

CREATING CHARACTER IDENTITY THROUGH META-INTERTEXTUALITY IN

GEORGE R.R. MARTIN'S *A SONG OF ICE AND FIRE*

by

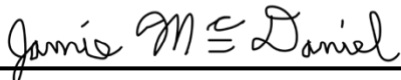
Kirston Nichoal Smith

A thesis submitted to the faculty of Radford University in
partial fulfillment of requirements for degree of Master of
Arts in the Department of English

Thesis Advisor: Jamie L. McDaniel

August 2020

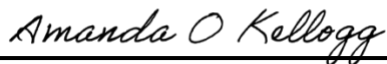
Copyright 2020, Kirston Nichoal Smith



8/16/2020

Dr. Jamie McDaniel
Thesis Advisor

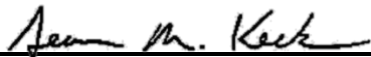
Date



8/16/2020

Dr. Amanda Kellogg
Committee Member

Date



8/16/2020

Dr. Sean Keck
Committee Member

Date

ABSTRACT

In examining George R. R. Martin's *A Song of Ice and Fire*, I untangle the intertwining plot lines of *A Game of Thrones*, *A Clash of Kings*, *A Storm of Swords*, *A Feast for Crows*, and *A Dance with Dragons* to reveal how Martin employs disability/impairment and sexual abuse/rape as traits or actions of characters within a meta-intertextual frame to create character identity. For instance, in examining the recurring disability/impairment motif that runs through *A Song of Ice and Fire*, I show how Martin uses meta-intertextual factors such as familial histories, past experiences, personal choices, actions, beliefs, and characters' internalization of those factors to show exceptional characters that push against fantasy's stereotypical depictions of disability/impairment as a litmus for morality or a scenario that creates superpowered individuals outside the boundaries of reality. The otherness, created by disability/impairment, that characters portray works as an isolating factor forcing their expulsion from the normative culture of Westeros, and unless the othered body can negotiate its return to normative culture, will inevitably lead to isolation or death. The wights, or reanimated bodies, exist as ultimate examples of character isolation from Westeros society where there is no path to reestablish their spot back into human society because a non-human entity controls the body. Furthermore, the characters who are disabled/impaired within the series often function to move the story forward. The death of Lord Arryn begins the story, the fall and attempted assassination of Bran causes fighting between the Starks and Lannisters, Bran's fall also serves to awaken his powers, Ned Stark's leg is crushed from a fall with his horse leaving him physically unable to defend himself and allowing his capture, Jaime Lannister's character growth is spurred by the loss of his hand, Arya gains warging powers during her temporary blinding that she uses to pass a test in the House of Black and White, and Jon Connington's plan to put Aegon on the throne gains urgency

once it is revealed he has greyscale. Importantly, the characters who have a disability/impairment integrate that aspect of their physicality into their identity in a complicated connection with characters' present moments, familial histories, past experiences, and internalization of their impairment in creating character identity.

In the same manner that Martin uses meta-intertextuality to integrate disability/impairment as a part of characters' identities in an authentic manner, the author uses meta-intertextuality with characters' sexual practices as a means to show the morality, or lack thereof, in a manner that undermines female autonomy in favor of showing the honorability or monstrosity of male characters. Martin's use of sexuality and sexual violence often uses women as props to show the moral integrity or lack thereof of the male characters of the series without addressing the needs of the victims of sexual abuse or violence. The frequency in which women become victims of sexual violence and the ways in which it is outright dismissed as the reality of how things are within *A Song of Ice and Fire* underscores a toxic interpretation of women's bodies as modifiable objects for male viewing, pleasure, and control. The fact that rape or sexual violence has occurred from the Medieval period to present is not in question, but that Martin engages sexual violence as a tool for the character growth of male characters ignores the autonomy of female characters' sexuality and their consent to be sexually active as part of their identity in favor of metaphorically creating morality or monstrosity in men to the point it undermines the authenticity of major female characters.

DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this to my parents, Louise and Bobby Smith, and my youngest sister, Skyler Smith because their encouragement pushed me to continue writing.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First, I would like to thank all my English professors at Concord University and Radford University for always being willing to extend a helping hand in learning new and challenging material. Thank you, Dr. Rieger, for always encouraging me to express my thoughts even when they are misinformed, and for taking the time to help me understand how to keep reading on a question to be able to form a more informed opinion on any subject. Dr. Wawrzycka, thank you for making literary theory seem less daunting than I believed it would be. Thank you, Dr. Kellogg for being so welcoming and always being available to discuss new ideas. Also, thank you for making your classes so interesting and useful outside of the classroom. Dr. McDaniel, I appreciate all the assistance you have provided for researching, discussing, and writing this thesis. Your ideas and thoughts have been useful in fixing my many mistakes during the writing process.

I would also like to thank the staff of the McConnell Library for being so helpful in retrieving source material during Covid-19. Without your help in locating articles, there would not have been a finished thesis.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract.....	ii
Dedication.....	iv
Acknowledgements.....	v
Table of Contents.....	vi
Introduction: Meta-Intertextuality in <i>A Song of Ice and Fire</i>	1
Chapter 1: A Song of Isolation and Death: George R. R. Martin’s Use of Disability in <i>A Song of Ice and Fire</i>	12
Chapter 2: A Song of Rape and Violence: George R. R. Martin’s Use of Sexual Violence in <i>A Song of Ice and Fire</i>	40
Conclusion: Looking Forward	61
Works Cited.....	66

Introduction: Meta-Intertextuality in *A Song of Ice and Fire*

“When you play the game of thrones, you win or you die. There is no middle ground,” Cersei proclaims before leaving Ned Stark standing in the godswood under the oak tree at the conclusion of their private meeting about her bastard children sired by her twin brother Jaime (*A Game of Thrones* 471). Before Cersei’s grand exit from the godswood, the two were talking about Cersei’s marriage to Robert and her infidelity with Jaime where Ned advises Cersei that “[when] the king returns from his hunt, I intend to lay the truth before him. You must be gone by then. You and your children, all three, and not to Casterly Rock. If I were you, I should take ship for the Free Cities” to escape the political fallout of Robert Baratheon discovering he has been cuckolded by Cersei (470). Cersei rejects this warning and the last words of the meeting spoken to Ned Stark serve as both a warning and a promise by Cersei as she pulls her hood up over her head to leave the godswood. The queen has no intention of fleeing from court in disgrace for infidelity with her twin, but will instead meet the threat Ned Stark’s information of infidelity has put before her head on and challenge him to a battle of wits that will result in death.

The secret meeting between Ned Stark, the Lord of Winterfell, and Cersei Lannister, the Queen of Westeros, is an example of the meta-intertextual framework employed by George R. R. Martin in *A Song of Ice and Fire*. Martin’s basic set-up of the chapters in the novels is alternating character points-of-view that switch between several characters in the series. In each character’s perspective, the current events are underscored by the knowledge, misconceptions, and perceptions of the point of view character. Therefore, the confrontation between Ned Stark and Cersei has been building up across several chapters beginning the night Catelyn Stark receives a coded letter from her sister Lysa claiming that the Lannisters killed Jon Arryn. The suspicion that Jon Arryn was killed is the main reason Ned Stark accepts Robert’s appointment as Hand of the

King. After all, as Maester Luwin points to Ned Stark the night the coded letter arrives, “The Hand of the King has great power, . . . to find the truth of Lord Arryn’s death, to bring his killers to the king’s justice” (60). It is Sansa’s unintentional comment that Joffrey’s “not the least bit like that old drunken king,” that leads Ned to examine the Baratheon lineage in Maester Malleon’s “massive tome” called *The Lineages and Histories of the Great Houses of the Seven Kingdoms, With Descriptions of Many High Lords and Noble Ladies and Their Children*, where he finds any match between a Baratheon and a Lannister always results in the Lannister “gold yielding before the coal” coloring of a Baratheon (464-469). The book by Maester Malleon had been in Ned Stark’s possession for weeks, but Ned could not understand what information Jon Arryn was trying to find and how it had resulted in the Lannisters’ wanting the former Hand of the King dead. Sansa’s words provide to Ned the observation that Joffrey, and his siblings, look Lannister instead of being dark-haired Baratheon. Jon Arryn’s death bed cry that “*The seed is strong*” means Cersei’s children are not Baratheon, providing a clear motive for Cersei and Jaime to plot to kill the former Hand of the King (469). Ned Stark then believes he has every reason to reveal to Robert Baratheon the people responsible for the murder of a man who was like a father to the Lord of Winterfell.

In chapter 45 of *A Game of Thrones*, the plot threads that were opened at the beginning of the novel start coming together to reveal Ned Stark has discovered the same information that Jon Arryn died to find. However, Ned Stark has not discovered all the facets of the truth of Lord Arryn’s death because Ned is unaware of the involvement of Petyr Baelish and Lysa Arryn in the murder, which is revealed to Sansa by Lysa who says Baelish instructed her to add poison to Jon Arryn’s cup of wine (*A Storm of Swords* 1109). The truth Ned Stark worked so hard to find, which will cost him his head, is incomplete even in his moment of confrontation between him

and Cersei and the consequences of his lack of knowledge will affect the whole realm by war because Stark trusts Baelish in vain. Ned Stark's intention in meeting Cersei in the godswood is to pass a warning to her to flee because he is haunted by "the bodies [of Rhaegar's children] beneath the Iron Throne, wrapped in the crimson cloaks of... [Lord Tywin's] house guard" (466). Ned Stark believes that once Robert Baratheon is aware of the adultery, "another dance of blood and vengeance" will begin and its victims will once again be innocent children (466). The problem with Ned Stark's interpretation of Cersei's and her children's situation is that, unlike Elia and her children that were separated from family and allies, Cersei is surrounded by her family's guards who are willing to die protecting their lord's daughter. She is not alone nor without means to outmaneuver Ned Stark's handful of guards. The warning Cersei is given by Ned allows her time to arrange an accident for Robert, buy the city watch Ned relies on to overwhelm the Lannister guards, and convince Petyr Baelish that siding with her is more lucrative than standing beside Lord Stark who will hand over the throne to Stannis Baratheon, who will shut down all Baelish's brothels. In the end, Ned Stark's concern for Cersei's children damns him politically because he has forewarned his opponent of his intentions. Cersei, not Ned Stark, has read the dangers and human interests accurately to use to her advantage, and has even returned the favor by warning Ned of his own precarious placement in the political climate of King's Landing, but Ned Stark refuses to interpret Cersei as a threat until he sits in a dungeon underneath the Red Keep.

The collection of interactions in chapter 45 is the result of meta-intertextuality where several characters' present moments, familial histories, past experiences, personal choices, actions, beliefs, and internalization of those factors intersect to create several character identities that call attention to those interactions while also allowing characters to comment upon the

events that are occurring in each chapter. As a result, George R. R. Martin's fantasy series *A Song of Ice and Fire* includes a rich cast of characters and environments for readers to encounter in the plot. Whether it is the frozen North with its wild people that bow to no king; the serious, long-faced Starks that rule a wilderness bigger than the rest of the seven kingdoms; the ancient order of the Night's Watch who guard the lands south of the Wall from the Wildings; the incestuous Lannister twins whose family rules the crowded Kings Landing; the intelligent, witty and sometimes dry-humored Tyrion that travels through both Westeros and Essos; or the white-blond Daenerys who quests to end slavery and take back the Iron Throne followed by her thousands of freedmen and raiders. The intersecting plot lines of *A Song of Ice and Fire* is haunted by the events of Robert's Rebellion while characters are involved in solving mysteries, working to resolve personal vendettas, affairs of love or lust, fighting for the Iron Throne (the world's most uncomfortable and sharp sword seat), and fighting the injustices of slavery. Furthermore, the plot threads that begin in one character's plot are carried over into the arcs of other characters whether a character is aware of the revealed information. Therefore, the Stark children would not be aware that their mother received a secret letter from Lysa Arryn at the beginning of *A Game of Thrones*, but Sansa can learn of this information through Lysa's confession and use this information to decide whether to reveal Baelish to the lords of the Vale. Meta-intertextuality becomes a mediation between the different characters' present moments, familial histories, past experiences, personal choices, actions, beliefs, and internalization of those factors intersecting within the text to reveal the moral integrity of each character. As a result of having multiple evolving characters and plot lines, George R. R. Martin's *A Song of Ice and Fire* offers complex renderings of characters who live in a variety of environments, have disabilities, have suffered from violence, or have been the victim of sexual abuse. Overall, I have found that

critics are interested in characters and their environments directly and indirectly, and the extent to which Martin's world facilitates their existence in a medievalist setting. However, critics have paid less attention to the inherent meta-intertextuality of *A Song of Ice and Fire* where characters' stories interact, interrupt, and intersect other characters' narratives to create dynamic characters who actively comment on their world and the underlying assumptions their society makes in regards to disability, women in power, and the control men exert over women's bodies while also being aided by women in control.

The geographical setting of Martin's *A Song of Ice and Fire* draws its inspiration from current world geography where Westeros and Essos respectively represent West and East stereotypical depictions. For instance, Mat Hardy's "The East Is Least: The Stereotypical Imagining of Essos in Game of Thrones" examines geographical world building in Martin's series. Hardy points out that even "when the fantasy takes place in a fictional world, the standard earthly depictions of West and East tend to be represented by the use of congruent landscapes (DiTommaso), racial descriptors (Young), and cultures (Hardy)" (Hardy 27). According to Edward Said, the "principal dogmas of Orientalism" are a clear distinction of "the West (which is rational, developed, humane, superior) and the Orient (which is aberrant, undeveloped, inferior), an insistence on "abstractions about Orient... based on texts representing a 'classical' Oriental civilization," a claim that the Orient is an unchanging culture that is "incapable of defining itself," and "that the Orient is at bottom something either to be feared... or to be controlled" ("Arabs, Islam and the Dogmas of the West" 104-105). As a result of the consistent dogmas cited in the studies of Orientalism, theorists, historians, and scholars have viewed Oriental cultures "as a place isolated from the mainstream of European progress in the science, arts, and commerce," where there is a tendency to view the East as in need of Western

civilization's management ("The Latent and Manifest Orientalism" 112). As Mat Hardy illustrates in his article, George R. R. Martin's Westeros becomes the focal point of western ideology and Essos becomes categorized by the stereotypical associations of oriental culture, such as the erotic nature of slavery and brutality in Essos. The implication becomes that characters and their racial identity and cultural morality align with the divide between Westeros and Essos. The leading characters, the Starks, the Lannisters, the Tyrells, and the Targaryens, are described as having fair skin and predominantly light hair colors, and are part of a culture that features elements from a western point of view (i.e. knighthood and a faith resembling Christianity). Contrastingly, characters who are associated with the Eastern culture come from Essos and are predominantly dark skinned with dark hair with a strong "focus on sadism, torture, and sex" engrained into their culture (Hardy 29). Therefore, Daenerys' fight against slavery can be focused into the concept of the white savior rescuing slaves from their dark-skinned oppressors where the Oriental-like peoples of Essos are seen "as problems to be solved or confined" ("Latent and Manifest Orientalism" 113). Essentially, characters' cultural identity is grounded in the fact that Martin borrows from real world stereotypes of Western and Eastern culture to create geographical regions that mirror our real-world assumptions about the East and West. Most of Martin's point of view characters are predominantly white and western in their ideologies with a few minor exceptions: Princess Arianne's and Prince Quentyn's point of view chapters appear late in the series and comprise a total six chapters between them; Martin writes two chapters for Arianne in *A Feast of Crows* and four chapters for Quentyn in *A Dance of Dragons*, and neither of the characters offers counter narratives to stereotypical depictions of Eastern cultures. Arianne uses her body as a sexual tool to sway the Kingsguard member Swan to help crown Myrcella as queen in opposition to her brother Tommen, and the coup is met with

brutal violence where Myrcella is disfigured by a one of Arianne's supporters. Similarly, Quentyn resorts to stealing Daenerys' dragons when she refuses to marry him, and Quentyn and his companions fight their way to the beasts only for the prince of Dorne to be burned severely for his efforts. Significantly, the only characters who challenge stereotypes are characters that are ideologically and geographically Western.

