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Hegemony and Spatial Articulations: The Case of George R. R. Martin's Secondary World

PhD Thesis

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Specifications

Abbreviations

The most frequently cited works in this thesis will be represented with the abbreviations listed below. This will only apply when said works have long titles, or in the case of the source books that constitute the corpus of analysis for this thesis. The abbreviations are the following:

Corpus works written by George R. R. Martin:

- *A Song of Ice and Fire* (1996-)—name of the whole saga: *ASoIaF*
- *The World of Ice and Fire* (2014)—name of the main lore book*: WoIaF*
- *A Game of* Thrones (1996): *GoT*
- *A Clash of Kings* (1998)*: CoK*
- *A Storm of Swords* (2000)*: SoS*
- *A Feast for Crows* (2005)*: FfC*
- *A Dance with Dragons* (2011)*: DwD*

Academic works:

- Bertrand Westphal's *Geocriticism: Real and Fictional Spaces*, English translation (2011): *RFS*
- Mikhail Bakhtin's "Forms of Time and the Chronotope in the Novel", English translation (1981): "FTCN"

Citation system

The system used will be the one proposed by the 8th edition of the *Modern Language Association Handbook* (2016) or *MLA Handbook*, but with some modifications:

1. In the Works Cited section, the surname of the author(s) will always go before the name and followed by a coma, even when the number of authors is superior to one, as opposed to the 'name, surname' order that MLA proposes for second, third, fourth etc. authors that follow the first one listed. This aims to highlight surnames, which are more distinctive.
2. In-text citations will always provide the following information: author(s), year, and page(s). If this information is not given in the running text itself, then it will be included between brackets after the quote, with a single surname of the first or only author—(Massey 1994: 253). If only part of this information is given in the running text, then the quotation will include the missing parts—e.g.: given the date, then (Massey: 253)/ given the date and the author, then (253).
3. When multiple, non-subsequent pages of the same work are quoted, they will appear in the in-text citation separated by a slash sign—'/'—as opposed to the coma sign—','— MLA proposes. E.g.: (24/35)
4. In the works cited section, when there are several simultaneous publication places, they will be separated by the '&' sign—e.g.: London & New York.
5. As we will be dealing with works from milestone authors that have been critically revised and revisited many times, in some cases they will appear quoted through editions, revisions or collections performed by other authors. In said cases, the in-text quotation will be as follows: e.g.: (Gramsci in Bellamy 1994: 19), unless the information is given in the running text. If only part of the information is given, then what was specified in point 2 is applied. This does not necessarily mean that the quote is not original from the author; simply that it is collected in a different edition with a new prologue, new epilogue, or new comments. In some occasions, other authors' insights into such scholars might be quoted, in which cases the author who provides the insight will be the one who will appear in the quotation, but the author who provides the original ideas will also be referred.

Glossary

This is a section that aims to clarify some of the most ambiguous concepts this study will deal with. Note that not every academic or philosophical concept used in this thesis will appear in the glossary below, as some of them are not easily definable without at least referring to their critical background—e.g. 'hegemony' or 'space'. These will be properly discussed and articulated in the study.

- **Domination:** Often used in opposition to hegemony, which—as will be developed at length throughout this work—is more based on consensus. Domination refers to those practices of reasserting or getting power which do not rely on the generation of a certain social agreement, but are based on force and direct repression instead.
- **Social Life**: Does not refer to social leisure activities or gatherings. When used in this study, it will refer to 'social life' as Gramscian theorists understand it, namely as the general combination of activities, practices and itineraries that unfolding life in society involves. This is done by reproducing or disrupting social configurations, conventions and power relations. These can range from economic to historical, cultural or religious.[1]
- **Spatial Practice:** 'Spatial Practice' is closely linked to 'Social Life', as it involves the spatial dimension of it; it refers to the way social life unfolds, shapes, and is shaped in space.
- **Subaltern/ Subalternity:** A combination of Gramsci and Spivak's ideas; refers to those classes or groups which do not belong into the hegemonic social framework and are therefore silenced by it.[2]
- **Primary World:** The world we perceive as real.
- **Secondary World:** A world we perceive as fictional.
- **Empty/ Floating Signifiers:** Signifiers that, while completely fulfilled in each context, can embody different meanings depending on the needs of either the

[1] See use of the concept of 'social life' in Thomas 2009: 100/173/346, in Morera 2011: 64/ 102/167 or in Hoare 2016: 53-54/68/85. For full references, see the Works Cited section.
[2] See use of the concept of 'subaltern' in Gramsci in Buttigieg 2007: 84/103/183/243 or in Spivak in Morris 2010: 30/38-39. For full references, see the Works Cited section.

ruling class, or the group that challenges the hegemonic rule of the ruling class.[3]—e.g.: 'governance', 'social order', 'morality', 'common sense' etc.

