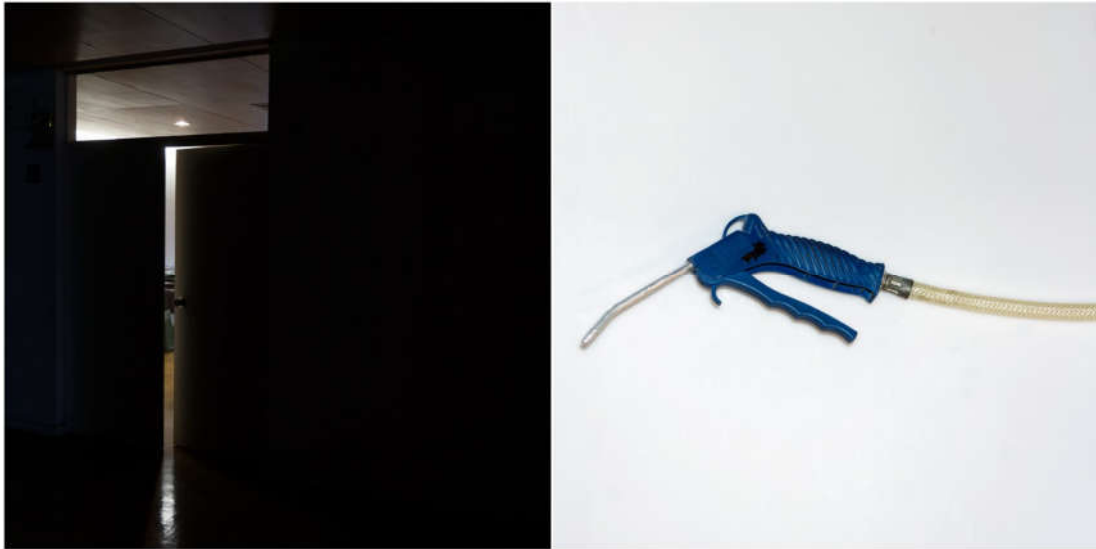


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## **Swords of Westeros: Swords as Symbols of Identity in *A Song of Ice and Fire***

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**Abstract** | Swords have been regarded as emblems of power and honour, symbols of status and authority belonging to several gods and heroes of many mythologies and cultures, but also as the main weapons of knights. Oaths were made upon swords and they were the companions of the most fearsome warriors and heroes. They were, sometimes, magical and had wills of their own, but above all swords were personal objects intimately connected to their owners.

This article will first clarify the connection between fantasy literature and the Middle Ages in the creation of George R. R. Martin's world in *A Song of Ice and Fire*, since that historical period influences the way that swords are portrayed in his work. It will then focus on exploring how swords are connected to their owner's identity, an aspect that is present in the following swords: Eddard Stark's *Ice*, Jon Snow's *Longclaw*, Stannis Baratheon's *Lightbringer*, and Arya Stark's *Needle*.

**Keywords** | Swords; Middle Ages; Celtic Myth; *A Song of Ice and Fire*; Fantasy



**Resumo** | As espadas têm sido vistas como emblemas de poder e honra, símbolos de estatuto e autoridade, pertencentes a vários deuses e heróis de várias mitologias e culturas, mas também como as armas principais dos cavaleiros. É sobre elas que se faziam juramentos e eram elas as companheiras dos guerreiros e heróis mais destemidos. Por vezes tinham propriedades mágicas e personalidade própria mas, acima de tudo, as espadas eram objectos pessoais intimamente ligadas aos seus donos.

Primeiramente, este artigo irá clarificar a ligação entre a literatura de fantasia e a Idade Média na criação do mundo de fantasia de George R. R. Martin, uma vez que esse período histórico influencia a forma como as espadas são retratadas no seu trabalho. De seguida, o artigo irá focar-se na forma como as espadas estão ligadas à identidade do seu proprietário, um aspecto presente nas seguintes espadas: *Ice* de Eddard Stark, *Longclaw* de Jon Snow, *Lightbringer* de Stannis Baratheon e *Needle* de Arya Stark.