The geographical divides that provide distinction between racial groups in the novels can also serve to separate the members of a society the government wishes to remove from society's sight. Rohani's and Abootalebi's article "Mending Wall: A Study of Restorative Justice in George R. R. Martin's *A Song of Ice and Fire* and *Tales of Dunk and Egg*" uses Daniel Van Ness's "process of 'restoration,'" which "takes place in a number of steps: *encounter, amends, inclusion and reintegration*" of the criminal back into society to be a productive member of society (60). Basically, the article's argument is that characters of the nobility can stand in their own defense against a criminal charge while the characters that are a part of the common people have judgment carried out without their input, and that once a character has committed a crime, there is an attempt to isolate that character from the rest of society. Fundamentally, characters' rights to have a say in the justice proceedings depends upon whether they belong to the nobility. The division of classes can be examined between the difference in the treatment of Tyrion, a nobleman, and Gared, a man serving the Night's Watch. Tyrion is present and able to speak in his own defense in the court of Lysa Arryn and at his murder trial in King's Landing as well as demand trial by combat to prove his innocence, whereas the Night's Watchman Gared has his verdict decided without his presence and is allowed only last words before being executed by Ned Stark for desertion (*A Game of Thrones* 404-408; 11-12). Similarly, a tavern girl can be raped by the Mountain and his men without repercussions because of their nobility and alliance

to Lord Tywin, but if the rapist is someone among the peasantry, he might be castrated or sent to the Wall (*A Clash of Kings* 348-350; *A Game of Thrones* 114). While the critics Hardy and Rohani and Abootalebi are not interested in the meta-intertextuality of the novels, their focus on restorative justice effects on a characters' placement in social hierarchy can be argued to form aspects of the makeup of characters' identities. For instance, an important part of Jon Snow's character is defined by being born a bastard of the northern house of Stark, which excludes him from the right to speak for himself like his half siblings if accused of a crime.

In the same way Jon Snow is defined by being born a bastard, Tyrion Lannister and Jaime Lannister can be defined by aspects of their bodies. "‘Yet I’m Still a Man’: Disability and Masculinity in George R. R. Martin’s *A Song of Ice and Fire Series*," Amy Tarnowski looks at the ways Martin constructs identity around the issue of disability. Tarnowski uses as a reference point Jeffrey Preston's "three questions that provide a framework for examining texts about disability: ‘What are the unconscious fantasies circulating in representations of disability? What role do these fantasies play in defining the condition of disability?’ and ‘What can these fantasies teach us about human vulnerability writ large?’ (15)" to examine the characters Jaime and Tyrion Lannister (78). In the case of Tyrion, the man has been cast as monstrous from birth by being different from "sanctioned physical forms and thus... deemed both deviant and evil" (84). In short, Tyrion, whose family members view his physical impairment as a negative deformity, often becomes the butt of other characters' derision. However, Tyrion crafts for himself a counter identity that allows him the virility of masculinity other characters would deny him. In contrast, Jaime is viewed by society and his family as being born whole and thus steps into the image and role that others define as the epitome of masculinity. However, when that wholeness is disrupted by the loss of his hand, Jaime undergoes an internal identity crisis where his

accomplishments are directly tied to the use of his sword hand. Tarnowski argues that because of his lost hand, Jaime suffers an separation from his father and sister as they evaluate his worth upon how closely Jaime is associated to the masculine ideal (93). As a result of the change in status, Jaime must internalize his identity by what he considers to be important. For example, Jaime's falling out with his father is a result of sticking with the position of Kingsguard, and Jaime finds a comfort in committing to becoming a stronger knight from looking into the past. Finally, Tarnowski's examination of representations of disability focuses primarily on Tyrion and Jaime, but in doing so the critic limits his analysis to a few characters in the larger reality of Martin's fantasy world.

Sylva Sheridan similarly limits analysis of characters to the single character of Daenerys Targaryen. In "Progression through Regression: The Inferno of Daenerys Targaryen" by Sylva Sheridan, the article aligns Daenerys' trip through the House of the Undying with Dante Alighieri's trip through Hell. Sheridan argues that "Daenerys's character.... [mirrors] literary historical character, Dante Alighieri" in that both deal with a journey that isolates them from the world of men as they journey through a realm of the dead that blends the elements of ice and fire (67). Daenerys, as Sheridan points out, is warned in by Pyat Pree that "'within, you will see many things that disturb you. Visions of loveliness and visions of horror, wonders, and terrors. Sights and sounds of days gone by and days to come and days that never were. Dwellers and servitors may speak to you as you go. Answer or ignore them as you choose, but enter no room until you reach the audience chamber'" (69). In the House of the Undying, Daenerys "comes across several... visions" that are like the living shades of Dante's Hell where events of the past, present, and possible future are revealed along the journey (70). For example, Daenerys sees visions of the past where her brother Rhaegar plays a song for his newborn son Aegon, and

witnesses a feast presided over by a deceased man with the head of the wolf. Importantly, Sheridan argues that Daenerys enters her journey through the underworld at a pivotal point in her life when she has recently been isolated from her first love and is seeking a path to the Iron Throne. Daenerys' journey through the House of the Undying, ultimately, serves to tie her past and present together allowing her to create an identity for herself.

Finally, Joseph Young's "'Enough About Whores': Sexual Characterization in *A Song of Ice and Fire*" examines sexual undercurrents prevalent in the novels where "almost everybody.... has their sexual mores bared... for the reader's consideration" (Young 45). Furthermore, the sexual behavior of individual characters can be a determinate of an honorable nature or a sexually deviant monster. For example, "seven-year-old Bran Stark's innocence is signalled [sic] by his confused observation of Queen Cersei's infidelity" with her twin Jaime, whereas, Cersei through sexual deviance becomes "as a nocturnal, child-eating ogress, a medievalist grotesque" (45 and 58). Building on observations from Hardy, Rohani and Abootalebi, Tarnowski, Sheridan, and Young, I would argue that the meta-intertextuality of mythic history, family mottos, and personal stories provides layers into how Martin designs characters with their own identities. For instance, "A Lannister always paid his debts" is a personal propaganda suggesting House Lannister will pay back money, a favor, or slight in the same manner it was given (*A Game of Thrones* 441-443). As a result, Tyrion pays the goaler for bringing him to Lysa Arryn, and Tywin obliterates House Reyne for ambition to be more powerful than House Lannister. Similarly, the family motto of House Tully is "Family, Duty, and Honor," and is represented in Catelyn Tully's action to release Jaime Lannister in trade for her daughters where potential freedom of her children, problematic in Robb Stark's war effort, outweighs her duty and honor to hold an enemy hostage until Northern demands are met (*A*

Storm of Swords 33 and 1164). The meta-intertextuality of *A Song of Ice and Fire* promotes a discussion of how types of characteristics or traits come together to form the identity of any character in Martin's world and can lead to discussions of character creation in other expanding world novels. The capacity of Martin's novels to create vivid character identities can lend those series to interrogating stereotypes of race, disability, sexuality, and criminality, as well as promote speculation on the process on creating the narratives both fictional and historical.

The vividness of characters is in part the result of having multiple character points-of-view to experience events and place value judgements upon other characters as the story progresses. The overlapping story also allows for the incessant features of the text, such as disability/impairment or sexual abuse/rape, to be addressed by multiple perspectives in varying ways. As a result, readers experience reactions to Tyrion's dwarfism from the perspectives of his siblings and the Stark family while also being allowed to be privy to Tyrion's motivations and personal thoughts on the subject. Likewise, readers experience Cersei's wish to lose perception of the crowd through impairment during her walk of atonement as a defense against the corrosiveness of her immediate situation (*A Dance with Dragons* 996). In the same manner that Cersei is willing to imagine disability as a shield from shame during the walk of atonement, Tyrion is willing to use sexually corrosive situations, such as hiring sex workers, to build for himself a defense against society's perceptions of dwarfs. Furthermore, Cersei's walk of atonement and the fallout makes apparent men's control over female bodies but also reveals the methods in which women are complacent in that control by helping to police female bodies for men. The fact is disability/impairment and sexual abuse/rape are important features of *A Song of Ice and Fire*, meriting a closer at their thematic value.

**Chapter 1: A Song of Isolation and Death: George R. R. Martin's Use of Disability in A
*Song of Ice and Fire***

At the final testimony of Tyrion's trial in King's Landing, his determination to finish the proceedings fails due to Shae's involvement in implicating him in Joffrey's murder. Tyrion demands that the judges "[g]et this lying whore out of my sight, ... and I will give you your confession" (*A Storm of Swords* 958). Once Shae is led from the court room, Tyrion begins a pseudo-confession during which he admits to guilt, not to the crime of regicide, but to being a dwarf in continual "infamy" despite "how many times... [his] good father forgave" him (958). Tyrion accuses his father and society at large of having scrutinized and ostracized him "[his] entire life" for being born a dwarf, and at the present he wishes he truly was the "the monster... [society] would have... [him]" be and that he had enough poison for the whole room to ingest (958).

Tyrion's inability to proceed with a trial concurs with his disintegrating masculine identity. Tyrion's outburst at the proceedings highlights his internalization and rejection of his family's and society's commentary on his status as an individual deviating from society's construction of the "hegemonic or normate class," or those people who fulfill the imagined and healthy idea of a male or female body (Tarnowski 80). Throughout the novels, Tyrion crafts for himself an identity that allows him the virility of masculinity that other characters would deny him. For instance, Tyrion engages in instances of frequent sex using brothels where he can pay to have sex as often as he desires. In the case of Shae, Tyrion plays house with a woman he instructs to "share my tent, pour my wine, laugh at my jests, rub the ache from my legs after each day's ride ... and whether I keep you a day or a year... you will take no other men into your bed" in exchange for money, upkeep, and gold (*A Game of Thrones* 656). Tyrion expects Shae to

play the role of a sexually loyal housewife who cares for a husband in all manners of domestic affairs. Essentially, Tyrion's emotional investment in Shae progresses from a young woman selling a commodity to viewing her as "this girl he'd loved" and protects from the political dangers of King's Landing (*A Storm of Swords* 956). Shae's testimony at Tyrion's trial erodes away the artifice Tyrion has built for himself surrounding the sexual relationship he has bought from Shae. Similarly, Shae's testimony opens Tyrion to ridicule because she accuses Tyrion of making her call him "my giant of Lannister" where the implication is that he is feeding his own ego (957). Importantly, Tyrion's breakdown at the trial is a result of the fact that Shae's relationship mirrors Tyrion's first experience of love with Tysha, who he had rescued from being attacked on the road and secretly married after a single afternoon of talking. The result of Tyrion's relationship with Tysha is Tywin sitting Tyrion "in the corner of the barracks" and making him watch men rape Tysha before paying her a "silver for each man," and then Tyrion being instructed by Tywin to do the same to Tysha before paying her with "a gold coin" (*A Game of Thrones* 443). In Martin's construction of the scenario, the rape of Tysha is an experience that sets in Tyrion's mind that no woman would ever love a man of his stature, and fuels an obsession of defiance against Tywin where Tyrion mirrors his first loving relationship with Shae who reasserts for Tyrion that no woman could feel love for a dwarf. Tyrion's perceived knowledge that no woman could love a dwarf fuels his rejection of the society he perceives as judging him and therefore, results in Tyrion wishing he had enough poison to kill everyone.

The rage Tyrion expresses during the trial is a result of George R. R. Martin's use of meta-intertextuality where personal history, metaphorical symbolism, societal perceptions, historical moments, superstitions, and physical traits are in constant mediation with each other to

create character identity. In the novels, Tyrion is physically a dwarf, but dwarfism is only one aspect of Tyrion's character, and understanding Tyrion's emotional deterioration has as much to do with his past and present as his perceived difference to ideological perfection of the body. Constantly, readers are asked to engage in negotiations between characters' present moments, familial histories, past experiences, and internalization of those factors in creating a character identity. For instance, Jaime's character identity evolves from an egotistical, villain to a conflicted anti-hero as readers gain more information from *A Game of Thrones* to *A Dance with Dragons*. George R. R. Martin employs disability/impairment as a physical attribute of characters within a meta-intertextual frame as a means to push against the fantasy genre's stereotypical depictions of disability/impairment as a litmus for morality or a scenario that creates superpowered individuals outside the boundaries of reality, while Martin still writes that disability/impairment is a trait that signifies otherness from normative bodies. The otherness, created by disability/impairment, that characters portray works as an isolating factor forcing their expulsion from the normative culture of Westeros, and unless the othered body can negotiate its return to normative culture will inevitably lead to isolation or death.

In the myriad of characters in Martin's *Song of Ice and Fire* series, Tyrion remains the only point of view character born with an impairment that he must negotiate against his culture's perception of the ideal, healthy body. According to Amy Tarnowski in "'Yet I'm Still a Man: Disability and Masculinity in George R.R. Martin's *A Song of Ice and Fire* Series,'" a reader "[is aware of] both a superficial or external understanding of disability [through the stories of other point of view characters], as well as a first-person reflection [of Tyrion] on... living as a little person in Westerosi society" (82). In *Game of Thrones*, the first book of the series, the reader does not experience Tyrion's perception until chapter 9 of the narrative, so the first perceptions

of Tyrion are left in the hands of the Starks. The first reference to Tyrion occurs in chapter 4, a Ned Stark chapter, where Tyrion is referred to as the “Imp,” implying that the paragon of honor within the series views Tyrion as a person of demonic nature (*A Game of Thrones* 36).

Importantly, Tyrion’s body being connected to monstrosity creates a situation where a supposed monster’s body “exists only to be read” by society and Tyrion’s body is constantly being read by Tywin, Cersei, Ned, Jon, Bran, Oberyn, and Catelyn whether Tyrion is a monster or not in *A Song of Ice and Fire* (Cohen 4). Of course, Ned Stark’s focus on Tyrion to that single acknowledgement of his nickname and name; Ned is more concerned with his childhood friend Robert Baratheon than the youngest son of a family he does not respect. A more in-depth description of Tyrion’s appearance occurs within chapter 5, a Jon Snow chapter, where the bastard of Winterfell examines the pairings at the King’s welcoming feast and muses on what the appearance of the king should be. In this chapter, the novel invites the reader to view Tyrion’s dwarfism as it “is juxtaposed with the appearance of his two normate siblings, Cersei and Jaime,” who are described as blessed by the gods (Tarnowski 82). On the surface, the comparison to his siblings serves to underscore Tyrion’s deviation from his supposedly perfect bodied siblings, who are “golden, with...green eyes” and the epitome of “*what a king should look like*” (*A Game of Thrones* 47). Therefore, in Westerosi society, the ideal of a ruler is a tall warrior with golden hair and a perfect body, instead of the short Tyrion with twisted limbs, bicolored hair, and mismatched eyes.

