

HELSINGIN YLIOPISTO

**Style and World-Building in George R. R. Martin's**  
***A Song of Ice and Fire***

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<p>Tutkielmani käsittelee kielellisen tyylin ja maailmanrakennuksen suhdetta George R. R. Martinin fantasiakirjasarjassa <i>A Song of Ice and Fire</i> (suom. <i>Tulen ja jään laulu</i>). Tarkoituksena on erityisesti selvittää, miten kirjojen kieli poikkeaa tavanomaisesta englannin kielestä, ja miten kielen poikkeavat muodot puolestaan toimivat keskiaikaisen fantasiamaailman rakennuspalikoina. Susan Mandalan (2010) mukaan kielellinen tyyli on jäänyt lapsipuolen asemaan tieteis- ja fantasiakirjallisuuden tutkimuksessa: kieltä on lähes poikkeuksetta pidetty tavanomaisena tai heikkona, ja sen roolia on myös vähätelty. Mandalan mukaan tällaiset käsitykset ovat perusteettomina, ja hänen mielestään toimiva tyyli on todella tärkeässä roolissa nimenomaan näissä genreissä, sillä se on oleellinen osa muun muassa uskottavien vaihtoehtomaailmojen luomista.</p> <p>Kirjojen maailma on keskiaikainen, mitä kuvataan varsin tarkasti ja uskottavasti. Tyylin tasolla maailman tätä puolta tukevat vanhakantaisten ilmaisujen toimiva käyttö, vanhakantaisten puhuttelumutojen uskottava käyttö sosiaalisen hierarkian kuvaamisessa, historiallisen sanaston runsas käyttö sekä joidenkin amerikanenglantiin kuuluvien sanojen korvaaminen brittiläisillä.</p> <p>Kirjojen maailma on myös omasta maailmastamme itsenäinen fantasiamaailma, ja tyyli on tärkeässä osassa myös tämän puolen kuvaamisessa. Kirjoista löytyy fiktiivisiä kieliä, joista tarkastelen kahta. Ne poikkeavat toisistaan selvästi, ja antavat näin erilaisen kuvan käyttäjistään. Molempien kielten tapauksessa lukija saattaa nähdä, miten jotkin niiden kielioppisäännöistä toimivat, mikä lisää kielten uskottavuutta. Seuraavaksi tutkin, millä tavoin kirjoissa käytetään englantia kekseliäillä ja poikkeuksellisilla tavoilla. Kirjoista löytyy keksittyjä idiomeja ja sananlaskuja, jotka osaltaan rakentavat kuvaa itsenäisestä fantasiamaailmasta ja paljastavat asioita sitä asuttavien kansojen ajattelutavoista. Englantia käytetään poikkeavasti myös osioissa, joissa maailma esitetään suden näkökulmasta. Vaikutelma tästä luodaan käyttämällä luontoon ja eläinmaailmaan liittyviä ilmaisuja ihmisistä. Tämän jälkeen tarkastelen paikannimien ja erisnimen roolia. Nimeäminen jakaa maailmaan kuuluvat alueet ja kansat tunnetumpiin ja tutumman oloisiin sekä vieraampiin ja eksoottisempiin.</p> <p>Lopuksi käsittelen tavalliseen kieleen kuuluvia piirteitä, jotka oli tarkoituksella jätetty kirjoista pois, jotta kuva keskiaikaisesta fantasiamaailmasta ei särkyisi. Näitä ovat muun muassa nykyaikaiselta kalskahtavat idiomaattiset ajanilmaukset sekä viikonpäivien ja kuukausien nimet, jotka liittyvät oikean maailman historiaan ja mytologiaan.</p> <p>Kirjoissa käytetään tavanomaisesta poikkeavaa tyyliä monipuolisesti ja kekseliäästi uskottavan vaihtoehtomaailman luomiseksi. Kieli ei kuitenkaan eroa normaalista niin paljon, että se olisi häiritsevää tai tekisi tekstistä vaikeasti ymmärrettävää.</p>			
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## 1. Introduction

George R. R. Martin's *A Song of Ice and Fire* (1996-) series is one of the most popular works of current fantasy literature. It is one of the fantasy works that have entered into mainstream: two of the five novels have topped *The New York Times* Best Seller list; it has sold more than 24 million copies in North America alone; and it has been adapted into a widely successful TV series by HBO (Wikipedia: A Song of Ice and Fire). Video games, graphic novels, maps and even a cook book have followed in the wake of the TV adaptation. The mainstream success is remarkable, since fantasy has been traditionally viewed as a somewhat marginal genre, even though with authors such as Martin and J. K. Rowling, this seems to be changing. *A Song of Ice and Fire* is interesting in that it in many ways defies what one has learned to expect from fantasy literature. Martin's work does not feature a hero on a quest to vanquish evil; in fact, it does not even feature a clear-cut distinction between good and evil. Instead, Martin draws rich, morally ambiguous characters with realistic motivations, vices and virtues. The role of magic and supernatural phenomena is limited compared to many other works in the genre, and Martin presents a realistic and rather grim view of life in the medieval world. Since *A Song of Ice and Fire* is both very successful and quite different from many other works of fantasy literature, it could in the long run have a profound effect on the way people view fantasy literature, and on how fantasy literature is written. Despite its success and potential importance to the genre, academic scholarship on the series has been somewhat limited. However, with the continued, and seemingly increasing, popularity of both the novels and the television series, this is almost certain to change.

In this paper I discuss the language and style of the *Song* novels concentrating on

specific, deviant forms and stylistic choices that contribute to world-building in some manner. The setting of *A Song of Ice and Fire* is a fantasy world that draws heavily on the European Middle Ages, but is independent from the real world we live in. How does the language of the novels differ from unmarked, everyday English in order to depict such a world? As Mandala (2010) argues, the aspect of style has been largely neglected in the research on fantasy literature: scholars have viewed the style of this genre as merely adequate or poor, even when faced with contrary evidence. In addition, many see style as an unimportant factor in fantasy literature, foregrounding content rather than presentation. However, these aspects are not necessarily separate. Fantasy fiction deals with worlds and things that are not and cannot be, while striving to present them as real and believable. As Mandala (2010: 31) states: “Other worlds in fiction are, after all, created from language, so it is reasonable to assume that style is integral to this endeavour”.

### **1.1 Aims and Methods**

The aim of this paper is to explore the ways Martin uses various stylistic features to build a unique and believable setting for the *Song* novels. This setting has two aspects: it is both a world heavily influenced by the Middle Ages, but it is also a fantasy world unrelated to our own. I begin exploring the medieval aspect of the story world with a thematic analysis of Martin's presentation of various medieval phenomena in the novels, and how they are related to medieval history. The second part of my analysis is stylistic: I discuss Martin's use of archaic language forms and other means to construct a believably medieval world.

The following chapters focus on different stylistic choices that Martin uses to present his setting as a unique fantasy world. I first proceed to discuss how invented

language can be used as a part of world-building in science fiction and fantasy, and how fictional languages, estranged forms of English and names are used in the *Song* novels to enhance the fantasy aspects of the story world. Finally, I discuss what kind of language Martin has chosen to avoid in order to support both the medieval and fantasy aspects of the setting.

The five volumes of the *Song* series published so far span several thousand pages, which makes locating and managing necessary information somewhat challenging. To alleviate this problem, I have consulted a few websites concerning the *Song* novels. These are listed under “Other Works Consulted”. I have also used electronic versions of the books to locate my examples more easily. Everything has been double-checked from the physical novels, and the page numbers for each reference come from the physical copies as well.

## **1.2 George R. R. Martin and *A Song of Ice and Fire***

George R. R. Martin (born 1948) is an American science fiction and fantasy author whose career began in the 1970s. Unquestionably his most famous work to date is the ongoing fantasy novel series *A Song of Ice and Fire*. The series currently spans five volumes: *A Game of Thrones* (1996, hereafter *GT*), *A Clash of Kings* (1998, hereafter *CK*) and *A Storm of Swords* (2000, the version used here is split into two parts, hereafter *SS1* and *SS2*), *A Feast for Crows* (2005, hereafter *FFC*) and *A Dance with Dragons* (hereafter *ADD*). Martin plans to write two more volumes to conclude the series. As noted above, the *Song* series has been a critical and commercial success, which has been further increased by the success of its TV adaptation.

*A Song of Ice and Fire* can be classified as *high fantasy*, that is, its setting is an

imaginary world, a *secondary world*, as opposed to *low fantasy*, which is set in the *primary world*, the world as we know it (see Tymn et al. 1979: 5-6). The world of *A Song of Ice and Fire* is a world with its own geography, history, mythology, natural laws etc. It is not connected to the primary world in any way, since, for example, there is no portal that leads to the secondary world from our world. Still, Martin's fictional world draws heavily upon the European Middle Ages. A medieval setting is certainly nothing new in fantasy literature, as Selling (2004) points out, but it has rarely been depicted in such a realistic manner as in the *Song* series. The novels do not shy away from the darker aspects of the times: social inequality, the lack of women's rights, the power struggles between members of aristocracy, the gruesomeness of war, the differences between chivalrous ideals and reality and so on. Magic and other fantastic elements play a surprisingly small role in the world of the novels, albeit one that increases as the series progresses. Some of these elements are portrayed as perfectly natural aspects of the world. For example, the characters in the series take it for granted that each season lasts an unpredictable number of years at a time and that the now-extinct dragons really used to exist. Other elements are depicted as rare, mysterious and even inconceivable to the characters. For example, there are very few people in the world that can use any form of magic, and the malevolent ice creatures known as the Others, absent for 8000 years, are largely believed to have existed in myth only. Many common features of fantasy literature are absent: there are no elves, dwarves, orcs or other traditional humanoid races; fantastic beasts are largely restricted to dragons; and magic is only used in rituals, not in combat.

Each chapter of the *Song* novels is named after one of the major characters. These are point-of-view characters, who serve as focalisers of the story. Martin employs third-

person narration, which is restricted to the knowledge available to the point-of-view character of the respective chapter. He adds more point-of-view characters as the series progresses, often giving the reader access to the point-of-view of a character who has already appeared in the story through other characters' accounts. The characters offer different perspectives to the events, often leaving it up to the reader to find the causality in the narrative. Similarly, information about the story world is scattered throughout the novels through partial accounts given by the characters.

*A Song of Ice and Fire* is mostly set on the continent of Westeros, in a country called the Seven Kingdoms. The once-individual kingdoms were unified by an outside conqueror, the House of Targaryen, who used dragons to defeat the armies of these kingdoms. Hundreds of years later, Robert Baratheon led a successful rebellion against the Mad King Aerys Targaryen, and crowned himself king. This eventually leads to a power struggle for the throne between the major houses of the Seven Kingdoms. While the kingdoms are in internal turmoil, the last Targaryens plot their return to power in exile on the eastern continent of Essos, and the Others make an appearance in the northern part of Westeros.

### **1.3 Language and Style in Science Fiction and Fantasy**

Mandala (2010:1), borrowing Leech and Short's (1981/2007: 11) definition, describes style as the way language is used in literature for a particular artistic effect. She mentions character creation, establishing atmosphere and revealing theme as some examples of these kinds of artistic effects (Mandala 2010: 1). This is also how style is understood in this paper; the particular artistic effects of interests here are those that are related to world-building.

Although the genres of fantasy literature and science fiction have been receiving



increasing scholarly attention, Mandala (2010: 1) argues that one issue, the role of style, “has been largely misunderstood and thus massively underrated”. She criticises previous scholars for dismissing the style in these genres as “mostly poor or unremarkable”, while offering no solid evidence for such a claim (Mandala 2010: 19). Instead of offering evidence, scholars tend to “accept the view that style is weak or uninspiring, and set about explaining why it should be excused” (Mandala 2010: 19). Furthermore, Mandala (2010: 21) criticises them for holding on to this view stubbornly: “So strong is the commitment to the ‘style is poor’ mantra in studies of science fiction and fantasy that evidence to the contrary is sometimes downplayed, reported with seeming reluctance”. All in all, she makes a convincing case for the past mistreatment of style in these genres.

Mandala (2010: 29) argues that the role of style in fantasy and science fiction must be re-evaluated: it is an integral part of two fundamental aspects of these genres, estrangement, or making the familiar strange, and the construction of believable alternative worlds. She conducts literary-linguistic analyses on several works of science fiction and fantasy to reveal how style is related to estrangement and world creation, such as exploring the use of experimental future Englishes in science fiction, evoking the past through archaisms in fantasy, and the use of plain language to create plausible worlds and characters.

I agree with Mandala's view that language and style play an important part in creating believable settings for alternative world fiction and proceed to study the *Song* novels in this light. The setting of Martin's novels is inspired by a past world, the medieval world of Europe. Based on Mandala's work, I will discuss how Martin uses archaic language forms and other stylistic means to suggest the past and support the

medieval aspects of his story world, and how he uses invented language to construct his story world and to separate it from the real one. These aspects of style function as active components in world-building building, but they require passive support: avoiding certain kinds of language that would not fit the story world. I conclude my analysis by looking at this interesting but largely invisible aspect of style. It should be noted that I only concentrate on those aspects of language that are somehow different from ordinary English, but these definitely do not encompass everything that goes into the construction of a plausible alternative world: as Mandala (2010: 95-117) argues, creating and presenting such a world also demands the skilful use of plain, ordinary language.

Before we begin our discussion on the novels, make sure to note that emphasis is always original in the quotations unless otherwise noted and that Martin also uses italics to indicate interior monologue.

## **2. The Medieval World of *Ice and Fire***

The European Middle Ages are a common source of inspiration for the alternative worlds depicted in fantasy. Using the Middle Ages as a starting point for a fictional one serves many purposes. The medieval world is vastly different from the world of today; strange, yet familiar from history books and lessons. As such, it helps the author establish an easily recognizable frame of reference for the reader, one that explains key differences between the story world and the modern world effortlessly, for example, a lower level of technology. In other words, the author does not need to start constructing the world from scratch or provide detailed explanations for those aspects of the story world that are already familiar to the reader from history. In addition to creating a

familiar framework, a medieval setting can be seen as unobtrusive when it comes to magic and other fantastic content: the setting is not burdened by contemporary ideas or entities that would clash with them, such as scientific rationalism or the technological advances of today.

Many critics hold the view that the medieval aspects are presented somewhat superficially in fantasy; for example, the settings have been called “pseudomedieval” (Zahorski and Boyer 1982: 61), “quasi-medieval” (Thompson 1982: 215), “vaguely medieval” (Zanger 1982: 230), “a simplified version of the Middle Ages” (Attebery 1992: 132), and the image of the Middle Ages in fantasy has been seen as predominantly “selective and positive” (Selling 2004: 214). Although these views might hold true for many other works of fantasy, this does not seem to be the case for *A Song of Ice and Fire*. Lagus (2006: 14) calls Martin's story world “a strikingly real place”, while Vike (2009: 64) notes that the medieval society presented in the novels “very much bears a resemblance to our own historical knowledge of how medieval Europe was structured”. In this chapter I explore the way Martin portrays medieval themes in the novels, and how they correspond to medieval history.

The society of the Seven Kingdoms, the principal setting of the novels, strongly resembles those of medieval Europe. The form of government is feudal monarchy: the realm is ruled by a king and under him there are the lords of the major houses of nobility. These lords are the king's vassals, ruling the lands given to them on the king's behalf. These lords have knights and lesser lords as their vassals, and the lesser lords may have vassals of their own. The common people, who do not own any land, form the lowest branch of society. The king appoints a body of advisers called “the small council” to help him rule. His chief advisor is called Hand of the King; he is also

responsible for executing the king's commands and ruling in the king's place if he is absent. "What the king dreams, [...] the Hand builds", it is said, or, as the common folk put it: "the king eats, [...] and the Hand takes the shit" (*GT*, 47). Although the king's power is absolute in theory, he must take into consideration the aspirations of the nobility. He has to keep his vassals content and on the other hand prevent any individual from becoming powerful enough to challenge his authority. Kingship is inherited by the king's eldest son.