- **Collective Will:** A collective sense of purpose fostered by a hegemonic or counter-hegemonic power which generates consensus and widespread agreement among a majority in a nation, system or social group.[4]
- **Chronotope:** time-space.

Other formal aspects of interest

- All the appendices in this work correspond to maps or cartographic representations. They have been assigned a letter from 'A' to 'J' in alphabetical order, and can be found in the Appendices section.
- Any specifications regarding the discussed elements in this work will be placed between '—' signs instead of brackets '( )'. This is a conscious decision which aims to ease the distinction between specifications made between brackets within quotations by other authors, and specifications made by the author of this thesis.
- Any word or short-phrase coming from a language other than English will be written in Italics when it appears isolated, that is, when it does not appear as part of a longer quote in said language.
- For quotations embedded in the running text, double quotation marks will be used—" ". For emphasis made by the author of this study, single quotation marks will be used—' '— unless the emphasised phrase is taken directly from an earlier quote, in which case double quotation marks will be used in order to respect the original formulation of said phrase by its author. The aim of this is to distinguish between words or phrases quoted from other authors, and emphasis made by the author of this thesis.
- When double quotation marks appear within a text cited in this study which is also framed between double quotation marks—" "—then the double commas from inside the quote will be replaced by single commas—' '.

[3] This concept will be discussed at length in the theoretical-methodological framework, but one can refer to Laclau 2007: 35-37/44.
[4] See Gramsci in Crehan 2002: 159.

Introduction

This first section will provide some general brush-strokes on the kind of study that will be found throughout the following pages as well as some clarifications regarding the state-of-the-art, methodology and justification. While it would be ideal for the reader to be acquainted with George R. R. Martin's literary saga *ASoIaF*, an effort has been made in order to ease the understanding of any references to the books through the use of footnotes that add clarifying information.

General introduction

> "Power resides where men believe it resides. No more and no less."
> (*CoK*: 145)

> "The cobbles underfoot were filthy, and there was so little space that the queen could not even walk around the puddles."
> (*DwD*: 1217)

This thesis poses, first and foremost, a personal challenge which aims to propose modern fantasy fiction as worthy of academic analysis. It is a genre that may, and rightfully so, be used to escape the real world, but it also constitutes an extraordinary tool for the analysis of social life. With this, we do not aim to enshrine fantasy as a revelatory genre that will unveil previously hidden social issues, but rather acknowledge that it provides a different, innovative angle on said issues which other kinds of fiction works may not provide. "[…] the secondary world is a mirror or metaphor for our own, things that happen in that world can be applied to our world. By showing us things in a different way, the other world sheds light on our world and helps us return to it with renewed vision" (Sammons 2010: 167).

Contrary to what may seem at first sight, modern fantasy is deeply ingrained in the primary world; it is just the 'tree' that appears different, the apparent that seems queer or otherworldly. However, beneath that surface lies a whole system of roots that draws its nourishment from what we perceive as 'real life', and these roots have many

different names: ‘culture’, ‘religion’, ‘land’, ‘identity’ or ‘history’ might be some of them.

Regardless of how methaphorical the language we use to explain this is, underneath lies a hard and plain truth: it is virtually impossible to generate a secondary world that is completely detached from our own reality. We are trapped within our own system of signification, and we can ony create and produce from our experience as subjective beings; however much we try to escape, the perceived reality is what feeds us, and it shapes our identities and the material world, even through the scope of modern fantasy.