However, Jon’s chapter following Ned Stark’s dismissal of Tyrion works to bring the character back into focus of the readers when they would have otherwise ignored the Tyrion’s presence and undercuts the demonic association that the title “Imp” calls to mind. Before the verbal exchange between Tyrion and Jon, the dwarf is “sitting on the ledge of the Great Hall,

looking for all the world like a gargoyle” above the teenager who had just fled the banquet hall after an argument (52). First, Martin reminds the reader of Tyrion’s connection with the grotesque by having him sitting above in a dark nook brooding over the world making him appear like the monstrous statue on gothic castles. However, the intimidating figure of a demon prowling from a dark corner to tempt a young impressionable Jon Snow is undermined by Tyrion as he “spun around in a tight ball, landed lightly on his hands, then vaulted backward onto his legs” turning the demonic portrayal into playfulness rather than maliciousness in that single instant. The grotesque, in this case, refers to “that which expands, exaggerates, transgresses” what is considered the ideal body while retaining a fundamental humor to the existence of the transgression (Graulund 3). Similarly, according to Charles Lambert, the title of Imp carries the meaning of “a devious, chimerical figure, not entirely reliable, mischievous, capable of courage but preferring to use his intelligence when given the choice” (29). In Jon Snow’s first point of view chapter, the elements of the monstrous present themselves in the narrative but are quickly dismissed so as to reveal a clever, well-meaning man willing to offer advice to a fellow outcast. Tyrion advises Jon to “Never forget what you are, for surely the world will not... Armor yourself in it, and it will never be used to hurt you” (*A Game of Thrones* 53). Tyrion reveals to Jon that he takes the reality of his situation and weaponizes society’s beliefs to fight against a world that views him as monstrous or dismisses his presence from their society. Effectively, Tyrion teaches Jon the necessity of negotiating society’s stories about bastards to move beyond that narrative to create a personal narrative to live by in a judgmental society.

Tyrion’s ability to negotiate society’s worst impulse in judging people is the reason that Tyrion, not Ned, Catelyn, or Bran’s siblings is the point of view character after Brandon Stark’s fall. Bran’s family members are too close to the situation to be able to clearly articulate the best-

or worst-case scenario for the injured child and be able to provide a glimmer of hope in a bleak situation. For example, Catelyn Stark shuts down refusing to leave Bran's sick bed until Bran's life is threatened by an assassin. Furthermore, Martin's choice of Tyrion provides a glimpse of the reactions the Lannisters have to the boy's injuries, which would be unavailable in the point of view of Bran's family.

Tyrion's position as a dwarf has prepared him to deal with the negative reactions of his various family members. Thus, in chapter 9, Tyrion's first chapter is a negotiation between different members of his family in regard to their dismissing Bran as unworthy of attention or not worth living. As a result, Tyrion instructs Joffrey to "fall to... [his] knees in front of... [Ned and Catelyn Stark], and ...tell them how very sorry... [he is]" about Bran's fall after slapping him twice for insolence (83). Afterward, Tyrion faces both his siblings' response that perhaps death is the better option than living as a cripple. Cersei expresses the opinion that death might be preferable while Jaime Lannister is the more vocal twin saying that "Even if... [Bran] does live, he will be a cripple. Worse than a cripple. A grotesque. Give me a good clean death" (87). Jaime believes the grotesque "confers negative connotations of the horrific and the disgusting," and as a result views Bran's deviation from the ideal body as debilitating to life in such a way that death appears a more reasonable option rather than having to adjust to a life being unable to walk (Graulund 4). Ultimately, Jaime's actual belief in equating Bran's crippling to being worse than death is suspect as he has a vested interest in seeing the boy dead for witnessing his infidelity with his twin. Furthermore, there is doubt about Jaime's sincerity considering his continuing to live after he loses his right hand and his attempts to train his left hand to re-enter the world of knighthood. Instead of equating disability with death, Tyrion displays a willingness to associate himself with "grotesques" and state that "life is full of possibilities" worth living to experience

(*A Game of Thrones* 87). Effectively, Tyrion refuses his siblings' and nephew's evaluation of "grotesques" not being worthy of respect or life and negotiates that the act of living allows for "possibilities" to overcome obstacles of disability (87). After a trip to the Wall, Tyrion returns to Winterfell where Tyrion provides plans for a special saddle that will allow Bran "on horseback... [to be] as tall as any" person (236). The saddle Tyrion offers Bran works in a moment of intertextuality where three characters' stories are interwoven. Tyrion acts as a middle person where Jon Snow's request for aid on Bran's behalf is fulfilled by Tyrion using his own experience to intercede in the fate of Bran.

Tyrion's gift of the saddle does not come without a clash of other characters' knowledge of the past and experience with the Lannisters. Brandon has been brought to the Great Hall where Robb Stark sits "in Father's [Ned Stark's] high seat, wearing ringmail and boiled leather and the stern face of Robb the Lord" with "his sword... across his knees, the steel bare" in a room filled with Stark guardsmen as a hostile gesture to Tyrion Lannister's return to Winterfell (235). In this moment, Robb believes Tyrion is part of a plot to kill his brother Bran, who was almost killed by an assassin while Tyrion was at the Wall. The theory Catelyn, Maester Luwin, Robb, and Theon agree on is that Bran had witnessed something the Lannisters did not want him to know and the Lannisters paid and armed a man with a dagger to assassinate the boy. The substitute lord perceives Tyrion as a threat not because of being a dwarf, but being a member of a household he views as opponents to House Stark. In this instance of open hostility, Tyrion reads the situation, comments on the rudeness by informing Robb to "learn a lord's courtesy," and then undermines and shames the substitute Lord by presenting a gift to Bran Stark of great value (235). Tyrion has provided to Bran one of the "possibilities" life can still provide to a person who is severely injured that he mentioned to Jaime in the Great Hall before leaving for

the Wall (87). In using the knowledge of his own saddle, Tyrion refuses to allow the prejudices of society to let a boy linger in depression at his current state of injury by constantly focusing on the body parts Bran has lost the ability to control.

In this way, Tyrion Lannister is one of the few major characters identified within Martin's world as being non-normative that circumvents what David T. Mitchell and Sharon L. Synder classify as disability's "twofold" function in literature (47). First, disability serves as "stock feature" used to distinguish a character from a cast of other background characters (47). As an example, Mitchell and Synder use *The Steadfast Tin Soldier* where "the soldiers... [come] equipped with a rifle and bayonet, a blue and red outfit..., black boots, and a stern military visage" save for the one soldier missing a leg (54). The missing leg distinguishes the steadfast tin soldier from his uniformly made brethren as well as working as a reason for the story as "normalcy is no story at all" (55). If the tin soldier had been like his brethren, there would not have been a story. Secondly, the character with a disability becomes a tool for "opportunistic metaphorical device" within the framework of the narrative (47). William Shakespeare's Richard III provides an example of disability being metaphorical:

... rudely stamp'd, and want love's majesty
 To strut before a wanton ambling nymph
 ... Cheated of feature by dissembling nature,
 Deform'd, unfinish'd, sent before my time
 ... And that so lamely and unfashionable
 That dogs bark at me as I halt by them; —
 ... And therefore, —since I cannot prove a lover,
 To entertain these fair well-spoken days, —

I am determinèd to prove a villain... (*King Richard III* 1.1.1-30)

Siobhan Keenan comments that the self-deprecating manner in which Richard “speaks... about his ugly and ‘misshapen’ body (1.2.237) [occurs] several times in the play and is quick to mock himself” to other characters to the benefit of his plans (29). According to Marson and Bloom, Shakespeare’s construction of Richard is of a man that invites “others... [to] read and interpret his body, [so] that they may see in its crookedness and distorted birth the deformity of his soul” while using it to his advantage (276). The body of Richard enters a dialogue where his actions, words, and body “exists only to be read” as a text by society, and a text Richard takes immense effort to comment on and use to his own benefit (Cohen 4). In the end, Shakespeare connects Richard III’s reason for being a villain to his twisted form reinforcing and challenging the ideology that deformity is an indicator of an evil morality. Similarly, in a discussion between Tyrion and Oberyn Martell, Tyrion’s physical shape at birth was viewed as a sign of “[famine], plague, and war” at Oldtown (*A Storm of Swords* 524).

Tyrion, while unique in comparison to other major characters in *A Song of Ice and Fire*, is not the lone dwarf of the series. There are minor characters who display dwarfism that play pivotal parts in the plot, such as the Dwarf of High Heart with her prophecies to the Brotherhood Without Banners, as well as Penny, who serves as an optimistic foil for Tyrion’s cynicism. Furthermore, the trajectory of his function in the plot has little do with using Tyrion’s dwarfism as only a feature for difference because Martin attempts to create an authentic reality where the character must make arrangements to be able to function in a society that pays little heed to the differences of those whose body cannot be fit into society’s construction of an ideal body. Therefore, Tyrion’s knowledge of the saddle for Bran Stark comes from practical self-experience. Likewise, the suspicions against Tyrion at the start of the novels has nothing to do

with him being a dwarf, but depends upon Lysa Arryn breeding suspicion toward the Lannisters in her coded letter to Catelyn before Bran's fall about Jon Arryn's death being a murder. Robb Stark's anger and suspicion toward Tyrion rests wholly on the belief that originates from a suspicion handed down from Catelyn whose own suspicion has been borrowed from Lysa who makes accusations against the Lannisters without evidence in a coded letter. Robb Stark, in trying to fulfill his duty as Winterfell's Lord, overlooks the fact that there is no proof that the Lannisters are responsible for Bran's fall or assassination and offers insult to Tyrion Lannister who returns the disrespect back by showing respect. Tyrion could have returned hostility with rage and could have sought revenge when the Stark wolves attempt to attack him physically. Instead, Tyrion judges the situation, realizes the danger, and works to deescalate the situation before a fight can break out between his guards, the Northmen, and the Night's Watch.

The ability to rework a dangerous situation in his favor allows Tyrion to control situations, people, and outcomes so the youngest Lannister gains the most from an encounter with enemies. Tyrion's capture by Catelyn Tully at the Crossroads Inn parallels his reception from Robb Stark at Winterfell where the wife of Ned Stark trusts the narrative of Petyr Baelish. On Catelyn's trip to Kings Landing to inform Ned of the attempt on Bran's life, Catelyn encounters guardsmen who take her to a brothel on Baelish's orders. In the encounter with Varys and Baelish, Catelyn is told by Petyr that "Ser Jaime lost a hundred golden dragons, the queen lost an emerald pendant, and... [he] lost... [his] knife" betting against Tyrion that Jaime would win a joust (*A Game of Thrones* 169). Although, at this moment in *A Game of Thrones*, Baelish could have pointed his finger at Cersei or Jaime and Catelyn Tully would have believed the accusations because of her sister's coded letter giving her a viable reason to mistrust members of House Lannister. Catelyn further does not second-guess Petyr could be lying to cover his own

involvement in trying to kill Bran. Regardless of Tyrion’s guilt, his capture by Catelyn has less to do with dwarfism and more to do with an opportune moment to capitalize on there being Riverland bannermen present at the Inn at the Crossroads:

There was no time to think it through, only the moment and the sound of her own voice ringing in her ears. “You in the corner,” she said to an older man she had not noticed until now. “Is that the black bat of Harrenhal I see embroidered on your surcoat, ser?”

The man got to his feet. “It is, my lady.”

“And is Lady Whent a true and honest friend to my father, Lord Hoster Tully of Riverrun?”

“She is,” the man replied stoutly. ...

Tyrion Lannister sniggered. That was when Catelyn knew he was hers. “This man came a guest into my house, and there conspired to murder my son, a boy of seven,” she proclaimed to the room at large, pointing. Ser Rodrik moved to her side, his sword in hand. “In the name of King Robert and the good lords you serve, I call upon you to seize him and help me return him to Winterfell to await the king’s justice.”

She did not know what was more satisfying: the sound of a dozen swords drawn as one or the look on Tyrion Lannister’s face. (283)

The scene at the crossroads is a moment of meta-intertextuality where past allegiances, present circumstances, opportunity, and Tyrion’s ignorance of Baelish’s accusation moves the story forward. Catelyn calls each group—Whent, Bracken, and Frey—by their family allegiance to their lords, reassuring their fealty to Lord Hoster Tully, Lord of Riverrun and her father. Carefully, Catelyn Tully sheds the mantle of Lady Stark to reveal the daughter of the Lord

Paramount of the Trident as she maneuvers around the room based on how many bannermen are present from each house. The final bannermen she addresses are those of Walder Frey who have “more than twenty” men and whose age lord Tyrion insults by giving a mocking laugh at the news the ninety-year-old man is getting married (283). Once Tyrion has wounded the pride of the largest group of men, she “knew he was hers” and illustrates the alleged crime of entering her home, partaking of her generosity, and plotting to kill Bran, “a boy of seven” before reminding the bannerman of their allegiance to King Robert and their lords asking them to act on her behalf to bring Lannister to “Winterfell to await the king’s justice” (283). Momentarily Tyrion is caught off guard by Catelyn’s calling on the men to have him arrested on her behalf who are willing to pick a fight with anyone on behalf of a allegiance to House Tully.

The citizen arrest of Tyrion causes many things to be set in motion, such as the wounding of Ned Stark and the razing of the Riverlands by Tywin in retaliation, but those events are not due to someone finding Tyrion suspicious because of his dwarfism. Instead, the distrust of Tyrion is the result of other characters’ stories intersecting in a conversation that continues in the novels long after Tyrion escapes from the Eyrie. In *A Storm of Swords*, when Jaime arranges for Tyrion’s escape, Tyrion informs Jaime when asked about Joffrey’s murder that “Joffrey would have been a worse king than Aerys ever was. He stole his father’s dagger and gave it to a footpad to slit the throat of Brandon Stark, did you know that?” (1060-1061). The blame for the assassination attempt on Bran is moved by Tyrion to Joffrey, who in a previous interaction with Tyrion appears flustered at the mention of “[a] dagger of the same fine Valyrian steel ... with a dragonbone hilt,” which Tyrion suggests as a gift to see the boy’s reaction (802). The main point is that dwarfism is not the reason Tyrion is accused of attempting to kill Bran, and the issue of attempted assassination is not dropped once Tyrion demands a Trial by Combat at the Eyrie.

