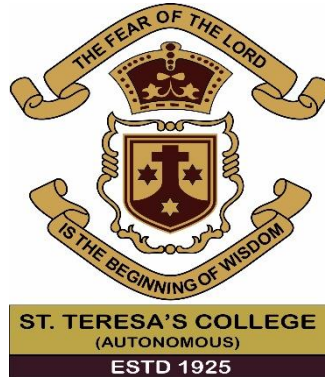


THE POLITICS OF ASCENSION IN *GAME OF THRONES*



*Project submitted to Mahatma Gandhi University in partial fulfilment of
the requirement for the degree of MASTER OF ARTS in
English Language and Literature*

By

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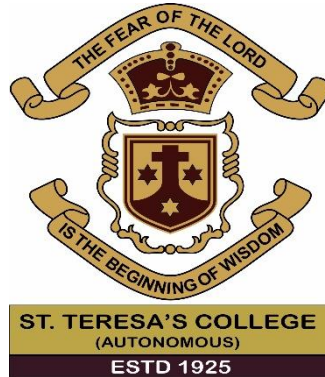
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I hereby declare that this dissertation entitled “The Politics of Ascension in *Game of Thrones*” is the record of bona fide work done by me under the guidance and supervision of, Dr. Jeena Ann Joseph, Assistant Professor, Department of English and Centre for Research, and that no part of the dissertation has been presented earlier for the award of any degree, diploma or any other similar title of recognition.

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CERTIFICATE

I hereby certify that this project entitled “The Politics of Ascension in *Game of Thrones*” is a record of bona fide work carried out by Chilka Baisil under my supervision and guidance.

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An Abstract of the Project Entitled
The Politics of Ascension in *Game of Thrones*

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The series, *Game of Thrones* presents a world dominated by greed and hunger for power that led to the downfall of the entire kingdom. The project tries to demonstrate the condition of getting caught into the vortex of political power systems, where people's characteristics amalgamate leading them to a point where they become unpredictable, which frequently results in a situation where female characters adopt male characteristics and vice versa for dominance and survival. The project aims to anatomize the constructed masculinities, feminist ideals and the subsequent instability that they cause when merged with power in *Game of Thrones*. Chapter 1 'Representation of Power in *Game of Thrones*' briefly examines how the various systems of power functioned in the medieval setting of *Game of Thrones* and looks at the many responses to these power systems. The emphasis in Chapter 2 'Men and Power' and Chapter 3 'Women and Power' is put on how male and female characters behave and act in such a power-driven culture, and how they respond to the idea of power. The project concludes reemphasising the argument that the adoption of hegemonic characteristics in power systems lead to its instability.

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Chilka Baisil

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Introduction

Game of Thrones is a fantasy television series directed by David Benioff and D.B Weiss. The series was adapted from the epic fantasy novel series, *A Song of Ice and Fire* by American author George R. R. Martin. The television adaptation was titled *Game of Thrones* after the first novel in Martin's series, *Game of Thrones*. While the novel series had seven books, the television adaptation had eight seasons. Each season consisted of 10 episodes each save the seventh and the eighth seasons with seven and six episodes respectively. The first season premiered on April 17, 2011, and the last concluded on May 19, 2019. The eight seasons, totalling 73 episodes, premiered on HBO and saw an increase in popularity by 2014 due to the expanding fanbase of *Game of Thrones* viewers. The entire series took eight years to be fully released, starting with the Season 1 Episode 1 titled *Winter is Coming* and ending with the Season 8 Episode titled *The Iron Throne*.

The plot chronicles the feuds and deep hidden hostility that lurk within Westeros' noble families, which is ignited by greed for the Iron Throne. House Lannister, House Stark, House Targaryen, House Arryn, House Baratheon, House Tully, House Greyjoy, House Martell, and House Tyrell are Westeros' nine noble families. The Houses are torn between the clamour of honours and duties to which they are obligated by principle and the broken promises and treachery that follow in order to gain power. The series contains a large number of characters, and with each episode, the number of characters decreases due to effects of treachery or warfare, while new characters are introduced. The world of Westeros reveals to the viewers what happens when competing needs for power, duty, and love collide.

The Battle of the Roses served as Martin's inspiration for writing *A Song of Ice and Fire*. The thirty-year conflict between House Lancaster and House York which resulted in a

lot of carnage, is comparable to *Game of Thrones*. The struggle for sovereignty of the English throne lasted from 1455 to 1485. The primary House names in *Game of Thrones*, House Lannister and House Stark, are extremely close to the House names Lancaster and York, which Martin chose. The Westerosi culture was a strikingly accurate portrayal of the European Middle Ages. The nine noble families of Westeros engaged in a conflict for dominance and power that resembled the War of the Roses. Martin drew inspiration for the work from other historical occurrences for major scenes like the Red Wedding and the concept of The Wall. The Black Dinner, a reference to a conflict between the Black Douglas clan and the Scottish King James II, served as a counterpart to the Red Wedding. The Earl of Douglas was invited to dinner by the king, William Crichton, and Alexander Livingston in exchange for peace and assurances of his safety, but during the course of the meal, the head of a black boar, a symbol of death, was placed on the table. Later, at Edinburgh Castle, the Earl and his brother were executed by beheading. The Red Wedding exhibits how deceit was covered up by hospitality, just like the Black Dinner did. The Wall in *Game of Thrones* is a huge ice wall that parallels Winterfell's northern border. Long ago, the Wall was originally constructed to protect the realm from White Walkers, but the people of the realm thought it served to keep the wildlings who lived beyond the Wall apart from their realm. The idea for The Wall was inspired by Hadrian's Wall, which was built in AD 122 on orders from Emperor Hadrian to separate the Roman province.

Three continents namely, Westeros in the west, Essos in the east, and Sothoryos in the south make up the world of *Game of Thrones*. The majority of the plot takes place on the continent of Westeros, also known as the Seven Kingdoms. The North, the Stormlands, the Vale, the Reach, the Iron Islands, the Westerlands, and Dorne are the seven kingdoms of Westeros. The capital of the Seven Kingdoms is King's Landing which houses the Iron Throne, upon which the King of the Seven Kingdoms establishes his dominance. Robert

Baratheon is the ruler of the Seven Kingdoms who reigns on the Iron Throne at the start of the television series. The Houses Stark in the North, Lannister in the Westerlands, Baratheon in the Stormlands, Arryn in the Vale, Tyrell in the Reach, Greyjoy in the Iron Islands, and Martell in Dorne are the Seven Kingdoms' Houses. With the help of their dragons, the House Targaryen conquered and united Westeros into the Seven Kingdoms, and they ruled until Robert's Rebellion. Only two Targaryens who managed to flee were spared by the combined force of the Houses that was directed on them, which completely decimated and massacred the Targaryen House. After Robert's Rebellion, Daenerys Targaryen and her brother Viserys were brought to Essos and they led an exiled existence as the only known Targaryens.

Jon Arryn, the Lord of The Eyrie and the Hand to King Robert Baratheon from House Arryn dies under dubious circumstance which leads to great confusion within the houses which is further heightened by a letter sent to the wife of the Lord of Winterfell, Catelyn Stark, from her sister who was the wife of Jon Arryn. The letter claimed that House Lannister had poisoned Jon Arryn, but the actual murderer had staged the letter for his own political gain. Confusion spread everywhere due to the letter and Jon Arryn's untimely demise. As a result, Eddard Stark was called on by Robert Baratheon to become his next hand resulting in him being away from Winterfell. Confusion spread everywhere due to the letter and Jon Arryn's untimely demise. The Seven Kingdoms are plunged into complete anarchy after Robert Baratheon's death as numerous candidates vie for the Iron Throne. Under Queen Cersei's regency, King Robert Baratheon was succeeded by Cersei's sons, King Jeffrey Baratheon and then King Tommen Baratheon. Later Cersei Lannister takes the Iron Throne and the Seven Kingdoms after Tommen Baratheon passes away. In the midst of the reigns of King Jeffrey, King Tommen, and Queen Cersei, there are a number of other characters vying for the Iron Throne and separate rule. These individuals include Stannis Baratheon and Renly Baratheon, who realised that Jeffrey and Tommen were not of Baratheon blood but

rather members of House Lannister after learning about the incest relationship between Cersei Lannister and her twin Jaimie Lannister. On the contrary, Robb Stark from Winterfell and Lord Balon Greyjoy from the Iron Islands, desired to free their existing kingdoms from the rest of the Seven Kingdoms and wanted a different self-governance structure for them.

In Essos, Viserys Targaryen attempts to assemble an army in an effort to reclaim the Iron Throne while planning retaliation against the Houses that caused Targaryen's downfall. Daenerys was still in her mother's womb when they fled to Essos, so she has no memories or knowledge of King's Landing or the Iron Throne aside from the tales her brother tells her. Viserys, who had memories of fleeing from Westeros, gave details about King's Landing and the Seven Kingdoms to his younger sister. With her character evolution and Viserys's death, Daenerys takes upon herself the task of reclaiming the Iron Throne. There are several threats to the Iron Throne like the White Walkers who try to destroy the entire realm by turning all living into the dead. In the power-driven society of Westeros, other power systems also come up in order to wield power in the power dynamic society of Westeros like that of the High Sparrows. The High Sparrow attempted to topple King's Landing's whole government in an effort to establish their own system of rule, which they upheld in the name of religion.

Eddard Stark, the Lord of Winterfell, his wife Catelyn Stark, and their children Robb Stark, Sansa Stark, Arya Stark, and Brandon Stark are the prominent characters from House Stark. The Stark family also included Jon Snow, who was identified as Eddard Stark's bastard son and was actually a Targaryen heir whose name was kept a secret out of concern for his safety given the state of the Targaryens under Robert Baratheon's rule. Tywin Lannister, the Lord of Lannister House, his children Jaimie and Cersei Lannister, and Tyrion Lannister are the main figures from House Lannister. King Jeffrey is a member of House Lannister as well. Characters like Sandor Clegane and Gregor Clegane serve the Lannister House. Robert, Renly, and Stannis are members of House Baratheon, which ascended to power following the

protracted Targaryen rule. Despite having brothers named Stannis and Renly, Robert Baratheon ended up ruling the Seven Kingdoms because he and Eddard Stark were the ones who waged war against the Targaryens, giving him the best claim to the throne among the rebels. With its fantasy features, the series serves as a doorway to a different universe in addition to portraying the hunger for power and supremacy. Myth, magic, sorcery, and supernatural creatures all exist. Beyond The Wall, in addition to the army of the dead known as the White Walkers, there are dire wolves, fairies, giants, and many more similar beings. The series' depiction of dragons is one of its standout elements; in fact, dragons come to be one of its primary defining characteristics. Dragons were always thought to be extinct, unlike other mythical and fantastical creatures, yet Daenerys is able to revive the three dragon eggs she is gifted. As a result, the battle for the Iron Throne dominates the whole series, leading to strained and contentious relationships between the rival Houses and the populace.

The project examines how, when male and female characters find themselves enmeshed in a political vortex, where the masculine traits, patriarchal traits and variations from it have a direct impact on the way the political power structures operate. The first chapter briefly examines how the systems of power functioned in the medieval setting of *Game of Thrones* and also looks at the many responses to these power systems. The emphasis in Chapter 2 and Chapter 3 is put on how male and female characters behave and act in such a power-driven culture, as well as how they respond to the idea of power. The project looks at the different types of masculinities and female characters presented in the series. The project aims to anatomize the constructed masculinities, feminist ideals and the subsequent damage that they cause when merged with power in *Game of Thrones* focusing on the main characters and their representation. The project tries to demonstrate the condition of getting caught into the vortex of political power-system; where people's characteristics amalgamate leading them

to a point that they become unpredictable, which frequently results in a situation where female characters adopt male characteristics and vice versa for dominance and survival. The project starts with examining the political power structures that are prevalent in *Game of Thrones* and how they tend to take advantage of the population for their own benefit. The project analyses the numerous masculine male characters in terms of how their masculine characteristics have an immediate effect on the power structure. Similar to this, the female characters are also examined in terms of their departure from the patriarchal conventions that were prevalent at the time. The project examines exceptional female characters that adopt the toxic masculine traits influenced by patriarchy and the power structures around them in order to become powerful. The project concludes reemphasising the argument that the adoption of hegemonic characteristics in power systems lead to its instability.

Chapter 1

Representation of Power in *Game of Thrones*

The possession of control and authority that allows a particular person or a group to exert influence over others is referred to as power. Hans Joachim Morgenthau, a famous figure in the study of international relations in his book *Politics Among Nations: A Struggle for Power and Peace* comments on power in the following manner, “When we speak of power, we mean man’s control over the minds and actions of other men. By political power we refer to the mutual relations of control among the holders of public authority and between the people at large” (13). The individuals who hold positions of power have the ability to alter even the existing popular notions and thereby possess the power to create impact on many others. Power and influence give an individual or a group the ability to shape societal norms, functions, and policies. According to Morgenthau, the relationship between those who wield political power and those they are exerting it over is psychological. When power is concentrated in the hands of a small number of people, antagonistic attitudes tend to result, which leads others to be controlled through domination, coercion, or force. In accordance with the idea of power politics in international relations, the division of power and national interests, or alterations to those distributions, are the primary drivers of conflict and system instability. The theory is usually concerned with an individual or an organisation engaging in politics with the intention of gaining more power, authority or influence which leads to instability. Such instability eventually results in atrocities, which frequently result in difficult conditions like wars.

