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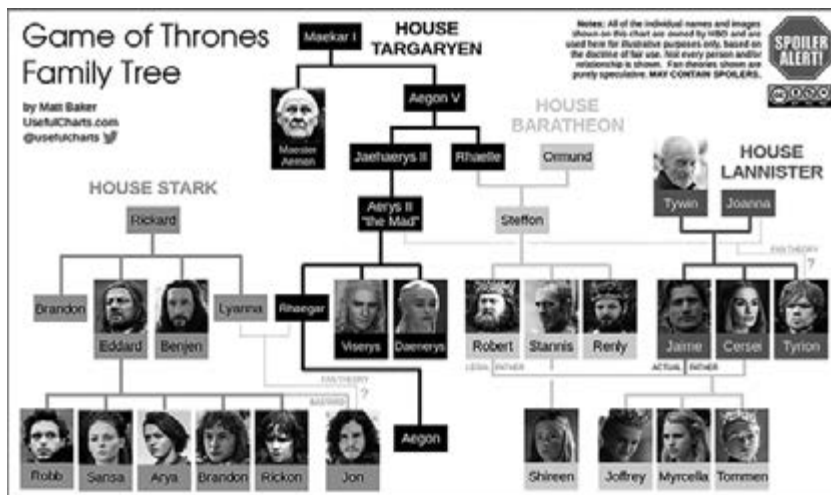
## 4. 'I AM YOUR KING': Authority in *Game of Thrones*

### Introduction

*Game of Thrones* (hereafter *GoT*, 2011–), a quasi-mediaeval fantasy series based on George R. R. Martin's *A Song of Ice and Fire* (*ASOIAF*, 1996–), has a significant impact on contemporary pop culture. With an average viewership of 18.4 million per episode, at the peak of its popularity, *GoT* claims the record for the most-watched TV show in the history of the HBO Network (Beaumont-Thomas 2014). The show and cast have received several prestigious awards, including the Peabody Award 2012, three Hugo Awards for Best Dramatic Presentation in short and long forms, and a total of ten Emmys to date. Like *Sherlock*, its active and productive fandom spans most social media sites, in addition to the major fanfiction archives.

Set in the imagined world of Westeros and Essos, the series charts the feuds and struggles of several powerful families over the Iron Throne, seat of the hereditary monarchy that unifies the seven so-called kingdoms of Westeros. At the outset, the old Targaryen dynasty has been overthrown in a bloody rebellion, and the new Baratheon dynasty is in crisis, plagued by accusations of incest and illegitimacy. Murder, conspiracy and betrayal are the currency of the day amongst the nobility, whilst the hungry, war-torn commons pose an increasing threat to the political structure. It might be argued, then, central problem in *GoT* is power and authority—who can and should rule Westeros? What gives anyone the right? As Richard Corrigan puts it, 'the question of who is the "legitimate authority" in the Seven Kingdoms [...] is of crucial importance' (2012, p. 50). To aid the reader in the following discussion, a chart of the relations between and positions of the key characters is provided below. We are chiefly concerned here with the ruling families of Lannister and Baratheon, the Targaryen dynasty in exile, and the Stark family who govern the north of Westeros.

Fig. 6: *GoT* family trees. Copyright Matt Baker.



How are these concepts of ‘power’ and ‘authority’ constructed then? In Western culture, they are typically defined both in contrast to and in conjunction with each other. Max Weber connected them in his famous typology of ‘legitimate rule’ ([1922]1958), which is probably the most influential statement in the Western construction of authority. Weber considers the three types to be traditional, rational-legal, and charismatic. Very often the types overlap, and an individual or institution wields a blend of two or all three. Traditional authority is frequently patriarchal: that of kings, lords, fathers and canonical literary masters. It gains legitimacy through appeal to history: this is the way things have always been done, this was good enough for our forefathers and should be good enough for us. Unsurprisingly, *GoT* constructs traditional authority as the dominant form; but that tradition is in crisis and its legitimacy constantly threatened. Rational-legal authority bases its legitimacy as the name suggests, in law and reason. Heads of state, elected MPs, lawmakers and enforcers, and the heads of companies hold rational-legal authority within their arenas. Charismatic authority is quite different: it has no legal or rational backing, but is based in the perceived divine or otherwise special qualities of individuals. Cult leaders and political revolutionaries are the classic examples. Arguably, *GoT* constructs charismatic authority as better and more effective than the other types. This is interesting, given that according to Frank Furedi, Western culture has regarded charismatic authority sceptically since the

fallout of the twentieth-century dictatorships (2013, p. 94), which were founded on the charismatic authority of figures like Hitler, Stalin and Mussolini.

It is after Weber that authority is frequently defined as 'legitimate power', though some critics dispute the construct. Philosopher John Day finds the term insufficient, for 'authority is often contrasted with power, which is regarded, as authority is not, as the exercise of force' (1963, p. 257). He believes that power is reliant on force, but we expect obedience to authority to involve some kind of voluntarism. Day goes on: 'when one person acknowledges another's authority, it cannot be because he is forced to. This is not what authority means' (p. 259). At the same time, Day suggests, we cannot truly disassociate power and authority, because authority seems to entail a certain kind of power. Day suggests this is 'causative' power, rather than 'coercive' power. A directive from a person in authority might cause me to perform an action, but given that I have accepted his or her authority, I have not been coerced into it. Moreover, authority is fallible. As Day writes, 'to say a man is in authority in the legal sense is to say nothing about what he is able to do in fact. It is merely a statement of what the rules permit him to do' (p. 262). As we will explore below, the fallibility and instability of authority is a constant theme in *GoT*, whose narrative begins, after all, in the aftermath of a rebellion that ended when Aerys 'The Mad King' Targaryen was stabbed in the back by his personal guard.

The English words 'authority' and 'author' share an etymological root in the Latin word 'auctor', which means something like founder or progenitor. As Assis notes,

The relation between author and authority implies the hierarchical authority inherent in the text's addressor. The authority of the writer of the text stems from his perception as the source of the text (2011, p. 1).

As we shall see, George R. R. Martin makes much use of this discourse when he asserts his claims as Author-God of the *ASOIAF* universe, and mediates and moderates it in discussion of the HBO series. Hannah Arendt observed the connection of authority and authorship as consolidating a form of non-coercive hierarchy. The founder, the progenitor, is constructed as naturally authoritative:

At the heart of Roman politics, from the beginning of the Republic until virtually the end of the imperial era, stands the conviction of the sacredness of foundation, in the sense that once something has been founded

it remains binding for all future generations. [...] It is in this context that the word and concept of authority originally appeared (Arendt [1954] 2006, pp. 104–105).

Assis observes that ‘in such a system, authority (*auctoritas*) is always a representation of the past, of the founding fathers or gods’ (p. 3). It is a distinctly masculine construction. In *GoT*, Viserys Targaryen, exiled son of the Mad King, bases his claim to authority on the past glories of the Targaryen dynasty, their conquest and establishment of the Seven Kingdoms from the backs of dragons. His frequent references to his ancestors, claim to ‘the blood of the dragon’, to be ‘the last hope of a dynasty [...], the greatest dynasty this world has ever seen’ (1x06, ‘A Golden Crown’) illustrates Justman’s point that ‘authority habitually mythologizes itself and its origins’ (1979, p. 196) However, his descent into madness and ignominious death construct these claims as futile.

We now turn to the construction of authority in *GoT*, in contrast and conjunction with the construction of power. This discursive construction is overall piecemeal and fractured. Unsurprisingly, given the influence of Weber on Western thought, I found by working outwards from specific statements to their conditions of possibility that three of its main branches construct that three part schema. Other branches concerned the threat of the commons to authority, authority and women, and, finally, the authority of text in *GoT*. We will now address these in turn, noting that the establishment of governing statements was much less clear here: the ‘domain of concepts’ was quite disparate, but certainly still discernible (Foucault 1981, p. 67). The governing statement it is that belief in authority is authority’s primary condition. This leads us to a discussion of how the author figures of *GoT* construct their authority or lack of it, which is complex enough here to warrant its own section. We will then be in a position to observe how fanfic alters the construction of that discursive formation.

## Authority in *Game of Thrones*

### Traditional/Patriarchal

As mentioned, traditional patriarchal authority is constructed prominently in *GoT*. Fathers rule their families, lords rule their lands, and the king rules the kingdoms. If the military order of the Night’s Watch is made up of ‘brothers’, as recruit Jon Snow puts it, the Lord Commander is their ‘father’

(4x06, 'Oathkeeper'). Patriarchy connects private and public authority, as illustrated in the early scene when Lord Eddard Stark brings his young son Bran to witness him execute a traitor. Bran is in training for the duties of a lord, performed 'in the name of' the king, the traditional father of the realm. 'Don't look away,' warns Bran's half-brother: 'Father will know if you do' (1x01, 'Winter is Coming'). Stark's realm of Winterfell is constructed as calm, orderly and prosperous. The camera pans over vast stone walls and wintery landscapes. The palette is black, grey, white, green and brown, visual statements constructing calmness and natural order. Children are seen at play and the people as happy and industrious. Stark is kind to his family and respectful yet commanding to his people. Yet, this model patriarch is executed halfway through the first season, too honest and/or inept to survive the political machinations of the capital. More successful patriarchs, like Lord Frey with his harem of teenage wives, or the wilderness-dwelling Craster who impregnates his daughters and granddaughters while exposing male infants to kill them, are constructed as corrupt and terrible.

Between these extremes is the example of Tywin Lannister, patriarch of that family. The ruthless and effective Tywin is played by Charles Dance, OBE, a casting choice that imbues the character gravitas and accomplishment. Dance has a celebrated history of playing powerful, morally ambiguous characters. His authority is visually constructed in key opening and closing scenes, especially the climax of episode 2x09, 'Blackwater', where he slowly rides a horse up through the aisle of his royal grandson's throne room, having saved the city by succouring its forces in battle. A slow, deep string version of the Lannister theme tune consolidates the visual statements. Similarly, the opening of Season 4 shows Tywin having the fallen Stark's sword, the phallic symbol of his power, melted down and forged into a new sword for his son. There is no dialogue: only the Lannister theme song and the crackle of fire. The leisurely camerawork and slow, deliberate pacing construct a sense of stern inevitability in Lannister triumph. Lannister colours are red and gold, but Tywin generally wears black riding leathers, constructing him as a man of strength and sombre practicality. Tywin takes his role as patriarch seriously, the survival and prosperity of his lineage being his main concern. In a crucial speech to his eldest son, he intones:

Before long I'll be dead. And you and your brother and your sister and all of her children. [...]. It's the family name that lives on. It's all that lives on. Not your personal glory, not your honour, but family. [...]. The future of our family will be determined in these next few months. We could establish a dynasty that will last a thousand years. Or we could collapse

into nothing, as the Targaryens did. I need you to become the man you were always meant to be (1x07, 'You Win or You Die').

**Fig. 7: Tywin (Charles Dance) remonstrates with his son Jaime (Nikolaj Coster-Waldau) in 1x07. Copyright and source: HBO.**



Yet, it could be argued that Tywin actually relies less on patriarchal authority than charismatic authority and illegitimate power. At his introduction above, he is seen butchering a deer, foreshadowing that he is 'not afraid to get his hands dirty,' as the English colloquialism has it. His horse shits on the floor of the throne room, and his deference to the king is perfunctory and scathing. Granted the king is his grandson, but in the patriarchal schema royalty ought to outrank lineage. Tywin does not accept his grandson's authority, and in episode 3x10, 'Mhysa', goes so far as to send him ignominiously to bed. 'I am the King!' protests King Joffrey futilely, to which Tywin calmly retorts, 'Any man who must say "I am the King" is no true king.' This is an important statement. Position and heritage are not enough: Joffrey lacks some inherent quality of kings, i.e. the charisma Tywin possesses. Finally, Tywin's *coup de grace* in the power struggle is a violation of traditional laws of warfare and sacred guest right: he arranges a massacre at a wedding feast, decimating the Stark family. Tywin's patriarchal authority is ultimately backed by illegitimate, pragmatic force. There is also an element of rational-legal at work here, as the crown is in massive debt to the Lannister family. This mixture of authority and power renders Tywin the de facto ruler of Westeros for many years and across the reign of three kings.

Yet, his downfall is the ultimate deconstruction of patriarchal authority: murdered on the toilet by the son he scorned and despised.

In a scene that cites the Oedipus myth, Tywin's deformed, youngest son Tyrion corners him with a crossbow, having been himself sentenced to execution. Tywin's final speech is creeping and pathetic. His legs and chest are bare: he appears older and less hale, stripped of his leathers and cloak. He appeals to Tyrion:

You refused to die. I respect that. Even admire it. You fight for what's yours. I'd never let them execute you. Is that what you fear? I'll never let [them] your head. You're a Lannister. You're my son.

Until this point, Tywin's acknowledgment of Tyrion has been pained and grudging, admitting only that he 'cannot prove' the dwarf Tyrion is not his offspring. After Tyrion shoots, the dying Tywin groans, 'You're no son of mine,' to which Tyrion returns with quiet conviction: 'I am your son. I have always been your son' (4x10, 'The Children').

It seems, then, that traditional patriarchal authority in its pure form is constructed as benevolent when wielded by a moral character, though ultimately ineffective. Backed by force, and mixed with the other types, it becomes more brutal, more sinister, and more effective. Ultimately though, patriarchal authority contains its own undoing: it is *because* Tyrion is Tywin's 'son' that he is able to go through with the murder. These statements gain strength and resonance via their citation of the Oedipus myth, which holds a prominent place in the Western literary canon.

In this patriarchal system, female characters use a variety of techniques to secure power and authority, typically sourcing it through men. Daenerys, who is married off to a foreign clan ruler at the beginning of her story arc, initially depends entirely on him for her authority. As he lies dying, one of the clan remarks that she is only their *de facto* ruler while her husband lives: 'when he dies, she is nothing' (1x09, 'Baelor'). Daenerys ultimately gains independent charismatic authority (see below), though many of her initial clansmen desert her rather than accept the authority of a woman. Cersei Lannister and Catelyn Stark attempt to influence their first-born sons, heirs of kingdoms, whilst Margaery Tyrell and Melisandre of Asshai employ their sexuality and charisma to gain power over men. In a scene replete with phallic symbolism, the new queen Margaery pretends to be aroused by her young royal husband playing with a crossbow, flattering him: 'You must do whatever you need to do. You are the king' (3x02, 'Dark Wings, Dark Words'), to which he replies breathily, and with heavy dramatic irony 'Yes. I am.' The



crossbow is soon in Margaery's hands, as he stands behind her adjusting her aim and admiring their image in their mirror. Though Joffrey remains in authority, Margaery has siphoned his phallic power. Meanwhile Melisandre coaxes the would-be king Stannis to impregnate her with the creature that assassinates his brother in her service, and promises him a son, the true patriarchal desire his sickly wife has been unable to fulfil. When he later demands, 'Make me another son,' she replies 'I cannot':

Stannis: Why?

