

# Psycho-dynamic Forcefulness through the lens of George R. R. Martin's *A Song of Ice and Fire: A Lacanian Reading*

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## **Abstract**

*A Song of Ice and Fire, which is the focal point of this article, overflows with the subjects as family, obligation and honor strung in confounded courses in our current reality where dream and genuine move side by side. By booming through the first two books of this series, A Game of Thrones and A Clash of Kings, one finds the assortment of the points of view and delves profound into the personalities and their activities which lead to every one of the contentions and disturbances. This effort tries to reveal insight into the convoluted ways and the grave choices of the characters are blossomed that give fierce shake to their entire world; for this we attract upon Lacanian Psychoanalysis to portrait how the most complicated political interests just as the most flawless privileged demonstrations that are seen all through these books are predicated upon desire, which is, as Lacan says, 'desire of the other'. This work attempts to show the appliance of desire, dynamism and vitality by examining the characters and occasions and afterward talk about the way that the craving of the Other brings forth every code of honor, intolerable hostility, desire for power.*

**Keywords:** *Desire, Lacan, Dynamic, A Game of Thrones, Symbolic Order*

## **I. Introduction**

As an epic fantasy by George R.R. Martin, *A Song of Ice and Fire*, is a world split into Westeros and Essos, two fictional continents garmented in colorful clothes of beliefs, ways and natural landscapes. It is through the multiple perspectives of the characters that readers are thrown like a net into diverse lands to catch beauties and ugliness and wander through the chambers of characters' mind.

The huge diversity of perspectives experiences as readers plough through this series leaves us baffled in some ways as to where the truth lies and who the good and bad is. As chapters and episodes flow on and meander to form a tangle of events, the small room of every character's mind grows into a huge castle where readers have to open every door and step into the light and darkness of each one and let them touch our soul. Readers might hate some characters before they start to sympathize with them and feel a torn piece of ourselves hidden in them; readers might seek to cherish some heroes before they be killed by the hands of the villains who

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are going to turn into heroes and saviors of their world in the future. This series depicts a morally ambiguous world where questions abound regarding honor, human sexuality and the morality of violence.

The first two novels of this series, *A Game of Thrones* and *A Clash of Kings* are the main focus of this article. Moreover, yet this work draws upon the other three novels in this series as well as Game of Thrones TV Series where throughout this study can find events ahead of these five novels so as to analyze characters and events retrospectively too. Notwithstanding the fictional world and fantastic characters, readers confront a hodgepodge of values and ways of thinking which is not far from our real world and in fact these series are praised for their realism as well its fantastic dimension. In this complicated world where some people believe in old gods and some in the new gods, justice seems to be hardly served and in some points when it is seen how some decent characters are killed by the hands of the other villainous characters in violent ways, readers might find the stories of gods and old heroism just a mockery. Realism of the story seems to be pushing itself more and more to the other parts of the stage and fill almost all of the story that is expected to bring some fantastic deliverance from evil.

George R.R. Martin's arrangement of books, *A Song of Ice and Fire* is notable for its reality constructing: the epic degree takes into account different societies, with their orderly political, philosophical, and strict frameworks. Surely, *A Song of Ice and Fire* is outstanding for its portrayal of a moderately serene conjunction of different religions. The adventure is loaded with strife, however this is roused by power battles, instead of strict inclination; moreover, there is no clear authorial inclination concerning the "correct" religion to which the characters ought to follow (thus no doubt revealing Martin's own atheism). While adjusting the books to the little screen, shorthand for these various religions is simply visual: customs are elevated, and symbolism is accentuated, regardless of whether it be the Silent Sisters of the Faith of the Seven really focusing on the dead, the gleaming red accessory and huge shadow birth of Melisandre, priestess of the Lord of Light (Carice van Houten), or the essences of the Old Gods graved into the weirwood, sobbing crimson sap. In this sense, the arrangement quietly underscores the significance of function and feel in changing over and supporting their "flocks": transformation did not depend on belief system, since it stays simple, best case scenario, in the time designated to this subject, yet on vain behaviors. In this manner, Game of Thrones (HBO, 2011-) says something, be it willful or no, on both religion and legislative issues in contemporary American culture. (Wells-Lassagne)