World renowned philosopher and Genevan author, Jean Jacques Rousseau is best known for reinventing the social contract as an agreement between the individual and a group’s general will that is focused on the collective good and its representation in the

legislation of an ideal state. Alongside elements of the French Revolution and the advancement of contemporary political, economic, and educational ideas, his political theory influenced the progression of the Age of Enlightenment all throughout Europe. Rousseau also exposes that the foundation of the existing society is a false social contract that enshrines social inequalities and upholds the laws of the rich. Rousseau's book *The Social Contract* focuses on topics and issues relating to power. Rousseau aspires to protect the civil liberties that should come with social life by establishing a social contract. An agreement not to hurt one's fellow citizens ensures this freedom; however, this constraint in a way makes individuals become more ethical and practical. According to Rousseau's social contract theory, the governed should grant their consent before the government may take over and rule. This idea sharply contrasted against the monarchy's alleged divine authority.

The Iron Throne at King's Landing, High Sparrows' theocratic control, the supremacy of House Stark at Winterfell, Daenerys Targaryen's role as a liberator of slaves, the Lannister House and the catastrophic vigour of the White Walkers are the key power bearing structures that we encounter in *Game of Thrones*. By deconstructing each of these politically oriented structures, we observe that the Iron Throne in King's Landing is ultimately the focus of each of these power-driven structures. The power wielded by the person who adorns the Iron Throne is the ultimate driving force throughout the entire series. The various power holding houses betray, battle and kill to assert their claim over the Throne. According to Morgenthau, a dominant person who is exposed to power, will either try to hold onto their power, gain more power, or demonstrate their power. This is well illustrated by the way different characters presented in *Game of Thrones* at positions of power behave insatiably lustful for more power and dominance. Tywin Lannister, Daenerys Targaryen, Cersei Lannister, Stannis Baratheon, and Jeffrey Baratheon all desire for positions of greater power and influence than they already possess. They plot various ways to gain more power and influence. Tywin

Lannister has ambitious goals involving his children to gain more control. He marries off his daughter Cersei Lannister to Robert Baratheon after his victory over the Mad King Aerys to gain an upper hand in Westeros. Tywin also makes use of the immense wealth of Lannister House for his political gains. Cersei Lannister tries to consolidate her power by planning to rule as queen regent when her son Joffrey is crowned the King of the Seven Kingdoms. Stannis Baratheon even gives in to using black magic for his political purposes, while Daenerys Targaryen utilises her dragons as a tool to increase her power. Disarray and destruction are created by these characters in their pursuit for power.

Attempting to accumulate more power often results in terrible consequences, including imperialism. Theon Greyjoy deciding to seize control over Winterfell in the absence of Starks and Mance Rayder gaining control over the Wildlings beyond the wall as the “King beyond the Wall” are instances of imperialism that results from the desire for power. Morgenthau states that “This urge will not be satisfied so long as there remains anywhere a possible object of domination, that is, a politically organized group of men which by its very independence challenges the conqueror’s lust for power” (36). Until an individual or group challenges the rule of the people in power through revolt, the hunger for more power will not end. There are three different methods that often lead to imperialism mentioned in *Politics Among Nations: A Struggle for Power*. Military imperialism or imperialism instigated through military force is one among the three methods that can be seen in *Game of Thrones*. In the words of Morgenthau, military imperialism is defined as “The most obvious, the most ancient, and also the crudest form of imperialism is military conquest” (38).

When power is concentrated in the hands of a few, it leads to imbalance of power. Morgenthau mentions the theory of balance as, “The concept of ‘equilibrium’ as a synonym for ‘balance’ is commonly employed in many sciences – physics, biology, economics, sociology and political science. It signifies stability within a system composed of a number of

autonomous forces” (Morgenthau 125). Due to the concentration of power in the hands of a very small number of people, there are such imbalances in the world of *Game of Thrones*. Furthermore, mentioned by Morgenthau is the result of such imbalances, “Whenever the equilibrium is disturbed either by an outside force or by a change in one or the other elements composing the system, the system shows a tendency to re-establish either the original or a new equilibrium” (125 – 126). Characters like Varys, Ned Stark, and Tyrion Lannister concentrate on redressing the effects of the power disparity. The three characters worked to restore the shattered balance rather than seeking power for themselves. By handing the Iron Throne to Stannis Baratheon, Robert Baratheon's lawful successor, Ned seeks to restore stability to King's Landing. He also attempts to force Cersei and her illegitimate children to leave the Iron Throne and King's Landing. Varys continued to assist those in need while only considering the larger benefit of the realm. As Hand to King Jeffrey, Queen Daenerys and later Brandon Stark, Tyrion Lannister aspires to promote the betterment of the land and holds ideals that are essentially very different from those of his family. Nonetheless, Ned Stark is put to death, Varys is burned to death, and Tyrion endures numerous life-threatening situations while narrowly escaping death. These incidents show that balancing power is a very challenging task because there are always forces working against it.

In order to restore and preserve the equilibrium, Morgenthau offers a number of strategies, such as divide and rule, compensation, a decrease in the use of armaments, and alliances. But, all of these strategies are employed in *Game of Thrones'* dystopian setting to further upset the equilibrium. Because of the radically different manner in which the Seven Kingdoms function, the techniques provide worse results. Several characters, like Petyr Baelish, misuse the divide and rule technique to further skew the system. By poisoning John Arryn, Petyr Baelish triggers the collapse of the Seven Kingdoms as a whole. He further puts the blame on House Lannister creating discord between House Stark and Lannister leading to

catastrophe. House Lannister misused the compensation strategy to use their wealth as leverage to conceal all of their wrongdoings. Morgenthau's methods recommended reducing the use of weapons and artillery, but the series depicts a very different case situation. The creation and widespread production of lethal weapons like Wildfire and Qyburn's enormous crossbow named Scorpion, are depicted in the series. The show also includes the employment of dragons as a weapon to gain the upper hand and enormous battleships like Euron Greyjoy's Iron fleet. The fourth and last method Morgenthau offered was making alliances. In the series, alliances are shown to be fruitless. Margery Tyrell's wedding to Jeoffrey Baratheon resulted in the death of Jeoffrey. Myrcella, the daughter of Cersei, is dispatched to Dorne to wed Trystane Martell in an effort to ally with House Martell. As a result, Myrcella is killed by Ellaria Sand and her daughters. The Red Wedding in which House Stark members are massacred, is the outcome of House Stark and House Frey's effort to create an alliance. So, this imbalance of power permeated the entire system and the people of Westeros were the most severely affected by this power imbalance.

Rousseau states that the people or subjects are unable to come up with a proper ideal concept that determines a good ruler or a governing body, instead each individual has their own notions and beliefs about what constitutes a good ruler or ruling body.

Subjects praise public tranquillity, citizens praise individual liberty; some prefer security of possessions, others security of the person; some hold that the best government is the most severe, others that it is the mildest; some want crimes punished, others want them prevented; some want the state to be feared by its neighbours, others prefers that it should keep a low profile and be ignored; some are content as long as money circulates, others demand that the people have bread. (Rousseau 43)

But in *Game of Thrones*, the subjects are not only denied their idealised notions of a ruling class, they also end up being the most oppressed group in society because they are reduced to nothing more than tools for the benefit of those in authority and even viewed as less than human figures who are often at the mercy of the ones in power. The Iron Throne, which was constructed at the command of Aegon the Conqueror, the first of the Targaryen Kings, who conquered the seven separate kingdoms of Westeros and united them under his reign, is thrust with the absolute power of the realm. The Iron Throne is a gigantic, asymmetrical structure of sharp, twisting blades that is said to be built from about 1,000 swords that the various lords had surrendered to Aegon during the War of Conquest. The Iron Throne is a hard seat because the position carries with it so much power, managing it is never simple nevertheless, countless others continue to strive for it. Because of its relationship to the Iron Throne, the capital of the seven kingdoms, King's Landing, is one of the most crucial locations in the whole series. However, despite being the most well-known city, it is filthy and provides its inhabitants with subpar living circumstances. The king, on the other hand, leads a lavish lifestyle. The King and the people residing in the Red Keep or the palace are adequately fed even during times of famine and difficulty, while the populace suffers and sometimes even perishes. Aerys, the Mad King, intended to use Wildfire, a highly flammable and explosive liquid to exterminate all of his subjects. The pyromancer's comment to Tyrion during their conversation about wildfire that "The substance burns so hot it melts wood, stone, even steel and of course flesh" ("The Ghost of Harrenhal" 27:27) is indicative of King Aerys' cruelty. Robert Baratheon, who won at the Battle of the Trident was the next in line for rule. However, Robert's early zeal and determination quickly faded away, and he eventually became an ineffective king who detested his tasks. He became increasingly preoccupied with his own affairs, went hunting, and lived a life enjoying drinking and prostitutes. He excelled over the Mad King Aerys since he did not deliberately want to

damage or destroy his subjects, but his disregard for his obligations as King and to his subjects caused more harm than necessary. On the other side, his successor Joffrey Baratheon revealed himself to be a cruel and sadistic tyrant who, if not poisoned to death, would have wreaked widespread destruction upon Kings Landing. Therefore, the King of the Iron Throne and his subjects in Kings Landing have always had a tense relationship.

Another interaction between the ruler and the ruled is depicted in the High Sparrow's power and control asserted in the name of religion. Because of all the turbulent shifts in power, the continuing fear of war and terrible living conditions, the lower classes became disillusioned. The state of disillusionment helped in leading to High Sparrow's quick rise to prominence. When people have nowhere else to turn, religion is a potent weapon for attracting adherents, his statements like "The poor disgust us because they are us, shorn of our illusions. They show us what we would look like without our fine clothes. How we'd smell without perfume" ("The Broken Man" 7:40), had a huge impact upon the downtrodden people of King's Landing. Cersei gives the High Sparrow a position of authority and an army in the hopes that he would become an ally, but things quickly go wrong when it becomes clear that the Sparrows are prepared to take over in the name of religion and have already begun imposing severe laws. The High Sparrow grew to become the chosen High Septon and the head of the Sparrows, a religious group. The Faith Militant, an army under the High Sparrow to ensure that their laws are followed and sinners are punished, was revived under his administration, and during King Tommen's rule, they had a significant impact on the Iron Throne.

The social contract idea that Thomas Hobbes and Jean-Jacques Rousseau created is heavily incorporated into the feudal system of the Starks. In exchange for protection and support from Winterfell, the smaller houses swear allegiance to it. The Starks at Winterfell have a stronger connection with their people when compared to the situation between rulers

and ruled at King's Landing because House Stark is motivated by principles of honour and loyalty. Daenerys Targaryen from house Targaryen is known as the liberator of slaves. She has a completely different relationship with her subjects or followers unlike the case of King's Landing, High Sparrow and House Stark, as she tries to inspire and leave an impact on her people. The White Walkers from the series on the other hand can be seen as completely destructive figures who aim to destroy every living being that they come across. The White Walkers aim to entirely overthrow the cycle of power by attempting to take over humankind, in contrast to the Iron Throne, High Sparrow, and Daenerys Targaryen who all seek dominance through their positions of authority. This means that every power structure is distinctive in some regard, and this includes how they treat their people or subjects.

“A government contracts when it changes from the many to the few, i.e. from democracy to aristocracy, and from aristocracy to monarchy” (Rousseau 44). After Robert Baratheon's masterfully plotted murder at the hands of his wife Cersei Lannister, the Iron Throne ultimately falls entirely into the hands of House Lannister. From this point on, the Throne operates in accordance with the Lannister family's preferences, advancing their interests and objectives. In Westeros at the time, a democratic condition was never even conceivable, but after Robert Baratheon's death, the political climate drastically deteriorated as it became focused completely on the advantages of one single family. The Lannister House, represented by their insignia, a golden lion on a field of red, is unquestionably the most powerful family in Westeros. "Hear Me Roar!" is their house slogan. By custom, the Warden of the West is a Lannister. The Lannister House is the richest of the Great Houses owing to their gold mines, and furthermore, they are well remembered for generously repaying favours and fiercely harbouring resentment. As a result of their enormous wealth, "As rich as the Lannisters" (Martin 402) is a crystal-clear portrayal of their stronghold. And at the heart of this formidable force is Tywin Lannister, the head of House Lannister, a wise

political player who has the skills to grasp the big picture, establish allies without allowing past grudges to stand in the way, and understand that these relationships must be continuously maintained for his grandson Joffrey to retain the Iron Throne. Tywin Lannister played the *Game of Thrones* with expertise, rearranging the pieces to benefit his house. He also made choices for King Joffrey, using him, the king of Westeros as a passive pawn in his scheme. To a degree, this illustrates how the influence of riches and money may weaken and impair the monarchical order and contribute to its decline.