Melisandre: You don't have the strength. It would kill you [...] Your fires burn low, my king (3x03, 'Walk of Punishment').

'King' is delivered with an ironic sneer: Melisandre has literally siphoned Stannis' power via her womb. At another point, she seduces a royal bastard in order to siphon his blood with leeches. Melisandre, a fire-worshipping priestess who appears in sensual red gowns, is a sexual threat to patriarchal authority through her powers over life and death, and the charismatic authority she gains through visions and mysticism. She disavows personal authority, claiming that she is merely a servant of the (male) Red God and a vessel for His power. Nonetheless, this manipulation of a patriarchal system has accrued her significant influence to date; how she will fare after Stannis' death, shown in the last aired episode, remains to be seen.

### Rational-legal authority

Rational-legal authority is constructed by a weaker branch of the discursive formation. Nonetheless, the authority of kings is not based exclusively in tradition and patriarchal heritage. The founders of the Targaryen dynasty had no authority, after all: they conquered and united the lands that became Westeros by pure (fire) power. Littman suggests that the Targaryen dragons are a citation of Thomas Hobbes' seventeenth-century treatise on the authority of kings, titled *Leviathan* (2012, pp. 5–18). According to this work, rational subjects should submit voluntarily to the monarch in exchange for peace, law and order. The king's authority is based on a tacit rational contract. Even a terrible king is preferable to anarchy and civil war. The contract reasonably extends on a smaller scale to the obedience of the commons to the nobility. A lord is responsible for keeping the peace in his holdfast. Thus, although the rebels were unjustified in their war, once Robert Baratheon becomes the new king, authority transfers to him regardless of his bloodline. It does not matter *who* the king is, so long as

there is one. This form of rational-legal authority is constructed as weak in *GoT*, primarily because we have not yet seen a king successful in keeping the commons peaceful and fed. Robert may have come closest, propped up by his small council, yet the vulnerability of the contract is demonstrated when Robert is killed and replaced by his malicious heir, who fails to keep any sort of peace and order in the kingdom.

The rapid turnover of kings in Westeros makes the authority of a Leviathan difficult to maintain. Who will the city guard obey, muses the scheming councillor Lord Baelish, 'when the Queen proclaims one King and the Hand proclaims another[?] [...] Who do they follow?' He draws the point of a dagger on his desk towards himself and pronounces, 'the man who pays them' (1x07, 'You Win or you Die'). When Eddard Stark protests that Baelish's planned coup is treason, Baelish retorts 'only if we lose'. The rational-legal model of submission to a Leviathan depends on a unified and singular authority, and Westeros rarely has one.

Some tentative statements in *GoT* construct democracy as an alternative form of rational-legal authority. The wildlings, who live beyond the Northern bounds of the kingdoms, elect their own leaders. The Night's Watch is also a proto-democracy, with Lord Commanders elected by vote. These statements jar against the quasi-medieval setting of *GoT*, which arguably weakens them as lacking diegetic credibility. Democracy, 'rule of the people', would be an utterly alien concept in a feudal system. 'The people' of Westeros have no authority. They do, however, have some power: a point that will be elaborated on below. At the conclusion of the final episode that has aired to date (and the final *ASOIAF* book Martin has published), Jon Snow is killed by the Night's Watch brothers after his election as Lord Commander. They believe he has betrayed them through associations and negotiations with the wildlings, declaring 'For the Watch!' as they stab him (5x10, 'Mother's Mercy'). There is much speculation based on foreshadowing that Jon will somehow rise from the dead to become the prophesied saviour of Westeros. Should that happen his authority will not be rational-legal, which we can conclude is constructed as weak and ineffective in *GoT*, but charismatic.

### Charismatic authority

Charismatic authority is constructed as the strongest and most effective form of authority in *GoT*. When Eddard's heir Robb Stark begins to make himself known as a player in the Game of Thrones, Tywin comments, 'He has a good mind for warfare, his men worship him. And as long as he keeps winning battles, they'll keep believing he is King in the North'

(2x05, 'The Ghost of Harrenhal'). 'Worship' as a verb choice constructs Rob as a charismatic leader, and the belief of men, rather than inherited or legal position, is what makes him a king. There is a citation here of the councillor Varys' earlier statement that 'power resides where men believes it resides. No more, no less' (2x03, 'What is Dead May Never Die'). What the statements of the narrative demonstrate, however, is that *authority* resides where people believe it resides: power is brute force. Granted, authority may be necessary to *harness* that power, but conversely it may not, hence the murder of Jon Snow. Here, we encounter the governing statement in the discursive construction of authority, it is that authority is created by belief in and acceptance of authority. There is nothing natural or a priori about it.

Tyrion also gains authority through charisma. In a key speech in episode 2x09, he rallies the failing troops with a speech after the king has fled the field. 'They say I am half a man, but what does that make you?' he demands in an attempt to shame them into fighting:

Don't fight for your king, and don't fight for his kingdoms. Don't fight for honour. Don't fight for glory. Don't fight for riches because you won't get any. This is your city Stannis means to sack, those are your gates he's ramming. If he gets in, it will be your houses he burns. Your gold he steals, your women he will rape (2x09, 'Blackwater').

Consider the employment of tropes from classical rhetoric, notably anaphora, troping on the meaning of 'half', and the rhetorical question (Vickers 1989, pp. 86; 91–95). Tyrion gains authority through his speech and presence, and the taunt of 'half man' that has plagued him his whole life becomes a rallying cry, as the troops' scorn turns to belief.

The strongest construction of charismatic authority operates through the character of Daenerys Targaryen, last confirmed survivor of the old dynasty. Granted, in her journey from abused child-bride to warrior queen, she learns to call on the authority of tradition to present herself by her titles, as 'the blood of old Valyria' and 'the mother of dragons'. Her dragons are the force behind her authority, which she maintains through charismatic displays and hints of divine origin. In the pivotal scene that concludes the first season, she performs the apparent miracle of walking into a fire and emerging unscathed, dragons hatched and perched on her naked body. The camera pans out and the score rises to display Daenerys' new people bowing to her, accepting for the first time her authority rather than her late husband's (1x10, 'Fire and Blood'). She wins the love of foreign peoples

with speeches, vows of protection, and an address from horseback that visually cites the famed military tactics of Alexander ‘The Great’ of Macedon, another charismatic authority. She appears in riding leathers or virginal white gowns as the situation requires, and overrides traditional authority in her conquered cities by abolishing slavery, and is lifted on the shoulders of adoring crowds, who hail her as their ‘mother’.

**Fig. 8: Daenaerys (Emilia Clarke) hailed as mother of the people in ‘Mhysa’ (3x10). Copyright and source: HBO.**



Camera pans picking out Daenerys as ‘special’, bright and light amid a mass of dark bodies, are a frequent technique constructing her charismatic authority. The problematic racial constructs of such images have been noted by commenters like Aamer Rahman (2013): Dany’s narrative constructs her as the White Saviour of benighted dark lands, whose primitive inhabitants love and worship her in return.

Charismatic authority is not infallible, and Danaerys’s is ultimately backed up by firepower: she is the only person in the known world in command of living dragons. When other means fail, she is prepared to kill her enemies. Even so, charismatic authority is constructed as the strongest and most successful kind in *GoT*. We turn now from Weber’s schema to consider the construction of ‘the people’ as a kind of power threatening to authority at every turn, and then finally the construction of power and authority through text. This will lead us to our discussion of extra-diegetic authority *over* the text, as constructed by its author figures.

## The Commons

Wiser characters in *GoT*, who tend to survive to a greater age and make more impactful statements than their younger counterparts, are aware and wary of the commons' power. 'We can't allow rebels behind our lines to harass us with impunity,' notes Tywin Lannister. 'We look like fools and they look like heroes. That's how kings fall' (2x07, 'A Man Without Honor'). Olenna Redwyne, aged matriarch of the Tyrell family, observes that a flamboyant royal wedding is necessary because 'the people are hungry for more than just food. They crave distractions. And if we don't provide them, they'll create their own. And their distractions are likely to end with us being torn to pieces' (3x05, 'Kissed by Fire'). In a rare moment of self-awareness, the doomed Viserys Targaryen realises the dependence of traditional authority on the people's support, having witnessed his sister's rise: 'I need a large army. I'm the last hope of a dynasty, Mormont. The greatest dynasty this world has ever seen on my shoulders since I was five years old... and no one has ever given me what they gave to [Daenerys] in that tent. Never. Not a piece of it. How can I carry what I need to carry without it? Who can rule without wealth or fear or love?' (1x06, 'A Golden Crown').

Overlooking the need for 'love' is one of Cersei Lannister's errors. She is prepared to make brutal and unpopular moves in her attempts to consolidate power, such as ordering the deaths of her late husband's illegitimate children. Tyrion, who is typically written as insightful and intelligent, attempts to warn her:

Cersei: I am Queen Regent.

Tyrion: Listen to me, Queen Regent. You're losing the people. Do you hear me?

Cersei: The people. You think I care?

Tyrion: You might find it difficult to rule over millions who want you dead. Half the city will starve when winter comes. The other half will plot to overthrow you. And your gold-plated thugs just gave them their rallying cry: the Queen slaughters babies' (2x02, 'The Night Lands').

Soon after, Cersei suffers a reversal of fortunes, from Queen Regent to humiliated prisoner, ousted by the younger and more popular Margaery Tyrell, an expert in cultivating the commons' sympathy. But popularity alone is not enough. Renly Baratheon bases his campaign for kingship upon it, claiming that Stannis is unsuitable as a king because 'he inspires no love or loyalty' (1x07, 'You Win or you Die') and 'no one wants [him] for their King.

[Stannis] never wanted any friends [and] a man without friends is a man without power' (2x04, 'Garden of Bones'). He is wrong, and killed off early in the narrative at Stannis' instigation: the support and sympathy of 'the people' is constructed as a necessary but insufficient condition of authority.

Finally, two dramatic sequences construct authority in crisis at the literal hands of the commons. The first is a riot in King's Landing. Tension is created as the royal procession follows a narrow street between a hungry crowd, armour and cloaks contrasting with dirty naked skin. The crowd's calls quickly turn from ambiguous to aggressive, a low hum of bass strings building softly in the extra-diegetic score. Then shouts turn to missiles as dirt is thrown and the crowd descends, imperilling the king and tearing the religious leader limb from limb. 'I want these people executed!' shouts the young King Joffrey, to which his personal guard replies 'They want the same for you' (2x06, 'The Old Gods and the New'). Authority is momentarily levelled. Once safe within the keep, an enraged Tyrion remonstrates with and ultimately slaps Joffrey, disregarding his authority and insulting him:

Joffrey: They attacked me!

Tyrion: They threw a cow pie at you, so you decided to kill them all? They're starving, you fool. All because of a war you started.

Joffrey: (screaming) You're talking to a king!

Tyrion: (slaps him) And now I've struck a king. Did my hand fall from my wrist? (2x06).

The legal and traditional authority of kings is revealed, momentarily, as a sham. Joffrey is raging, pathetic and ineffective, depending purely on armed force to control the populace. As Day established, this is not authority (1963, p. 257). The commons are also constructed as an increasing threat to Daenerys' authority in her conquered cities. Her first error is ignorance. She assumes that outlawing slavery will be universally popular with former slaves, but on the contrary, receives an entreaty that a tutor be allowed to sell himself back to the household where he had security and purpose (4x10). She attempts to abolish gladiatorial fighting pits, an ancient tradition, but popular resistance is so strong she cannot enforce the law. Finally, rebel factions devoted to preserving the traditions of the city against the foreign invader cause a riot in the pits and attempt to kill her; Daenerys only escapes by flight on one of her dragons (5x09, 'The Dance of Dragons'). The dragons themselves, which are both symbols of her authority and the brute force backing it, are becoming increasingly difficult to control and threaten her at several points.

There is one more identifiable branch to the construction of authority within *GoT*: that is the authority attributed to the written text. George R. R. Martin's paratextual proclamations uphold the idea of a true, authentic and authorial text; yet, ironically, the text he is so protective of constructs the authority of the written word in a much more unstable way. We will now discuss how the authority of text is construct *within* the diegesis, then contrast the public statements of Martin and the showrunners with regard to authority *over* it.

## Text

The story opens in the years following a rebellion and, unsurprisingly, the different families tell different stories about the events of that war. Westeros is a world without an objective history. Either Rhaegar Targaryen was a vicious rapist who abducted Lyanna Stark and helped instigate a bloody civil war, or a gentle minstrel who fought under duress, doomed to die for the love of his life. A representative of the Bank of neighbouring Bravos remarks that

Across the Narrow Sea, your books are filled with words like 'usurper' and 'madman' and 'blood right'. Here, our books are filled with numbers. We prefer the stories they tell. More plain. Less open to interpretation (4x06, 'Oathkeeper').

Moreover, texts change in transmission. Eddard Stark, knowing Joffrey is illegitimate, silently alters Robert's royal decree when he transcribes it at Robert's deathbed. Cersei has no qualms about ripping up the parchment. When the aged knight Barristan Selmy protests, 'Those were the king's words,' Cersei replies, 'We have a new king now' (1x07, 'You Win or you Die') and has Stark arrested at sword-point. Power trumps the authority of the text and the authorship of a dead king. She later rips up Robb Stark's missive (2x02, 'The Night Lands'), and scoffs at the idea that 'a piece of paper' can keep anyone safe (2x03, 'What is Dead May Never Die'). Yet, Cersei has fallen from grace dramatically. It is, after all, a singularly author-ized kind of text that condemns her—the formal confession of her cousin to their affair (5x10, 'Mother's Mercy').