George R.R. Martin's *A Song of Ice and Fire* books and HBO's Game of Thrones arrangement delineate a medieval world at war. In any case, how exact would they say they are? The creator, a history specialist and medieval hand to hand fighting master, analyzes in detail how genuinely Martin's anecdotal world mirrors the arms and defensive layer, battling procedures and attack fighting of the Middle Ages. En route, he investigates the idea of medievalism current popular culture's concept of the Middle Ages. The main reason why we have chosen this book is that war is the emblematic of people's claim to fulfill their desire, no matter what. Thus, a war shows the intensity of desires, and desires show the nut and bolt of the way people used to act during the Middle Ages.

Further, *The Ultimate Game of Thrones and Philosophy: You Think Or Die* by Eric J. Silverman is a series of essays that will lead you to the deep philosophical questions that lurk between the lines and find out about the secrets of the universe of the Game of Thrones. The Ultimate Game of Thrones and Philosophy get

fans many new articles by specialists who look at philosophical inquiries raised by the Game of Thrones story. This extreme examination gives the most complete talk to date and connects with the Game of Thrones universe through the finish of Season Six of the HBO arrangement. (143)

### **1.1. Desire**

In Lacanian terms, desire is always desire of the big Other; a desire for recognition from the Other which can ideals, morals, or another individual in their complicated dimension. Through Lacanian Psychoanalysis, we can analyze desires and find out about the lack on which it is based, thus revealing the foundation of pathological behavior. This is where Lacan in an influential manner views linguistic terms Freud's explication of the Oedipus complex in a new way. Freud had postulated that the child's desire toward its mother is banned by the father, who menaces the infant through castration. Confronted with this menace, desire is repressed by the infant, therefore opening up the capacity of the unconscious, which is for Lacan (and Freud as viewed through Lacan) not a locus but a link to the social world where morality, religion, and conscience, law dominates. In accordance with Freud, the child internalizes by the father's mandates (what Lacan terms the Law of the Father) the appropriate criteria of socially acceptable thought and behavior. Freud calls these criteria 'internalized as conscience the child's superego'. (Habib 489)

### **1.2. The Other**

This big Other or the Other can be the dominating culture, ideals, morals, religion from which desire being recognized. The Other is like a big eye, like Sauron's eye in 'The Lord of the Rings' always watching us and instilling us with desire, desire to be understood and valued by it, desire for its desire. In his book, *A Hair of the Dog that Bit You* (2006) Žižek says one can conclude by saying it is exactly the reference to this everlasting, 'mythical object-libido' that makes us able to throw some light on one of the most ambiguous points of Lacanian psychoanalysis: what, exactly, is the role of *objet petit a* in a drive – for instance, in the scopic drive – as against desire? The solution is presented by Lacan's interpretation, in his *Seminar XI*, that the significant characteristics of the scopic drive involves in 'making oneself seen [*se faire voir*]. On the other hand, as Lacan instantly mentions, this 'making oneself seen' that accounts for 'the circularity, the constitutive loop, of the drive', should not be mistaken with the 'narcissistic 'looking at oneself through the other' at all, that is, through the eyes of the big Other', from the spot of the Ego-Ideal in the Other, in the type in which I emerge to myself worthy of love: what is missing when subject looks at himself through the other's the radical disparateness of the object *qua* gaze to whom I illustrate myself in 'making oneself seen' So there is something that is lost in the gaze of the other that propels me to go after it to satisfy the big Other with the hope that one day I will reach that Thing which is far away from me, that is the intrinsic inclination toward perfection and ideal in the subject which was triggered during his/her infancy in the imaginary order when infant found the world unified whole and upon entering the symbolic which is constituted through signifiers, the subject is in constant search of the lost object or the object *petit a* that does not exist. Here the concept of Drive comes forward, which is explained a bit in previous paragraph, that connects us with the concept of Lacanian Real (147-150).

