"A Book Every King Should Read:"

An Argument for the Inclusion of George R.R. Martin's *A Song of Ice and Fire* into the Fantasy Canon

Béatrice Thorstensen

A Thesis Submitted to

The Department of Literature, Area Studies,

and European Languages

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Abstract

Due to a lack in the existing criticism concerning George R.R. Martin's fantasy series *A Song of Ice and Fire*, this thesis argues for its inclusion into the fantasy canon as a first step towards scholarly recognition. In order to do so, three fundamental aspects of a narrative will be discussed: content, structure and reader response. So as to demonstrate how content can be analyzed, a comparative study of Martin's world of Westeros and J.R.R. Tolkien's Middle Earth from *The Lord of the Rings* will be provided, in accordance to principles developed by fantasy theorists such as Farah Mendlesohn and John Clute. It will also contribute to determining whether these two secondary worlds are equally complex or whether one is superior to the other. George R.R. Martin's narrative technique will also be discussed in this thesis as a demonstration of the unusual structure of the series, relying on Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan and Jakob Lothe's work on narrative theory. Lastly, in order to analyze reader response in relation to a character's role in the narrative, a character analysis of Jaime Lannister from *A Song of Ice and Fire* will be provided, using the theories of Wolfgang Iser and Rimmon-Kenan. As a part of this character analysis, a comparison between Jaime Lannister and Severus Snape from the *Harry Potter* series by J.K. Rowling will also be included, as both characters go through a similar process in the narrative. At the close of the analysis of these three aspects, this thesis will have shown a sufficient number of arguments for the inclusion of *A Song of Ice and Fire* into the canon of fantasy literature, as well as the unexpected result that the series can also be argued to have created its own subgenre of fantasy, namely politics-fantasy.

Acknowledgments

Maps
Westeros

STRONGHOLDS of the NORTH
1 Westwatch-by-the-Bridge
2 **The Shadow Tower**
3 Sentinel Stand
4 Greyguard
5 Stonedoor
6 Hoarfrost Hill
7 Icemark
8 The Nightfort
9 Deep Lake
10 Queensgate
11 **Castle Black**
12 Oakenshield
13 Woodswatch-by-the-Pool
14 Sable Hall
15 Rimegate
16 The Long Barrow
17 The Torches
18 Greenguard
19 **Eastwatch-by-the-Sea**

THE LAND OF ALWAYS WINTER (UNMAPPED)

THE SHIVERING SEA

THE FROZEN SHORE

THE HAUNTED FOREST

THE WALL

Eastwatch-by-the-Sea

BAY of ICE

BRANDON'S GIFT

THE NEW GIFT

BAY of SEALS

SEA DRAGON POINT

BEAR ISLAND

Last Hearth

THE LAST RIVER

Karhold

Deepwood Motte

WOLFSWOOD

THE KINGSROAD

LONG LAKE

THE DREADFORT

Winterfell

STONY SHORE

THE RILLS

Torrhen's Square

BARROWLANDS

White Harbour

Widow's Watch

BLAZEWATER BAY

CAPE KRAKEN

Flint's Finger

Moat Cailin

THE FLINT CLIFFS

THE NECK

Greywater Watch

THREE SISTERS

THE BITE

THE FINGERS

VALE of ARRYN

Heart's Home

Longbow Hall

The Twins

GREEN FORK

Ironoaks

Old Anchor

Runestone

Gulltown

IRON ISLANDS

CAPE of EAGLES

KINGSROAD

HARLAW

PYKE

IRONMAN'S BAY

Oldstones

Fairmarket

BLUE FORK

THE TRIDENT

Inn of the Kneeling Man

Lord Harroway's Town

Saltpans

BAY of CRABS

CRACKCLAW POINT

RED FORK

TUMBLESTONE

The Crag

Riverrun

High Heart

Harrenhal

Maidenpool

Duskendale

BLACKWATER BAY

Sharp Point

FAIR ISLE

Ashemark

Acorn Hall

GODS EYE Isle of Faces

King's Landing

Rosby

MASSEY'S HOOK

Golden Tooth

RIVER ROAD

Pinkmaiden

Stoney Sept

Kayce

Casterly Rock

Lannisport

GOLD ROAD

BLACKWATER RUSH

KINGSWOOD

Wendwater

Bronzegate

Silverhill

THE REACH

ROSEROAD

Crakehall

Red Lake

Goldengrove

MANDER

Bitterbridge

BLUE BYRN

Grassy Vale

Stonehelm

Eventfall Hall

TARTH

Old Oak

OCEAN ROAD

Longtable

Storm's End

SHIPBREAKER BAY

Cider Hall

Ashford

COCKLESWENT

Summerhall

CAPE WRATH

RAINWOOD

ESTERMONT

SHIELD ISLANDS

Highgarden

Brightwater Keep

Nightsong

HORN HILL

DORNISH MARCHES

Wyl

Greenstone

Mistwood

Honeyholt

Blackhaven

KINGSGRAVE

Old Town

Yronwood

SEA of DORNE

THE BROKEN ARM

Starfall

DORNE

THE TOR

Godsgrace

WHISPERING SOUND

Three Towers

Sandstone

Hellholt

THE SCOURGE

SALT SHORE

THE ARBOR

x

Middle Earth

Maps have become standard accompaniments to heroic fantasies, […] because they illustrate graphically the fragmentation of the fantastic world, and the binding, base-touching aspect of the quest the protagonists customarily pursue. […] Heroic fantasies demand borders and frontiers because the heroic action customarily begins with the crossing of borders, the violation of the limits of the familiar to enter that *mundus alter* that just over the mountain or across the running brook (Zanger 230-1).

<u>List of Abbreviated Works</u>

A Song of Ice and Fire: ASoIaF

- *A Game of Thrones: AGoT*

- *A Clash of Kings: ACoK*

- *A Storm of Swords: ASoS*

- *A Feast for Crows. AFfC*

- *A Dance with Dragons: ADwD*

The Lord of the Rings: LotR

- *The Hobbit: TH*

- *The Fellowship of the Ring: TFotR*

- *The Two Towers: TTT*

- *The Return of the King: TRofK*

In the *Harry Potter* series*:*

- *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone: PS*

- *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix: OotP*

- *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince: HBP*

- *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows: DH*

Table of Contents

We read fantasy to find the colors again, I think. To taste strong spices and hear the songs the sirens sang. There is something old and true in fantasy that speaks to something deep within us, to the child who dreamt that one day he would hunt the forests of the night, and feast beneath the hollow hills, and find a love to last forever somewhere south of Oz and north of Shangri-La.

Fantasy is the towers of Minas Tirith, the ancient stones of Gormenghast, the halls of Camelot. They can keep their heaven. When I die, I'd sooner go to Middle Earth.

George R. R. Martin
("On Fantasy")

Introduction

Mainly because of the success engendered by the TV series, George R.R. Martin's fantasy heptalogy *A Song of Ice and Fire* has become a cultural phenomenon. As the title indicates, this thesis aims to prove that the books behind the TV series deserve more scholarly attention than previously bestowed, and so I will argue for the inclusion of George R.R. Martin's *A Song of Ice and Fire* into the fantasy canon. I believe that including the series into the fantasy canon is an appropriate first step in order for *A Song of Ice and Fire* to gain the scholarly attention it deserves. Further, I will stress the importance of Martin's compelling narrative methods as seen mainly in his characterization of Jaime Lannister. I claim that Jaime's role in *ASoIaF* is central to the readers' understanding of the development of the main plot, and so, a character analysis will be included in this thesis.

A Song of Ice and Fire* comprises five books thus far: *A Game of Thrones* (1996); *A Clash of Kings* (1998); *A Storm of Swords* (2000); *A Feast for Crows* (2005); and *A Dance with Dragons* (2011); and is set in the imaginary world of Westeros. Two more books are forthcoming in order to complete the heptalogy; *The Winds of Winter* and *A Dream of Spring*, with unknown release dates. For practical purposes, the series' name will be shortened to *ASoIaF*; and similarly Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings* will be shortened to *LotR*. (For other abbreviated forms, see the List of Abbreviated Works). The fact that two books are not yet published is not a hindrance to this thesis as I shall focus mainly on the first three books of the series considering that they are the most relevant in demonstrating the relevance of Jaime's characterization. Also they provide ample background information concerning the world of Westeros. In fact, the title of this thesis comes from the third book, *ASoS*, as Tyrion Lannister offers a book to King Joffrey as a wedding present. The book he presents is called *The Lives of Four Kings* and is "a book every king should read" (803).

As of yet, *ASoIaF* has received little attention from literary scholars. Hardly any of the previous scholarly studies of fantasy as a genre mentions the name of George R.R. Martin or his series. One of the reasons for this neglect is that most of the scholarly works discussing the fantasy genre date from the 1980s or earlier. The most recent works tend to focus on authors such as J.K. Rowling and Philip Pullman. However, there are exceptions, such as *A Short History of Fantasy* (2009) by Farah Mendlesohn and Edward James, which does give some credit to Martin's work by calling him one of "the three major medievalist writers of the 1990s" (145). Yet, only one paragraph is dedicated to Martin's work, stating that "what

distinguishes Martin […] is that he depicts a plausible and internally coherent medieval world largely free from the clichés" (146); clichés arguably invented by Tolkien. Furthermore, Mendlesohn maintains that "there is certainly much more detailed politics and warfare in these books than there is of magic and sorcery," making his story "more realistic and hardcore" (146). One should also consider Henry Jacoby's *Game of Thrones and Philosophy* (2012), which provides articles with insight into the world of Westeros and its complexity of narrative, characterization and story. John Clute's *The Encyclopedia of Fantasy* (1997) also mentions George R.R. Martin, but makes no reference to *ASoIaF*. This dearth of scholarly texts serves as an argument for the importance of this thesis and shows that Martin has not yet received due academic attention. Many books written on fantasy theory after the publication of *AGoT* in 1996 do not comprise any form of criticism regarding *ASoIaF*.

Evidently, there is a gap in the existing criticism concerning Martin's work, and this thesis aims to remedy such a void by demonstrating that *ASoIaF* has the potential to equal if not surpass the works of J.R.R. Tolkien and J.K Rowling. I will investigate Martin's narrative strategies and define the genre the series belong to, as well as argue for the inclusion of *ASoIaF* in the fantasy canon. Due to Tolkien's renown as a fantasy writer, and the fact that his *LotR* trilogy is considered one of the greatest works of fantasy taking place in an imaginary world, a comparative study between Martin's *ASoIaF* and Tolkien's *LotR* is in order. This comparison is necessary for the sake of making the argument that Martin's series deserves a place among works of fantasy deemed worthy of being included in the fantasy canon.

The Debate Regarding the Fantasy Canon

The main obstacle to the purpose of this thesis is that there is no fantasy canon. Indeed, most critics of the fantasy genre agree that a fantasy canon does not exist. In *The Cambridge Companion to Fantasy Literature* (2012), James and Mendlesohn emphasize in their introduction the lack of such a canon. Far from deploring this omission, they argue that: "two people's understanding of the fantastic can be sufficiently different as to generate a list of texts with little overlap apart from Tolkien. This is enormously liberating. There are no texts that one feels one *must* include" (3). Obviously, I disagree with this statement, and I contend that the writers and works discussed in *The Cambridge Companion to Fantasy Literature* comprise a possible fantasy canon, since those are the works and writers worthy of being discussed in depth. Fantasy, as much as any other genre, should have a canon, based upon the quality and the popularity of the fantastic narratives. Authors such as J.R.R. Tolkien, C.S. Lewis, J.K. Rowling and Ursula le Guin have produced works that already are a part of what

one might consider the fantasy canon, and George R.R. Martin's name should be added to the list. I also disagree with the statement saying that there are no texts that "one feels one *must* include," since the very purpose of this thesis is to try to incorporate *ASoIaF* into the fantasy canon in order to fill the gap in the existing criticism. The main challenge of this endeavor will be to ascertain which literary criteria apply to the fantasy genre so as to be able to include *ASoIaF* into a canon that has no definite or universally agreed-upon list of works.

I am aware that Harold Bloom's *The Western Canon: The Books and School of the Ages* (1994) has initiated, during the last two decades, a debate concerning the concept of the canon in general, and that the idea of a literary canon is not as desirable as it once was. The ongoing criticism regarding the purpose of literary canons is mainly based on the question of authority: who should decide which works are worthy of canonization? As I wield no such authority, far from me the idea to propose a list of works that would comprise the canon. John Guillory argues against canonicity by stating that there would be "two sets of books, those privileged by being on the list and those not worthy of inclusion" as a result of composing literary canons (29). Another issue is whether or not canonizing works of literature in general is even possible. For instance, in *What is World Literature?* (2003) by David Damrosch, the idea of a list of "masterpieces" is thoroughly discussed but a conclusion is never truly reached (110-144). Furthermore, Paul Trout comments that "one motivation for the current attack on the canon is anger and resentment that it does not include *every text*" ("Contingencies"). Although I understand his concerns, I feel neither anger nor resentment concerning the lack of a fantasy canon; I merely wish to emphasize that in order to argue for the inclusion of a new work of fantasy, such as *ASoIaF*, it is necessary for the canon to exist first. However unwelcome the concept of a canon has now become, I argue that it is necessary to try and create a fantasy canon before its very existence can be contested academically.

I believe that the lack of a fantasy canon is a predicament of an academic nature as it becomes more arduous for new works of fantasy, such as *ASoIaF*, to become a part of the existing criticism. This canonical void might lead to a disinterest in writing new works of fantasy, as, even though it might not be the primary motivation for writing fantasy, authors might fear that their efforts would not be rewarded by scholarly attention. I claim that the creation of a fantasy canon would redress the situation.

Even though no official fantasy canon exists, Roger C. Schlobin concludes his book entitled *The Aesthetics of Fantasy Literature and Art* (1982) with the chapter "Modern Fantasy Fiction: A Checklist," (249-261) where he provides a tentative enumeration of major works of fantasy. Likewise, Mendlesohn and James are content to propose a "Chronology of

Important Works and People" (219-49) dating from c.1300 BC to 2010, in *A Short History of Fantasy*, listing George R.R. Martin's *AGoT* under the year 1996. *The Cambridge History of the English Novel* (2012), edited by Robert Caserio and Clement Hawes, devotes a chapter to "Unending Romance: Science Fiction and Fantasy in the Twentieth Century" (872-886), written by James and Mendlesohn, but offers no canon either. These works are careful to avoid using the term *canon*: they limit themselves to proposing detailed lists of works of fantasy that have had some impact on the fantasy genre. Under such circumstances, it would perhaps be considered wiser to do the same as Brian Attebery, who offers to call them "exemplary texts" instead (*Strategies* 126). In the course of this thesis, I choose to refer to these "exemplary texts" as the fantasy canon when trying to prove that *ASoIaF* should be on the shortlist for approval, should such a canon ever be finalized.

When discussing the idea of a fantasy canon further, Attebery points out that "the most satisfying way [of establishing a canon] would be to line up a shelf of books and say, 'There. That is what I mean by fantasy'" (*Fantasy Tradition* 1). He also admits that "My own shelf would include Tolkien's *Lord of The Rings*," (1), as would others, such as Lucie Armitt and Gary Wolfe. Wolfe regrets the lack of an "agreed-upon canon of fantasy works to discuss," ("History," 373), while Armitt claims that should "we have a chance to consider […] a selection of some of the key fantasy narratives written in the last 300 years, […] where else could one begin but with J.R.R. Tolkien?" (45). Likewise, Wolfe's writes that "it seems likely that most critics hold in mind a kind of 'benchmark' text, such as Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings*, against which to measure other works" ("History," 373). This is precisely what I will attempt to do in the first chapter of the thesis. *ASoIaF* will be compared to *LotR* in order to measure its worth against the one work of fantasy literature that most scholars have agreed is the founding trilogy of modern fantasy, and the one work that would have an almost undeniable place in the fantasy canon.

The Question of Genre: How to Classify Works of Fantasy Literature

Robert Scholes, who wrote the foreword to *The Fantastic*, *A Structural Approach to a Literary Genre* (1970) writes that "no genre is itself ever complete – it is modified, as Todorov suggests, by each new work of imagination" (ix). I agree with this statement, especially since it applies well to the fantasy genre and is agreeable to this thesis' purpose of including *ASoIaF* to the fantasy canon. The fantasy genre is susceptible to each new work entering its premises, altering its core and influencing readers and authors alike. Considering Scholes' understanding of Tzvetan Todorov's views, it is possible to argue that *ASoIaF* can

modify the fantasy genre. I claim that it already has; it might even have created a new sub-genre of fantasy: politics fantasy. Also, due to its use of complex ways of narration and the enchanting effect it has on the readers through using shock and unpredictability, I believe that it deserves further scholarly attention and therefore also a place among the fantasy canon.

ASoIaF is set in the fictional world of Westeros and could be classified, under the models of James and Mendlesohn, as belonging to the subgenre of medievalist fantasy. The definition of medievalist fantasy is as follows: "a story set in a world based in some loose way on the world of the European Middle-Ages, often drawing its inspiration from medieval romance" (Mendlesohn and James 254). When reading *ASoIaF*, the similarities between the Middle Ages and Westeros are quite obvious; there are feuds that are more related to family ties and allegiances than to countries; the noble families of Westeros have sigils and mottos on their shields as well as their own colors; they have castles and fortresses, war tactics inspired by the Middle Ages with similar weapons – such as swords, lances, and shields; and the society is based on a feudal hierarchy – with kings at the top of the social pyramid, then the church, followed by nobles and knights, artisans and peasants at the bottom. Despite these similarities, categorizing *ASoIaF* as medieval fantasy might not be the only option.

In *A Short History of Fantasy*, Mendlesohn and James list all the existing subgenres of fantasy and give a definition for each and every one of them. This list is not inalterable and new subgenres might be devised and included. The useful subgenres, regarding the purpose of this thesis, are "heroic fantasy," "high fantasy," "medievalist fantasy" and "sword-and-sorcery" (253-55). *ASoIaF* can be said to be compatible with the medievalist fantasy sub-genre, but another way to approach it would be to define it as heroic fantasy. Heroic fantasy is "fantasy set in a world which often resembles the ancient or medieval past, drawing on their epic traditions of heroes; barely distinguishable from high fantasy or sword-and-sorcery" (Mendlesohn and James 253). Indeed, when looking at the definitions of high fantasy and sword-and-sorcery, *ASoIaF* could readily be classified as either of them due to their numerous similarities. High fantasy, as opposed to low fantasy, is not set in a realistic setting. It comprises the "activities of heroes, drawing on the literary tradition of epic," (253) while sword-and-sorcery involves "warriors in conflict with magical or supernatural forces" and is "set in a pre-industrial world" (255). All these definitions apply to *ASoIaF*, and so it becomes difficult, if not impossible, to put only one label on the series.