In the Eyrie, Tyrion agrees to give a confession for his crimes only to confess to crimes other than the ones Lady Stark and Lady Arryn have leveled against him. Tyrion says he has committed “crimes and sins... beyond counting,” which include whoring, wishing others dead, and gambling (*A Game of Thrones* 405). Enraged Lady Arryn and Lady Stark attempt to pull the discussion back to his guilt in “sending a hired knife to slay my son Bran in his bed, and of conspiring to murder Lord Jon Arryn, the Hand of the King,” but Tyrion adamantly refuses to admit guilt (406). When frustration causes Lady Arryn to order Tyrion taken back to “a smaller cell, with a floor more sharply sloped,” Tyrion turns the situation around demanding a trial by combat (406). And while the Lords and Ladies of the Vale find the suggestion humorous because of Tyrion’s height disadvantage, the dwarfism itself is not the reason that he is in the situation itself. The cultural ideologies about dwarfism are not the driving force for Lady Arryn’s determination to throw him out the Moon Door. Yes, Tyrion’s dwarfism is a central part of his character, but it does not disappear and reappear when convenient to the plot. Instead, the dwarfism is always there simmering in the background where characters and readers are constantly aware of such a trait. The reason Tyrion is being accused is the combined work of Lady Arryn and Petyr Baelish who need a scape goat for their own murder of Jon Arryn with the Tears of Lys (*A Storm of Swords* 1109). The plan to pin the blame on the Lannisters only partly works because Tyrion arranges himself around the situation through a trial by combat to be released from the Eyrie. At this point in the narrative, Tyrion’s being a dwarf is a physical trait commented on, but not the reason he has found himself in his current situation.

Tyrion’s dwarfism becomes an important focus of his character arc once he duplicates his first love in the relationship with Shae, and the shadows of Tysha haunt Tyrion’s every interaction making the focus of his disability “metaphorical” where the perception of difference

drives Tyrion down a path that completely isolates himself from peers and family (Mitchell and Synder 47). In Tyrion's trial for murdering Joffrey, Tyrion ignores his own advice to "Never forget what you are, for surely the world will not... Armor yourself in it, and it will never be used to hurt you" (*A Game of Thrones* 53). In refusing to shield himself from the hurtful perceptions of the world, Tyrion leaves himself open to misread the situations surrounding his father's decisions and his own trial. For instance, Tyrion's internalization of society's view of his disability and Tywin's own dismissive attitude toward Tyrion has caused Tyrion to ignore moments when Tywin is legitimately giving him power and acknowledgement. The marriage to Sansa is a calculated move that puts Tyrion and his heirs as future Wardens of the North, and hints that, though he is cruel and callous, Tywin wants his children in prominent positions of power. Cersei is Queen and her children related by blood will rule the Seven Kingdoms, Jaime as Tywin's heir will be Lord of Casterly Rock and Warden of the West (that is if he can be freed from the Kingsguard's vow of celibacy), and Tyrion who is married to Sansa will become Lord of Winterfell and Warden of the North. The positions Tywin is trying to place his children in are powerful placements for all of House Lannister. Tyrion is so caught in not getting Casterly Rock that he ignores the fact that his father has handed him a larger land to manage, which needs leaders to replace the dead due to war. No matter how intelligent Tyrion is or thinks himself, he misses what his father knows: that Aerys was using Jaime as a shield against Tywin and that his placement in the Kingsguard was a thinly veiled excuse for the Mad King to have a hostage. Until Tyrion's trial, and an argument can be made for up until Tywin's death, there has been legitimate efforts from Tywin to place all his children into irrevocable places of power. Evidently, while Tywin may claim that the reason Tyrion has a place in the Lannister household is because "Men's laws give... [Tyrion] the right to bear... [his] name and display...[his] colors,

since... [he] cannot prove that” Tyrion is not his, it does not prevent him from giving Tyrion as much power as his older brother would have as heir of Casterly Rock (*A Storm of Swords* 65). Thus, Tywin appoints Tyrion as his stand-in for the King’s Hand allowing him to gain experience ruling in the capital, and Tywin arranges for Tyrion to marry Sansa Stark so that Tyrion’s heirs will inherit the northern kingdom.

In trying to regain the experience of his first love, Tyrion recreates a situation that leaves him vulnerable to the perception that no woman will willingly want to be his wife, lover, or casual companion unless there is an economic reason. In essence, the metaphorical armor Tyrion has forged for himself to protect against societal ableism does not consider that there are others who create their own armor to survive, and which will attack any perceived weakness in order to better their own chances of survival. As a result, the relationship with Shae is built upon the promise that Tyrion will provide for her in exchange for sex and company, and when Tyrion is arrested Shae must now move on to find another source of income. In the first book of the series, Tywin warned Tyrion that he “will not take the whore to court,” and Tyrion deliberately defies his father to take Shae to Kings Landing (*A Game of Thrones* 745). The decision is a willful act of disobedience against his father, rather than a well-thought decision considering all the potential fallouts that can come from having a lover with no familial status to protect her from the whims of his society. Tyrion’s arrest means that Shae will have to find another rich provider sooner rather than later in the novels.

The decision to bring Shae to court backfires resulting in Tyrion’s second pseudo confession of the series where Tyrion loses the ability to negotiate his place in society. Tyrion, who had casually turned the false claims of Lady Stark and Lady Arryn against them to work the code of chivalry to his favor, is now unable to do so because he has provided the tools for his

own downfall. Shae's testimony damns Tyrion, true or not, in the eyes of witnesses because his dignity as a human being has been undermined. In *A Game of Thrones*, Tyrion wanted the laughter of the crowd because it suited his purpose to undermine the legitimacy of Lady Arryn's court proceedings, but in King's Landing, among those he has fought for, the laughter serves only to dehumanize him as an individual separate from those of the "normate class" (Tarnowski 80). In *A Storm of Swords*, the trial by combat serves to separate Tyrion from Westeros society because unlike the trial by combat in *A Game of Thrones*, it is not a calculated risk taken based on perceived knowledge of the lords and ladies present but the actions of a man who says, "I am innocent, but I will get no justice here. You leave me no choice but to appeal to the gods. I demand trial by battle" (*A Storm of Swords* 958). The loss of the trial by combat ends Tyrion's ability to stay within Westeros unless he goes to the Wall or leaves his homeland, and the break is made even more permanent because he slays his father for the rape of Tysha, who Jaime has revealed to have been a girl in love. The most current book, *A Dance with Dragons*, shows a downward spiraling Tyrion fractured from his identity because of the betrayals he has suffered by father, brother, and himself. Tyrion must learn to live with the consequences of knowing that his first wife was a victim of his father's cruelty, Jaime's lies, and his own inability to understand and negotiate the dangers of crossing Tywin Lannister's will. In Essos, Tyrion is transported by boat by Varys and Illyrio, travels with an under-cover Aegon and company, is kidnapped by Jeor Mormont, is sold into slavery, and is surrounded by the plague the Pale Mare. As a result, he is haunted by the question that he cannot nor will not be able to answer because it is the wrong question, "Where do whores go?" (*A Dance with Dragons* 21, 25, 132, and 620). Tyrion is caught up in negotiating what he has believed to be true, what is true, and where to go with that knowledge because he cannot return to Westeros if Cersei has power. Patricia Monk argues that

Tyrion's banishment from Westeros follows "a braided trio of themes, loosely identifiable as the making of a king, the icons of balance, and the myth of the hero" where his removal from Westeros and travel through Essos will eventually result in the hero's return home (6). The critic further argues Tyrion's relationship with women in his arc is a dance where he has "[danced] with each of the women [in his arc] (Tysha, Cersei, Shae, Sansa, the unnamed prostitute in Essos, and Penny)... [who represent aspects] of the dragon that he has danced with in his life in order to accommodate the feminine in himself... [and that Tyrion's] eventual meeting with a [living] dragon... will serve to confirm this balance of gender as well as his stability as the fulcrum for the balance and reunification of Westeros" (20). Whether this estimation is true or not remains to be seen, and the novels are paused with Tyrion at Meereen isolated from his homeland, family, and political power in Westeros while surrounded by death in the form of the illness the Pale Mare and war, and though he is attempting to negotiate his return to Westeros by dealing with the Second Sons, there is no assurance he will be able to negotiate his othered body back into the normative culture of Westeros and is as likely to still be isolated or killed in the next novel.

In the series *A Song of Ice and Fire*, Tyrion's arc is not dependent on his feature of dwarfism, and while Tyrion internalizes cultural fantasies about being a dwarf, there is an attempt to provide character growth separate from Westerosi perceptions of impairment. The same cannot be said about other characters in the series who suffer physical impairment. For instance, the conflict of the first novel is set in motion by the poisoning of Jon Arryn, which leads Robert Baratheon to enlist Ned Stark as Hand of the King. Similarly, Ned Stark's leg wound from falling off his horse leaves him physically unable to defend himself from Petyr Baelish's betrayal. In the same manner, the intentional wounding of Jaime Lannister spurs his

character growth, and Bran Stark's powers awaken after he is pushed from a tower. Lastly, Jon Connington's plan to put Aegon on the throne gains urgency once it is revealed he has greyscale. According to Charles Lambert, there are "three principal types of disability" that can be visited on the characters which include "congenital (Tyrion, Hodor); collateral (Bran); retributive (Reek, Jaime, Davos)," but there are also instances of "illness (Shireen Baratheon, afflicted by greyscale)" and "acts of simple, unnecessary cruelty (Sandor Clegane)" (31). In the case of most characters with impairments (those who are point of view characters), the physical difference works as an isolating factor that removes characters from society where the character can die.

The forms of impairment that fall within "collateral" and "retributive" categories often intermingle with each other because characters' stories intersect and veer from each other before circling back to redirect the reader's attention to previous events in the novels or historical events that fill the background information about the characters (31). The death of Jon Arryn, the Hand of the King, starts the action of the story as King Robert's decision to come north to recruit Ned Stark for the position of Hand is a direct result of Arryn's death. The suspicion of the Lannisters was the major motivation for Ned Stark's acceptance of the position of Hand because, as Maester Luwin suggests, "The Hand of the King has great power... to find the truth of Lord Arryn's death, to bring his killers to the king's justice. Power to protect Lady Arryn and her son if the worst be true" and the Lannisters arranged the death of Lord Arryn (*A Game of Thrones* 60). The suspicion that the Lannisters murdered Arryn appears early in the novels by way of "a carved wooden box [with a false bottom], left on a table in... [Luwin's] observatory" with a coded letter only Lady Catelyn can read because her sister Lady Arryn wrote the message in their childhood language (57). Ned, though he verbalizes doubts about the truth of Lady Arryn's claims, enters his investigation looking for the reasons the Lannisters would want to kill Lord Arryn, and

discovers the infidelity of the Cersei with her twin brother. The fact that Ned Stark's leg is crushed results from a combination of factors. The first factor is Lady Stark's capture of Tyrion based on Petyr Baelish's saying the dagger belonged to the Tyrion, and Jaime's reaction to his brother's capture is to confront Ned Stark at the first opportunity. Secondly, Ned's concentration of finding answers to Arryn's death allows him to be put in a vulnerable state when he follows Baelish to his brothel. Lastly, the need to save his men from Jaime Lannister's men put him in a fight he is hopelessly outnumbered by and as a result, his horse falls on top of his leg. In this moment, the actions and knowledge of several characters intersect in a moment that results in the wounding of a major character. Jamie knows Catelyn has his brother and Ned believes the Lannisters responsible for the death of Jon Arryn, and as a result the men clash because the other holds each other responsible for the actions of others.

The problem, and one not discovered by Ned Stark, is that the Lannisters are not responsible for Lord Arryn's death. Instead, in front of Sansa, in an incoherent plea to Baelish, Lysa confesses that Baelish "told... [her] to put the tears in Jon's wine, and... [she] wrote Catelyn and told her the Lannisters had killed... [her] lord husband" (*A Storm of Swords* 1109). The truth of Arryn's death is a cover-up not just of the incest of the Lannister twins but of Lady Arryn's long affair with Baelish who is looking for a way to cause disorder in the Seven Kingdoms as a way to climb the social hierarchy. The murder of Arryn works as a tool for Baelish to cause political upheaval in the realm and remove opponents to his rise. For example, when Ned Stark seeks help from Baelish to provide him men from the City Watch Baelish suggests that:

... Joffrey is but twelve, and Robert gave you the regency, my lord. You are the Hand of the King and Protector of the Realm. The power is yours... Make your peace with the

Lannisters. Release the Imp. Wed Joffrey to your Sansa... It will be four years before Joffrey comes of age. By then he will look to you as a second father, and if not, well ... four years is a good long while, my lord. Long enough to dispose of Lord Stannis. Then, should Joffrey prove troublesome, we can reveal his little secret... (*A Game of Thrones* 495)

The advice to take over the realm is not welcomed by Ned Stark, who does not want the power to rule nor to use a young boy and his daughter as tools to rule the realm in his name. Lord Stark also does not want to be involved in plotting to put one king on the throne only to dispose of them and placing someone else on the throne if the previous ruler displeases him. However, Ned's quickness to dismiss the comment as a passing suggestion for possible answers is a failure of Lord Stark to comprehend past connections between people, the current moment, and the potential for others besides the Lannisters to be plotting to cause trouble. For instance, before the start of the novel, Petyr Baelish was and still is an admirer of Catelyn Tully Stark and a rival to Ned's older brother Brandon for her affection. Petyr for his love of Catelyn was willing to challenge Brandon and still carries a scar he calls "a token of...[Brandon's] esteem" (186). Currently, Baelish claims to have "only loved one woman" and Ned Stark replaces Brandon as an obstacle in gaining Catelyn's affections (*A Storm of Swords* 1110). In the moment Petyr proposes a takeover and Ned refuses, Stark fails to negotiate himself in the political climate of Kings Landing he views as "a nest of adders" and has made himself an enemy by outright dismissing Petyr's ambitious plans (*A Game of Thrones* 60). Ned Stark, honorable though he may be, has forgotten that Petyr once fought for the ambition of loving another man's betrothed, sits on the King's council, and pays the wages of a group of men employed for the City Watch, and when a person suggests a coup they are not speaking idle thoughts. Ned Stark now has

witnessed Petyr's verbal treason, and should Stannis come to the throne and the verbalization come to light, then Petyr stands to lose more than his position on the council, but his life. The ending result is a Ned Stark removed from his political power, isolated from family and society, a coerced confession of wrongdoing, and being beheaded as a political traitor by the newly crowned King Joffrey who executes the disgraced lord as an act of retribution. Petyr's betrayal of Ned Stark will result in his beheading and final isolation from society.