### **1.3. Oedipus**

As a mythical king of Thebes, Oedipus is a Greek tragic hero who has given birth to the concept of Oedipus Complex in Freudian Psychoanalysis which has influenced Psychoanalysis after him. This concept

refers to an unconscious desire from child's side to the opposite-sex parent. The character Oedipus ended up fulfilling a prophecy in which he was supposed to kill his father and marry his mother. Freud discussed that such pathological behaviors as homosexuality, pedophilia, neurosis can have its roots in child's not having resolution with same-sex parent. The concept of Oedipus Complex has later gained a broader linguistic term by Lacanian Psychoanalysis: the symbolic order. The Oedipus complex separates the move from the fanciful to the symbolic. By the mediate of a third term, the Name-of-the-Father, that shut zone of common craving between the mother and youngster is broken and a room appears, inside which the kid can begin to perceive itself as a split being from the mother. Lacan names this third term the Name-of-the-Father, since it doesn't need to be the genuine dad, or even a male figure, notwithstanding, is a representative position that the youngster observes to be the locus of the object of the mother's longing. Additionally, it is as can be seen, a place of power and the representative law that intervenes to check the kid's longing. For Lacan, the fundamental signifier that this all out interaction turns upon is the phallus. (Homer 53)

#### **1.4. Anti-Oedipus**

In his approach which is called schizoanalysis, Gilles Deleuze distances himself from the classic definition of Freudian Psychoanalysis and his famous Oedipus-Complex triangle. Deleuze finds this family triangle (mummy, daddy, me) as a predetermined supposition that narrows that desire to triangle whose yoke can be shaken off. Deleuze finds agencies of power, agencies of paranoia, agencies of State as Oedipus injected in our unconscious. He further discussed the way one can free him/herself from repressive desires whose basis is Oedipus, thus de-individualizing himself. At the point when it initially showed up in France, *Anti-Oedipus* was hailed as a show-stopper by a few and " a work of heretical madness" by others. In it, Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari put forward the accompanying hypothesis: Western culture's inborn crowd sense has permitted the public authority, the media, and surprisingly the standards of financial matters to exploit every individual's reluctance to be cut off from the gathering. Likewise, the individuals who experience the ill effects of mental issues may not be crazy, yet could be people in the most perfect sense, since they are commonly confined from society. More than a quarter century after its unique distribution, *Anti-Oedipus* actually remains as a questionable commitment to a truly necessary discourse on the idea of free reasoning. (223-225)

#### **1.5. Symbolic Order**

What defines us is our desire for what society considers for us as 'good and bad'. Our desire to be a PhD student with a great prestige that can distinguish us from the one who does not have academic degree. The simple 'good and bad' that drives us to act in various ways is what the symbolic order has fashioned for us, thus it leads to intersubjective relations, the formation of community with unified structure of values. It is altogether the rules through which we recognize our values, desire its desire and in negative way, desire our own repression. Furthermore, such an approach to George R.R. Martin's works is to trace the violence on the characters ends. The connotation of study is in; firstly, taking advantage of Lacanian Psychoanalysis and somewhat Deleuzian *Schizoanalysis* applied in George R.R. Martin's *A Game of Thrones*, *A Clash of Kings* and *A Storm of Swords*. Such an interdisciplinary and intersexuality research can be considered as a sample for further academic literary investigations. Secondly, intending to offer a new reading of George R.R. Martin's *A Game of Thrones*, *A Clash of Kings* and *A Storm of Swords* wherein we will attempt to find the answer for the question of if there is any non-pathological behavior. Thirdly, illustrating the contribution of Lacanian

Psychoanalysis in defining morality and ethics. Psychoanalysis is the analysis of those issues and troubles which plague human beings due to their aprotic position on the boundary of nature and culture. In man's case, an already corrupt and natural body in need must be supplemented by a symbolic structure that permits the organism to survive yet it comes with a price, and that is alienation and an unlimited desire unknown to the animal. Human needs the symbolic order to supplement their imperfect animality, however, this prosthesis brings forth a more schism that is illustrated in the constant 'discontent' of the civilized animal, the boundlessly unsatisfied nature of his perverse desire. Human animals require the symbolic realm and yet suffer from it: this is the aporia which psychoanalysis confronts. (Lewis 17)