Westeros essentially seems to have a feudal society with a class of serfs who are subject to a local lord. However, it seems that several essential components of true feudalism are absent in Westeros. In particular, estate property and serfdom, as well as the little wealth of individual farmers and merchants that helped drive and fund feudalism in the actual world. Small capital was taken away from Westeros, and the number of traders kept declining. Only an extremely few amount of people hold the power and riches. Consequently, there is a significant gap between the affluent and the poor. According to Marxist views, the wealthy always enjoy the upper-class standards of life, just like the mighty Houses in Westeros, while the underprivileged continue to suffer in silence. Cersei Lannister had spent a huge sum of the capital's money to pay for the manufacture of Wildflower, a substance that spreads like fire causing destruction. Cersei had the potions made in large numbers to retaliate in case of strong retribution or revolt from the citizens. She used the people's money in order to fund her requirements while the people of the city remained hunger-struck. Powerful people constantly desire the poor to be under them in order to exercise their authority. Rousseau makes direct reference to this as follows:

A political sermoniser may tell them that, because the people's strength is their own, their chief interest is that the people should be prosperous, numerous and formidable; but there's no point in telling them this because

they know very well that it's not true! Their first personal interest is that the people should be weak, wretched, and unable to resist them. (36)

The famous French philosopher Michael Foucault's Lectures At The Collège De France was published in the book *The Birth of Biopolitics*. His lecture on 31 January 1979 mentions the art historian Bernard Berenson's statement "God knows I fear the destruction of the world by the atomic bomb, but there is at least one thing I fear as much, and that is the invasion of humanity by the state." Foucault further gives his views on the statement in the following manner:

I think this is the purest, clearest expression of a state-phobia one of the most constant features of which is its coupling with fear of the atomic bomb. The state and the atomic bomb, or rather the bomb than the state, or the state is no better than the bomb, or the state entails the bomb, or the bomb entails and necessarily calls for the state. (76)

The sentences above specifically address the plight of the citizens of the Seven Kingdoms who bear the costs of battles fought for power. They develop a resentment for the privileged people in power who have taken advantage of them, and this resentment manifests as state phobia. When such resentment towards the government and those in positions of authority is allowed to fester, it frequently results in violent outbursts that are difficult to stop or manage. When conditions become intolerable, the weaker or poorer group ultimately rebel against the dominant, as was the case when Daenerys, as a slave liberator, inspired the slaves of Meereen, the largest and most influential city in Slaver's Bay, to revolt. In order to arm the slave populace, Daenerys arranges for the weapons to be transported into Meereen. The slaves swiftly revolt, kill the slave owners, and seize control of the city.

In Season 2, when the populace of King's Landing begins to assault the Red Keep residents, a similar scenario occurs. People shout out at Jeoffrey stating "He's no king, he's a bastard!" ("The Old Gods and the New" 24:21). The crowds yelling for help and pleading, "Please your grace, we are hungry," gradually degenerate into complete mayhem, with the populace attacking the members of the royal family. The scene also shows Tyrion's horror as he witnesses a guy being torn to bits by the angry mob. The same is the case with the Wildlings outside the wall led by Mance Rayder. Essentially, they were Southerners who relocated to the North in search of freedom and a better quality of life, both of which the South was unable to offer. There were frequent violent clashes between the two groups as a result of The Wall's construction, which divided the two realms. The Night's Watch, who were stationed to guard The Wall, perceived the wildlings as an enemy. But when the long winter approaches, the threat of the White Walkers increases. This causes the wildlings under the leadership of Mance Rayder, a former Night's Watch member, to make every effort to revolt against and attack the Night's Watch in order to pass The Wall and escape the White Walkers. Such similar actions were put forth by citizens of Kings Landing as they too began expressing their animosity toward King Joffrey and queen regent Cersei. They even publicly rebelled by attacking the upper nobles, which made it difficult for the nobility to travel about the city for a period without special protection.

The Iron Throne of Westeros was at stake in the extensive War of the Five Kings. The Iron Throne of Westeros fought for by Joffrey Baratheon, Stannis Baratheon, and Renly Baratheon, while Robb Stark wanted the title of King in the North and Balon Greyjoy the title of King of the Iron Islands. Briefly said, it was a fight between five kings, as the name War of the Five Kings implies. Such power struggles and animosity between houses may frequently and readily escalate into devastating conflicts with a variety of horrific results. This may be

extremely devastating, especially if the populace rebels against those in authority. Such situations spiral out of control and result in enormous losses for all parties.

Morgenthau's book *Politics Among Nations: A Struggle for Power and Peace* discusses topics such as international morality of war, moral condemnation of war, and the protection of human lives, all of which can be linked to the various battles that took place in order to gain power. According to him, "War in our time has become total in four different respects: with respect to the fraction of population completely identified in its emotions and convictions with the wars of its nation, the fraction of the population participating in war, the fraction of the population affected by war, and the objective pursued by war" (287).

Wars are frequently fought to achieve the goals of the dominant, but the victims of war and those who suffer the most are always the civilian population. Therefore, issues of politics and power need to be handled carefully since even the smallest oversight or misunderstanding can start conflicts and cause destruction. Accumulation of power often drove people to war. The series presents the different Houses competing amongst each other for the Iron Throne, such wars go on for years, causing losses on both sides. When we analyse *Game of Thrones*, we observe that following Robert Baratheon's passing, the number of wars suddenly increased. Since Robert's accession to the Iron Throne, there had been no conflicts, and the kingdom had been at peace for a very long time. However, once Jeffrey took the throne, things started to get worse. When Jeffrey is depicted as a dictator and an illegitimate heir to the Throne, a struggle for power results. The same situation arises when Tommen and subsequently Cersei ascend to the throne. Therefore, the selection or nomination of the ideal ruler is crucial for a peaceful reign.

The series presents many battles like the Battle of the Bastards, Battle of Castle Black, Battle of the Blackwater, Battle of Winterfell, Battle of King's Landing, Robert's Rebellion

and many more. Each battle is waged in the conquest for power and leads to countless casualties, deaths and even economic loss. The people at the lowest level of the social structure are the worst hit in each case. War is a condition of armed conflict that can arise between nations or between groups residing within the same nation. Periods of war lead to frequent catastrophes and dreadful situations, which cause significant losses, including huge loss of life.

During wars there was no distinction between people, every individual belonging to the enemy state indirectly becomes an enemy irrespective of whether or not they are armed forces or involved in the war atrocities.

In those times war was considered a contest between all the inhabitants of the territories of the belligerent states. The enemy was less a state in the modern sense of a legal abstraction than all the individuals owing allegiance to a certain lord or a living within a certain territory. Thus every individual citizen of the enemy state became an enemy of every individual citizen on the other side. (Morgenthau 178)

The victor often executed men, women, and children or sold them into slavery without any negative moral repercussions. The people during war times faced inhuman conditions for things that are not directly connected to them. Individuals in positions of power frequently endanger the population when they start wars for their own gain or benefit. When Mad King Aerys realised Robert Baratheon would overthrow him, he planned to ignite King's Landing and its residents using Wildfire. He wanted to destroy the entire city because he didn't want anyone else to ascend to the throne but himself. At the Battle of King's Landing, Daenerys' army was ruthless against the Lannister troops who gave up their weapons and surrendered. The army also went about unleashing brutality upon the people of

King's Landing. By making everyone a victim, war assumes the position as ultimate villain in the political power system. Power in short was limited to the hands of a very few and these people took advantage of the weaker section beneath them for their own benefits. In the end, Daenerys Targaryen's Dragon, Drogon puts to flame and burns away the Iron Throne referring to the destructive forces that the Iron Throne puts into action.

The power to rule is always left in the hands of the Kings and Lords, giving the citizens no choice for themselves. But towards the end of the series in the Great Council, Tyrion suggests selecting for themselves a ruler since all those who had competed for the Throne were no longer alive. In the last episode of Season 8, Samwell Tarly brings in the suggestion of a democratic system "Why just us? We represent all the great houses, but whomever we choose, they won't just rule over lords and ladies. Maybe the decision about what's best for everyone should be left to, well, everyone" ("The Iron Throne" 45:43). But his suggestion is belittled and mocked as one of the council members says "Maybe we should give the dogs a vote as well" (45:43). Brandon Stark is chosen as the next ruler by the suggestion of Tyrion Lannister and joint approval of the council. With the council members selecting the ruler, they are one step closer to the idea of democracy.

Chapter 2

Men and Power

Masculinity describes men's actions, social positions, and relationships as well as the meanings attached to them. Unlike the term 'male', which emphasizes biological sex, the term masculinity accentuates gender. Therefore, studies of masculinities do not always have to focus on biological men. A study of these personalities reveals and pinpoints the impact of ideas of masculinity and the ensuing margins that they produce. The characters vary from the strong and mighty to the weakest of society. And because *Game of Thrones* is set in a period with ideals close to the medieval era, its stress on chivalry, honour, and conquest highlights the necessity for a strong masculine identity.

Studies concerning men is still a relatively young field of study in sociology, and it is an even more recent field of study in literature. Men's studies lack the type of appeal enjoyed by studies on women. This is because, in contrast to women's studies and feminist theory, which have a tremendously compelling demand given that women have been marginalized, subjugated, and owned to the point that they are no longer part of the public conversation. One of the first academics to focus on men's studies was Harry Brod. Harry Brod in his *The Case for Men's Studies* demonstrates how reality falls short in studies regarding men and their behaviours, "While women have been obscured from our vision by being too much in the background, men have been obscured from our vision by being too much in the foreground" (Brod 41).

The most significant theory in the area concerning men and masculinities is that of the Australian sociologist Raewyn Connell. It has had a significant influence on the subject of

gender studies as well as being adopted by a variety of other academic fields. Raewyn Connell in her book *Masculinities* states that:

All societies have cultural accounts of gender, but not all have the concept of 'masculinity'. In its modern usage the term assumes that one's behaviour results from the type of person one is. That is to say, an unmasculine person would behave differently: being peaceful rather than violent, conciliatory rather than dominating, hardly able to kick a football, uninterested in sexual conquest, and so forth. This conception presupposes a belief in individual difference and personal agency. (67)

Masculinity is directly dependent on one's actions and choices, it is what one does and chooses to do. It is thus a character's actions that makes or defines them as masculine or not. In *Game of Thrones*, a variety of characters are shown, each with features and values that range from one extreme to the polar opposite. The actions of many characters like Arya Stark, Cersei Lannister, Tywin Lannister, Bran Stark and Jaimie Lannister played a crucial role in their end result. But instead, the people are forced to normalize and accept already set up notions rather than the normal way of life, which denies living according to one's own choice which forces the adhering to fixed standards that are to define them. People in such conditions often present a fake alternate self to the society to match up to the expectations and ideals that are wanted of them.

Connell in her book *Masculinities* discusses the relationships among various masculinities as hegemony, subordination, complicity, and marginalisation. Even while it is always males who benefit from patriarchy, not all men have the same access to these benefits, which leads to this separation based on masculinity. One section is always favoured over the other which results in an uneven distribution. The Hegemonic and Marginalized masculinities

sit at the two extreme extremities of the spectrum. Raewyn Connell defines hegemonic masculinity as follows in her book:

Hegemonic masculinity can be defined as the configuration of gender practice which embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of the legitimacy of patriarchy, which guarantees (or is taken to guarantee) the dominant position of men and the subordination of women. (77)

Hegemonic, the dominant form of the four, rests above the cycle of power. Men's dominance over women as well as the dominance of some men over other men are both actions that differentiate hegemonic masculinity from the rest, which is characterised by specific attitudes and behaviours that men engage in that continue to reinforce societal inequalities. The hegemonic figures oppress and dominate the other groups and frequently occupy powerful positions in society. Even though Lord Petyr Baelish is a major player who excels at power plays and is also known as Little Finger, he cannot be regarded as a hegemonic figure since he played his game rather cunningly in the guise of a shadow. On the other side, a hegemonic person places enormous value on demonstrating their might and influence, much as Ser Gregor Clegane, also known as the mountain. He represents House Clegane. He also serves as House Lannister's bannerman. Gregor Clegane is said to be a very tall man, thus the moniker "the mountain" was given to him. Gregor is renowned for both his ruthlessness and fighting skill. Because of his adherence to hegemonic ideologies, Gregor enjoys a great level of privilege; he never faced repercussions for abusing his brother, even though it was rumoured that he had also murdered his father, sister, and first two spouses. Despite this, he still received a knighthood and was made one of the Lannister House's bannermen. This is a powerful reflection of how the inhabitants of the Seven Kingdoms favour violence and aggression above weakness. Another person who merits attention is Ser Jaimie Lannister, also known as the King slayer. Although he earned a poor reputation by

killing the King that he had promised to guard, exhibiting a behaviour that is quite different from what the public expects of a Kings guard, he never truly suffered the repercussions for it and is still able to benefit from his hegemonic masculinity. He was even able to maintain his status as a Kingsguard. Thus, it may be said that hegemonic masculinity's primary tenets are strength and heroism. Even if someone is not being truthful, he or she will still be able to benefit from the privilege of hegemonic masculinity if they possess courage and power. This makes the power possessed by the hegemonic part more obvious. However, because political power is our primary concern, the hegemonic personalities we analyse will be those who hold powerful positions of control and influence in Westeros.