Stuart Hall argues that identity is, after all, a fictional discourse partly constructed in fantasy (1996: 4). Going even further, one could claim that everything is, in fact, a fiction; any tradition or habit may at its primitive origin outside symbolic thought have come inspired by the real world—if such a feat is even possible—but what we now experience is the artifice produced by the multilayered and substitutive lens of collective perception that unavoidably integrates individual perception, and which has banished the ‘real’; we are never outside symbolisation, outside text. This is emphasised by Jacques Derrida in *Of Grammatology* (1997): “There is not a single signified that escapes, even if recaptured, the play of signifying references that constitute language” (7).

Baudrillard also echoes Derrida’s perspectives by defining the current era as possessing the quality of the ‘hyperreal’, which implies a loss of a ‘reality’ that precedes the simulation of said reality, hence generating an intertextual priority based on the simulation, and which shapes a world also built through said simulations: “The territory no longer precedes the map, nor does it survive it. It is nevertheless the map that precedes the territory—precession of simulacra” (1994: 1).

While it is true that in some cases these points of view may fall into the trap of existential absurdity—if we are trapped within the system of symbolic references, then there is no ‘real’ and we live within an illusion of what is—we should concede that these perspectives acknowledge a fundamental truth in signification, one that has often been ignored for the sake of both convenience and practicality in order to favour an essentialist, totalising view on reality; the fact that we live in a world of symbols that combine and refer to each other infinitely either in their presence or in their absence,

and that there is not such a thing as a tangible and unequivocal platonic truth. From this we may conclude that fantasy discourse is, indeed, also composed by what we perceive as real insofar as it lies within the same system of signification.

Having arrived to that conclusion, it is then logical to assume that modern fantastic spatial discourse is, too, within the same system of signification of what we perceive as real, and is therefore intertwined with it. Consequently, if after a painstaking worldbuilding labour we come up with a secondary world which, in addition, possesses the inner consistency of reality in the Tolkienean sense (Tolkien in Flieger 2008: 77), we may surmise that the hegemonic processes and spatial—pre, during and post—articulations around these processes share a strong link with what we perceive as 'reality' and resonate to us because the discourse which builds said secondary world exists within the same "play of signifying references" (Derrida 1997: 7) as the primary world. Consider the following quote regarding Daenerys Targaryen:

> And perhaps the dragon did remember, but Dany could not. She had never seen this land her brother said was theirs, this realm beyond the narrow sea. These places he talked of, Casterly Rock and the Eyrie, Highgarden and the Vale of Arryn, Dorne and the Isle of Faces, they were just words to her. Viserys had been a boy of eight when they fled King's Landing to escape the advancing armies of the Usurper, but Daenerys had been only a quickening in their mother's womb. (*GoT*: 34)

All the locations mentioned, as well as 'the dragon', are fantastic fictional places, but they are more than vacuous references to hollow spaces, even though they appear listed on Daenerys' thoughts without any particular meaning to her—because of her individual history. They, on their own, refer to more complex systems of reference. We will use the Eyrie as an illustrative example:

> Many have claimed that the Eyrie of the Arryns is the most beautiful castle in all the Seven Kingdoms […]. And yet the Arryns and the men of the Vale will tell you that the Eyrie is impregnable as well, for its position high atop the mountainside makes it all but impossible to assault. (*WoIaF*: 170)

Here the Eyrie becomes more than a simple reference to an eagle's nest; it is a particular location in the region of the Vale—within the North—with political and military significance. In fact, this quote from *WoIaF* is but a very small excerpt of all the

background information we are given about it. Similarly, these further details about the Vale and the seat of the Arryns endow what we read in the books with even more consistency:

> The Vale was narrow here, no more than a half day's ride across, and the northern mountains seemed so close that Catelyn could almost reach out and touch them. Looming over them all was the jagged peak called the Giant's Lance, a mountain that even mountains loomed up to, its head lost in icy mists three and a half miles above the valley floor. Over its massive western shoulder fowed the ghost torrent of Alyssa's Tears. Even from this distance, Catelyn could make out the shining silver thread, bright against the dark stone. […] Catelyn raised her eyes, up and up and up. At first all she saw was stone and trees, the looming mass of the great mountain shrouded in night, as black as a starless sky. Then she noticed the glow of distant fires well above them; a tower keep, built upon the steep side of the mountain, its lights like orange eyes staring down from above. Above that was another, higher and more distant, and still higher a third, no more than a flickering spark in the sky. And finally, up where the falcons soared, a flash of white in the moonlight. Vertigo washed over her as she stared upward at the pale towers, so far above. "The Eyrie," she heard Marillion murmur, awed. (*GoT*: 443/449)