## II. Discussion and Analysis

The sight of justice done is rare to find in this series, yet when it is served, it is served by the hands of those who undergo a huge shift in whom they are. This can be seen in characters like Jon Snow, Daenerys Targaryen, Tyrion Lannister, Bran Stark, Sansa Stark, Arya Stark and some others. All these characters pointed out have their own special type of personality and ways of thinking embedded in what their world and house has taught them, this can be shown in following lines:

Sansa already looked her best. She had brushed out her long auburn hair until it shone, and picked her nicest blue silks. She had been looking forward to today for more than a week. It was a great honor to ride with the queen, and besides, Prince Joffrey might be there. Her betrothed. Just thinking it made her feel a strange fluttering inside, even though they were not to marry for years and years. Sansa did not really know Joffrey yet, but she was already in love with him. He was all she ever dreamt her prince should be, tall and handsome and strong, with hair like gold. She treasured every chance to spend time with him, few as they were. The only thing that scared her about today was Arya. Arya had a way of ruining everything. You never knew what she would do. "I'll tell her," Sansa said uncertainly, "but she'll dress the way she always does." She hoped it wouldn't be too embarrassing. "May I be excused?" (Martin, "A Game of Thrones" 133)

For instance, Sansa Stark's ideal belief in the ultimate victory and chivalry of larger-than-life heroes has shut her eyes to the bleak and frightening reality around her, even the blonde prince charming-like, Joffrey, she adores ends up cutting her father's head. So, it takes a lot for her to strip her view of the fantasies that were controlling every step of her life. Such changes are what we focus on in this work:

"Leave her alone," Joffrey said. He stood over her, beautiful in blue wool and black leather, his golden curls shining in the sun like a crown. He gave her his hand, drew her to her feet. "What is it, sweet lady? Why are you afraid? No one will hurt you. Put away your swords, all of you. The wolf is her little pet, that's all." He looked at Sandor Clegane. "And you, dog, away with you, you're scaring my betrothed." (Martin, "A Game of Thrones" 138)

To show the way characters change and change their world as well, this work further analyzes and show how some of the leading characters are like paintings whose mental journey is like the move toward abstraction in painting and the aim of this journey is to reach a "thought without image" because it goes against representation. The move toward abstraction does not resonate only in the characters whose personality in the beginning represents the values and ideologies that their society has implanted in them, but in the very shape and

demarcation of their world as it breaks down into an abstract-like paintings like those of Jackson Pollock's "all over" paintings which identify "that space not as a chaos but as a chaosmosis or machinic heterogeneity" (Purdon 14).

Thus in the beginning, this work will discuss how there is an illusion of neat demarcation, Westeros is where it should be, Essos and the Wall between the civilized Westeros and the Wildlings too. The reality of their world is altogether clear cut. However, by comparing characters and events to the transition of painting from transition realism toward abstraction, this study will discuss how everything breaks down into a heterogeneity when, for instance, Jon Snow takes Wildlings into Westeros and Daenerys Targaryen takes the people of Essos into Westeros as well:

I am the blood of the dragon, Daenerys Targaryen reminded herself as she turned her face away. She pressed her lips together and hardened her heart and rode on toward theate. (Martin, "A Game of Thrones" 606)

Further, the analysis tries to show if we tend to look at the world of *A Song of Ice and Fire* and even characters as realist paintings, it will see how everything seems to turn into an abstract-like painting as characters traverse the fantasies, which control and suppress them, are the effect of the Other and give meaning to their desires, oedipalize them and fill them with anxiety of filling the lack of the Other itself instills in them. Thus, this work will be discussing the way in which some characters traverse the fantasies and shake off the yoke of the Other which has forged them into a realist-like painting, with no unbounded and free flow of the abstract-like paintings.