Moreover, it is from an ancient book that Ned Stark learns the secret of Joffrey's parentage. Baratheon children for hundreds of years have been 'black of hair', but Joffrey is the same blond as his biological sibling-parents (1x06, 'A Golden Crown'). The sympathetic and popular character Tyrion gains wisdom largely from reading: Tyrion compares books to a whetstone to keep the mind sharp, and values them intensely. As Martin's professed

favourite character (Martin 2014), and the only one for whom he has published a collection of 'wit and wisdom' (2013), Tyrion's opinions and actions gain additional authorization and legitimation within the series. At Joffrey's wedding, Tyrion presents him with a huge book, apparently a work in the tradition of the mirrors (guidebooks) for princes that were popular in the European middle ages. Joffrey initially appears to accept the gift, remarking smarmily, 'Now that the war is won, we should all find time for wisdom,' but with his next gift, a sword from steel of renowned quality, proceeds to hack it to pieces. He then proceeds to cruelly humiliate Tyrion for the rest of the party—which culminates with Joffrey's assassination. Joffrey, in his idiocy and cruelty, treats with disdain the texts Tyrion reveres. He is dead, while Tyrion is exiled but alive, and extra-diegetically protected by fan and authorial favour. It might be argued, then, that in *GoT*, texts have some unstable authority but little power. Their objectivity cannot be trusted and they are easily destroyed; yet, those who disbelieve and so refuse to grant authority to text, such as Joffrey and Cersei, tend to suffer dramatic falls.

We can conclude, then, that authority in *GoT* is constructed as multifaceted, fractured, and dispersed, but still a recognisable discourse construction. It is quite different to power, which seems to be a property of the most brutal and violent, though it can be appropriated by cleverness. Authority is dependent on belief. It is found in patriarchs and charismatic leaders but it is always vulnerable: to force, to feminine manipulation, to the violence of the commons. This is an important point, as we will see when we come to discuss Martin's assertions of authority over his text. The fractured, fragmented, vulnerable status of authority in *GoT* is rather more modern than medieval, yet when Martin asserts his authority over the text, he reverts to some very traditional assumptions about the relations between text and author. We will address these next.

### **I AM YOUR AUTHOR: the word of Martin (and HBO).**

In a now-famous blog post, dated 07/05/10, George R. R. Martin asserted an authorial claim over the world of Westeros that does not 'permit fanfic.' Clearly, he does not have the *power* to ban fanfic, but discursively lays claim to the patriarchal, traditional authority of the author:

My characters are my children, I have been heard to say. I don't want people making off with them, thank you. Even people who say they love my children. I'm sure that's true, I don't doubt the sincerity of the affection, but still... (2010).



This is an ancient trope, and the discursive genealogy has been mapped by Rose (2002) and Gunkel (2012). Gunkel argues that ‘the idea of a book as the author’s child dates back at least to Plato,’ quoting him

“And every word,” Socrates explains, “when once it is written, is bandied about alike among those who understand and those who have no interest in it, and it knows not to whom to speak or not to speak; when ill-treated or unjustly reviled it always needs its father to help it; for it has no power to protect itself” (Plato in Gunkel, p. 74).

During the European Renaissance, ‘paternity [...] became the most common figure for expressing the relationship between an author and his works’ (Rose, p. 3) and the discourse ‘continues to exert conceptual pressure in contemporary copyright law, which, especially through the stipulations provided by the Berne Convention, recognize and seek to protect the “paternal rights” of authors’ (Gunkel, p. 74). Martin’s statements hinge on and consolidate this discursive formation. Only he, the Author/Father/God, can protect his children from abuse and deformity by the inferior writers who would accost them. Indeed, the word ‘plagiarism’ comes from a Latin word denoting kidnapping. Martin also claims a legal duty to ‘protect [himself] and [his] creations. He asserts that

a copyright MUST BE DEFENDED. If someone infringes on your copyright, and you are aware of the infringement, and you do not defend your copyright, the law assumes that you have abandoned it. Once you have done that, anyone can do whatever the hell they want with your stuff (2010).

This is false—copyright, so far as it goes, is automatic and requires no participation on the owner’s behalf, unlike Trademarks, which the law can assume to be lapsed if they are un-enforced (Templeton 2008). What we are concerned with here, however, is the discursive work performed by Martin’s statements. Consider Justman’s observations that ‘authority sets bounds, both formal and informal; a story is a bounded world; a book is bound literally. [...] Framing, an art term itself, can be a strategy of authority’ (1979, pp. 197; 200). Martin’s statements attempt to draw an authoritative frame that bounds and closes the fictional world.

Martin did admit in the 2010 post, which was primarily about his written works, that he was powerless to prevent people writing fanfic about the HBO TV show. ‘If the HBO show is a hit, I am sure it will generate reams

and reams of fanfiction. Whether HBO will encourage it, tolerate it, ignore it, or try to shut it down, I cannot say. That's their call' (2010). This may be taken as a milder form of textual provocation: it is baiting, in the sense that Martin is so clearly dismissive of their form, yet provocative of textual production in the sense that he acknowledge he cannot stop it. However, by the time Martin appears on the *GoT* DVD commentaries, his statements have modified dramatically (2013a,b). He describes his role as 'provid[ing] the underlying material' and is unperturbed by changes to the books, noting that showrunners Benioff and Weiss 'permit' him to write one script per season. He is here subject to their authority and praises the 'wonderful additions' of their lines. He commends the casting choices, claiming that actor Miltos Yerolemu 'is Syrio' and Peter Dinklage 'is Tyrion', despite the fact their physical features diverge from the book descriptions. He claims the character of Osha, dramatically changed from the books, may even influence his own writing and her direction in the book series. He comments that whilst 'book purists' may be upset by some changes, he himself is not: the frame of his work seems to have expanded and become more flexible than the one constructed in 2010.

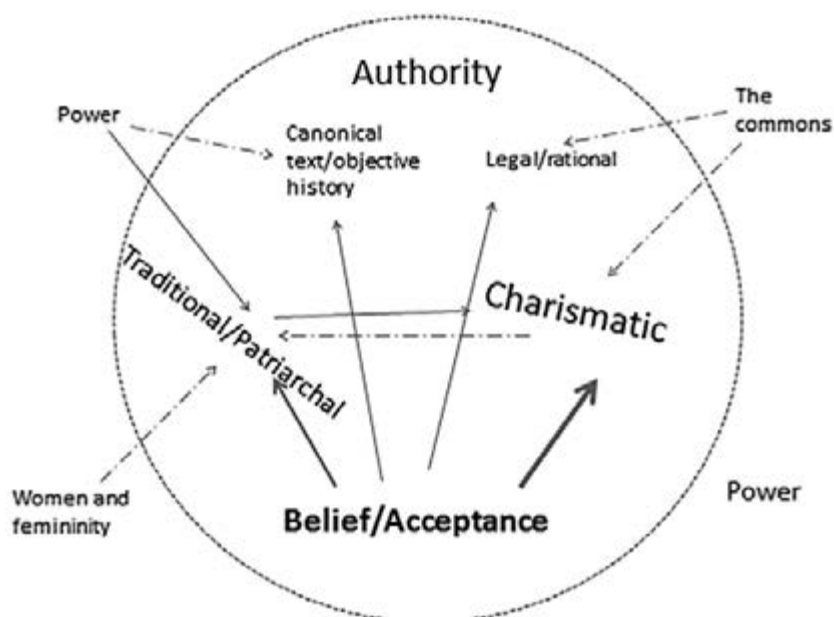
Benioff and Weiss themselves are actively dismissive of single authorship discourse. Strikingly, they too describe their series as 'fanfiction' (2013a): a highly profitable kind, to be sure, and apparently one Martin entirely approves of. In a radio interview, Benioff describes the ascription of a singular author to film and television as 'just a load of shit' (2013a), and praises the contributions of everyone concerned. In their DVD commentaries, they show none of the deference to Martin that Moffat and Gatiss expressed to Arthur Conan Doyle, and discuss their matching of the cast to their scripts rather than Martin's books (2013b). On the other hand, they do repeat a story in which they proved their fan credentials to Martin by correctly inferring a major plot point to come, in order demonstrate 'that we wanted to make the faithful adaptation. Then he saw the show for the first time and thought "That's my world, those are my characters"' (Lyus 2012). Yet they profess equal concern that 'the *fan community* seem to understand that we love the books as much as they do' (Cumming 2012, my emphasis).

In sum, then, the highly traditional and patriarchal discourse of sole authority espoused by Martin seems to break down and fragment in the discussion of the books' adaptation to television. Benioff and Weiss do not set themselves up as auteurs, and even defer to the fandom as gatekeepers in cooperation with Martin. Of course this is a rhetorical move—the 'fan community' can hardly be homogenized into holding a single view of what *GoT* could or should be and, like other fanboy-auteur figures, Benioff and

Weiss retain their position of industrial and economic power. But their description of the TV series as fanfiction of the books is an important statement and strong example of the legitimation paradox at work: further fanfic *of the books* is now legitimated via the textual provocation of the TV auteurs, and we will see how fans appropriate this statement, undoing to an extent Martin's claim to the 'principle of thrift in the proliferation of meaning' (Foucault 1991, p. 118). Fanfiction for the TV series is implicitly permitted via the showrunners' positive attitude towards it. Once again, fan activity is legitimated by White men in positions that are already culturally legitimate.

We might draw the discursive construction of authority over and in *GoT* as such:

**Fig. 9: The discursive construction of authority in *GoT*.**



Solid arrows here signify consolidation, broken arrows disruption. The governing statement is that authority depends on belief and acceptance. Rational-legal and the authority of the text are less supported by belief than traditional and charismatic. The white area outside the broken circle is signifies power without authority, in which women, femininity and the commons take part. As we can see, charismatic authority is the strongest construction, though the power of the commons destabilizes it.

Charismatic authority disrupts patriarchal; yet, traditional/patriarchal can actually reinforce charismatic, as in Daenerys's citation of her mythological history.

We turn now to the transformations and consolidations of the discourse, as reconstructed by fanfic. In doing so, we will necessarily be discussing fandom's negotiation of authorial legitimation more explicitly than previously, due to the fact that *all GoT* fanfic, by its form, contests an authorial prohibition.

### Fandom's Reconstruction of Authority in *Game of Thrones*

By searching at the communities of highest centralization (once again A03, LJ and ff.net), I located fanfic pertinent to the construction of authority. Because this is not a categorization in typical fannish use (with the exception of the 'abuse of authority' tag on A03), I had to utilize the search boxes for key terms 'power' and 'authority' on Ff.net and A03, and simply read the description of every entry in the centralized LJ community, as there is no reliable search function on LJ. The first finding of note is that there seems to be much *less* fanfic overall for *GoT* than *Sherlock* or *Supernatural*. Perhaps Martin's author-function has an effect on this, as an external force of regulation (cf. Foucault 1981, p. 56). Secondly, fans do not always distinguish between the TV and book versions. The LiveJournal community hbo-gotfiction claims to be exclusively for fic based on the television series, in order to respect the wishes of George R. R. Martin, but, in practice, contains fic referring to book-only events or characters. The boundaries of the TV and book text are fluid.

I coded a total of 154 fics with 8722 reviews. The distribution was as follows:

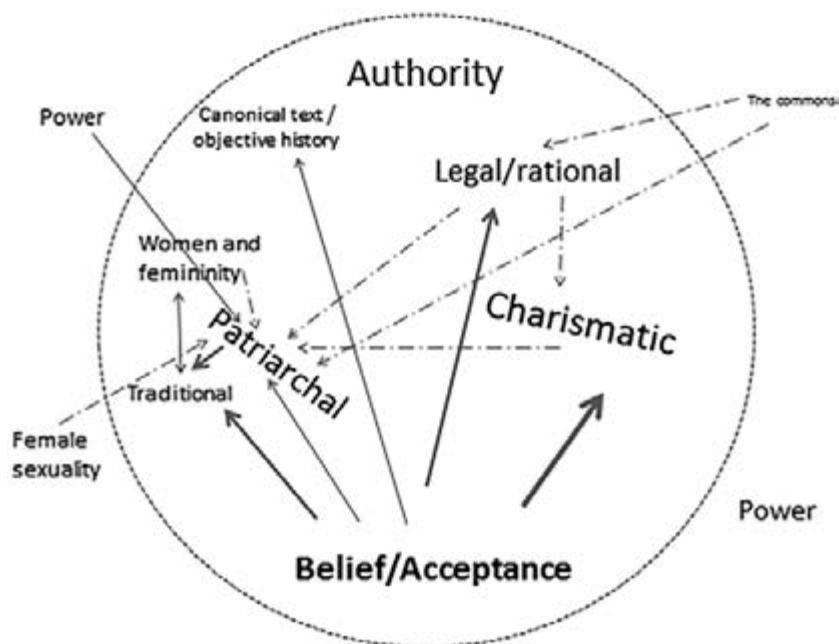
**Table 2: Table of fic distribution for *GoT*.**

Site	Ff.net	LJ	A03	Other	Overall
Number of fics	68	79	74	10	154
Highest number of comments on a fic	293	176	6461	24	6461
Lowest number of comments on a fic	0	0	0	0	0
Average number of comments on a fic (mean)	30.9	15.4	121.2	8.4	80.3
Average number of comments on a fic (median)	16	9	8	4	13

Values are to the nearest decimal place. Once again, several fics appeared on more than one site (hence the sum of the first four numeric cells in the top row is >154). There were 66 negative reviews, i.e. 0.8% of 8722, but this is still a significant percentage increase from the other fandoms. This suggests slightly differing social norms, with more tolerance for criticism and higher expectations of quality in *GoT* fandom, which is chronologically the youngest of the three.

Fandom's alteration of the discursive formation can be rendered thus:

**Fig. 10: Fandom's reconstruction of authority in *GoT*.**



As we can see, while the branches of the discursive formation remained similar to those found in canon, with the governing statement remaining. There is greater attention to and variation in the construction of women and authority. Women and femininity have been accepted into the sphere of authority, though female sexuality remains outside it. I have therefore allocated this branch its own section, in the discussion following patriarchy. Traditional and patriarchal authority have been separated and the prominence of the rational-legal model increased. Charismatic authority remains extremely prominent, and, if anything, the power of the commons to disrupt

it has *decreased*, a surprising finding for a supposedly democratic form of writing. One reason for this, as I will demonstrate, may be that Martin's strong and current author figure has influenced a norm to keep what fic there is relatively close to canon, which focuses primarily on upper class characters. On the other hand, the authority of the canonical text has been pushed to the edge of the formation, as faith in it is decreased (though still evident). We will now consider the branches of this reconstruction.