Lord Tywin Lannister, Khal Drogo from the Dothraki Tribe, Robert Baratheon, Stannis Baratheon and Jeoffrey Baratheon are the dominant hegemonic personalities portrayed in *Game of Thrones*. These five characters fall under the category Morgenthau says powerful people try to accumulate more power. One of the series' greatest patriarchs is the head of House Lannister, Tywin Lannister, is the epitome of hegemonic masculinity. Tywin's efforts are driven by a desire to preserve the family name and the house honour for countless future generations. He is an extremely wealthy ruler who will stop at nothing to gain and maintain power. He is powerful enough to assemble one of Westeros's most powerful armies, bend rules and make it his own to benefit his interests. He is a character who truly lives up to the sigil of his house, he had both the strength and majesty of a lion. He served as the Mad King's hand and headed one of the most feared and powerful households in the realm. He preferred his son Jaimie Lannister over his daughter Cersei and dwarf son Tyrion, which was one of his biggest flaws when it came to his connection with his three children. He believed Cersei was unsuited to rule because she is too harsh and lacks loyalty. Most of her acquaintances detest her guts. A successful leader must be feared and adored. Even while her father may not have been widely adored, he was nevertheless well esteemed and respected.

When he was still the hand of the Mad King Aerys, many people believed he was the king. Tywin Lannister hates Tyrion for his dwarf appearance and sees him as a monster, a major flaw for his otherwise perfect Lannister House. Tywin holds him responsible for his wife's demise as she died while giving birth to him. Although Tywin recognises Tyrion's potential for a significant job and appoints him as the Hand of King Joffrey, they have no love or bond that is generally seen between a parent and child. In fact, if Tyrion died, Tywin would be a lot happier. He was extremely proud of House Lannister and wanted his kids to maintain the reputation of the house by living up to the standards. And he committed several violent and heinous acts against the underprivileged while using the name of his house. The Lannister men were referred to as the Red Cloaks and, like Tywin and the rest of the family, they radiated dread among the community. One of his most heinous acts is The Red Wedding, in which he conspires with Walder Frey and Roose Bolton to betray the Starks. The Red Wedding is referred to as one of the most brutal and heart-breaking incidents in the whole series, leaving the audience stunned. "The Lannisters send their regards [Roose stabs Robb through the heart while Catelyn looks on in despair]" ("The Rains of Castamere" 47:26).

Being a hegemonic figure himself, he preferred his golden child Jaimie Lannister who possessed the same hegemonic qualities. He despises the notion of a woman in power far more than he despises Tyrion, this is evident when he dismisses Cersei and does not trust her to make rational decisions. His demise highlights his influence and authority since Cersei is unsure of what to do and her actions start to backfire. In other words, following his passing, the Lannister control over the Iron Throne begins to waver.

The savage Dothraki nomads are led by the formidable Khal or warlord Drogo. He is promised Daenerys Targaryen at the start of the *Game of Thrones* by her brother Viserys Targaryen. He is portrayed with masculine ideals and is a tall and powerful warlord who is described as a killing machine. He wears his hair a long braid that reaches his thighs and is

decorated with small bells to signify his rank as an unconquered chieftain among the Dothraki. As the leader of his entire clan, he is portrayed as a powerful hegemonic character akin to Tywin Lannister. He exercises his domination over the others because, as the Khal of the tribe, he has the primary authority and power. Moreover, he leads his men in battles, frequently plundering and pillaging villages that they come across. The villages they encounter are completely destroyed, the males are slain, the women are raped and taken as slaves, and other goods are also seized. Both Drogo and Tywin have similar views about women, Drogo views women as insignificant things that must be dominated. “I will kill the men in the iron suits and tear down their stone houses. I will rape their women, take their children as slaves, and bring their broken gods back to Vaes Dothrak to bow down beneath the Mother of Mountains” (“You Win or You Die” 49:28), clearly depicts Drogo’s conception of women as mere possessions. Drogo sees women as a commodity to men and the Dothraki tribe see the rape of women after they win as a very natural process. Hence both Tywin and Drogo embody the idea of dominating over women.

Robert Baratheon is another hegemonic character presented in *Game of Thrones*. Rhaegar Targaryen was defeated by Robert Baratheon in the Battle of the Trident, ending the lengthy Targaryen rule over King's Landing. He succeeded Mad King Aerys as the next monarch to sit on the Iron Throne. He enjoyed an extremely powerful position in the power structure, much like typical hegemonic characters. He took great delight in his well-known triumph at the Trident, just as hegemonic figures do when they seek to make their victories and accomplishments widely known. He was tall and in good condition when he was a young war hero but after becoming king, his flame vanished. He had an estranged relationship with his wife Cersei Lannister and often sought the company of prostitutes, since he was the king there was nobody stopping him. “What her father did to your family, that was unspeakable. What Rhaegar Targaryen did to your sister, the woman I loved. I’ll kill every Targaryen I get

my hands on” (“The Kingsroad” 22). These lines depict how Robert was blinded by his hegemonic ideals that he even set out to kill a young Daenerys. Robert had waged the rebellion against the Targaryens when he found out Lyanna Stark had been taken away by Rhagar Targaryen. Despite the fact that Lyanna and Rhaegar were in love with each other, Robert couldn't accept Lyanna with another man. It was his traits as a hegemonic male that drove him to launch the rebellion.

Another notable hegemonic character is his younger brother Stannis Baratheon, one of the five kings in the War of the Five Kings. He declared himself to be the King of Westeros and exerted all of his power to take the position and throne for himself. He was a strong figure who, if he had been successful in the Battle of Blackwater, might have completely altered the course of the Game of Thrones. He was so determined to be on the Iron Throne that he even offered the fire lord his own daughter as a sacrifice and killed his younger brother Renly Baratheon using dark magic. He had high aspirations but was deluded by the Iron Throne, which by the rules of inheritance was to be his. He was regarded as the most terrifying of the Baratheon brothers throughout all of Westeros. The least friendly of the Baratheon brothers yet a master of strategy and battle, Stannis is the most terrifying. Stannis is a capable commander and strategist. He is also a cruel warrior and an effective leader. During the Greyjoy Rebellion, Stannis was able to match the Ironborn at the height of their dominance, destroying Victarion Greyjoy in open combat at Fair Isle. Stannis is a harsh, merciless, and brutally intransigent man who has never really learned to flatter or submit, openly expressing his ideas and instinctively defying anyone who would argue with him. Although he doesn't engage in outright cruelty, he is entirely capable of it.

Jeffrey Baratheon who becomes King after Robert Baratheon also turns out to possess the evils of hegemonic masculinity. He exhibits sadistic traits, gaining joy out of torturing others. Jeffrey orders the execution of all of Robert Baratheon's bastard offspring

so that they won't pose a danger to his reign. He orders the execution of several kids who have committed no sin whatsoever. He acts similar to King Herod, who ordered the killing of all the newborns in Bethlehem in an effort to get rid of the baby Jesus. Jeffrey develops into a brutal leader akin to King Herod, who put an end to anybody who disagreed with him. Jeffrey's rule turned King's Landing into a condition of state phobia where the citizens are put in conditions where they are pressurized to the point that they revolt back.

One thing unites all of the dominant hegemonic power holding figures, they invariably pass away tragically. Tywin Lannister is killed by his dwarf son Tyrion Lannister, that too when he is in the bathroom, when he least expects it. Ironically the Head of Lannister House does not die heroically in a battlefield but is killed by his own son in his bathroom depicting how the powerful died helpless. Khal Drogo on the other hand is led to his death bed by a single mortal wound which is further worsened by Mirri Maz Duur, a *maegi* - a practitioner of blood magic. Drogo the great warlord ultimately lies at mercy in the hands of a female victim of his pillage which leads to his demise depicting how the strong died of a scar. As in the case of Robert Baratheon, the victor at the Battle of the Trident, is killed in a hunting accident by a wild boar due to Cersei's secretive planning. Robert ironically dies due to the two things he loves – hunting and drinking. Stannis is defeated in battle with the Boltons and is killed at the hands of Brienne of Tarth who avenges the death of Renly Baratheon. Jeffrey is poisoned to death at his wedding to Margery Tyrell.

Presented at the extreme opposite side of the Hegemonic masculinity is the marginalized masculinity. Raewyn Connell states that “Marginalization is always relative to the authorization of the hegemonic masculinity of the dominant group” (80). *Marginalized Masculinities* addresses how men in vulnerable situations see and experience their masculinities in various nations and under different social circumstances. Generally, the audience and the readers' favourite or favoured characters are those who represent

marginalised sections of the society. Raewyn Connell's lines demonstrate that the extent of marginalisation experienced by a marginal character may be strongly associated with the influence of the hegemonic section. Jon Snow, Tyrion Lannister, Samwell Tarly, and Brandon Stark are among the figures considered under marginalised masculinities. All of these characters were forced away from the mainstream in some sense.

From his birth to existence at Winterfell, Jon Snow was labelled as a bastard. Snow is a term given to bastard children born at Winterfell; this was a scar that Jon carried with him throughout his youth in Winterfell. Being labelled a bastard held him back in many ways, and he was considered a misfit. Jon was never completely welcomed in Winterfell; his stepmother, Catelyn Stark, treated him with hatred because he was living proof of her husband's infidelity. He never felt like a member of the Stark family or belonged at Winterfell. As a result, he decides to take the black and join the Night's Watch at The Wall. He was strongly inspired by Ned's brother, Benjen Stark, who was also a Night's Watch sworn brother. One of the reasons that he decided that joining the Night's Watch would be the ideal decision was because there was no division based on one's status and position in society. The past of a person has no bearing on the Night's Watch since members of the Night's Watch are either banished from their lands as punishment for committing heinous crimes or, as in the case of Jon Snow, take the black of their own will. He envisioned the Night's Watch as a heroic fort where he could stand tall and make a reputation for himself without the stigma of being a bastard. "Even a bastard could rise high in the Night's Watch (Martin 502)", these lines depict the condition of bastard children and at the same time provides hope to Jon. Furthermore, he viewed his uncle Benjen Stark as a role model and desired to follow his footsteps, therefore he chooses the black when Eddard Stark becomes the King's hand in Westeros and leaves Winterfell. However, after he reaches The Wall, he realises that his perfect picture of the Night's Watch is nothing but dust since divides exist.

Benjen, his uncle, was a ranger. Jon, on the other hand, was appointed to be Lord Commander Mormont's steward. Despite his extensive training and sword expertise, he was not chosen as a ranger, which disappointed Jon because he had wanted to find his uncle Benjen, who had gone missing. With each incident that passes, Jon gradually begins to ascend higher. He becomes a ranger, travels outside the wall, and even gains the trust of the wildlings. Jon Snow gradually emerges and breaks free from the chains, continuing to rise with people supporting and looking up to him. He successfully repels the wildlings' onslaught on the wall and is appointed as the 998th Lord Commander of the Night's Watch.

Jon has a striking similarity to the hegemonic characters since he is skilled at wielding swords and riding horses, both of which are required of males in the Seven Kingdoms. Men who achieve in these disciplines are praised, while those who do not are ostracised. However, unlike Jaime Lannister and Gregor Clegane, who gain by embodying hegemonic masculinity, Jon Snow does not because of his social position. When men participate in combat, they wear their house sigil in their surcoats, whereas bastards are not given a sigil. Even women who are forbidden from warfare have their own insignia, but an illegitimate child on the other hand are not provided sigils. He understands that he will never contribute to anything because of his status as a bastard. As a result, he insists on joining the Night's Watch, the military organisation that defends the Wall, because the majority of the recruits are social misfits. Jon becomes a more powerful figure after joining the Night's Watch than he was when living at Winterfell as a bastard. His notable wins include those over Ramsay Bolton and the White Walkers. Every good consequence of his is swiftly followed by a terrible aftermath. In Season 5, he is slain by his fellow Night Watch brethren, but he is brought back to life by Melisandre, a Red Priestess. This comes soon after his elevation to Lord Commander and victory over the wildlings. Similarly, the bombshell revelation that Jon was actually Aegon Targaryen, the son of Rhaegar Targaryen and Lyanna Stark, is lessened in the end. This

unexpected discovery elevates him from an illegitimate successor to that of the true heir to the Iron Throne. Jon Snow was offered the title as both the King in the North and also the King to the Iron Throne but unlike the hegemonic masculine characters that drive themselves to disaster for the throne, he had no intention of claiming the Iron Throne. Despite his immense love for Daenerys, Jon murders her to keep her from committing further crimes and jeopardizing humanity. Even after being the real heir to the Iron Throne, Jon is taken to The Wall once more at the end of Season 8. However, unlike the first time now he is exiled this time as a punishment for the killing of Daenerys Targaryen. As the series concludes, Jon goes beyond The Wall to dwell among the wildlings, isolating himself from the world he knows.