The noble houses are led by a lord, the eldest male of the family. Like kingship, lordship is inherited by his eldest son. Members of aristocracy are expected to put the success of their house above their own. Each family has its own coat of arms and motto. These mottoes are often boastful in nature: for example, the motto of House Martell, whose lands were never conquered but became a part of the realm through marriage, is "Unbowed, Unbent, Unbroken" (*GT*, 830). The family symbols represent the values of the house, and characters often relate to them strongly. The heraldic animal of House Lannister is a lion. Therefore, this is what Tyrion Lannister, seriously wounded in battle, thinks on his sickbed: "*Am I crying?* He must not let his father see. He was a Lannister of Casterly Rock. *A lion, I must be a lion, live a lion, die a lion*" (*CK*, 840). In addition to wealth and power, the prestige of a noble house is also tied to its ancestry: the aforementioned Lannisters claim to descend from Lann the Clever, who lived during the semi-mythical Age of Heroes, thousands of years in the past (*GT*, 274). The nobility is particular about retaining the honour of the family: if an outsider insults a member of the house, the deed is not likely to go unpunished. So, when the Lannisters say "A Lannister always pays his debts" (*GT*, 330), they often mean avenging a slight rather than money. The worst insults are not easily forgotten and they may lead to feuds between the houses.

The knights of the Seven Kingdoms are expected to follow a code of chivalry

consisting of obedience, honour, courtesy and protecting the weak and the innocent. They are the celebrities of this world: songs are made to honour their deeds. However, there is often a contrast between the chivalric ideals and what the knights actually do. For example, knights obey without question when king Joffrey orders them to hit his bride and lead raiding parties against helpless villagers, massacring them for being on the wrong side. As Sandor Clegane explains to Sansa Stark, who is infatuated by the romantic view of the knights in the songs: “What do you think a knight is *for*, girl? You think it’s all taking favors from ladies and looking fine in gold plate? Knights are for *killing*” (*CK*, 683).

Although Martin mostly concentrates on the life of the nobility, the differences between the living conditions of the aristocrats and the commoners are apparent: the world of *A Song of Ice and Fire* is one of social inequality. The commoners have no say in political matters, they do not own the land they work, and almost all of the wealth is possessed by the nobility. The food consumed by the people of Westeros indicates the gap between the respective condition the nobles and the commoners live in. The nobility often holds extravagant feasts consisting of multiple courses:

Six monstrous huge aurochs had been roasting for hours, turning slowly on wooden spits while kitchen boys basted them with butter and herbs until the meat crackled and spit. Tables and benches had been raised outside the pavilions, piled high with sweetgrass and strawberries and fresh-baked bread. (*GT*, 298)

The conditions in Flea Bottom, the poorest part of the kingdom's capital, are quite different. While she is living there, Arya Stark has to catch pigeons for food. There are pot-shops where she can trade half a pigeon for a heel of yesterday’s bread and a “bowl o’ brown”: “It usually had barley in it, and chunks of carrot and onion and turnip, and sometimes even

apple, with a film of grease swimming on top. Mostly she tried not to think about the meat” (*GT*, 719). Even war means different things to the commoners than to the nobles: their villages are burned, their men slaughtered and their women raped, while the nobles are preferably taken as hostages and ransomed for money or exchanged for other prisoners.

Social mobility is extremely limited: being born poor most likely means dying poor. The nobles marry among their own kind and even here there are limitations: it is unlikely that a member of a great house would marry to a lesser house. Social advancement is possible through performing some kind of a service to one's superiors. In fact, the higher lords often buy such services with promises of land, knighthood or lordship. Perhaps the most important prospect for advancement is war. It leaves ranks to be filled and land to be redistributed: that which is owned by own casualties and that which is seized from the vanquished. After a great battle between Lannister and Baratheon forces, six hundred men are knighted, lordships are granted, and holdings change hands: “Ser Philip shall henceforth be Lord Philip of House Foote, and to him shall go all the lands, rights, and incomes of House Caron” (*CK*, 821). Those who rise above the position they are born in are often frowned upon as upstarts undeserving of their status. Davos Seaworth, a former smuggler raised to knighthood, is mistrusted by lords of older houses:

He could trust none of them, nor would they ever include him in their private councils. They scorned his sons as well. *My grandsons will joust with theirs, though, and one day their blood may wed with mine. In time my little black ship [his device] will fly as high as Velaryon's seahorse or Celtigar's red crabs.* (*CK*, 134)

The world depicted in the novels is very much a world of men. Women have little say in matters concerning politics, wealth, or even themselves. They usually cannot inherit, as

the males take precedence. Nor can women choose their own spouses: arranged marriage is a political tool for securing alliances with other houses of nobility. Marriage contracts can be made when the girl is still very young: Sansa Stark is betrothed at the age of eleven (*GT*, 48). The main purpose of a wife is to produce male offspring, heirs to ensure the continuation of the family line. Furthermore, the women are expected to appear presentable, take part in polite conversation, and know the proper etiquette. Their education is evident in Cersei Lannister's words: "Jaime [her brother] learned to fight with sword and lance and mace, while I was taught to smile and sing and please" (*CK*, 767).

The lords carry out justice over their subjects in the name of the king. Punishments can be harsh: desertion and treason are punishable by death, a rapist may be castrated, and a smuggler may have his fingers cut off. The accused may also choose the medieval practice of trial by combat (Wikipedia: Trial by combat). In this case, the accuser and the accused, or their champions, face each other in single combat to settle the matter. It is thought that the gods serve as judges, granting victory to the one who is right. Almost all crimes can be forgiven, if the offender chooses to join the Night's Watch, a sworn brotherhood that protects the Wall at the northern border of the realm against the wild people living beyond it. Joining the Watch means lifelong service and forsaking all titles and belongings, including the right to marry.

The principal religion of the Seven Kingdoms is called "the Faith of the Seven", or simply "the Faith" for short. As Vike (2009: 62) has noted, its structure and function bear a close resemblance to Catholicism during the Middle Ages. Followers of the Faith worship a single god who has seven faces, or aspects: the Father, the Mother, the Crone, the Maid, the Warrior, the Smith, and the Stranger. This concept is rather like the Holy Trinity in Christianity. The seven are often portrayed in statues, each having an altar for worship. The different aspects of god are somewhat like patron saints in Catholicism:

each represents particular areas of life and is worshipped accordingly. For example, if you wish for success in battle you would pray to the Warrior, while prayers for the safety of your children would be directed at the Mother. The Faith appears to be rather prosperous: on one occasion the Crown ends up in so much debt it has to borrow from the Faith (*GT*, 194). The head of the Faith is called the “High Septon”, who has a role similar to that of Pope. As some popes, it is implied that the High Septon is not above indulging in some of the worldly pleasures: he is described as “a squat man, grey with age and ponderously fat, wearing long white robes and an immense crown of spun gold and crystal that wreathed his head with rainbows whenever he moved” (*GT*, 724). The terminology associated with the Faith is reminiscent of Latin, the language closely associated with the medieval Catholic church: *septon* (*GT*, 23); “priest”, *septa* (*GT*, 68); “priestess” and *sept*, (*GT*, 23); “church” are all invented words derived from the Latin word *septem*, “seven”. The secular power of the Crown and the spiritual power of the Faith are intertwined in many ways. For example, the earthly authorities may sometimes influence the choice of High Septon. When the previous High Septon is torn to pieces by an angry mob, the Hand of the King, Tyrion Lannister, replaces him by one who is “*his* choice, and wise enough to know who put the honey on his bread” (*CK*, 646). The secular authorities have influence over the Faith, but they are also dependent on its support. Religion is a part of many rituals such as marriages, trials and the anointment of knights. The Faith is also a moral authority, preaching against incest, for instance. Although Zanger (1982: 230) has stated that one of the features that distinguishes fantasy from medieval history is the “absence of the Church as an institution of power and significance”, this is not true for the *Song* novels.

In conclusion, the medieval world presented in *A Song of Ice and Fire* very much resembles the historical medieval world of Europe. I do not think it can be said to be



“vaguely medieval” or “simplified”, as significant features such as the workings of a feudal society, feudal politics and the role of religion are described in much detail. Nor is Martin's re-creation of the Middle Ages “selective and positive”: the world has been stripped of the romantic qualities commonly associated with the medieval period in fiction, and the darker aspects of the times are presented faithfully, such as the social inequality between social classes and between men and women. It is worth noting that although the principal setting of the novels draws its inspiration from the European Middle Ages, other places and cultures with their own customs are explored in the novels as well.

## **2.1 Suggesting the Past through Language**

We have established that the medieval aspects of Martin's fictional world are presented rather realistically and elaborately. However, this is still not enough to create a believable illusion of a past world; the language used to describe the world and that spoken by its inhabitants should be fitting as well. As Mandala (2010) argues, stylistic choices play an important part in creating a credible alternative world. Since Martin's story world draws its inspiration from the past, we can expect the language to do so as well. In chapter 2.2 I discuss Martin's use of archaisms to create a believable medieval setting, while chapter 2.3 deals with Martin's use of archaic forms of address to convey social status in the novels and chapter 2.4 covers non-archaic stylistic features that support the medieval atmosphere in the novels.

## **2.2 Archaisms**

Mandala (2010: 71) defines archaisms as “words or constructions retained from an

earlier period of the language but no longer in general use". She argues that "they can be an effective means of distancing the alternative world of the text from the reader's own, and can be instrumental in bringing a coherent past world to life in the narrative" (Mandala 2010: 76). The role of archaic forms in fantasy is not to recreate a close approximation of past language forms; in fact, the author must strike a careful balance between effect and comprehensibility. As Mandala (2010: 85) puts it, "the language must be different enough from the reader's own to convince, but not so distant that we lose touch with the narrative". She states that such language use consists of, according to Sonmez's (2002) definition, textual "wormholes", "that pull readers from their present into the past world of the narrative" (Mandala 2010: 78). In this chapter I identify and analyse the archaisms in the *Song* novels largely based on Mandala's analysis in the third chapter of her book (2010: 71-94). I have also consulted the online version of the *Oxford English Dictionary* where necessary.

Let us first consider archaisms on a lexical level. I found that Martin makes extensive use of archaic vocabulary to suggest the past in the novels. Some examples include *wroth*: "His Grace is most wroth with you" (*GT*, 358), *unman*: "Are you unmanned by the dark, Gared?" (*GT*, 2), *wench* as a noun: "a fair-haired, blue-eyed wench of sixteen" (*GT*, 32), and a verb: "I am planning to make you run the kingdom and fight the wars while I eat and drink and wench myself into an early grave" (*GT*, 47), *destrier* and *garron* for different types of horses (*GT*, 2), *oft* instead of "often": "Visitors oft thought him Lord Renly's own son" (*CK*, 591), *unto*: "I am weary unto death of this endless war you two are fighting" (*GT*, 216), *twixt*: "there is no valid marriage contract 'twixt you and Sansa Stark" (*CK*, 819), *whence*: "from whence they had come" (*GT*, 288), *hence*: "three days hence" (*GT*, 483) and *thence*: "they rode down Shadowblack Lane to the foot of Aegon's High Hill, and thence onto Pigrun Alley" (*CK*, 408).

There are also several instances of contemporary words used in their previous meanings. *Without* was used in the sense of “outside”: “Maester Luwin is without and begs urgent audience” (*GT*, 60), *host* in the meaning of “an army”: “His host is now said to be a hundred thousand strong” (*CK*, 244) and *gay* in the sense of “merry”: “Marillion clumsily plucked a gay note on his new woodharp” (*GT*, 421).

There are also archaic phrases such as *must needs*, 'must or has to, “needs” acts as an intensifier': “So Ned must needs sit the Iron Throne in his absence” (*GT*, 463), *if it please you*, which was used in polite requests in the meaning 'if you agree': “I will lead the attack myself, if it please you” (*CK*, 168) and when addressing someone of superior status; when Catelyn Stark asks a girl's name she answers: “Mya Stone, if it please you, my lady” (*GT*, 369). Finally, the characters were *breaking their fast* instead of “having breakfast”: “Jon was breaking his fast on applecakes and blood sausage” (*GT*, 515); here, the etymology of “breakfast” is made explicit: people fast naturally when they sleep and the first meal of the day breaks this fast.

As Mandala (2010: 73) notes, archaisms can also occur on the syntactic level. I found examples of the auxiliary *do* being omitted in negatives: “I like it not” (*GT*, 18) and “he loves me not” (*GT*, 83), and questions: “How fares your good lord, sers?” (*GT*, 292). There were also instances of the perfective aspect being formed with the auxiliary *to be* instead of *to have*: “His lordship is come to visit me” (*CK*, 409) and modifiers following their head words instead of preceding them: “I'm almost a man grown” (*CK*, 103).

Mandala (2010: 73) mentions some very well known archaisms which were, interestingly, not found in the novels. The archaic pronouns *thou* and *thee* and possessive forms *thy* and *thine* were not used, nor were the *-(e)st* and *-eth* inflections of verbs. I think these particular forms have become somewhat of a cliché in fantasy, which could be the reason Martin has decided to avoid them. In my opinion, it could

almost be said that using these forms is nowadays more effective in parodying archaic language than creating a believable illusion of the past. Another reason might be that, since pronouns, possessives and verbal inflections occur so commonly in language, the constant use of their archaic forms might grow tiresome for the reader.

In sum, Martin uses archaisms quite skilfully in the novels. The archaisms appear to be genuine; their use is diverse and they appear on many different levels of language; and Martin also avoids the most worn ones. Even though the archaisms are quite frequent, he does not overuse them: not every sentence or paragraph is cluttered with them. The archaisms do not make the text more difficult to understand to any great extent, as the meaning of even the more obscure ones is usually clear from the context.

### **2.3 Archaic Forms of Address and Social Hierarchy**

In this chapter I discuss Martin's use archaic forms of address in the *Song* novels to present a past speech community, and how they are related to the status and background of the characters. Polite address forms may convey deference towards an addressee of superior status or a distant relationship between the speaker and the addressee, while familiar forms of address may indicate a close relationship or the inferior status of the addressee (see Brown and Gilman 1960). Address forms can also be used strategically to various effects, such as insulting the addressee. Mandala (2010: 80-81) argues that archaic forms of address are particularly important in creating an illusion of a credible past speech community: address patterns indicate the social structures of this community. Since the feudal society portrayed in *A Song of Ice and Fire* is strictly hierarchical, rank and social status can to a great extent be expected to determine the address patterns.

The King and other members of the royal family are addressed as *Your Grace* in the novels. This deferential and distant form of address is restricted to them, indicating that they are highest in the social hierarchy of the Seven Kingdoms. When King Robert Baratheon appears to visit Eddard Stark, who he has not met in years, the latter repeatedly addresses him as *Your Grace*. Since the two are close friends, using such a formal address form rather annoys Robert: “And if I hear 'Your Grace' once more I'll have your head on a spike. We are more to each other than that” (*GT*, 44). It is interesting that even after Robert's invitation to turn to a more intimate form of address, Eddard is unable to do so. He refrains from using *Your Grace* for a while, addressing Robert only as *you*, but then switches right back to it: “And there is the Wall. You need to see it, Your Grace, to walk along its battlements and talk to those who man it” (*GT*, 46). Here, social status seems to override the personal relationship between the two: Eddard feels the need to address Robert according to his rank even if the two are close friends.