Ned Stark, Tyrion Lannister, Jon Snow, Joffrey, Cersei, Brienne, Arya, Stannis, and numerous different characters are utilized to apply the conventional philosophical inquiries that everybody faces, here, in following lines Ned Stark portrays his dynamic vitality:

Ser Jorah nodded. "By then my father had taken the black, so I was Lord of Bear Island in my own right. I had no lack of marriage offers, but before I could reach a decision Lord Balon Greyjoy rose in rebellion against the Usurper, and Ned Stark called his banners to help his friend Robert. The final battle was on Pyke. When Robert's stonethrowers opened a breach in King Balon's wall, a priest from Myr was the first man through, but I was not far behind. For that I won my knighthood." (Martin, "A Clash of Kings" 107)

By what means should political pioneers be picked in Westeros and past? Is control only a dream? Is it shameless to appreciate excessively savage and sexual stories like Game of Thrones? In what capacity should ethically equivocal people, for example, Jamie Lannister: The Kingslayer and Savior of King's Landing be assessed? Would anyone be able to be confided in a general public like Westeros? What guidelines ought to administer sexual connections in a universe of adoration, interbreeding, assault, and organized marriage? How does incapacity shape character for people like Tyrion, Bran, and others? How might one realize whether there is a God in the Game of Thrones universe and what he resembles? There are philosophical concepts of Kierkegaard, Immanuel Kant, Machiavelli, etc. All these ideas and analyses will help us get into the tortuous chambers of various writers' mind regarding *A Song of Ice and Fire*. So, Tyrion illustrates that throughout these lines:

“I can see where Joffrey learned his courtesies.” Tyrion paused to admire the pair of Valyrian sphinxes that guarded the door, affecting an air of casual confidence. Cersei could smell weakness the way a dog smells fear. (Martin, "A Clash of Kings" 30)

In a postmodern world every behavior seems to be pathological since modern science, psychology, psychoanalysis has reached an advanced level of unveiling even the slightest anxiety. To bring the light what is concealed in the deepest parts of us has been so controversial that many thinkers and has led many believe that we are machines whose will to act independently is but a mere illusion. Thus, the more one understands about him/herself and what lies beneath his skins that governs every act, one might urge him/herself to confront questions which breed more and more questions instead of answers that might deliver solace. It is not solely the concern of the modern man to seek out and find a totalizing theory about human subjectivity or self, but it has been a perennial attempt for human to carve out a unified self, say, religion.

The answer to the question ‘who am I?’ is the most challenging answer which starts philosophy or thinking journey. To talk about postmodern issues might seem somehow irrelevant to ‘A Song of Ice and Fire’, however, even George R. R. Martin concerns regarding cyborg and the authenticity and non-machine existence of human consciousness might have led him to write a novel about cyborg which is titled, ‘the Glass Flower’. So, there are questions whose answers might not easily yield to the somewhat solid language of science and in the midst of scientific paralysis, fantasy comes forth to attempt to portrait a metaphorical exposition of the answers.

What is the purpose of this study? It is to show if human can achieve a totalizing theory thereby he/she can find an objective stance stripped of all the subjective mooring. Some thinkers like Haraway are utterly straightforward in denying such totalizing theory when she says:

first, the production of universal, totalizing theory is a major mistake that misses most of reality, probably always, but certainly now; and second, taking responsibility for the social relations of science and technology means refusing an anti-science metaphysics, a demonology of technology, and so means embracing the skilful task of reconstructing the boundaries of daily life, in partial connection with others, in communication with all of our parts. . . . This is a dream not of a common language, but of a powerful infidel heteroglossia. (Hall 121)

So, by analyzing George R.R. Martin's *A Game of Thrones* and *A Clash of Kings*, we aim to analyze the characters and the basis of their desires and unveil what drives the pathological behaviors and show if there is a sense of violence.