As it can be appreciated, all three extracts lay within the same system of references of the secondary world, each one adding more information than the previous one—or from a different perspective at least. However, it would be a mistake to assume that what we have called 'system of references of the secondary world' for practical purposes is confined to the limits of the world of *ASoIaF*, because these systems are not closed. Each of the signifiers present in the quote is at play within the signifying system of references inside the reader-writer pact that generates the world of *ASoIaF*, but each of them, at the same time, signifies itself in opposition to other signifiers outside of this pact and into the system of what we perceive as real: "A text exists because it defines itself according to those that are *not* there" (Llovet et al. 2015: 76).[5] To further prove this point, we could compare the previous description of the Vale and the Eyrie to

[5] Original quote in Spanish from section 1.15. regarding deconstruction in *Teoría Literaria y Literatura Comparada* (2015), by Jordi Llovet et al.: "Un texto existe porque se define en función de todos aquellos que *no* están" (76).

Washington Irving's description of the landscape around the Caatskilli mountains in his short story "Rip Van Winkle" (1819):[6]

> Whoever has made a voyage up the Hudson must remember the Kaatskill mountains. They are a dismembered branch of the great Appalachian family, and are seen away to the west of the river, swelling up to a noble height, and lording it over the surrounding country. […] At the foot of these fairy mountains, the voyager may have described the light smoke curling up from a village, whose shingle-roofs gleam among the trees, just where the blue tints of the upland melt away into the fresh green of the nearer landscape. (45-46)

The similarity between "the looming mass of the great mountain" in *ASoIaF* and Irving's mountain "lording it over the surrounding country" is apparent. Similarly, "the light smoke curling up from a village, whose shingle-roofs gleam among the trees" and "the glow of distant fires […] its lights like orange eyes staring down from above". At the same time, one could evoke the image of the German *Neuschwanstein* castle when thinking about the Eyrie, or simply the sound of an eagle's cry may invoke its image. Of course, this may also happen within the 'system of references of the secondary world', as the receiver may evoke the map in appendix G—or 'outside' of it, if the receiver perceives it as any other primary world map that he or she has previously seen.

These references are not actually strictly similar to the description of the Eyrie given in Catelyn's quote from *ASoIaF,* but the symbolic interplay is evident: the reader or receptor of any kind may incur into all sorts of primary world substitutions that prove the infinite referentiality within the signifying game of references we are trying to highlight.

On the other hand, on his famous 1947 essay "On Fairy Stories" Tolkien wrote:

> Probably every writer making a secondary world, a fantasy, every sub-creator, wishes in some measure to be a real maker, or hopes that he is drawing on reality: hopes that the peculiar quality of this secondary world (if not all the details) are derived from Reality, or are flowing into it. If he indeed achieves a quality that can fairly be described by the dictionary definition: 'inner consistency of reality', it is difficult to conceive how this can be, if the work does not in some way partake of reality. (Tolkien in Flieger 2008: 77)

[6] Quote from 2001 edition. See Works Cited section.

The British author describes having "the inner consistency of reality" as a quality that needs to draw from reality in order to exist. Of course, not every fantasy work possesses this quality, but those which do become something else than mere fancy:

> […] at any rate it is found in practice that 'the inner consistency of reality' is more difficult to produce, the more unlike are the images and the rearrangements of primary material to the actual arrangements of the Primary World. […] Fantasy thus, - too often, remains undeveloped; it is and has been used frivolously, or only half seriously, or merely for decoration: it remains merely 'fanciful'. Anyone inheriting the fantastic device of human language can say the green sun. Many can then imagine or picture it. But that is not enough […]. To make a Secondary World inside which the green sun will be credible, commanding Secondary Belief, will probably require labour and thought […]. Few attempt such difficult tasks. But when they are attempted and in any degree accomplished then we have a rare achievement of Art: indeed narrative art, story making in its primary and most potent mode. (Tolkien in Flieger 2008: 68-69)

When a fantasy work is nourished at its core by the primary world to the point that its inner mechanisms seem not only plausible within the writer-reader pact, but also possess a logic that backs all actions and deeds that take place within it, then the work is not merely escapist; it becomes an alternative perspective on reality.