### Patriarchal

Unsurprisingly given the setting, feudal patriarchy remains an important model of authority in the fanfic. Snafu the Great's *Game of Thrones: Vendetta* posits an alternative path to destruction for Tywin Lannister as a direct consequence of Tywin's abuse of authority. Vengeance comes at the hands of Lucian Maegyr, a fan-invented father for Robb Stark's wife Talisa. On the TV show, the pregnant Talisa is murdered along with Robb and Catelyn Stark at Lannister's instigation, under the guise of a wedding feast, as noted above. In Snafu's story, Maegyr is constructed as 'the diametric opposite' of Tywin, with

natural charisma about him, in contrast to the forceful personality of Tywin Lannister. Lucian had the gentleness which reminded them of Ned Stark, but underlying that was the ruthlessness of a seasoned warlord (Snafu 2014).

Real patriarchal authority is not force, though force underlies it. As the fan-created House of Maegyr pursues its vendetta, the bad patriarchs of canon are systematically punished. Walder Frey, whose household carries out Tywin's massacre of the Starks, dies 'on his knees, sobbing as he watches his entire line being wiped out.' Joffrey is executed, and Lucian Maegyr kills Tywin in climactic single combat. The end of the story is the restoration of good patriarchy and the Targaryen dynasty, which Joffrey is made to publicly admit as the legitimate hereditary authority, pronouncing: 'I am not the true King [...] The true King of Westeros is Aegon Targaryen, Sixth of That Name, the Lord of the Seven Kingdoms and Protector of the Realm' (Snafu 2014). Repetitive declarative statements construct the end of the Lannister line and restoration of the Targaryen dynasty as critically important: 'So ended the life of Joffrey Baratheon, the deposed King of Westeros. [line break]. So ended the line of Cersei and Jamie Lannister' (*Ibid.*).

The solemn effect may suggest inevitability, and, indeed, the use of Biblical epitaphs and quotations on the inevitability of vengeance constructs

the Maegyr victory as a foregone conclusion. Snafu opens chapters with quotations like Ezekiel 25:17, which concludes with the promise of God's vengeance upon the unjust. The selection of Biblical paratexts reinforces the construction of *good* patriarchal authority as the legitimate and correct order of things; though of course, through the legitimation paradox, the fan author sources and appropriates this authority for himself, to 'correct' the text of *GoT* in which the just are rarely rewarded. A reviewer explicitly approves of this technique, noting 'you can never go wrong with the holy word of God!' (Runnero43 2014). *Vendetta* is a popular and well-received fic, gathering 49 reviews on Fanfic.net and a recommendation on Tumblr. There is only explicitly one negative, which is complains of undue credit and attention to the author's original characters.

The restoration of 'good' patriarchy, then, is a significant statement in the fandom construction. However, fics questioning the legitimacy of patriarchy itself are more common. Coolchica87's *For Want of a Better King* (2015a), an unfinished coming-of-age story for Arya, may sound from the title like a correctly managed patriarchy is the solution, but in fact, Arya has to protect her father, who admits he is 'drowning' in the capital city. This fic receives only ten reviews, but *On the Way There* (2015b), by the same author, receives 39, three times the overall median. In this story, Arya is married off to the royal bastard Gendry after the restoration of the Targaryen dynasty, but comes to rule 'as a lord' in Winterfell, negotiating an egalitarian marriage. As she advises her young cousin-by-marriage Shireen, 'The world is changing. And if you don't wish to marry, you don't have to' (2015b). Class and heritage, not gender, are the basis of her authority: she is confident that in Winterfell she will be respected as 'a Northerner' and a 'Stark' above the authority of her husband. Though there is an occasional mild criticism of the author's lexical choices, most reviews are consolidation statements of the 'Good story' (Don 2015) and 'please update ASAP' variety (Anon. 9 2015).

Indeed, there are a whole range of fics that replace the king with a queen, or lords with ladies, separating traditional from patriarchal authority and imbuing women with authority through their class heritage. (Fics imbuing female characters with *different kinds* of authority will be dealt with in the separate section below). Many address Arya Stark's rise to a position of power:

A slow smile unfurled across the King's face. "[Arya] has mustered an army of wildlings in the Gift. She retook Castle Black and put Bowen Marsh and all of his followers to the sword. This girl sacked the mighty Dreadfort, and fed Ramsay Snow to a pack of wolves." The King gave a shrug then, and leaned back in his seat. "Or so the tales proclaim. In any

event, she is the last Stark in Westeros who still draws breath, and that's good enough for me" (Valkyryst 2013).

In this story, which gathers 44 reviews on Fanfic.net, 12 on A03, and two recommendations on external sites, Arya's traditional authority as a Stark and the charismatic legends attached to deeds compensate for her gender. The legitimization paradox is still at work within the diegesis however: the woman is authorized by the king. Despite many heroic deeds, authority is ultimately granted to her by his proclamation that she is 'good enough.' Clearly, this dynamic is only logical within the diegetic feudal system, but as will be discussed below, it is notable how few *GoT* fics depart from this canonical structure of authority in any substantial way.

Many stories reconstruct and consolidate the narrative of Daenerys Targaryen's rise to power. There is an explicit tension in these stories between Daenerys-as-authority in her own right, and Daenerys-as-authority via her male relatives. Interestingly, it could be argued that the influence of male relatives is *greater* in fanfic than canon, where Daenerys' son, brother and husband are dead. Consider PristinelyUngifted's *The Song of Rhaego Fireborn* (2011), which gathers a significant total of 115 comments across the websphere, and all but three are positive. Here, Daenerys' husband Drogo and her son Rhaego are alive. Though she reflects that '[her brother] Viserys' obsession with the past,' with the mythological foundations of Targaryen authority, 'had earned him an early grave,' and 'it was time to look to the future,' when she descends on Westeros with force, she proclaims authority as dispersed across the patriarchal family structure:

"I am Daenerys Targaryen, and with me rides my husband, Drogo, Khal of the Dothraki, and my son, Rhaego, rightful heir of the Seven Kingdoms. You see that we have swords. You see that dragons fly with us. We are here for my son's birthright, and we will fight for it!" (PristinelyUngifted 2011).

The fronted 'I am' establishes Daenerys as authority via Biblical citation, but Daenerys's conquests are ultimately in the name of her son. One of the rare negative reviews undermines the patriarchal construction: 'You are my brother Drogo,' Khal Drogo said, 'And I give you my family. Should I fall in battle, they will be yours to care for' (PristinelyUngifted 2011). The response is: "The 'I give you my family' bit ruined the story" (Anon. 10 2014). Yet, on the whole, reviewers appreciate the balancing of the authority construct across the characters and their positions.



On a similar theme, in lydzi's *Queen* (2012), Shireen Baratheon becomes the queen of Westeros due to her heritage, a gentle and beneficent ruler who looks to the statue of her dead father for inspiration. Two of the commenters name her 'Stannis's daughter' or 'her father's daughter' (linndechir 2012; sternflammenden 2012). Yet, one significant story deconstructs the legitimacy of patriarchal authority in quite a systemic manner. In Gemmi92's *Deviance*, which, with 234 comments, is one of the most significant fics in the study from Fanfic.net, the original character of Sarah Baratheon must learn to disobey her father in order to become fulfilled. A strong subtext contributes parallel statements to the discourse, concerning the fan's disobedience of the author. The fact that they are subtextual is an illustration of that principle noted earlier, that at the edges or peripheries of discursive construction, special techniques may be necessary to permit the challenge to what is acceptable in that construction: 'if "tricks" are used, this is an indicator that certain statements cannot be said directly without risking negative sanctions' (Jäger and Maier 2009, p. 47). The trick here is subtext created through the equation of author and father figures. After all, simply in *writing* fic, one is expressly defying Martin's well-known statements. At the outset of *Deviance*, Sarah is a dutiful and obedient daughter. Jaime Lannister confronts her:

"Tell me, has your father always dictated your life, or are you just too scared to defy him?"

She took a moment to think before answering. "Both [...] I don't want to disappoint him. What child wants to disappoint their father?"

"Sometimes disappointment is necessary if we are to choose our own path," Jaime told her [...]

"But...it is only right to obey, isn't it?" Sarah checked. "I mean, my father has told me...the King..."

"If I had that thought, do you think your uncle would have been on the throne?" Jaime asked, picking up another piece of bacon. "No, little stag. You make the most of what there is" (Gemmi92 2013).

'Making the most of what there is' serves here as a statement on the construction of fanfic—an act of textual poaching and piecing together. After many trials, Sarah and her father Stannis have a pivotal scene in which she answers his injunction 'You are my daughter. You obey me,' with the correction that she is her 'own person too,' and symbolically takes his sword, emblem of patriarchal authority, from his hands.

Finally, it should be noted that the construction of patriarchal authority and its problems continues in modern AU fic. Given that AUs in many

fandoms span a huge variation of social systems, from space travel to animal transformation to office environments, we might expect rather more variation than is evident. GoT fic In Lady Jeyne Deadpool's *Song of Hormones and Broken Hearts*, Tywin the business magnate retains a harsh patriarchal hold over his daughter, limiting her movements and dress choices (2014). In just\_a\_dram's *A City of Fortune and Failure* (2015), set in contemporary New York, Robert is the fallen 'king of the military industry'; Lannister Mercantile the massive business conglomerate with de facto power over the city, and Joffrey the irresponsible playboy 'prince' of the city. Tywin's 'family legacy' is still his uppermost concern. Royalty is no longer important: Daenerys does in fact have a royal title, but 'It's meaningless [...] in the States'. She reflects that

Princess Dany of some godforsaken country that ceased to exist more than a century ago and wouldn't care to be ruled by the likes of her irresponsible, hot tempered brother if it did still exist is a title she'd rather be permanently shelved (just\_a\_dram 2015).

This important fic, set in a modern day would-be democracy that is still demonstrably, visibly structured by patriarchal authority is 'a game of business, politics and love in New York City.' Royalty confers wealth but no power or authority: Daenerys is a naïve, well-meaning socialite who swans about hosting charitable functions for causes she does not understand. Business and money in the hands of men and their male heirs rule New York. *City* is the second-most influential fic in the websphere. It has 1147 total comments, which consolidate its statements via appreciation of its characterization and faithfulness to a model of authenticity: 'Sansa's voice is so spot-on' (pennylane4 2014); 'Oh, thank you for this!! This is just beautiful and so perfectly Ned and Catelyn' (DKNC 2013). Again, the presence of a strong author figure who defends the integrity of his 'children' in the public realm may be a factor here, though we should not dismiss the possibility that fans simply enjoy reading 'more of' the characters they enjoy (Pugh 2005, p. 19), in addition to adapting and transforming them. Booth argues that 'nostalgia for the text' is an important shaping factor in fanwork as the impulse towards transformation and novelty (2015, p. 18).

The abuse of patriarchal authority in the present is the key theme of Lady\_Blade\_WarAngel's *The Seven Deadly Sins of King's Landing Academy* (2014). In this high school AU, Jaime and Tyrion gradually uncover that principal Robert Baratheon has been date-raping students and covering up his crimes for decades. The story is concerned with the costs of contemporary patriarchy to women. After a sexual assault, Margaery finds herself almost helpless in

this modern-day fic as the abused women of Westeros, recognizing her judge as a chauvinist. Patriarchal authority, backed by power, is alive and well in the modern day fics, though they are obviously highly critical of that fact.

This is also the case in the single most impactful fic in the formation. Hellholden's *Her Liquor's Top Shelf* (2015) receives an extraordinary 6461 comments, all on A03, mostly simple reinforcement of its statements along the lines of 'Do write soon!!! Your story is so good' (didi45 2013); 'Oh my goodness, I am sooo loving this fic! (littlebirdhound 2013); and 'OMG LOVE THIS! Please post more SOON' (Torie 2013). All but three are positive. The fic has been translated into French, had a playlist compiled for it, and receives much enthusiastic discussion on Tumblr; in sum, it has achieved significant status in fandom, probably due to its great length, fluent and well-plotted writing, and the popularity of its central romantic pairing. Internal mechanisms of regulation favouring these factors have consolidated its impact. Though largely concerned with rational-legal authority and its fallibility (see below), this modern-day AU also contributes to the construction of traditional/patriarchal authority. Sansa Stark is in relationship with the older Sandor Clegane. Her father is upset and attempts to ban her from seeing him, commenting with heavy dramatic irony: 'There are more suitable boys out there for her, boys like Joffrey.' The reader already knows at this point that Joffrey has acted abusively towards Sansa. Sansa disobeys her parents, but is also subject to a certain amount of control from her older boyfriend. When a woman propositions Sansa:

"She's not available," Sandor said curtly. Without any warning, he took Sansa by the chin to lift her head up as he looked down at her. "Are you available, Sansa?" When she couldn't answer him and could only open her mouth to make a few incoherent sounds, Sandor took his hand away from her chin and pointed down at her. "The answer to that is 'no,'" he informed her. "You're not available" (Hellholden 2015).

Though the author is always careful to stress in her framing notes that Sandor and Sansa have their problems, and their relationship is not perfect, and the few negative reviews are from readers uncomfortable with this and similar statements, which construct patriarchal authority as part of a romantic male/female relationship:

I don't like how Sansa automatically shuts-up when Sandor is angry. How she becomes afraid to speak her mind. [...] She shouldn't feel scare[d] of him at all, even when he's angry. She should be allowed to get angry back and speak her mind (SanSon23 2013).

Yet, the fic also features Tyrion's growing awareness of his politician father's corruption and hold over the family. Here he explains his motivations in finally conspiring to have Tywin brought to justice:

"Father," Tyrion began slowly, "asked me to do something very illegal and very traceable. It would have left an electronic fingerprint, a mark that would have led straight to me. I refused [...] I had had it with his lies and his manipulations and his...well, you know our father," Tyrion finished. "He was your father—"

"He was a selfish, arrogant, greedy, and abusive megalomaniac," Tyrion pronounced fervently, and he brought his fist down all of a sudden, banging it against the table (Hellholden 2015).