The crippling of Bran is the result of "collateral damage" because Bran Stark is in the wrong place at the wrong time when he is thrown from the tower (Lambert 25, 31). Lambert's point is that Bran's injury has little to do with any action Bran has taken on his own. The young boy is doing the same activity of climbing he has always performed before Robert Baratheon's train entered Winterfell. Bran's deliberation in chapter 8 about the attempts made to dissuade him from climbing Winterfell's walls highlight the reality that the boy "never fall[s]" when scaling the walls (*A Game of Thrones* 76). Bran's fall does not occur because he slipped naturally, but because he has overheard a conversation Cersei and Jaime want to be kept secret. The simple fact is that Bran's witnessing Jaime and Cersei having intercourse is a damning moment for the twins, and Jaime knows that should it come to light, he, his sister, and children will all forfeit their lives to Robert Baratheon's wrath. Jaime's decision to throw Bran is done out of self-preservation rather than a malicious, thought-out attempt to cause harm. As he explains to Catelyn, Bran saw "a glimpse of something he was never meant to see" when he was climbing the tower where the Lannister twins had their tryst and was thrown from the tower to keep him from being able to report to anyone of the incest (*A Clash of Kings* 596). Jaime's throwing Bran is not like the man's decision to order the execution of Ned Stark's men at Baelish's brothel. Both actions can be labeled as reprehensible, but the core reason behind each action comes from

different circumstances and reasons to act. Bran is an unwitting witness to adultery and incest, not a political figure claiming responsibility for the capture of Jaime's brother for criminal activity. The order to kill Ned's men is supposed to serve as a lesson to the man about messing with the Lannister family, whereas Bran being pushed from the tower is to silence a fact best kept to the shadows of a broken tower. The ultimate effect of Bran's crippling is to provide the reader a source of suspicion about the twins which justifies Ned's, Catelyn's, Robb's, Theon's, the northern lords', and Tyrion's concern that the Lannister family, specifically Jaime and Cersei, is responsible for the assassination attempt of Bran. The responsibility for the attack on the young boy extends to *A Storm of Swords* where Tyrion informs Jaime that Joffrey was responsible for stealing a dagger and giving it to an assassin to kill Bran (*A Storm of Swords* 1060-1061).

The injury of Bran, first and foremost, is a means to establish fighting between the houses of Stark and Lannister, but once the fighting has been started, Bran's character arc becomes consumed in searching for a person to help train the power awoken by the fall. Bran's ability to slip into the wolf Summer and Hodor is a result of impairment being used as a "opportunistic metaphorical device" within the framework of the narrative to allow Bran's character arc to proceed beyond the confines of Winterfell (Mitchell and Synder 47). The first indication of Bran's powers occurs while Bran is still in a comatose state. In a dream, Bran is falling from the sky while being instructed to "fly" repeatedly, and from the height in his dream, he can view places like "Winterfell as the eagle sees it," "the Wall shining like blue crystal," and "Asshai by the Shadow, where dragons stirred beneath the sunrise" (*A Game of Thrones* 154-158). Sight beyond what others can see is just another aspect of Bran's power. Charles Lambert's description of Bran's powers in relation to Summer and Hodor is as follows:

There's a strong element of hierarchy at work here, as the channels through which Bran reacquires liberty of movement are both, in one way or another, subordinate to him.

Summer, for all his power, is an animal, the boy's familiar. Hodor, body to Bran's mind and will, is the bearer, as St Christopher is the bearer. There's an odd, almost certainly accidental, echo of *The Erl King* by Michel Tournier in the figure of the brutish giant-like Hodor with the boy Bran on his shoulder. It's an image of service, but also of completeness, of one part requiring the other. More brutally, it's an image of abuse, of one disabled person taking advantage of his superior rank to exploit another. (27)

Furthermore, Shiloh Carroll points out that "[the] language used to describe Bran's warging [into Hodor] is strongly reminiscent of rape, indicating that Bran, the narrative voice, and likely Martin are all aware that what Bran is doing is a violation" (151). The incident where Bran takes over Hodor at the Nightfort occurs in the fifty-sixth chapter of *A Storm of Swords* where the mental takeover is described in comparison to Bran's integration into Summer, the dire wolf. The ability to go into Summer is framed as natural as "sliding" into the mind of the animal, whereas going into Hodor is like pulling "a left boot on your right foot" (*A Storm of Swords* 765).

Martin's use of an analogy of a shoe on the wrong foot is to indicate that the action is possible, but it is not supposed to occur because the result is ill-fitting. Possibly the most disturbing part of the whole incident is that Hodor cannot and will never be able to consent to the use of his body for this purpose and Bran's using Hodor to gain mobility will always be a violation of human rights. Regardless of the human rights violation by Bran, the boy's ability to take control of a human being indicates a strengthening of Bran's powers as he moves north into the vast wilderness beyond the Wall. Bran's using Hodor does not stop but will continue as the boy grows more powerful. In *A Dance with Dragons*, Bran's group is eventually led to Brynden, "a

pale lord in ebon finery... [who sits] dreaming in a tangled nest of roots, a woven weirwood throne that embraced his withered limbs as a mother does a child” (206). In coming to Brynden Rivers, in the far reaches of the north, Bran and his companions have moved to the most isolated place in Westeros, and perhaps, in Essos as well. The fact that Bran is being trained by Rivers in a weirwood throne indicates that, while Bran may have “been marked out in an almost Christ-like sense, as someone with powers that go beyond mere tit-for-tat compensation,” to obtain such power relies on being completely isolated from the rest of society (Lambert 27). Whether Bran will end up stuck on a throne like the withered Brynden remains to be seen, but at the moment with the information presented in the novels, there is a strong chance that obtaining “powers that might hold the key to saving the world” relies on giving up all connection to society (27). In other words, to gain the power to effect change and stop the Others from killing all the living with frozen zombies, Bran is more than likely going to have to give up his connection to humanity by fully giving up all mobility.

The power Bran seeks from Brynden may allow Bran the ability to possibly control other humans much in the same way that Bran has been able to slip into Hodor’s skin and walk the cave system. However, unless Martin provides Bran a way to negotiate his way back to humanity, Bran possibly will sit in a weirwood throne and be absorbed into the network of underground roots. The character of Brynden withered in his throne and the chance that Bran will join the root-web resembles a theme of living-death that always exists in the background of the novels. For instance, there are other characters like Brynden in the novels who resemble living while essentially being dead, such as Khal Drogo, Beric Dondarrion and Catelyn Stark, who are all risen from the dead through the power of magic or R’hllor. The resurrection from dead to living-dead robs the person of the vitality of life and explicitly “connect[s] zombies [or

living-dead] to their families and loved ones” (McDaniel 424). The character of Khal Drogo is saved from death by Mirri Maz Duur, but the life she brings back is a catatonic being who can be led and placed by other characters, and importantly is held to life by sorcery and Daenerys’ will to see her lover survive his wounds. When Daenerys confronts Mirri Maz Duur about the bargain for life Maz Duur tells Daenerys to “Look to your khal and see what life is worth, when all the rest is gone” (*A Game of Thrones* 735). The body may be forced to exist, but the vital essence of that body is taken away leaving a shell behind for Daenerys. In a desperate attempt to bring Khal Drogo back to his former self, Daenerys “[uses] her hands, her mouth, her breasts... [rakes] him with her nails and [covers] him with kisses ... Yet Drogo did not feel, or speak, or rise” to join his wife’s activities (736). Finally, seeing that it is impossible to restore Khal Drogo to his former self, Daenerys “[presses a] ... cushion down across his face” to smother the Dothraki khal (736). Similarly, Beric Dondarrion is losing the parts of life that are considered important to being a human being:

“Can I dwell on what I scarce remember? I held a castle on the Marches once, and there was a woman I was pledged to marry, but I could not find that castle today, nor tell you the color of that woman’s hair. Who knighted me, old friend? What were my favorite foods? It all fades. Sometimes I think I was born on the bloody grass in that grove of ash, with the taste of fire in my mouth and a hole in my chest. Are you my mother, Thoros?”
 (*A Storm of Swords* 536)

As Dondarrion reveals the state of his memory after his revival to life, it becomes apparent that he is slowly losing the details about life that make up humanity, and without that humanity he is becoming isolated from society each and every time he is brought back to life. Perhaps, Dondarrion’s isolation from humanity serves to illustrate the reason Catelyn Stark’s resurrection

is devoid of anything but hate for those she deems responsible for her son's death. Catelyn's pursuit of justice against the Lannisters and Freys focuses on anyone with the symbols of those houses such as Brienne of Tarth, who has always been loyal to Catelyn Stark, for carrying a sword with a lion-head representing the Lannisters. The living-dead resurrected by humans through magic can restore some or no memories but the resurrected being is implicitly connected to the human beings in their former life: Khal Drogo to Daenerys, Dondarrion to Thoros, and Catelyn to her family's enemies, real or imagined.

The examples of living-dead creatures exist from the start of the novels; in the prologue of *A Game of Thrones*, the reader experiences the death of Waymar Royce by the Others that are "[tall]... and gaunt and hard as old bones, with flesh pale as milk... [and] armor... [that seems] to change color as it... [moves]" (8). The most chilling aspect of Royce's and other wights' resurrection is the divide from humanity that occurs as the living-dead is no longer "connect[ed]... to their families and loved ones" and attack based on proximity rather than seeking out someone who shared intimate moments in life with the newly turned living-dead (McDaniel 424). The separation of a resurrected wight from its humanity is highlighted by the death of Will at the hands of the newly resurrected Waymar Royce. The rangers scouting beyond the Wall argue about whether a group of Wildings is dead, and Will, the chapter's point of view character, reflects that "[it] is hard to take orders from... [Royce when] you laughed at [him] in your cups" (*A Game of Thrones* 2). Waymar Royce has been with the Night's Watch for "half a year" whereas Gared has served forty years and Will has served four years (2). The human connections between Royce and his subordinates are based on a chain of command as he has not seen any of the dangers Gared and Will have encountered. Royce's status as leader is the result of being "the youngest son of an ancient house with too many heirs," and neither of his

subordinates considers him a friend or colleague (2). Waymar's death and resurrection by the Others has no emotional impact, other than fear, on Royce's subordinates. The Others are living ice, dead while being alive, which can and do kill everyone within their power. The Others can also bring the mutilated bodies of their victims back from the dead to kill on their behalf. The Others bringing the dead back to life serves as an ultimate isolation from human society where there can be no compromise which will allow the victim to return to society. The living-dead created by the Others is like Khal Drogo who does not have any semblance of mental cognition left to make decisions. The bodies brought back by the Others are impaired, and yet, can move to kill as Will learns when Waymar Royce stands over him with "[a] shard from his sword transfixing the blind white pupil of his left eye" (*A Game of Thrones* 10). Finally, the wights seek the closest living body to kill without regard to former life or familial connections, unlike Dondarrion or Catelyn Stark who pursue either the completion of a royal decree or revenge for family murder. The wights' goal, like a puppet, is the purpose of the Others: to destroy all life.

The world of *A Song of Ice and Fire* has no limit to the ways characters can be impaired, causing those marked as different to the ideal body to be marked as cast out from society. The living-dead in the series exists the ultimate example of how characters can be isolated from Westeros society with no way to reestablish their spot back into human society. Furthermore, disability/impairment is used to move the narrative forward, such as the suspicious death of Lord Arryn. Furthermore, the characters who suffer impairment integrate that aspect of their physicality into their identity in a complicated connection with characters' present moments, familial histories, past experiences, and internalization of their impairment in creating character identity. The characters who are successful can manage to retain their place in society, but often those characters exist as isolated or dead beings removed from the society. Finally, George R. R.

Martin employs disability/impairment as a physical attribute of characters within a meta-intertextual frame as a means to push against fantasy's stereotypical depictions of disability/impairment as a litmus for morality or a scenario that creates superpowered individuals outside the boundaries of reality while Martin still writes that disability/impairment is a trait that signifies otherness from normative bodies. The disability/impairment that characters exhibit works as an isolating factor forcing their expulsion from the normative culture of Westeros, and unless the othered body can negotiate its return to normative culture will inevitably lead to permanent isolation from society.

Chapter 2: A Song of Rape and Violence: George R. R. Martin's Use Sexual Violence in *A Song of Ice and Fire*

In the first chapter, I discussed how George R. R. Martin employs disability/impairment as a physical attribute of characters within a meta-intertextual frame as a means to push against fantasy's stereotypical depictions of disability/impairment as a litmus for morality or a scenario that creates superpowered individuals outside the boundaries of reality while Martin still writes that disability/impairment is a trait that signifies otherness from normative bodies. The otherness created by disability/impairment causes expulsion from the normative culture of Westeros, and unless the othered body can negotiate its return to into society that disability or impairment will inevitably lead to isolation or death. The wights, or reanimated bodies, exist as an ultimate example of character isolation from Westeros society where there is no path to reestablish their spot back into human society because a non-human entity controls the body. The characters who are disabled/impaired within the series often function, with the notable exception of Tyrion, to move the story forward. Importantly, the characters who have a disability/impairment integrate that aspect of their physicality into their identity in a complicated connection with characters' present moments, familial histories, past experiences, and internalization of their impairment in creating character identity. In the same manner that Martin uses meta-intertextuality to integrate disability/impairment as a part of characters' identities, the author uses meta-intertextuality with characters' sexual practices as a means to show the morality, or lack thereof, in a manner that undermines female autonomy in favor of showing the honorability or monstrosity of male characters.

In Cersei's last point of view chapter in *A Dance with Dragons*, the dowager queen faces her walk of atonement with her head held high to a jeering crowd. After the silent sisters have

shaved her head and body of hair, they give her a white septa robe to wear inside the building “so any worshipers they met along the way might be spared the sight of naked flesh” (*A Dance with Dragons* 990). On the steps of Sept of Baelor, Cersei is forced to disrobe in front of a crowd to reveal a “sinner... with a humble heart, shorn of secrets and concealments, naked before the eyes of gods and men, to make her walk of atonement” by the orders of the High Sparrow—the leader of a militaristic faction of the religion of the Seven (993). At the start of her walk through the chattering crowd, Cersei successfully keeps her head up as she travels from the steps of the Great Sept of Baelor toward the Red Keep. Cersei’s mantra becomes “Words are wind... Words cannot harm me” (997). The queen also imagines herself as being “blind and deaf” to the taunts of a crowd she imagines as “worms” to give herself a shield from the corrosiveness of the situation (996). However, the illusion Cersei has created for herself starts crumbling upon hallucinating “familiar faces” in the crowd that she has loved, hurt, or killed, which includes her father Tywin, the childhood friend Melara Hetherspoon who died in a well, Ned Stark sitting with Sansa and her wolf, her brother Tyrion, and Joffrey (998). The final breaking of Cersei’s willpower is the mirage-appearance of Maggy the Frog, “the hag... standing in the crowd with her pendulous teats and her warty greenish skin, leering with the rest, with malice shining from her crusty yellow eyes” repeating the childhood prophesy of queenship and destruction to Cersei (999). At the appearance of Maggy the Frog, the last vestige of pride Cersei has been hanging onto shatters as she gives “a sharp cry,... [covering] her nipples with one arm,... [sliding] her other hand down to hide her slit, and... [begins] to run, shoving her way past the line of Poor Fellows, crouching as she scrambled crab-legged up the hill” (999-1000). The prideful, arrogant queen has been revealed to be just another human being concerned with the human concern of self-

identity, but the journey to that point renders Cersei into an image of an animal scrambling for shelter in the face of degradation of her body, autonomy, and pride.