I would argue that this series has already helped to create its own subgenre of fantasy literature: a subgenre I would like to introduce as "plots-and-politics fantasy" or simply "politics fantasy". By politics I do not mean that this fantasy series was written for political

purposes, such as discussing social tensions or mirroring a shortcoming in our society to the world of Westeros, but that there is a strong political influence in the plot itself. Much of the plot is based on the mundane politics of Westeros as well as political intrigues of a more murderous nature. As of today, politics fantasy does not have an official status as a subgenre of fantasy. Yet, this thesis might hopefully contribute to the recognition of this new subgenre, and perhaps be analyzed further by a recognized author of fantasy literary theory.

Theory

J.R.R. Tolkien revolutionized the fantasy genre first with *The Hobbit* (1937) and later with his *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy (1954-1955) set in the "secondary world" – a term coined by Tolkien – of Middle Earth. In his book *The Monsters and the Critics* (2006), Tolkien writes that: "the story-maker proves a successful 'sub-creator'. He makes a Secondary World which your mind can enter. Inside it, what he relates is 'true': it accords with the laws of that world. You therefore believe it, while you are, as it were inside." (132). The creation of this secondary world with its own history and genealogical trees and maps showed authors a new way of writing fantasy (Swinfen 75). The fantastic did not have to take place in a realistic setting anymore, thereby creating a new way of writing fantasy, known as immersive fantasy.

Mendlesohn and James propose in *A Short History of Fantasy* definitions for four different categories of writing fantasy, one of which being immersive fantasy, and is defined as a story "set entirely within an imagined world, without any overt reference to the world of the reader" (253-254). Mendlesohn, who is also the author of *Rhetorics of Fantasy* (2008), dedicates a chapter to defining immersive fantasy, which is quite useful as George R.R. Martin's Westeros is a secondary world which demands immersion from its readers. To do so, Martin needs to provide great historical and cultural details as well as capture the readers by using challenging narrative techniques.

Kathryn Hume, who wrote *Fantasy and Mimesis* (1984), argues that there are four other ways of writing fantasy. Of these, the "literature of vision" is the most relevant to this thesis. She describes it as a literature that "invites us to experience a new sense of reality, a new interpretation that often seems more varied and intense than our own. We absorb a new vision" (55-56). Should one attempt to classify *ASoIaF* according to Hume's categorization of fantasy literature, it would fall under the literature of vision category since the world of Westeros invites us into a new reality; a reality fashioned according to the wishes of George R.R. Martin. Hume argues that literature of vision aims to disturb and that its main effect is to engage the reader (57), as we shall see in Chapter I. *LotR* belongs to a different category than

ASoIaF; it is part of the "literature of illusion," which is "generally known as escapist literature" (55-6). The literature of illusion aims to comfort but has a disengaging effect. *LotR* comforts the readers through its pastoral elements, but disengages the readers due to its much romanticized setting.

Martin uses the literary technique of shock in order to provoke and perturb the readers, and yet manages to maintain their curiosity and attention. Rita Felski, in her book entitled *Uses of Literature* (2008), dedicates a whole chapter to the use of shock in literary texts. She writes that texts which aim to shock the readers can feel "like a slap in the face; an exhilarating assault equal parts intellectual and visceral" (106). Reading *ASoIaF* can have precisely such an effect, and it can help explain why so many readers become addicted to the series; the rush of adrenaline coursing through the body as a result of shocking events in the narrative is addictive and so one keeps on reading. It is worth questioning whether shock is just a product of popular literature rather than an accepted literary technique which aims to keep the readers entangled in the story. Felski has addressed this issue by writing that "critics tiptoe around the subject of shock […]. When broaching the subject of literature's power to disturb, they are often drawn to a more specialized language of transgression, trauma, defamiliarization, dislocation, self-shattering, [and] the sublime" (105). Her research on the effects of shock upon the reader is important to this thesis, since it is constantly used by Martin, both in depicting several events – such as the unsuspected deaths of main characters – and to characterize key characters – such as Jaime and his incestuous relationship with Cersei.

Felski takes it upon herself to describe another literary underdog, enchantment, which she admits is "a term with precious little currency in literary theory" (54). Bruno Bettelheim has written *The Uses of Enchantment* (1976), but since Felski's work is more recent, I prefer referring to her work. She defines enchantment as "a state of intense involvement, a sense of being so entirely caught up in an aesthetic object that nothing else seems to matter" (54). Combining shock and enchantment, Hume's definition of the literature of vision stipulates that the narrative is meant to disturb and engage the reader, because as she writes, "disturbing the readers does not rule out pleasing them as well" (57). As such, it can be said that the readers delight in being unsettled by the shocking nature of the narrative.

When investigating the world of Westeros, the work of Ann Swinfen, *In Defense of Fantasy* (1984)*,* and her research on the use of secondary worlds in fantasy narratives will be most useful. My own position in this thesis is in defense of the fantasy genre, since it has much to offer. *ASoIaF* is clearly a work of fantasy, with dragons, shape shifters, wargs, magical resurrections and magical deeds performed through religious faith. Of all the

creatures who have become clichés of fantasy literature, only the dragons are present in Martin's series; which is unusual. The creation of new and unknown fantastic creatures, such as the White Walkers, provides novelty which is desirable in order to please the readers.

Whereas Tolkien is generally seen as the founding father of the fantasy genre as we understand it today, Todorov is regarded as the father of fantasy theory. Many authors have tried to imitate, recreate or mock the world of Tolkien, but they have all in one way or another been influenced by his work (Mendlesohn and James). Todorov's situation is similar, seeing as other academics have either agreed with, contested or expanded on his findings and theories. His book *The Fantastic, A Structural Approach to a Literary Genre* is a reference work to many other works concerning fantasy theory. However, as I have come to disagree with his views on the fantastic, as we shall see in Chapter I, his theories will not be discussed further than through mentioning the theories of critics who based their views on Todorov's.

Narrative Technique

Regarding the analysis of Martin's narrative technique, I will rely on a book written by Wolfgang Iser, namely *Prospecting: From Reader Response to Literary Anthropology* (1993) which contains constructive information about the interaction between text and reader. Iser writes: "when the reader has gone through the various perspectives offered him by the text, he is left with nothing but his own experience to judge what has been communicated to him" (*Prospecting* 7). This literary condition applies directly to what Martin does by giving the readers several focalizers with contrasting perspectives and different experiences of the same situation to choose from; he relies on the readers' own interpretation of what he has presented. Martin's ability to only reveal a portion of the truth through numerous focalizers can be described as creating "gaps" in the plot, and so Iser's "filling the gaps" theory is applicable here (9). Not only can reader response theory help me in analyzing the effect of the narrative techniques on the reader, it will also be useful when I will analyze how Jaime Lannister's role in the narrative affects the readers' understanding of the plot. Regarding the analysis of the various narrative styles used in *ASoIaF,* I will rely on Jakob Lothe's *Narrative in Fiction and Film* (2000), and on Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan's *Narrative Fiction* (2002). I will depend on her definition of focalizers as the one who sees the events (72-3) when discussing the narrative style of *ASoIaF*. As her work provides descriptions of different methods of characterization, I will use them in the character analysis of Jaime Lannister and Severus Snape.

When asked to describe his use of the several focalizations in *ASoIaF,* Martin answered: "I am a strong believer in telling stories through a limited but very tight third

person point of view" (Martin, *Please Everyone*). However, I have found that the narrative technique in *ASoIaF* is highly sophisticated with alternations between third person limited narrator, free indirect discourse, direct discourse and free direct discourse. Albert J.J. Anglberger and Alexander Hieke have also analyzed Martin's narrative strategies, but my own approach is slightly different from theirs, as we shall see in Chapter II. Furthermore, I would argue that Martin's alternation between focalizers and between narrative techniques has become his signature; a signature that I have not yet come across in other work of fantasy literature. This literary trademark contributes to engaging and disturbing the readers, while maintaining the suspense.

The readers also stay enchanted by this unpredictable narrative method, seeing as some of the focalizers of the first book do not serve as focalizers in the second, and some that were not focalizers in the first two books, suddenly become one in the third or fourth. What happens is that some of the characters that are presented to us in the first books die, and so their narrative voice can no longer be heard. Other characters will then take their place shifting the focus throughout the story; political schemes make it more relevant for certain characters to have a narrative voice than others; and certain events are seen from several points of view alternately to give the reader several perspectives to choose from. As a result, the narration appears to be quite unpredictable, creating a disturbing effect upon the readers.

George R.R. Martin has said in an interview on the Conan O'Brien show that he wants his readers to be "afraid to turn the next page because the next character may not survive it" (Martin, *Fans to be Afraid*). He wants the readers to fear for the lives of their favorite characters, as the readers know from the first book that Martin is not afraid to kill them off; none of the focalizers are safe. Readers could suddenly lose one of the focalizers' point of view simply because he or she no longer exists. As a result, the readers need to gather information elsewhere, maybe from a less reliable focalizer, or from a focalizer that appeared less reliable but who proved to be more reliable than the previous one. Lothe explains that focalizers depend on "*narrative authority*" (25), an authority determined both by the focalizers' geographical location, their own personal meanings and prejudices as well as their family ties and political affiliations. As the series has several focalizers set in different parts of the fictional world of Westeros, what one focalizer, or character would say, about another is not necessarily what another focalizer would say concerning the same person. Some focalizers give us clear indications that other characters are not to be trusted. In the case of the two main politically involved characters of Petyr Baelish and Varys the Spider, neither they nor their words can be trusted by the readers. Some focalizers will be affected by prejudices

or past wrongs which will, in turn, influence the reader to form preconceptions regarding a character depending on which focalizer seems the most reliable. Furthermore, one reader might consider one focalizer to be more reliable than another, while another reader might disagree. Such disagreement may happen both because of the readers' personal feelings about the characters or because of how the readers interpret the text. The actions of the characters, then, carry more weight than their words or the words of others, as we shall see in Chapter II. Some focalizers are more reliable than others, depending on their physical or emotional proximity to the character they describe. The readers cannot accept all the information they receive as definite or absolute, and must therefore exercise caution.

Characterization: The Importance of Jaime Lannister

The reasons why I have chosen to demonstrate the qualities of *ASoIaF* through the characterization of Jaime Lannister is because, in my opinion, he is an extremely central character, both in relation to character development and the evolution of the plot. George R.R. Martin has chosen to alternate between focalizers, attributing a different one to each chapter. There is no determined order of focalizers either; and since they alternate constantly, the readers do not know which focalizer to expect in the following chapter, creating a sense of suspense and contributing directly to the unpredictability of the series. Furthermore, not all focalizers have their say in every book. Some characters who act as focalizers do not return in each tome, forcing the readers to either learn about the character through the eyes of other focalizers or wait for the next volume, where the character becomes a focalizer again. The readers, then, make up their minds about a character based on the perspective of the different focalizers, but as they constantly fluctuate and can be unreliable; opinions about certain characters will therefore be altered accordingly in the eyes of the readers.

Jaime Lannister is the perfect example of the unreliability offered by this style of narration. Jaime's family does not help in creating a positive image of him either. The Lannisters are extremely power-hungry and are conspiring against House Baratheon and later against the Starks in order to gain and keep the throne of Westeros. Three of its family members are focalizers; namely Cersei, Jaime's twin sister, Jaime himself and their brother Tyrion. In the first two books, Jaime Lannister does not serve as a focalizer and the reader has to wait until the third book, *ASoS*, to finally discover how he thinks and how the events of his life have shaped him from his own point of view. And so, for two and a half books, the readers are led to believe that Jaime Lannister is a man of dubious morals, and a knight who has no difficulty killing his own king, earning him the title of Kingslayer. He is referred to as

Kingslayer more often than as "Jaime" during the first three books of *ASoIaF*. Before the third book, the readers are told his story mainly from the perspective of his enemy, Eddard "Ned" Stark, which obviously influences the presentation of his character. His incestuous relationship to his twin sister also contributes to making him a villain. When the perspective changes, however, so does Jaime's image, and his family's along with him. This change of perspective also has an effect on the political balance of Westeros since the Lannisters are a powerful political entity at court and beyond. As all these various effects and repercussions are centered on the character of Jaime Lannister in the first three books, I would argue that *ASoIaF* deserves more scholarly attention.

Martin uses the character of Jaime Lannister in order to shock the readers and so his character has become more memorable. Due to the central position his family occupied in the narrative, and in Westeros, his incestuous relationship with his sister and his own role in the narrative, Jaime is the ideal character to analyze in order to support the aim of this thesis: the inclusion of *ASoIaF* into the fantasy canon. The two books that will be used the most concerning Jaime Lannister are the second book, *ACoK*, and the third, *ASoS* since they are the two most relevant books regarding the development of his character.

For people who are more acquainted with the famous *Harry Potter* series (1997-2007), Jaime Lannister could be mirrored with the character of Severus Snape. For seven books, Snape is only seen through the eyes of the protagonist, Harry Potter. Harry is convinced that Snape is a villain; therefore he becomes one to the readers, seen as they are greatly influenced by Harry's opinions. Until readers can see Snape's own point of view, they cannot understand why he has committed the foul deeds that made him seem a villain in the first place, such as killing Harry's mentor Dumbledore. A similar misconception also befalls the character of Jaime Lannister, with the main difference that it is not only one character that judges him a villain, but several. His own actions in *AGoT*, such as throwing a child out of a window to protect his own secret sexual relationship to his twin sister Cersei, also contribute to his villainy. The main difference between Severus Snape and Jaime Lannister, however, is that we can see Snape's true intents only on his death bed, while Jaime survives and has time to redeem himself after he is seen in a more morally acceptable light by the readers.

The Organization of This Thesis

Attebery claims in *Strategies of Fantasy* (1992) that "the works we recognize as fantasy tend to resemble *The Lord of the Rings* in three […] fundamental ways. One of these has to do with content, another with structure, and the third with reader response" (14). His argument has

inspired me to divide this thesis into three parts; content will be discussed in Chapter I with an emphasis on the differences and similarities between Martin's world of Westeros and Tolkien's world of Middle Earth. I will support this comparison using mainly, but not exclusively, the research of John Clute on fantasy literature, Felski's work on shock and enchantment, Farah Mendlesohn and Brian Stableford's claims on immersive fantasy as well as Attebery's *Strategies of Fantasy*. The purpose of Chapter I is to compare several aspects of Westeros and Middle Earth in order to determine which is superior, should they prove not to be equally good. Also, Martin admits in an interview that:

> Much as I admire Tolkien, and I do admire Tolkien — he's been a huge influence on me, and his *Lord of the Rings* is the mountain that leans over every other fantasy written since and shaped all of modern fantasy — there are things about it, the whole concept of the Dark Lord, and good guys battling bad guys, Good versus Evil, while brilliantly handled in Tolkien, in the hands of many Tolkien successors, it has become kind of a cartoon. We don't need any more Dark Lords, we don't need any more, 'Here are the good guys, they're in white, there are the bad guys, they're in black (Martin, *Future of the Franchise*).

I believe that a comparison between Westeros and Middle Earth is long overdue and would be interesting from a scholarly point of view, and so I will endeavor to determine whether or not *ASoIaF*, through this comparative study, is worthy being canonized. Another factor for such a comparison is the fact that Martin has been referred to as an "American Tolkien" (Hobson) in 2013, clearly inviting a comparative study of their works.

Structure and reader-response will be discussed in Chapter II, as they are, in this case, closely linked. I choose to look at structure through my own analysis, however short, of Martin's narrative technique. Reader response will be treated through the characterization of one of the main characters of *ASoIaF*, Jaime Lannister, and the literary effects his character and role in the narrative have upon the reader and the construction of the text itself. There will also be a comparative study between the characters of Jaime Lannister and one of J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* characters, namely Severus Snape. The purpose of this particular comparative study is to show that Martin's characters can be as complex as Rowling's, who has already proven to be an established fantasy writer due to her *Harry Potter* series. To complete this task, I shall use reader-response theory with Iser's theories as my only source. I will have use of Lothe's definitions of narrative points of view, such as limited third person narrator, free indirect discourse, free direct discourse and direct discourse. I will also depend on Rimmon-Kenan's *Narrative Fiction* so as to demonstrate how the deliberate negative portrayal of Jaime Lannister acts as a narrative technique of Martin's in the first two books of the series.

Chapter I.

A Song of Ice and Fire as Part of the Fantasy Canon: A Comparative Study of Westeros and Middle Earth

This chapter of the thesis will comprise a definition of fantasy as a genre, based on the views of scholars such as Kathryn Hume, Tzvetan Todorov and Colin Manlove. Providing this definition will give a foundation for the classification of *A Song of Ice and Fire*, which is a step towards including it into the fantasy canon. Numerous authors of fantasy literature, such as Tolkien, have also written most of the fantasy criticism available, and their work is used in this chapter. A short discussion regarding the fantasy canon is subsequent, along with my own solution to the problem that it imposes. A comparison between the secondary worlds of Martin's Westeros and Tolkien's Middle Earth will reveal that Martin has designed a world that is equal to, if not superior to, Tolkien's when it comes to its complexity, its literary realism and its way of challenging the norms of what readers expect of fantasy literature. Focusing primarily on Westeros, I shall employ concepts for analyzing fantasy literature derived from John Clute, Farah Mendlesohn and Rita Felski.

1.1 Working Towards a Suitable Definition of Fantasy

For the purpose of this thesis, I shall attempt to construct a definition of the subgenre of fantasy that applies to *ASoIaF* as well as the other works that will be considered in this thesis; *LotR* and *Harry Potter*. Rosemary Jackson argues that the fantasy genre is not easily defined (1). When comparing E.M. Forster's definition of fantasy, from 1927, as "fiction that 'implies the supernatural' but need not express it" (Forster in Wolfe, "Critical Terms," 271) to Kathryn Hume's definition, from 1984, saying that fantasy is "any departure from consensus reality", involving a "deliberate departure from the limits of what is usually accepted as real and normal" (Hume in Wolfe 272-3), it is clear that the definition of fantasy has evolved. As the genre has progressed from representing the "uncanny" and the "marvelous" to including dragons and secondary worlds, defining it becomes a challenge. Jackson states that "the 'value' of fantasy has seemed to reside in precisely this resistance to definition" (1). Nevertheless, a suitable definition must be devised in order to demonstrate the differences and similarities between Martin's *ASoIaF* and Tolkien's *LotR*.

Concerning the previously attempted definitions of fantasy, I disagree the most with Tzvetan Todorov's main argument, stipulating that the fantastic in literature limits itself to the reader's moment of *hesitation*, stressing that it is the first condition of the fantastic (32). This

interpretation now appears obsolete because today's readers of fantasy *expect* the supernatural and inexplicable events from the narrative. Hesitation is no longer a factor, as the readers know that the narrative will evoke the desired *wonder*; indeed they demand it.

One definition I support, however, is Colin Manlove's, which construes fantasy as "fiction evoking wonder and containing a substantial and irreducible element of supernatural or impossible worlds, beings or objects with which the reader or the characters within the story become on at least partly familiar terms" (165). This definition is easily applicable to works such as *ASoIaF* and *LotR*. I also sympathize with Tolkien's argument that "the writer is a 'subcreator', creating a Secondary World, real to the reader while he reads" (de Camp 235), since it is one of the conditions for a successful immersion into the secondary world.