The use of *Your Grace* as an address form is straightforward during normal circumstances: it is reserved for the king and his family. This gets more complicated when the Seven Kingdoms start a civil war, as there are several men claiming to be king in the realm. Addressing one of these men as *Your Grace* or not now reveals the speaker's stance on whether he or she considers the addressee to be the rightful ruler or not. At one point of the story, there are four kings: Joffrey Baratheon, Robert's heir, who is backed up by the Lannisters, Robert's brothers Renly and Stannis, and Robb Stark, who has proclaimed himself king of the northern parts of Westeros. Catelyn, Robb's mother, is trying to forge an alliance with Renly against Joffrey and the Lannisters. She addresses Renly as *my lord*, provoking an answer from one of his followers: “*Your*

*Grace*,' Brienne the Blue corrected, sharply. 'And you should kneel when you approach the king'" (CK, 313). Although Catelyn does not consider Renly to be the rightful king, she later switches the address form for a strategic reason. Renly is about to go to war against his brother, Stannis, and Catelyn is trying to talk sense to him: "I must speak with you, Your Grace,' she said, granting him a king's style for once, anything to make him heed her" (CK, 453).

Some members of aristocracy can be addressed by the combination of the title *Lord* and either forename or surname. The title of *Lord* is tied to the ownership of land, although it can also be granted as an honorary title. For example, an alchemist called Hallyne is given the right to use the title for his services to the crown, but he does not receive a castle or any land to rule with it (CK, 822). There are no distinctions between the ranks of these lords: there are no dukes, counts or barons. The title is always *Lord*, regardless of the size of the lord's holdings or whether the lord is a direct vassal of the king or the vassal of another lord. The wife of a lord is entitled to the title *Lady*.

Lords and ladies, as well as other members of the aristocracy, may also be addressed as *my lord* or *my lady*. These address forms appear in three different variants, which Martin uses to indicate the social status of the speaker. The nobility uses the forms *my lord* and *my lady*, while commoners use the contracted forms *m'lord* and *m'lady*. There are some interesting cases regarding the use of these forms. For example, Davos Seaworth, a former smuggler knighted by Stannis Baratheon, first addresses Lady Melisandre as *m'lady* and then immediately switches to *my lady* (CK, 560). This seems to be a subtle hint by Martin that Davos is of common birth. The third variants are *milord* and *milady*. These variants are rare and only used by a few minor characters, who are commoners, just as the users of the contracted forms.

The knights of the Seven Kingdoms are addressed by the title *ser*. This is obviously a variant form of *sir*, and functions similarly. In fact, the *Oxford English Dictionary* lists *ser* as one of the spelling variants of *sir* in Middle English. The choice of an archaic spelling form over the more familiar one is one of the stylistic strategies that help to create the illusion of a past world. In addition, the use of *ser* is probably one of the most iconic aspects of the language of the *Song* novels – it sets Martin's saga apart from most other works of fantasy literature.

The nobility usually addresses those of common birth by their first name. This familiar manner of address may be used to indicate a close relationship between the speaker and the addressee or as here the addressee's inferior status. The archaic address form *goodman* is also used.

I will now discuss a particularly interesting exchange regarding the use of address forms in the novels. The Seven Kingdoms are in the middle of a civil war. The rule of the boy-king Joffrey and queen regent Cersei is proving to be disastrous, so Tyrion Lannister is sent to court to serve as Hand of the King in order to keep his sister and nephew in check. One of Cersei's and Joffrey's most questionable decisions has been to award Janos Slynt, a butcher's son and Commander of City Watch, with lordship and the seat of Harrenhal, the largest castle in the Seven Kingdoms. One of Tyrion's first tasks is to get rid of him. He also knows that some members of Slynt's City Watch are responsible for the murder of a prostitute and her daughter, who is an illegitimate child of the late king Robert. Tyrion is trying to discover who they were and who gave the order. He prepares a feast for Slynt and constantly offers him more wine to get him drunk. Their conversation begins amiably:

“You have a gift for words, Lord Tyrion, if I might say so. And you tell a droll tale. Droll, yes.”

“I'm pleased you think so... but I'm not a lord, as you are. A simple *Tyrion* will suffice for me, Lord Janos.”

(*CK*, 111)

Tyrion is, in fact, not a lord, since he does not govern any land nor has he been endowed with *Lord* as an honorary title. However, he belongs to one of the major houses of Westeros, and he is, as Hand of the King, technically the second most powerful man in the Seven Kingdoms, so it is easy to see why Slynt would address him as *Lord*. Tyrion then invites Slynt to address him by first name, an address form denoting intimacy or social inferiority, while retaining the respectful *Lord Janos* himself. Here, Tyrion is aiming to build trust between the two, while emphasising Slynt's status and downplaying his own. He does this so that Slynt might speak more freely and reveal the murderers.

Later, the conversation turns to who should succeed Slynt as Commander of City Watch. He presents Tyrion with a list of six names, specifically endorsing Allar Deem. Tyrion's favourite is Ser Jacelyn Blackwater, but Slynt disagrees:

“Ser Jacelyn thinks overmuch of himself and his honor, as I see it. You'll do better leaving that one where he is, my lo-Tyrion. Allar Deem's the man for you.”

“Deem is little loved in the streets, I am told.”

“He's feared. That's better.”

“What was it I heard of him? Some trouble in a brothel?”

“That. Not his fault, my lo-Tyrion. No. He never meant to kill the woman, that was her own doing. He warned her to stand aside and let him do his duty.”



“Still... mothers and children, he might have expected she'd try to save the babe.” (CK, 113)

Notice how difficult it is for Janos Slynt to call Tyrion by his first name instead of *my lord*. He has only recently been raised to lordship, and he used to be a mere commoner, much below Tyrion in social hierarchy. Now that Tyrion has learned that Allar Deem was the killer, he asks Slynt who gave the order, but he will not tell. Tyrion then proceeds to mock Slynt, implying that he acquired his new position as Lord of Harrenhal through dishonourable means, which angers him: “I dislike the tone of your voice my lo-*Imp*” (CK, 115). *Imp* is a pejorative nickname referring to Tyrion's short stature and slightly disfigured appearance and it is often used of him behind his back. After this, Tyrion makes a thinly disguised threat by asking Slynt how many sons he has, which leads to the following exchange:

“What are my sons to you, dwarf?”  
 “*Dwarf?*” His anger flashed. You should have stopped at Imp. I am Tyrion of House Lannister, and some day, if you have the sense gods gave a sea slug, you will drop to your knees in thanks that it was me you had to deal with, and not my lord father. Now, *how many sons do you have?*”  
 Tyrion could see the sudden fear in Janos Slynt's eyes.  
 “Th-three, m'lord. And a daughter. Please, m'lord-” (CK, 115)

Slynt continues to insult Tyrion by calling him a dwarf. However, Tyrion manages to intimidate him seriously, which makes him switch back to respectful address. Notice that Slynt, being under pressure, uses *m'lord* instead of *my lord* like before. This is the form that is used by common people, and Slynt, of course, is originally a commoner.

Tyrion then reveals that Slynt will sail to the Wall and join the Night's Watch there, and calls in the City Watch to seize him: “‘Lord Slynt,’ Tyrion called out, ‘I believe you know Ser Jacelyn Bywater, our new Commander of City Watch’” (CK, 116). It seems that Tyrion is making a mockery out of Janos Slynt here by using the polite address form *Lord Slynt*: after all, he will have to relinquish his lordship when he joins the Night's Watch. Finally, Tyrion hands the list of Slynt's six favourites to Jacelyn, saying that they will be joining the Night's Watch too, and tells him to hint the ship's captain that Allar Deem would not be missed if he were to be washed overboard during the journey.

In conclusion, Martin uses archaic forms of address to portray his characters as members of a credible medieval speech community. The choice of address forms is largely tied to the addressee's rank and place in social hierarchy. In fact, social status can outweigh even a close personal relationship between the characters in this regard. Forms of address can also indicate the social background of the speaker, as made evident by the nobility's use of *my lord* versus the commoners' use of *m'lord*. Martin makes interesting use of these address forms when portraying characters that have risen from common birth to a higher status: they sometimes revert to using the form associated with the commoners, letting their background shine through and showing that they are not yet fully accustomed to their new role.

## **2.4 Non-archaic Language and Medieval Atmosphere**

The medieval atmosphere of the novels is not founded on archaisms alone. In this chapter I discuss non-archaic stylistic aspects that paint the picture of a world in the Middle Ages such as the specialised historical vocabulary, the detailed description of

heraldry and the use of British English.

A medieval world is obviously full of medieval objects so it is not a surprise that the *Song* novels are brimming with words for them. These words are not necessarily archaic, even if their referents are less common, less important or even non-existent in the world of today; they are historical words that are still used when discussing these referents.

The novels feature an extensive vocabulary linked to medieval warfare, for example, the characters use weapons such as *longswords* (GT, 6), *greatswords* (GT, 14), *bastard swords* (CK, 186), *longbows* (CK, 81), *crossbows* (CK, 246), *morningstars* (CK, 46), *warhammers* (GT, 40), *dirks* (GT, 8), *daggers* (GT, 132), *poleaxes* (GT, 730), *battle-axes* (CK, 49), *maces* (GT, 335), *spears* (CK, 267) and *lances* (CK, 38), wear *ringmail* (GT, 2), *chainmail* (GT, 145), *boiled leather* (GT, 2), *hauberks* (GT, 460), *breastplates* (GT, 44), *greaves* (SS2, 414), *vambraces* (SS2, 414), *gorgets* (SS2, 415), *spaulders* (SS2, 415), *gauntlets* (CK, 455), *brigandines* (SS2, 532) *helms* (GT, 44) and *shields* (GT, 315) for protection and employ siege engines such as *catapults* (SS2, 314), *trebuchets* (SS1, 427) and *siege towers* (SS2, 221).

Not all of the vocabulary is warlike. For example, the characters dress in medieval fashion and the articles of clothing include *breeches* (CK, 9), *doublets* (CK, 9), *bodices* (GT, 545), *cloaks* (CK, 9), *capes* (GT, 294), *tunics* (GT, 300), *mantles* (GT, 427) and *surcoats* (GT, 445), drink from *flagons* (GT, 427), *goblets* (CK, 49), *chalices* (SS2, 259) and *tankards* (SS1, 149) and plough the seas in *galleys* (CK, 741), *longships* (CK, 151), *carracks* (CK, 8) and *cogs* (CK, 8).

Another interesting example of vocabulary that helps build the medieval atmosphere are the specialised terms for different kinds of horses. These include *gelding* (GT, 396), *mare* (GT, 149), *courser* (GT, 148), *palfrey* (CK, 244), *steed* (SS1,

520), *stallion* (CK, 38), *filly* (GT, 396), *yearling* (GT, 244), *charger* (CK, 38) and *blood bay* (CK, 731). The diverse use of horse terminology not only adds variety to the text but also enhances the credibility of the world. Horses were the most important domestic animal in the medieval times, used for transportation, work, warfare and sport alike and acting as status symbols as well. Since horses are such an important part of the world the characters live in, it is natural that they are able to differentiate between different kinds of horses and pay attention to this matter.

One of the striking features of the novels' language are the numerous and vivid descriptions of the heraldic symbols associated with each house of nobility. Scenes that depict a character observing these symbols are relatively common, such as the one below:

Near all the chivalry of the south had come to Renly's call, it seemed. The golden rose of Highgarden was seen everywhere [...]. As well Catelyn spied the fox-and-flowers of House Florent, Fossoway apples red and green, Lord Tarly's striding huntsman, oak leaves for Oakheart, cranes for Crane, a cloud of black-and-orange butterflies for the Mullendores. Across the Mander, the storm lords had raised their standards Renly's own bannermen, sworn to House Baratheon and Storm's End. Catelyn recognized Bryce Caron's nightingales, the Penrose quills, and Lord Estermont's sea turtle, green on green. Yet for every shield she knew, there were a dozen strange to her, borne by the small lords sworn to the bannermen, and by hedge knights and freeriders, who had come swarming to make Renly Baratheon a king in fact as well as name. (CK, 307)

Martin's depiction of heraldry might seem superfluous at first, but these symbols convey vital information in the world the characters live in; they represent a house of nobility and the political and military power behind it. Their presence or absence in a given situation can therefore tell a great deal about the current political situation, which is especially important as the story world is in the middle of a civil war, with multiple kings vying for power.

Although Martin uses American English spelling and punctuation in the novels, he often opts for words more closely associated with British English. For example, he uses *autumn* (CK, 5) instead of *fall* and *arse* (SS1, 50) instead of *ass*, and employs words that are not commonly used in the United States such as *bugger*: “Bugger this bear, he’s not worth freezing over” (SS1, 2), *fortnight* (GT, 3), *lad* (GT, 5), *bloody*: “If Lord Tywin wants my help, he can bloody well ask for it” (GT, 647) and *randy*: “And Tom o’ Sevens, you randy old goat!” (SS1, 399-400). This is another stylistic choice that adds to the medieval feel of the *Song* novels. Great Britain was a part of the medieval world while the United States was not, which makes it much easier to associate British English with the time period than American English, a concept tied to a later era.

Interestingly, Martin is not entirely consistent in the choice between the words *arse* and *ass* throughout the series. In the first novel, *A Game of Thrones*, *ass* is used: “I sit on that damnable iron chair and listen to them complain until my mind is numb and my ass is raw” (GT, 47). *A Clash of Kings* features both *ass*: “Shut your hole, or I’ll shove a spit up your ass and we’ll baste you for a turn or two” (CK, 620) and *arse*: “As for your Ned, he should have kissed the hand that slew Aerys, but he preferred to scorn the arse he found sitting on Robert’s throne” (CK, 722). In the third novel, *A Storm of Swords*, *arse* replaces *ass* in all cases, and seems to be used more frequently than either word in the previous two

novels (see SS1: 5, 47, 50, and 82, for example). This change shows that Martin has honed his style as the series has progressed, finding new ways to add to the medieval feel of the novels. Choosing to use the British variant of a word like *arse* and increasing its frequency seems like an efficient means to this end since it, as a vulgarity, stands out.

### 3. Invented Language in Science Fiction and Fantasy

We have already discussed the way archaic language is used in the *Song* novels to create a believable medieval setting for the story. This aspect of the world is very different from the contemporary world and therefore strange to us, but also familiar to a degree, since it is based on history. However, the world of *Ice and Fire* is not just a re-imagining of the historical medieval world, but also a world vastly different from our own, a fantasy world. Likewise, archaisms are not the only deviant language forms in the *Song* novels, as there is also invented language that contributes to this aspect of the story world. Before we begin our discussion on Martin's use of invented language in the *Song* novels, let us briefly consider invented languages and their role in alternative world fiction in general.

Artificial languages, also called invented or constructed languages, are languages that are created for a particular purpose. As Barnes and van Heerden (2006) note, there are international auxiliary languages such as Esperanto that are designed to be used as *lingua francas*, computer programming languages such as BASIC, and simplified versions of natural languages that have been created for the benefit of foreign language speakers and people with dyslexia or other impairments. According to Barnes and van Heerden (2006: 115), one category of artificial languages consists of fictional languages used in science fiction and fantasy, where they contribute to world-building and function akin to natural languages within the story world. Barnes and van Heerden

(2006: 114) note that while other kinds of constructed languages, such as Esperanto, are usually designed to be as clear and simple as possible, this is not usually true of invented languages in fiction. This is because their primary function is not the ease of communication but some kind of artistic function. The author has complete freedom to create an invented language in the exact form he or she wishes, and the form it takes depends on the particular effects the author wishes to achieve.