With regards to the scientific value of the analysis of a secondary world in the fantasy genre, we could strongly argue that such a study may potentially be able to debunk many prejudices and bad habits prevalent in the academia. In the introduction to *The Cambridge Companion to Fantasy Literature* (2012), Farah Mendlesohn and Howard James point out how critics and scholars usually "generate definitions of fantasy which include the texts that they value and exclude most of what general readers think of as fantasy. Most of them consider primarily texts of the nineteenth and early twentieth century" (1); in fact, the main aim of this particular Cambridge Companion is precisely to point out the value of critical academic readings of fantasy by gathering the main scholarly approaches as well as some of the chief fantasy genres: "This book endeavours to take the body of genre fantasy on a multiplicity of terms that recognizes academic, reader and commercial understandings of fantasy as equally valuable" (2). Likewise, in *Race and Popular Fantasy Literature: Habits of Whiteness* (2016), Helen

Young writes against the common dismissal of fantasy as merely juvenile and gives the names of two works that have greatly contributed to the defence of fantasy in the academia: "Classic works like Ann Swinfen's aptly titled *Defence of Fantasy* (1984) and Rosemary Jackson's *Fantasy: the Literature of Subversion* (1981) worked against both popular and academic prejudices which saw Fantasy as juvenile, generic, and unworthy of attention" (2-3). She then connects the empowerment of fantasy to the necessity of locating it in the canon: "The desire of more recent historians of fantasy literature to trace its roots back to at least medieval times is suggestive of a continued desire to represent Fantasy as a literary mode of writing which can be validated by locating its antecedents in the canon" (3). However, the academia runs against a major issue:

> One of the underlying problems when it comes to defining Fantasy, as James and Mendlesohn imply, is that scholarship by and large – Cultural Studies is a major exception – values works deemed to have artistic merit. Art – literary or otherwise – is deemed to be, as Pierre Bourdieu terms it, "autonomous," created for its own sake and without consideration of the desires or needs of the potential audience; the opposing system of value is the "heteronomous" which operates throughout society, particularly "in the economic field." The artistic value of a work is commonly framed in opposition to its market value […]. Twenty-first century Western culture is still deeply steeped in the belief that a work which has commercial success and mass appeal is not good art, although I do not subscribe to the idea in this book. Defining Fantasy in artistic – Literary – terms is not necessarily at odds with considering it as what Bourdieu terms a "field of large-scale production," but the two systems of value are always in tension and are not easy to reconcile. (3)

This is precisely what prevents fantasy from entering certain fields of study, and, naturally, the problem that George R. R. Martin's work runs against.

In the light of all this one could, as a conclusion, argue that reality and fancy are actually two sides of the same coin separated by artificial constructs, but both forming part of the soil that forms the substratum of existence.[7] Hopefully, this thesis will contribute to prove not only the worthiness, but also the applicability and practicality of the critical analysis of such a masterfully built fantastic secondary world as is unveiled

[7] This debate will be developed further in the conclusions. See Hall 1996: 4, Derrida 1997: 7 or Baudrillard 1994: 1.

to us through George R. R. Martin's *ASoIaF* and, in doing so, add one more voice to the task of bringing the modern fantasy genre to the foreground of literary criticism.

Objectives

Firstly, we aim to demonstrate the worthiness of the modern fantasy genre—and more specifically of George R. R. Martin's *ASoIaF* saga—for academic research. As stated in the introduction, fiction plays an essential role in the forming of identity, and thus in social life and its processes.

Secondly, to demonstrate the plausibility of the combination between the theory of hegemony and spatial theory as a unified critical and methodological approach, that is, to propose a unified methodology that takes into account the inherent spatiality of hegemony; spatial articulations are both a precondition and a result of power shifts, hence an integral part of any kind of hegemonic process, and should be analysed accordingly.