Tyrion Lannister is Tywin Lannister's dwarf son. Being born as a dwarf disadvantaged him in many ways, and he was given several aliases such as Beast, Half man, and The Imp. His father and sister regarded him as a flaw or defect in their family and even blamed him for his mother's death, as she died while giving birth to him. Despite his appearance, he was extremely intelligent and scholarly, which thrust him in the forefront. Due to his physical limitations, he was neither well-versed in warfare nor in the chivalrous ideals that men were expected to follow. Throughout his life as a Lannister, he was constantly compared to his brother Jaime Lannister. "My brother has his sword, and I have my mind" ("Kings Road" 27:03), these lines by Tyrion portrays how he had to excel in his intellect to match up to his very favoured and skilled brother. He would have been in a lot worse predicament if he had been born as a commoner. His Lannister surname did support him to live a better life than other dwarfs. The hatred between the Starks and the Lannisters was inflamed further when Catelyn Stark kidnapped Tyrion. Tywin Lannister tried all in his power to bring Tyrion back, but it wasn't out of fatherly love for Tyrion, but because Tyrion was from House Lannister and he needed to retain the House name and honour. He through these lines highlights how he cared little for his son when compared to his House, "The

honour of our House was at stake. I had no choice but to ride. No man sheds Lannister blood with impunity” (Martin 591). On the other hand, Jaimie's imprisonment by the Starks shattered Tywin since Jaimie was his golden child. Tyrion is less favoured when compared to his King slayer brother, Jaimie Lannister. Tyrion led a life always focusing on the good and morally right and yet his oath breaker brother is at a better advantage.

Tyrion is one of those characters that both the public and readers anticipated to die soon because his physique stands no chance in the tough world, yet he ends up being a survivor of the *Game of Thrones* as well as a beloved character. He meets and overcomes several challenges throughout his life. He is taken hostage to The Eyrie of House Arryn and earns his freedom by requesting a Trial by Combat, a form of Germanic law that settles allegations in the absence of testimony or a confession. Tyrion designs a horse saddle for Brandon Stark, allowing him to ride horses despite his disability, and he even offers strength to Jon Snow, a downtrodden character like himself. Later, he is appointed as King Jeffrey's hand. As the King's hand, he attempts to resurrect the nearly destroyed Kingdom and even defeats Stannis Baratheon in the Battle of the Blackwater with his intellect and planning. Tyrion was a figure that was despised by his own family, with the exception of his brother Jaimie. Cersei blindly believes that her son Jeffrey was poisoned to death by Tyrion and Tywin sees this as a good opportunity to get rid of him depicting the father son feud which culminates in Tyrion killing his father. Him killing his father might be interpreted as an act of self-liberation from the constraints that bind him to the Lannister house. Tyrion is falsely accused for the attempt to kill Bran and also for the murder of Jeffrey. Tyrion is the only figure who survives as a king's hand and later also becomes a queen's hand, hand to Daenerys Targaryen and later hand to Brandon Stark when the series concludes. Tyrion being appointed as the King's hand not once, not twice, but three times demonstrates how important he is to the Seven Kingdoms to be granted the job of advising the King on all matters. He

counsels Daenerys and guides her wisely. However, when he is imprisoned for betrayal again in the last season, he realises that Daenerys will bring more harm than good and therefore encourages Jon Snow to do what is right. His words, “You’ve been up there, on a dragon’s back, you’ve had that power. Would you have burned the city down?” to which Jon replies “I don’t know”. Tyrion makes Jon understand exactly what Daenerys has become through his words, “You won’t say because you don’t want to betray her but you know” (“The Iron Throne” 22:59). Despite being a minor figure, he saw through the necessary government system and identified Brandon Stark as the rightful ruler of King's Landing for a better future.

Samwell Tarly is another marginalized character. Initially, he lacks the strength and heroism of the other men and is presented as a timid figure by George R.R Martin. Because the times expected males to demonstrate courage and power, his father, Lord Randyll Tarly, was dissatisfied with his son. Sam's connection with his father is similar to Tyrion's relationship with his father. Randyll Tarly, just like Tywin Lannister, preferred his other son, Dickon Tarly, over Sam. His father has forcefully sent Sam to The Wall so that Dickon could take over after his father. Sam was threatened to either join the Night's Watch or face death in the form of a hunting accident. His father never cared to send him to the Citadel where he could enjoy learning, which was something that he loved but rather chose The Wall because all he wanted was to get rid of his cowardly elder son. Even at The Wall he is mocked and ridiculed, but is saved by Jon Snow, forging an enduring relationship between the two. However, Sam's character undergoes a dramatic metamorphosis after meeting Gilly, with whom he falls in love. Despite being portrayed as a coward, Sam is the series' first human to slay a White Walker. Later on, he is seen to do everything, even ready to get killed for the sake of Gilly and her baby, similar to how knights in mediaeval times were expected to look after and safeguard ladies. It is once again Sam who like Tyrion understands the perils of monarchy and succession, and hence in the last episode of season 8, Samwell Tarly proposes

a democratic system - "Why just us?", Sam approaches the council "We represent all the great houses, but whomever we choose, they won't just rule over lords and ladies. Maybe the decision about what's best for everyone should be left to, well, everyone" ("The Iron Throne" 46:09). However, his offer is dismissed and insulted by one of the council members. This shows how deeply patriarchy has infiltrated the people, to the point that they find it difficult to accept another type of administration despite everything they have been through.

Brandon Stark, Eddard Stark's son, grew up in Winterfell. He was tremendously inspired by his father and his ideals of honour and chivalry, hence he aspired to be a noble knight. He wanted to join The Kingsguard and regarded Jaimie Lannister as an excellent knight. He always dreamt of Knighthood and never wanted to be a ruler. They are said to be the finest and most proficient fighters in all of Westeros. Their responsibility is to keep the king and his family safe at all times. Unfortunately, his dreams are shattered by Jaimie Lannister, whom he regards as the best knight. When Bran witnesses Jaimie and Cersei's incest, Jaimie tosses him out a tower window. Bran becomes a cripple as a result of the accident and is unable to pursue his dreams and instead becomes the polar opposite of what he intended to be. Bran is unable to walk after the accident and must be carried about by Hodor, let alone dream of being a knight. There are instances of him wanting to play around and even train like the boys his age but is unable to do so.

Brandon Stark has been a victim of the *Game of Thrones* his whole life. His honourable father Eddard Stark is falsely accused as a traitor and is executed, Theon Greyjoy who was like a brother to him takes over his family's house and destroys the Stark family name. His brother Rob Stark and mother Catelyn Stark were assassinated in the most dishonourable way conceivable in Westeros, slaughtered in the infamous Red Wedding. His elder sister, Sansa Stark is used by Petyr Baelish as a pawn in order to achieve his political goals. Exiled and slain for leadership of the Night's Watch, Jon Snow, his bastard brother. His younger sibling,

Rickon Stark was slain by Ramsay Bolton. His younger sister Arya Stark, was forced to give up her childhood in order to become a cold-blooded assassin to avenge her family's wrongful deaths. Thousands of people were killed at every step, all in pursuit of power and the Iron Throne. Bran witnessed everything since he was the Three Eyed Raven, he can see the past, present, and future. Despite being a marginal masculine character due to his physical disability, he survives till the end even when powerful and mighty fell. He transcends his crippled self and becomes the next Three Eyed Raven and in the end is made the ruler of the Seven Kingdoms. Sansa comments ``Bran has no interest in ruling and he can't father children'' (``The Iron Throne'' 49:3) to which Tyrion replies ``Good. Sons of kings can be cruel and stupid, as you well know. He will never torment us'' (49:3). Tyrion Lannister names him as the best candidate to rule the Seven Kingdoms because Bran never harboured the desire for power and since he with him would end the hierarchical succession to the throne where power might be misused and Tyrion's decision is jointly agreed upon.

The marginalised male figures are markedly different from their hegemonic counterparts. The hegemonic personalities are imbued with the goal of governing and taking over, whilst the marginalised characters in the narrative want to enhance and contribute to make changes in the realm. Characters portraying hegemonic masculinity like Tywin Lannister, Khal Drogo, Robert Baratheon, Stannis Baratheon, and even Eddard Stark were all deposed from their magnificent and powerful positions to their graves. This demonstrates that hegemonic masculine ideas paired with politics inevitably result in disaster. Hegemonic masculine characters in a way turn toxic and hence makes the political structure and system unstable, never actually capable of bringing peace and prosperity to the land. On the other hand, characters like Jon Snow, Tyrion Lannister and Samwell Tarly despite being marginal masculinities survive till the end and even turn out to be in better positions than how they started, these characters prospered in the long run.

The series also depicts characters who try to bring peace and better stability to King's Landing. Tyrion Lannister, Ned Stark and Varys are the three characters who try to uplift the condition of the Kingdoms and its people. Characters that comprehend realpolitik are able to succeed throughout the entire series while those who don't are mercilessly destroyed. Perhaps one of the only positive power-holding hegemonic characters in the series is Eddard Stark. He serves as Lord of Winterfell, Warden of the North, and leader of House Stark. King Robert Baratheon, with whom he grew up, is a close confidant of his. Even though he had little interest in the position, he was appointed King Robert Baratheon's hand. Ned desired to stay away from King's Landing and spend his days at Winterfell in peace, distant from the South's lustful and greedy inhabitants. Despite being a leader figure, he was never eager to amass greater power; instead, he was obsessed with the principles of honour. At King's Landing after Robert Baratheon's death, he strives to put things back in place. Ned also loses his chance to gain the upper hand by telling Cersei beforehand that he intended to capture and imprison her and as a result, Cersei organises her own soldiers and seizes control of Ned and imprisons him. Ned being an honourable man didn't want Cersei and her illegitimate children in danger and hence warns her to flee before he takes action but Cersei exploits Ned's weakness in behaving honestly. There is no middle ground in the *Game of Thrones*; you either play to win, as Cersei was doing, or you lose. Varys upon seeing Ned falsely charged as a traitor says that, "You are an honest and honourable man, Lord Eddard. Ofttimes, I forget that. I have met so few of them in my life ... When I see what honesty and honour have won you, I understand why" (Martin 611). Petyr Baelish also comments on Ned's honour and honesty as "You wear your honour like a suit of armour, Stark. You think it keeps you safe, but all it does is weigh you down and make it hard for you to move" (Martin 496). The honourable Eddard Stark is labelled as a traitor and is executed at the Sept of Baelor under King Joffrey's commands, sadly the honourable died being named as a traitor.

Varys, the eunuch is yet another character that tries to protect the realm. Being an asexual character, he possesses neither masculine nor feminine characters. Varys solely aims at protecting the realm as he moves from supporting one ruler to another. Varys stands with Robert Baratheon against Mad King Aerys when he turns destructive. Later he supports Robert Baratheon and even uses his spies to plan an attack on Daenerys Targaryen when she was married to Khal Drogo, sensing her as a possible threat. Robert Baratheon's death and the revelation that Jeffrey is not the actual heir to the throne makes him shift his support to Daenerys Targaryen. Later when he realises that Daenerys will also rise in power to resemble her father, he decides to support Jon Snow as the rightful claim to the Iron Throne. But in the end, he is ordered to be executed by Daenerys for betraying her.

These characters serve as the best illustration of a character that aims for the betterment of the realm. On the stark opposite pole is Petyr Baelish. Ever since Petyr Baelish planted his seeds and incited a fight between the Lannister House and the Stark House, the fall of the Iron Throne was already predetermined. Petyr Baelish performed admirably in *Game of Thrones*, portraying a mysterious figure that viewers or one of the other characters might make out to a certain extent. He created a state of disarray and disorder while covertly making plans to seize the Throne. But in reality, despite his meticulous planning and plotting, he was executed by Arya Stark in Season 7 when all of his terrible actions were spelled out and revealed. Therefore, it becomes crucial to consider with whom power will reside, i.e., the King or Queen of the Iron Throne should be someone who appreciates the responsibility of upholding peace and prosperity of the realm rather than seizing the chance to abuse authority for their own ulterior gains or motives.