Discussing fantasy literature without mentioning a certain name is exceedingly difficult, and even more so when fictional languages are also concerned. I am, of course, referring to J. R. R. Tolkien. Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings* is the most famous and influential work of western fantasy literature to this date, and has provided inspiration to countless authors in the genre. He is also famous for the numerous languages he invented and used in his work. Tolkien was a philologist and he was very passionate about creating languages, which definitely shows in his work. Some of his creations are actually fully functioning languages with complete grammars and extensive vocabularies. Others have done this too, for example, *Klingon* in *Star Trek* is such a language, but this is not necessarily the case for most invented languages in science fiction and fantasy. Another interesting feature of Tolkien's languages that sets them apart from other fictional languages is their role in Tolkien's writing. He has stated that “[t]he invention of languages is the foundation. The ‘stories’ were made rather to provide a world for the languages than the reverse. To me a name comes first and the story follows” (1955/1981). In other words, Tolkien did not create his languages to serve his fiction, but the other way around. He has even suggested that instead of a fictional language needing a surrounding mythology to be successful, a “language construction will *breed* a mythology” (1931/1983: 211, emphasis original). I think it can

be said that although Tolkien is widely influential and much imitated as a fantasy writer, his approach to writing fiction and using fictional language are not necessarily prototypical.

In most works of science fiction and fantasy, fictional languages play a smaller role than in Tolkien's work. The languages are not necessarily nearly as developed, nor do they function as the basis the whole work is built on. Instead, they are created to serve the work in question and developed to the extent the author finds necessary. However, this does not mean that they are not needed or that their role is insignificant. As Ursula le Guin (2006: xix) puts it, "the development of an imagined world beyond a certain point demands the development of a language to suit it". Since the settings of these works are at least somehow, and often completely, different from the world we live in, it is almost necessary that the language used in the story world is also different in some regard. One very basic reason for using invented language in science fiction and fantasy is the need to name a thing or concept that does not exist in the real world. For example, J. K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* novels feature a sport where wizards fly on their broomsticks and chase flying balls. Of course, such a sport does not exist in real life, so the author had to invent a name for it, and the sport became known as *quidditch*.

It can be argued that the mere existence of invented language in a science fiction or fantasy setting serves various functions: it distinguishes the story world from the real one, lends it credibility and depth, and creates a sense of strangeness. As mentioned before, it might also be necessary simply to name unnamed things. However, these are not the only functions fictional language can serve, as will be discussed below. When we consider the intended effects of invented language, we must consider the form of that language. After all, the author has complete control over all qualities of the



language; its phonology, vocabulary, grammar etc., and all of these aspects may be developed to serve whatever goals the author wishes to achieve. J. K. Rowling has stated in an interview that she wanted a word beginning with the letter “Q” for her fictional sport and wrote down five pages of them before settling for *quidditch* (Rowling: 1999). It is probably no coincidence that the word has an onomatopoeic quality – it resembles the sound a broom sweep makes.

The use of invented language always adds a sense of unfamiliarity to the story world. In some cases, this may be one of its primary functions. The *Klingon* language is an example of this: it is spoken by an extraterrestrial species of the same name, and it was designed to sound alien to highlight the otherness of the *Klingon*. As Barnes and van Heerden (2006: 112) note, the language contains peculiar features to achieve this effect: a strange-sounding phonology and the rare object-verb-subject word order. H.P. Lovecraft's *The Call of Cthulhu* (1928) contains another good example of invented language being used to achieve the sense of extreme unfamiliarity. In this short story, deranged cultists are heard chanting the phrase “Ph'nglui mglw'nafh Cthulhu R'lyeh wgah'nagl fhtagn”, which translates to “In his house at R'lyeh dead Cthulhu waits dreaming”. This language here is very strange and seemingly unpronounceable, which makes it appear rather menacing. This reflects its subject matter well: an incomprehensible alien god of unspeakable evil whose very existence mocks everything mankind holds sacred.

On the other hand, fictional language can be used to make strange things more familiar. For example, let us consider the name of Sauron's black land in Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*: the place where Frodo and his companions must travel to destroy the One Ring, *Mordor*. Just by looking at the name, we can tell that Mordor is a desolate,

foreboding place – Frodo's quest will be no picnic. Although Mordor does not mean anything, we assign these kinds of negative qualities to it because it resembles *mors*, the Latin word for death, and the English word *murder*. Creators of fictional languages usually draw inspiration from natural languages, and authors may exploit similarity to existing language to imply meaning. Of course, this can only work with languages and expressions that can be expected to be familiar to the majority of the readers.

Invented language can also serve to assign certain qualities to its speakers or reinforce them. The *Klingon* language sounds strange, which makes the *Klingon* appear alien. Elvish languages in fantasy fiction tend to sound “beautiful” or “elevated”, which highlights the sophisticated nature of the species, while the language of orcs, for example, often appears to be “ugly” or “brutish”. How is this achieved, then? I am not going to try to go in depth here, as this is not the focus of this work, and it is beyond its scope, but let us consider a few things. First of all, the actual fictional language content might be accompanied by a description about how the language is supposed to sound: melodic, flowing, soft, hard, harsh, guttural etc. Of course, the actual language content should not contradict this. We can probably assume that the supposed pronunciation of the fictional language is close to its written form; as we are discussing a medium that can only represent the language in writing, it would not make much sense to assume that there is a large disparity between spelling and pronunciation. On the other hand, the reader might be expected to filter the connection between spelling and pronunciation through that of his or her mother tongue, to apply familiar conventions to the fictional language. Phonology and syllable structure affect our perception of the fictional language in question, and this in turn affects our view on those who speak it. For example, using a lot of vowels might give a fictional language a sing-song quality

of sorts, using lots of sibilants might make the language appear rather serpentine, and all the consonants in “Ph'nglui mglw'nafh Cthulhu R'lyeh wgah'nagl fhtagn” make it seem so alien and unpronounceable. In addition, borrowing features from a real language to the fictional language might be exploited to create a link between the perceived qualities of these languages and their speakers. For example, we associate Latin with the Roman empire, science and religion – it is a prestigious and “civilised” language. If a fictional language contains Latinate features, we tend to attribute similar characteristics to it, and view those who speak it in a certain manner.

Finally, invented language may be used to signify changes that have taken place in the world. This kind of use usually seems to take place in science fiction with a future setting, although it is also possible in alternative history settings. In this case, the settings are not completely independent fictional worlds – they are based on the real world we live in that has changed somehow. Likewise, the fictional language is not altogether fictional, but an actual language like English, for example, that has undergone some changes due to the changes that have taken place in the world.

Susan Mandala (2010) has explored futuristic versions of English in science fiction settings that have changed considerably due to language contact. One of these is Joss Whedon's television series *Firefly*, where the characters commonly code-switch between English and Chinese. *Firefly's* dialogue contains untranslated Chinese words and phrases embedded within English, creating an estranged version of the English language for the audience. Mandala (2010: 44-45) notes that the dialogue is constructed in a way that facilitates understanding: most of the dialogue is in English with only small units of Chinese embedded within; in addition, she notes that most of these units are interjections, exclamatives, formulaic responses and terms of address, which are

mostly predictable in their context, making it possible to infer at least their approximate meaning. Using Chinese in this manner does not alienate the audience or hinder understanding too much, but it contributes to world-building in a significant way. As Mandala (2010: 43) notes, the fact that the characters code-switch between English and Chinese commonly and effortlessly suggests that the status of these languages has changed from the world we live in: English has declined as a dominant world language, while Chinese has risen to prominence, penetrating into the former language, which in turn implies a shift in power from the West towards the Far East.

George Orwell's dystopian novel *Nineteen Eighty-Four* features another example of estranged English that reflects the changes that have taken place in the novel's reality. In this case, no language contact is involved. The new version of English in the novel is called Newspeak, and it is purposefully constructed by the ruling totalitarian government. Newspeak is, essentially, an extremely simplified version of English, which has many of its unwanted words and concepts removed. Newspeak is built on the Sapir-Whorfian premise that language affects thought, and its purpose is to limit freedom of thought by making dissidence impossible. It is worth noting that *Nineteen Eighty-Four* contains an appendix focused solely on Newspeak, in which the language is explained in much further detail than in the novel itself.

Whatever the form or function of the invented language, its use always presents a challenge to understanding. As Mandala (2010: 30-31) notes, estrangement calls for a balance: the familiar must become strange but not incomprehensible, while the strange must also become familiar. Invented language must be used in moderation to keep the text understandable as a whole, and we must also somehow come to learn what the fictional language matter actually means: “Estrangement embedded at the level of style

can only be effective, of course, if the estranged code carries with it the key to its eventual understanding” (Mandala 2010: 52). Invented language can be made known to the reader in many different ways: embedded translations, context, likeness to natural languages, appendices etc. What can be challenging is making them appear to be a natural part of the story world while conveying meaning to the reader at the same time. The conflict rises from the need to present the invented language as an already existing feature of the story world – one that the characters are familiar with and fluent in, but the reader, of course, is not. Relying too much on overt translations or explanations can make the presentation of the language feel unnatural, as there should be no need to do so in an environment where the language is already known. More subtle methods can be more effective in making the language accessible to the reader while conveying it as a believable part of the setting.

### **3.1 Invented Language in *A Song of Ice and Fire***

George R. R. Martin's approach to fictional language is very much the antithesis to that of Tolkien. In his blog, Martin discusses his reply to a reader inquiring about the vocabulary of High Valyrian, one of the fictional languages in *A Song of Ice and Fire*: “[...] all I know about High Valyrian is the seven words I've made up to date. When I need an eighth, I'll make that up too... but I don't have a whole imaginary language in my desk here, the way Tolkien did” (Martin: 2010). It seems fair to assess that Martin's view of invented languages is more practical than passionate; for him, they are a tool, a means to an end.

As a side note, it is worth mentioning that some of the invented languages that appear in the *Song* novels have been developed much further for the TV adaptation. In Martin's novels, most of the dialogue spoken in an invented language is presented in

English, but HBO deemed that this approach would not work for their adaptation – they wanted to have their character actually speak these languages whenever they were supposed to be doing so. The languages had to be extended for this purpose, and the task was given to David J. Peterson, a linguist and an experienced language creator. He has expanded the languages considerably using the information available in the novels as a starting point; for example, he has developed the Dothraki language into a fully functioning language with a vocabulary of over 3000 words (Dothraki website). It must be noted here that I will only discuss the languages as they appear in the novels. Still, it is interesting to see how a different medium requires a different approach when fictional languages are concerned. Furthermore, it could be that this will influence Martin's use of invented languages in the future instalments of the *Song* series, as he now has these much more complete versions readily available to him.

As discussed before, Martin's approach to invented language is rather minimalistic. Still, it seems that a large effect can be achieved with relatively little effort: after all, the reader approaching Martin about the Valyrian language seemed to assume that it went much beyond the few words that appear in the books. Ursula le Guin states that “to give the impression of a language, the flavor of it, a few mysterious words in it – which is all most novels need to do – all the inventor has to do is find a couple of rules and obey them. [...] an incoherent language is a contradiction in terms. A language is, in a sense, its rules” (2006: xix). A few words consisting of random syllables do not create an illusion of an actual, living language, but creating a small set of rules and adhering to them can do so, even if the language is largely incomplete.

I begin my discussion on the use of invented language in the *Song* novels by looking at two fictional languages used in Martin's story world: High Valyrian in

chapter 3.2 and Dothraki in chapter 3.3. I then proceed to compare the differences in the presentation and intended effects of the two languages in chapter 3.4. Chapters 3.5 and 3.6 deal with two kinds of estranged English: in the first one I look at the way Martin uses invented idioms and proverbs to flesh out the setting, while in the latter one I discuss his creative use of English to represent the consciousness of a wolf. Finally, chapter 3.7 deals with the role of personal names and place names in world-building and setting apart different regions and peoples inside the story world.

### 3.2 High Valyrian

High Valyrian was the language of the ancient Valyrian Empire, which once ruled most of the continent of Essos. As discussed above, there is not much High Valyrian in the novels, but what is there, together with the way it is presented, manages to create quite a few interesting effects.

The phrase *valar morghulis* is first introduced in the second book of the series when Jaqen H'ghar, parting ways with Arya Stark, gives her a coin and tells her that “If the day comes when you would find me again, give that coin to any man from Braavos, and say these words to him – *valar morghulis*” (CK, 624). He makes her repeat the words several times but does not explain what they mean. We do not learn the meaning of the words, or what language they are, until well into the third book, but there are quite a few clues foreshadowing this revelation.

Arya has developed a habit of saying a sort of a grim prayer before she goes to sleep: she whispers the names of all the people who have wronged her and her family to her pillow, wishing them death. When she learns the words from Jaqen, she starts ending her prayer with them: “Arya [...] said her own prayer. *Ser Gregor*; it went,

*Dunsen, Polliver, Raff the Sweetling. The Tickler and the Hound. Ser Ilyn, Ser Meryn, King Joffrey, Queen Cersei.* She ended it with *valar morghulis* [...]”(SS1, 45). In addition to repeating the phrase as a part of her prayer, she also utters the words when she is forced to cut the throat of a guard in order to escape from captivity: “*Valar morghulis,*’ she whispered as he died” (CK, 816). *Morghulis*, like the previously discussed Mordor, partly resembles the Latin word for death, *mors*. This resemblance and the situations the phrase is used in strongly hint that *valar morghulis* might have something to do with death. This is confirmed when we finally learn the meaning of the phrase:

“I can give you freedom, but not safety,” Dany warned. I have a world to cross and wars to fight. You may go hungry. You may grow sick. You may be killed.”

“*Valar morghulis,*” said Missandei, in High Valyrian.

“All men must die,” Dany agreed, “but not for a long time, we may pray.” (SS1, 372)

In itself, the phrase *valar morghulis* creates a mystery that goes on for several hundred pages. Martin's character-driven narrative style seems very effective in creating these kinds of mysteries in a believable manner: since Arya does not know the meaning of the words, neither does the reader. The resolution to this mystery comes much later through different characters in a completely unrelated situation. We learn from Missandei's and Daenerys's conversation that the phrase is High Valyrian, and that it means “all men must die”. Of course, Arya is still unaware of these things. It is interesting that she has been using the phrase instinctively in appropriate situations. In a way, this seems to bestow a mystical quality to the phrase: as if the words themselves



were so powerful that their meaning is apparent to even those who do not know the language.

The counterpart of *valar morghulis*, *valar dohaeris* first appears towards the end of the third book. Arya is trying to book passage aboard a ship but does not have enough money to pay for it. When she learns that the captain is from Braavos, she presents him the coin Jaqen had given her:

The captain turned it over and blinked at it, then looked at her again. “This... how...?” *Jaqen said to say the words too.* Arya crossed her arms against her chest. “*Valar morghulis*,” she said, as if she'd known what it meant. “*Valar dohaeris*,” he replied, touching his brow with two fingers. “Of course you shall have a cabin.” (SS2, 489)

Here we learn that the phrase *valar dohaeris* is, at least on some occasions, used as a response to *valar morghulis*. It seems that the exchange of these phrases could be part of some kind of a greeting ritual, as the captain also responds with the gesture of touching his brow. We also learn that having the coin and knowing the words had power in this situation, as the captain immediately changes his mind and gives Arya a cabin.

At this point, we know that *valar morghulis* means “all men must die”, (although Arya does not), but we do not know what *valar dohaeris* means. Just like with *valar morghulis*, we will not learn this for a while, but we can make some educated guesses. The phrases share two elements: *valar* and the suffix *-is*, which means that the meanings must be related. When I first saw *valar dohaeris*, I thought that if *valar morghulis* means “all men must die”, this phrase has to mean “all men must (something)”, *valar* is “all men”, the second part of the phrase is a verb, and the suffix *-is* signifies necessity.