For the purpose of this thesis, I therefore propose a definition which combines the perspectives of Hume, Manlove and Tolkien. Diverging from Forster's and Todorov's, this definition adequately describes the sub-genre of high medieval fantasy which *ASoIaF* and *LotR* belong to. Consequently, fantasy will be defined as: a work of fiction evoking wonder through the author's creation of a secondary world containing elements of the supernatural, which are deliberately foreign from reality but made credible to the reader while reading. The secondary world thus provides an escape to a realm with which the reader becomes partly familiar with and can be immersed in.

I devised this definition as a starting point for my comparative study of Westeros and Middle Earth. It therefore deliberately leaves out the element of the "impossible," which was originally included in Manlove's definition. Gary Wolfe also considered the impossible as being what fantasy must "first and foremost deal with" ("Encounter," 222). I disagree with this statement, since the "impossible" becomes achievable in the secondary world as the author has the ability to attribute to the text what Tolkien addressed as "Secondary Belief", which thwarts Wolfe's statement regarding the necessity of the "impossible" in a fantasy narrative. My definition includes the word "reality," however, as fantasy literature has long been defined "in terms of its relation to 'the real'" (Jackson 26), even if it is in opposition to it. Mendlesohn, on the other hand, has claimed that "immersive fantasy does not need that belief in the dividing line between the real and the not-real to function" (*Rhetorics* 61), which indicates that the word "reality" could be excluded from my definition altogether. *ASoIaF* and *LotR* are both narratives of immersive fantasy which expect the readers to discard reality and enter the fictional worlds of Westeros and Middle Earth. In the next section, I will work towards establishing a solution to the problem of the fantasy canon in order to provide an equal footing for the comparison of Martin's and Tolkien's secondary worlds.

1.2 Establishing A Fantasy Canon

Theories regarding the fantasy genre usually avoid canonical theorizing, since most of the works of fantasy literature discussed are considered non-canonical, with the exception perhaps of *LotR* (Vike 15). It is also understandable that there is no fantasy canon to speak of considering that the genre itself has been resisting definition. Without the necessary criteria to define the genre, it is indeed problematic to establish a canon. This thesis does not aim to determine which works of fantasy deserve to be a part of the fantasy canon, as such authority eludes me. James and Mendlesohn have pointed out in *The Cambridge Companion to Fantasy Literature* that "there is very little consensus around a canon" (3). The fact that such a recent scholarly volume is unable to find a solution to the fantasy canon conundrum only encourages me to formulate a solution of my own: what if critics were to produce a canon for each sub-genre of the fantasy genre? As none of the previous critics have managed to agree on what should constitute the fantasy canon, I propose that one should divide and conquer; divide the fantasy genre in clearly-defined subgenres, and then create a canon for each subgenre.

As *ASoIaF* belongs to the subgenres of high medieval fantasy, heroic fantasy and sword and sorcery fantasy, the series would have a place in each of these subgenres' canons. These canons would be close to identical since the subgenres themselves are quite similar; some variations would occur, however. For instance, while *LotR* is also high medieval fantasy, it belongs to the quest-fantasy subgenre as well, which *ASoIaF* does not. There are no quests in Martin's series while Tolkien has centered *LotR* on Frodo's quest: the destruction of the One Ring of Power. As a conclusion, *ASoIaF* would belong to the same canon as *LotR* regarding the subgenres of heroic fantasy and high medieval fantasy, but they both have a place in other potential fantasy subgenre canons as well, such as quest fantasy and politics-fantasy respectively. For the purpose of this thesis, I have proposed to create canons for each subgenres of fantasy as a solution that allows me to compare the worlds of Westeros and Middle Earth by classifying them both in the fantasy canon of high medieval fantasy.

1.3 Content: A Comparative Study of Westeros and Middle Earth.

1.3.1 Introduction

As much as I agree with Todorov's statement that "[w]hat interests the critic is not what the work has in common with the rest of the literature, but whatever is specific about it" (141-2), it is important to remember that a comparative study highlights both the similarities and the differences between two works of literature. John Clute, co-author of *The Encyclopedia of Fantasy*, has made a list of criteria by which fantasy can be analyzed. I will discuss Martin's

creation of Westeros in light of Clute's concepts of "thinning," "wrongness," "healing," "quest" and "recognition". There are many differences between Westeros and Middle Earth to inspect, and this analysis will demonstrate that *ASoIaF* is a unique work of fantasy literature, while measuring it against one of the best works of fantasy literature ever produced.

Martin and Tolkien have both created their respective fictional universes for readers to revel and fully immerse themselves in. Tolkien revolutionized the fantasy genre with his *LotR* trilogy, creating the first secondary world where magic *works* and feels like a natural part of Middle Earth. There was no need to explain magic by hinting that it had all been a dream, or alternatively, that the main character was insane, or that all the impossible events ultimately had a logical explanation (James and Mendlesohn 65). It can be said that his conception of Middle Earth has contributed tremendously to today's views of the fantasy genre. Likewise, Martin has contributed to the evolution of the fantasy genre by creating a medieval-like secondary world where magic and politics can merge. Subsequently, I will compare the worlds of Westeros and Middle Earth according to the following criteria, and in this order: the use of medieval fantasy, John Clute's terms of fantasy criticism, Mendlesohn's immersive fantasy theory, the historical and cultural depth of the two worlds, familiarity, continuity, Secondary Belief, enchantment, and predictability and shock. These categories were chosen according to their relevance when comparing secondary worlds. The overall purpose here is to demonstrate that the world created by Martin is as convincing as Tolkien's Middle Earth and therefore deserves a place amongst the fantasy canon of high medieval fantasy.

1.3.2   Medieval Fantasy: the Common Ground of Westeros and Middle Earth.

Both Tolkien's and Martin's worlds are set in a medieval environment, where science is scarce and magic is believed to be the cause of unexplainable events, whether miraculous or disastrous. Hence, the medieval period offers the perfect setting for their fictional world, since they are dependent on the wonders of magic in order to fight against the many evils that are present. Magic works here because the presence of science is limited and does not present a threat; it has become part of the land, part of the people and their superstitions as well as being a part of the nature of things (De Camp 14). Nonetheless, science tries to break through. In *TTT*, the forges of Orthanc and Saruman's preparations for war are more often associated with a form of science than magic, and in Westeros wildfire is created by Alchemists, which represent a mixture of science and magic that was widely believed in during the Middle Ages with Nicholas Flamel – the supposed creator of the Philosopher's Stone – as its most

renowned front-figure (Marshall 2002). The maesters of Westeros are considered to be doctors and scholars, making their existence a slight but present challenge to beliefs in magic.

Andre Norton argues that "[t]he first requirement for writing heroic or sword and sorcery fantasy must be a deep interest in and a love for history itself. Not the history of dates, of sweeps and empires – but the kind of history which deals with daily life, the beliefs, and aspirations of people long since dust" (154). This condition applies to both Martin and Tolkien. Even though the nobility of Westeros is the main focus of the story, many details concerning the daily lives of the less fortunate are depicted, which contributes to creating a believable and seemingly realistic representation of Westeros, combining the lives of the nobles with the lives of the peasants and innkeepers. In a similar fashion, Tolkien provides the readers with an image of the nobility, through the characters of Aragorn, Faramir and Boromir, and the struggles of the people of Rohan, when they are being attacked by the forces of Saruman. It is also useful to point out that "modern fantasy often focuses upon aristocratic society" and "other classes of society appear but rarely, as occasional guides, minor enemies or objects of charity" (Thompson 218), which is also true in both Westeros and Middle Earth.

In a medieval setting traveling is slow as characters usually travel by horse or by foot. This procrastination facilitates the rise of suspense in the narrative, thus allowing the story the necessary time to develop and generate chaos and miscommunication between the main characters (James 65). An example of this is when Gandalf the Grey rides across Middle Earth to find answers about the ring in Frodo's possession, and barely manages to inform the hobbit in time for him to flee (tFotR). In Westeros, ravens are the main form of communication, which, in times of war, are often killed in order to prevent the enemy from gathering information. Since traveling requires an appreciable amount of time, the characters often become victims of misadventures when headed for their final destination. Tolkien called this plot device "Walking," which is used in heroic fantasy, meaning that the characters travel slowly. It allows them to perform another of Tolkien's plot devices, "the Cook's Tour," which is an exploration of the map by the characters – and simultaneously by the readers (James 65).

Although it is mainly due to Tolkien that the medieval fantasy genre has become so popular, it has been argued that "[o]f the various types of fantasy, heroic fantasy shows the greatest enthusiasm for recreating a quasi-medieval setting, thanks largely to William Morris, the earliest practitioner of the form, who consciously sought to revive the world of medieval romance" (Thompson 215). Nevertheless, Tolkien's Middle Earth was the first creation of a medieval fantasy universe to acquire world renown and appreciation, while introducing a new technique of the fantastic, namely to include history in fantasy (Mendlesohn and James 97).

Tolkien was influenced by myths and folklore, contrary to Martin, who was inspired by historical events when shaping the events and history of Westeros. The Wall in the North is then an exaggerated replica of Hadrian's Wall and the game of thrones is inspired by the War of the Roses (1455-1485). The following excerpt explains Martin's inspirational sources: "I like to use history to flavor my fantasy, to add texture and verisimilitude, but simply rewriting history with the names changed has no appeal for me. I prefer to re-imagine it all, and take it in new and unexpected directions" (Martin, "Wars of the Roses"). Martin has also been said to want to "get some of the 'grittiness and realism and complexity of historical fiction' into his fantasy writing, as a counterpoint to the 'wonder and imagination' of fantasy works," since he "felt that Tolkien's imitators had created a sort of 'Disneyland Middle Ages,' and he wanted to bring some realism back to the fantasy genre" (Martin, "10 Sources"). Indeed, his take on chivalry is certainly new and unexpected coming from a narrative inspired by medieval history.

Due to the rise of the romance genre from the Middle Ages, and because of works associated with the Arthurian legend, the knights and their noble deeds are often romanticized in medieval narratives. Their virtues and morals were unfaltering, and so chivalry became a social ideal (Vinaver). "In romance the values are those of chivalry, in fantasy the concept of heroism is not thus limited" (Thompson 222). Martin, then, deliberately diverges from the romanticized view of chivalry in order to enter the realm of the fantastic which is, as Thompson points out, not as centered upon the principle of the virtuous knight as medieval romances are. Martin emphatically disagrees with the romanticized view of the virtuous knights as he relentlessly depicts them as ambiguous or even evil characters – by associating them with whoring, disrespecting oaths and slaying the innocent, contrary to portraying them as chaste, loyal to their oaths under penalty of death, and protectors of the innocent. Knights in Westeros are constantly being insulted by lesser men, such as sell-swords, and nobles who no longer trust their loyalty. Their appointment has less to do with their own worth than with their political roles or affiliations; indeed some become knights through bribery, sexual favors or assassinations. Martin, thus, challenges the clichés associated with the traditional knight's tale, and thwarts the reader's expectations. *ASoIaF* is a narrative that shows the readers "the darker side of chivalry, where fully armored adults hit defenseless children, kings rape their queens, and anointed 'knights' are not knights at all" (Goguen 206). Tolkien, on the other hand, can be seen as a romantic at heart, and by giving Aragorn and Faramir the roles of the perfect knights, he confirms the romanticized clichés of the virtuous knights; they are true to their loved-ones, their men and their people. They are inculpable, though they are not immune

to being mislead or insecure. Mercenaries and knights in Westeros are uncharacteristically similar; they are constantly compared to each other, and the mercenaries, or sell-swords, often strike us as not being less scrupulous than the knights, even though they fight for money rather than for honor. Only the knights of the old generation still value honor; knights such as Ser Barristan Selmy, who says that "Without honor, a knight is no more than a common killer. It is better to die with honor than to live without it" (*ADwD* 961). However, the attitude towards knights in the new generation is more like that of Sandor Clegane: "There are no true knights, no more than there are gods. If you can't protect yourself, die and get out of the way of those who can. Sharp steel and strong arms rule this world, don't ever believe any different" (*ACoK* 757). In Middle Earth, the only mercenaries are the ones used by the Dark Lord Sauron, clearly demonstrating that Tolkien did not believe mercenaries could fight for the forces of good against evil.

The worlds of Westeros and Middle Earth are both "medieval type[s] throughout" because the "weapons are swords, spears, knives, and bows and arrows. Light armour is worn, and battles are fought on foot or on horseback" (Swinfen 82). There is also no indication of any weapons associated with modern warfare such as gunpowder and machinery, creating battle scenes which stay loyal to the medieval setting. In addition to catapults and rams, magic plays a role in battle as well, such as Gandalf's light spell against the Nazgûl in *LotR* and the wildfire used in *ASoIaF*. Also, the readers learn that a hundred years ago in Westeros, the Targaryens used dragons in battle. Daenerys' dragons, however, have not grown enough yet for the readers to be able to experience how they can be used on the battlefield.

Edward James has commented upon the work of the American medievalist Norman Cantor and his claim that "Tolkien expressed three important truths in *LotR*" (67). Firstly Tolkien demonstrated "the real fear felt by those in the early Middle-Ages of marauding bands of soldiers" (67); secondly he illustrates "the problems faced by […] ordinary people, virtually […] unprotected by trained soldiers" (67); and thirdly he shows "us that it is not just the knights who displayed courage in the Middle-Ages, but the little men too" (68). On the other hand, Martin does not display the courage of the non-aristocratic people; he focuses rather on the courage found in children of the aristocracy in times of war, by creating characters such as Arya and Bran Stark. However, the references to the feudal system known from the medieval period are more obvious in Westeros than in Middle Earth, as we are privy to the taxes imposed by the politicians of King's Landing upon the poor as it would have been in the medieval period.

Although the medieval setting is the main common ground in the comparison of Westeros and Middle Earth, there are other aspects to consider. John Clute, a critic specializing in science fiction and fantasy literature, provides us with several criteria with which it becomes possible to analyze the structure of fantasy writing. These principles need to be considered and discussed during this comparative study.

1.3.3 John Clute and Fantasy Criticism

John Clute, co-editor of *The Encyclopedia of Fantasy*, has introduced significant terms to fantasy criticism: *thinning*, *wrongness*, *healing*, *quest* and *recognition*. Clute also borrows from Tolkien the term of the "eucatastrophe," which is the happy ending of a fantastic tale. The fact that Martin's series is not yet finished obviously represents an impediment to the use of the terms eucatastrophe and recognition when analyzing the world of Westeros, but they are all applicable to *LotR*, as we shall see.

"Thinning" is the decline of the world's former state (Clute and Grant 942). In the case of Westeros, thinning is seen through the slow decline of magic; the Children of the Forest have retired from the Seven Kingdoms of Westeros; the dragons, which used to be enormous, are now reduced in size and have nearly vanished; and the wargs are nearly forgotten. Magic is only alive beyond the Wall and across the Narrow Sea, leaving Westeros quasi-devoid of magic. Maester Luwin says to Bran Stark in *AGoT*: "The children of the forest have been dead and gone for thousands of years. All that is left of them are the faces in the trees" (248). There is further evidence of thinning as the alchemist Hallyne tells Tyrion Lannister: "'I'd ask him [Pollitor] why so many of our spells seemed, well, not as *effectual* as the scrolls would have us believe, and he said it was because magic had begun to go out of the world the day the last dragon died'" (*ACoK* 718). The thinning of magic is evident in Westeros' case, while in *LotR*, it is unmistakable through the rule of a Dark Lord. Magic is disappearing due to Sauron's manipulation of the rings of power in the possession of the elves and dwarves, and the elves deserting Middle Earth further contributes to the thinning of magic.

The next term introduced by Clute is "wrongness," which "generally signals not a threat from abroad but the apprehension of some profound change in the essence of things" (1038), and provides "a sense that the world as a whole has gone askew" (339). Wrongness, in Westeros, can be said to be caused by several factors. One could contend that the Andals were the ones who engendered wrongness when they invaded Westeros and killed nearly all the Children of the forest, thereby establishing the rule of their seven-faced god and the Seven Kingdoms (*AGoT* 739). One could also claim that wrongness was engendered by Robert

Baratheon taking the throne from King Aerys Targaryen, thus ending the hereditary Targaryen Empire. King Robert's death, which plunged Westeros into a war of succession, can also be argued to be the catalyst. Wrongness has been established in Westeros, and it has yet to be resolved. Wrongness in *LotR* is caused by the evilness of Sauron, and by his wish to rule all of Middle Earth, unleashing his armies of orcs and trolls and mercenaries upon the land. The apparition of a Dark Lord is a trope of fantasy literature, and is common when introducing wrongness (Clute 1038).

Healing is "what occurs after the worst has been experienced and defeated" (Clute 458), but it was not always referred to as healing as it was Tolkien who first described it in terms of "consolation" (James 66). Westeros has not experienced much "healing" as of yet: in fact, the process of thinning is still ongoing. Mendlesohn emphasizes that "immersive fantasies are mostly fantasies of thinning" (*Rhetorics* 113) and that most writers of immersive fantasy "start with what is and watch it crumble" (113). Indeed, Westeros is still deteriorating, and healing does not appear to be forthcoming considering that the evil from the North is moving south and is likely to extend the thinning process. Even though *LotR* experiences healing through the death of Sauron - the much awaited eucatastrophe of the narrative – readers do not witness the rebuilding of Middle Earth after its devastation. If anything, Middle Earth is thinning further when Gandalf, Elrond and Galadriel leave Middle Earth.

The "quest" element that Clute has introduced in fantasy criticism does not apply as much to *ASoIaF* as to *LotR*. Martin does not construct a specific quest to save Westeros; all of the characters have different goals, and work more for themselves than for others. Even Bran Stark, in his quest to find the Children of the forest, only has selfish goals in mind: he wants to be able to walk again and thinks that the Children's magic can accomplish that (*ASoS*). Similarly, Daenerys, is also on a self-centered quest: she wants to rule over Westeros as its true heir. Ultimately, the only quest that the characters seem to have is either for survival or to seize an opportunity to rise in power. The lack of a virtuous quest might be argued to reflect how readers regard their own world, as it has become the norm to have personal quests to achieve rather than sacrificing oneself for the sake of others, which is either not desirable or difficult to realize. This ambiguity might partly explain why the series have become so popular; it mirrors the fundamental reality of our society today. Contrary to *ASoIaF, LotR* offers one main quest that needs to be fulfilled in order to save Middle Earth; it is righteous and demands both self-sacrifice and tenacity. Frodo does not know whether he will survive the quest or not; only the readers know the outcome in accordance to Tolkien's principle of the eucatastrophe – the ultimate happy ending which brings a "catch of breath, a best and a

lifting of the heart, near to tears, as keen as that given in any form of literary art, and having a peculiar quality" (Tolkien 153-4), guaranteeing that Frodo will succeed.