Chapter 3

Women and Power

The setting of the storyline in the medieval period results in the strong division of the society based on hierarchy and patriarchy. The world of *Game of Thrones* is deeply influenced by feudalism, patriarchy and misogyny. As a result of which men are the ones in power, playing the important roles of the King, Lords, and Knights embarked with the task of protecting the realm. Women on the other hand are presented as mere objects of possession often valued only for their sexuality. Gender is one amongst the prominent themes presented, as the entire series revolves around the various gender roles and the power it holds. It is always the men who enjoy the advantages of patriarchy. Women are forced to adhere to stringent standards and conventions that represent femininity and feminine behaviour. Simone de Beauvoir in her book *The Second Sex* states that “One is not born, but rather becomes, woman. No biological, psychic, or economic destiny defines the figure that the human female takes on in society; it is civilization as a whole that elaborates this intermediary product between the male and the eunuch that is called feminine” (330). The idea of being feminine is associated with the way one acts and behaves.

Women in the *Game of Thrones* lived a tough life, they were not given opportunities and were forced into the backgrounds. Even the condition of their lives was pathetic, this is clearly depicted by how the Dothraki tribe treat their women as nothing more than mere accessories. The lines from Raewyn Connell’s *Masculinities*, “Intimidation of women ranges across the spectrum from wolf-whistling in the street, to office harassment, to rape and domestic assault, to murder by a woman's patriarchal 'owner', such as a separated husband” (83) is directly reflected even in the Medieval *Game of Thrones* setting. Arya Stark after her father’s execution is disguised as a boy portraying the hostile conditions faced by women

during the time. She is named as Arya the orphan boy by Yoren, a member of the Night's Watch, he also further warns her to maintain her female identity hidden. Sansa Stark is badly treated by Jeffrey during his reign as the King, he even makes his knights beat her up for his entertainment to an extent that the very mention of his name brings nightmares to Sansa. Ser Gregor Clegane or The Mountain is known for his cruelty towards women, he is said to have killed two of his wives and also brutally raped and killed many women including Elia Martel. Cersei Lannister's Walk of Shame was one of the most horrifying scenes in *Game of Thrones* history. Cersei is paraded around King's Landing by the High Sparrow as punishment for her incestuous affair with her cousin, Lancel, in Season 5. Cersei was not only forced to walk naked, but she was also abused by the men and women of King's Landing. They also hurled dirt and trash at her. "Most men do not attack or harass women; but those who do are unlikely to think themselves deviant. On the contrary they usually feel they are entirely justified, that they are exercising a right. They are authorized by an ideology of supremacy" (Raewyn 83). The lines from *Masculinities* depict how most crimes committed by males go unnoticed while women are harshly punished for the same. The scene also demonstrates how individuals are willing to dehumanise and degrade women if given the opportunity to do so. People clearly despised Cersei for her actions, but the scenario demonstrates how far individuals are willing to go to bring women down.

The women during the time were expected to behave ladylike. The young girls from well to do families are trained in lady like behaviour from a very young age. They were to stay away from fields that were not meant for women. Betty Friedan's book *The Feminine Mystique* points out this condition of women through the following lines:

They're not interested in the broad public issues of the day. They are not interested in national or international affairs. They are only interested in the family and the home. They aren't interested in politics, unless it's related to an

immediate need in the home, like the price of coffee. Humor? Has to be gentle, they don't get satire. Travel? We have almost completely dropped it. Education? That's a problem. (64).

Cersei's lines "I should have been born a man. I would have no need for any of you then" (Martin 291) conveys the limitations faced by women. These lines also hint at how much worse the situation of common women would be if the powerful Cersei herself feels confined. In the political setting of *Game of Thrones*, despite these impositions, there are female characters who go beyond the chains that they are bound to and try to rise and soar high in a man's world. Women like Daenerys Targaryen and Cersei Lannister have even risen and accumulated power to an extent that was unimaginable for even the men of their times. Daenerys Targaryen interprets the High Valarian words "Valar Morghulis", which means all men must die, in a significantly different way. She replies to Missandei, "Yes. All men must die, but we are not men" ("Walk of Punishment" 33:77). When Daenerys meets Missandei in Astapor to purchase the unsullied army, she says these words to her, demonstrating her self-assurance and the authority she possesses.

Brienne of Tarth, Arya Stark, Sansa Stark and Yara Greyjoy are female characters who try to deviate from the characteristics that are imposed upon women of their times to bring about change. They strive for goals and needs that are considered to be not meant for women during their times. Brienne of Tarth is the only woman in the whole of the Seven kingdoms to be knighted and is the only daughter of Lord Selwyn Tarth of House Tarth. Brienne stands out from other women as she was way too tall and muscular unlike the standard required by women who are to be petite and fragile. Furthermore, from a young age she aspired to be a knight which was a very unusual ambition for a young girl to have as only men were knighted. When she was young, she was constantly teased by her peers for wearing feminine clothing that did not suit her manly body. She recalls a particular ball where the

other women made a mockery of her until she was saved by Renly Baratheon. She was mockingly referred to as "Brienne the Beauty " and the "Maid of Tarth " for her appearance. She makes her first appearance in Season 2 partaking in a tournament, tossing men over and winning the tourney. She is represented in dark armour, towering and powerful, and it almost comes as a surprise to the spectators when she removes her helmet that she is a woman. After winning the tourney, she is appointed as Renly Baratheon's Kingsgaurd, as per her wish. Renly's assassination by his brother using black magic tears her apart; she resolves to avenge his death and is eventually successful in slaying Stannis Baratheon. Brienne subsequently swears allegiance to Catelyn Stark and vows to release Jaimie Lannister in exchange for Catelyn's daughters Sansa and Arya, who are reported to be being kept hostage by the Lannisters. She carries out her task of escorting Jaimie with immense responsibility and confronts several hurdles along the route. Brienne subsequently discovers that both of Catelyn's daughters are not under Lannister authority and sets out to find both Arya and Sansa to uphold her pledge. Brienne was not knighted at the time, yet she embodied the values of chivalry. Ser Gregor Clegane, a knight, on the other hand, reflects no such principles and instead causes more damage and trouble to individuals, in a manner unworthy of the title. People like Gregor are knighted, but despite her aspirations she is not initially knighted because she was born a woman. Brienne sets out to find the Stark girls with "Oathkeeper", a sword forged out of Ned Stark's legendary sword "Ice". She is knighted by Jaimie Lannister in Season 8 and strongly defends Winterfell against the White Walker army. With Bran as the new king, Brienne is appointed Lord Commander of the Kingsguard, a position which she truly deserves. Brienne is one among the few characters of *Game of Thrones* who could stand up on a match against Jaimie Lannister. In the end she is seen completing Jaime Lannister's entry in The Book of Brothers, listing out his achievements.

Arya Stark grew up in Winterfell as the daughter of Eddard Stark and Catelyn Stark. From a very young age she shows interest in outdoor activities and archery, which goes against the ladylike behaviour she was expected to exhibit. She is characterised as a free-spirited girl who stands in stark contrast to her sister Sansa, who embodies ladylike behaviour and ideals. Arya is seen enjoying time with her wolf Nymeria, messing about with stableboys, and even watching the jousting on the training grounds. A conversation between Arya and Brienne reveals how both of them were restricted from training and using swords. Both their fathers were against their daughters taking up swords, Brienne states that her father was totally against her fighting with boys but later he approved of it and makes her train properly. She is overjoyed when her bastard brother Jon Snow presents her with "Needle," a miniature sword, and this inspires her to learn how to use it. Arya had no desire to leave Winterfell, and she never felt at ease in King's Landing. Syrio Forel teaches Arya how to use swords, laying the groundwork for her stronghold. Arya, too, is subjected to rigorous training at the House of Black and White in order to become a faceless man. She established high goals for herself and fought tirelessly, sacrificing everything to avenge the unjust deaths of her family members.

Arya suffers greatly during her life, and despite the fact that she begins her adventure as a young girl, she matures well ahead of her age. From the scared little girl on her journey to The Wall dressed as a boy, she transforms into a vicious assassin. Arya's strength is exemplified by her success in acquiring the abilities of a faceless man, which she uses to assassinate Walder Frey, his sons, and his soldiers in order to retaliate against the Freys for the massacre of House Stark at the Red Wedding. Arya is also the one who slays the Night King, demonstrating how powerful women can be. She is also the one to kill Petyr Baelish, slitting his throat, executing the instigator of the entire downfall. Arya's first victim was a stable boy who she had to kill in order to escape, but she eventually evolves into a skilled

assassin. Arya, like the other female characters, experiences agony, sadness, and separation; she even witnesses the execution of her innocent father. Witnessing Ned's death and losing her mother and brother, reveals to Arya that she needs the stronghold to put things right, and in attempt to accomplish it, she even goes blind in Bravos while training to be the faceless man.

Despite being Arya's sister, Sansa Stark was very different from her. Sansa was trained by Septa Mordane to uphold the ladylike ideal that was to be adopted by young girls of her age. Sansa, in contrast to Arya, was overjoyed to go from Winterfell and move to King's Landing when her father Eddard Stark was chosen to be King Robert Baratheon's hand. She read tales of knights and princes, she was enchanted by such dreams to a point that she dreamt of marrying Jeffrey and ruling as the queen. In King's Landing she enjoys her days, spends time with Cersei and also attends tourneys. Her safe bubble is burst and she is forced to confront the harsh truth as she sees her father, Ned Stark's execution in the Sept of Baelor labelled as a traitor. Jeffrey Baratheon treats her badly and even locks her in her away. The execution of her father Ned is foreshadowed by the slaughter of her beloved dire wolf and results in accelerating her change. She comes to terms with Jeffrey's true nature and endures his oppression until her betrothal to Jeffrey is broken and Margaery Tyrell is betrothed to Jeffrey. Later on, she is made to wed Tyrion Lannister as part of a conspiracy by Tywin to secure the Lannister House the claim to Winterfell. All of these events helped Sansa reach an understanding of both the reality and her position. She escapes King's Landing during the scene when Jeffrey is poisoned. As a result of Petyr Baelish's plotting for his personal benefit, Sansa ends up in the hands of Ramsay Bolton, who is much worse than Jeffrey. Sansa grows from each loss and eventually takes her rightful place in Winterfell and stands strong. Sansa as a character undergoes a complete metamorphosis; from the delicate little girl who dreams of princes and knights, she herself becomes

strong and a Queen, "The Queen in the North" ("The Iron Throne" 1:11:55). She rescues her brother Jon Snow and the Wildlings from being defeated and slaughtered by Ramsay Bolton's army with her timely interference proving her power and influence.

Another strong female character presented in the series is Yara Greyjoy. She is Balon Greyjoy's, the head of House Greyjoy's daughter. She is presented as a strong warrior, whom her father favoured more than his son Theon Greyjoy. It was Yara who was with her father in Iron Island while Theon was raised in Winterfell as a ward of House Stark. When they plan to invade the weakly fortified North, Yara is assigned a more important part by her father than Theon, who, although being a male, is given relatively little responsibility. Additionally, everyone prefers Yara to Theon, including the soldiers and sailors, who see her as a leader and are prepared to follow her commands. She is seen as a respected commander who has led as well as executed many men. Because of her valour and strength, she gained great support in her land that favoured her taking up the role of the head of House Greyjoy after her father's period. Her brave spirit is depicted in Season 2 when she embarks on a personal mission aimed at rescuing her brother Theon Greyjoy from Ramsay Bolton. But despite facing defeat and losing a sizable portion of her army, she never repents to her father since she believed saving her brother came first, she saw rescuing her brother was of primary importance.

Yara learned to fight and live like a man as she grew up while the son of House Greyjoy was away at Winterfell. With her brother gone, all the responsibilities were thrust upon her which she managed to balance and carry out. Even after Theon's return to Pyke, Yara's followers remained strong because they believe Theon is unfit to lead House Greyjoy because he has already adopted the Stark way of life, which is in stark contrast to their views. However, things start to change when Yara's uncle, Euron Greyjoy, arrives. When Euron vows to offer the Ironborn more honour, the populace believes he is a better choice to hold the position of King of the Iron Islands. Things dramatically alter when Euron enters the

scene, and her supporters instantly switch allegiances to Euron. This illustrates how males are consistently given preference over women; in this instance, despite all of the female character's accomplishments, Euron is chosen over her simply because he is a man. Later on, Yara swears allegiance to Daenerys; Euron is defeated in the battle; and Yara survives till the very end. At the closing of the series, Yara is crowned Queen of the Iron Islands.