This interpretation does, indeed, later prove to be correct, but it is not the only one possible. It would be equally possible for *valar* to be the verb part “must die”, *morghul-* being “men”, and the suffix *-is* signifying “all”. In this case, *valar dohaeris* would mean “all (something) must die”. While possible, this interpretation seems highly unlikely, as the other one feels much more natural and comes instinctively. Let us now consider why this is so.

As mentioned before, the beginning of the word *morghulis* resembles the Latin word for death. This likeness to an actual language is quite a strong hint that it is, indeed, this part of the phrase that has something to do with death instead of *valar*. Another factor that leads toward the correct interpretation is the word order. English, Finnish, and, in fact, the vast majority of the world's languages follow a basic word order that puts the subject before the verb (Tomlin, 1986: 22). This makes it natural for the speakers of these languages to assume that *valar* is the subject and *morghulis* the verb. On the other hand, speakers of languages that put the verb before the subject might be more likely to interpret the phrase differently.

Le Guin (2006: xix) has stated that a language can be said to be, in essence, its rules, as we have discussed above. It is our knowledge of these rules that allows us to attribute meaning to the elements shared between the two phrases, although we only know the meaning of the first phrase. When we see these rules at work, we see a language instead of just a few made-up words. It is also important to notice that Martin does not explain these rules to us – we are left to figure them out on our own. In a way, this makes the language seem like a natural part of the story world: we see the similarity between two instances of language use and make assumptions based on that. If we were explicitly told how the language functions it could easily feel forced or artificial, as if

the novel was trying to teach us like a grammar book. Discovering how the language works on your own can also be rather satisfying for the reader.

Since we know that *valar dohaeris* means “all men must (something)”, we can start speculating on what that “something” is. As a side note, if we were reading the novels as they came out, we would be doing this for about five years: *A Storm of Swords* was published in the year 2000 while the following *A Feast for Crows* came out in 2005. Unlike with *morghulis*, there does not seem to be anything about the form of *dohaeris* that would give us a hint about its meaning based on resemblance to actual languages. Since *valar morghulis* means “all men must die”, one fair assumption for the meaning of *valar dohaeris* would be “all men must live”. This, of course, would be based on the duality of life and death; it is quite reasonable to expect the exchange of these phrases to involve such a common dichotomy, with the answer being the opposite of the first phrase. Based on a few Google searches this seemed to be a popular theory before the meaning of the phrase was revealed in *A Feast for Crows*. This would create a rather comforting sense for the exchange: we will die eventually, but first we get to live. However, this is not actually the meaning of *valar dohaeris*, as we will eventually find out.

The phrase next appears when the captain of the ship speaks to Arya after they have completed their voyage: “‘*Valar dohaeris.*’ He touched two fingers to his brow. I beg you remember Ternesio Terys and the service he has done you” (*FFC*, 113). We still do not learn the meaning of the phrase, although the way it is used here is actually a subtle hint. The meaning is finally revealed when a man speaks to Arya at a temple: “All men must serve beneath this roof. *Valar dohaeris* is how we say it here” (*FFC*, 392). The mystery of these two phrases is finally concluded, as we learn that *valar*

*dohaeris* means “all men must serve”. The exchange of these phrases as a greeting seems to reveal a rather bleak view of the world: all men must die, all men must serve. The temple in question is devoted to the service of the Many-Faced God, or the god of death, and the religious community also functions as an assassin’s guild.

In addition to *valar morghulis/dohaeris*, only a few High Valyrian words appear in the novels so far. One of these is *valonqar*. The word first appears when Cersei Lannister wakes up to a nightmare about her brother Tyrion, who is accused of murdering one of her children:

But that was folly. Her dwarf brother was down in the black cells, condemned to die this very day. [...] *A dream, that’s all it was, a dream. I drank too much last night, these fears are only humors born of wine. I will be the one laughing, come dusk. My children will be safe, Tommen’s throne will be secure, and my twisted little valonqar will be short a head and rotting.* (FFC, 56)

Cersei refers to her brother as *valonqar*, but we do not learn why she does this or what the word means. She later learns that Tyrion has escaped from captivity, and the word reappears without any further explanation: “*It is blood I need, not water. Tyrion’s blood, the blood of the valonqar*” (FFC, 67). *Valonqar* next appears much later when Cersei is reminiscing about the death of her son: “In his last moments he had looked to her in desperate appeal, and a sudden memory had stopped her heart; a drop of red blood hissing in a candle flame, a croaking voice that spoke of crowns and shrouds, of death at the hands of the *valonqar*” (FFC, 511). This appearance deepens the mystery: it seems that Cersei’s use of the word stems from some strange event in her past, and that she is afraid of the *valonqar* killing her.

Cersei then puts a bounty on her brother's head, which brings several bounty hunters carrying severed heads supposedly belonging to Tyrion to her: “I bring you justice. I bring you the head of your *valonqar*.’ The old Valyrian word sent a chill through her, though it also gave her a tingle of hope. ‘The Imp is no longer my brother, if he ever was,’ she declared” (*FFC*, 662). Here we finally learn that *valonqar* is a Valyrian word, and Cersei's response makes it fairly certain that it means “brother”. Later on Cersei dreams of the event where she first heard the word. When they were children, she and her friend Melara went to a frightening old woman to have their fortunes told. She tells Cersei that she will be queen but one day a younger queen will come to take everything away from her, hints at the death of her children and tells her that “when your tears have drowned you, the *valonqar* shall wrap his hands about your pale white throat and choke the life from you”(FFC, 672). She also tells Melara that her death is near. The account of this event finally explains why Cersei has been referring to her brother with this foreign word. Finally, we learn the exact meaning of the word as Cersei is giving an account of her past encounter with the diviner to one of her friends:

The words came tumbling out of her. She could still hear Melara Hetherspoon insisting that if they never spoke about the prophecies, they would not come true. She was not so silent in the well, though. She screamed and shouted. “Tyrion is the *valonqar*,” she said. “Do you use that word in Myr? It’s High Valyrian, it means *little brother*.” She had asked Septa Saranella about the word, after Melara drowned. (*FFC*, 726)

We learn that *valonqar* means “little brother”, and how Cersei learned the meaning of the word. We also learn that Melara had died, as the old woman prophesied. The way this word is handled is another good example of how Martin likes to create small

mysteries that are only resolved several hundred pages later. The word is repeated several times before its exact meaning is given explicitly. In between, the meaning is hinted at, and we slowly learn why Cersei is using the word.

Finally, let us have a look at another High Valyrian word, *dracarys*. The word first appears when queen Daenerys is training her young dragons:

“Drogon,” Dany said softly, “*dracarys*.” And she tossed the pork in the air.

Drogon moved quicker than a striking cobra. Flame roared from his mouth, orange and scarlet and black, searing the meat before it began to fall. [...] She smiled at Ser Jorah. “I won’t need to char their meat over a brazier any longer.”

“So I see. *Dracarys*?”

All three dragons turned their heads at the sound of that word and Viserion let loose with a blast of pale gold flame that made Ser Jorah take a hasty step backward. Dany giggled. “Be careful with that word, ser, or they’re like to singe your beard off. It means ‘dragonfire’ in High Valyrian. I wanted to choose a command that no one was like to utter by chance.”

(*SSI*, 114)

This time the meaning of the word is given immediately. Daenerys knows the meaning of the word, while Ser Jorah does not. She explains it to him after the slight mishap, which, conveniently, leads to the reader learning the meaning right away. *Dracarys*, “dragonfire”, bears an obvious resemblance to the Latin word for dragon, *draco*, making it another High Valyrian word besides *morghulis* that reminds us of the language of the Roman Empire. This probably is not a coincidence, as Valyria is very much the equivalent of Rome in Martin's story world. It used to be a city-state that conquered most of the known world, creating a vast empire. This empire later collapsed;

by the time period of the novels, it is long since gone. It has left behind magnificent roads and its language. High Valyrian is not spoken as a mother tongue any more, but it is still taught to, and used by, the nobility and the learned. Some forms of Valyrian are spoken in parts of the former empire, but the regional differences are increasing: “He had learned to read High Valyrian at his maester’s knee, though what they spoke in the Nine Free Cities ... well, it was not so much a dialect as nine dialects on the way to becoming separate tongues” (*DWD*, 17). This is very much like the development of the Romance languages from Vulgar Latin. The parallels between the two empires are strong and this connection is further strengthened by the Latinate features of High Valyrian.

### 3.3 Dothraki

Let us now look at the Dothraki language, which is the most well-defined fictional language in the novels. It is spoken by a people of the same name: fierce, horse-riding nomads in Essos, the eastern continent in Martin's story world. The Dothraki are extremely skilled in mounted warfare, and they tend to put these skills to good use often, pillaging towns and cities for treasure or extorting them for tribute. The Dothraki are organised in *khalasars* (*GT*, 32), meaning hordes, tribes or clans, that are centred around their *khal* (*GT*, 32), leader or king. The Dothraki people are very much like the Mongols by nature; this is also reflected in their title for leader, *khal*, which closely resembles the Mongol title *khan*. Just like the previously discussed similarities between Latin and High Valyrian, and the Roman Empire and the Valyrian Empire, this is also a case where the similarity between invented language and actual language helps us establish the connection between the fictional world and the real world.

We can also see that *khalasar* is derived from *khal*, and there are other examples

of this too: the *khal's* wife, or queen, is called *khaleesi* (*GT*, 105), and his son is *khalakka* (*GT*, 391), a prince. These could be examples of productive word-formation processes; for example, it's entirely possible that the suffix *-eesi* might be used to derive the feminine counterpart from any applicable noun, but the novels do not offer support for this. We learn the meaning of these words from the context they are used in, as they are not stated explicitly. The common root *khal* implies that the meanings are related, which makes it easier to guess them. This word first appears when Daenerys is talking about her upcoming marriage with Khal Drogo with her brother Viserys (*GT*, 30). At this point we do not know that *khal* is a title; Khal Drogo could be just a name. This changes quickly as a slave girl tells Daenerys more about her future husband:

Drogo is so rich that even his slaves wear golden collars. A hundred thousand men ride in his *khalasar*, and his palace in Vaes Dothrak has two hundred rooms and doors of solid silver.” There was more like that, so much more, what a handsome man the *khal* was, so tall and fierce, fearless in battle, the best rider ever to mount a horse, a demon archer. (*GT*, 32)

There are several things in the slave girl's story that reveal the meaning of these words implicitly. *Khal* appears in lower case and preceded by a definite article, which signifies it is not a name. In this case, it appears independently of *Drogo*, but clearly refers to him. When it appears together with it in *Khal Drogo*, it is capitalised just like titles are capitalised in English when they appear as a part of a proper name: King James, Queen Elizabeth etc. We learn that Drogo is a rich and powerful man who also has a palace, just like a king or leader. We also learn that a hundred thousand men ride in what is said to be “his *khalasar*”; the *khalasar* belongs to him, he leads them. These things, together



with *khal's* resemblance to the Mongol title *khan*, make it rather obvious that *khal* is the title for a leader or a king, and that a *khalasar* is the horde or tribe led by a *khal*. This is a good example of how Martin makes it possible to infer the meaning of fictional language matter through context instead of making it explicit. The language is presented as a natural part of the fictional world: it is used by people who know the language, and there is therefore no need to provide an explanation or translation.

We also learn the meaning of *khaleesi* and *khalakka* through context and their relation to the word *khal*. *Khaleesi* first appears at the wedding of Daenerys and Drogo, where the former is addressed as such: “A handsome gift, *Khaleesi*,” Magister Illyrio said” (*GT*, 105). The word appears again a little later when Daenerys receives a horse as a wedding gift: “She is the pride of the *khalasar*,” Illyrio said. ‘Custom decrees that the *khaleesi* must ride a mount worthy of her place by the side of the *khal*” (*GT*, 105). These exchanges make it clear that *khaleesi* is the title of the *khal's* wife, a queen. Likewise, we learn the meaning of *khalakka* implicitly:

Cohollo came to Dany as Irri and Jhiqui were helping her down off her silver [her horse]. He was the oldest of Drogo’s three bloodriders, a squat bald man with a crooked nose and a mouth full of broken teeth, shattered by a mace twenty years before when he saved the young *khalakka* from sellswords who hoped to sell him to his father’s enemies. (*GT*, 391)

Drogo, who is now *khal*, was referred to as *khalakka* when he was young and his father was still alive. This, together with the fact that *khalakka* seems to be derived from *khal* and can therefore be expected to have a related meaning, strongly implies that *khalakka* is the title of the *khal's* son, a prince.

As we have discussed previously, a few invented words alone do not necessarily create a believable impression of an actual language, but being able to observe some of the language's rules can go a long way towards this end. We learn the basic word order of the *Dothraki* language through a phrase Daenerys utters at a ceremony celebrating her pregnancy to Khal Drogo: “*Khalakka dothrae mr'anha!*” she proclaimed in her best Dothraki. *A prince rides inside me!*” (GT, 490). The word order is quite obviously subject-verb-object. We already knew the meaning of *khalakka* implicitly, and an explicit translation is given here: “a prince”. *Dothrae* should definitely be the verb “rides” here. It is easy to see the similarity between it and the name of the people themselves, Dothraki. It is very likely that their meanings are related, with the name being derived from the verb. I think it is perfectly reasonable to assume that the meaning of *dothraki* is something along the lines of “riders”; horses and riding are such an all-encompassing part of the Dothraki culture that it would certainly make sense for them to call themselves that. *Mr'anha* seems to consist of two parts which is why it is likely to stand for “inside me”.

Let us now have a look at a few Dothraki noun phrases and then discuss what they have in common. First of all, there is *Rhaesh Andahli*, the Dothraki name for the continent of Westeros, after its dominant ethnic group: “The Dothraki called that land *Rhaesh Andahli*, the land of the Andals (GT, 30). Secondly, we have the names of the Dothraki capital, and their only city, *Vaes Dothrak* (GT, 385), and the name Daenerys and her follower give to a derelict ruin of a city: “Dany settled down with her small band of survivors in the place they named *Vaes Tolorro*, the city of bones” (CK, 182). As a side note, we can assume that *vaes* is the Dothraki word for “city” based on these two phrases. The next two examples are nicknames the Dothraki give Viserys after he loses

their respect:

Dany followed on her silver, escorted by Ser Jorah Mormont and her brother Viserys, mounted once more. After the day in the grass when she had left him to walk back to the *khalasar*, the Dothraki had laughingly called him *Khal Rhae Mhar*, the Sorefoot King. Khal Drogo had offered him a place in a cart the next day, and Viserys had accepted. In his stubborn ignorance, he had not even known he was being mocked; the carts were for eunuchs, cripples, women giving birth, the very young and the very old. That won him yet another name: *Khal Rhaggat*, the Cart King. (*GT*, 385-386)

The penultimate example here is *dosh khaleen*, a council of former *khaleesi*:

The crones of the *dosh khaleen* came first, with their eunuchs and slaves. Some supported themselves with tall carved staffs as they struggled along on ancient, shaking legs, while others walked as proud as any horselord. Each of the old women had been a *khaleesi* once. When their lord husbands died and a new *khal* took his place at the front of his riders, with a new *khaleesi* mounted beside him, they were sent here, to reign over the vast Dothraki nation. (*GT*, 492)

*Khaleen* is probably related to *khaleesi* in meaning based on the similar form of the two words. Finally, we get one more example as the members of the *dosh khaleen* celebrate Daenerys's pregnancy: “*Rakh! Rakh! Rakh haj!*” they proclaimed. *A boy, a boy, a strong boy*” (*GT*, 490). As we can see from the translation provided here, *rakh* is the word for “boy” while *haj* means “strong”.