It seems then, that *Liquor* constructs patriarchal authority as negative, primarily due to its potential for abuse by corrupt or inept men. Yet, some readers perceive it as constructing patriarchal authority within a relationship as natural and, by commenting as such, reinforce the very construct they critique. Overall, the construction of patriarchy in fandom has not changed the canonical one considerably: patriarchal authority is generally dangerous and abusive in practice, though theoretically it may be beneficent in the hands of a good man. However, the *context* of fanfic is an anti-patriarchal practice, whilst the framing of the legitimate text in Martin's style is an absolutely patriarchal one. Anti-patriarchal statements in canon are thus ironic; whilst those in fandom, where young female characters learn to 'make the best of what there is' in spite of fathers, are rendered sincere by context and opposition to the author-father. There is a sense in which *all* fanfic is anti-patriarchal, at least that which is freely shared and explicitly acknowledged as a transformative work: its *form* is oppositional to the single authority of the White male author figure. And yet, as I am arguing, its textual and paratextual appeals to that authority, in various forms, complicate that transformative impulse across fandoms.

### Rational-legal authority

Fandom seems more interested in the construction of rational-legal authority than canon, and constructs it with greater detail and variation. Perhaps this is to be expected: rational-legal authority is the kind most people are most familiar with in contemporary culture (Allan 2004, p. 151), given that most of us live in avowedly democratic societies with elected leaders. It is generally constructed positively, particularly through the character of

Stannis (though now that Stannis has undergone a significant fall from grace in canon, this will probably change in the future). In Lindechir's *Life Lessons*, young Stannis observes to his father that he, not his elder brother, would make the more suitable lord of Storm's End. His father explains the necessity of the laws of inheritance to him, relying not on tradition as a justification, but a ration-legal premise:

"Do you know why we have laws, Stannis?" [Steffon asked].

[...]

"Because there can be no justice without laws. The law ensures that every man gets what he deserves." It sounded like something Maester Cressen had taught him.

"But the law isn't infallibly just, is it? [...] while the law should of course strive to be as just as possible, its main purpose is to maintain order. A world without laws would sink into chaos [...] That is how the king rules the country, how every lord rules his lands, every knight his castle, every man his family [...] Even a king cannot simply do away with the laws of the land, and if he does, he destabilises the entire continent. For if one man defies the law and gets away with it, others will follow" (Lindechir 2013a).

Lindechir is a well-known fandom author, so her statements come pre-imbued with a certain authority (cf. Hills 2006; Chin 2010, pp. 15–16). Reviewers affirm this via the legitimization paradox in explicit form, commenting on the authentic quality of her writing: 'I felt like I was reading another POV chapter from a GRRM book' (datalenkoass 2013). Fanwork is praised for being almost as good as the author-ed text, for being similar or faithful to it. The 'discussion at the heart of [the] story' is affirmed as a valid argument, reviewers commenting that with a solid legal system, 'life isn't perfect but could be a lot worse' (emynithilien 2013a). This sort of fic, centred on Stannis and the rational justification of authority, is quite common: see also rolfskate's *A Father's Sons* (2012) and emynithilien's *How Long Have I Been in this Storm* (2013b). The individual fics do not tend to make huge impact: the last three referenced receive 11, 13 and 9 comments respectively, but their relative frequency and the fact they never provoke objection construct rational-legal authority as uncontroversial and easily accepted.

As mentioned above, *Liquor's* primary model of authority is rational-legal. Authority is structural not personal. Jaime Lannister's authority comes not from his father, but from his position as a police officer; once stripped of

his position and arrested, he reflects that 'he was nobody now. There was no power or authority in his voice anymore. [Line break]. He wondered just how his father expected to get him out of this mess.' The 'golden armour' he had been dressed in, metaphorically as opposed to literally in the show, came from his job not his heritage. Likewise, Daenerys poses as a 'mail-order bride' who may or may not be royalty, but is actually a secret agent, and produces her official identification as the means to prove her authority (Hellholden 2015). Though the characters are imperfect, allowing Jaime to abuse his authority behind a 'shiny badge', the *system* is sound, and it is the impersonality of the system that renders it so. Brienne reminds Jaime that their jobs as police are to 'uphold the law, not to uphold [their] ideas,' and as Brienne is a heroine in the story, the statement is significant. Quite incidentally then, through its sheer popularity, *Liquor* shores up the construction of rational-legal authority in *GoT* fanfic as legitimate and sound.

There is also a small subset of fics dealing with systemic change in Westeros. In a LiveJournal fic exchange, prompter janie\_tangerine requests a story set

[p]ost-canon, since it's obvious that the absolute monarchy system failed then it's obviously time to find a better one. The Republic of Westeros? Constitutional monarchy? Constitutional monarchy with every realm being separated? Democracy [...]? The wildlings take charge and everything turns into organized anarchy that somehow works? (quoted in redcandle17, 2015).

Redcandle17 responds with *Game Change*, a story in which Daenerys has come to power and has 'great changes' in store for the governance of Westeros. She intends to institute a representative democracy, convening

"a grand council that will meet every year hereafter. After the tourney, [she] shall convene every lord and landed knight of note, along with representatives from the Citadel, the Faith, the Night's Watch... and the guilds" (redcandle17 2015).

Sansa, who still thinks in terms of traditional authority, 'would not have thought the guilds important enough to warrant a say in matters of the realm,' given that 'they were only commoners,' but Daenerys is determined that though at present she 'cannot have tens of thousands of village elders in the council [...]' some day we shall figure out how to give the peasants their say.'

Given the prompt, the rational-legal authority of elected leaders is obviously constructed as legitimate and correct here. As a\_dragonlady comments:

Logically the governance of Westeros had to change or there would only be a repetition of past problems e.g. abuse of power by the monarchy and nobles leading to rebellion and civil war. I think that only Dany of all the contenders for the Iron Throne would be able to conceive of a new system that would eventually curb her powers and those of her successors as absolute monarchs (2015).

Traditional patriarchy descends into brute force regardless of who is in charge: the fault is with the system, which instils too much power in one person. Now the discursive formation begins to change—albeit with the same gradualness described in the story. *Game Change* has no massive impact, gathering 16 comments across the websphere, though all are positive and intrigued by the premise. There is even some mild objection or at least alertness to the legitimation paradox played out in the text, wherein a hereditary ruler authorizes the people:

And I like that you have Dany herself suggesting this Great Council—how often does an absolute ruler suggest something akin to a parliamentary system? Usually these things come from the bottom up (well, or at least from below the ruler!) and with quite a bit of bloodshed along the way (Zoesong 2015).

ZoeSong is right that these types of changes typically are brought on by the ruled, not the ruler! But perhaps it takes a right minded Queen, eh? (Lilone1776, 2015).

There are two other fics in which Daenerys deliberately delegates and disperses her traditional authority. Selena Dobрева's *Freed Bird* (2015), which constructs a kind of authority inextricable from femininity and womanhood, will be dealt with in the section on women and authority below. The other is *After the Dragons* by Ashesintheair, in which Daenerys conquers Westeros but then immediately divides up its rule, leaving Jaime Lannister as regent in the south. In a verbal demonstration of the legitimation paradox, she informs him:

“Dorne has seceded; let them go their own way. The Queen in the North stays where she is [...] Don't war with either of them, find some other way

to settle your grievances. Last, my nephew has command of the Wall and it protects all of you. All of you will support him. His lands have been given over to wildlings so a tithe will be provided to him [...]. Other than that, the south is yours. We will take a master with us to train ravens to fly across the Narrow Sea. Send me word from time to time. Don't make me wish I had settled for an execution" (Ashesintheair 2015).

Jaime is granted authority at the behest of the queen, an instance of legitimation by appeal to a female character in authority. However, in these fics, the legitimation paradox is at work both diegetically and extra-diegetically. Through traditional authority, and backed by its force, Daenerys divides up the rule of Westeros. Through appropriation of George R. R. Martin's 'child' Daenerys, Ashesintheair re-arranges Westeros to her own desire. In the story Jaime's first act as regent is to melt the Iron Throne, or 'unmake the symbol of [his] authority,' which is also George R. R. Martin's. Daenerys, approving of Jaime's actions, has the melted iron 'thrown into the sea,' considering the symbol too powerful to leave in Westeros. It is not merely the 'drunks and monsters' who have recently sat upon the throne that is the problem: the problem is absolute monarchy. Yet, this most careful and explicit deconstruction of traditional authority in favour of a rational-legal system fails to make much impact on the formation. It receives only two comments on Ao3. Where fandom is changing the discursive construction of authority, it is gradual and slow.

Finally, it should be noted that rational-legal authority is not without its critical dissection. In regertz's unfinished *Back to the Throne Room*, Westeros has been invaded by technologically advanced aliens known colloquially as Dirters. The Dirters, who bear a striking resemblance to the US administration, have installed the young Aegon Targaryen as a puppet king and Tyrion as a minister. Tyrion is sharp enough to understand the true politics of the occupation; when a Dirter Lieutenant remarks that they once had to 'nuke a planet' whose inhabitants kept killing invaders and were on the brink of a technological breakthrough, Tyrion remarks:

"Of course... [...] That would have been terrible. What a pity those people didn't see the light and realize your people are out for more than just to take resources and put others to work doing it. Even if temporarily there's disruption to our way of life and we seem to receive little benefit at first, in the long run we know we'll be a better place..." Cough, cough... "...For it..." Cough... "You must excuse me, could we put that window up?" (regertz 2015).



Very obviously, the rational-legal administration of Westeros by the Dirlers is designed to do exactly the above. Perhaps Daenerys the charismatic authority who has proved 'brave, a competent ruler [...] but hopelessly out of her depth against Varys and the Dirlers he'd chosen to back' would have been preferable in this case. The mentally unstable young king Aegon holds no authority. He fears usurpation, so the Dirlter Senator assures him they stand ready to 'support the legitimate government,' quelling the populace by force if necessary to keep their puppet in place. Tyrion muses on the Dirlters'

commitment to 'non-interference' or 'equal justice' for natives and their own or the continued 'complete independence' of the societies they encountered, finding the concept 'relative' and 'flexible', particularly in times of crises...The definition of 'crisis' being reserved of course, to them (regertz 2015).

Quite clearly, the rational-legal structure of consent, treaty and legitimate government is as open to abuse here as the traditional patriarchy, though it is constructed as the 'modern' alternative, forcibly ushered in by 'advanced societies'. *Back to the Throne Room* receives nine comments, rendering it on par with the other the other fics specifically constructing rational-legal authority as the replacement of traditional models. Its statements are arguably strengthened by their allegory of contemporary global politics. Yet, the dominance of *Liquor* in the overall discursive formations means that the construction of rational-legal authority as natural, sane and sound are the stronger statements, incidental as this may be to its popularity. It is well-received because of factors favoured in fandom: good writing, length, a plot and the employment of a popular pairing, and its statements gain impact due to that popularity. Internal mechanisms of fandom, then consolidate its statements (cf. Foucault 1981, p. 56).

### Charismatic authority

Charismatic authority remains a prominent construction in the formation as altered by fanfic. It is generally presented as strong, effective and largely beneficent, focused around the characters of Jon Snow and Danaerys Targaryen. It is far more prominent, and makes much more impact than the constructions of rational-legal authority explored above, particularly on Fanfiction.net.

In Mx4's *The First Sparks*, Jon is constructed as a charismatic authority by virtue of divine heritage. This is non-canonical, though the circumstances of Jon's birth are a mystery, and there is speculation that he is the legitimate hereditary heir of Westeros and perhaps its prophesied saviour. In *Sparks*, he is a Christ figure, his true father being the Fire God R'hllor. To come into his power, he must 'face three trials. A trial of the mind. A trial of the heart. And a trial of the soul' (Mx4 2015). The three-trial pattern hooks into the discourse of myth, fairytale and religion (notably, the Three Temptations of Christ). First, Jon must battle the image of his stepbrother Robb Stark, the traditional heir of Winterfell. Though the image of Robb is stronger, Jon passes the trial when he realises 'that Robb Stark was as much constrained by his title of Lord of Winterfell as he had been elevated by it. That Robb had been born into a cage that he had no hope of escaping.' He tells his brother, 'I don't need to fight you' for Robb 'may be the Lord of Winterfell, but [he has] no choice [...] I have learned to be a lord. Or a warrior. Or a scholar. No matter what I may become, it will only ever be my choice' (Mx4 2015). Traditional authority may be backed by more force, but Jon's charismatic authority, constructed as is the product of choice and labour, proves the more genuine form.

Jon must then battle his own baser instincts in the form of a wolf/dragon monster (symbols of the houses he is descended from) and empathetically suffer the pains of the vulnerable in society: women, children and the poor. As he feels them, he experiences the sensation of being whipped, a scene intertextually reminiscent of Christ's passion. Further, he experiences a miraculous rebirth through fire, and at last is sent by his divine father on exile from his homeland, in order to fulfil his destiny as Azor Ahai, legendary saviour of Westeros. The story is unfinished, so his authority is not yet consolidated, but the repeated citation of mythological tropes makes it clear that the basis is charismatic. *The First Sparks* receives a very respectable 168 comments across the websphere, only one of which is negative, and that is simply a flat correction of a spelling mistake.

Jon as charismatic authority through divine or legendary heritage is a common trope. It features in Valkryst's *Blood of the Direwolf* (2012) and *The Bastard Reborn* (2013), and also in emynithilien's pointedly titled *It's the Man Who Makes the Lord* (2012), in which he rises from the dead after his murder by the Night's Watch. Fans often theorize that this will happen in canon: this charismatic authority is constructed as triumphing over the brute force of the people, superior to a democratic (if violent) movement. Interestingly, though, in *It's the Man*, charismatic authority does not confer the rule of Westeros. That belongs to Stannis, also rumoured to be the

prophesied saviour of Westeros, and though he does defeat the King of the Others in single combat, his sword

‘Lightbringer’ no longer glowed, and when other men made comments [Stannis] brusquely said that he had never put much stock in being Azor Ahai anyway, but he not being some mythical hero did not stop him from remaining the rightful king of Westeros (emynithilien 2012).

*It's the Man* receives 26 comments across the websphere, whilst *Blood and The Bastard* receive 50 and 56 respectively. Fics where charismatic figures are granted greater power and authority, then, have more impact on the discursive formation. Compare outboxed's *Of Prophecy and Kingship*. Here again, Stannis' traditional, inherited authority is constructed as superior to the charismatic authority Jon Snow has gained as military leader of the Night's Watch. The parallelism in the title explicitly contrasts these types of authority, embodied by the two leading characters. Before meeting Jon, Stannis had been expecting confrontation, prepared for conflict between the military order and the state:

“So it is still my kingdom to you then, Lord Snow?” Stannis asks.