Other notable female characters include Olenna Tyrell and Catelyn Stark. Olenna and Catelyn are two female characters who both had a patriarchal upbringing and lived in a world which gave importance to men. These women observed how men handled situations through time, and when it was time for them to make important decisions and judgements, they acted how they believed was appropriate and morally right. Despite the fact that Catelyn Stark was the one who instigated the main battle between the Stark and Lannister families by kidnapping Tyrion, she subsequently came to the realization that the war would not solve anything and would just result in more casualties on both sides. She was horrified by the thought of her husband's death and vowed not to let any of her kids die in battle. "Will that bring Ned back to me?" (Martin 762), this line presents her thoughts on war and revenge, she understood what was already gone is lost and she had to take care of what she had. Jaimie Lannister, who was held captive by the Starks, was to be exchanged for her daughters Sansa and Arya in order to bring about a truce with the Lannister family. Everyone, however, opposed her plan since Jaimie Lannister was seen by her own son as a potent weapon against the House Lannister. "You are a woman, my lady. Women don't understand these things. You are the gentle sex. A man has the need for vengeance" (Martin 769), these lines from the first book *Game of Thrones* were used against Catelyn to put down her idea for truce. But ignoring her suggestion for a truce ultimately led to the Red Wedding, during which they were ruthlessly butchered by the combined armies of House Lannister, Frey, and Bolton. The Red Wedding wouldn't have happened if they had paid heed to her advice. She had similarly

counselled her son Robb Stark to forbid Theon Greyjoy from establishing an alliance with the Iron Islands. Because Robb disregards her advice, Theon is swayed by his father's philosophy and attacks Winterfell while their men are occupied against the Lannisters, resulting in the total annihilation of the Stark territory.

Lady Olenna Tyrell is a powerful female figure who serves as the leader of House Tyrell. By marrying Margery Tyrell to Jeffrey Baratheon, she sought to gain control of the Iron Throne. Despite her intentions to gain from the throne's influence, she ends up planning Jeffrey's demise. She poisons Jeffrey's drink, which results in his death, since she regards him as a threat to the realm and her granddaughter. Although she had killed Jeffrey for her personal gain, she did manage to stop the reign of a brutal tyrant like Jeffrey who might have caused suffering to his subjects. Despite Tyrion being accused of killing Jeffrey, the true mastermind behind Jeffrey's death is not revealed until Season 7. Jaimie Lannister receives a confession from Lady Olenna, but only after she is certain that a painless death awaits her.

The aforementioned characters show how they differ from other typical female characters. But far too many women in the narrative devote their entire existence to serving a man rather than themselves. Brienne, Arya, Sansa, Yara, Catelyn, and Olenna are just a few examples of the powerful female characters we witness in the series. They were far more aware of the horrors of war and the harm it can do to individuals than the men in authority. When compared to the dominant masculine characters, the characters like Arya Stark, Brienne of Tarth, Sansa Stark, and Yara Greyjoy are in a better position in the end. Unlike the Hegemonic male figures, these female characters only helped to strengthen the power structure of Westeros. Hence demonstrates how destructive hegemonic masculinity in power politics can be.

Raewyn Connell states in her book *Masculinities* that “Men are much more likely to hold state power: for instance, men are ten times more likely than women to hold office as a member of parliament” (82). Notably in *Game of Thrones*, men hold positions of authority while women are relegated to the background and given little significance. Women are raised with ideas that isolate them from the dominant force, turning them into nothing more than instruments for males to increase their dominance through marriage. Rarely do women hold independent power. But the series also features powerful female characters, some of whom occasionally surpass their male counterparts in strength. Nevertheless, the journey taken by women in search of power to stand tall in a society dominated by men is not an easy one. Women often have to lose parts of their feminine self or have to seek strength in mythical beings such as dragons to gain access to power, they change or evolve to fit into the male dominated world. They eventually develop and absorb the masculine traits and characteristics that are frequently shown by hegemonic leaders. Because the hegemonic males are in charge, certain female characters attempt to emulate this behaviour. These female characters give a new definition to masculinity, as something which does not pertain to men alone. Masculinity is something that is constructed gradually, based on one’s actions and experiences, something much more than a set of already decided upon values and characteristics involving only the male gender.

Cersei Lannister and Daenerys Targaryen are two examples of female characters in the series that absorbed the hegemonic traits. In the series, Cersei and Daenerys emerge as the two key dominant characters. The Battle of the Five Kings turns into the Battle of the Two Queens as a result of their massive power accumulation and their greed for the Iron Throne. Without considering the repercussions of their deeds, they each exert every effort to seize the Iron Throne.

Cersei Lannister is the daughter of Lord Tywin Lannister and is sister to Jaime Lannister and Tyrion Lannister. She and Jaime Lannister, her twin brother, had an incestuous relationship. Jaime Lannister was the father of her three children, Joffrey, Myrcella, and Tommen, despite Cersei being married to Robert Baratheon. Cersei becomes the Queen of the Seven Kingdoms after the deaths of her three children, whose deaths were mostly a result of her actions. From an early age, Cersei displayed her dark side by ordering the beating of a helpless servant girl at Casterly Rock. Her behaviour continued to deteriorate thereafter. She was introduced to the world of dominance and power when she saw her father Tywin as the head of House Lannister. She witnessed her father's use of force to annex territory and subjugate populations. She gladly marries Robert Baratheon despite knowing that he had only loved Lyanna Stark and even waged a war for her. Because she was born a female and understood that she could never acquire such power she saw Robert as her means to attain power. She married him only to rule over him. There is a scene in Season 5 where Cersei visits a witch in the woods, which is a brief reference to Cersei's early years. "When will I marry the prince?" ("The Wars to Come" 5:43) is the first of three questions she poses to the witch. The witch responds "no" and continues by saying that she would wed a king. Rhaegar Targaryen, the Targaryen prince whom she had expected to wed, dies as a result of Robert's Rebellion, and Robert succeeded as the King. This shows how, from an early age, her desire was to become a queen, and how, throughout her later life, she made progress toward her objective without considering what is morally right. Her married life with Robert Baratheon was not a happy one, in the end she ends up plotting his death in the most natural manner possible, making him the victim of a drunk hunting accident. But after Robert, his loyal friend Ned stands as a threat to her accumulation of power. Ned finds out her secret, about her children whose actual father is Jaime Lannister, which leads her to plot against Ned which ends in his death. With Robert and Ned gone, she has her son Jeffrey as the next

King. Her heinous crimes begin with painting Ned as a traitor and end with Missandei's murder. She holds her brother Tyrion Lannister responsible for her son Jeffrey's death. Later, Myrcella, her daughter, is transported to Dorne to wed into House Martell, and her younger son Tommen is appointed king.

Cersei chooses to cede authority to High Sparrow, a religious figure, after sensing that the Tyrells were taking control of her son Tommen when he marries Margery Tyrell. She attempts to create an ally out of the religious group since she is unsure what to do after her father Tywin's death and is unstable, and she is successful in getting Margery and her brother jailed. Her strategy, however, backfires as she is forced to undertake the walk of shame as a punishment for her incestuous affair. Ever since the incident, Cersei has undergone a full transformation; all she wants is revenge and power. In Season 6, she makes the choice to get revenge by using Wildfire to blow up the Sept of Baelor, killing her adversaries. Her killing of innocent bystanders in addition to her foes makes this one of *Game of Thrones'* most violent sequences. By igniting the Sept, she makes a forceful, dominant statement about herself and warns others of the consequences of interfering with her. After the suicide of her son Tommen, she turns into a tyrant.

After the Walk of Atonement, Cersei transforms into a dark dictator who is solely concerned with maintaining her position and power, and is willing to do anything for it. Another one of her horrible deeds is forcing Ellaria Martell to watch as her daughter slowly break down as the poison takes hold. To get revenge for Ellaria killing her daughter Myrcella, she makes Ellaria suffer. Cersei worries that the Gods would turn against her as a result of her incest with Jaimie. She sees how her incestuous relationship caused her son Jeffrey to develop sadistic tendencies. She quotes, "Every time a new Targaryen is born, the gods toss the coin in the air and the world holds its breath to see how it will land" ("A Man Without Honour" 46:44) and claims that the Targaryens' incestuous existence is what caused them to

become insane. In her extreme power-lust, Cersei breaks apart from her twin brother Jaimie and forms an alliance with Euron Greyjoy in order to gain strength and resources to confront Daenerys. She fights and separates with Jaimie when he refuses to go back on his pledge to fight against the White Walkers. If Cersei had just given up, she could have stopped Daenerys from attacking King's Landing, but instead, she worsens the situation by ordering Missandei to be beheaded, further infuriating Daenerys. Finally, she realises that there is no turning back and that her choices have doomed her. When Daenerys sets about destroying the kingdom, she is killed in the process and dies crushed by the falling bricks of the Red Keep.

Daenerys Targaryen was born to King Aerys II and Queen Rhaella. She was born outside King's Landing because her mother had to flee King's Landing as a result of Robert's Rebellion. So, despite being the King's daughter all she knew of King's Landing was stories told to her by her brother Viserys Targaryen. Daenerys is first presented as a young, obedient girl who is submissive to her brother. Viserys arranges her marriage to Khal Drogo in return for an army, so that he can get back the Iron Throne which rightfully belonged to the Targaryen family. Daenerys never had any inclinations towards the Throne or the power it holds, it was her brother who had wanted to make the Throne his, in order to bring back the Targaryen legacy. Dany begins to gain new knowledge and perspectives as a part of the Dothraki tribe. She learns what power is from her husband Khal Drogo and other Dothraki warriors, and she also realises that since she married Drogo, her brother is no longer able to control her or hurt her. The little girl begins to respond to her brother after being submissive and even makes threats to get him to leave her alone. Her brother, however, ignores her advice and is killed by Drogo. He is killed as Drogo covers him with molten gold. Dany observes this and remarks that "He was no dragon. Fire cannot kill a dragon" ("A Golden Crown" 49:2). These sentences show how her perceptions of her brother had evolved over time; instead of seeing him as a dragon, who she dreaded, she now refers to him as not a

dragon. Dany further asserts her authority by pleading with Drogo and his men to release the women of the towns they have seized. Problems arise between Drogo and his army as a result, but ultimately Drogo sides with Dany.

Drogo passes away from a wound that Maegi, one of the ladies Dany had liberated from Dothraki men's control, made worse. The majority of the tribe deserts her after Drogo's death, leaving only a small few behind. She promptly executes the witch's punishment by tying her to Drogo's funeral pyre. She herself leaps into the fire and returns with three dragons that hatch from the eggs that were given to her as gifts. From the beginning, Daenerys began to reveal her hegemonic side, although it went unnoticed by the viewers. She incorporates the Dothraki in her army. She forces them to cross the sea to battle for her even though they have never crossed the sea as they were tribesmen who saw the sea as a forbidden land. And in the process a sizable number of Dothraki soldiers die while fighting in her wars for the Iron Throne. The dragons favour her in her voyage, as she goes from Qarth to Astapor. In Astapor she purchases an army of unsullied, soldiers who will listen to everything she says without questions. Dany baffles everyone including Ser Jorah Mormont, when she declares that she would exchange her dragon for the unsullied army. Everyone attempts to talk her out of it. However, Daenerys had other ideas and gave her dragon to Krazyn, a master of the unsullied. To everyone's surprise, she orders the unsullied soldiers to murder all the Astapor masters once she has the army under her command to abolish slave owners and the practise of slavery in Astapor. She orders Drogon, her dragon, to set Krazyn ablaze. She further declares that all the unsullied are now free men and that they are no longer property of anybody, giving them the choice to leave unharmed or fight for her as free men.

Later, she travels to Yunkai, another renowned Slaver's Bay city, with the goal of liberating the slaves imprisoned there by their owners. Slightly changing her original intent, she now includes liberating the slaves in her quest for the Iron Throne. She strongly insists

that the Yunkai slaves be set free, and she finally uses her influence to accomplish this. She treats them as free citizens, and they respond by addressing her as "Mhysa," which means "mother" in the Old Ghiscari language. She then marches with her army to Meereen. When she learns that there is a crucifix of a slave at every mile leading to the city, she becomes furious and orders the dead to be removed and buried after taking off their slave collars. On her way to Meereen, she sees 163 slaves crucified in total. She seizes control of Meereen by instigating a slave uprising from within the city, which results in the slaves ripping off their collars in support of her. She then has 163 slave owners crucified to take the position of the slaves who were crucified, she insisted on returning injustice with injustice instead of mercy. She then starts her period of rule over Meereen.

Beginning with the Iron Throne as her goal, Daenerys eventually develops an interest in the concept of becoming a slave liberator and begins emancipating slaves city after city. She has undergone a significant transformation from her previous self; now, she is fully authoritative and in charge. She also has to contend with the Sons of Harpy, a group of rebels in Meereen who are fighting against her. She finally resolves all issues and moves to Dragonstone in a mission to oust the Lannisters from the Iron Throne. She meets Jon Snow at Dragonstone and chooses to join him in the battle against the White Walkers, she even loses one of her dragons in the course of fighting against the Night King. Dany gains further knowledge about her vicious opponent Cersei Lannister, who would stop at nothing to win the throne. Daenerys ultimately loses all control when Cersei orders Missandei to be slain. Dany unleashes her wrath upon King's Landing and its citizens, burning the entire city to ashes and takes the Iron Throne for herself. But she is killed by her beloved and dies in vain before she can even claim the throne, she earned for herself.