**Palavras-chave** | Espadas; Idade Média; Mitos Celtas; *A Song of Ice and Fire*; Fantasia



### **Swords of Westeros: the legacy of medieval swords in *A Song of Ice and Fire***

Both in the world of Westeros and in the world of the Middle Ages there is a tradition of important weapons. In medieval literature, swords belonged to the bravest warriors, knights, kings, gods and heroes of different mythologies and cultures. Swords represented power and honour, status and authority, kingship and sovereignty. In fact, according to Hilda Ellis Davidson, “The reason is largely because the sword was essentially the weapon of the leader, a personal treasure which was also a necessity for the man who would keep his precarious place at the head of others” (211). They were also connected to values such as bravery, loyalty and truth, but also violence and death, being some of the most decorated war items of the Middle Ages.

Since *A Song of Ice and Fire* is a work of fantasy, it is important to clarify the connection between fantasy and the Middle Ages. The Middle Ages have continually been reimagined in contemporary culture. In fact, Umberto Eco states that “it seems people like the Middle Ages”, and that popular culture is an important vehicle for this renewed interest in the medieval period (61). This aspect is linked to the concept of medievalism and it is important in order to understand the way that Martin uses the Middle Ages in his work, particularly in the way that swords are portrayed in *A Song of Ice and Fire*.

Being the weapon of the leader, the sword symbolized the identity of its wielder. This became more prominent during the medieval period especially because of its constant presence in chivalric romances where it became a symbolic object associated with the hero. In *A Song of Ice and Fire*, there are also swords which

reflect the same ideals and characteristics, as well as symbolic charge, of those of the medieval period.

### **Fantasy and its medieval form**

John Clute in the *Encyclopedia of Fantasy* refers the connection between fantasy and history, especially with the medieval period:

Fantasy as a genre is almost inextricably bound up with history and ideas of history, reflected and reworked more or less thoroughly according to the needs, ambitions and intentions of individual authors. To many writers and readers, a fantasy novel should be set against a quasi-historical (very often quasi-medieval) background, and the boundaries between historical novels and fantasy can be thin (n. pag.).

In this way, it is possible to acknowledge that Martin also roots the world of Westeros in the Middle Ages. But Martin's medieval Westeros is much closer to the historical Middle Ages than the previous fantasy works of other authors, especially in the 1970s and 1980s, which followed the medieval format of Tolkien, as Martin states: "The success that the Tolkien books had redefined modern fantasy. (...) And that led to a lot more Tolkien imitators" (Poniewozik n. pag). The Middle Ages portrayed in those works perpetuated an idealized view of the period full of misconceptions and clichés that were born in the Victorian period, where the renewed interest for the Middle Ages began. One can say, then, that Martin's work is more realistic in its approach to the medieval period. In relation to that, M. H. Abrams writes that the representation of reality designates a way to represent life and the social world as well as human experience "as it seems to the common reader, evoking the sense that its characters might in fact exist, and that such things might well happen" (260). In *A Song of Ice and Fire* those realistic elements can be recognized in the social structure, in politics, and in the psychological aspects of the characters which help the reader to immerse him/herself in the fantasy world. The representation of swords, of their shape, meaning and value offer another aspect of realism since they resemble the swords of the Middle Ages.

One may, therefore, say that even though "[f]antasy is any departure from consensus reality" and it "includes transgressions of what one generally takes to be physical facts," fantasy can also borrow elements from reality in order to build its

world (Hume, 21). In Martin's own words, "I like to use history to flavor my fantasy, to add texture and verisimilitude" (*The Citadel: So Spake Martin*, n. pag.). This attempt to root the fantasy world in reality, giving it mimetic characteristics, is also important because both depend on each other, they are not opposites, according to Brian Attebery, "Mimesis without fantasy would be nothing but reporting one's perception of actual events. Fantasy without mimesis would be a purely artificial invention without recognizable objects or actions" (3). In this matter, the world of Westeros is a fantasy world, in which there are elements that offer a break from reality, but there are also aspects that the reader may identify as existing or having existed in reality.