Before all this, Jon might have thought that Stannis was merely testing for insolence but it feels almost a real question now. Jon isn't sure why it should be, though he knows why it is, in truth, has feared all along the expectation that he might rise up and proclaim himself. He will not give credence to such ideas by addressing them though, so he merely says: “you are King Robert's rightful heir.”

[...]. “And you do not wish to sue for it?” Stannis asks. “Men would follow you.”

“I have no wish to be king and no right even if I did.” Jon says (outboxed 2013).

Popular, charismatic power is a potential threat to traditional hereditary authority, but does not have the authority to overthrow it. Jon has power; Stannis has authority. Jon is quite happy with this arrangement. Interestingly, this fic receives only three comments, suggesting that whilst traditional authority is uncontroversial in fanfic, charismatic is constructed as more powerful.

By contrast, in *Blood of the Direwolf*, Jon and Arya achieve transcendent bonds with their direwolf companions that inspire them to heroic deeds. In *The Bastard*, Jon is again resurrected from death and must fulfil his

destiny as 'the prince who was promised.' The story is unfinished, but there is nothing to suggest the projected ending will be overturned. In *Blood*, Arya too features as a charismatic authority, who has 'trained under the Faceless assassins and the First Swords of Braavos. Her hands had spilt more blood than most knights. And now she had stormed the Dreadfort... and tasted the flesh of men.' She stirs the Northern people to follow her with charismatic speeches:

"These people are Godless!" Arya roared, her heart aflame. "These people have drenched themselves in the blood of your kin, and then demanded you lick their boots clean. These people slew your own lord in cold blood... my father!" Her chest pounding with rage. "And you wish to kneel to them like dogs, and praise their sword arm? Well I'm sick of kneeling. Winter has come, my lords. Now is not the time for dogs. Now is the time for wolves." A choir of cheers erupted from wildling and clansman alike (Valkyrist 2012).

Overall, statements like these, which construct charismatic authority as more admirable and effective than its alternatives, make more impact on the formation. In addition to the higher number of reviews, readers respond with frequent compliments and enthusiasm. There are also four negative reviews of *Blood* and two of *The Bastard*, including a critique of charismatic authority:

Why are you demonizing Bowen Marsh [a Nights Watchman, critical of Jon's leadership]?

His actions were rash, but he was right—Jon went against his vows and duty as a Lord Commander once he decided to go to Winterfell.

While this whole wildlings business was more or less acceptable, because it was clearly for the benefit of the Watch, going on a personal revenge/rescue mission is NOT acceptable for a Lord Commander [...] I just can't accept your portrayal of Marsh as a power-hungry maniac (Blazen 2013).

To keep to one's 'vows and duty' and act in the name of the many, a rational-legal construct, is positioned by these statements as more legitimate than charismatic leadership. Thus, though charismatic authority is generally constructed as powerful and positive, there are some statements acting as a counterweight to that trend.

These observations hold for the construction of Daenerys Targaryen as charismatic authority. Building upon the canonical construct, Daenerys

as conqueror and ruler of Westeros is a popular fic trope. Sometimes her charismatic authority is constructed imagistically:

Daenerys Targaryen sat on the dais like she was born to sit on thrones. Her crown fit her head like a helm, crafted in the form of three dragons, nestled in her hair and staring out with their ruby eyes. Rather than a long, flowing gown she dressed in a faded leather vest and men's breeches, cinched at the waist with a belt of medallions, and on her feet were strawlike sandals. Her unorthodox attire did nothing to undermine her queenliness; rather, it was the opposite. It said, I am the Mother of Dragons. I dress how I please (elalendi 2014).

Notice the legitimation paradox at work: some elements of patriarchal authority, i.e. battle dress, are appropriated in order to represent the authority of a woman. Compare *The Song of Rhaego Fireborn*, wherein Daenerys's charismatic authority is legitimated by and through her living son. Rhaego clearly has divine or mystical origin. He grows unnaturally fast and communicates with dragons:

The khalasar viewed all the strange magic surrounding Rhaego as part of his birthright as the Stallion Who Mounts the World [...]. To them he was a legend already, as miraculous as the dragons he had been born with. They accepted all he did and all that he was with wonder and praise (PristinelyUngifted 2011).

Daenerys and her husband go on to reclaim Westeros in the name of their son. As noted, *Song* receives an impactful 115 comments.

On the other hand, two of the most popular fics in the formation subtly mock the charismatic authority of Daenerys in canon as ineffective and irrational. In *Liquor*, before her real authority as a secret agent is revealed, Daenerys's 'princess' disguise is a source of humour, as her 'knee-length pearl-colored Armani gown' and petulant fondness for the word 'no' contrast with the capability of practicality of the characters around her:

"She kept demanding that she wanted a crown, so I bought her one," Tyrion said.

"Are you serious?" Jaime asked, unable to stop himself, but he was grinning like a madman. "What's it made out of?" Jaime inquired further. "Rhinestones and aluminum?"

Tyrian made a face like he didn't want to answer that question, but he did anyway. "White gold and diamonds," he admitted slowly (Hellholden 2015).

When Daenerys is revealed as a secret agent, the sham is revealed: her authority really stems from a legal position. In *A City of Fortune and Failure* she is as glamorous and popular as in canon, but utterly ineffective, 'babbl[ing] about social justice [while her advisor] Jorah Mormont had little to share in return but a fair dose of pessimism and a propensity to peer down her dress' (just\_a\_dram 2015). It is notable that both these examples are set in the modern world. Charismatic authority is glorified—though not without its detractors—when set in the world of Westeros, but its effectiveness and legitimacy in the contemporary world, with its rational-legal models, is more limited. In general, then, fandom has not greatly changed the Weberian scheme of authority in *GoT*. Charismatic is still the most effective, though rational-legal may be somewhat more prominent, and patriarchy perhaps more criticized through interest in and development of female characters. Moreover, as we will now see, fandom attributes genuine authority to women.

### Women, power and authority

As explained, women in canon are without authority, but gain power through manipulation of powerful men. Fanfic changes this significantly and self-consciously alters this. Some simply establish Daenerys as 'as queen first and as a female ruler' (Selena Dobрева 2015), or in the case of sapphire blue-ruby red roses's *Q is for Queens of a Pair* (2015), alter the patriarchal structure so that Arya and Daenerys can rule together as 'co-queens'. In *Freed Bird*, Daenerys' 'pure femininity and power' replaces the appropriation of patriarchal dress and rhetoric. 'She is kind, and strong,' comments Margaery Tyrell, 'not many women are to be so [sic] and be accepted so lovingly' (Selena Dobрева 2015).

Women as embodying a different kind of strength and a different kind of authority is fairly popular trope. In got-exchange, opheliahyde requests 'a story of queens, those that would-be or could-be, those that are and those that were; all of these ladies have a story, I'd love to hear it—if anything else, you could always write an AU where the ladies rule Westeros' (quoted in oparu 2012). Oparu responds with the story *Peacekeepers*, the canonically dead wife of the last Targaryen prince rules Westeros, and Daenerys, Margaery and Sansa, ruling the various realms, maintain a lasting peace

through their friendship (oparu 2012). In the same author's *Thawing Deep*, Sansa as the last Stark becomes the ruler of Winterfell, and establishes an authority based on the empathetic understanding that 'Her people need a lady, not an avenging warrior':

She leaves candles in the sept and lingers in the godswood, listening for the voices of her family [...] Words have no heat in her mouth, and anger slumbers in her chest. She trades jewels for food, then tapestries, what remains of their books, armour, weapons, everything that will not feed or clothe her people is expendable like so many tales of chivalrous princes (oparu 2012b).

She has grown up and put fairytales behind her, but her authority stems from nurturing, the female-coded provision of food and warmth. As illustrated in figure 14, women have entered the sphere of authority via class heritage, destabilizing patriarchy and separating patriarchal authority from traditional. Meanwhile on the throne, Daenerys 'speaks of forgiveness and rebuilding, growing a kingdom from the ashes and mud of too much war' (oparu 2012b). Similarly, in Ghosted's *Swallowed by a Wave*, Sansa and Asha peaceably rule the North and the Islands as 'sisters of the brothers who should have inherited the world' (Ghosted 2012). Reviewer youremyqueen quotes the line, solidifying its contribution to the discursive formation, and praises:

God, yes, that line. Because Robb and Theon are great, and I love them dearly, but Sansa and Asha are the heroes of their own stories and maybe they won't go down in the histories quite the same, but there they are anyhow (youremyqueen 2012).

Finally, in magisterequitum's *When You Kiss Me, I'm Happy Enough*, Sansa's 'remaking [of] the history of Winterfell' via her tapestry work is symbolic of her acts to 'sti[t]ch up the north and bind its wounds' (magisterequitum 2011a). Via the feminine activity of weaving, Sansa both establishes her peaceful reign and rewrites herself and her family into history. 'I really think that line there is how she will end up' the author comments on her story, 'She's going to get to a point where she starts shaping reality for herself' (magisterequitum 2011b). *When You Kiss Me* receives a respectable 41 comments across the sphere, 35 of which are on LJ, but *Swallowed by a Wave* only 5 and *Peacekeepers* 18. All were originally written on LJ, indicating that site as most receptive to the construction of a new feminine form of

authority. *Peacekeepers* later appears on A03, but none of them appear on FF.net.

There is also a large set of fics consolidating and expanding the canonical construction of sex and motherhood as female paths to power. Fandom, however, tends to explore the psychology of these methods and the necessity of their pursuit. Part of this is probably down to medium: written text provides more space for interior dialogue than television. In makeitfly's *The Girl Who Ran So Fast*, Myrcella Baratheon, married off to a prince of Dorne, finally comes to understand her mother's power as equal to her father's:

Her mother too was a hunter, Myrcella understood that now. Born a Lannister and raised up to be a Baratheon and a queen, a litter of princesses and princes and kings springing from her loins. She survived King's Landing, even tamed it for a while, the only place in all Seven Kingdoms more infested with snakes than Dorne itself. Perhaps she had been a young girl too, trapped in a different sort of prison, stalking a different sort of prey. Both had destroyed prey, eviscerated their names (makeitfly 2012).

Myrcella becomes a hunter herself as her royal husband impregnates her:

He slid the noose around his own neck at the end. He pulled away too late, spilling inside her for the first time. Afterwards he placed his hand on her stomach, as though to embrace a child who would someday grow in her womb. Their child.

"I love you, Myrcella."

Only a few words. The trap was set, the prey caught. She smiled (ibid).

Sex grants women power, but not authority (see figure 9). In J. M. Parker's *Dany's Dream*, Daenerys observes that, with the late Drogo and the growing child in her belly, 'Dany had been infinitely empowered [...] Yet, she was still very much reliant on her husband' (Parker 2011). It is a tentative balance. This point is made explicitly in linndechir's *The Kingmaker*, where Asha and her uncle Victarion arrive at a power-sharing agreement over the iron islands. He has all the authority:

"I don't need a title, nuncle." [Asha] sighed and shook her head. "I don't even need you to acknowledge that you share your rule with a woman, if you're worried about men laughing at you. I simply need to know that you will listen to me."

[...]



“What makes you think I want that?” [Victarion asked]

“I saw how you looked at me earlier today,” Asha said.

Asha is aware that her power here rests on her balancing and manipulation of gender roles:

“You aren’t much of a woman, Asha,” [Victarion said].

“I’m enough of a man to help you rule, nuncle.” [...] “And believe me, I’m enough of a woman to handle you” (linndechir 2013b).

In keeping with the title, Asha states that she will call her uncle a king when she has made him one. These fics draw a distinct line between power and authority: power is attributed to women and authority to men. Thus, female *sexuality* remains outside the formation of authority in figure 10, in the realms of power, though both that and the forms of female authority which have been accepted into the construction destabilise patriarchy. In these fics, sex is the natural and necessary route to power for women, but other methods, based around nurturance and cooperation, are more successful in the pursuit of authority.

Fandom is moderately invested, then, in consolidating the construction of sex as female power. None of these fics make a massive impact—*The Girl Who Ran* receives 24 comments, *Long Road* 11, and *The Kingmaker* eight, but together they do make up discernible set of statements. By contrast, there is a smaller set of statements that construct female sexual power as insufficient without authority to bolster it. In bkgirl’s *Running to the Edge of the World*, Cersei on trial before an unsympathetic court realises that ‘in the end, out of all the lovers she’d taken to bed, all the men that had professed undying affection, she was alone. No one had come to speak in her defense.’

Sex is not enough. Nor is the position of women always so easily manipulated. In tenten\_d’s *What’s Buried Underneath*, the canonically dead Lyanna Stark attempts to make the best of her position as the consort of the Targryen prince Rhaegar. The summary promises ‘five times a woman can do nothing to prevent a tragedy and the one time she can’ (2014). The 5 + 1 formula is a common template for short fanfics, often used as a challenge prompt. In this Rome-like AU, Lyanna attempts to influence her royal husband but is still beaten and forced to watch her brother brutalized in gladiatorial games. Finally, called away to war, her husband kills her and their child rather than leave her to the barbarians he believes will overrun the city. With 36 reviews across the websphere, *Buried* has more impact as a single work than those constructing sex as female power, thus providing a vivid and poignant counter-statement.

Finally, there is a set of statements exploring the reversal of gender roles, either in sexual play or set in an alternative universe. In *lainemontgomery's The Flint and the Flame* (2012), Joanna Lannister dominates Tywin sexually though without force. In *oparu's Beneath the Old Gods*, Catelyn and Eddard play at a reverse wedding, in which she would name him 'Lord Tully,' her maiden name, and make him 'a trout instead of a wolf,' the sigil of her house (2011a). Commenters appreciate the pleasure and sensuality of these fics. Here, female sexual power grants her authority, but only in play. On the other hand, the same author's *The Stranger's Road* is self-described as a 'matriarchal AU set during Lyanna Stark's rebellion against Queen Rhaella on Iron Throne.' The full premise follows pre-canonical events of *GoT*, but casts female characters in male roles and vice versa. Men in this world are assigned to

building, farming and music, keeping house and hall warm and snug until the women came home from war. Women gave life and women brought death, men were for the in between, trading and singing; raising children while the women fought and died (oparu 2012c).