Thirdly, to demonstrate the plausibility and social utility of the analysis of hegemony and spatial articulations in a modern fantastic secondary world. As argued in the introduction, modern fantasy is deeply in touch with the primary world given the fact that it lies within the same system of signification as what we perceive as 'real', and even if it is symbolically assimilated as a fundamental dichotomy—'real' vs 'fiction'—it provides a different strategy for the analysis of social processes.

Fourthly, to present Bakhtin's 'chronotope'[8]—time-space—as a tool applicable to the analysis of hegemony and shifts in hegemony. Bakthin's famous concept breaks with the pre-established duality between time and space, and acknowledges the fundamental spatiality of time—and viceversa. Through the idea of the chronotope, we may isolate unified frameworks of time-space that perpetuate or subvert power and class relations.

Fifthly, to propose a method to analyse hegemonisation processes—in secondary or primary worlds—through a spatial perspective by means of two practical examples from *ASoIaF*—Chapters 4 and 6. These chapters will provide practical examples of the

[8] See "FTCN" (1981).

previously mentioned unified methodological approach at work, and will serve as proof of validity of such an approach.

Sixthly, to outline the way processes of hegemonisation and domination may work in colonial contexts through the example of the colonial times in the fictional continent of Westeros. Spaces under colonisation or colonised spaces constitute particular spaces with specific spatial articulations that share some common traits as well as different colonisation, decolonisation or assimilation strategies.

Lastly, to open possible future lines of research which will be outlined by the end of this thesis.

Justification of corpus

The corpus of works analysed in this thesis will be comprised by the ones listed in the abbreviations, that is, all the books from the *ASoIaF* saga plus *The World of Ice and Fire*, which expands the history of the secondary world created by George R. R. Martin.

The choice of this saga had different motivations; on the one hand, there is a need to expand the niche of academic research in fantasy works beyond J. R. R. Tolkien, which currently takes up a huge portion of it. The reason why George R. R. Martin's work and no other was chosen to do so was the quality and meticulousness of the secondary world he created, which shows a great social, cultural, political—and even geographical—lucidity and complexity.[9] The trope of power—how it is achieved and lost, how it is distributed, what it means, the changes it poses for social life and spatial practices—is present throughout the whole saga, which, combined with an impressively detailed mapping—see appendices—and worldbuilding labour, make Martin's work a perfect candidate for the analysis of hegemonic relations and spatial articulations. Every social change, every shift in power, every moral code is appropriately unfolded in space, and modifies it to the extent that it is modified by it, as we will see throughout the pages of this study.

[9] See article by Thomas Gressey-Jones et al. "Narrative Structure of A Song of Ice and Fire Creates a Fictional World with Realistic Measures of Social Complexity" (2020).

On the other hand, Martin's work is often compared to Tolkien's as both a legacy and a subversion of the British author's work[10]—sometimes positively, sometimes dismissively—which grants him the position of a great modern fantasy fiction classic worth studying as a creation that is profoundly in touch with contemporary world society, just like Tolkien's was—and, in some ways, still is—in his time.

Finally, there is a need to recall the issue of the inversely proportional relation between artistic value and commercial success that dominates perception in a considerable sector of scholarship and in society in general, which was argued in a previous quote by Mendlesohn and James (2012: 3).

The choice of corpus for analysis is also influenced by a need to break with this conception that, far from adding, it waives many great opportunities for interesting studies. In fact, several contemporary popular creations—literary or otherwise—have shaped the worldview of entire generations—Harry Potter, TV shows like Doctor Who, videogame sagas such as Zelda or Castlevania, popular films such as Ghibli's—and it would be a great loss if we were to dismiss their socio-cultural relevance and their artistic qualities due to prejudices regarding commercial success.

State-of-the-art

There is not an abundance of specific research regarding George R. R. Martin's work, and many studies revolve around the TV adaptation rather than the literary saga. Among these, we may find books regarding gender studies such as the collection *Vying for the Iron Throne: Essays on Power, Gender, Death and Performance in HBO's Game of Thrones* (Mantoan and Brady 2018), or Ken Mondschein's *Game of Thrones and the Medieval Art of War* (2017), more centered on the historical aspect of the show. With regards to the literary saga, there exists the collection of essays titled *Mastering the Game of Thrones: Essays on George R. R. Martin's A Song of Ice and Fire* (Battis and Johnston 2014), in which we can find Michail Zontos' essay "Dividing Lines: Frederick Jackson Turner's Western Frontier and George R. R. Martin's Northern Wall". This

[10] See introduction to Joseph Rex Young's *George R. R. Martin and the Fantasy Form* (2019).

essay deals with the space of the Ice Wall of Westeros in the light of Turner's frontier theory,[11] which will also be mentioned—although briefly—through this study.