The world of *A Song of Ice and Fire* is a medieval based world and its grounding in the Middle Ages allows the author to interpret that period but also to reflect about our contemporary society. Therefore, the following question arises: why the Middle Ages? Why does fantasy often root its world mainly in the medieval period?

Tison Pugh and Jane Weisl define the concept of medievalism as referring:

to the art, literature, scholarship, avocational pastimes, and sundry forms of entertainment and culture that turn to the Middle Ages for their subject matter or inspiration, and in doing so, explicitly or implicitly, by comparison or by contrast, comment on the artist's contemporary sociocultural milieu (1).

This interest in the medieval period started in the Victorian period and it showed a nostalgia for a lost past of which little is known and much is imagined. The Middle Ages became a place of mythical and historical interest, although some of the medieval themes are themselves fantasies of the period, meaning that they do not correspond to the real Middle Ages, such as the themes of courtly love and chivalry. Medievalism, therefore, is an interpretation of a period and not its accurate representation (Pugh 3).

The swords depicted in Martin's work are also somewhere between the historical and the mythical swords of the Middle Ages, since they resemble the medieval swords in their shape and making, but also in their symbolism and attributes. The fact that they belong to some of the most important characters of the

books is a reminder of the swords of medieval heroes, kings and gods, bearers of the most important swords of the Middle Ages.

What Martin does in *A Song of Ice and Fire* is to build a recognizable medieval world in order to deconstruct certain themes and literary *topoi*, to comment on the idealization of the Middle Ages and to shed a more realistic light on the period. His world resembles the medieval world and, through swords, Martin allows the reader to recognize their bearers as important characters, as it happened in medieval mythologies and romances.

### **The Swords of Westeros**

Swords are deeply connected to the identity and authority of their owners because they belonged to leaders, important warriors and kings. One of the main characteristics of the most important medieval swords is that they had names, a feature that would bestow an additional power to the sword. This aspect has its origins in animism, a belief system in which objects, like humans and animals, have souls, a belief shared by the Anglo-Saxon and Celtic peoples. Therefore, a sword with a name had great power and this practice of naming swords continued throughout the medieval period (Oakeshott, 106). Names were also important because they reinforced the status of the sword as a personal weapon of great value and imbued with its own personality (Loades, 1788).

In medieval literature there are several swords with names. In *Beowulf*, the hero with the same name has *Hrunting*, with which he fights against Grendel's mother. In Norse myth, Sigurd kills the dragon Fafnir with his reforged sword *Gram*, in *The Volsung Saga*. Roland, Charlemagne's paladin in the *Chanson de Roland*, also had a special sword, *Durandal*, which was given to him by an angel. King Arthur, in the Arthurian texts, has *Excalibur*, a magical sword given to him by the Lady of the Lake. In Martin's work the most important swords also have names; they have an identity which is deeply connected to the identity of its owner.

Eddard Stark, head of the House Stark, Lord of Winterfell and Warden of the North, fought with Robert Baratheon helping him win the Iron Throne. He is known as a man of courage in the battlefield and has an unwavering sense of honour and justice. He is a noble lord, a man of power and Hand of the King, making him the second most important person of Westeros. He has a sword, an heirloom of his family

that was passed through generations: *Ice*. The name *Ice* refers to the cold territory of the North, the land of the House Stark, but also to the impartial and objective justice applied with a cutting edge by Ned, since he uses the sword to execute condemned prisoners. *Ice* was passed on through generations of the Stark family as it was acquired by the Starks, four hundred years before the events narrated in *A Song of Ice and Fire*:

It had been forged in Valyria (...), when the ironsmiths had worked their metal with spells as well as hammers. Four hundred years old it was, and as sharp as the day it was forged. The name it bore was older still, a legacy from the age of heroes, when the Starks were Kings in the North (Martin, *Thrones* 24).