Clute argues that we frequently "use the term RECOGNITION […] to describe the moment at which […] the protagonist finally gazes upon the shriveled heart of the thinned world and sees what to do" (339). Recognition comes late to Westeros as the Southern Kingdoms are too engaged in warfare and quarrelling for power to notice the imminent threat imposed by the White Walkers. They are playing their game of thrones, and are therefore happily ignoring the warnings sent by the Night's Watch. The one character who is closest to having achieved recognition is Bran Stark, when he decides to follow the three-eyed raven appearing in his dreams, and leading him to the last of the Children of the forest (*ACoK* 437). Bran understands that he may have the power to save Westeros, but he lacks the necessary training, confidence and wisdom. In *LotR*, the characters of Aragorn, Gandalf and Frodo experience recognition. Gandalf sees what needs to be done and assists the others to his utmost ability in order to accomplish the salvation of Middle Earth; Aragorn recognizes that he can no longer be a wandering Ranger, but must assume the role of king of Gondor to restore the balance of the forces of Men against evil (*TRotK)*; and Frodo understands that his quest to destroy the Ring in order to save Middle Earth might claim his life.

To sum up, there are aspects of both series that comply with John Clute's principles of fantasy writing, and both are set in a medieval-like world. Furthermore, both *ASoIaF* and *LotR* are works of immersive fantasy; which will be discussed in the following section.

1.3.4   Immersive fantasy theory

Mendlesohn describes immersive fantasy as being "a fantasy set in a world built so that it functions on all levels as a complete world" (*Rhetorics* 59). In other words, the reader must be completely entranced by this world, and the impossible events must *make sense* in order for the world to function. Richard Mathews argues that "fantasy does not require logic;" (3) a claim with which I strongly disagree, as magic cannot replace logic in a fantastic narrative; magical plot twists still require a logical explanation. As long as one can find a seemingly rational and consistent explanation based on the magical rules of a secondary world, the readers can easily allow themselves to be immersed. It, then, seems only logical that Gollum should be granted an unnaturally long life *because* he has had the One Ring of Power in his possession for so long. The same type of magical logic applies in *ASoIaF*: the reason why the dragon eggs only feel warm to Daenerys, and not to the others who touch them, is because they belong to her as the last heir of the Targaryens who have always owned dragons.

Mendlesohn asks: "how can a writer force the reader to accept as normal things that are fantastical?" (*Rhetorics* 99). She answers her own question by claiming that "immersive fantasy must take no quarter: it must assume that the reader is as much a part of the world as are those being read about" (59). Consequently, the rules of Westeros and Middle Earth must appear consistent to both the characters and the readers in order for the world to function and engage the readers into the world of the characters. In other words, authors such as Tolkien and Martin must demonstrate that their fictional characters are convinced by magical laws of the secondary world in order to sway the audience. Should none of the characters truly believe in the workings of the secondary world, then neither will the readers. On the grounds of what we have read in the prologue of *AGoT* (namely that the White Walkers are real and of a supernatural nature) and due to Bran's unfaltering belief in the magic of the Children of the forest, we are less inclined to sympathize with Maester Luwin's adamant refusal that anything magical can ever happen. "'The children…live only in dreams. Now. Dead and gone'" (*AGoT* 736). The fact that the readers alone are privy to the events that occur in the prologue of *AGoT* – the three characters involved now being dead and unable to spread their knowledge of the White Walkers – gives them a certain advantage over the fictional characters. To know something that the characters do not, and cannot possibly discover for several more chapters, gives the readers a sense of empowerment which entices them to continue their reading, immersing them completely.

Mendlesohn emphasizes that "a good immersive fantasy creates the world by writing it in such a way that non-comprehension of what is written and said becomes part of the mortar of the immersion" (*Rhetorics* 73). Even though the supernatural events must be compatible with the fantasy world, the reader must not always understand everything at once in order to be immersed. The initial ignorance is also a part of the immersion process as it forces the reader to guess what the reasons could be; it also keeps the reader in suspense and thus maintains the immersion into the secondary world. In order to describe how "non-comprehension" works in the text, one might employ the literary term "gap," originating from Iser's reader response theory. Iser explains that "the reader is stimulated into filling the empty spaces […] in order to group them into a coherent whole" (*Prospecting* 26). These gaps enhance the reader's engagement in the text and contribute greatly to the feeling of immersion. Immersive fantasy must thus not procure all the information at once; it should have significant gaps in the narrative, so as to immerse the reader almost unconsciously. As Mendlesohn puts it: "[T]he world should be described, not explained, and the vision should come first, elaboration later, forcing the readers to construct the world from hints and

glimpses. The harder they work, the more they will be a part of the world" (*Rhetorics* 112). However, not all readers are capable of or willing to be immersed in a narrative that deals with the impossible; such readers will reject the work regardless of the author's presentation of the text (Irwin 65). Likewise, Swinfen has argued that even for readers capable of achieving immersion, "a superabundance of marvels will strain the reader's credulity just as inconsistencies in the natural law or in the structure of civilization will do" (93).

Mendlesohn maintains that when describing the secondary world, "immersive fantasy is a fantasy of perspective" (*Rhetorics* 97). *ASoIaF* is nothing if not a narrative of multiple perspectives. Each chapter is written by a different focalizer, giving us a variety of perspectives to choose from. By offering such a rich variety of perspectives, Martin is provoking the readers in order to create an intensified participation in the construction of meaning. This "wealth of points of view" also has the effect of inducing the reader "to assume a critical attitude toward the social reality portrayed," (Iser, *Prospecting*, 21-2) while simultaneously offering the reader the possibility to choose his preferred perspective.

LotR is also a work of immersive fantasy as Middle Earth offers a coherent fantasy world, with its own history, its own languages, its own geography and its own magical creatures. Tolkien has even claimed on several occasions that Middle Earth was created as a result of the languages that he had devised, and those languages are an important part of what makes *LotR* a work of immersive fantasy, along with the extensive history provided in the appendices (James and Mendlesohn 63-4). "Readers of immersive fantasy must navigate an alien new world" (Gilman 137), which is made possible by Tolkien's Cook's Tour method as well as by providing the readers with extensive maps and description of the new world that they are about to discover. Historical and cultural aspects also play a role in the immersion of the readers, which will be discussed in the following section.

1.3.5   The Historical and Cultural Depths of Westeros and Middle Earth.

Mendlesohn writes that "Tolkien pioneered the argument that to create a coherent fantasy world, one needs to know its history, its archeology, its geology, and its languages" (*Rhetorics* 67). I agree that works of immersive fantasy require extensive historical and linguistic details in pursuance of immersing the readers. However, I believe that cultural details, such as religion, politics, economics, social hierarchy and ethics are more significant than geology or archeology in order to provide the readers with enough coherent information for them to be wholly immersed in the fantasy world. Brian Attebery writes in *The Fantasy Tradition in American Literature*: "A fantasy is generally only as good as its materials. The

fantasist must create a society, and an entire world, which is unlike his own and yet intimately connected with it" (15). The more material the author is able to provide the readers with, the more they will feel involved with the narrative. Successful fantasy cannot ignore the cultural aspects of a society since they constitute the necessary background required for the reader to create his own hypothesis on what will happen next, seen as the reader *thinks* he knows what to expect from the narrative based upon these informations.

Tolkien provides a history of Middle Earth going back several thousand years; which he has divided into four Ages: the First Age, the Second Age, the Third Age, in which most of the narrative takes place, and the Fourth Age, beginning after Sauron's final defeat. Tolkien also includes immortal creatures who can remember events that occurred thousands of years ago; the elves and wizards such as Gandalf. Westeros, on the other hand, does not have such a clear-cut division of its timeline. Martin offers a more credible depiction of Westeros' history by allowing the characters to search through historical books mentioned in the narrative itself. As books perish and wither with time, a complete history of Westeros has not been preserved, but it has become the responsibility of the Maesters to teach Westeros' history to other, usually younger, characters; thereby allowing the readers to learn it alongside them. Consequently, we learn from Maester Luwin that Westeros has a history that can go back at least ten thousand years (*AGoT* 737-9), but there are no "Ages" to speak of. Old Nan provides the readers with stories, but her apocryphal tales do not offer any specific dates for historical events. Both Middle Earth and Westeros have an extensive historical background, and both use them to create the depth required in order to immerse the reader.

In Middle Earth there are no religions with a particular structure. The gods of Middle Earth, the Ainur, are only mentioned briefly in *LotR*, and their presence is not very noticeable. Most of the magic used for good resides with the elves and with the five wizards presently living there: Gandalf, Saruman, Radagast, Alatar and Pallando. Readers can also see the magic of the evil Lord Sauron and his Ring of Power, which rules the other rings offered to the elves, the dwarves and men. There are magical beings, such as the Ents and the Nazgul as well, but there is no established religion in Middle Earth that would allow its people to witness magic as often as it happens in Westeros. There are also no temples or holy men to speak of, and even though there are supposedly two religions in Middle Earth – Illúvatarism and Melkorism – their presence is close to inexistent in the narrative.

In contrast Westeros offers many gods – some of them still perform miracles such as resurrecting the dead – but they are fickle and their powers are unpredictable at best. In Westeros, most of the magic resides with the gods, whether old or new; they are the ones

possessing the magic. Some magical beings are independent of the gods, such as Daenerys' three dragons, the giants beyond the Wall, and perhaps also the White Walkers – although there is no certainty concerning them as of yet. All other magical happenstances are influenced by some deity or other, making Westeros a realm much influenced by religion. Also, whereas there is no worship of religion in Middle Earth, Martin offers both monotheistic – the Drowned God and R'hllor, and polytheistic – the faith of the Seven and the faith in the Old Gods, religions in Westeros. I would like to argue that Tolkien's work, though inspirational to many fantasy writers, is an oversimplification of medieval societies particularly in terms of social structures and political motives. Since religion and politics are important aspects of civilization, I also claim that Martin has created a more complex and thus more credible image of the medieval-like society of Westeros, while Tolkien's lacks these particular background elements, so crucial to the people who live in a period inspired by the Middle Ages. Also, Martin uses the various religions of Westeros as a way of involving the readers with the narrative text. In an interview at Comic-Con, he said that "the readers are certainly free to wonder about the validity of these religions," so that "the relation between the religions and the various magics that some people have […] is something that the reader can try to puzzle out" (Martin, *Gods*). Indeed, readers are left to wonder whether the true nature of magic lies within religious belief in the world of Westeros.

Politics plays an important role in determining how a society functions as a whole: it is omnipresent in *ASoIaF* since it is what constitutes the game of thrones. There are intrigues and conspiracies lurking in every corner, and nobody is to be trusted as every "player" of the game of thrones only has his or her own best interest at heart. Seizing the throne requires military attacks and strategy as well, but it is mainly the machinations of politics that are depicted. Marcus Schulzke has written an article called "Playing the Game of Thrones: Some Lessons from Machiavelli" in which he analyzes the struggle for power according to "Machiavellian" principles (33-47). In said article, one can read that "as Machiavelli explains, there are two different kinds of kingdoms, hereditary and new, which require two different kinds of rulers. Hereditary rulers can maintain power by continuing the policies of their predecessors; […] new rulers […] show others how to capture the throne" (Schulzke 33-4). Both hereditary (the Targaryens) and new rulers (the Baratheons) are portrayed in *ASoIaF*, and politics in general are central to the plot. Tolkien's *LotR*, on the other hand, comprises no politics at all – it is "primarily symbolic," as Attebery points out (*Strategies* 31). The only politics we are witness to is the return of Aragorn to the throne of Gondor, which has been held by stewards who were reluctant to allow the king to return to his rightful throne (*TRotK*).

In fact, since Denethor, Steward of Gondor, dies due to his own folly, there is no political fight for the throne. Hence, when analyzing the political differences between Middle Earth and Westeros, Martin's series is clearly superior to Tolkien's apolitical, romanticized world.

In addition, Martin also manages to combine politics with the supernatural and thereby connects the plots of the court of King's Landing in the South with the imminent threat of magical beings from the North. This correlation is most evident in *AGoT*, when the Lord Commander of the Night's Watch, Lord Mormont, acquires knowledge of King Robert Baratheon's death and laments that "'this could not have happened at a worse time. If ever the realm needed a strong king…there are dark days and cold nights ahead'" (562). Later on, after being attacked by wights, Lord Mormont also says: "'We have white shadows in the woods and unquiet dead stalking our halls and a *boy* sits the Iron Throne,' he said in disgust" (654). Lastly, he declares that "'when dead men come hunting in the night, do you think it matters who sits the Iron Throne?'" (784). Although his attitude changes, from wishing the realm had a strong king to taking matters into his own hands and disengaging with the politics of the South, Lord Commander Mormont still played the role of connecting politics with the supernatural element of the narrative, so that the battle for the Iron Throne is given a purpose: the triumphant king will have to fight the White Walkers after defeating his political enemies.

The interrelation between politics and economy also functions well in *ASoIaF*. Economy is discussed extensively in *ASoIaF*; the funding of armies, the costs of tournaments, the debts of the crown and the loan of money from foreign banks as well as the issue of feeding the poor are all touched upon. A particular emphasis is dedicated to the economical politics surrounding the city of King's Landing. In *LotR*, however, the economical aspect has been neglected, almost as if it had no place in Middle Earth. Tolkien is more concerned with creating languages than describing the economic system of Middle Earth. De Camp also notes that the four hobbits heroes, Sam, Pippin, Merry and Frodo, "never work at all when home but live comfortably on their incomes," (225) or on the profits of their adventures. In Westeros, people kill for money, ransom nobles, loot corpses, steal from the weak, and discuss the salary of prostitutes, leaving no stones unturned. Diana Wynne Jones claims that economy in fantasy literature in general is "full of holes" (59). There are merchants and pirates and bandits, but the economy itself is not thoroughly discussed in typical works of fantasy literature. Martin, again, diverges from the norm by explaining in detail the inner workings of the economy of Westeros, through policies decided upon in King's Landing.

Languages are an essential foundation in the creation of a successful secondary world. Tolkien is recognized worldwide for the creation of several languages that are used in *LotR*.

Amongst them are the languages of the Elves (Common Eldarin, Quenya and Sindarin), the languages of the dwarves (Khuzdul and Iglishmêk), the language of Men (generally referred to as Westron), the language of the Ents, called Entish, and the language of Sauron, called the Black Speech. Likewise, Martin has created several languages, but their grammar and vocabulary are considerably less developed than Tolkien's. In *ASoIaF*, we find evidence of languages such as the Common Tongue, the Dothraki language, High and Low Valyrian, the language of Asshai, the True Tongue – which is the tongue of the children of the forest – and the language of the White Walkers. Nevertheless, a comparison between Martin's languages and Tolkien's would be brief, as Martin himself says: "I have not actually created a Valyrian language. The best I could do was try to sketch in each of the chief tongues of my imaginary world in broad strokes, and give them each their characteristic sounds and spellings" (Martin, *More Questions*). And so, in the battle for linguistic supremacy, Tolkien wins over Martin.

Ann Swinfen, when describing the norm of secondary world creation, asserts that "evil is present and manifest, and must be fought if it is not to triumph" (91). Further, she observes that "evil is physically stronger, but is morally and intellectually weaker than good. It cannot comprehend good" (93-4). This fact is incontestable in *LotR*, as Sauron is the ultimate evil; he has been undefeatable for thousands of years and his actions and evil power affect the whole of Middle Earth, and his downfall is crucial to the survival of good. In *ASoIaF*, the most evil creatures are the White Walkers; they are the main threat to the realm, but knowledge of their existence has not yet even been acknowledged by anyone but the Night's Watch. Interestingly, the force for good – the Night's Watch guarding the Wall – charged with the task of defeating evil, is not as honorable as it should be; previously manned with men of honor it has now become the penal facility of Westeros, where rapists and criminals are banished to serve for the good of the realm. Even though "The Night's Watch is a pack of thieves, killers and baseborn churls" (*ASoS* 439), they are the only force standing between the White Walkers and Westeros. Evil in *ASoIaF* is less easily defined than in *LotR,* as every character appears ambiguous; none are entirely evil or good. Only the White Walkers are purely evil, but no force against them is purely good, such as Gandalf the White fighting against Saruman, the corrupted wizard. Good in Westeros is not morally superior to evil, as the morals of men have been compromised by their hunger for political power. Their blindness to the supernatural is therefore connected to politics and the survival of Westeros.

All of these cultural and historical aspects of what constitutes a society are essential to creating a successful secondary world, especially considering that they provide familiarity between reality and the fantasy world, which will be addressed in this following section.

1.3.6 **Familiarity, Consistency, Secondary Belief and Enchantment.**

Kari Maud argues in her article "Reading the Fantasy Series" that in order to sustain the interest of the readers and build a relationship between the reader and the author, it is vital that the writer is able to create a sense of familiarity and continuity in the text, "without destroying suspense or becoming overly predictable" (148). If there is one thing that *ASoIaF* is not, it is being predictable. On the other hand, fantastic narratives are expected to "pull the reader from the apparent familiarity and security of the known and everyday world into something more strange" (Jackson 34). In doing so, they provide the readers with an escape from the primary world into a world where the supernatural has merged with the natural laws of the secondary world. Nevertheless, Brian Stableford argues that immersive fantasies should create secondary worlds that "establish facilities that will enable the reader to feel quite at home there in spite of [their] strangeness" (xlviii-xlix). The familiar is a vital condition for secondary worlds since it allows the readers to identify themselves with them, and therefore accentuates the immersion process. Susan Cooper addresses this process by arguing that "we aren't escaping out [of the primary world], we're escaping in[to the secondary one]" (282). Escapism is therefore closely linked with familiarity as escapism "offers alternative ways of explaining and coping with reality" (Mendlesohn and James 217). Reality, or the primary world, is bound to the secondary world through the familiar elements implemented into it, and helps to create a meaningful escape into a familiar, yet strange, world.

A fantasy reader knows when he starts reading a work of fantasy fiction that there will be some elements of the narrative that will be unfamiliar and seem impossible at first. "Fantasy, though, needs consistency. Reader and writer are committed to maintaining the illusion for the entire course of the fiction. Tolkien refers to this commitment as 'secondary belief'" (Attebery 2). As long as the fictional universe maintains its consistency, the reader is easily immersed into worlds such as Westeros and Middle Earth, and can enjoy the strange and impossible elements of the secondary world. Should the secondary world lose its continuity, the reader will begin to doubt the veracity of the events narrated. "The moment disbelief arises, the spell is broken; the magic, or rather art, has failed" (Tolkien 132). When the immersion ends, the reader is thrown back into the primary world, knowing that immersion would now be impossible since the secondary world has lost its credibility.