Another interesting addition to specific studies regarding *ASoIaF* could be the collection *Beyond the Wall: Exploring George R. R. Martin's A Song of Ice and Fire* (2012) edited by James Lowder. Here we encounter essays that deal with historical references in Martin's literature such as Adam Whitehead's "An Unreliable World: History and Timekeeping in Westeros" (2012), aesthetically based studies like Linda Antonsson and Elio M. Garcia's "The Palace of Love, the Palace of Sorrow: Romanticism in A Song of Ice and Fire" (2012), a study on otherness with Brent Hartinger's "A Different Kind of Other: The Role of Freaks and Outcasts in A Song of Ice and Fire" (2012), or a gender based essay by Caroline Spector with the title of "Power and Feminism in Westeros" (2012) among many others.

ASoIaF has also been widely acclaimed by critics as being heavily influenced by history and as fairly subversive of the genre: "On the level of narrative strategy, Martin employs historical and literary allusions and resonances, along with a deceptively open use of genre conventions […]. This narrative strategy also results in texts that are ripe for multiple interpretations […]" (Lowder 2012: xvi-xvii). With regards to individual books, there are plenty of them that deal with the medieval aspect of the saga. Among these, we may highlight Shiloh Carrol's *Medievalism in A Song of Ice and Fire and Game of Thrones* (2018) or Carol Parrish Jamison's *Chivalry in Westeros: The Knightly Code of A Song of Ice and Fire* (2018), which strongly aligns with Charles H. Hackney's "'Silk ribbons tied around a sword': Knighthood and the Chivalric Virtues in Westeros" (2014). In this same line, although not so focused on the literary saga but on the TV show, we find Brian A. Pavlac's collection of essays *Game of Thrones versus History: Written in Blood* (2017).

We also find some research books around the *ASoIaF* universe which provide a perspective exclusively centered in gender. Zita Eva Rohr and Lisa Benz's *Queenship and the Women of Westeros: Female Agency and Advice in Game of Thrones and A Song of Ice and Fire* (2020), Anne Gjelsvik and Rikke Schubart's *Women of Ice and Fire: Gender, Game of Thrones and Multiple Media Engagements* (2016) are two examples.

[11] Frederick Jackson Turner: "The Significance of the Frontier in American History" (1893).

In addition to the previous two lines of research, the study of subalternity and otherness is also present. We may mention, besides the already referred essay on outcasts by Brent Hartinger, Ghita Mesbah's journal article "Orientalism in George R. R. Martin's A Song of Ice and Fire: Daenerys the White Savior" (2020), or Nada Elnahla's "The Other Beyond the Wall: A Post-colonial Reading of George R. R. Martin's *A Song of Ice and Fire* and HBO's *Game of Thrones*" (2016).

It becomes fairly apparent, then, that currently there are three main lines of research that more or less dominate the academic world regarding George R. R. Martin's work, and which do not simply deal with the subversive quality it has in the modern fantasy genre in contrast to Tolkien. These are: the historical—particularly medieval—approach, the gender approach, and the racial subaltern—particularly postcolonial—approach. The historical approach is fairly popular given the patent echoes from medieval England—even in the mapping of Westeros[12]—as well as the complex social and political circumstances that find their roots in primary world history. The proliferation of the gender approach is probably due to the different—not necessarily better or worse—treatment *ASoIaF* gives to constructs such as femininity, masculinity, sexuality, queerness etc. The postcolonial perspective is due to the inherently diverse universe we find in Martin's secondary world that gives rise to many different kinds of issues of subalternity and race.

However, these works do not deal with the specific subject of this thesis. It is true that perspectives of subalternity, postcolonialism and otherness are going to be present through the study, but in terms of specific bibliography there is barely anything that actually matches the field of Gramscian hegemony and/or spatial theory in relation to *ASoIaF*. One of these might be Rainer Emig's article "Fantasy as Politics: George R. R. Martin's A Song of Ice and Fire" (2014), which deals with power relations in the Martinverse, although not specifically conceptualised as hegemonic processes. Power is studied as a more generic construct, mostly through a moral standpoint, notwithstanding its academic interest.

