's younger brother. Sandor wins his freedom in a duel and kidnaps Arya, planning on bringing her to her mother for ransom. However, the same night they arrive at Lord Walder Frey's keep, Catelyn and Robb Stark are murdered and Sandor Clegane flees with Arya. The Hound decides to bring her to her aunt Lysa at the Eyrie instead, but on the way he is mortally wounded by outlaws and Arya leaves him to die and finds a ship to bring her to Braavos.

She finds the House of the Many-Faced God and commences training to become an assassin like Jaqen H'ghar. She plans on reaping vengeance on those who have been complicit in killing her family and silently recites their names to herself every night before sleep. It is not long before she makes her first kill.

**Daenerys:** After Khal Drogo's death, Daenerys leads her *khalasar* (her tribe of Dothraki) through the Red Wastes desert to the city of Qarth and from there west to Slaver's Bay. She plans on gathering an army to help her conquer the Seven Kingdoms across the Narrow Sea, but her plans are delayed when she witnesses the injustice of the slave industry. By tricking the slave owners in Astapor and using her wits, she manages to claim their army of thousands of slave soldiers called Unsullied, kill the slave owners, free the slaves from their bondage and inspire them to fight for her of their own free will.

She lays waste to the slaving industry one city at a time, her forces growing with each conquest and her three dragons growing in size as well. Soon her dragons are so large they are barely controllable any longer and when they start to feast on human flesh when hunting, she orders them contained beneath the earth. The largest of the dragons, however, cannot be caught and escapes the city of Meereen where she has settled.

Daenerys' most trusted advisor, Ser Jorah Mormont, was exiled from Westeros years ago by King Robert after he sold some poachers on his land to slavers instead of sending them to serve for the Night's Watch. Ser Jorah now seeks to redeem himself with King Robert by serving as his spy close to Daenerys. However,



he falls in love with her and decides to serve her faithfully instead. Months later, Daenerys discovers the truth and crushed by the betrayal she sends Jorah away in a new exile, vowing to kill him if he ever returns.

She is soon troubled by the news that new slave industries have formed in the cities she left behind, and the new slavers are marching against her with newly formed armies. In the end she is forced into marrying a Meereenese nobleman called Hizdarh zo Loraq in order to win favor with the Meereenese population who can help her stop the coming siege. Her new husband orders the fighting pits to be reopened after she closed them and she endures his decisions with little grace. On the opening day, the bloodshed and excitement attracts the notice of her largest dragon who descends into the pit of chaos and panic. Men start to attack the dragon and in order to save him, Daenerys instinctively jumps on his back and flies away. All believe her to be dead, but she spends the next many days out in the wild learning to ride her dragon. When she finally decides to return to Meereen, she is found by another Dothraki tribe.

**Tyrion:** After Eddard Stark's execution, Tyrion is sent to King's Landing to rule as Hand of the King on his father's behalf in order to curb some of Joffrey's less prudent impulses. Highly unlike the rest of his family, Tyrion decides to rule with justice and honor, and he performs many positive deeds over the next few months to combat the level of deceit and nefarious methods that have become commonplace in the capitol. He is continuously disillusioned at the unwillingness of the public to accept him as their champion. They insist on portraying him as a twisted demon who is just as bad as the rest of his family. Earlier, after he escaped from Lysa Arryn's 'justice' at the Eyrie, he met the prostitute Shae on the road and has brought her with him to King's Landing. Gradually he falls in love with her, but after being accused of Joffrey's murder, Shae testifies against him in the trial. She lies and ridicules him and her testimony condemns him.

Tyrion demands a trial by combat, so the gods (manifested in the sword hand of his chosen champion) can judge him as either guilty or innocent. Cersei and the crown's champion is the ferocious beast, Gregor Clegane – and Prince Oberyn Martell volunteers as Tyrion's champion. He seeks vengeance over Clegane who raped and killed his sister and her children (the family of Prince Rhaegar Targaryen, Mad King Aerys' heir). Oberyn Martell, the Red Viper, manages to wound Gregor Clegane fatally but he dies first when his eyes are torn from his head and his skull cracked. Tyrion has lost his trial and in the following days, he awaits execution in the dungeons of the Red Keep.

His brother, Jaime, becomes his savior. Jaime and Varys the Spider manage to smuggle Tyrion out of the Keep and onto a ship headed for Pentos. However, before Tyrion leaves Jaime confesses an old truth to him: as a young man Tyrion fell in love with a crofter's daughter and married her in secret. When their father Tywin found out he manipulated Jaime into telling Tyrion that the girl was really a paid whore and was only hired to make a man out of him. Without Jaime knowing his intentions, Tywin proceeded to have the girl raped by every guardsmen of Casterly Rock while Tyrion stood by and watched – and ultimately,



Tyrion was forced to rape her as well. Since then, Tyrion has believed that the girl was a prostitute but as Jaime leads him through the dungeons of the Red Keep in King's Landing, he confesses that the girl was who she appeared to be, a crofter's daughter chance met on the road.

Tyrion is filled with hatred at this confession. He curses his brother, then creeps into his father's chambers and kills him. Finding Shae in his father's bed, he kills her too before making it aboard the ship taking him east to Pentos.

He is met in Pentos by magister Illyrio Mopatis, the man who housed and supported Daenerys and Viserys Targaryen before they left with Khal Drogo and his Dothraki horde. Illyrio sends Tyrion further east towards Slaver's Bay to meet Daenerys. Along the way, however, Tyrion's identity as a Lannister becomes known to Ser Jorah Mormont who has been living in misery since Daenerys exiled him. In Tyrion, Mormont recognizes the means to redeem himself with Daenerys by presenting her with an enemy. He kidnaps Tyrion, but soon both of them are captured and sold as slaves. Tyrion befriends a dwarf woman called Penny, who used to share a mummer's act with her dwarf brother who is now dead. They would ride a dog and pig each and joust with faux lances to the amusement of onlookers. Tyrion agrees to become part of her act, taking her brother's place, and his wicked sense of humor amuses his master sufficiently enough to enable them to survive.

They journey towards Meereen, accompanying the slavers who mean to remove Daenerys from power. Once outside the city, Tyrion manages for him and Penny to move inside the walls but they are thrown into the reopened fighting pits as entertainment before he has a chance to see Daenerys. He even misses the spectacle of Daenerys as she flies off on the back of her gigantic black dragon because he is detained inside the walls of the fighting pit.