Swinfen points out that the "initial task of a secondary world fantasy would thus seem to be to convince. Much time and effort must be expended […] in order to provide secondary realism" (99). Secondary realism, similarly to secondary belief, is crucial in order for the reader to believe in the world the narrative relates to. Martin manages to create this realism

through providing vivid and astute images of a medieval-like society where religion and power are at the center of attention; where conflicts rage between houses rather than against a common cause such as evil; where whoring and thieving are necessities in order for men and women to survive the political quarrels of the nobles; and where omens and superstitions are paramount to the people of Westeros. These aspects of society can be seen as customary by readers familiar with medieval times. By comparison, Tolkien's Middle Earth, despite it being the first functional secondary world to be created, appears somewhat unrealistic; it is a world devoid of sex, religion and political conspiracies. These insufficiencies, however, have not hindered his trilogy from becoming a major work of immersive fantasy, which is mainly due to its ability to stay true to the story; Middle Earth never loses its consistency. The spell is never broken, and so the readers can maintain their beliefs in the secondary world.

Tolkien, as the pioneer of secondary worlds, associates secondary belief with enchantment. According to Carolyne Larrington "enchantment […] tends to be regarded by modern theorists as too simple to account for, and thus as inherently less interesting than the 'uncanny'" (32). Rita Felski, however, has dedicated a chapter to enchantment in her book *Uses of Literature*. She describes enchantment as a state "of total absorption in a text, of intense and enigmatic pleasure" (54) and claims that "the transition back to the everyday world feels unwelcome, even intrusive" (54). Moreover, she writes that "you feel oblivious to your surroundings, your past, your everyday life; you exist only in the present and the numinous presence of a text" (55). All of these arguments contribute to demonstrating that enchantment is a state of mind that can be easily achieved in immersive fantasies of a certain quality, such as *ASoIaF* and *LotR*. Unfortunately, enchantment has yet to be fully recognized as a narrative technique, since it has been downgraded to a form of bewitchment producing an effect in the reader similar to that of intoxication (Felski 54-5). Being enchanted in the text is a huge part of reading immersive fantasy; without it, the secondary world would not appeal as much to its readers. Enchantment is very dependent on the secondary world being consistent; should it fail to maintain its coherence, the enchantment would dissipate and render the readers unable to re-immerse themselves successfully.

Middle Earth enchants its readers by procuring what has been described as "exotic landscapes," in order to "appeal to the dedicated reader" (Moorcock 45). Tolkien's most enchanting landscape is that of the green and lush Shire, an image of the English rural landscape which creates an irresistible immersive mood as a starting point to the trilogy. The Shire also represents safety; a nest and a cocoon shielding the hobbits from the dangers of the outside world. One might argue that it is because the Shire has many similarities with the

English rural landscape that Tolkien was able to produce a credible image of the Shire based upon the concept of familiarity. The Shire is the first region of Middle Earth with which the readers become acquainted; and it is therefore vital for it to enchant the readers straight away, while being remotely familiar to them as well. Of course, there is more to Middle Earth than the Shire that enchants its readers, such as the elves and their beauty, their languages and songs; the sentiment of fellowship of good against evil and its forces; the characters which are true and valiant and pure; and the happy ending.

Westeros, on the other hand, is not as romanticized as Middle Earth, and its enchanting factors are therefore quite different. What appeals to the readers in this case is the realistic representation of a quasi-medieval society where the strong rule over the weak, and where there is no knight in shining armour coming to rescue our favorite character. At this point in the series, the last book being published in 2011, the world of Westeros is still in the thinning process described by Clute, and so suspense is quite high as readers are constantly hoping for something good to finally occur. The enchantment also lies in the variety of narrative strategies; the many lovable characters and their ambivalent nature; the search for magical events; and the repeated shock caused by unexpected deaths and turns of events that diverge from the traditional fantasy patterns.

Furthermore, Rita Felski warns that "[t]he idea of enchantment implies that something mysterious emanates from a work and subliminally steers the reader's response" (56-7). As such, it is clear to me that enchantment is closely linked with reader-response theory. Reception theory is likewise influential on the importance of predictability and shock in a narrative text as it demonstrates how readers respond to those literary techniques.

1.3.7 **Predictability and Shock**

The narrative devices of predictability and shock are closely linked to one another, since it is impossible to experience shock if the events are highly predictable. Some aspects of medieval fantasy literature are to some degree predictable, as readers expect magical and/or evil creatures, duels, wizards and magic. When describing works of fantasy literature, Attebery has admitted that "as a commercial product, its success depends on consistency and predictability" (*Strategies* 2), which provides the argument that the reception of a work by its readers is undeniably entangled with its novelty and lack of predictable clichés. If the work of fantasy allows for too much predictability, it becomes banal and foreseeable to the point of being dull; it is therefore commendable that Tolkien has managed to merge the traditional with the original. He offers the readers the traditional Quest element; magical objects such as

the rings of power; the curse that the One Ring bears; an incurable wound sustained by Frodo on Weathertop (*TFotR)*; the gold-hoarding dragon Smaug (*TH*); the reforging of the hero's blade (Aragorn's sword Anduril); and the return of the true king to the throne of Gondor (*TRotK*), (De Camp 248). All of these elements have become traditional in medieval fantasy literature, and as such have come to be predictable components of the genre. Tolkien also presents us with original additions, such as Tom Bombadil, the Balrog (*TFotR*), and the Ents (*TTT*), which are woven into the traditional frame of *LotR*.

Martin makes a point of starting *ASoIaF* in accordance to the traditional principles of a medieval fantasy narrative only to choose a different approach already in *AGoT* when Eddard Stark kills his daughter Sansa's wolf, Lady (158), thereby shocking the readers since they expect each of the six direwolves to survive in order to protect the six Stark children. Rita Felski has described shock as building "on a sense of fear, serving as a synonym for terror or intense fright, while also shading towards rather different associations of disgust and repulsion" (112). What I understand Felski to mean here is that shock is to be experienced through events or deeds that allow the readers to physically and psychologically respond to the narrative. Shock needs to be assimilated in order for the reader to fully appreciate and digest its consequences. The readers anticipated the survival of the wolves due to Jon Snow telling his father that "'your children were meant to have these pups, my lord'" (19), and their death might mean the death of the Stark children as well, which is unsettling.

The separation of characters has also become a classic narrative device of medieval fantasy fiction, due to the division of the fellowship in *TFotR* (Mendlesohn and James 122), and Martin stays true to that traditional element as well when he indiscriminately scatters the members of different houses. The Stark family suffers the most in relation to this separation, but they are fairly easy to follow as they also act as main characters and focalizers. The death of Eddard Stark, the head of the family, at the end of the first book, *AGoT*, was the first truly unpredictable and shocking event that occurred, as it is expected that the virtuous hero is saved at the last minute by something or other, in the traditional fashion of a fantasy narrative. Martin toys with the readers' feelings as a rescue was planned, only to be thwarted by King Joffrey. Nevertheless, Eddard dies, and Martin, by killing off one the main characters so early in the story, sets the tone and promises the reader that more shocking and unpredictable events are forthcoming.

It might be argued that the most shocking aspect of *ASoIaF* is its unrestrained representation of violence and sexual scenes. I, however, claim that it is rather the rupture with the archetypes of the fantastic, and the series' lack of concern for the familiarity

provided by the tropes of fantasy literature, that proves most shocking. As Felski explains, with the reference to Karl Heinz Bohrer; "shock pivots around the quality of […] 'suddenness', a violent rupture of continuity and coherence, as time is definitely and dramatically rent asunder into a 'before' and 'after'" (113). I understand "suddenness" to be closely attached to predictability; a narrated event cannot be sudden unless it is unpredictable.

In addition, Felski complicates matters further by observing that "shock […] marks the antithesis of the blissful enfolding and voluptuous pleasure that we associate with enchantment. Instead of being […] cradled, we find ourselves ambushed and under assault," our defenses brought down (113). The obvious differences between enchantment and shock should make a narrative such as *ASoIaF* very difficult to function well; as it provides both. It is as if the readers are enchanted to be shocked. Moreover, Hume claims that literature of vision, to which *ASoIaF* belongs, aims to disturb the readers in order to achieve engagement from them (57). She also argued that "literature of vision, instead of offering retreat, challenges us with the new, but still offers this experience as a pleasure for our consideration" (57). I would argue that what the readers are enchanted by is the unexpectedness that the shock provides, by Martin's unconventional handling of the chivalric archetypes, and by the unpredictability of the narrative itself. Hume has explained that "an author can stimulate our awareness of reality by manipulating our literary expectations, giving us a different presentation of reality than we expect from the form or story" (83). Martin has certainly managed to do so, as everything the readers expect of the fantasy narrative he has created is challenged. As such, the clichés of fantasy literature apply no longer, creating an unexpectedness which delights the readers, inducing their enchantment. However, Felski made the point that there is a risk of becoming "immune to the shocking insofar shock itself has become routine; we inhabit a world of frenetic change […], immersed in a culture that is driven by an insatiable demand for novelty and sensation" (107). The remedy to immunity would appear to be novelty and sensation since they are indeed part of what enchants the readers, despite the shock that should be unwelcome. In Chapter II, I will discuss further the concept of shock upon the readers and how it might affect their opinions regarding the character of Jaime Lannister.

1.4 To Recapitulate

As we have seen in this chapter, the works of Martin and Tolkien differ on many points, but the similarities they share are the ones that matter in order to classify *ASoIaF* as belonging to the canon of high medieval fantasy. They both offer the readers worlds based on a structure

and setting similar to the Middle Ages; they are both in accordance with most, if not all, of Clute's criteria of fantasy literature, namely thinning, wrongness, healing, quest and recognition; and they are both works of immersive fantasy. Also, both Martin and Tolkien provide the readers with enough cultural and historical background information to facilitate the readers' immersion process, even though the two authors do not focus on the same aspects of society. While Tolkien has primarily concentrated his attention on the linguistics of Middle Earth and gave ample historical background concerning his secondary world, Martin has chosen to focus on the political and economical aspects of Westeros' society. Both, however, are also concerned with good and evil, even if their views differ. In *LotR,* evil is black and good is white, while in *ASoIaF,* there is no black or white, only different shades of grey. Both also provide the readers with extensive maps of their secondary world, which Raymond H. Thompson has explained as important due to the authors' "concern for credibility of the secondary world" (219) which "accounts for the care over topography which is largely lacking in medieval romance" (219). However, I would argue that Martin's secondary world is even more complex than Middle Earth since it depicts a more complete and therefore "realistic" image of what characterized medieval society, rather than a romanticized version of the Middle Ages as seen in Tolkien's work. Martin comments on these differences in Entertainment Weekly:

> "You read that certain kind of fiction where the guy will always get the girl and the good guys win and it reaffirms to you that life is fair. We all want that at times. There's a certain vicarious release to that. [...] But that's not the kind of fiction I write, in most cases. It's certainly not what Ice and Fire is. It tries to be more realistic about what life is. It has joy, but it also had pain and fear. I think the best fiction captures life in all its light and darkness" (Martin, "Red Wedding").

This literary realism has hugely contributed to the series' popularity, proving that a tale that seems realistic – at times brutally so – however hard and unfair, is as appreciated as a romantic fantasy brimming with archetypes.

Even though Westeros is a fantasy world, its success lies in its shocking realism as well as its balance between the world of men and the realm of magical beings and gods. It is also a world where the antagonists have the possibility to redeem themselves instead of being slayed by their untainted enemies, as happens in *LotR*. Characters such as Davos Seaworth and Jaime Lannister correspond to this possible redemption. As we shall see in Chapter II, Jaime Lannister will endeavor to redeem himself and attempt to become an honorable knight, and possibly manage to break the cycle of untrustworthy knights in Westeros, restoring the readers' faith in the Brothers of the Kingsguard and in chivalry in general.

Chapter II

The Characterization of Jaime Lannister in *A Song of Ice and Fire*

A Song of Ice and Fire is a high medieval fantasy series narrated from the point of view of various focalizers. Martin's choice of alternating focalizers as well as his unusual and sophisticated narrative technique will be discussed in this chapter. The main focus will be on Martin's portrayal of Jaime Lannister and his role in the narrative. A comparative study of Jaime Lannister from *ASoIaF,* and Severus Snape, from J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* series will also be included in this chapter seen as both characters go through a similar development; they are first misunderstood as a result of incomplete facts gathered through the views of various focalizers, and eventually cleared of their accusations when they are allowed to tell their own version of the events. The purpose of this comparison is to demonstrate how Martin employs the same characterization techniques as Rowling. By writing the world-famous *Harry Potter* series, Rowling has earned her place in the fantasy canon, and it is for this reason that I choose to include a comparative study between one of her characters and one of Martin's characters. In my analysis, I shall mainly depend on reader-response theory and close reading in order to analyze the narrative techniques used by Martin.

2.1 Structure: An Introduction to Martin's Narrative Technique

In this section, I offer a short analysis of Martin's narrative technique in order to show how unusual his writing methods are. His atypical writing style is vital to understand when discussing the characterization of Jaime Lannister. The alternation between various narrative devices creates an unusual effect upon the plot and the readers, and therefore deserves closer attention. In order to achieve a satisfying analysis of this narrative technique, I shall discuss Anglberger and Hieke's account of Martin's use of multiple narrative perspectives treated in the chapter "Lord Eddard Stark, Queen Cersei Lannister: Moral Judgments from Different Perspectives" in which they present the following overview of Martin's technique:

> Martin describes the events from a third-person point of view, but he applies the following constraints (1) he restricts the description of all events to what the point-of-view character (POV character) can perceive, including the character's own actions and behavior; (2) in many cases he describes the mental states of the POV character in the current situation from a third-person point of view; (3) and sometimes he even lets us know parts of the "inner world" of the POV character by quoting his or her thoughts in the first-person point-of-view (indicated by italics in the books), (93).

They then offer an example taken from a chapter written from Eddard Stark's point of view:

> "Robert…*Joffrey is not your son* [3]," he wanted to say, but the words would not come [2]. The agony was written too plainly across Robert's face [1]; he could not hurt him

more [2]. So Ned bent his head and wrote, but where the king had said "my son Joffrey", he scrawled "my heir" instead [1]. The deceit made him feel soiled [2]. *The lies we tell for love*, he thought. *May the gods forgive me* [3] (93).

I would like to propose a new approach when interpreting the various ways of narration that Martin uses. This suggestion differs from the analysis presented by Anglberger and Hieke and is based on Lothe's account of the distinctive types of narration described in *Narrative in Fiction and Film*. I also choose to refer to the "POV characters" as focalizers, in accordance to Rimmon-Kenan's definition. *ASoIaF* is told no less than by thirty different focalizers in the course of the five books published presently. According to my analysis of the narrative, there are four elements to consider rather than three, as Hieke and Anglberger have claimed. These four elements are (A) third person limited narrator; (B) direct discourse; (C) free indirect discourse and (D) free direct discourse, which is "the typical form of first-person interior monologue" (Lothe 46). Lothe argues that literary meaning is "established through verbal language, textual structure, and narrative strategies" (16), which is why I believe that it is crucial that (B), direct discourse, becomes the fourth narrative element that Anglberger and Hieke have overlooked, since direct discourse represents the dialogues between characters. My own example is taken from a chapter in *AFfC* where Cersei is the focalizer:

> When the door closed behind them Cersei poured herself another cup of wine (A). "I am surrounded by enemies and imbeciles," (B) she said. She could not even trust to her own blood and kin, nor Jaime, who had once been her other half (C). *He was meant to be my sword and shield, my strong right arm. Why does he insist on vexing me?* (D), (690).

This example of the alternation between the four ways of narration shows that Martin's technique has a way of creating a special effect upon the readers: they access the character's inner thoughts and are able to comprehend more fully their motives, which affect their actions, which contribute to the plot's development. Of the four techniques used, the characters' interior monologue is the most easily noticeable since Martin chose to write it in italics, as shown above. However, it is (C), free indirect discourse, which is a "linguistic combination of two voices" that "can communicate both the speech and thoughts of a character" (Lothe 47) that contributes the most to the effect I keep referring to, creating a narrative ambiguity for the readers to decipher. Anglberger and Hieke point out that "Martin's narrative mode grant us special access to POV characters: we know their thoughts, feelings, intentions, and motives; we know their beliefs and how they reason" (93-4). I fully endorse their analysis of the insight provided by these narrative strategies, even though I felt the need to add direct discourse as a fourth narrative technique to their analysis and to diverge from their terminology, using more technical terms in my own analysis. It is also important to note that although we can read the

inner thoughts of the characters, introspection is not entirely reliable as characters might misjudge themselves or unfamiliar situations (Hieke and Anglberger 94).

This rotation of narrative perspectives, that is third-person limited narrator, dialogue, free indirect and free direct discourse, can be further explained using Iser's theory and what he called the "abrupt alternation" between narrative perspectives. He writes that these abrupt alternations "give rise to the stimulating quality of the text" (*Prospecting* 23). The use of these four narrative techniques provides a greater stimulation for the readers, rather than, narratives which only use, for instance, a third-person point of view throughout.

Concerning the reliability of the focalizers, Lothe states that "even an unreliable narrator can give us necessary information" but "the fact that he is unreliable will reduce the trust we place in this information" (26). In addition to Lothe's argument that verbal language is important, I believe that direct discourses are crucial in *ASoIaF*. Indeed, many of the dialogues between characters represent the most unreliable evidence of the whole series, as the majority of characters lie in order to protect their political interests. An example of such a dialogue can be found in the discussion between Eddard Stark and the politically motivated Lord Petyr Baelish in *AGoT* regarding trusting people at court. Lord Baelish warns Eddard at the end of this discussion: "'Distrusting me was the wisest thing you've done since you climbed down off your horse'" (258). Of course, not all dialogues are lies, and so the reader must be wary of who provides trustworthy information. I agree with Anglberger and Hieke when they argue that, in *ASoIaF*, "the *most reliable* ways of confirming our moral judgments about other people involve observing their actions directly, and being informed by trustworthy third-party agents" (95). The characters' *actions* are worth more than their words, and it is based on their actions and not hearsay that the readers should judge both their reliability and their personality. Jaime Lannister is a perfect example of this misrepresentation, as his ill reputation precedes him, causing other characters to distrust his deeds. I will now analyze the characterization of Jaime Lannister, which plays an essential role in the narrative.

2.2 A Short Description of the Character of Jaime Lannister

The following description of Jaime Lannister is quoted directly from *ASoS*, and provided by the Book of the Brothers, the official record of the Kingsguard in King's Landing:

> Ser Jaime of House Lannister. Firstborn son of Lord Tywin and Lady Joanna of Casterly Rock. […] Knighted in his 15th year by Ser Arthur Dayne of the Kingsguard, for valor in the field. Chosen for the Kingsguard in his 15th year by King Aerys II Targaryen. During the sack of King's Landing, slew King Aerys II at the foot of the Iron Throne. Thereafter known as the "Kingslayer". Pardoned for his crime by King Robert I Baratheon (915).