### **III. Conclusion**

To draw conclusion and prove the possibility of reaching an objective level for symbolic-order-contrived subject and being able to see the symbolic illusion, and how subject must identify first the objects of desire within the confines of fantasy desire, dynamism and vitality and then by traversing the fantasy, confront the void, the gap, filled by fantasmatic object. However, to confront the loss itself is a shift from desire to drive (Zizek, "In Defense of Lost Causes" 328-9). Furthermore, to drive and identifying oneself with the fantasy that

one can act non-pathologically and this level of objectivity will be shown in various characters in 'A Song of Ice and Fire' and in other works of literature. What is different about this series is that as the bleak reality grows thicker, the fantasy on different sides of the world grows thicker as well telling us that desires, shaping the characters and sharpening their attempts to cut the impossible and grow as big as the heroes of the olden tales, are also parts of the reality of their world, not just some figments of imagination. Thus, Sansa Stark is not wrong in believing in knightly chivalry, or John Snow who seeks honor in the Wall, the forever house of the dishonored. From the very beginning of the story, the stability seems to lie nowhere and it is the ferocity of the instability that shakes the character's will into firmness.

For instance, John Snow whose pursue of honor in the Wall is because in Winterfell, he is just a bastard and basically and essentialistically dishonored and no matter how much he strives to be like his father (the other), in the basis of his existence, no honor is allowed to bloom. Thus, he sets on a journey to achieve the honor that the small society in which he lives (the House Stark) has never given him, but this journey leads to the loss of his ego in many ways, and he strips himself of anthropomorphic armoring and becomes someone new by distancing himself from the previous desires and laws of the realm and House Stark. By what do this study mean by 'someone new'?

By depicting upon Deleuzian schizoanalysis, this study will also discuss how Oedipus internalizes man by man and "creates a new meaning for suffering, *internal suffering*, and a new tone for life: the depressive tone." The challenge this work will put forth between Lacanian Psychoanalysis and the Deleuzian Schizoanalysis will let us dig deeper into the functionality of desire (Deleuze and Guattari xvIII). This study will further display our discussion by drawing upon Zizek's analysis of Lacanian and Deleuzian's approaches to show that Deleuze's approach toward the impossibility of Lacanian desire is a misreading because what Deleuze considers as Sense Effect of desire (signification) which is the product of Socius or a social machine cannot be confined simply to a product of society and it will be shown according to Lacan, there is a symbolic illusion which is disregarded by Deleuze and is at work which is made up of a chain of signifiers that establish a Sense Effect and this is very symbolic illusion closes our eyes to the sliding effect of signifiers and we feel there is a wholeness in desire which is completely fabricated by Socius (Zizek, "Interrogating the Real" 159-160).

Later works and this one will try to bridge and focus on the gap between Lacanian Psychoanalysis and Deleuzian Schizoanalysis and emphasize how there is misunderstanding in viewing these two theories, for that we apply these theories on George R.R. Martin's novels *A Game of Thrones* and *A Clash of Kings*. As a modern and unique reading of Martin's *A Song of Ice and Fire*, in which it sheds light on the characters and events. Throughout searching for how there can be an objective level for symbolic-order-contrived subject. This analysis leads us for digging in-depth to find the violence and where the subject can act non-pathologically. However, the mechanism of desire can be shown by analyzing the characters and events and then discuss the way the desire of the Other gives birth to every code of honor, heinous enmity, aspiration for power. Further, it tries to show how there can be an objective level for symbolic-order-contrived subject where subject can act non-pathologically and withdraw allegiance from what Michel Foucault names as 'the old categories of the Negative' (law, limit, castration, lack).

In this complicated world where some people believe in old gods and some in the new gods, justice seems to be hardly served and in some points when it is seen how some decent characters are killed by the hands



of the other villainous characters in violent ways, readers might find the stories of gods and old heroism just a mockery. So, the realism of the story seems to be pushing itself more and more to the other parts of the stage and fill almost all of the story that is expected to bring some fantastic deliverance from evil. Furthermore, we emerge to show the way characters change and change their world as well, this work further analyzes and show how some of the leading characters are like paintings whose mental journey is like the move toward abstraction in painting and the aim of this journey is to reach a “thought without image” because it goes against representation.

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