What do *Rhaesh Andahli*, *Vaes Dothrak*, *Vaes Tolorro*; *Khal Rhae Mhar*; *Khal*

*Rhaggat*, *dosh khaleen* and *rakh haj* have in common, then? All of these are noun phrases comprised of a head noun and a modifier. In most cases, the modifier is another noun: *Khal Rhaggat* “Cart King” has *Khal* “King” as the head and *Rhaggat* “Cart” as the modifier, while in *rakh haj* “strong boy”, *rakh* “boy” is modified by the adjective *haj* “strong”. In *Khal Rhae Mhar* “Sorefoot King”, *Khal* is modified by another noun phrase consisting of a noun and an adjective *Rhae Mhar* “Sorefoot”. In all cases the modifier follows the head noun. This seems to be another observable feature of the Dothraki language: in noun phrases, the modifiers (at least nouns and adjectives) come after the head noun. Based on this, we can probably also assume that in *Khal Rhae Mhar*, *Rhae* means “foot” while *Mhar* stands for “sore”.

Other Dothraki words and phrases include *arakh*, “long razor-sharp blades, half sword and half scythe”(GT, 102), *hranna* (GT, 226), a type of grass, *khas* (GT, 227), a group of personal bodyguards for important people in a *khalasar*, *ko* (GT, 800), a title given to a *khal's* closest and most important men, *hrakkar*, “the great white lion of the plains” (GT, 584), *shierak qiya*, “The Dothraki named the comet *shierak qiya*, the Bleeding Star” (CK, 170), *jaqqa rhan*, “Wounded men moaned and prayed. *Jaqqa rhan* moved among them, the mercy men with their heavy axes, taking a harvest of heads from the dead and dying alike” (GT, 665) and *haesh rakhi*, “Ser Jorah said the people of this country named themselves the Lhazareen, but the Dothraki called them *haesh rakhi*, the Lamb Men” (GT, 666). It is interesting that almost all of the Dothraki words or phrases contain the letter “h”, often preceding or following another consonant. This distinctive feature creates a connection between the words and phrases, making it easy to see that they belong in the same language.

Let us now consider *what* is actually presented in Dothraki in the novels. While

the characters certainly speak a lot more Dothraki in the books, most of it is represented in English. As we can see, the units presented in fictional language are quite small: they are mostly words and phrases with only a single short sentence thrown in. These small units appear within otherwise English text. They are sometimes accompanied by an embedded translation or explanation, but this does not necessarily happen immediately, or in some cases, not at all. In these cases, their rough meaning is still inferable from the context. The Dothraki presented in the novels is mostly nouns or noun phrases, names for things. These things include titles like *ko* and *khal* etc., concepts related to the organisation of society: *khalasar*, *dosh khaleen*, place names: *Vaes Dothrak*, nicknames: *Khal Rhae Mhar*, a name for another people: *haesh rakhi*, a weapon the Dothraki use: *arakh*, an animal: *hrakkar*, a specific type of grass: *hranna* etc.

What these things have in common is that most of them are specific or important to the Dothraki culture, or they tell something about it. There are a few exceptions to this, for example, there is nothing specific to the Dothraki about *rakh haj*, “strong boy”, but in most cases, everyday speech and common concepts are represented in English. The relative scarcity of fictional language matter makes it much easier to digest, and also puts more weight on the matter that is presented in Dothraki. We would not necessarily gain too much by learning the Dothraki numerals, or the words for “talk”, “milk” or “bucket”, as these kinds of mundane words would probably tell us little to nothing about the Dothraki people themselves. In some cases fictional language is pretty much needed to name new and unique things such as the Dothraki weapon *arakh*, and somewhat less unique things and concepts benefit from fictional names in that they themselves, and the Dothraki as a whole, gain much more flavour. For example, if *khal* was replaced by a familiar title such as king, chief or leader, the Dothraki would feel

much blander. Dothraki terms also create a distinction between similar concepts and their Dothraki counterparts. For example, when Ser Jorah commends Daenerys for learning to talk like a queen, she corrects him: “Not a queen,’ said Dany. ‘A *khaleesi*’” (*GT*, 227), highlighting the difference between the two, and asserting that she now belongs to the Dothraki culture.

Some words are related to the Dothraki way of life and their living environment. *Hrakkar* is an animal the Dothraki hunt: “Drogo would take his bloodriders and ride in search of *hrakkar*, the great white lion of the plains” (*GT*, 584). It seems to be particularly valued as game among the Dothraki: Daenerys thinks her husband's joy would be fierce, should they succeed (*GT*, 584), and Drogo promises to make her a cloak out of its skin (*GT*, 593). *Hranna* is a word for a type of grass that grows in the great plains the Dothraki inhabit, the Dothraki sea. It is just one of them, as we learn from Ser Jorah's account to Daenerys: “And this is only *hranna*, child. There are a hundred kinds of grass out there, grasses as yellow as lemon and as dark as indigo, blue grasses and orange grasses and grasses like rainbows” (*GT*, 226).

Some Dothraki expressions tell a lot about the values of the Dothraki culture. *Khal Rhae Mhar*, “Sorefoot King” and *Khal Rhaggat*, “Cart King” are two nicknames given to Viserys by the Dothraki. He receives the first one after he wrongs Daenerys, who has his horse taken away, forcing him to walk behind the *khalasar*, and the second one after he accepts a place in a cart, unaware that they are reserved for the very weakest members of the tribe. The Dothraki value horsemanship above all else, which makes these names huge insults towards Viserys, especially since he is the supposed king of the Seven Kingdoms – in the minds of the Dothraki, a *khal* who cannot ride cannot rule (*GT*, 705). Another telling expression is *haesh rakhi*, “Lamb Men”, a name

given by the Dothraki to a people called the Lhazareen (*GT*, 666). The Lhazareen are a peaceful people who herd sheep and grow vegetables, very much the polar opposite of the warlike Dothraki raiders, who often target the Lhazareen and sell them as slaves. (*GT*, 665-667). Calling them the “Lamb Men” shows that the Dothraki perceive the Lhazareen as weak and feel disdain towards their peaceful culture.

### **3.4 Differences between High Valyrian and Dothraki**

Let us now compare the way the two major fictional languages are handled in the novels. First of all, there is obviously much more Dothraki than High Valyrian in the novels. This makes sense because Dothraki is a living language while High Valyrian is not, and this also adds to the mystery of the latter. The meaning of the High Valyrian content is also exposed in a way that makes the language feel arcane: the reader is often left guessing what certain words mean for several hundred pages, spanning even to the next instalment in the series. On the other hand, the meaning of Dothraki words and phrases is either given explicitly, or it is easily inferable from the context. All in all, High Valyrian is shrouded in an aura of mystery throughout the novels, while Dothraki seems far more commonplace and we become much more familiar with it.

High Valyrian was spoken by members of the most highly civilised society in the history of Martin's story world, while Dothraki is spoken by a people of horse riding nomad raiders. This seems to be reflected in the languages themselves: High Valyrian has certain qualities that make it feel “civilised” or “pleasant”, while Dothraki seems much “rougher”, befitting the people that speak it. This is not to say that the qualities of a language would actually have anything to do with the nature of its speakers, but the way we perceive the language still seems to affect our views on them. This, in turn, can

be exploited by the one who creates the fictional language to portray its speakers in a certain light.

As discussed before, High Valyrian has some Latinate features, which helps create parallels between High Valyrian and Latin, and the Valyrian and Roman empires. In itself, this link creates an image of High Valyrian as a “civilised” language. While there is not that much information on High Valyrian in the novels beyond the few phrases already discussed, we do learn a few additional things. For example, Daenerys encounters a man who speaks a language that is described as “the liquid Valyrian of the Nine Free Cities” (*CK*, 389). This is not High Valyrian *per se*, but one of its descendant languages. As we have discussed above, the Valyrian spoken in each of the nine cities is rather different from each other – as Tyrion noted, they are in the process of becoming separate languages (*DWD*, 17). Yet the wording here suggests that all of them are “liquid”. I think it is fairly reasonable to assume that they get this shared quality from High Valyrian, of which they are descended from. This kind depiction of the language conjures images of flow, smoothness and clarity, for example. We also get another indirect account of what High Valyrian sounds like. Daenerys meets “A small, damp man, he smelled as if he had bathed in perfume and spoke a bastard form of High Valyrian, much corrupted and flavored with a thick Ghiscari growl (*DWD*, 41). The Ghiscari Empire was a rival of Valyria, and was eventually conquered by it. Their language was replaced by High Valyrian in the process, but as we can see from Daenerys's account here, it is rather different from “pure” High Valyrian. We can assume that the “growl” is not characteristic of High Valyrian, as it is said to corrupt it, which in turn, suggests that “pure” High Valyrian is rather pleasant-sounding.

Dothraki, on the other hand, is described as rough: “Magister Illyrio growled



something to him in the rough Dothraki tongue” (*GT*, 35) and guttural: “The pale man with the blue lips replied in guttural Dothraki, 'I am Pyat Pree, the great warlock’” (*CK*, 183). These descriptions conjure an image of a much harsher sounding language; one that does not necessarily sound pleasant to the ear, nor flow like liquid. Guttural is not a particularly precise term, but it pertains to sounds that are articulated in the throat or are perceived as such. The *OED* defines guttural as follows:

Of sounds or utterance: produced in the throat. By non-phoneticians any mode of pronunciation which is harsh or grating in effect is often supposed to be ‘guttural’; with this notion the designation is popularly applied by English-speakers to the German *ch*, but not to *k* or *g*, though technically it belongs equally to them. As a technical term of phonetics, the word was first used to denote the Hebrew spirant consonants , ךּ , ךּ , ךּ; it is now commonly applied (inaccurately, if its etymological sense be regarded) to the sounds formed by the back of the tongue and the palate, as /k/g/x/γ/ŋ/).

When we look at the Dothraki language that appears in the novels, we can see that *k*, *g*, *q* and *h* occur very frequently. These are sounds can be considered guttural by their place of articulation. Another very frequent occurrence is the combination *kh*, which we can probably assume to stand for the voiceless velar fricative [x], as *ch* does in German, a sound considered throaty or guttural by English-speakers.

Finally, let us briefly compare High Valyrian and Dothraki proper names.

Although names will be discussed in more detail below, they play an important part in giving each language a distinct flavour and characterising its speakers, and should therefore be mentioned here. Some High Valyrian male names include *Aegon*, *Aenys*, *Meagor*, *Jaehaerys*, *Viserys*, *Daeron*, *Baelor*, *Aemon*, *Aerys*, *Maekar* and *Rhaegar*, while

female names include *Rhaenys*, *Visenya*, *Rhaenyra*, *Naerys*, *Rhaella* and *Daenerys* (*GT*, 833-835). All of these names belong to members of the Targaryen dynasty, which probably explains similarities between names such as *Viserys* and *Visenya* etc. Some Dothraki male names include *Drogo*, *Jhogo*, *Aggo*, *Rakharo*, *Pono*, *Jhaqo*, *Maggo*, *Moro*, *Rhogoro*, *Jommo* (*FFC*, 929-931), while female names include *Irri* and *Jhiqui* (*FFC*, 930). As a side note, there are very few named female Dothraki characters in the novels; I believe the aforementioned two to be the only ones. Valyrian surnames include *Targaryen* (*GT*, 832), *Baratheon* (*GT*, 810) and *Velaryon* (*GT*, 812). On the other hand, the Dothraki do not use surnames as such, but they have a patronymic system instead: “This I vow, I, *Drogo son of Bharbo* (*GT*, 594; emphasis added).

The main differences here seem to be that Dothraki names are simpler, slightly shorter and more uniform. Almost all of the Dothraki names are just four or five letters and two syllables long, while High Valyrian names are slightly longer as a whole. All male Dothraki names end in *-o*, and both female names end in *-i*, while High Valyrian names for both sexes have much more varied endings. All in all, Dothraki names are very straightforward, while High Valyrian names are much more complex. This, in part, characterises the two peoples: the Dothraki lead a seemingly simple, even “barbaric” way of life, while the Valyrians belong to a highly complex, “civilised” society. The image of the Dothraki as a less organised society is also supported by their lack of fixed surnames.

### **3.5 Estranged English: Idioms and Proverbs**

In this chapter I discuss the use of invented idioms and proverbs as a tool for world-building in the novels. The language discussed here is not archaic, nor is it invented

language in the same vein as High Valyrian or Dothraki, but rather English used in inventive, non-familiar ways. Idioms and proverbs are fixed units of language that become established through use. The *Song* novels contain many idioms and proverbs that are not such fixed, commonly used units in real life, but they have instead been invented to be used in the books. In the reality of the story world they are such fixed units that have become established parts of the language through use and repetition. This is why they can play an important part in world-building; we can deduce some kind of an idea of how they were formed in the first place, and they can tell us a lot about the people who use them and how they view the world they live in.

*Meat and mead* is an idiomatic expression that is often repeated in the novels. One example of the phrase being used can be seen in Eddard Stark's evaluation of Petyr Baelish, also known as Littlefinger: "He had no taste for these intrigues, but he was beginning to realize that they were meat and mead to a man like Littlefinger" (*GT*, 196). In this case, meat and mead is used just like the idiom *bread and butter*: scheming is Littlefinger's bread and butter; it is what he does and how he sustains himself. Meat and mead is also used to refer to food in general: "My men will want meat and mead," Tyrion told him. 'See that they get it'" (*GT*, 611). Sharing meat and mead with someone means eating and drinking with them, but it can also be taken in a wider sense of offering someone hospitality or accepting it: "I welcome you to our fires,' Bran said stiffly, 'and offer you meat and mead in honor of our friendship'" (*GT*, 580), and maintaining peaceful relations between the participants: "Even warring *khalasars* put aside their feuds and shared meat and mead together when they were in sight of the Mother of Mountains" (*GT*, 390). The phrase adds to the medieval atmosphere of the novels, as mead was a common alcoholic beverage during the times, but has since been

largely replaced by others, while meat was an important and highly valued part of the diet. There is another expression that enhances the medieval feel of the story world: sometimes it is said that a certain thing is *as useful/useless as nipples on a breastplate*: “These Kingsguard knights are as useless as nipples on a breastplate” (*ADD*, 848), that is, not useful at all. This expression seems like a natural fit for a medieval setting: breastplates are commonly used items with the very practical purpose of protecting the wearer, and decorating them with nipples would be useless and even laughable.

The examples discussed above add to the medieval aspect of the story world in general. These expressions could have been used in the real world too. There are other expressions which help build the specific, fictional world of the novels, and differentiate it from our own. For example, wishing that *the Others take* someone or something is a frequently used curse in the novels: “‘The Others take my wife,’ Robert muttered sourly” (*GT*, 44). The Others are a race of non-living humanoids who are hostile towards all living things, and can raise the dead as their mindless servants. This kind of an expression has, of course, many counterparts in real life, such as *may the Devil take you*. In this case, however, the malignant force, the Others, comes from the mythology of the fictional world, and the existence of this phrase therefore contributes to world-building. Another expression that does this is the proverb *dark wings, dark words*:

“It fell to me to send the queen word of Lord Arryn’s sudden death. Never have I sent off a bird with a heavier heart.” “Dark wings, dark words,” Ned murmured. It was a proverb Old Nan had taught him as a boy. “So the fishwives say,” Grand Maester Pycelle agreed, “but we know it is not always so. When Maester Luwin’s bird brought the word about your Bran, the message lifted every true heart in the castle, did it not?” (*GT*, 254-255)

This saying makes sense in the setting of the novels because ravens are used to carry messages instead of pigeons. Communicating over large distances is very difficult and slow in the medieval fantasy world, and sending messages via ravens is by far the fastest way of doing so. Ravens that are trained to do this are also very rare, which means that they are reserved for very important messages, which often tend to be bad news, but as Pycelle notes, this is not always the case.