Therefore, *Ice* represents the legacy of the Starks and it is the symbol of Eddard's identity as a Stark and of his authority as Lord of Winterfell and Warden of the North. This passing of the sword through generations also has its roots in the Middle Ages, when important weapons such as swords were considered family treasures, usually given to a youth when he attained manhood (Davidson 212). This is also present in medieval literature, for example, when Sigurd receives the fragments of his father's shattered sword, which he reforges and becomes the sword *Gram*. The sword perpetuated the name and the accomplishments of the family, being associated with what was most important in a man's life: "family ties, loyalty to his lord, the duties of a king, the excitement of battle, the attainment of manhood, and the last funeral rites" (Davidson 214). In fact, there are also swords in the tombs of each of the Lords of Winterfell, resting on their knees, in the Winterfell crypts, proving the importance of the sword as a symbol of identity in the Stark family (Martin, *Thrones* 42).

Moreover, *Ice* is a "legacy from the age of heroes" in a work that seems to have no heroes. The concept of the hero is a difficult one to grasp, but one of the main ideas is that the heroic narratives, especially the mythical ones, tell the same story repeatedly throughout time, and the hero is a timeless figure that assumes various faces and names, although his conception and function is always the same.<sup>1</sup> The

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<sup>1</sup> This is Joseph Campbell's theory in his famous work *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* (1949), although he was not the first one to study the structure of the heroic narratives. The first one was Otto Rank, in *The Myth and Birth of the Hero* (1909) in which he relies on Sigmund Freud's theory of Dreams, and compares myths to dreams. Another important author is the Russian folklorist Vladimir Propp and his *Morphology of the Folktale* (1928) in

medieval hero in the imagination of the contemporary reader is, perhaps, the hero of the chivalric romances, the brave knight that inhabits King Arthur's court. He is honourable, brave, with high moral standards and fights for a greater good. In this sense, Eddard Stark starts as the embodiment of this medieval hero that will fight against the injustices of Westeros and save it from corruption. He is a vestige of King Arthur's knights. But the figure of the hero is a mythic and literary one, an archetype through which ideals and values are conveyed.

Therefore, *Ice* is also an heirloom of the swords of these mythical heroes that are not real. Eddard Stark dies, in fact, by his own blade, being decapitated by Ser Ilyn Payne (Martin, *Thrones* 727). His death is the death of the hero by his own ideals. It is also the death of the idealized view of the Middle Ages perpetuated since Victorian times, by a medievalism that searched for a chivalric order of society that came from medieval romances and not from reality. In this way, Martin puts in perspective an apparently heroic Middle Ages by killing one of the main characters with his own sword *Ice*. A sword that was a symbol of his identity as a Stark, but also a symbol of the heroic ideal which is not real.

Another important sword is the sword of Jon Snow: *Longclaw*. Jon Snow is the illegitimate son of Eddard Stark and he has no right of bearing his father's name. His last name Snow is the same last name that all bastard sons have in the North. In a sense, Jon Snow has to forge his own identity, stepping out of the shadow of the Starks since he will never be one. The way he acquires his sword is a proof of his bravery and courage, a step in becoming his own person.

When Jon Snow is sent to the Wall to join the Night's Watch he saves Jeor Mormont, Lord Commander of the Night's Watch, from death when he is attacked by a wight. As a token of gratitude, Mormont gives him a sword that is described in great detail:

The pommel was a hunk of pale stone weighted with lead to balance the long blade. It had been carved into the likeness of a snarling wolf's head, with chips of garnet set into the eyes. The grip was virgin leather, soft and black, as yet unstained by sweat or blood. The blade itself was a good half foot longer than those Jon was used to, tapered to thrust as well as slash, with three fullers deeply incised in the metal. Where *Ice* was a true two-handed great-sword, this was a hand-and-a-half, sometimes named a

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which he demonstrates that the heroes of Russian folktales also follow the same path from their birth to their deaths.



“bastard sword”. (...) When Jon turned it sideways, he could see the ripples in the dark steel where the metal had been folded back on itself again and again (Martin, *Thrones* 655).