Cersei Lannister and Daenerys Targaryen, two female characters, adopted the dominant hegemonic masculine ideals for themselves. In the case of Cersei Lannister, she

was constantly on the prowl for power, even as a little child. Daenerys, on the other hand, experiences a significant change after marrying Khal Drogo because it is with the Dothraki tribe that she is able to see for herself what power and dominance can accomplish. As a result, she decides to pursue her brother's ambition of claiming the Iron Throne for herself. During their struggles for the Throne, Daenerys and Cersei both significantly impair the lives of the innocent. Cersei kills numerous people, orders their execution, and even initiates the burning of the Sept of Baelor under her ruthless reign. On the other side, Daenerys degenerates from the role of a slave liberator called Mhysa to that of her tyrant like her father, the Mad King. She uses her dragon to destroy King's Landing in the very same way that her father had envisioned using Wildfire. Additionally, Daenerys mercilessly commands her dragons to execute anybody who defies her, even Varys, who had fervently backed her and had brought Tyrion to Dany. Varys understands that he made a mistake in picking Dany to sit on the Iron Throne. He immediately tries to right the situation by supporting Jon Snow as the legitimate successor. As a lesson to everyone, Daenerys orders her dragon to burn him to death for betraying her.

Both Cersei Lannister and Daenerys Targaryen are strong female characters who dominate the series exercising power over most men in the series. Even the male characters who sought the throne are insignificant in comparison to how well these female characters executed their rise to the throne. They make their supremacy clear by their actions. “When my dragons are grown, we will take back what was stolen from me and destroy those who wronged me! We will lay waste to armies and burn cities to the ground. Turn us away and we will burn you first” (“Garden of Bones” 34:24). Daenerys' statements radiate dominance and force, and these lines even allude to the radical transformation she would undergo once she gains control. In the last season of the series, she does in fact destroy the whole city of King's Landing in accordance with her words. Additionally, Cersei's lines,

"When you play the game of thrones, you win or you die. There is no middle ground" ("You Win or You Die" 8:95), is a very powerful portrayal of her idea on how to acquire power. She asserts that there is no middle ground, meaning that it is either death or glory on the Iron Throne. Cersei and Daenerys both show a clear transformation. Both women were expected to adopt the role of nurturing mothers in accordance with the ideas of patriarchy. Cersei was mother to three children for whom she would have done anything. She wanted her children to attain power in the Seven Kingdoms and did all in her might to uplift them. But with the death of Jeffrey Baratheon, her first born and subsequent deaths Myrcella and Tommen causes a radical shift in her. She transforms from a motherly figure into a ruthless despot. Similarly, Daenerys losing her child in her frantic attempt to save her husband Khal Drogo also resonates with a change in her character. She takes up the characteristics of a ruler after Drogo's death. Both these hegemonic female characters grow in power after the death of their husbands.

In *Masculinities*, Raewyn Connell categorises violence in relation to masculinity using the lines, "Violence can become a way of claiming or asserting masculinity in group struggles. This is an explosive process when an oppressed group gains the means of violence" (83). These sentences reflect how Cersei and Daenerys employed force to seize power while exposing their Hegemonic masculine sides. Because Cersei clearly demonstrates her hegemonic characteristics from the beginning, the viewer dislikes her from the very start. Daenerys, on the other hand, is such a well-liked figure that the public finds her switch to the hegemonic side shocking and intolerable. Tyrion's comments to persuade Jon Snow to kill Daenerys, however, serve to underscore her hegemonic cruelty "My father was an evil man. My sister was an evil woman. Pile up all the bodies of all the people they've ever killed. There still won't be half as many as our beautiful queen slaughtered in a single day" ("The Iron Throne" 25:59). Following Missandei's death at the hands of Cersei, Daenerys goes out

of control at King's Landing. In the last season of the show, Daenerys transforms into a Mad Queen who massacres thousands of people mirroring her father, King Aerys Targaryen who was called the Mad King. Eight times over the eight seasons of the series, Daenerys has said the word "Dracarys." Her dragons are instructed to burn and destroy at her command by the word "Dracarys." And every time she utters the High Valyrian word, destruction breaks out as her dragons conjure damnation on earth to an extent that "Dracarys" was synonymous to wailing and helpless cries for help. Even after the bells sounded to announce the Lannister army's surrender, both Daenerys and Cersei stood their ground. Cersei tells Qyburn "They will defend their queen to the last man. The Red Keep has never fallen, It won't fall today" ("The Bells" 37:16). Cersei refuses to surrender and disregards the condition of her subjects despite their pleas for peace. The cries of people, "Ring the bells! Ring the bells" ("The Bells" 40:31) echoes throughout King's Landing. But despite their cries Daenerys loses control and unleashes mayhem upon King's Landing with her dragon, Drogon. The reason for this is that she knew that the people would always view her as an invader rather than a saviour, they would never accept her on the Iron Throne because they preferred Jon Snow, also known as the King in the North. She was aware that the only way to seize the throne was to inspire fear. She was also wary of the fact that Jon is descended from the Targaryens, strengthening his claim to the throne. She worries that he would enjoy greater support to the throne.

Like a true hegemonic character, Cersei was hesitant to concede defeat because she wanted to retain the Iron Throne for herself. Even though she is aware that her army has little chance against Daenerys', she refuses to give up and further enrages Daenerys by murdering Missandei. Tyrion's eyes make it clear that Cersei had doomed her kingdom by ordering Missandei's death. Tyrion tries to counsel both, but his attempts are unsuccessful. Cersei refuses to ring the bell in surrender as she somehow hoped to defeat Daenerys. However,

even if the populace rings the bell to declare their surrender, Daenerys continues to obliterate everything. Cersei was no better than Daenerys; as she had authorized the manufacturing of thousands of jars of wildfire, which, like Daenerys' acts, was capable of annihilating the whole city. Daenerys' destructive powers are highlighted by how Arya Stark warns her brother Jon Snow about Daenerys. She tells him, "I know a killer when I see one" ("The Iron Throne" 19:59), highlighting how she could easily turn against Jon too.

The first recognised queen regnant in the history of the Seven Kingdoms was Cersei Lannister. Her reign came to an end with her death during the Battle of King's Landing. She was the final ruler to occupy the Iron Throne since Daenerys is killed before she can take her place on the Iron Throne despite her victory. Like all Hegemonic, Cersei Lannister and Daenerys Targaryen die in the end without being able to seize the Iron Throne. Ironically, Daenerys is slain even before she can occupy the throne that she battled and slaughtered thousands of people for, while Cersei passes away beneath the Red Keep, from where she intended to reign from.

Conclusion

The political atmosphere depicted in *Game of Thrones* is brutal and driven by violence and greed. The functioning of the power structures depicted in the series demonstrate their inefficiency. The different power structures illustrate how poorly the people of the Westeros and Essos were treated and valued. *The Social Contract* by Rousseau and *Politics Among Nations: A Struggle for Power and Peace* by Hans Morgenthau offer the framework for the idea of power and political structures. As compared to the ideas in these works, the power structure in *Game of Thrones* appears to have flaws, with the benefits of the system rigidly restricted to only a small number of people.

Hegemonic masculinity describes the majority of the male characters in positions of authority, while marginalised masculinities face difficulties. Tywin Lannister, Khal Drogo, Robert Baratheon, Stannis Baratheon, and Jeffrey Baratheon are examples of hegemonic domineering figures who hold positions of authority. These individuals are so motivated by their desire for power that they often put the people they are supposed to lead in jeopardy. These hegemonic masculine figures drive their subjects into warfare and bring them severe hardships. In contrast to the hegemonic characters, the marginalised masculine characters in the series attempt to improve the state of the realm. The series' marginalised characters, like Brandon Stark, Tyrion Lannister, Samwell Tarly, and Jon Snow, work to improve the way Westeros' political system is structured. The show features female characters who defy the expectations of patriarchy and power placed upon them. They try to ascend in a world dominated by men. In contrast to the male hegemonic figures, these female characters work to improve the functioning of whole realm rather than trying to seize the power structures for themselves. Strong female characters like Yara Greyjoy, Brienne of Tarth, Arya Stark, Sansa Stark, Catelyn Stark and Olenna Tyrell are the female characters of the series that diverge

from the concepts of female behaviour thrust upon women. The series also depicts female characters that get influenced by the ideals of hegemonic masculinity, such as Cersei Lannister and Daenerys Targaryen. The characters like Cersei Lannister and Daenerys Targaryen try to dominate and take over the power structures driving the entire kingdom to destruction blinded by their goals.

The series depicts how, in contrast to deviant female characters and marginalised masculinities, the hegemonic males and hegemonic female characters ultimately cause harm to the power system and the kingdoms. The quest for power was expressed by characters like Tywin Lannister, Khal Drogo, Stannis Baratheon, Robert Baratheon, and Jeffrey Baratheon. And their propensity for power caused a lot of issues in Westeros. They mutate into monsters, lusting after power and disregarding their obligations as rulers. Because of their erratic behaviour, these characters sometimes even fail to recognise their blood relations, as in the case of Tywin Lannister and Stannis Baratheon. In order to curtail Tyrion Lannister's influence within the political system, Tywin Lannister is shown to be willing to have him executed on the basis of baseless accusations. On the other hand, Stannis Baratheon sacrifices his daughter Shireen and kills his brother Renly in order to win the Iron Throne. Every city that the Dothraki tribe passes through is demolished by Khal Drogo in his power as Khal. Leading to completely demolished cities with slaughtered, raped, and killed inhabitants. Jeffrey reveals himself to be a sadist who delights in other people's suffering, endangering the safety of the entire Westeros. In contrast, Robert Baratheon is less harmful than the other hegemonic figures, his flaw being his lack of concern for the welfare of the populace.

Male characters who fall under marginalized masculinities and female characters who reject patriarchal labels have similar goals inside the power structure. At first, Samwell Tarly, Brandon Stark, Tyrion Lannister, and Jon Snow were all oppressed and neglected figures because they were marginalized masculinities. But these characters develop slowly with time

to take up the roles of protecting the realm. Sansa Stark, Yara Greyjoy, Arya Stark, and Brienne of Tarth are examples of female characters that were suppressed or mocked for breaking from the norm. The realm or its political power structure are not negatively impacted by any of these female characters or marginalized masculinities. After being exposed to the male world of dominance, female characters like Daenerys Targaryen and Cersei Lannister choose to adopt the hegemonic masculine traits in order to obtain power. Through her father Tywin Lannister, Cersei gained an understanding of the status and clout held by their dominant male counterparts. Daenerys learns how power can give a person the upper hand through the influence of her brother's ideas and her exposure to the Dothraki tribe. As a result, both of these female characters embrace hegemonic traits.

Westeros is plagued by problems brought on by hegemonic male characters and female characters who adopt hegemonic values. They incite violence inside their kingdoms. These hegemonic individuals are the root cause of all the wars depicted in the series. All of the battles leave the kingdom and its inhabitants in total destruction. With their ultimate battle at King's Landing destroying the entire city, the hegemonic female characters show themselves to be more destructive than the hegemonic masculinities. Daenerys and Cersei both adopt severe forms of hegemonic masculinity. Both Cersei and Daenerys at the Battle of King's Landing, overlooks the citizens of the city and ringing of the bells to call for peace and declare their surrender. The entire city is destroyed by Daenerys' rage and Cersei's resistance to giving up. These individuals adopt hegemonic principles without giving any thought to the welfare of their people. From being known as "Mhysa," Daenerys undergoes a significant transformation and becomes a despot. She set out to dismantle the wheel or chain that kept people in perilous living situations while favouring those in positions of power. But Daenerys ends up joining the very chain that she had wished to break. The female characters like Sansa Stark and Arya Stark show their dislike towards both Cersei and

Daenerys. Sansa is wary of Daenerys from the very start and Arya understands Daenerys's true nature when she gets a first-hand experience of war during the battle at the King's Landing. She sees thousands including young, innocent children suffering from the wrath of Daenerys Targaryen.

Both male and female characters who adopt hegemonic masculinities strive for domination and power over the others. The marginalised masculinities and non-traditional feminine characters are uninterested in the power structures and work to improve the realm. The power system is threatened by hegemonic figures. When hegemonic values are entwined with the power structure system, instability results. Hence in the end Brandon Stark from Winterfell is chosen as the perfect candidate for the throne. Brandon is chosen as the best candidate to the throne because neither is he interested in Iron Throne nor the powers that come with it. Brandon Stark exhibits no form of hegemonic masculinity that is a threat to the Seven Kingdoms. And with Brandon's ascend to the throne ends the hierarchical succession of power to the position of the ruler. The Great Council comes to a joint decision that each successive ruler will be short jointly elected on by the members of the Great Council. Even though not everyone can partake in the election process, there is a drastic change from the dominant hegemonic system to a much better selection of the people in power. There by the series ends on a positive note with the hint of democracy that might arrive in the upcoming period.

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