In addition, it ought to be said of Ser Jaime Lannister that he has an incestuous relationship with his twin sister Cersei Lannister, and has fathered three children by her. He has also claimed not to have had any sexual relationship with any other woman but her, which he himself considers to be very virtuous (*ACoK* 799). Jaime slew the Mad King Aerys as he was threatening to burn the whole city of King's Landing by wildfire, earning himself the title of Kingslayer and being known in the entire realm as an oathbreaker.

My main approach to this character is by way of reader-response theory since what piqued my interest is how the character of Jaime Lannister and his role in the narrative can influence the readers' perception of the plot. I shall also comment upon the author's possible intentions concerning this character and why his narrative technique has had such an important impact upon the way his characters are perceived by the readers.

2.3 Structure and Reader Response: Jaime Lannister's Role Within the Narrative

2.3.1 Lannisters and Starks: the Struggle for Point of View

The first mention of Jaime Lannister is in *AGoT*, where he is simply referred to as one of the "queen's brothers" (27) who are coming to Winterfell, home of the Starks. The readers are immediately told that "Ned [Stark] grimaced at that. There was small love between him and the queen's family […]. The Lannisters […] had come late to Robert's cause […] and he had never forgiven them" (27). Robert Baratheon, the king that rules Westeros at the beginning of *ASoIaF*, is Eddard "Ned" Stark's oldest friend and he is married to Cersei Lannister, Jaime Lannister's twin sister. The readers acquire all these informations in the first pages of the second chapter which is told from Catelyn Stark's point of view. While her version of the story seems reliable, it is obvious that she is not a firsthand source to the conflict between the Lannisters and the Starks, as she herself was away when the conflict originated between the two families during the war that made Robert king of the Seven Kingdoms of Westeros.

The second utterance concerning Jaime Lannister comes from Ned Stark's point of view: "there came Ser Jaime Lannister with hair as bright as beaten gold" (39). Contrary to our first impression of Jaime which was purely political – his family would not enter the war until victory was assured, showing that they are either cowards or careful in their allegiances, or both (27) – the second impression is a physical one. Jaime's appearance is taking shape within the readers' mind. The third description of Jaime is a lengthy depiction of his looks, combined with a comparison to his brother Tyrion, also called the Imp, and to the king, Robert Baratheon. The readers also learn his two names: Jaime Lannister and "Kingslayer".

This description is provided by Jon Snow, Ned Stark's illegitimate son, and is reliable to the extent that he is said to be observing Jaime directly:

> He [Jon Snow] was more interested in the pair that came behind him [Joffrey Baratheon]: the queen's brothers, the Lannisters of Casterly Rock. The Lion and the Imp; there was no mistaking which was which, Ser Jaime Lannister was twin to Queen Cersei; tall and golden, with flashing green eyes and a smile that cut like a knife. He wore crimson silk, high black boots, a black satin cloak. On the breast of his tunic, the lion of his House was embroidered in gold thread, roaring its defiance. They called him the Lion of Lannister to his face and "Kingslayer" behind his back.
> Jon found it hard to look away from him. *This is what a king should look like*, he thought to himself as the man passed (51).

At this point in the narrative, the only insight into the character of Jaime Lannister that the readers have been subjected to comes from the point of view of Starks. That is arguably not the most advantageous angle from which to view the Lannisters, and so, readers are susceptible of becoming biased due to prejudices against Jaime and house Lannister. Rimmon-Kenan explains this favoritism as the results of the "recency effect" which is "information and attitudes presented at an early stage of the text" that "tend to encourage the reader to interpret everything in their light. The reader is prone to preserve such meanings and attitudes for as long as possible" (121). The readers are persuaded to sympathize with the Starks, as they are the characters which are introduced first, and are presented as an honorable family. Their enemy is House Lannister, and therefore it becomes natural for the readers to be skeptical of the Lannisters. Iser calls this predisposition "reader manipulation" as "we as readers are constantly reacting to the characters in a novel" (*Prospecting* 14).

Most of the readers' early reactions concerning the Lannisters are based upon the comments of the Starks. In addition, some of the Lannisters' own deeds antagonize the readers further when they read that Cersei is suspected of having the King's Hand, Jon Arryn, murdered. Jaime also contributes to the Lannisters' ill reputation in the eyes of the readers when he pushes seven year old Bran Stark out of a window in order to protect the incestuous relationship he has secretly engaged in with his twin. While it is claimed that Jaime has done so for love (*AGoT* 85), the fact remains that he tried to kill one of the Starks' family members, which is the family the readers have become acquainted with first and which has provided most of the knowledge concerning the world of Westeros. The majority of readers are therefore rather attached to the Starks, at least until the presentation of other characters and families. The misdeeds of the twins contribute to create a negative picture of House Lannister as a whole, and readers might easily assign to them the role of the enemy.

In short, the readers have, in the course of the first nine chapters, begun to form a negative opinion of the Lannisters. Iser points out that "the views that others have of [a

character] cannot be called 'pure' perception; they are the result of interpretation" (31). The first point of view the readers are subjected to concerning Jaime murdering King Aerys is Ned Stark's. His interpretation of the deed has influenced the readers to distrust and judge Jaime the Kingslayer, even though Ned cannot possibly have known the knight's true motives. As a result, in the course of the two first books of *ASoIaF*, readers are led to perceive Jaime as an evil knight who slew the king to protect himself in the face of an invading army led by Robert Baratheon and his father, Lord Tywin Lannister. Admittedly, such an interpretation seems unavoidable, given that, as Iser argues, our "need for interpretation" will necessarily arise "from the structure of interpersonal experience" (32). All fictional characters are being judged by others, and none are immune to hearsay and ill reputations. Interpersonal experience between the characters is what provides the readers with sufficient data to form their own opinions of both the focalizers and the other characters. Iser's statement that "the technical requirements of language […] are responsible for directing the reader's response" (14), is proven to be true, insofar as the language chosen by the focalizers divulges their true feelings for other characters. Fooling other characters into accepting what the focalizers need them to believe is the critical issue of *ASoIaF* as it becomes difficult for the readers to see what is the truth and what are lies disguised as the truth in order for characters to win the game of thrones.

As the story develops, the readers learn that Jaime's title as a Kingslayer is an impediment to his trustworthiness and his honor. His word is constantly challenged due to his one misunderstood deed, and his life is altered indefinitely because of it. The Starks call the Lannisters proud (*AGoT* 73), Tyrion calls Jaime arrogant (368), and admits that his brother is also an impatient man, saying that: "Jaime was […] rash and headstrong and quick to anger. His brother never untied a knot when he could slash it in two with his sword" (415). When Jaime is named Lord Commander of the Kingsguard, he is shunned as "the false knight who profaned his blade with the blood of the king he had sworn to defend" (623) and his dishonor taints the reputation of the Kingsguard as a whole. Yet, for all his faults as a Kingslayer, Jaime "had always been able to make men follow him eagerly, and die for him if need be" (677), making him a war leader and a competent soldier.

Jaime's redemption does not begin until after being captured and imprisoned by Robb Stark. Through his imprisonment, he loses his knightly status and image by becoming filthy and nearly unrecognizable. "His unwashed hair fell to his shoulders in ropes and tangles, the clothes were rotting on his body, his face was pale and wasted" (*ACoK* 790). While he is in chains, the readers learn details of his story through a discussion between himself and Catelyn Stark and through information provided by Tyrion, that does not appear to be directly

connected to him as of yet. These details will provide credibility to his story, demonstrating that Jaime is to be considered a reliable narrator. In *ASoS*, after having his hand cut off, Jaime tells Brienne of Tarth, his road-side companion, the story of how he became the Kingslayer (506). He narrates how when Robert Baratheon was approaching the city of King's Landing, King Aerys ordered his pyromancer, Rossart, to set the city afire using "wildfire," (an alchemical version of Greek Fire, that burns everything and cannot be quenched by water). Jaime slew the pyromancer as he was making his way to the storehouses, before slaying the king himself (506). The readers are inclined to believe Jaime since they know that Tyrion has spoken to alchemists in *ACoK*, prior to Jaime's confession, and learned that King Aerys had ordered several thousand jars of wildfire to be hidden throughout the city. Many of the alchemists now serving King Joffrey do not know the whereabouts of all the jars, but some have been found beneath the sept (311) – which corresponds to a church – proving that King Aerys would have killed people who sought refuge in a religious sanctum. Jaime Lannister saved the city of King's Landing and its inhabitants from Aerys' folly, and instead of being treated as a hero, he was condemned a Kingslayer, and his honor rendered worthless.

These revelations act as a turning point in the narrative as the readers are forced to acknowledge that the Starks could not possibly have known the complete story and therefore must have prematurely condemned Jaime and his actions, which consequently makes the readers' opinions precipitated and misinformed. As foul a crime as kingslaying is, *kin*slaying is regarded as an even worse crime in Westeros, as Tyrion explains in *ACoK*: "The man who kills his own blood is cursed forever in the sight of gods and men" (640). Considering that Jaime faced the choice of either killing his father by order of King Aerys or killing the king to protect the city, it might seem unfair that he was judged so harshly by all, readers included, when faced with this impossible choice. Since Jaime never revealed his motives for slaying the king, Ned Stark along with many others, believed him to have done so for political reasons and as an act of treachery which would help his father ascend to power. The readers have also been led to believe this version of the facts during the first two books, as a result of the recency effect, before the truth was finally revealed.

Iser claims that "we cannot perceive without preconception" (*Prospecting* 32). According to this statement, it would seem that Martin's readers needed a preconception of the character of Jaime Lannister in order to be able to contest it upon closer inspection. Jaime is probably one of the most reliable characters, as his story coincides with fragments of information collected through various other focalizers, such as Tyrion and Catelyn Stark. Jaime is the key to the puzzle created by the other focalizers, the catalyst as it were, for a

thorough reinterpretation of previous assumptions made by the readers. He is the focalizer that assembles the pieces of the narrative of the first three books, and gives the readers a moment of epiphany as everything falls into place. Iser describes the reader's experience of such moments in terms of "fill[ing] the remaining gaps. He [the reader] removes them by a free play of meaning-projection and thus himself provides the unformulated connections between the particular views" (*Prospecting* 9). Although it is the reader's job to associate the numerous details of a narrative into a coherent whole by filling the gaps provided by the author, I suggest that Jaime Lannister is the one character that contributes to filling these gaps when his story coalesces. Jaime's role is not that of the young knight turned evil by kingslaying, nor is it that of a knight whose actions have been reevaluated and perhaps forgiven in the eyes of the readers; his function is to provide both background information and closure concerning what has happened to King Aerys in order for the plot to unfold further.

Owing to Jaime's revelations, the question of Daenerys Targaryen's past is one step closer to being resolved, and Eddard Stark's prejudices and his side of the story are diminished as readers discover the truth from a firsthand source. Moreover, Jaime is exempted of his oathbreaking, and the princes of Dorne can now make their entrance to claim justice for Elia of Dorne, married to King Aerys' son, Rhaegar Targaryen. As the chapter concerning Aerys' death closes, another one opens; and this one concerns the fate of his children and their spouses. *ASoS*, the third book of *ASoIaF*, is therefore the tome which provides answers concerning intrigues of the previous books, and opens the possibility for new conflicts and schemes in the following books; all of which are centered on Jaime Lannister's confession. The recently added intrigues engage the readers anew, keeping their curiosity and wonder alive. Martin thus employs a method of reader-involvement which, as Iser argues regarding reader-response in general, is more sophisticated than the common cutting techniques which create a moment of suspense by dramatically interrupting an action and moving on to the next character (11). Iser claims that "the abrupt introduction of new characters or even new threads of the plot, so that the question arises as the connections between the story revealed so far and the new, unforeseen situations" (*Prospecting* 11) is a more deliberate and calculated interruption of the narrative, and therefore more sophisticated (11). The story revealed so far concerns King Aerys' madness and death, and the new situation will regard his heirs and the vengeance of the princes of Dorne. Their plots of revenge are revealed in *AFfC* and *ADwD*, involving Daenerys Targaryen, King Aerys' daughter, and making the plot come full circle.

All these intrigues are masterfully constructed around Jaime's redeeming confession. Bennett and Royle argue that "[o]ur memory of a particular novel […] depends as much on

our sense of a particular character as on the ingenuities of the plot" (63). Jaime is the character that consolidates the plot, making both the storyline and his character more memorable to the readers. The events are timed perfectly, so that when the readers have just learned the truth from Jaime himself, already in the next chapter they are being introduced to Prince Oberyn Martell of Dorne, brother to the late Queen Elia of Dorne who was married to Rhaegar Targaryen (*ASoS* 518-520). Oberyn's tale of vengeance is about to begin, as the tale of Aerys's death has just been resolved, involving the readers further into the story, just as Iser claims desirable in a sophisticated narrative. In addition to introducing a new conflict, Oberyn Martell also provides us with more background information as he recounts to Tyrion his visit to Casterly Rock, the home of the Lannisters, when he was younger. There was to be an alliance through marriage between the Martells and the Lannisters, but Elia married Rhaegar instead of Jaime and Oberyn remained unmarried as Cersei became betrothed to another. (*ASoS* 967-9). These revelations make the plot even more intricate, and weave the House of Dorne perfectly into the already known storyline. This development coincides with Iser's statement that a narrative of a higher level needs its readers to be "discovering links and working out how the narrative will bring the different elements together" (11). Of course, the history of the Dornishmen is not over, but it is beautifully introduced at the close of Jaime's confession. Jaime's own redemption can now start as well, opening a new chapter for the readers to discover. However, I feel that the element of shock provided by Jaime is also worth mentioning before moving on to his redemption and comparison to Severus Snape.

2.3.2   A Shocking Affair: An Analysis of Jaime and Cersei's Incestuous Relationship

In addition to the role Jaime's confession plays in the narrative, his incestuous love affair with his twin sister Cersei provides the readers with the element of shock. In discussing the nature of shock, Rita Felski claims the following:

> The literature of shock becomes truly disquieting not when it is shown to further social progress, but when […] it slips through our frameworks of legitimation and resists our most heartfelt values. It is at that point that we are left floundering and speechless, casting about for words to make sense of our own response (110).

Felski explains this further by writing that "incest, suicide, adultery, parricide, matricide, mass slaughter and unspeakable atrocities of various kinds" (110-1) are the elements most used in narratives to shake our values and shock us to the point of doubting our responses. There are many passages in *ASoIaF* that refer to incest, both in general and in reference to Jaime's and Cersei specifically. Stannis Baratheon, Robert's Baratheon younger brother, has been broadcasting the truth of Queen Cersei's adulterous and incestuous relationship with Jaime by

sending letters to all the nobles of the realm. He spreads these rumors so that his claim to the throne becomes irrefutable, as he wishes to demonstrate that Robert Baratheon has left no trueborn heir to succeed him. "'Queen Cersei bedded her brother, so Joffrey is a bastard'. 'Joffrey the Illborn,' 'no wonder he's faithless, with the Kingslayer for a father'" (*ACoK* 259). Jaime, as a member of the Kingsguard, was supposed to remain chaste, and so Joffrey represents everything that is wrong with the relationship between Cersei and Jaime; he is an illegitimate child born from incest, a usurper to the throne and the Kingslayer's son.

Although they are enemies, Catelyn Stark tries to feel empathy for Cersei. She reflects in *ACoK*: "Cersei is a mother too. No matter who fathered those children, she felt them kick inside her, brought them forth with her pain and blood" (497). In addition, she informs the readers that:

> Bastards were common enough, but incest was a monstrous sin to both old gods and new, and the children of such wickedness were named abominations in sept and godswood alike. The dragon kings had wed brother to sister, but they were the blood of old Valyria where such practices had been common, and like their dragons, the Targaryens answered to neither god nor men (497-8).

Later, Jaime comments upon the subject of his own incest and says:

> Perhaps Stannis Baratheon and the Starks had done him a kindness. They had spread their tale of incest all over the Seven Kingdoms, so there was nothing left to hide. *Why shouldn't I marry Cersei openly and share her bed every night? The dragons always married their sisters.* Septons, lords, and smallfolk had turned a blind eye to the Targaryens for hundreds of years, let them do the same for House Lannister. […] *That would show the realm that the Lannisters are above their laws, like gods and Targaryens* (*ASoS* 287).

Catelyn and Jaime agree that Targaryens were above the law and were therefore allowed to marry siblings. Catelyn, alongside the majority of characters in the series, condemns incest, while Jaime Lannister defends it. Cersei Lannister, when confronted by Eddard Stark, also defends herself by remarking that "Why not? The Targaryens wed brother to sister for three hundred years, to keep the bloodlines pure. And Jaime and I are more than brother and sister. We are one person in two bodies. We shared a womb together. […] When he is in me, I feel…whole" (*AGoT* 485). From this point of view, their incest almost makes sense, and so it can be argued that what is most shocking here is not the incest in itself, but the fact that neither Cersei nor Jaime are *ashamed* of their inappropriate relationship.

Katherine Tullmann points out in her article entitled "Dany's Encounter with the Wild: Cultural Relativism" that "perhaps the reason why we are disposed to condemn incest is that we have been conditioned to do so by cultural practices and pressures" (198). Indeed, to the extent that *ASoIaF* represents a medieval-like world, I am in a position to look at how

incestuous relationships were treated in the Middle Ages. Elizabeth Archibald writes that such relationships were severely reprimanded by the Church during the Middle Ages, even if it did allow tales of incest to be told to the public as a warning (3). Remnants of those reprimands have influenced the view of incest in the Western world today, making it repulsive to us. According to Otto Rank in *The Incest Theme in Literature and Legend* (1992)*,* there are many records of incest in criminal cases dating from the Middle Ages proving that incest did occur quite often (379). In Rank's research, incest between brother and sister is the result of a sibling complex. He explains that "between siblings of the opposite sex growing together, a close bond develops; they feel that they belong together" (365). Neither Rank nor Archibald mention cases of incest between twins, and sexual relationships between siblings that were consensual from the start were very rare.

Rank states that "we do not wish to deny that modern literature tends most strongly to the undisguised depiction of sexual, especially incestuous, themes. Indeed, we believe we have come to appreciate and understand this situation from a psychoanalytical standpoint" (549). Indeed, incest, or sexual scenes in a literary text, are not as shocking as they used to be, since our modern minds are more open to psychoanalytical approaches regarding the how and the why of incestuous relationships than before. Also, as Rank suggests, modern literature explores sex more openly than before, as is clearly the case in *ASoIaF*, compared to for example *LotR*, which is practically asexual.

Elizabeth Barnes writes that incest used to be a royal privilege, or at least an aristocratic one, as demonstrated both in medieval and early-modern literature (4). "It represented a way for the powerful to maintain and solidify their political control," she writes, and points out that "the impulse to incest functions as a response to the fear of contamination on the part of the elite by invasion from the lower classes" (4). This fear might apply to the Targaryens, but for Cersei and Jaime, the result of their incest does not solidify their political control of Westeros; it weakens it considerably. Cersei becomes Queen Regent only because her children are still believed to be Robert Baratheon's offspring. Should the court believe that they are in fact a product of Lannister incest, her political control would cease.