One of the strongest moments of sympathy for Cersei is the walk of atonement, where sympathy arises because of the excessive and sexual nature of the scenario and the desperation Cersei displays in escaping the mob. The reader is not asked to sympathize because there are other characters who may or may not have committed similar or worse crimes in the vicinity, but because there is just too much happening to this one character. First, Cersei's hair is removed from head and body, and the action is justified as "presenting herself as the gods made her," but the reality is that the shaving of hair serves to infantilize a sexually mature woman and reveals the misogynistic nature of the violation (*A Dance with Dragons* 993). The removal of hair and then clothing reveals Cersei to the crowd to shame her for her sexual appetite and to show that even a queen is not above the laws of the gods. Cersei's walk through Kings Landing further reveals that "[references] to sex, commercialised [sic] and otherwise, are an incessant feature of the text" (Young 45). Furthermore, in having people and events from the past haunt Cersei's every step during her walk of atonement, the High Sparrow's punishment becomes an instance where Tywin's, Jaime's, Joffrey's, Lancel's, and Osney Kettleblack's sins coalesce into karmic balance where the Queen is punished for the wrongs of her male lovers and relatives. After all, Cersei's punishment is a replica of Tywin's punishment for Lord Tytos's "grasping, lowborn mistress [who is forcibly evicted] from Casterly Rock" and stripped of her gowns and jewels to walk naked through streets of Lannisport (*A Dance with Dragons* 993). The karmic nature of Cersei's punishment is enhanced by the ghosts of Tywin, Melara Hetherspoon, Ned Stark, Sansa and her wolf, Tyrion, and Joffrey who underscore pivotal moments connecting Cersei's past and present that have led her to this instance of shame and ridicule before the citizens of King's

Landing. The walk of atonement becomes a meta-intertextual scene similar to Martin's use of disability/impairment in the series, where sexuality and sexual violence enters a meta-intertextual dialogue with a character's personal history, societal perceptions, historical moments, and physical traits to create character identity. However, unlike disability/impairment, Martin's use of sexuality and sexual violence often uses women as props to show the moral integrity or lack thereof of the male characters of the series without addressing the needs of the victims of sexual abuse or violence. The frequency in which women become victims of sexual violence and the ways in which it is outright dismissed as the reality of how things are within *A Song of Ice and Fire* underscores a toxic interpretation of women's bodies as moldable objects for male viewing, pleasure, and control. The existence of sexual violence in the Medieval period to present is not in question, but that Martin engages sexual violence as a way to allow for the character growth of men ignores the autonomy of female characters' sexuality as part of their identity in favor of metaphorically creating morality or monstrosity in men to the point where it undermines the authenticity of major female characters.

The fact that Cersei's walk of atonement becomes metaphorically charged by the actions of the men in her life destabilizes the authenticity of Cersei's identity and creates a metaphorical device by which men's crimes can be measured. Cersei standing before the crowd as the septas list off her offenses is revealed to be that "His High Holiness has commanded" the display as a form of penance for the disgraced queen, and Cersei has agreed to the High Sparrow's demand as a solution to escape incarceration by the High Sparrow and return to the Red Keep and Tommen, her last living son (*A Dance with Dragons* 993). At this point in the narrative, Cersei has not been tried for adultery, incest, treason, or any other crimes that have been leveled against her by her accusers in a court of her peers or a court comprised of members of the Seven.

Cersei's parade through the streets provides control of a female body by a male to be viewed by the populous. The removal of Cersei's hair and clothing is not necessary for repentance to remind the Queen of how she entered the world, but is a power play to show the nobility, especially women, that the strength of the religious leaders is more powerful than royalty. The High Sparrow chose this punishment as a symbolic representation of the sins Cersei has committed because the ritualistic shaving and stripping of Cersei not only infantilizes her but reveals how she bargains with men to guarantee cooperation in her schemes in overthrowing her enemies in court and abroad. In contrast, the punishment of men is out of the sight of the public as neither Lancel Lannister or Osney Kettleback are either not punished or punished out of sight, and there is no mention of atonement for men in the novels. If men are punished at all for a sexual transgression, it is not within a religious context but to be sent to the wall rather than to be publicly shamed in front of the crowd. However, the fact that Cersei's attempt to implicate Margery Tyrell for adultery through Osney Kettleblack, who is tortured by the High Sparrow until Cersei is implicated as an adulteress, fades to the background of the walk of atonement. During the walk of atonement, Margery Tyrell is mentioned three times in connection to the current event. First, Cersei ponders the fact that "she dare not let the Faith sit in judgment on her, as that Margaery Tyrell meant to do" because she has "few friends amongst the septas and sparrows" (988). The second reference to Margery is when Cersei accuses her uncle, the High Sparrow, and "the little rose" of plotting the walk as a method to "break... [her] pride, that it will make an end [of Cersei]" to remove her from political power (994). Lastly, Cersei hears Margery's name called out while she hears the insults against her person for her crime of adultery. Despite these three threads that connect Cersei to her failure to set up Margery, Cersei never actively focuses on the fact Margery should have been caught up in her plan to discredit

the new queen. Instead, the focus of the chapter becomes the past where Tywin made another woman walk the streets for committing the crime of using her sex to gain power over men. The palimpsestic nature of the walk of atonement undercuts Cersei's character arc because Tywin's action of stripping and forcing Lord Tytos' mistress to walk the streets of Lannisport superimposes itself over the High Sparrow's punishment of Cersei, making the moment rife with metaphorical tension destabilizing Cersei's personal identity as she becomes the upstart mistress her father abused.

The symbolic nature of Cersei's walk does not stop at a connection between Lord Tytos' mistress and Cersei, rather the similarities between the women make Cersei a stand-in for ambitious women who are fated to be cast aside as soon as a younger woman is available to take their place. The symbolism of Cersei growing too old and being replaced is emphasized by the appearance of Maggy the Frog who was once a young beauty but now has "pendulous teats and... warty greenish skin... [and] crusty yellow eyes" (*A Dance with Dragons* 999). The visitation of Maggy the Frog stresses Cersei's dawning realization that her body bears the marks of age in the form of "stretch marks on her belly from the children she had borne, and her breasts were not as firm as they had been... Without a gown to hold them up, they sagged against her chest" (999). The appearance of Maggy the Frog reminds Cersei of the childhood prophesy that Cersei will be "Queen" of Westeros "until there comes another, younger and more beautiful, to cast... [her] down and take all... [she holds] most dear" and Cersei's walk of atonement shatters any delusions the Queen might harbor of still being a young beauty (999). The walk of atonement is a meta-intertextual moment where Tywin's past intersects Cersei's past and present moment so that the Queen's pride in her physical appearance is used to drive home the lesson that she too is another human being aging. The meta-intertextuality of the walk of atonement

shatters the queenly identity Cersei has built for herself based on her physical appearance, but the reader does not experience the fallout of Cersei's trauma because Cersei's point of view in *A Dance with Dragons* ends after the walk of atonement. The next time a reader sees Cersei in the text is from the point of view of Kevan Lannister where he notes that "[his] niece had been subdued and submissive since her walk of atonement... The novices who attended her reported that she spent a third of her waking hours with her son, another third in prayer, and the rest in her tub... scrubbing herself ... as if she meant to scrape her skin off" (1110). Kevan Lannister's observation of Cersei's post-walk of atonement is of a woman trying to undo the horror she has experienced, but the fact that George R. R. Martin gives Kevan Lannister the point of view chapter ignores the need for the repercussions of sexual violence to be addressed from the victim's perspective rather than a witness far removed from the sexual violence that has occurred. At this point in the story, the sympathy Cersei garners because of the walk of atonement arises because of the excessive and sexual nature of the scenario. The desperation Cersei displays in escaping the mob and continues to exhibit in trying to wash away the trauma appears authentic, but the removal of Cersei's perspective after the walk of atonement renders the validity of her character identity hollow as a male perspective takes over to avoid dealing with the direct result of a sexual trauma experienced by a female character.

The trauma of Cersei's atonement walk is one of two instances in the novels where readers are encouraged to sympathize with a character who is often rendered as an appallingly prideful woman obsessed with her own importance. The walk of atonement is a moment of sympathy built on the excessively sexual nature and the slow deterioration of Cersei's mental will power to ignore the crowd's opinions. Another instance the reader is asked to sympathize with Cersei is in the confrontation with Ned Stark about her incest with Jaime where Ned

wonders “If it came to that, the life of some child I did not know, against Robb and Sansa and Arya and Bran and Rickon, what would I do?... what would Catelyn do, if it were Jon’s life, against the children of her body?” (*A Game of Thrones* 469). In this moment, the reader is asked to consider the human need to protect one’s own children from danger against protecting the life of a child that is a stranger. The point is driven home by first having the reader consider Ned’s own thoughts on the subject through the children Robb, Sansa, Arya, Bran, and Rickon, the children he has had with Catelyn before making the reader consider what Catelyn might do if the choice were her own children versus Jon. Ned concludes he would rather never discover what might happen if Catelyn was in such a scenario, but the implication is clear that Catelyn would never hold the life of Jon as equal to the life of her own children any more than Cersei or Jaime would hold Bran’s life to be equal to their own children’s lives. The contemplation of Ned opens a dialogue where the reader can ask if Cersei’s actions and decisions are worse or better than Ned Stark’s actions and decisions. Furthermore, Cersei gives voice to the reader’s doubts in her rage at Ned’s refusal to be swayed by her offer of companionship:

“Honor,” she spat. “How dare you play the noble lord with me! What do you take me for? You’ve a bastard of your own, I’ve seen him. Who was the mother, I wonder? Some Dornish peasant you raped while her holdfast burned? A whore? Or was it the grieving sister, the Lady Ashara? She threw herself into the sea, I’m told. Why was that? For the brother you slew, or the child you stole? Tell me, my honorable Lord Ned Stark, how are you any different from Robert, or me, or Jaime?” (470)

Ned Stark’s answer is that he does not slay children, but that does not address Jon’s parentage, or the accusations leveled at Lord Stark of behaving indecently. Instead of Ned answering and relieving doubts, the reader is left with the possibility that Ned Stark can commit violent rape,

purchase mercantile sex, or steal Ashara's child from her after having sex with her. Ned's refusal to explain the circumstance of Jon's birth to Cersei emphasizes that there is no difference, and Ned's concern about children only extends to not being guilty of doing the killing himself or being directly responsible. In opening the paragon of honor to the possibility of being like Robert or Jaime, Martin has given Cersei a moment of sympathy usually left out of her story. The answer to Cersei's question to Ned Stark about the difference between herself, Ned, Robert, and Jaime is that she is female, whereas Ned, Robert, and Jaime are male and the recipients of a patriarchal society that excuses their sexual deficiencies while punishing women. For instance, Jaime Lannister is guilty of incest, adultery, and attempted murder, but his character receives a more sympathetic rendering than Cersei, who up until their point of view chapters were similarly arrogant and despicable in the novels. More troubling is that Jaime only loses his arrogance when his hand is removed, making the sympathetic rendering dependent upon impairment to open the character to humanization that was previously denied in pursuit of creating a villain for the first novel, *A Game of Thrones*. Easily, the revelation of Jaime's past as a captive in Kings Landing, Aerys' plans to burn the city, and Jaime's desperation to stop the destruction could have made him a more sympathetic character without the need to remove his sword hand. According to Joseph Young, Cersei's attraction to Jaime and "her relationship with her brother had less to do with specific affection for Jaime than a preoccupation with things that look like her" (52). However, Martin's choice to have Cersei and Jaime be twins invites the idea of Cersei having a "mystical [or mythical] connection to Jaime, ... [where she describes] him as a part of her own identity (Game 468)" and the removal of Jaime's sword hand becomes a way to sever the identicalness of twins into characters with different motivations sexually and morally (52). As a result, Cersei appears more depraved as Jaime appears a loyal lover striving to restore a tattered

honor by ultimately severing his romantic connection to Cersei. Therefore, upon receiving Cersei's request for aid against the High Septon, who is demanding her to walk the streets naked, Jaime throws the message in the fire as a symbolic message of burning his bridges of romantic interest in favor of rebuilding a masculine identity within the chivalric code that has labeled him as dishonorable for slaying King Aerys. The result of Jaime's decision to walk a path of redemption ultimately leaves his twin and lover to the control of the High Septon who orders the walk of atonement as degrading as humanly possible for Cersei; the Queen ends up standing naked and alone in answer for the sexual crimes of not only Jaime but Tywin Lannister, Lancel Lannister, Joffrey Lannister, and Osney Kettleback.

The fact that Cersei becomes a stand-in symbol for the crimes committed by men to the deterioration of her own character identity reveals a tendency in Martin's *A Song of Ice and Fire* for women's bodies to become objects of men's control or essential for male character growth. The fact that women's character growth takes a back seat to male characters is not isolated to Cersei as on some level most women in the novels are subjected to the control, desire, or abuse of male characters. For instance, Cersei, Catelyn, Lysa, Daenerys, and other noble women are all betrothed to their husbands by men, either fathers or brothers, who have a significant say in how their aristocratic daughters or siblings are treated. The betrothals of these women serve to strengthen opportunistic familial connections as attempts to gather power behind a title granted or gain military strength. In the first novel, Viserys informs Daenerys that "I'd let his whole khalasar fuck you if need be, sweet sister, all forty thousand men, and their horses too if that was what it took to get my army" (*A Game of Thrones* 35). The vivid depiction of a gang rape is a chilling scenario to consider, but exemplifies that in the society of Westeros Daenerys is considered chattel by her brother and her worth is only as valuable as what it gains her brother.

As explained by Sylwia Borowska-Szerszun, the thematic use of rape “is included in the narrative is simply to make the story more ‘realistic’ and less ‘Disneyland-like,’ to break away from what Martin perceives as a nostalgic vision of the past characteristic of Tolkienian fantasy” (5). As a result, the novels expose the reader to repeated representations of rape during violent occurrences in the series; the sacking of Kings Landing pre-series, the riots of Kings Landing, the razing of the Riverlands, the Dothraki pillaging, the raiders of the Iron Islands scavenging for loot, and the Wildings stealing women for wives are all examples of rape as being connected to violence of men fighting. Furthermore, Borowska-Szerszun explains that rape may also be the result of men having nothing else to occupy their time as in the case of Gregor Clegane’s and his men’s rape of the girl Layna who is nothing but a bystander to their decisions and actions (6-7). Predominately, the act of rape like arranged marriages gives control of a female body to men where the violation of a female body allows for the growth of male characters while undermining the character individuality of female characters.