Yet, the events of this story, dependent on the abuse of power by monarchs and control of the smallfolk by nobility, are unchanged. As the author comments:

For this story, I think with feudalism and a well-defined class structure it doesn't matter which gender is in charge, the lower classes do most of the work, and some of that would still be split across gender lines but there's nothing stopping the upper classes from doing what they want (2012d).

Matriarchy, then, is constructed as a plausible alternative to patriarchy, but not a necessarily progressive one. Power and authority remain in the hands of the few in this traditional structure, with all the attendant problems. Indeed, most fics addressing women, power and authority tend to leave the class structure of Westeros more or less intact, but fandom also takes up the theme of the commons as a threat to authority. This is addressed in the next section.

### **The Commons**

As a summary to her fic *Our Claws Are Sharp*, DaliWritesThings asks:

George Martin has showed us the minds of the noblemen of Westeros, but what of the ordinary people living their lives under the kings' shadows? A poem about the people's bitterness (2013).

Ostensibly, fanfic.net does not allow poetry, but this instance has apparently been allowed to stand and thus appears as part of the sample. It warns:

We live in fear of cold and winter  
 The hunger, the ill and the sword  
 We have no food and we have no water  
 But our claws are sharp, milord (2013).

The final line cites and alters the canonical song ‘The Reynes of Castamere’, in which a nobleman warns his rival that his claws ‘are long and sharp, my Lord.’ Interestingly, this fic only receives one review. Perhaps relative unpopularity of the form influences the lack of impact on the formation.

Statements on class structure worked into longer stories tend to make more impact by virtue of their context. In CoolChica87’s popular *On the Way There*, Arya is confronted by a commoner:

“I’ll not be judged by the likes of you.” He says.  
 “A woman, you mean.”  
 “No, a lady. You highborns can judge us all you like, tell us what to do, but you’re not here. You weren’t here. You’ve no idea what it’s like. You start wars, and it’s us who fight in ‘em. I’ll not apologize for the choices I made [in battle] (2015b).

Arya’s position as a noble actually diminishes her authority in a period of upheaval. Compare miss\_izzy92’s *It’s Violent Times for Weary Feet* (2012a), an AU fic set in Revolutionary Russia. The summary and central question of this short fic is ‘Why is your pain worth more than ours?’ which the peasant Gendry poses to the noble Arya, last survivor of a decimated house. In this ‘world turned upside down,’ Gendry awakens to find Arya holding a knife at his throat, accusing:

“You came and took everything! My home, my father, my brother.”  
 “You’re... noble?” With her wild hair and wilder eyes, she didn’t look noble. Something flashed across her eyes and he knew he was right.  
 “You’re in pain.” Her hand was shaking. He could feel it from where the cold steel vibrated against his throat.  
 “Yes.” She choked out.  
 “Why is your pain worth more than ours?” Her eyes widened. “I never did anything to your family.”  
 “Your red friends.” She spat and he could see her growing angrier.

“And what have your people been doing to the workers for centuries?”  
(miss\_izzy92, 2012a).

There is no answer to that. The fic opens with an epigraph from Volin, acknowledging that ‘it is the people who make [the state] run—whether under compulsion or freely.’ The rule of the nobility is maintained through violent exploitation of the ordinary people, and subject to threat from it. *Violent Times* receives 18 reviews, a respectable reception by LJ standards, but that is about the sum of the statements from the perspective of the commons: The vast majority of *GoT* fic is concerned with the nobility: here is a circumstance where fandom may have altered categories of interpretation (Artieri 2012, p. 463), but has not. Miss\_izzy92 comments on her own fic, ‘I have no idea why the ASOIAF ff isn’t more varied. It’s very limited to slight variations from the plot and modern AUs’ (2012b). Perhaps Martin’s proprietary statements of authority over his ‘children’ is one reason; relatedly, the fact that there are simply fewer *GoT* fics than *SPN* or *Sherlock* might mean that meta-discourse around them is less developed, and fewer avenues of variation within the discursive formation are explored. Thus both external and internal factors act as mechanisms of limitation.

There are more fics constructing the nobles’ increasing awareness of the commons power. Renly’s canonical words to Stannis are quoted in Alikat7’s *The Wind Itself was their Song*:

“The whole of the realm denies it, brother. Old men deny it with their death rattle, and unborn children deny it in their mothers’ wombs. They deny it in Dorne and they deny it on the Wall. No one wants you for their king” (2014).

Repetition consolidates the support of the commons as necessary yet insufficient for authority. Meanwhile, in *Mistress of the Living Darkness’s Don’t Blink*, Baelish instructs his protégé Sansa in the art of ruling:

“What keeps the lords protected, love?” [he asked].

Sansa cocked her head to the side and glanced at the armory report he was studying so closely, “The soldiers and the gold.”

[...]

“Those help, but the peasants are the base of any society. To keep everything from tumbling, you must have happy lowborns, and you do that with food and safety. The soldiers protect the land from invaders and bandits. The gold keeps the soldiers happy and fit for battle. It keeps the

lords in their great castles. It keeps the market going, but it is the food that truly controls everything.” He turned and murmured, “The Starks are right. Winter is coming. When that happens, grain will be worth far more than gold. A starving man will do anything for food” (2015).

The term ‘base’ hooks into a Marxist discourse of power, creating an ironic contrast between Marxist aims and Baelish’s vision of a stable feudal society. The commons may be a potential threat to power, but they are easily controlled. Sansa’s increasing skill in governance is appreciated by the commenters: ‘she should declare herself as the Queen of the North’ (Anon. 10 2014).

In combination with the cool reaction to the poem, then, we can observe that fandom grants surprisingly little authority to the idea of the commons. This is striking given that fanfic is sometimes thought of as the democratic answer to the single author theory (cf. Pugh 2005). In the very popular *For Want of a Better King* (CoolChica87 2015a), the minstrel Tom is disgusted with both sides of the royal feud, declaring ‘We seen evil on both sides.’ He is ‘tired of fightin’ for someone else’ and would ‘rather fight for my own land and my own kin.’ Arya cheers along to fit in with the crowd, but is sceptical of this proto-anarchist vision, feeling that the brotherhood ‘had a point, but they clearly didn’t understand politics.’ The popularity of this story and the fact that Arya is the POV character strengthens the impacts of these statements, which construct the feudal hierarchy or a similar system as practically necessary.

Female rulers are constructed as readier to engage with the commons. In fanfic, their authority is typically more dependent on the goodwill of the people, in contrast to the canonical construction of men who rule by a mixture of authority and force. In *The Stone Queen* by mautadite, Shireen is a much-loved ruler, and while her councillor fears ‘something horrible to happen out of her willingness to speak to and interact with her subjects,’ she is always ready to do so. Granted, the common folk request her blessings on their children because of her elevated status, but this status is constructed as dependent on the people’s acceptance:

Westeros had been quick enough to accept her. Most had only known of Shireen as Stannis’ ugly daughter, the girl he took for an heir only because Selyse never gave him a son. But at the worst point in the war, the Others had reached as far south as Goldengrove, and no one could be bothered to argue the legitimacy of one of the women who’d helped to drive them back (mautadite 2014a).

Reviewer ladybird97 comments: 'I love Shireen as queen. LOVE IT. Love the way she's been embraced by the people—the scene with the mother and baby was just beautiful' (ladybird97 2014). The author observes that Shireen 'knows what it's like to just be thought very little of, and she doesn't look down the smallfolk' (2014b). Meanwhile, in mirime\_vy's *And Make Them Love Me*, the legitimacy of Sansa's authority depends on her service of and to the commons. Her councillor Sandor advises her:

"You want them love you but that mustn't be your only reason to try to rule them well. It shouldn't matter to you if they love you or hate you as long as they are taken care of. If you cannot do that, then you will truly fail" (2013).

An interesting tension is constructed here. On the one hand, to rule well is to serve the needs of the people. On the other, the traditional authority knows what is best for the people, despite what the people may think. It could be argued that this is the position Martin takes up when he argues that he cannot permit fanfic, though people might want to write it, for it would lead to the general weakening and demise of *ASOIAF*. Of course, this is complicated further by the fact that *And Make Them Love Me* is fanfic itself, and thus defies Martin's declarations. In continuing to write fic, it would seem, the *practice* claims authority on behalf of the commons, or collective, even as the statements of this story attribute authority to a traditional hereditary ruler who knows what is best for the people.

Finally, consider these statements from snowdarkred's *Blood Lion Heart Wolf*, which explicitly pits traditional authority against a growing power sourced from the commons:

At least once every seven days, Sansa walks through the streets. Her husband the King is loathed by the people—for being wicked, for being cruel, for being eager to levy taxes and shed blood for the privilege. Joffrey is hated and feared, but Sansa is loved.

She does not have the court on her side, so she must claim the people instead.

She wins the people's loyalty, so that when the time comes to put down her monster husband, she'll have an army at her back. A pack (2012).

This story is not particularly impactful, with a total of six comments—*Make Them Love Me* receives 8, *Stone Queen* 27. The power of the commons is almost always mediated through a figure of traditional authority—and

where it is not, as in the poem we began this section with, the statements constructing it fail to make much impact. The legitimation paradox is being worked out diegetically in the fanfic as the power of the commons will potentially overthrow the traditional structure, but *through* a traditional authority figure, *and* extra-diegetically as writers disobey Martin's injunctions but focus their fic on noble characters, thus sticking relatively close to the author-ized characterizations of the canon. We will now conclude this discussion by turning to analyse how the legitimation paradox operates *around* the text, by analysing the construction of text and authorship.

### I AM YOUR AUTHOR, revisited

Fanfiction is always already reflexive on its own status as text, and the status of the text it adapts. This is the case even when it lacks disclaimers and author's notes, due to its contexts of production. As Pappas has argued, the 'typical attitude towards authority' in reading outside the academy is that

the right way to read is the way which leads us—by plan or not—to the author. We may call this the pull of the author's person. It's not so much that we believe the author knows best what the work is about, as that what matters most about the work is what the author thinks it means. What we want most to know is what the author said. [However] A subversive reading will release the reader from the power of the author as seen symbolically in such legal structures as copyright laws, but experienced more intimately as limitations upon the creation of meanings (1989, p. 325).

Fanfic, then, particularly in the *GoT/ASOIAF* fandom, can be understood as a form of subversive *writing*. Pappas goes not to argue that it is perfectly possible for

authority [to be] un-seated by some means which the authority made possible in the first place. If the authority behind a text is its author, then unseating the authority will mean carrying on some activity the author has instigated, to a point at which it no longer is relevant to ask about the author's own desire (p. 328).

Pappas does not find this paradoxical, but rather asserts than argues this point. I believe the legitimation paradox remains intact until fanfic starts

to destruct and question the construction of singular authorship, which we will see most explicitly in the next chapter. Here, the author's authority may begin to be usurped through the practice of subversive writing, though for the most part remains paradoxically dependent upon it.

In the first instance, as I have argued throughout, subversive writing itself enacts the legitimation paradox. Secondly, fans insert their judgements upon dubious or yet-to-be revealed points of Martin's canon, frequently its backstory. The popular fan theory that Lyanna Stark and Rhaegar Targaryen are Jon Snow's parents is evoked in siraloPPolaris's *A Realm in Rebellion*, and constructed as the 'true' account of history.

"We must hide him, you must." The boy stirred in his sleep, clutching at his mother in her ruined cloth. "Ned, please. Sweet Ned." Her brother shook his head in disbelief, his shaggy hair falling about his unshaven, weary face. "Call him your bastard, keep him safe, please" (2013).

The judgement is that Lyanna was not abducted, but went with Rhaegar willingly. Thirdly, author's notes and disclaimers assert the fan's appropriation and adaption of the text:

Sorry I don't know the exact geography of Westeros so I'm just gonna wing it. X) [sic] (echoxknox 2013).

The casual style and inclusion of a smiling emoticon juxtaposes Martin's formal postures of authorship. Compare:

A/N: This story will not follow the books, as I have not read them (Selena Dobrev 2015).

Reviewer Vwchick responds: 'This is such a Great Story! You said you haven't read the books, all I can say is please don't, lol. I mean the 1 and maybe the 2 [sic] are great but then the characters start acting very strange' (Vwchick 2014). The fan's authority is here sourced from the conviction that Martin has produced an 'incorrect' text that betrays the characters it has established. The fan-text is the corrective (cf. Jenkins 2006b; Goodman 2015). The capitalization of 'Great Story' whilst 'books' remains in lower case underlines this statement typographically.

Fans also resolve the complex story in preferred arrangements, sometimes through the authority of a character who has become king or queen. In this passage from *Freed Bird*, the new Queen Daenerys (and through her,



the fan) places popular characters in positions of authority, and dismisses disliked ones:

“Lord Commander of the Kingsguard, Lord Tyrion Lannister, is to be The Hand of the Queen.” Her eyes glimmered with amusement at the stunned faces circling the table. “Lord Petyr Baelish, and Grand Maester Pycelle, your services will no longer be required at the small council. You may leave [...] Ser Barristan Selmy will regain his position as. “Lord Varys, you will remain on my council. During my time here at King’s Landing, you proved to be a valued asset” (Selena Dobрева 2015).

Favoured dead characters are saved, and villains killed. The reception of this kind of statement tends to be double-edged:

I just wish that was the way it was in season 1...sigh (tinawinna 2013).

I’m wishing this is how the story would’ve gone. I would’ve been saved from all the tears. This is very well written, I like it very very much (ErinacchiLove 2012).

Consider the verb choices: wish, wishing would’ve. Though fix-it fic is appreciated, it is not author-ized at the level of canon. The fix-it genre is self-conscious, the discourse having crossed the threshold of meta-discourse to discuss its own construction with reference to Martin’s prohibitions:

:) well, if [Martin] kills his toys, he shouldn’t mind me making them happy again (oparu 2011b).

UGH, I KNOW, RIGHT. WE ARE SO MUCH KINDER TO YOUR ‘CHILDREN’ THAN YOU (kindness\_says 2011).

SERIOUSLY. IF YOU TAKE BETTER CARE OF YOUR TOYS, OTHERS WON’T NEED TO RESCUE THEM (oparu 2011b).