Let us now look at some phrases used by the Dothraki, and how they help characterise this particular people. For example, Khal Drogo calls her wife, Daenerys Targaryen, *the moon of his life*: “I shall make you a cloak of its skin, moon of my life,” he swore (*GT*, 593), while Daenerys calls her husband her *sun-and-stars*: “Tell my sun-and-stars that I dream of him, and wait anxious for his return” (*GT*, 392). It seems likely that these phrases are commonly used for loved ones in the Dothraki culture, and that they also have basis in their religious beliefs. The sun and the moon are a god and a goddess, respectively, and they are married to each other: “Moon is god, woman wife of sun. It is known” (*GT*, 235). The passage below seems to explain why the man is called *sun-and-stars*:

When a horselord dies, his horse is slain with him, so he might ride proud into the night lands. The bodies are burned beneath the open sky, and the *khal* rises on his fiery steed to take his place among the stars. The more fiercely the man burned in life, the brighter his star will shine in the darkness. (*GT*, 803)

Based on the expressions *moon of my life* and *my sun-and-stars*, as well as the related details, it seems that heavenly bodies play an important part in Dothraki culture and beliefs. The phrases do not exist in a vacuum, but we can instead see where they come

from.

*It is known* is a phrase often repeated by the Dothraki, and it tells a lot about the way they think. It is used to affirm that what was just said is true, as in the example discussed in the previous paragraph: “Moon is god, woman wife of sun. It is known” (*GT*, 235). The phrase is usually then repeated by other Dothraki to reaffirm that the statement is indeed true. In the example below, Daenerys sees a woman being raped by the Dothraki after a battle and wishes to stop them, but she is met with some opposition from her entourage:

“She is a lamb girl,” Quaro said in Dothraki. “She is nothing, *Khaleesi*. The riders do her honor. The Lamb Men lay with sheep, it is known.”

“It is known,” her handmaid Irri echoed.

“It is known,” agreed Jhogo. (*GT*, 668)

This example also shows that some of the Dothraki beliefs are probably of a dubious nature. Indeed, the phrase often accompanies statements that paint the Dothraki as a highly superstitious people. Of course, it is somewhat hard to tell what constitutes superstition in a fantasy world where many things are possible that are not in the real world, but the Dothraki beliefs are presented in a manner that suggests that many of them are unfounded. There are many examples of this in the novels. In the following one, Daenerys leads her people to an abandoned city, but they are reluctant to enter: “Jhiqui shuddered. 'When the gods are gone, the evil ghosts feast by night. Such places are best shunned. It is known.' 'It is known,' Irri agreed” (*CK*, 176). The ruined city proves safe, with no ghosts to be found. Indeed, Daenerys does not always pay much heed to the advice offered by her Dothraki handmaids:

“*Khaleesi*,” whispered Irri, “you must not touch the dead man.

It is bad luck to touch the dead.”

“Unless you killed them yourself.” Jhiqui was bigger-boned than Irri, with wide hips and heavy breasts.

“That is known.”

“It is known,” Irri agreed.

Dothraki were wise where horses were concerned, but could be utter fools about much else. (*ADD*, 34)

The Dothraki view the number thirteen as unlucky, as some cultures in real life do, which seems to support the idea of them being rather superstitious: “‘Xaro Xhoan Daxos has offered me thirteen galleys,’ she told Irri and Jhiqui as they were dressing her for court. ‘Thirteen is a bad number, *Khaleesi*,’ murmured Jhiqui, in the Dothraki tongue. ‘It is known’” (*ADD*, 247). These kinds of beliefs are not only held by the two young handmaids, but other Dothraki as well: “‘Man must not eat the flesh of man,’ said Aggo. ‘It is known,’ agreed Rahkaro. ‘They will be cursed’” (*ADD*, 554).

Although the phrase *it is known* is often used to reaffirm statements of dubious factuality, it is also used about concrete matters that clearly hold true: “‘The bricks are old and crumbling. They are trying to claw their way into the city.’ ‘This would take them many years,’ said Irri. ‘The walls are very thick. This is known.’ ‘It is known,’ agreed Jhiqui” (*ADD*, 557). The use of this phrase in both of these contexts suggests that the Dothraki hold their beliefs as such undeniable facts. The Dothraki are not exactly philosophers: their culture is one that favours war, action and constant movement. They do not build or stay in one place for a long time. It also seems that they do not often stop to ponder, to question old beliefs, but instead take them for granted. The phrase *it is known*, and the way it is used, seem to embody Dothraki thinking to a large extent.

We can also learn something about the Dothraki by looking at how they express concepts that are *not* a part of their culture. In the following excerpt, Khal Drogo vows to conquer the throne of the Seven Kingdoms for his son:

To him I will give this iron chair his mother's father sat in. I will give him Seven Kingdoms. I, Drogo, *khal*, will do this thing." His voice rose, and he lifted his fist to the sky. "I will take my *khalasar* west to where the world ends, and ride the wooden horses across the black salt water as no *khal* has done before. I will kill the men in the iron suits and tear down their stone houses. (*GT*, 593-594)

Drogo does not talk about a throne but an *iron chair* instead. The Dothraki do not have thrones, as they do not stand still to rule particular lands; they keep on moving and plundering instead of conquering. The expression Drogo uses is a compound that is rather literally just the sum of its parts. This is also the case with Drogo's choice of words for armour, *iron suits*, and castles, *stone houses*, and just like thrones, these are things the Dothraki do not use. On the other hand, the expression used for ships is metaphorical: *wooden horses*. Horses are the primary means of transportation for the Dothraki, and they are very much the basis of their culture. This expression is a good example of their significance to the Dothraki: they are the norm, and other methods of transportation are seen as special kinds of horses. The Dothraki are not a seafaring people; they are, in fact, afraid of the sea. Drogo calls the sea *the black salt water*, where the addition of the adjective *black* makes it sound rather ominous. The Dothraki also have another expression for the sea, *the poison water*: "Her Dothraki called the sea *the poison water*, distrusting any liquid that their horses could not drink" (*SSI*, 105). This phrase again shows the importance of horses to the Dothraki way of life.



### 3.6 Estranged English: Wolf Language

This chapter deals with another case of English being used in an unfamiliar manner to achieve a particular effect: the changes that take place in the language in order to represent the consciousness of a wolf, and to portray the world from a wolf's point of view. In the world of the novels, there are some characters that can enter the mind of animals, sharing their senses and consciousness. This often happens unwillingly at first when a character is asleep, leading to especially vivid dreams where the character experiences that he or she is an animal. With practice, they can learn to do this at will. Most of the characters form this bond with wolves, in which case they are called *warg* (CK, 472), while others can also do this with other animals; in this case, they are called *skinchangers* (CK, 694). There are several occasions where a point-of-view character, usually Brandon Stark, is presented in the state where he is inside a wolf's mind, and these passages are presented in language that differs stylistically from the other parts in an interesting manner. In these passages, there is a strong emphasis on how the world is perceived through senses, especially the sense of smell, which creates the effect that we are now looking at the world from an animal's perspective.

There are also some interesting changes in the vocabulary in the wolf passages. These changes seem to concern humans and things related to them. The following passage contains some good examples of this: “beyond the walled wood still stood *the great grey caves of man-rock*. Winterfell, he remembered, the *sound* coming to him suddenly. Beyond its *sky-tall man-cliffs* the true world was calling, and he knew he must answer or die” (CK, 72, emphases added). Winterfell is a castle, but filtered through the wolf's consciousness it is referred to as “the great grey caves of man-rock”, and its walls become “sky-tall man-cliffs”. The wolf sees these structures as natural formations such

as caves or cliffs, but differentiates them from the actual natural shapes by adding “*man-*”: man-rock, man-cliffs, which highlights the fact that they are, in fact, not natural but built by men. There are many other instances where man-made objects are likened to natural formations or living things. For example, buildings are called *piles of man-rock* (CK, 599), *caves of piled stone* (CK, 599) and *stone dens* (CK, 600). A gate is described as *a black iron snake coiled tight about bar and post* (CK, 600) and its bars are called *the black bones of the gate* (CK, 600). In addition, swords are called *man-claws* (CK, 862) or *long grey claws* (ADD, 1), a spear is *a wooden tooth* (ADD, 2), while armour is *hardskin* (CK, 862).

In the passage discussed above, the castle's name, Winterfell, is described as a “sound” instead of a name, and “sound” is also used in a similar fashion on other occasions: “*Prince*. The man-sound came into his head suddenly, yet he could feel the rightness of it” (SSI, 122). Here the word “prince” is described as a sound, or a “man-sound” in particular. There is another example regarding the names given to the wolves: “He had a pack as well, once. [...] Somewhere down inside him were the sounds the men had given them to tell one from the other, but it was not by their sounds he knew them. He remembered their scents, his brothers and his sisters” (SSI, 123). Wolves do not have the concepts of names or words, so it makes sense that they are replaced by simply “sounds” in these passages. The excerpts also show that while Brandon is inside the wolf's mind, it results in some kind of a blend between his and the wolf's consciousness, where he still remembers some things from his human state, although they are filtered through the wolf's mind.

In the wolf passages, words that are usually only used for animals are also applied to humans. In the following example, a group of men is called a *man-pack* and the

sound they make is described as *howling*: “This night was wildly alive, full of the howling of the man-pack at their play” (CK, 301). The feet of men are called *man-paws* (ADD, 1), while a woman's breasts are called *dugs* (ADD, 2). Men are referred to as *males* (ADD, 2), women as *females* (ADD, 2), while children are called *pups* (ADD, 2) or *the cubs of men* (CK, 601).

All in all, the language of the wolf passages is estranged in a rather simple but effective way: things and concepts related to the human world are replaced by ones related to nature and the animal world. These passages have their own unique feel and manage to create the effect that we are looking at the world from a whole different perspective.

### 3.7 Names

Names play an important part in building a fictional world. How are all the exotic locales named? What are the people and other creatures that inhabit the world called? These things cannot be named haphazardly, if the coherence of the story world is to be maintained. For example, the author of a medieval fantasy novel probably does not want to use too mundane or modern names for his or her characters. Naming things in a certain fashion can achieve a variety of effects. For example, we have already discussed the way Dothraki and Valyrian names help in building an idea of what people of those cultures are like. In this chapter I further discuss how the names of people and places contribute to world-building, and how they help in setting apart different peoples and areas inside the story world.

There is an abundance of names in *A Song of Ice and Fire*. There are a lot of named characters in the novels, to say the least. Of course, most of them are minor

characters that do not play a very important part in the story on a whole. Martin has, thankfully, organised the characters and basic information about them and their relations in appendices at the end of each book. Likewise, there are a ton of place names that are easily accessible through maps that provided at the beginning of each novel.

Two of the major houses of nobility in the Seven Kingdoms are called *Lannister* and *Stark*. There is a major feud between these houses, and they war against each other in the civil wars that fracture the Seven Kingdoms. It seems very likely that the names of the houses are an allusion to Lancaster and York – the houses that fought against each other in the War of the Roses. The names of the houses establish a connection between fictional and real life events. The name Stark also has some interesting connotations. The Starks rule the vast, cold, harsh north of the Seven Kingdoms. Stark has meanings such as “harsh”, “blunt”, “severe”, and the archaic meaning “strong”. This name reflects the nature of the northern part of the realm, as well as the people who rule it. The Starks are presented as strong and severe but also honest and loyal. They scorn the political intrigues of the southern parts of the realm, and strive to accomplish everything honestly and justly. A good example of their severe but just way of thinking is their attitude towards death penalty: if a lord condemns one of his people to death, he must carry out the punishment himself. This is done out of respect for the condemned, as well as to prevent such a punishment from being used too lightly.

In the Seven Kingdoms, bastards born to a noble receive a special kind of a surname, which depends on the region they are born in. These names are based on the geography of the region in question. The illegitimate child of Eddard Stark is called Jon *Snow* (*ADD*, 1151), because he was born in the north. Bastards born in Dorne, the in the hot and dry southern part of the Seven Kingdoms, are called *Sand* (*ADD*, 1149) – the

region contains a desert – while those born in the Riverlands are called *Rivers* (ADD, 1144). Other bastard names include *Stone* (ADD, 1135), *Storm* (ADD, 1139), *Waters* (ADD, 1123), *Flowers* (ADD, 1159), *Hill* (ADD, 1146) and *Pyke* (ADD, 1129). The bastard names are an interesting and unique feature of Martin's story world. This custom reveals a lot about the attitude towards illegitimate children in this world: they have to recognise themselves as such through the use of these names, not being able to escape the associated social stigma in any way. Bastards may be, in some rare cases, legitimised, meaning that they gain the rights of legitimate children, including the right to use the family name.

Let us now look at what kind of forenames are given to the people of the Seven Kingdoms. First of all, there are some regular English names, such as *Robert* (GT, 810), *Brandon* (GT, 813), *Jon* (GT, 814), *Jason*, (GT, 814), *Desmond* (GT, 822), *Robin* (GT, 822) and *Andrew* (CK, 884). These, however, do not appear in great numbers, nor are the names all that commonplace in real life. As a side note, it is interesting that the king of the Seven Kingdoms at the beginning of the story is called Robert Baratheon, with one of the most important people having such an ordinary forename.

Names that are variants of existing names are much more common than real names. These may be either alternative spellings of names or variants that alter the pronunciation slightly. These kinds of names are numerous, and they include, for example: *Eddard*, nicknamed *Ned* (GT, 813); from Edward, *Edmure* (GT, 822); Edmund, *Petyr* (GT, 811); Peter, *Edwyn* (CK, 907); Edwin, *Patrek* (CK, 908); Patrick, *Jaime* (CK, 895); Jamie, *Jeyne* (CK, 909); Jane, *Joffrey* (CK, 879); Geoffrey, *Podrick* (CK, 879); Patrick, *Catelyn* (GT, 813); Caitlin/Kathleen, *Raymund* (CK, 910); Raymond, *Walder* (CK, 907); Walter, *Addam* (CK, 896); Adam, *Trystane* (CK, 899); Tristan,

*Quentyn* (CK, 899); *Quentin*, *Margaery* (CK, 897); *Margaret*, *Endrew* (CK, 912); *Andrew*, *Denys* (CK, 913); *Dennis*.

In addition, English surnames are sometimes used as forenames in the novels: *Stannis* Baratheon (GT, 811), *Morton* and *Donnel* Waynwood (GT, 820) and *Orton* Merryweather (ADD, 1123) This is also true for place names: *Preston* Greenfield (GT, 812), *Stafford* Lannister (GT, 817) and *Leyton* Hightower (GT, 826). There are also names that come from other European languages, or are their variants: *Sandor* (CK, 880); Hungarian, *Jonos* (CK, 889); variant of Hungarian *Janos*, *Lothar* (CK, 910); German, and *Willem* (CK, 895); Dutch. It is also worth noting that characters that belong to the same house of nobility often have names that resemble each other. For example, there are characters named *Tywin*, *Tyrion*, *Tygett*, and *Tyrek* in the Lannister family (CK, 895-896), and names are often repeated in subsequent generations. In part, this helps the reader remember that these characters are related, and these kinds of naming customs add a sense of coherence and believability to the noble houses.

Surnames in the Seven Kingdoms are often actual English surnames, their variants or made-up but English-sounding. There are some exceptions, such as *Baratheon* (GT, 810) and *Velaryon* (GT, 812), who are of Valyrian origin and have Valyrian names. Commoners do not use surnames at all, and illegitimate children of the nobility have to use special bastard names that have been discussed before. Some surnames used in the Seven Kingdoms include *Clegane*, *Blount*, *Trant*, *Oakheart*, *Greenfield*, *Moore*, *Payne*, *Santagar*, *Swann*, *Hayford*, *Hollard*, *Stokeworth*, *Rosby*, *Redwyne* and *Kettleblack* (CK, 880-881).