In the novels, the act of rape occurs frequently and often functions as a means to flesh out the character identity of male characters where particular men can be made to appear better or worse than their peers in relation to the rape occurring. As indicated by Borowska-Szerszun, the episode of gang rape by Gregor Clegane and his men is played off as a bonding experience for men over the helplessness of a woman who cannot defend herself from the violent attention of strangers (6-7). Gregor Clegane and his men’s gang rape of Layna, a thirteen-year-old girl, is employed as a prop to measure the morality of male characters by their proximity to rape. The fact of the matter is that Gregor Clegane’s soldier, Chiswyck’s tale is told at a pivotal moment when Arya Stark has been given the power of life and death by Jaqen H’ghar. The man Jaqen H’ghar tells Arya that the reason she is being given the power of life and death is because she

“took three [from a fire] that were...[the Red God’s and that she] must give three in their places. Speak the names, and a man will do the rest” (*A Clash of Kings* 348). Chiswyck’s story of rape is told as “one of his funny stories” to a crowd of men while they are drinking in front of Arya who says nothing but slips away after the story is done (348). At the Barracks Hall where Arya is sent to serve drinks, she sneaks over to Jaqen H’ghar to whisper the name Chiswyck and three days later Chiswyck falls and breaks his neck. The death of Chiswyck is a moment of meta-intertextuality where Arya’s past and present intertwine at Harrenhal when Arya is held prisoner by her family’s enemies and encounters Jaqen H’ghar, a man she saved from the fire. The intersecting paths of enemies and potential allies to Arya provide her with an opportunity to remove enemies, but there is a moral decision that must be made when killing another person. Arya considers the enemies she has made since her father was beheaded and ponders that “Joffrey and his mother, Ilyn Payne and Meryn Trant and Sandor Clegane ... but they were in King’s Landing hundreds of miles away, and Ser Gregor had lingered only a few nights before departing” and leading his men away, though “Ser Amory Lorch was... [at Harrenhal] and she hated him almost as much. Didn’t she?” (348). The hesitation to end a life shown by Arya humanizes the little girl who has been a victim of violence since her father was beheaded by King Joffrey. Arya makes her decision to whisper a name to Jaqen H’ghar once she has heard Chiswyck brag about the rape of a thirteen-year-old child. The gang rape of Layna creates a situation where Arya’s request for Chiswyck’s death is justified because of his proximity to rape. However, Layna as a character does not exist as outside of the graphic rape; her presence does not impact the stories except as a catalyst to move Arya from hesitancy to speak a name to actively choosing to whisper Chiswyck’s name into Jaqen H’ghar’s ear. Layna enters the story as a bridge between the dialogues created around Arya, Jaqen H’ghar, and Chiswyck where the

thirteen-year-old girl's trauma is a tool to make a morally reprehensible decision more palatable to readers since a child rapist is easier to wish dead than a common soldier only following the orders of a superior who is holding Arya Stark captive. As result, Layna's abuse is contained to the single story by Chiswyck and afterwards the thirteen-year-old's sexual trauma is never fully addressed again in the series. The girl and her rape, like Cersei's naked walk of atonement, show a repeating trend for women's bodies to be subjected to violent, sexualized abuse to characterize the character of men without examining the repercussion of abuse on the victims.

The tendency to use sexual violence against women without examining the consequences of the violation extends beyond the backstory of a faceless, thirteen-year-old rape victim or forcing Cersei to walk naked through the streets of King's Landing. The essential elements of backstory within the novel provide a similarly disturbing gang rape tied into Tyrion's first experiences of love. During Tyrion's murder trial, Tyrion has a breakdown because of making his relationship with Shae mirror Tyrion's first experience of love with Tysha. The end of Tyrion's relationship with Tysha happens because Tywin makes Tyrion watch and participate in the gang rape of his wife (*A Game of Thrones* 443). The purpose of Tysha's rape is to teach a lesson to Tyrion in obedience to Tywin Lannister and causes Tyrion to develop an obsession with defying Tywin where Tyrion mirrors his first relationship with Shae and other professional sex workers. The problem with the scenario is that while the novel gives Tysha some background for her character and a moment of connection with Tyrion in being saved from violence, there is nothing of substance added to her character and her safety dissolves into horror through Tyrion's point of view story. Tysha serves as a lesson from Tyrion's father, Tywin, and as an ironic device to bring Tyrion to further desperation once he learns Tysha was never a whore. The irony is lost to Tyrion in his rage at Tywin as Martin uses the situation to garner sympathy for a male

character because all the women connected to him are "... false. Sansa, Shae, all my women ... Tysha was the only one who ever loved me" and suffered horribly for the situation (*A Dance with Dragons* 620). According to Charles Lambert, Sansa "fails to appreciate Tyrion's attempts to treat her with respect" and as a result shows how marks of beauty are more "a sign of moral degradation, or insipidness, than of moral worth" (32). In the same manner Patricia Monk interprets Tyrion's relationship with Sansa as follows:

An arranged marriage, of a common medieval sort, does not affect his [Tyrion's] honor. When Sansa humiliates him at the wedding ceremony, by refusing to kneel to accept the cloak symbolizing his protection, he is extremely angry, but even so, he plays the fool to avoid dragging her through the ceremonial bedding. When she offers passive resistance to consummating the marriage, he refuses to force her to accept him. "On my honor as a Lannister," the Imp said, "I will not touch you until you want me to," and he accepts her indication of "Never" (*Storm* 394). They therefore enter a marriage blanc (unconsummated marriage)—when she and Tyrion share a bed it is just to sleep. Under tremendous pressure his self-disciplinary promise remains unbroken. (13-14)

The tendency to read the arranged marriage between Tyrion and Sansa as a moment for showing Tyrion as sympathetic and honorable is to forget the all too real problem of women being subjugated as tools for men's story arcs, and result Sansa becomes a tool in Tyrion's character progression. Similarly, Jaime Hovey interprets the wedding and bedding scenes as "Sansa... [lacking] compassion for Tyrion because of her investment in what Rosemarie Garland Thomson has termed the normate, defined as 'the constructed identity of those who, by way of the bodily configurations and cultural capital they assume, can step into a position of authority and wield the power it grants them'" (93-94). Lambert, Monk, and Hovey, while they acknowledge Sansa's

lack of power in the situation of being forced to marry Tyrion, also suggest Sansa is letting her biases and cultural fantasies of a tall, dashing hero blind her to who is honorable and who is the monster in her world. According to Lambert, Monk, and Hovey, the act of not acknowledging Tyrion's gallantry renders Sansa as a person who thinks herself better than Tyrion.

The analysis by Lambert, Monk, and Hovey suggests that Sansa's rejection of Tyrion's gallantry makes her shallow, but their stance fails to acknowledge the fact that Sansa is a teenager, who is thirteen years younger than Tyrion, and is still a child learning the complexities of human nature and love. However, in contrast to reading Sansa as failing to be grateful to Tyrion for his kindness, Shiloh Carroll interprets Sansa's refusal to kneel as "one of the few times she does not bend to the will of those around her" and suggests "Tyrion's method of 'asking' for her to kneel [by repeatedly pulling on her dress] is perfunctory and even rude" (139). In the action of refusing to kneel for Tyrion, Sansa enacts the only form of rebellion available to her as she cannot say no to the marriage. Instead, she stands silently defying the system that is abusing her and threatening to continue abusing her. Furthermore, the suggestion that Sansa should feel grateful to Tyrion is to ignore that Sansa is a political prisoner in Kings Landing and must obey to survive. Likewise, the idea that she "lacks compassion" for Tyrion is to ignore that Tyrion does not spare compassion for her in tugging on her dress instead of asking his child-bride to kneel so that he can reach her shoulders (Hovey 93). Furthermore, Tyrion's refusal to essentially rape Sansa has more to do with not wanting to have sex with an inert body than any type of chivalry. The fact is that Tyrion wants the illusion of interest even when that interest is feigned as when Tyrion employs the sexual favors of sex workers. Martin's underlying suggestion in the novels that Sansa should feel grateful to Tyrion is to dismiss and ignore her rights as a human being who can think and feel. The fact is Sansa may be wrong about using

visual cues to guide her fantasies, but that does not remove her right to not want to be forced to marry Tyrion nor does it make her refusal to bow an act of shallowness just as her answer that she may never want sex from Tyrion should be recognized as a justified reaction of any female under sexual duress. Tyrion's so-called gallantry does not remove the fact that Sansa is a victim in the moment nor should the marriage to Tyrion suggest to anyone, including Martin, that Sansa is owned by Tyrion by the completion of the non-consensual marriage. After all, Tyrion labels "Sansa... [as a part of] all my women" during his ruminations about who has and has not loved him (*A Dance with Dragons* 620). The implication is that Sansa is just another woman who has failed to recognize Tyrion's value while Tyrion ignores, though he is rendered sympathetically, that the relationship with Sansa was built by Tywin Lannister forcing a child to be his bride, and as a result Sansa becomes subordinate to making Tyrion appear as a better man than he or any man is in the series.

In the same manner Tyrion ignores the reality of his relationship with Sansa, Tyrion refuses to acknowledge the truth of the relationship with Shae. In a bid to create for himself a moment to satisfy his sexual desires, Tyrion also attempts to create a meaningful relationship with Shae whom he has purchased sexual favors from for an extended length of time. In romanticizing his connection to Shae, Tyrion decides that Shae should and must return Tyrion's love even though the nature of their relationship is mercantile. The first meeting Tyrion has with Shae, the man instructs her that she will "share... [his] tent, pour... [his] wine, laugh at ... [his] jests, rub the ache from... [his] legs after each day's ride ... and whether... [he keeps her] a day or a year... [she] will take no other men into... [her] bed" in exchange for money, upkeep, and gold (*A Game of Thrones* 656). Shae agrees to the exchange and the conditions following Tyrion to Kings Landing where the man keeps her in a manse with servants before eventually moving

her into the city to make her a handmaiden to Sansa. At the trial, Tyrion learns, though he should have known, that the love he has developed for Shae is not returned because her affection, her body, and her time were merchandise she was selling that he bought, and now that Tyrion is a prisoner with no power or money to retain Shae's services, the deal made is terminated and Shae is now free to form another mercantile relationship with another man. The scene where Tyrion finds Shae in Tywin's bed is gut wrenching for Tyrion because the reader is in his head with his emotions fueling the reader's response to Shae's betrayal, but never does the reader experience Shae's thoughts and emotions during her employment by Tyrion. The reader learns through Cersei, when she is informed of her father's murder, that Shae approached her "the night before the dwarf's trial by combat... [and that] Shae had been asking about some jewels Tyrion had given her, and certain promises Cersei might have made, a manse in the city and a knight to marry her" (*A Feast of Crows* 63). Shae's testimony was mercantile in the same way that her sexual relationship with Tyrion was bought, and now that Tyrion knows that his fantasy has been shattered, he takes out his rage on both the prostitute and his father. Shae's romantic involvement with Tyrion, like Sansa's marriage to the man, is false, unreal, and entirely shaded by a male's perspective in how women should act toward men's kindness even if that kindness is superficial.

The perspective that women should show gratefulness for any act of kindness in situations of sexual abuse is extended by Martin to all women regardless of the situation that leads to the instances of rape. Furthermore, while sexual abuse is often experienced by and through the perspectives of point of view characters there is not a single instance in the novels where readers experience rape in the point of view of the victim. Instead, the horror of rape is often watered down through the perspective of the rapist who is committing the violation, and even fewer of the rapes that occur feature characters significant to the plot of *A Song of Ice and*

Fire. Sylwia Borowska-Szerszun identifies two individuals as survivors of rape in the series: Cersei Lannister and Mirri Maz Duur (9). Unfortunately, in Martin's construction of Cersei and Mirri Maz Duur, "both of them are villains" in the series and as a result, readers are tempted to overlook their words on the issue. For instance, as Borowska-Szerszun points out, Cersei is "continuously abused by her royal husband... which is... revealed late in the narrative, after... [repeated] negative, misogynistic stereotypes concerning female leadership... [and problematically Cersei's] recollections of marital rape are revealed in a highly eroticized scene, in which she fantasizes about violating another woman" (9). The idea then that Cersei might be a victim of a society who abuses women is given little significance when her character development perpetually makes her come across as self-absorbed and only interested in gaining more power. Likewise, the fact that Cersei when given the chance also abuses women highlights the ways in which victims can therefore become the perpetrators of abuse. Cersei like Tyrion both suffer sexually abuse by male relatives and in turn abuse those in their sphere of contact. Similarly, the circumstances of Mirri Maz Duur's entrance into the story undermines the validity of her opposition to the treatment of herself and her village by Khal Drogo's warriors. Mirri Maz Duur is "a war captive, whose rape by the Dothraki victors is stopped in the middle by Daenerys, and who... questions the premise that this intervention 'saved' her" (9). According to Shiloh Carroll, Mirri Maz Duur falls into the category of witches whose advice "[when] characters do listen... [causes] misfortune" to occur in the plot (81). As a result, Daenerys loses both her unborn child and her husband to the plotting of Mirri Maz Duur, who deliberately misleads Daenerys about the spell she is performing. The answer Mirri Maz Duur provides Daenerys about her reasons for the death of her unborn child is that "The stallion who mounts the world will burn no cities now. His khalasar shall trample no nations into dust" (*A Game of Thrones*

734-735). Mirri Maz Duur is attacking her attackers and the institution of raiders who “trample... nations into dust” (735). Mirri Maz Duur has already seen her village destroyed, her neighbors killed, her temple and god defiled, and has been repeatedly raped by the Khal Drogo’s khalasar. In Mirri Maz Duur’s defiance against Daenerys’ assertion that her interruption somehow was an act of salvation for the victims of rape, there is a short moment of clarity where human desperation comes through and the victims of violence assert their own right to vengeance. Mirri Maz Duur’s revenge against her city’s attackers is an action of mentally destroying Khal Drogo and killing his offspring, which prevents the Dothraki prophesy of the stallion who mounts the world from coming to pass as well as preventing Drogo’s lineage from abusing more people in the future. However, Martin quickly silences Mirri Maz Duur’s authority on the issue of rape salvation by having the magical woman become the living-firewood for Daenerys’ dragons’ birth. In burning Mirri Maz Duur, Martin encourages the readers to assume Daenerys’ belief that Mirri Maz Duur “cheated” Daenerys and “murdered... [her] child within” (734). The pyre allows readers to ignore the moral consideration that those who wage war on peaceful villages might owe their victims restitution for their wrong doings, and Mirri Maz Duur’s punishment suggests that Daenerys, who benefits from war by proxy, is justified for expecting those supposedly saved from rape to be grateful for the interruption of their abuse.

The implication that Mirri Maz Duur should be grateful that her rape was interrupted resembles the implications that Sansa should feel gratitude to Tyrion for showing her human consideration that should have been hers anyway. Similarly, the horror visited on Mirri Maz Duur and her village serves as a backdrop for the character development of Daenerys’ character like Tysha’s rape and Shae’s betrayal provides character development to Tyrion. The concerns with the violence and the chaos that Khal Drogo has unleashed on a helpless village matters less

than teaching Daenerys a lesson so that she can birth her dragons. The silencing of female voices in opposition to masculine control over female bodies is not helped by Martin's use of sexuality to indicate the presences of characters' moral placement in the story. For instance, Daenerys, who falls in love with Khal Drogo, ends up accepting her lower status as his wife by learning how to pleasure and love the man she was forced to marry, and this grants Daenerys with the moral superiority over Mirri Maz Duur who cannot and will not accept the interpretation of salvation from the wife of Khal Drogo, her people's destroyer. Similarly, Catelyn Stark was previously promised to Brandon Stark, but settles for Ned Stark, becoming the bountiful, dutiful wife who provides him with five children, and comes across as morally superior to Cersei Lannister who sleeps with her brother. In the same way, Jaime, due to his monogamous relationship to Cersei, is afforded a more sympathetic rendering, even a path to redemption, than Cersei, though both twins are guilty of incest, adultery, and attempting to kill a boy for witnessing their sex. Finally, Cersei's walk of atonement serves as a way in which females, especially those seeking power, are rendered victims to the control of men over female bodies.