Fans also, paradoxically, source their authority to write dark or disturbing content in the fact that their stories are ‘set in George RR Martin’s world, which is fucked up. So really, a fluffy story was never gonna happen’ (CoolChica87 2015b). Reviewers hold fan-authors to account for ‘inauthentic’ fic, complaining when stories are judged as too ‘convenient for the good guys’ when ‘what makes GOT and ASOIAF so fun, is the unpredictability,

the logical nature of actions, and the fact that the story is never twisted to make the good guys win'(SSJRyo1000 2014). The fan-author is taken to task for 'violating that theme with this story' (*Ibid.*). The metaphor of violation here consolidates the discourse of fanfic-as-kidnapping Martin instigated. Subversive writing may be conservatively read.

Fanfic is also constructed as a corrective to Martin's style:

This was such a joy to read [...] because you take what's good about Martin's world; the loose political set up and court intrigue, the cutthroat characters and wrap it up in your own clean, crisp prose that is so far superior to his, it's unbelievable (corleones 2011).

Your prose is amazing and cleans up Martin's sometimes overly indulgent way with words (hariboo 2011).

This is beyond words. it makes me ardently wish that GRRM was a better writer, because this fic makes me want more of this world, and of these characters, but auuuugh his prose is so shitty! why! why can't you just write all of the books for him so i can immerse myself in this world and not have to abide terrible writing in order to do so! (shecrows 2011).

The author responds:

Thank you so much [...] And I agree so hard re: GRRM! I really do love the world he created with these books, but omg, his prose leaves SO MUCH to be desired. Like, bro, no one wants to read about teats or how she was red and terrible and red or whatever other garbage there is LOL (falseeyelashes 2011a).

The construction of Martin as a much better storyteller and world-builder than he is a prose stylist is fairly common, and fanfic takes that criticism of authority a step further by correcting it. On the other hand, pulling against, we find in the same comment section the more typical fandom compliment of fan-authors as *almost* as good as author-ity, the compliment through comparison:

I truly believe George Martin could have written this (FANFAVMOMA 2014).

I've asked myself a couple of times if you are George R. R. Martin, even though I know how impossible that is (Phantom white lady of 221b 2013).

These are clear instances of the legitimation paradox at work: the fan's work is author-ized by similarity to canon. And notably, a long review attempts to accommodate fanfic within the schema of authority Martin sets out:

Often in fanfiction, it seems as if some Authors use FF as a conduit to abuse the characters they hate, or attempt to 'out-dark' Martin, which makes me sympathetic to why Martin hates fanfiction, because only Martin knows the end-game, and why he puts his characters, or his 'children' through what he does.

BUT, every now and again there is an aspiring Author who uses this forum as an opportunity to truly hone their skills, perhaps 'spring-boarding' into their own works and ideas later on.

And this Author I think is one of those who truly re[s]pects the Authors work, keeps it Canon as much as what any of us can speculate, and treats another Authors 'children' with dignity. If Martin saw works like this, as well as a few others he might well be more comfortable with FF (shadow2001, 2013, capitalizations in original).

Here, the legitimation paradox operates to negotiate the author's own prohibition, even as a highly traditional author-function is upheld. Fanfic is constructed as a stage on the way to 'real' authorship, author-ized by 'keep[ing] it Canon' and respecting the Author's progeny.

A variation on this is the legitimation of fanfic through reference to the TV show:

If Benioff & Weiss can do it... well, I hope I'm not doing it to the extent they do (elinorofealdor 2014).

Since Benioff and Weiss insist on writing fanfiction during season 4, they might as well have done it right. So, Arya and the Hound meet Brienne and Pod in the Moon Mountains. Let's assume the Hound and Brienne don't draw swords. (Nhaz 2014)

I've read all the books but I usually write the show because I have less guilt that way. GRRM hates fanfic, but... HBO is like paid fanfic so I can rip them off? (oparu 2011b).

This is somewhat different to legitimation in the author's name, because Benioff and Weiss are not quite constructed as proper authors. Recall that they refer to their own text as fanfic, albeit from a position of industrial

and economic power, in that practice of fanboy-auterism recognized by Scott (2011). The fan takes her licence to 'rip them off' from the impression that Benioff and Weiss are doing something illegitimate in the first place.

Some fics explicitly address the canon construction text as an unstable source of authority. Usually they consolidate it. ladyrostova's *Remember Me in Blood* opens 'This is a story about a lie' (2012). The lie could be interpreted as a) the love story of Rhaegar and Lyanna; b) the legitimacy of the Targaryen dynasty; c) Jon Snow's heritage; d) the legitimacy of the revolution; and e) all of the above. In any case it was 'a lie that caused a thousand deaths. Sent women wailing to their graves. Bowed men's heads with agony. Tore the world apart. Never died.' The key theme of the story is the problem of history. The narrator reports that Rhaegar 'had lived a selfish life and he had died a selfish death, but they did not say this in the songs' and claims to be a tale 'told truthfully only by those who know the truth,' but given that 'lies are interwoven so tightly in the thread of time that it is impossible to tell where they began and where they end,' the narrator can hardly be trusted. The authority of text itself, or the concept of an authentic and true text, is beginning to be picked apart here. As we will see more explicitly in the next chapter, this is one method by which the legitimation paradox—the legitimation of 'derivative' text by appeal to an authentic model—may begin to be deconstructed.

*Remember Me* is well received, with 40 reviews including a notable 23 on LJ, though one dissenter complains that the author 'betrayed the character of Rhaegar and at the end made him a monster' (Anon. 10), arguing for a fixed text in which canon is stable and interpretable. Articioc's *BRIEF HISTORY OF THE VVARR* of the FIVE KINGS in VVESTROS (sic) is a treatise supposedly written by the unreliable and sneaky Grand Maester Pycelle. It is written in an approximation of late Middle or Elizabethan English, and recounts canonical events in a light that casts Pycelle's benefactors as heroes and their enemies as villains, except for the following passage:

My sweet Lord Joffrey, first of his name, that he Resolved to make Justice and ordered Lord Eddard to be put to death; and had the Executioner missed and cut good his head instead, yea good Joffreys head, he would have deserved one thousand times such an end, or even a worse one.(1)  
(1)=Pycelle is old and sometimes lets a bit of truth filter. Maybe he's dead before finish this work [sic] and so he had not revised it (Articioc 2014).

The fanfic author, then, takes on the role of a reliable editor in the place of unreliable history. Strikingly, this story is blanked, receiving 0 reviews on Ff.net, the only place it is posted. Perhaps such explicit statements on

the unreliability of history are pushing the boundaries of the discourse formation, or perhaps the style of humour is simply not appreciated, and the statements' rejection follows incidentally.

By contrast, falseeyelashes's *The Joinery* constructs the texts of history as fixed and inevitable, at least in their outcomes. It opens with a quotation from the source text:

When Ned Stark entered the hall, Jaime had called to him. "Ah, so it is to be King Robert Baratheon then?"  
(GEORGE R. R. MARTIN)

But continues:

This story opens with a different start though you shall find it ends the same—the same song, a different singer.  
(The start of a story is easy to change. It is easy to alter it, warp it, bend the first to your will. It is the end you cannot change. The ends we meet are decided by the gods. Our ends are their ends, and while the path may vary, the end shall not (falseeyelashes 2011b).

So the story plays out with some variations that result in pre-set endings. *The Joinery* receives 111 comments, all of which are positive. Thus fandom still has some investment in constructing the authority of the set text, and with it, the outcomes of history.

Yet, there was also a set of fics criticizing the authority of the canonical text through parody and humour. Parody is inherently double faced, both mockery and homage, consolidation and deconstruction of the author-ized text (cf. Booth 2015, p. 20). Drawing on Dan Harries' study of parody in cinema, Booth argues that parody functions by means of a 'double referent', pointing to both itself as emulation and the original text, which it simultaneously consolidates and ridicules (78). 1000th Ghost's *Game of Thrones Predictions* juxtaposes the high fantasy setting with contemporary slang and casual diction to create humour and lower the tone:

Daenerys decides that 1. Dragons do not make good house pets because they do things like scorch innocent people and 2. Keeping them cooped up will make them weak and unable to fight. So, she attacks King's Landing RIGHT NOW!  
Then she arrives at King's Landing and is all, "WHAT UP, SUCKERS, I'VE GOT DRAGONS," and scorches everyone.

So then she is queen of...everything, I guess.

"Herp de derp, you can fly," says the three-eyed raven old guy.

"Cool beans," says Bran, so he flies alongside the dragon (2014).

Reducing Martin's canonical sage to a 'three-eyed raven old guy' and the workings of magic to a nonsense rhyme debase the authority of the text. Generally, parody does not make a huge impact on the formation: *Predictions* receives five reviews. Whenyouodonthavealife's *Love with a Side of Pasta* (2014) and Harmonic Friction's *Because the King Dies as He Pleases* (2014), which use the same technique of juxtaposing high and low tone, receive 12 and 11 respectively.

But we should note here that whilst parody mocks the authority of the source, it also turns a humorous mirror on the authority of fandom to rewrite any text. Kal-El Fornia's comment 'let's hope George R. R. doesn't come across this to steal your idea' (2015) has the effect of humorous irony when applied to a deliberately absurd premise. Parody is inherently self-mocking as well as mocking of its source. Awesomepigman's *Fandom Conquerors* asks:

Who rule the world? Tumblrlerlers [sic]. That's right when the world is overrun by a maleficent sorceress two heroes step up to rule all the realms (fandoms) for the sorceress. Conquering realms such as the realm of Supernatural, Game of thrones, Middle Earth, and many more (2014).

In this story, two fangirls are sucked into a mystical realm via

a compilation of adorable pigs in cat suit photos [that] showed up on their [Tumblr] dashboards. The sorceress knew that pigs in cat suit photos were the easiest way to both of their hearts. As they each hit 'reblog' they were pulled through their computers into the sorceress' castle (*Ibid.*).

The sorceress has enlisted the fangirls to rule over various 'realms', including *GoT*. Once the fans realize she means a 'fandom', the sorceress confirms: 'yes, fandumb. I prefer to not use such peasant terms,' self-mocking the spaces of fan activity via the comic homophony between (fan)-'dom'(ains) and 'dumb'. The author also disavows: 'I do not own any of the fandoms, that's just too much power' (Awesomepigman 2014).

Rena\_Sally\_Giles's *Crushing the Patriarchy* is sharper, its satire less affectionate and more concisely directed at fandom, or at least its more political dimensions. The summary reads:

My OC decides to liberate the ASOIAF/GoT universe from operassion, which is cussed bi their patrickarial feudall system. Can she do it or will da patricky stop her? Reed and revoirw plz!!!111 No flaming, you misogynmast, rassist, ablelist, elitits, homophonic, transphonic, over-privileged cis-cum!!!!111 Cheque your privilog!111!!11 (2014).

The humour relies largely on puns through misspelling and malapropisms, as the author/narrator greets us ‘Hullo peephole of the internetz!’ A ‘peephole’ has connotations of something small and sordid, in contrast to the self-conception of socially motivated online activity. This story’s original character explicitly sets out to change the power structure of Westeros, and end

da operasession of da kangs, for kings were nothin but strait, white, cis, mail, ableist, whalety, thin bustards ho exploided the smallfork fur his own selfist game. Thy lived like fat cats while everyone else had nothing, it wuss a socialpathic, capitolits sociey designated bi the partiacky to operass da peepole of color, womyn, da handicapped, da LGBT, da otterkin, da punsexal, da asexul, da zoophilics, da poor, da ugly and fate peephole (*Ibid.*).

Fandom’s intervention in the text and world of Westeros, then, is constructed as absurd and self-important, rather than effectual in any real sense—including, by inference, this fic itself. Reception of this parody is a 50/50 split: out of 10 comments on A03, five consolidate the mockery: ‘excellent satirical chronicle of Tumblr S[ocial]J[ustice]W[arriors]’ (Raskolnikova 2014); and five undermine it: ‘So is this supposed to be your oh-so-clever attempt to make fun of feminists, or at least your warped, misguided idea about what being a feminist means?’ (Shiera 2014). We could argue, then, that whilst the *context and production* of fanfic contributes to the instability of the text and deconstruction of the author figure, it’s re-presentation of these discursive formations is much more ambiguous. The fic that constructs text as stable and inevitable, at least in its endings, is received much better than those which deconstruct it totally. Parody of the original text rarely makes much impact, yet parody of fandom’s interventions meets a suspect reception. Martin’s author-function is used both to legitimate fanfic and correct its perceived inadequacies; whilst Benioff and Weiss’s liberties with *their* original text are used to justify fans doing the same, even as they are lightly denigrated for it. For these reasons, it seems too hasty to remove the construct of a canonical text from the

sphere of authority, though it has been pushed to the edge and the strength of belief and acceptance reduced.

So, whilst fandom has changed this discursive formation, the changes are perhaps less dramatic than we might expect given a source text set in a feudal system and presided over by a traditionalist author figure. Women are shown to have entered the sphere of authority based on traditional class legitimacy, and their style of rule has changed it, separating patriarchy and traditional authority to a degree not found in the source. Yet, the power of the commons is if anything diminished, in favour of a strong form of charismatic authority. The authority of the text, and the traditional author, is obviously deconstructed via fanfic as a *form*, but we have found the *content* of the statements to be highly ambiguous, wary of the TV show for deviating from the 'authentic' text and not particularly receptive to parody. There is little variation in the sense of AU. By keeping focus on the nobility, and concern to keep characters 'canon', *GoT* fic has not gone as far as *Sherlock* in the generation of new interpretative characters, or transformation of the original discourse that shows up its assumptions and absences. In Booth's (2015) terms, the balance seems tipped more towards nostalgia for the original text than an impulse to novelty. Several factors may account for this: again, *GoT* fandom is simply smaller, and a smaller sample will naturally produce less variation. Moreover, *GoT*'s fragmented construction of authority may be less politically objectionable to fandom than *Sherlock*'s naturalization of the dominance of White upper-middle class men. External forces, in the shape of socio-political awareness, may exert a more transformative pressure on *Sherlock* fic, particularly with regard to gender and the male body. It is worth noting that gender is the area in which *GoT* fic is most transformative. Martin's strong and current author function may also be a factor in the relatively 'faithful' or canonical usages of *GoT*, as opposed to the permissive, fanboy-auteur stances of Moffatt and Gattis. Now, in our final research chapter, we turn to address the construction of authorship explicitly in the meta-textual *Supernatural*, a text which contains its *own* author figure and constructs its own fans. We will then be in a position to overview our findings, and compare the results.