Tullmann mentions in her article the consequences of Cersei's and Jaime's relationship in light of Westeros' political balance: "when he learns the truth, Eddard doesn't feel disgust, but rather dismay and indignation for the consequences of the coupling" (199). Tullmann claims that Ned Stark is more preoccupied with the political aspect of the incest than with the morality of it (199). It cannot be denied that the incestuous relationship between the Lannister twins poses serious political consequences for the kingdom as Cersei does not

provide the king with a trueborn heir; indeed she miscarried voluntarily. It is up to the individual reader either to condone the relationship or reject it as an abomination, as Catelyn Stark does. Alternatively, the reader may choose to treat the incestuous relationship as a political depravity. Iser points out that "when the reader has gone through the various perspectives offered him by the text, he is left with nothing but his own experience to judge what has been communicated to him" (*Prospecting* 7). Even though the reader has been subjected to several points of view, his or her judgment will necessarily depend on personal experience and the reader's own personality. Thus, "different readers at different times" will react differently to the same text, "even though the general impression may be the same" (Iser 5). Iser describes the process of forming opinions and making sense of a narrative as "the product of a complex interaction between text and reader" (5). I would like to suggest, then, that when the readers overcome the initial shock of the incest, the decision as to whether or not the incest should be seen as an atrocity, a political impediment or as a logical outcome for the twins, will affect the reader's response to the remaining parts of the narrative.

As mentioned in the first chapter of this thesis, Martin's choice of a medieval setting with its elements of romance appears to be inspired by the theme of the Arthurian legend. Incest has a central role in the Arthurian legend, since, according to some sources, Mordred is a product of Arthur's incestuous relationship with his sister which has been transformed by magic to appear as the woman Arthur desired. Elizabeth Archibald points out that, in the medieval period, "sibling incest seems to have been regarded as considerably less heinous than parent-child incest" (192) which bodes well for the Lannister twins in Martin's medieval-like fictional universe. However, there is also incest between parents and children in *ASoIaF*, at Craster's Keep, which is condemned as utterly vile (*ACoK* 356). Archibald goes on to say that sibling incest "is usually a sub-plot rather than a central theme, and often involves minor characters rather than the protagonists"(192). Cersei and Jaime, two of the main characters of *ASoIaF*, conceive Joffrey, whose existence becomes the main political issue of the series: who is to succeed King Robert Baratheon? Their incest is thereby at the center of the series' plot.

Incest has other repercussions than political ones. The dangers of inbreeding are also a risk. One might speculate on whether the reason why King Aerys Targaryen was called the Mad King is that his madness was caused by inbreeding. Since the Targaryens had wed brother to sister for several hundred years, it is a logical assumption that king Aerys would suffer the consequences of such unions. According to Archibald "the dangers of inbreeding are almost never mentioned by medieval writers" (6). It might also be the case in *ASoIaF* as none of the characters supposes that Aerys' madness is a direct result of centuries of sibling

marriages in House Targaryen. The irony is also that the one who slew King Aerys is Jaime Lannister, who himself has fathered children of incest. It is difficult to say whether Joffrey "Baratheon" is cruel and unstable as a king due to a spoilt childhood under the influence of an over-protective mother, or whether it is caused by a genealogical mistake caused by inbreeding. Nonetheless, the fact remains that, in Westeros, incest is only admissible for House Targaryen, and it is viewed as a shocking practice by most. Jaime and Cersei's incest is most shocking to the readers because of their defense of it; they never seem to desire to repent for their sexual relationship or excuse the serious political repercussions for the realm. Shock is a narrative tool used by Martin at regular intervals in the series, and Jaime and Cersei's incestuous relationship is one of those shocking elements. However, there is more to be said of Jaime Lannister that does not involve his sexual proclivities.

2.4 <u>Reader Response: A Comparative Study of the Characterization of Jaime Lannister and Severus Snape</u>

The comparative study between these two characters has the purpose of drawing a bridge between the world-renowned *Harry Potter* author, J.K. Rowling, and George R.R. Martin. Rowling's place in the world of fantasy literature has been assured by the tremendous success of her books, and that is why I have chosen to compare a character from her work to Jaime Lannister in order to prove that not only is Westeros equal – or even superior – to Middle Earth, but Martin's characters are also as complex and well drawn as J.K. Rowling's.

As already mentioned, there is an inconvenient dearth of scholarly material on *ASoIaF,* and although there are some fan-based articles on the Internet regarding character comparison between *Harry Potter* and *ASoIaF*, no scholarly attention has as yet been devoted to comparing Severus Snape to Jaime Lannister. The most unusual part of *ASoIaF* in terms of characterization is the constant shifts of focalizers, and the fact that not all of the main characters have the opportunity to act as a focalizer from the very first book. As such, it proves difficult to create a clear image of the characters, since the readers see them through the eyes of several focalizers. Jaime's story is not told from his point of view before the third book, and until then, what the readers have learned about him appears to come from reliable focalizers. Severus Snape suffers from much the same circumstances, as most of the informations concerning him come from the character of Harry Potter, who is the main focalizer of the heptalogy, and whose relationship to Snape can be described as strained at best. Snape's point of view of the events taking place in the series is not revealed to the readers until the seventh and last book of *Harry Potter*.

As Bennett and Royle suggest, characters are "the life of literature: they are the objects of our curiosity and fascination, affection and dislike, admiration and condemnation" (63). Jaime Lannister and Severus Snape are characters which awaken our curiosity by their ambiguous nature, fascinating the readers simultaneously. They are endearing as their actions are based upon impossible choices between good and evil, making the readers love them when they choose to be good and dislike them when evil dictates their conduct. They are admired for their tenacity and their personality, while being concurrently condemned for their wrong choices and vices.

Bennett and Royle discuss in *An Introduction to Literature, Criticism and Theory* (2009) the requirements for characters to seem as real as possible to the readers. Characters need plausible names; a certain complexity about them so as not to appear one-dimensional; various traits that define them and make them unpredictable or act on impulse; and in addition, it is necessary that they should have a single identity to which the traits relate (65). The names Jaime Lannister and Severus Snape are plausible since they are characters of a fantasy world, contributing to the feeling of being immersed in a world where the people's names are exotic and inviting. In her book, *Narrative Theory,* Rimmon-Kenan refers to the four ways in which one can categorize a character's name according to Philippe Hamon: the visual, the acoustic, the articulatory and the morphological (68). For instance, the name Severus Snape has alliteration, which gives his name an acoustic character-trait. If one were to enunciate it very clearly, his name would sound like a hissing snake, corresponding to his last name being one letter away from being the word "snake," giving it a morphological character-trait similar to the acoustic one. Even the letter "S" looks like a snake, which is also the symbol of House Slytherin to which Snape belongs.

Jaime and Snape may both be described as "round characters," a term which Rimmon-Kenan has borrowed from E.M. Forster, defining them as "both complex and developing" (41). Forster distinguishes between three axes to define the round characters: complexity, development and penetration into the inner life (41). Complexity centers on the traits that are dominant within a character, and revolves around which traits are viewed as secondary (41). By development, Forster means that the character should not be static; i.e. an allegorical figure or a caricature, as such characters are often minor (41). Finally, a "penetration into the 'inner life' ranges from characters […] whose consciousness is presented from within" to characters "seen only from the outside, their minds remaining opaque" (42).

The complexity of Snape and Jaime render them immune to becoming one-dimensional. The dominant traits within their personality are well-defined and the secondary

traits are centered on the one dominant trait that defines their characters. Jaime is the soldier *par excellence*; he lives for tournaments, battle and blood and glory. Tyrion says when praying at the altar of the Warrior: "*Watch over my brother* […] *he's one of yours*" (*ACoK* 635). Jaime says it as well: "They had taken his hand, they had taken his *sword hand*, and without it he was nothing. […] It was his right hand that made him a knight; his right arm that made him a man" (*ASoS* 416). Without his hand he is lost, and wishes to die: "*let them kill me*, he thought, *so long as I die fighting, a blade in hand*" (414). Jaime has to reinvent his identity after the loss of his hand; and this need for a new self coincides with his revelation to Brienne regarding Aerys and the introduction of the Martells of Dorne. Jaime is continually developing, and he therefore conforms to Forster's idea of a "round" character. Snape, however, has one obvious trait, and that is to be ambiguous; his whole character is built upon this particularity, and because of it he also manages to escape becoming a static character. He has many secondary traits as well, such as the cruel and unjust teacher, the sulky shade always dressed in black and the loyal friend of a long-lost loved-one. The readers can scrutinize the minds of both characters, either through their own narrative voice – the consciousness presented from within, as in Jaime's case – or through an outside view, as in Snape's case, whose mind remains opaque, until his memories are unveiled.

Complexity is hard to define, however, as characters can be subjected to "two basic types of textual indicators: direct definition and indirect presentation" (Rimmon-Kenan 58). Direct definition "names the trait by an adjective […] an abstract noun, […] or possibly some other kind of noun […] or part of speech […]" (59-60). An example of this is when Jon Snow states that "The Lannisters are proud" (*AGoT* 73). Indirect presentation "does not mention the trait but displays and exemplifies it in various ways, leaving to the reader the task of inferring the quality they imply" (59). Rimmon-Kenan argues that there are four main categories of indirect presentation: action, speech, external appearance and environment (61-7). The category of action can then be further subdivided into one-time actions or habitual actions; "One-time actions tend to evoke the dynamic aspect of the character, often playing a part in a turning point in the narrative" (61). As such, when Jaime endeavors to save Brienne from being raped in *ASoS*, it represents a one-time action, since it is not his habit to save women from being raped, only this particular one. The friendship that develops between Jaime and Brienne is a turning point in Jaime's life, and therefore in the narrative as a whole, since his confession to Brienne plays a key role in the further development of the narrative. A one-time action can also be, as is the case here, an act of commission, i.e. an act performed willingly by the character. Such an action provides the readers with an indirect presentation of his

character: they now know that Jaime is good-hearted because he tries to prevent Brienne from being sexually assaulted. Such indirect presentation also indicates that actions are worth more than words, which concurs with Anglberger's and Hieke's statement discussed in 2.1 regarding the observation of the characters' actions rather than relying on their speech.

Speech is too extensive a category to be fully discussed in this thesis. However, it is important to note that both Jaime and Snape are misunderstood due to the speech of other focalizers and the false knowledge entrusted to the readers. The readers' understanding is fabricated by third-party agents, leading to Jaime and Snape seeming ambiguous at best, and evil at the worst. "[W]hat one character says about another may characterize not only the one spoken about but also the one who speaks" (Rimmon-Kenan 64). Indeed, when Ned Stark speaks of Jaime Lannister to Robert Baratheon, what he says of Jaime can also reflect his own prejudiced opinions. Jaime discusses this injustice with Brienne when she asks him after hearing the truth of King Aerys' death: "'If this is true, how is it no one knows?'" (*ASoS* 507) to which Jaime responds: "'Do you think the noble Lord of Winterfell wanted to hear my feeble explanations? Such an *honorable* man. He had only to look at me to judge me guilty'" (508). Ned Stark is considered the most virtuous character of the series, but even he has flaws, as his premature judgment of Jaime's actions shows. Harry also judges Snape hastily, but Harry's young age is a factor to be taken into consideration, as well as the fact that Snape acted as a double-agent and it was therefore necessary for him to convincingly deceive his colleagues and others characters, as well as the readers. Also, Snape does not endeavor to appear particularly pleasant; he does not mask his dislike for Harry. As such, Harry has not been misjudging him entirely, but Harry *has* misunderstood Snape's motives.

The next sub-category of indirect presentation is external appearance. Jaime Lannister and Severus Snape are as physically opposite as two characters can be. Jaime has golden hair, is handsome and fair, and represents the image of the perfect knight as well as the archetype of the prince charming. Severus Snape is described for the first time by an eleven year old Harry Potter, who depicts him as "a teacher with greasy black hair, a hooked nose and sallow skin" (*PS* 94). Further, the readers learn that "harder to shake off was the feeling Harry had got from the teacher's look – a feeling that he didn't like Harry at all" (94). Harry's first impression of Snape antagonizes the readers because it is made clear that Snape dislikes Harry immediately, for no apparent reason.

Johann Kaspar Lavater, a Swiss physiognomist, tried to demonstrate the direct connection between physical appearance, especially facial features, and character traits during the eighteenth century (Rimmon-Kenan 65). Although his theory has been discredited,

Rimmon-Kenan states that "the metonymic relation between external appearance and character-traits has remained a powerful resource in the hand of many writers" (65). She also argues that some of the external factors are beyond the control of the character: biological features such as height, eye and hair color, length of nose and so on (65-6). However there are factors that are more deliberate such as choice of clothing, posture, and hair-style (66) which might affect the reader's perception of a character and associate a character-trait accordingly.

Inner worth cannot be determined upon physical features alone; Jaime might be handsome, wear a golden armor, and imagine himself a lion due to the feline sigil of House Lannister, but he has performed both good and evil deeds, more dependent upon situational factors than his own morals. Likewise, Snape is portrayed as "an overgrown bat" (*PS* 209), since he is always dressed in black and always appears sinister, but he has also performed good and evil deeds, that have had a direct impact on his choice of clothes and hair-style. I would like to argue that the reason why he always wears black is because he is still mourning Lily's death, his childhood sweetheart, and Harry's mother. Sixteen years after her death, when asked by Dumbledore if he still loved Lily, Snape answers "'Always'" (*DH* 552). Therefore appearances are not always what they seem to be; the perfect knight can break his vows and the ghoulish potions professor can prove to be loyal.

Jaime represents the archetype of the perfect knight, up until the point where he slays King Aerys. From then on, he is disguising himself as a knight in a kingslayer's armor. He accepts the title of Kingslayer as the fact remains true, but in his heart he knows that he did the right thing, maybe not the honorable thing as he broke his oath, but the right thing nonetheless as he saved many lives that day. Jaime does make excuses for himself breaking his oath, while proving a point, when he says to Catelyn Stark while being captive:

> 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' (*ACoK* 796).

Perhaps the features of the Kingslayer in Jaime are stronger than his inner knight since he breaks with the archetype of the perfect knight who would try to perform all of these vows without questioning them, reminding us of Martin's apparent refusal to represent the medieval knights as perfect to a fault, as Galahads in disguise. Galahad was the purest of the knights in the Arthurian legend, the one rumored to be worthy of finding the Holy Grail. On the other hand, Rowling lets Snape use deception and disguises constantly, since these were the tools necessary to provide him with a mask that would endure being Harry's professor, Dumbledore's spy and Voldemort's trusted man. He only takes off his mask on rare occasions

and always involuntarily – such as during occlumency lessons with Harry in *OotP*. Snape deceives the readers right up until his death, and his appearance contributes to the deception.

Physical appearance is always present, as it is the first thing that one notices when seeing or describing another person. Brienne and Jaime are described respectively as ugly and handsome, but they form a bond despite their physical appearance through the need to survive and depend on each other for safety. However, as Jaime turns increasingly ugly – he has shaved his hair, grown a beard, and lost his right hand – he convinces the readers of his honorable intentions regarding King Aerys. The loss of his advantageous physical features causes redeeming personality traits to emerge and hence convince the readers of his inner worth, ultimately proving a connection between physical appearance and character traits. It is as if a favorable physical appearance distracts the readers from the characters' inner worth and qualities. Brienne was always described as ugly, and her personality is righteous, her sense of honor and duty are unfailing; she is a maiden and a knight, and she respects honor above all else. Snape lacks the necessary partner that Brienne provides Jaime, and he leads a solitary life. The only person who is said to have liked him despite his appearance was Lily at the time when they were children. The other person that trusts Severus Snape unconditionally is Dumbledore, regardless of his appearance, something that Harry has difficulty understanding until Snape's death. Snape's unfavorable looks are constant, but they will no longer be a factor when his version of the events is finally revealed.

Similar to Jaime, Snape is made to kill an important member of society and is misunderstood because of it. The readers learn later that as Dumbledore was dying from a curse, he asked Snape to kill him at the appropriate moment, which Snape reluctantly does. At the moment of the murder however, which Harry is witness to, neither he nor the readers know the background story and therefore both judge Snape as a murderer. Rowling connects the physical appearance of Snape with his murderous actions and Harry's judgment of his former teacher by writing that: "Hatred boiled up in Harry at the sight of him: he had forgotten the details of Snape's appearance in the magnitude of his crimes, forgotten how his greasy, black hair hung in curtains around his thin face, how his black eyes had a dead, cold look" (*DH* 480). As Rowling kills off Snape, she lets Harry take pity on him and makes him look "down upon the dying man he hated, whose widening black eyes found Harry as he tried to speak. […] The green eyes found the black, but after a second something in the depths of the dark pair seemed to vanish" (528). Harry's green eyes are the one physical feature that he has inherited from his mother, and Severus has always been in love with Lily. Her green eyes

give some peace to Snape as he dies, drawing a parallel between physical appearances and the characterization of fictional characters.

Rimmon-Kenan argues that a "character's physical surrounding […] as well as his human environment […] are also often used as trait-connoting metonymies" (66). Jaime's life is bathed in light and renown while Snape prospers in the shadows of Hogwarts' dungeons. Based on what the readers are told of the characters' environment, they can form an image of the characters' physical appearance. When the readers are told that Snape "knows an awful lot about the Dark Arts," (*PS* 94), his affiliation with it creates suspicion as the readers associate the Dark Arts with Voldemort. By contrast, Jaime's environment is both what redeems him and what condemns him. Since Jaime is a member of the Kingsguard and dons a white armor, the readers might be led to believe that he cannot possibly be as evil as portrayed by the Starks since white is the color of innocence. However, after pushing Bran Stark out of a window, the white color of his garments becomes symbolic and ironic: the readers can see him as false, as white is a color as easily soiled as one's innocence.

After comparing Jaime and Snape in terms of their actions, speech, external appearance and environment, I will now compare their role in the narrative. "In a given narrative, a character may perform more than one role […] and conversely, a role may be fulfilled by more than one character" (Rimmon-Kenan 34). Jaime's role in the narrative is to rally the pieces of an incomplete subplot, through his confession to Brienne. Snape does the same, after his death, as the truth of his actions is revealed when Harry gathers his memories in a phial and watches them in the Pensieve – a device that allows you to relive your memories or those of others – leading Harry and the readers to know the motives behind Snape's contradictory actions. Snape's memories provide Harry and the readers alike with the missing components of the story. They now know the reason why Snape was the one to kill Dumbledore in *HBP* and why Dumbledore begged him to do so; the affection he had for Lily; and the resentment he had towards James Potter who bullied him when they were teenagers. Snape's ambiguous feelings towards Harry are both due to Harry being James's son, and to the fact that Harry reminds him of what Snape never had: Lily. Furthermore, the work Snape did as a double agent in order to gather information on Voldemort while trying to save Harry Potter is also explained. Iser argues that "if communication between text and reader is to be successful, clearly the reader's activity must also be controlled […] by the text" (*Prospecting* 33). The seven *Harry Potter* novels provide the readers with gaps of information that are partially filled through Snape's memories. Based on Iser's reader-response theory, one may assume that this in turn "stimulates the reader into filling the blanks with projections. He [the

reader] is drawn into the events and made to supply what is meant from what is said" (*Prospecting* 34). Further, Iser states that "blanks indicate that the different segments and patterns of the text are to be connected even though the text itself does not say so" (34). Both Snape and Jaime serve an important function in the narrative by providing the necessary fragments of information that are vital in order to bring closure to one part of the narrative, allowing the rest of the story to be told. Snape brings closure to the circumstances surrounding Dumbledore's death, and so the plot can advance to Harry's defeat of Voldemort.