This sword had been in the Mormont family for five centuries and it was wielded by Jeor until he joined the Night’s Watch. Afterwards it was passed on to his son Jorah, but he brought dishonour to the House Mormont and left the sword behind. The pommel of the sword was a bear’s head, the totem of House Mormont but was replaced by the white head of a direwolf when it was given to Jon Snow (Martin, *Thrones* 655). The sword went through several changes and was reshaped in order to embody his new owner’s identity: the pommel was changed and it was given a new name: *Longclaw*.

The peculiar attribute of this sword is that its pommel is in the shape of an animal’s head. This zoomorphic shape symbolizes the direwolf Ghost, Jon’s companion, but it is also a reference to the totem of House Stark, which is a grey direwolf. This kind of detail can also be seen in the ceremonial swords of the Celts: “These swords often had anthropoid hilts, a small figure on the pommel which represented the spirit within it, or gave the sword its name” (Barker 19). The presence of anthropoid figures can also be seen in Anglo-Saxon objects. Among the objects discovered at the Sutton Hoo ship burial there was a sceptre that had a small bronze stag on one of its ends. This was the totemic emblem of the Wuffings, the family of Raedwald, a ruler of East Anglia in the seventh century, to whom this tribute may have been addressed (Barker 28).<sup>2</sup> In the case of *Longclaw* the pommel was first a bear, symbol of the House Mormont, and then a direwolf, alluding to Jon Snow’s animal companion. Its name also refers to the claws of both the bear and the direwolf (Martin, *Thrones* 657).

In Jon’s case he receives the sword as an act of gratitude and a reward for his courageous act of saving Mormont’s life. In the Middle Ages this was also a common practice. For example, the Anglo-Saxon tribal chiefs could pass their most valuable

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<sup>2</sup> It is still uncertain to whom the ship burial belonged to, but it is safe to say that it belonged to an Anglo-Saxon king, or “Bretwalda”, because of the royal regalia that was discovered: a heavily decorated sword, helmet and shield, and a sceptre. It may be assumed that Raedwald was buried there because of the presence of the stag in the sceptre and of several Merovingian coins dated from around the year 620, which attest to the wealth and power that Raedwald had. Besides, there is the question of the pagan burial. The conversion of England to Christianity had begun when St. Augustine arrived in 596, and Bede writes that Raedwald had converted in Kent. But when he returned home, he returned to his former faith (Bede 132-133). Therefore, Brian Barker says: “Raedwald was given a Christian burial while his pagan followers had launched his spirit on its journey to the other world of the old heathen gods of his ancestors in the burial ship” (29).

weapons to the greatest warriors of the tribe (Davidson 212). This can also be confirmed in *Beowulf*, when the hero receives a sword from Hrothgar because of his heroic deeds in the court of the Danes (verses 1020-1024).

Moreover, the sword is called a “bastard sword” and this may be understood as having a double meaning. On the one hand, it refers to a particular type of sword used in the fourteenth century, the “bastard swords”. They had long blades and hilts similar to the two-handed swords but not as long. Nowadays they are also referred to as “hand-and-a-half swords,” and they had hilts long enough to be wielded by both hands, although they could also be brandished by one (Oakeshott 308). On the other hand, by being called a “bastard sword”, *Longclaw* alludes not only to the fact that Jon is the illegitimate son of Eddard Stark, but also that Jon is given a sword that is not his by right, since it belonged to the legitimate son of Jeor Mormont. In this way, *Longclaw* is a symbol and extension of Jon’s identity because of its name, its pommel and its sword type.