The use of sexual violence and rape in the narrative of *A Song of Ice and Fire* is as incessant as Martin's use of disability/impairment in creating character identity within a meta-intertextual framework. The meta-intertextual framework that Martin uses creates a dialogue between characters' traits, personal choices, societal perceptions, and physical traits in constant mediation with each other to create character identity. However, the meta-intertextual framework employed by Martin that works to push against stereotypical depictions of disability/impairment works the opposite when using sexual violence or rape as part of that dialogic model of writing because it favors male characters' development over female characters' autonomy, especially considering that Martin removes any direct engagement with rape while still using sexual

violence. Cersei's walk of atonement, for instance, provides the reader with the most vivid instance of sexual abuse against a woman in the novels, but outside of showing the event as Cersei being knocked from the pedestal she has built for herself, there is no engagement with the fallout for the trauma of being forced to walk naked. The next time Cersei is seen in the text is from the point of view of Kevan Lannister and not her own because Martin skirts directly around facing the trauma inflicted on Cersei by the High Sparrow. In a similar manner, rape is absent from the point of view chapters and is instead addressed through the perpetrator or as a background detail to another character's history; Cersei's rape by Robert, Layna's rape by Gregor Clegane and his men, Tysha's gang rape by order of Lord Tywin, and Mirri Maz Duur's and her fellow village women's rape by Khal Drogo's men all occur outside of the point of view chapters.

Conclusion: Looking Forward

I first became interested in *A Song of Ice and Fire* because George R. R. Martin takes for his inspiration the historical events surrounding the War of the Roses, which I was acquainted with due to watching documentaries on England's early kings. I found it extremely interesting that Martin chose this part of history as his inspiration for the novels, especially since the history leading up to the Tudor dynasty was adapted by William Shakespeare. The plays connected to the Tudor dynasty are propaganda, creating a state authorized version that praised Tudor kingship as divine right. As a result, figures like Richard III are traditionally portrayed as deformed and grasping men, who win power through murder and treachery, and though Shakespeare does not render a simplistic representation of Richard III, there is still the underlying implication that Richard's evil is represented in his deformed body. So, when I started examining *A Song of Ice and Fire*, my intention was to look at the ways that characters within the story authored history to justify actions taken in the past. For example, the underlying history of Robert's Rebellion, where the Targaryen dynasty was displaced by the efforts of Jon Arryn, Ned Stark, and Robert Baratheon, haunts the main series. The official story of the Baratheon kingship is that Rhaegar Targaryen stole Robert's love and fiancé Lyanna Stark, and that Robert raised an army to win her back. Robert faced and slayed Rhaegar in battle on the Trident, but was too late to save Lyanna, who died and was brought back to Winterfell by her brother Ned Stark. As details of the past emerge, the reader constantly gets hints throughout the series that the official story of the crown is not true. Importantly, the fact that challenges the Baratheon version of events the most is that Jon Arryn, Ned Stark, and Robert Baratheon did not call together their armies until Aerys Targaryen demanded the heads of Ned and Robert well after Lyanna had already disappeared and Ned's father and brother had been murdered. The

authoring of a story that romanticizes the realities of war to justify the violence committed by one side over another highlights the tendency in the novels for characters in Martin's series to be aware of and actively influence the way history is written.

The fact that Martin has characters in the novels bring up the past, engage in analyzing those events, and interpreting the events still informs this paper, but as I began researching *A Song of Ice and Fire*, I discovered critics were predominately concerned with looking at aspects of characterization or Martin's rendering of medievalism. As I have previously discussed, there is a rich cast of characters and environments for readers to encounter in the plot of *A Song of Ice and Fire*, which include the frozen North with its Starks, Night's Watch, and Wildings, the golden Lannisters in King's Landing, or the white-blond Daenerys who travels in Essos. The intersecting plot lines of *A Song of Ice and Fire* reveal characters involved in solving mysteries, working to resolve personal vendettas, affairs of love or lust, fighting for the Iron Throne, fighting the injustices of slavery, and more, all while being haunted by the events of Robert's Rebellion, which put the Baratheon line on the throne of Westeros. Furthermore, the plot threads that began in one character's plot are carried over into the arcs of other characters whether a character is aware of the revealed information. Therefore, Sansa would not be aware that her mother received a secret letter from Lysa Arryn at the beginning of *A Game of Thrones*, but Lysa's confession of her involvement in the murder of Jon Arryn reveals that Ned Stark was wrong in believing he had uncovered all participants involved in Jon Arryn's death. Meta-intertextuality becomes a mediation between the different characters' present moments, familial histories, past experiences, personal choices, actions, beliefs, and internalization of those factors intersecting within the text to reveal the moral integrity of each character. As a result of having multiple evolving characters and plot lines, George R. R. Martin's *A Song of Ice and Fire* offers

complex renderings of characters who live in a variety of environments, have disabilities, have suffered from violence, or have been the recipient of sexual abuse.

In examining *A Song of Ice and Fire*, it becomes apparent that there is no limit to the ways characters can be impaired causing those marked as different to the ideal body to be marked as cast out from society: severed limbs, beheadings, stabbings, horses crushing legs, falling from heights, scarring from sickness, burning in fire, freezing, and so on. The living-dead exists as an example of how characters can be isolated from Westeros society with no way to reestablish their spot back into human culture. Furthermore, disabled/impaired characters are used to move the story forward. The characters who suffer impairment integrate that aspect of their physicality into their identity in a complicated connection with characters' present moments, familial histories, past experiences, and internalization of their impairment in creating character identity. The characters who are successful can manage to retain their place in society, but often those characters exist as isolated or dead beings removed from the society. Finally, George R. R. Martin's employment of disability/impairment as a physical attribute of characters within a meta-intertextual frame pushes against fantasy's stereotypical depictions of disability/impairment as a litmus for morality or a scenario that creates superpowered individuals outside the boundaries of reality only in regards to exceptional characters. Though Tyrion is not the only dwarf of the series, he is the only one that actively seeks to shape the narrative about what it means to be a dwarf in Westeros and Essos. The fact that disability/impairment is an isolating experience in Westeros forces characters to be exiled from the normative culture of Westeros unless those characters can negotiate a return to normative culture. If those characters cannot find a way back to society, it will inevitably lead to isolation or death, and often the

characters that make their way back into society are examples of exceptionalism within the series.

Likewise, Cersei's walk of atonement becomes a meta-intertextual scene like Martin's use of disability/impairment in the series, where sexuality and sexual violence enters a meta-intertextual dialogue with several aspects of a character's distinct identity. Martin's use of sexuality and sexual violence often uses women as props to show the moral integrity or lack thereof of the male characters of the series without addressing the needs of the victims of sexual abuse or violence; Daenerys is sold to Khal Drogo while having her feelings dismissed, Cersei is forced to walk naked through the streets of King's Landing, Tysha and Layna are gang raped, Cersei has been raped by Robert Baratheon, Tyrion rapes a unnamed sex worker, and King's Landing occupants are raped during sackings and riots. The frequency in which women become victims of sexual violence and the ways in which it is outright dismissed as the reality of how things are within *A Song of Ice and Fire* underscores a toxic interpretation of women's bodies as modifiable objects for male viewing, pleasure, and control, and that Martin engages sexual violence as a tool for the character growth of male characters ignores the autonomy of female characters' sexuality and their consent to be sexually active as part of their identity in favor of metaphorically creating morality or monstrosity in men to the point it undermines the authenticity of major female characters. As a result, most of the women of the series become victims of sexual violence in the novels without pushing against inevitability of their future victimhood, unlike Tyrion who offers counter narratives to being viewed as disabled/impaired.

The persistent use of disability/impairment and sexual abuse/rape are a few of the motifs that are a part of the meta-intertextual structure George R. R. Martin uses in *A Song of Ice and Fire*. Finally, though I did not write anything on my interest in Martin drawing on the history of

the War of the Rose, I am still interested in how Martin has characters narrate their own version of history. If time had permitted, I would have liked to expand my discussions on disability/impairment and sexual abuse/rape to examine how characters use myth, religion, and history in *A Song of Ice and Fire* to justify their personal views. After all, it is Robert's Rebellion fought fourteen to fifteen years before the start of the series that haunts survivors like Ned Stark, Catelyn Tully, Robert Baratheon, Cersei Lannister, Jaime Lannister, Tyrion Lannister, and Tywin Lannister. The weight of history is even more pressing on issues where there is no clear answer for the readers to settle on, like who is Jon Snow's mother or if Aegon Targaryen was killed in Tywin's sacking of King's Landing during the war. Likewise, the intertwining of myths and religion in association with the Long Night reflect on the Night's Watch's struggle to keep the Others and wights from escaping south of the Wall to kill every living creature. The religion of R'hllor provides a reason for the successes and failures of Stannis Baratheon's attempts to win the Iron Throne, and as a means to bring to life characters who have been killed as both Beric Dondarrion and Catelyn Stark are resurrected through R'hllor magic. In the end, Martin's meta-intertextual framework, though it has faults in pushing against stereotypes, provides environments with characters who challenge readers to reconsider their perceptions of morality.

Works Cited

- Borowska-Szerszun, Sylwia. "Representation of Rape in George R. R. Martin's *A Song of Ice and Fire* and Robin Hobb's *Liveship Traders*." *Extrapolation*, vol. 60, no. 1, 2019. *ProQuest*, <https://doi.org/10.3828/extr.2019.2>.
- Carroll, Shiloh. *Medievalism in A Song of Ice and Fire and Game of Thrones*. D. S. Brewer, 2018. *EBSCOhost*, search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=nlebk&AN=1636003&site=ehost-live&scope=site.
- Cohen, Jeffrey Jerome. "Monster Culture (Seven Theses)." *Monster Theory Reading Culture*, edited by Jeffrey Cohen, University of Minnesota Press, 1996, pp. 3–25.
- Graulund, Rune. "Grotesque." *Oxford University Press*, Oct. 2019, pp. 1–18. doi: 10.1093/acrefore/9780190201098.013.1067.
- Hardy, Mat. "The East Is Least: The Stereotypical Imagining of Essos in Game of Thrones." *Canadian Review of American Studies*, vol. 49, no. 1, pp. 26–45. *EBSCOhost*, doi:10.3138/cras.49.1.003.
- Hovey, Jaime. "Tyrion's Gallantry." *Critical Quarterly*, vol. 57, no. 1, pp. 86–98. *EBSCOhost*, doi:10.1111/criq.12177.
- Keenan, Siobhan. "Re-Reading Shakespeare's Richard III: Tragic Hero and Villian?" *Linguaculture*, vol. 2017, no. 1, June 2017, pp. 23–34. *EBSCOhost*, doi:10.1515/linu-2017-0003.
- Lambert, Charles. "A Tender Spot in My Heart: Disability in A Song of Ice and Fire." *Critical Quarterly*, vol. 57, no. 1, pp. 20–33. *EBSCOhost*, doi:10.1111/criq.12176.

Marson, Janyce, and Harold Bloom. “*Richard III* in the Twenty-First Century.” *Richard III*.

Infobase Publishing, 2010, pp. 263 – 308. *EBSCOhost*, search.ebscohost.com/login

.aspx?direct=true&db=nlebk&AN=328640&site=ehost-live&scope=site.

Martin, George R. R. *A Clash of Kings*. Kindle ed., Random House, 1999.

---. *A Dance with Dragons*. Kindle ed., Random House, 2011.

---. *A Feast of Crows*. Kindle ed., Random House, 2005.

---. *A Game of Thrones*. Kindle ed., Random House, 1996.

---. *A Storm of Swords*. Kindle ed, Random House, 2000.

Marques, Diana. “Power and the Denial of Femininity in *Game of Thrones*.” *Canadian Review of*

American Studies, vol. 49, no. 1, 2019, pp. 47–65. *EBSCOhost*, doi:10.3138/cras.49.1.0

04.

---. “The Haunted Forest of *A Song of Ice and Fire*: A Space of Otherness.” *Fafnir*, vol. 3, no. 3,

Sept. 2016, pp. 31–40. *EBSCOhost*, search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct

=true&AuthType=ip,sso&db=edsdoj&AN=edsdoj.2b2ee77eac2e40d5a9b8cd29d56fd3ad

&site=eds-live&scope=site.

McDaniel, Jamie. ““You Can Point a Finger at a Zombie. Sometimes They Fall off.”:

Contemporary Zombie Films, Embedded Ableism, and Disability as Metaphor.” *The*

Midwest Quarterly, vol. 57, no. 4, June 2016, pp. 423–446. *EBSCOhost*, search.

ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=ip,sso&db=edsglr&AN=edsgcl.45948

7455&site=eds-live&scope=site.

Mitchell, David T., and Sharon L. Snyder. *Narrative Prosthesis: Disability and the Dependencies*

of Discourse. University of Michigan Press, 2000.

- Monk, Patricia. "Tyrion Lannister: A Fulcrum of Balance in George R.R. Martin's A Song of Ice and Fire." *Mythlore*, vol. 36, no. 2, Mar. 2018, pp. 5–21. *EBSCOhost*, search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=ip,sso&db=edsglr&AN=edsgcl.539213005&site=eds-live&scope=site.
- Patel, C. "Expelling a Monstrous Matriarchy: Casting Cersei Lannister as Abject in A Song of Ice and Fire." *Journal of European Popular Culture*, vol. 5, no. 2, Oct. 2014, pp. 135–147. *EBSCOhost*, doi:10.1386/jepc.5.2.135_1.
- Rohani S., and H. Abootalebi. "Mending Wall: A Study of Restorative Justice in George R. R. Martin's A Song of Ice and Fire and Tales of Dunk and Egg." *K@ta: A Biannual Publication on the Study of Language and Literature*, vol.17, no. 2, 2015, pp. 58. *EBSCOhost*, search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=edsdoj&AN=edsdoj.07bfb3566c6a4d1794bc821eb71724&site=eds-live&scope=site.
- Said, Edward. "Arabs, Islam, and the Dogmas of the West." *Orientalism: A Reader*, edited by A. L. Macfie, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, 2000, pp. 104–105. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/10.3366/j.ctvxcrbwv.17.
- . "Latent and Manifest Orientalism." *Orientalism: A Reader*, edited by A. L. Macfie, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, 2000, pp. 111–114. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/10.3366/j.ctvxcrbwv.20.
- Shakespeare, William. *King Richard III*. Kindle ed., Amazon Prime.
- Sheridan, Sylva. "Progression through Regression: The Inferno of Daenerys Targaryen." *Canadian Review of American Studies*, vol. 49, no. 1, Jan. 2019, pp. 66–76. *EBSCOhost*, doi:10.3138/cras.49.1.006.

Tarnowski, Amy. “‘Yet I’m Still a Man’: Disability and Masculinity in George R.R. Martin’s A Song of Ice and Fire Series.” *Canadian Review of American Studies*, vol. 49, no. 1, Jan. 2019, pp. 77–98. *EBSCOhost*, doi:10.3138/cras.49.1.007.

Young, Joseph. “‘Enough about Whores’: Sexual Characterization in *A Song of Ice and Fire*.” *Mythlore*, no. 2, 2017, pp. 45. *EBSCOhost*, search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true &db=edsclr&AN=edsgcl.495035829&site=eds-live&scope=site.