All in all, the mixture of real English names, estranged names and names from other European languages create an interesting effect: it makes the people of the Seven

Kingdoms sound somewhat familiar but still strange at the same time. In a way, they feel like a blend of the British and other European peoples, but the slightly altered names still differentiate them from their real-life counterparts and give them a flavour of their own.

Place names in the Seven Kingdoms are in English, and they are usually rather straightforward, descriptive and evocative. Some examples include *Castle Black*, *Shadow Tower*, *Eastwatch-by-the-Sea*, *Winterfell*, *King's Landing*, *White Harbor*, *Oldtown*, *Dragonstone*, *Highgarden*, *Bitterbridge*, *Kingsgrave*, *Starfall*, *Ghosthill*, *Last Hearth*, and *The Dreadfort*, while some place names also include personal names, usually the family name of a noble house: *Harrenhal*, *Casterly Rock*, *Crakehall* and *Lannisport* (ADD, maps: The North; The South). Some of these names seem to hint at past events, adding depth and mystery to the story world and showing that it has a history of its own: for example, what happened at *Kingsgrave*, or why is the *Bitterbridge* bitter?

The rather clear and simple place names in the Seven Kingdoms make the setting feel more familiar. Together with the kind of familiar personal names of its people, and the fact that it is based on medieval Europe, the Seven Kingdoms is the place that we are most connected to in the story world. It is the principal setting of the novels; the familiar in this strange world of Martin's, while other places represent the exotic other, which is also apparent in the names used in these locations.

We have previously discussed both Dothraki and High Valyrian names. Both of these have distinctive features that set them apart from each other and the names used in the Seven Kingdoms on the continent of Westeros. These languages originated in the eastern continent, Essos. This is an important part of the setting, but it is featured much

less than Westeros, as it is mostly explored through a single point-of-view character, Daenerys Targaryen. Some characters that hail from Essos have names like *Salladhor Saan*, *Meizo Mahr*, *Khorane Sathmantes* (SSI, 584), *Xaro Xhoan Daxos*, *Quaithe*, *Illyrio Mopatis*, *Kraznys mo Nakloz*, *Grazdan mo Ullhor*, *Missandei*, *Prendahl na Ghezn*, *Sallor*, *Daario Naharis*, and *Oznak zo Pahl* (SSI, 587-588). These characters belong to various different cultural groups as can be seen from the variety of names. For example, the names which contain various prepositions, such as *Kraznys mo Nakloz*, *Prendahl na Ghezn* and *Oznak zo Pahl*, are all Ghiscari names. What all these names have in common is that they lack the vaguely familiar British or European feel of the names on the continent of Westeros.

In Essos, most place names are in fictional languages instead of English. There are a few descriptive English names, such as *The Sea of Sighs*, *Worm River* and *Dagger Lake*, but all the cities have invented names. These names include *Valyria*, *Tyria*, *Oros*, *Mantarys*, *Elyria*, *Meereen*, *Yunkai*, *Astapor*, *Old Ghiscar*, *New Ghis*, *Braavos*, *Lorath*, *Pentos*, *Myr*, *Tyrosh*, *Valysar*, *Norvos*, *Volantis* and *Qohor*. (ADD, maps: The lands of the Summer Sea; The Free Cities) Compared to the English place names in Westeros, these names have quite an exotic and foreign ring to them. They are clearly made-up names in an invented language, and we can only guess what they actually mean. Just like the personal names used in Essos, these place names add a sense of exoticism and mystique to the eastern continent.

#### **4. Avoiding Language that is Connected to the Real World**

So far we have discussed stylistic features that play an active part in the construction of the story world of the novels. These features define the setting as both medieval and



fantastic. Many of them are deviant forms such as archaisms or even invented language. Used in excess, they could quickly become obtrusive and even make the language difficult to understand. It is easy to see that not all of the language, or even very much of it, can be like this. Still, other aspects of style have an important, if largely invisible, role in maintaining this illusion passively, by not breaking it. Creating a believable setting calls for the presence of appropriate language, but it also calls for the absence of inappropriate language. As Mandala puts it, “Another way to distance the language of the text without sacrificing meaning is to vary the archaic style with a style that is neither overtly archaized, *nor obviously situated during the writer's own place or time*” (2010: 91, emphasis added).

The *Song* novels are set in medieval times, which calls for the use of archaic language, but also necessitates the avoidance of overtly contemporary language in order to maintain an illusion of the past. The setting is also a fantasy world wholly disconnected from the real world. This aspect of the story world is supported by the use of invented language, but it also demands the absence of language that is obviously connected to things that are specific to the real world. In this chapter we will briefly discuss language that would not fit the medieval fantasy setting of the *Song* novels, and is therefore avoided. Although this is a very important factor in maintaining the coherence of the setting, it is not readily noticeable. This chapter is somewhat limited in scope, as it is rather more difficult to discuss the absence, rather than the presence, of something.

Mandala notes that the illusion of the past is often maintained by employing present-day English in a formal style together with the archaisms, a style which “tends to exclude current slang expressions, expletives, interjections, and conversational

idioms, all elements that would immediately place the discourse in our time and context. Other common features include a tendency towards syntactic complexity, use of ‘elevated’ lexis and an avoidance of contractions” (2010: 91). Martin certainly avoids current slang expressions, and at least overtly contemporary expletives, interjections and idioms. On the other hand, there is no shortage of contractions, the syntax is not particularly complicated nor is the lexis especially elevated. This kind of formal style would perhaps be more in line with a romanticised version of the medieval world, whereas Martin's view of the Middle Ages is more realistic and much darker.

While avoiding something like contemporary slang seems rather obvious, there are other, far less conspicuous aspects of style that demand the author's attention in order not to break the spell. According to Mandala, one example of an area of language where such attention is necessary are references to time. She states that talking about time often involves idiomatic expressions such as *Have you got the time?*, *What's the time?*, *Half-past* and *Quarter to* (Mandala 2010: 93), and that, since these kinds of expressions are familiar from everyday talk, their use would “wrench the narrative back into our present” (2010: 93). She notes that fantasy authors tend to choose other expressions to distance the text from our present world, for example, they might have their characters ask *What's the hour?* instead of *What time is it?* (Mandala 2010: 93). I think it can be added that expressions of time in fiction set in the past world must also be different from contemporary expressions because it can be expected that the inhabitants of this world have a different notion of time than we do. They are not likely to have the means to accurately measure time readily at their disposal; they are not carrying around watches, so it would not make sense for a character to note that it is “a

quarter to five”, for example, since he or she should not have access to this kind of information.

It seems that Martin does, indeed, carefully avoid breaking the credibility of his story world with overtly contemporary expressions of time. For example, the most accurate unit of time seems to be an hour: “He was pleasantly surprised when Galt of the Stone Crows informed him not an hour later that the powdered man was at his door” (CK, 251) and “She’d sat awake for a good hour” (CK, 269). It is also noteworthy that both *week* and *month* seem to appear rather scarcely in the novels, while *fortnight* is much more common. Since *fortnight* is not common in American English, it seems likely that Martin has favoured it over the more mundane measurements of time in order to preserve the illusion of the past. Time is also often expressed in relation to natural phenomena: “Perhaps as late as moonrise, though he hoped not” (CK, 251), “It was the hour before dawn” (CK, 511) and “You could find a ship as well, and be back at Winterfell with a moon’s turn, if the winds are kind” (CK, 104). There are also some idiomatic expressions regarding time that are less commonly used today, such as: “The hour grows late, you ought to be fast asleep.” (CK, 66) and “First I must find a sure way to get you from the castle when the hour is ripe” (CK, 259).

Just as the language of the novels should not break the spell of the story being set in another time, it also should not break it in regard to the setting being another place. Our world does not exist in the story world of the *Song* novels – the setting is completely independent from the real world. Famous events, places and people from our history have never existed in relation to the world of the novels. This can be problematic in some cases, since some of our vocabulary is clearly based on these things. Many of the characters in Martin's saga could be described with the adjective *Machiavellian*, but

this word would not make much sense if it was actually used in the novels – after all, Machiavelli is not a part of the story world's reality.

While Machiavellian is quite an uncommon word, there are others that are clearly tied to our reality and used much more frequently. The names of some weekdays and months are good examples of this: January and March are named after the Roman gods Janus and Mars, July and August are named after Julius Caesar and Augustus, while Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday come from Týr, Woden, Thor and Frig. Since these entities do not exist in the story world of the *Song* novels, it would be illogical to retain these particular names in the language of the novels; indeed, it would put on a great strain on the notion that the story world is independent from our own. One solution to this problem would be to rename weekdays and months so that they would no longer conflict with the reality of the story world. Renaming them after entities that exist in the story world's reality could add depth to its perceived history and mythology. On the other hand, introducing this kind of new terminology might be rather confusing for the reader. Since this terminology refers to very fundamental concepts, it might also be difficult to introduce it in a manner that does not feel forced in the story. Of course, this kind of information could very well be introduced in an appendix. Another approach would be to omit the names – and this is indeed the solution Martin has chosen; names of weekdays and months simply do not appear in the novels. While this approach forgoes the possibility of adding depth to the story world, it also avoids the possible problems caused by renaming. In fact, the absence of these names is not particularly noticeable, unless one goes searching for them in particular. Together with the lack of exact measurements of time, the lack of names for weekdays and months helps keep the notion of time somewhat vague in Martin's story world, which, I feel, is

an overall positive when it comes to the atmosphere of the novels. This fuzziness adds to the feeling that the story is set in the past, and it seems to fit a setting where even the length of seasons is unpredictable very well.

As stated before, discussing the avoidance of certain kinds of unfitting language is somewhat difficult, or at least doing so in a meaningful manner is. I tried to concentrate on a few interesting, less obvious examples of such omissions in this chapter. Of course, it would be possible to list all kinds of contemporary or otherwise inappropriate language that is not used in the novels but I doubt much could be gained from such approach. I have not discovered any instances of Martin using language that is glaringly inappropriate for the setting he has constructed, although, given the length of the series, it is of course possible that he has had some slips in this matter. I think this is quite an interesting aspect of style in alternative world fiction, and wonder how conscious authors in the genre are of their choices, or whether they are more instinctive.

## **5. Conclusion**

In this thesis I have discussed George R. R. Martin's use of medieval themes and archaic language to create a believable setting that draws upon Europe's medieval past for *A Song of Ice and Fire* novels. I found his recreation of the medieval world to be detailed and realistic: when the fantasy elements are not present, *A Song of Ice and Fire* reads much like a historical novel. Martin supports the presentation of medieval themes with skilful usage of archaic language forms to create an image of a past world. His use of archaisms is varied and balanced: the language is effective in suggesting the past but does not make the novels difficult to read. Martin also avoids the most worn-out archaisms and uses archaic address patterns to present the social hierarchy of a feudal society. The medieval atmosphere is also supported by other stylistic features, such as

the use of specialised historical vocabulary, and the selective use of British English forms.

I then proceeded to discuss the use of invented language in science fiction and fantasy in general. I noted that the author is free to construct such a language in whatever form he or she wishes, and that the language can serve a multitude of artistic functions in the text. Because of their nature as free, purposeful creations that lack meaning as such, the form and the artistic function of the language can be expected to be closely connected. Fictional languages can be extensive and even fully functioning languages, but this is not necessarily often the case. Most languages are only developed to the point the author finds necessary, but they can still be very effective. I then considered some of the functions invented languages can have in fiction. The usually add a sense of strangeness to the story world, but they can also be used to make strange things familiar through allusions to real languages. Invented language can be used to name non-existing things, and to give us a certain image about the speakers of the language in question. Invented languages that are based on an actual language that has changed somehow can also be used to signify changes in the story world in relation to our own. Invented language should be used in moderation in order not to alienate the reader. Its use also presents a challenge to the author, as it should both be presented as an already existing part of the story world, while its meaning should also be made known to the reader.

I found that Martin uses invented language rather sparsely but nevertheless effectively in *A Song of Ice and Fire*. I first discussed and compared two fictional languages in the novels: High Valyrian and Dothraki. With both languages, we can see some of their rules at work, which adds to the feel that they are actually functioning

languages. However, there are considerable differences in the presentation of the two languages, as well as the effects they create.

High Valyrian includes Latinate features, which connect it to the language of the Roman Empire. It is presented as a mysterious, prestigious language of a long-gone, highly civilised society. High Valyrian words and phrases are scarce in the novels, and their meaning is unveiled very slowly, which adds to the aura of mystery surrounding the language.

Dothraki conjures an image of a rough, warlike people reminiscent of the Mongols. There is much more of the Dothraki language than High Valyrian in the novels. It is presented as a living language, we become quite familiar with it, and it reveals interesting things about the Dothraki culture. We usually learn the meaning of Dothraki words and phrases right away, although they are not always given explicitly, but are rather clear from context.

After discussing the two actual fictional languages, I moved on to consider the use of estranged English in the novels. I found out that invented idioms and proverbs are used to add flavour to Martin's story world and to characterise its inhabitants. Estranged English is also used successfully to represent the consciousness of a wolf by applying expressions normally related to nature and animals to the human world.

Names are used for various effects in the novels. They can allude to real-life events, and their meaning can reveal something about people in question. Martin also introducing an interesting practise of specific bastard names as a part of his story world. Names are also used to separate different parts of the setting. Names used in the continent of Westeros are often English names, variants of English names or drawn from other European languages. This makes them, and the part of the story world, feel

somewhat familiar in contrast to the continent of Essos, where the names are more exotic and seemingly belong to fictional languages.

Finally, I discussed an important but inconspicuous part of effective style in alternative world fiction: the avoidance of unfitting language. I found out that Martin chooses to avoid contemporary expressions of time to keep the narrative in the past. In addition, he does not use vocabulary that is clearly related to entities that only exist in our world, of which the story world is supposed to be independent. This includes the names of weekdays and months that are tied to real world history and mythology.

After finishing my research on this topic, I agree with Mandala's (2010) views even more. Style in science fiction and fantasy is not automatically poor, plain or unremarkable, and it definitely should not be dismissed as unimportant. I found out that there is a lot going on with the language of the *Song* novels, although I mostly just looked at the experimental, deviant aspects of style that are related to world-building. Even here, I have probably missed some interesting and important aspects of style, and this is obviously not everything there is to style in Martin's work. It is probably safe to say that style plays an important part world-building, and that crafting an interesting, believable setting for alternative world fiction demands a lot of skill and consideration.

I believe *A Song of Ice and Fire* deserves more scholarly attention in general, and it is very likely to receive it due to its success. It will probably prove to be quite an influential work in the genre and popular culture in general, and some of its features have at least been perceived to be uncommon in the genre: it blends realism with fantasy and puts much focus on its characters, including a diverse cast of interesting female characters.

Language and style in alternative world fiction certainly demand more research,



as this aspect has been largely ignored or mistreated thus far. To my knowledge, the use of fictional languages has not been studied to any great extent, although it is very common in both science fiction and fantasy, and almost unique to these genres. What effects can be achieved with them, how are these effects related to the form of the language, and how is the language made accessible to the reader without drawing too much attention to this process? Of course, less noticeable aspects of style, such as the avoidance of language would not fit the setting, can be equally important and worthy of attention.

Mandala's work and this thesis mostly concentrate on style that is effective in what it is meant to do. Although it is not justified to say that the style of science fiction or fantasy would always or often be poor, it is bound to be so in some cases. Not all literary endeavours are equal. What separates good and effective style from poor and ineffective in these genres? Why do some texts fall short when it comes to the creation of a plausible setting, for example? Does the overuse of deviant language forms become obtrusive and alienate the reader in some cases? Do some texts use archaisms in a manner that feels clumsy and clichéd? These kinds of questions are probably worth looking at when we consider the role of style in these genres. The short-comings of some texts can tell us a lot about what it is that actually makes the more successful ones work.

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