Arya Stark also has a sword that symbolizes her identity, and she is the only girl in the Stark family to have a sword. She is the youngest daughter of Eddard and Catelyn Stark and her sword is called *Needle*. Its name is peculiar and ironic because Arya is a tomboy more interested in learning about how to fight, how to ride a horse, and less concerned with more feminine tasks such as singing and embroidery. This sword is given to her by her half-brother Jon Snow when he leaves to join the Night’s Watch:

“I almost forgot”, he told her. “All the best swords have names.”  
“Like Ice”, she said. She looked at the blade in her hand. “Does this have a name? Oh tell me.”  
“Can’t you guess?” Jon teased. “Your very favourite thing.”  
(...)  
“*Needle!*” (Martin, *Thrones* 98)

Arya’s sword seems to be an extension of herself since she has no talent for needlework but she can use this *Needle* to learn how to wield a sword, like the boys do. This sword has a thin and short blade and these types of swords are used in the Free Cities, according to Jon Snow (Martin, *Thrones* 97). In this way, the sword seems to assimilate its owner’s characteristics, because Arya is also a thin and small girl, suiting her slight build.

Ultimately, Arya's sword comes to represent her life at Winterfell, her happy childhood and her family:

Needle was Robb and Bran and Rickon, her mother and her father, even Sansa. Needle was Winterfell's grey walls, and the laughter of its people. Needle was the summer snows, Old Nan's stories, the heart tree with its red leaves and scary face, the warm earthly smell of the glass gardens, the sound of the north wind rattling the shutters of her room Needle was Jon Snow's smile. (Martin, *Crows* 455)

*Needle* becomes a symbol of Arya's true identity throughout her travels, since she is forced to assume several disguises to hide who she really is. First, she disguises herself as Arry, a boy, then Salty, when she travels to Braavos, and she finally has to discard her true identity as well as all her belongings in order to enter and serve in the House of Black and White. She has to give up *Needle* too but she instead chooses to hide it in a safe place. Walking away she says: "One day" (Martin, *Crows* 456). Her sword remains, therefore, as a promise that one day she will be Arya Stark again. Therefore, it is possible to say that *Needle* establishes a connection between Arya and her family because it reminds her of her life before she left Winterfell. It is a symbol of her family and of her identity, just like medieval swords were to their owners.

One of the most symbolic and complex swords is the one that belongs to Stannis Baratheon: *Lightbringer*. After Robert Baratheon's death in *A Game of Thrones*, his older brother Stannis claims the Iron Throne for himself. He is always accompanied by Melisandre, a priestess of R'hllor who believes Stannis is Azor Ahai reborn, a hero destined to defeat the Others, and it is she who gives him his sword, *Lightbringer*. This sword is obtained through a ritual where the images of the Seven are burned in an enormous bonfire and Melisandre proclaims:

In this dread hour a warrior shall draw from the fire a burning sword. And that sword shall be Lightbringer, the Red Sword of Heroes, and he who clasps it shall be Azor Ahai come again, and the darkness shall flee before him. [...] *Azor Ahai, beloved of R'hllor! The Warrior of Light, the Son of Fire! Come forth, your sword awaits you!* [...]. (Martin, *Kings* 148)

Stannis walks up to the bonfire and withdraws the sword from the burning image of the Mother (Martin, *Kings* 149). This seems to be the sword with the most

symbolism because it might be a symbol of Stannis' identity not as king but as a legendary hero prophesied to fight the Others.

The association between swords and light or fire is also a common feature in medieval literature especially if a sword belongs to a god or to a hero. Light, in Celtic tradition, also represented the intervention of celestial gods, so whoever had a shining or flaming sword was a divine being or someone blessed by the gods (Chevalier, 586).

*Lightbringer* is, therefore, a sword of light, with a blade that has a constant glow bearing the same colour as of a flame, that was once the property of the legendary hero Azor Ahai and which will be the salvation of Westeros when the time comes to fight the Others. In fact, Melisandre keeps saying "The night is dark and full of terrors" (Martin, *Kings* 24), alluding to the fact that the time they are living in is a time of Darkness, of danger. Consequently, the wielder of *Lightbringer*, being Azor Ahai reborn, will free Westeros from the Darkness, represented by the Others, and establish a new age of Light and hope. Being thus, this sword also evokes the flaming swords of the solar gods such as Lugh<sup>3</sup>, from Irish Celtic myth, with which he casts out the Fomoiré<sup>4</sup> from Ireland, inaugurating the golden age of the Tuatha Dé Danann<sup>5</sup>, as it is described in the *Second Battle of Moytura*. It is also reminiscent of the battle in which archangel Michael defeats Lucifer in the Book of Revelation, a battle between Light and Darkness (Rev. 12: 7-9).