I have claimed that Jaime's role is to give closure for one part of the plot, so that the next part may begin. It will become necessary for Martin to attribute a new role to Jaime, who is now the new Commander of the Kingsguard. When looking at the White Book, the readers can see that Jaime is having an epiphany: "the rest Jaime Lannister would need to write for himself. He could write whatever he chose, henceforth. Whatever he chose…" (*ASoS* 1010). This moment is a turning point in Jaime's life; he can choose to make his life worthy of the White Book by changing his ways, or continuing on the path his father has chosen for him. His road to redemption coincides with the start of the healing process of Westeros; a process deemed necessary by Clute for all narratives of fantasy literature (see 1.3.3). Jaime's new role in the narrative is to initiate Healing. He does so by trying to right wrongs, and end conflicts peacefully (*AFfC*). Snape has the same role in the *Harry Potter* series; he is the one who reconciles several gaps of the narrative by explaining everything through his memories. Snape thereby contributes to a healing process that is comparable to what we see in *ASoIaF*, as Harry along with the readers finally learn that Dumbledore would have died regardless of Snape's actions, due to the curse inflicted upon him by a Horcrux. Snape heals the readers and Harry more than he heals Hogwarts and the wizarding world, diverging therefore from John Clute's definition and entering more into Tolkien's definition of "consolation" (339).

Jaime and Snape also have other things in common, such as having the misfortune of experiencing hatred from the people they are trying to protect. Brienne remains suspicious of Jaime's help, since he is only known to her at first as the Kingslayer. "*Aerys,* Jaime thought resentfully. *It always turns on Aerys*" (*ASoS* 295), and Harry does not comprehend that Snape is helping him, since Snape acts as one of Voldemort's men. Snape's redemption is harder to analyze since he endeavors to save Harry while being a spy for Dumbledore, and so his evilness appears to be more than the disguise it truly is. Snape tries to redeem himself while being Harry's professor, although in such a discreet manner that it is hard to understand at first. At the end of *PS*, Quirell and Voldemort reveal to Harry that they would have killed him "if Snape hadn't been muttering a counter-curse, trying to save you" (209). This comment is

where Snape's ambiguity as a character truly begins; namely in his reluctance to face up to his good and noble actions.

Both Jaime and Snape also perform a necessary evil to achieve a greater good, which has always been an ethical dilemma in the eyes of our society: should one kill one person to save the lives of others? Jaime kills Aerys in order to save the city from being consumed by wildfire. He breaks an oath, and becomes one of the most hated men of Westeros because of it, in order to save King's Landing and its inhabitants. He is never thanked for his actions, and this one necessary evil has become a taint on his name, on his honor and on his personality. However, when his right hand has been cut off, Jaime says "I've lost the hand I killed the king with. The hand that flung the Stark boy from that tower. The hand I'd slide between my sister's thighs to make her wet" (*ASoS* 504). With his right hand gone, the hand that performed his most monstrous sins, I argue that the Kingslayer in him dies. Already a few chapters later, we learn that Tyrion is accused of killing King Joffrey, earning him the following comment: "They have a new Kingslayer now" (847). As Jaime the Kingslayer loses his kingslaying hand, Tyrion takes his place, almost as if the realm – or the readers – needs a Kingslayer to despise. Snape, on the other hand, has to kill Dumbledore to prevent Draco Malfoy, a relatively innocent boy, from becoming a killer. He has also had to watch people he knew and cared about be killed without being able to stop it so as to not awaken suspicion in Voldemort while spying for the Order of the Phoenix, an order founded to fight and defeat Voldemort. His necessary evils have been for the greater good of the wizard community, and his actions are as misunderstood as Jaime's. In the end, however, Harry recognizes Snape as "the bravest man I ever knew" (*DH* 607). While Jaime takes the opportunity to redeem himself publicly through his new post as Commander of the Kingsguard; Snape only did so privately, in the eyes of Dumbledore and Harry, to which Dumbledore once comments "My word, Severus, that I shall never reveal the best of you?" (545). Harry's response is to name his son after him, Albus Severus Potter, the only one of this children to inherit Lily Potter's eyes; a last tribute to Snape's love for Lily. Snape, contrary to Jaime, seems to truly regret his actions, which led to the death of the woman he loved, while Jaime merely learns from his past misdeeds and moves on without showing regret and self-pity.

It is difficult to compare the reliability of the two characters, since it is based upon two very different perspectives. "Although [the reader] cannot help following the views and interpretations of the narrator, it is essential for him to understand the motivations behind this constant changing of viewpoints, because only the discovery of the motivations can lead to the comprehension of what is intended" (Iser, *Prospecting,* 19). When Jaime is finally

attributed a narrative voice, it is to clear his name in the eyes of the readers and explain his version of the events. The readers realize that so far the only information they have gathered on Jaime Lannister has come from other sources and so the motivation for the shift of focalizers is easily explained. Jaime's reliability as a narrator has already been discussed, and I declare that it is quite high as he is not a politically motivated character, nor is he prone to deceive others. Jaime usually speaks his mind, and he does not care about the political ramifications of his words and actions, therefore proving to be one of the most reliable narrators of the series. Thus, reliability in the characters of Westeros is very much linked with their political agenda and ambitions. Snape's reliability is harder to deny. Our knowledge of Snape, until his death, comes from the medium of others; his reliability is not in question, only his character and motivations are. Everything we learn about Snape that is true is through his own memories, and even though memories can be altered by time and magic, as Professor Horace Slughorn proved in *HBP*, they are usually viewed as reliable in the *Harry Potter* world. Snape could have altered his memories to fit his own desires, but it is safe to assume that he did not, since his memories show crucial information for the survival of Harry Potter and the defeat of Voldemort. As such, Snape's reliability through the medium of his memories is difficult to contest, as he has shown no signs of mental instability that would cause his memories to be unreliable. Harry is not the narrator of the series, but he is the main focalizer, and his perspective becomes the readers'. Therefore, Harry becomes an unreliable focalizer when the readers wish to secure truthful information regarding Snape's character.

As I conclude this chapter of the thesis, I would like to mention Iser's argument that "[c]entral to the reading of every literary work is the interaction between its structure and its recipient" (*Prospecting* 31). The readers are the ones that have to interpret the text based upon the author's intentional gaps of information in the narrative. I hope to have shed some light on Martin's narrative techniques in the short introduction I dedicated on the subject, and shown his unusual characterization. Also, based on the criteria of both E.M. Forster and Rimmon-Kenan, I argue that both Jaime Lannister and Severus Snape are "round" and complex characters that intrigue the readers enough to make them want to discover more about them. As such, Jaime and Snape also contribute to involving the readers in the narrative, attributing them another similar role in addition to being the keystone of the narrative's turning point. This analysis clearly shows that Martin's characterization equals Rowling's, and has hopefully contributed to demonstrating that Martin's work is equally worthy of academic praise as the *Harry Potter* series, which has already earned tremendous scholarly attention.

Conclusion

Tyrion Lannister once said to Jon Snow: "My mind is my weapon. My brother has his sword. King Robert has his warhammer, and I have my mind… and a mind needs books as a sword needs a whetstone, if it is to keep its edge" (*AGoT* 123-4). I would like to add to these words of wisdom that books need scholars to critique and analyze them in order for them to keep their edge. The purpose of this thesis has been to include *A Song of Ice and Fire* into a fantasy canon. However, as no such canon exists as of today, I proposed to consider the possibility of creating a canon for each sub-genre of fantasy, allowing *ASoIaF* to become part of either a heroic fantasy or a medieval fantasy canon. I also proposed the creation of a new subgenre of fantasy, namely "politics-fantasy," with Martin's *ASoIaF* as its founding narrative.

I have analyzed the content, the structure and the possible reader-response associated with *ASoIaF* in order to include the series into the canon. I have compared the world of Westeros to the world of Middle Earth, since many scholars who have studied or written fantasy literature have agreed that Tolkien's *LotR* is the one text to measure others against, and ought to have a place among the fantasy canon, if there had been one. J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* series is in a similar position to Tolkien's, as her work, even though originally written for children, has had such a tremendous success that it has earned its place in the fantasy canon. I have, therefore, chosen to compare one of Martin's characters, Jaime Lannister, to one of Rowling's characters, Severus Snape, to show that Martin's characterization is as complex and well-structured within the narrative text as Rowling's, therefore trying to place him on the same literary pedestal as her.

I would like to return to the quote used in my introduction, where Robert Scholes writes that "no genre is itself ever complete – it is modified, as Todorov suggests, by each new work of imagination" (ix). Using this statement as a starting point, it is possible for any genre to evolve and adapt in order to include new literary works. The creation of several subgenres of fantasy was necessary in order for it to cope with the various works of fantasy submitted to the genre. David Sandner, like Scholes, claims that "the fantastic is not a stable form even today [2004], despite being 'named'" (10) as it has proved "notoriously difficult to define" (9). Thus, this shows that it is possible for new works of fantasy literature to penetrate and alter the genre through their originality and perhaps even through their popularity. As a result, such works may later deserve a place in a future fantasy canon.

ASoIaF is a work that is unique in many ways: the narrative technique is unusual and stimulating, the characterization is complex and there are more "round" characters than there

are "flat" ones. Martin also has the tendency to kill off focalizers, forcing the readers to search for answers in the perspective of other focalizers whilst shocking them. However, as a work of fantasy, its uniqueness also lies in its uncommon take on religion and politics. As the series falls under both heroic and medieval fantasy, it is normal to want to compare it to medieval romances. Jules Zanger claims that "one significant characteristic that distinguishes the world of heroic fantasy from that of the historic Middle Ages is the absence of the church as the institution of power and significance" (230). Martin, on the other hand, has included several religious faiths into Westeros. This is not to say that the series is a work of medieval romance but that Martin has provided *ASoIaF* with religious elements such as buildings called "septs," with "septons" and a "High-Septon" as the leading person of the faith of the Seven Gods. Although not very prominent in the first three books of *ASoIaF*, the political, social and cultural power of the septs and septons are shown in *AFfC* and *ADwD*. This is expressed through the new High Septon of King's Landing challenging the virtues of Queen Cersei by imprisoning her on the ground of incest and fornication out of wedlock. Also, the order of sparrows is a considerable pious force in the narrative, urging for religious justice in a time of war (*AFfC*, 91). Such elements are usually not present in a modern work of medieval fantasy, making Martin's *ASoIaF* a more unique and complete work of fantasy literature.

Diana Wynne Jones, the author of several works of fantasy, has also written *The Tough Guide to Fantasyland*, where she analyzes the many aspects of what constitutes a work of fantasy which takes place in a secondary world. On the subject of politics, she has written that "the Rule is that they are always very complicated and involve issues most Tourists [readers] have never heard of" (147). She trivializes the presence of politics in the secondary world by stating that "it eventually cancels down to the Head of the House […] having to sell himself sheepskins and then poison himself" (148). Martin's *ASoIaF* does neither; the readers are constantly included into the political intrigues of the narrative, and the game of thrones is at the center of the plot, permitting the king to escape having to poison himself. Several kings are slain, but none die as a result of something as trivial as suicide. All plots are done in the shadows, and yet Martin allows his readers to get a glimpse of those plots and intrigues, and this from the very start of *AGoT*; who killed Jon Arryn, the Hand of the King, and why? From then on, the intrigues and political plots only increase and their magnitude only grow in the minds of the readers.

Based upon the omnipresence of religion and politics, I would argue that Martin's work is less traditional than other works of fantasy. *ASoIaF* is especially less traditional than Tolkien's *LotR*, which is now considered to be the creator of clichés within fantasy literature.

ASoIaF has thus the potential to change the fantasy genre, and, as a consequence, will maybe contribute to creating a new subgenre: politics-fantasy. The changes imposed by Martin on the fantasy genre would facilitate the creation of new works of political fantasy by pioneering authors. Martin has thus opened a door for present and future authors of fantasy, and proven that politics and fantasy need not be separated. Politics is usually seen as a serious field, while fantasy has not always been recognized as a serious genre. I believe that a combination of the two contributes to making politics more accessible to the readers of fantasy, while making this particular work of fantasy more serious due to its political undertones. As such, this combination might be the birth of a new way of writing fantasy.

In relation to the characterization of Jaime Lannister and Severus Snape and their role in each narrative, it can be said that they both raise the text to a new level due to their revelations and the effect of those revelations upon the readers. "Filling the gaps" of the text through the supplied information provided by the characters are what involves the readers with the text, as Iser claims. Nevertheless, Raymond H. Thompson has asked the million-dollar question in his article "Modern Fantasy and Medieval Romance: A Comparative Study:" "is it legitimate to expect realistic characterization in fantasy?" (211) Thompson answers his own question at the end of the article, claiming that "the answer is no" since "they are deliberately heightened in order to be representative rather than realistic" (223). I agree with his resolution insofar as characters can easily be used by the author as metaphors or as a representation of virtues in order to help the readers understand what the author wishes to emphasize. They also need to be representative of something in order to prove a point or give the readers a sense that their existence was not in vain; although it is my opinion that the author can equip the characters with the means to do so while being realistic.

Moreover, I think that a realistic characterization is possible and even crucial to the readers of fantasy literature. Since there are already many unfamiliar elements in a narrative taking place in a secondary world, it is important for the readers to be able to identify themselves with one or several characters in order to find some connection between this alternative world and their own. Characters play a decisive role in this identification: should the characters be too unrealistic, too cliché, or lack a thorough description of their past, vital to attract the attention of the readers, they will vanish into the narrative and the text will become less immersive. Mendlesohn has argued that "the choice of point of view characters aids the immersion also" (*Rhetorics* 100), proving that since the readers are able to read Jaime's confession from his point of view, they are immersing themselves in his unfotunate story, which is also a central part of the recent history of Westeros. The characters of Jaime

Lannister and Severus Snape have both provided the readers with sufficient knowledge of their past and present to make their existence memorable, and they therefore heighten the text through their choices. The characters need to be realistic since their choices also need to make sense, at least to the characters themselves, in order for the readers to accept them. It seems to me that should the characters lack realism, it will only result in the readers losing interest in them and the narrative itself. However, I think it might be wiser to settle for characters of fantasy literature being viewed as "internal phenomena, embodiments of psychological phenomena acting out their struggle toward integration in a projected landscape of the mind", as Attebery describes them in *Strategies of Fantasy* (71). Furthermore, he also states that "a character in a fairy tale *is* what he *does*" (72), which was the also the point that Anglberger and Hieke – a point with which I agree – made concerning the characters of *ASoIaF* (2.1).

Moreover, Clute writes under his definition of "Fantasy," from his *The Encyclopedia of Fantasy*, that "fantasy can almost be defined as a genre whose protagonists reflect and embody the tale being told, and who lead the way through travails and reversals towards the completion of a happy ending" (339). It would seem that characters are then central to the readers' interest in the story, as they are both representative of the plot, as Thompson claims (223), and are crucial for the readers identifying themselves with the characters. Indeed, Wolfe has maintained that "fantasy manages to sustain our interest in impossible worlds simply by making these worlds emotionally meaningful to us" (*Encounter* 229-30). The best way of performing such a task is for the author to create characters that inspire emotional response from the readers. A secondary world with such characters will become more memorable, enjoyable and more praiseworthy than a world that does not.

The characters' roles are as important as their personalities in complex narratives. Jaime Lannister and Severus Snape are the *revelators* in the text; their confessions help the readers fill in the gaps and blanks that the author has created prior to the characters' confessions. Iser has claimed that there is an "interplay between the explicit and the implicit, between revelation and concealment" (*How to do Theory* 64). I argue that Martin has skillfully managed that balance between the explicit and the implicit and has made it possible for the readers to "connect the dots" on their own, creating a form for communication between the author's intention in the text, the text itself and the readers' comprehension of it. Indeed, Iser has stated that in narratives "the gaps or structured blanks […] function as a kind of pivot on which the whole text-reader relationship revolves, because they stimulate the process of ideation to be performed by the reader on terms set by the text" (64). As such, *ASoIaF* is a narrative text that highly stimulates its readers' intellect, as it is their duty to fill

in the gaps with the information provided by key characters such as Jaime Lannister. W.R. Irwin, author of *The Game of the Impossible: A Rhetoric of Fantasy* (1976) also argues that "fantasy is a mental exercise" due to "what it requires of a reader" (40). Fantasy is, then, "more than just a pretty face;" it does not solely mean to entertain or to provide an escape, it is also a way of challenging the intellect of its readers by inventing unfamiliar elements in a semi-familiar setting: the setting of the fantastic.

In this thesis, I set out to argue for the inclusion of *A Song of Ice and Fire* as a likely candidate for the fantasy canon, should it ever be created by scholars and critics. I hope to have demonstrated its literary worth through comparing the world of Westeros to that of Tolkien's Middle Earth, and by showing that as far as characterization goes, both Jaime Lannister and Severus Snape share the same sort of complexity of character. I also wanted to dedicate some scholarly attention to Martin's narrative technique, as it has not been duly recognized as of yet. During the writing of this thesis, I have also discovered that *ASoIaF* has the potential to create its own subgenre which I hope to coin as politics-fantasy. Therefore I agree with Attebery concerning his claim that "if a sub-genre attracts enough interest from readers and writers, it may eventually change the center of gravity of the whole genre" (*Strategies* 126). However, I disagree with his opinion that the one sub-genre "that promises to reshape the genre most significantly is […] 'modern urban fantasy,'" (126) a form of low fantasy set in a contemporary realistic setting. I claim that *ASoIaF* is more likely to change the fantasy genre than any other works of fantasy literature to be published in the next decade. I therefore contest L. Sprague de Camp's statement that "few have equaled and none has surpassed *LotR* in vividness, grandeur, and sheer readability" (251). I believe that I have shown in the course of this thesis that the world of Westeros has surpassed Tolkien's Middle Earth in terms of depth and complexity. Given that Tolkien's work revolutionized the fantasy genre, and that the greatest achievement of his *Lord of the Rings* trilogy was in "normalizing the idea of a secondary world" (James and Mendlesohn 65), I claim that the greatest potential of *ASoIaF* lies in its ability to create a new subgenre of the fantastic. Who is to say, however, what more this heptalogy can accomplish? It is difficult to fathom, as *A Song of Ice and Fire* has not yet reached completion, but I definitely believe that it has the potential to revolutionize the fantasy genre further than it already has.

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