Stannis' *Lightbringer* is proof that he is the chosen one to fight the powers of Darkness. It is a symbol of Stannis Baratheon's identity as a hero and a saviour, more than a proof of his sovereignty as the rightful king of Westeros. It gives him a spiritual authority as if he were Azor Ahai reborn, and the people were in the presence of a true hero of bygone times. He is, as the name of the sword indicates, the bringer of Light in a time of Darkness.

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<sup>3</sup> The name Lug means "light" or "shining". He is known as Lug Lamfhota, referring to his long arm and his ability to throw his spear, and Samildanach because he masters several arts and crafts.

<sup>4</sup> The Fomoiré were a race of demons which threatened the inhabitants of Ireland. They were defeated by the Tuatha Dé Danann in the *Cath Maige Tuired (The Second Battle of Moytura)*.

<sup>5</sup> The Tuatha Dé Danann were the Celtic gods of Ireland, the tribe of the Goddess Danu or Dana. According to the *Lebor Gabála Éirenn (The Book of the Taking of Ireland)*, a twelfth century manuscript, they were the fifth race to inhabit Ireland and they defeated the Fir Bolg, the previous race.

## Conclusion

George R. R. Martin manages to build a recognizable medieval world in *A Song of Ice and Fire* by presenting the readers with images that they associate with the Middle Ages, whether through the presence of a feudal society, through the political intrigue that echoes the War of the Roses, or even through the presence of knights and chivalric ideals which are, inevitably, destroyed.

This association between fantasy and history, namely medieval history, to give a more realistic flavour to his narrative is assumed by Martin, “That’s the general process for doing fantasy, is you have to root it in reality. Then you play with it a little; then you add the imaginative element, then you make it largely bigger” (Hodgman n. pag.). And it is through this allegation of historical realism that the author establishes his authority when it comes to his depiction of the Middle Ages. His medieval Westeros is far from the clichés and stereotypes perpetuated in other works of fantasy and he aims at a more realistic approach, leaving the idealized Middle Ages of the Victorians behind:

the fantasy novels that I was reading by Tolkien imitators and other fantasists, yet they were getting it all wrong. It was a sort of Disneyland middle ages, where they had castles and princesses and all that. The trappings of a class system, but they didn't seem to understand what a class system actually meant (Hodgman n. pag.).

He tries to depict a medieval world much closer to what it really might have been, destroying some preconceived notions of the contemporary reader about a past that he/she does not really know. But he also presents the reader with elements that are between the historical and the mythical past of the Middle Ages, and one of these elements is the sword.

Swords were associated with gods, kings, brave warriors and knights. The sword was the main weapon of the knight and it was a symbol of his identity, as well as the embodiment of chivalric ideals. Swords had names, were the extensions of their owners, were objects of great beauty and had, sometimes, magical properties. In this way, it is possible to say that George R. R. Martin resorted to factual as well as symbolical characteristics of medieval swords, real and legendary, to forge those that belong to some of the most remarkable characters of his world.

In *A Song of Ice and Fire*, swords represent the identity of their owners and they also have an identity themselves, names and characteristics that make them unique. For Arya Stark and Jon Snow the swords represent their true selves, for Eddard Stark it is an heirloom of his family and of heroic ideals which do not have a place in reality. Stannis Baratheon's sword is a mythological sword, the sword of heroes of bygone times.

In the words of Michael Loades:

Swords are icons. They are symbols of rank, status and authority; the weapons upon which oaths were sworn, with which allegiances were pledged and by which honours were conferred. Swords represent cultural ideas and personal attributes. They stand for justice, courage and honour. Above all, swords are personal objects. Swords tell stories. (Loades 140-145)

And so do the swords of Westeros in *A Song of Ice and Fire*.



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