Carmen-Elena Dorobat and Matthew McCaffrey's "We Do Not Sow: The Economics and Politics of A Song of Ice and Fire" (2015) provides an economic perspective and analyses the foundations of the state in Martin's secondary world, as

[12] See appendix G.

well as the perpetuation, shifting and generation of power relations that comes with the control of the treasury; essentially a study on the economic aspect that influences the creation and the unfolding of hegemonic networks, politics, coercion, consensus, domination etc., which even though is not the main scope of this thesis, bears a strong connection to it.

It is also worth to mention a brilliant 2020 journal article titled "Narrative Structure of *A Song of Ice and Fire* Creates a Fictional World with Realistic Measures of Social Complexity" which uses network science and data analytics to show how *ASoIaF* presents greatly consistent real-world social networks as well as primary-world-like power shifts resulting from solid events with time-space relations comparable to those of the real world, along with the high plausibility of character interactions (Gessey-Jones et al.: 28582).

With regards to the spatial aspect, the worldbuilding of Martin's secondary world is something that is present or mentioned in several academic works, even though it is hard to find one fully dedicated to it. Among these, we may highlight Weronika Łaszkiewicz's essay "Analyzing Postmodern Aspects of Medieval Fantasy Fiction: A Song of Ice and Fire by George R. R. Martin" (2019), which places the saga into a postmodern framework in spite of its medieval ambiance—hence reasserting the validity of the tools applied through this thesis, especially those from Derrida or Laclau—and deals with narrative and worldbuilding aspects. It is also worth to include here Mary Kate Hurley's essay "'Scars of History': *Game of Thrones* and American Origin Stories" (2016), where she writes that "*A Song of Ice and Fire* succeeds as an exercise in world-building because it creates a compeling illusion: that of a fictional realm that has a realistic sense of historical depth" (147). Some of them also analyse specific spaces from Martin's secondary world, such as Diana Marques' "The Haunted Forest of *A Song of Ice and Fire*: a space of otherness" (2016), which deals with the trope of the medieval forest as a separate space from the 'civilised' that embodies chaos and the supernatural. This separation between the 'natural' and the 'civilised' is key in ecocritical, geocritical and spatial studies, and it also affects hegemonic narratives insofar as the conception of nature as a resource, a means of production, a leisure space, a wild, uncanny space etc. directly shapes the way the state is articulated, as well as the counter-hegemonic narratives that may arise—e.g. if a state conceives the forest as a

resource for game and timber, and a counter-hegemonic movement arises which proposes an alternative value for it due to a biocentric set of morals.

However, there is an emergent tendency towards the spatial analysis of Martin's work coming from prospective young scholars which can be found outside the formal and consolidated academia, especially in degree or MA projects. Even if their validity in the academy is not yet fully established, it is worth to quote at least a couple of them who have published texts in their universities' archives in order to expose the arising pattern. For example, Jaru Hirsso wrote the dissertation "Style and World-Building in *A Song of Ice and Fire*" (2015) which explores the worldbuilding aspect of Martin's work through language and narrative style. Lucia Sladiková wrote "Reality in George R. R. Martin's *A Song of Ice and Fire*" (2015), where in order to prove the primary world's influence in Martin's secondary world she focuses on some spatial aspects such as the territory or the walls. On the other hand, Sean Maryl analyses architectural space through the scope of Focault's idea of heterotopias in "Game of Thrones: A Critical Heterotopic Reading of Architectural Space" (2015).

The previously mentioned works and tendencies constitute the main state-of-the-art with regards to *ASoIaF* in the academia. As it is noticeable, the niche is starting to get filled with research coming from different scopes—especially historical, gender and postcolonial/subaltern, as stated before—but there is a growing tendency towards the analysis of different spatial aspects of Martin's work. While all the perspectives mentioned intertwine with space, as said issues necessarily articulate it and are articulated by it—how is postcolonial space? How are traditionally male and female spaces distributed? How does the articulation of space change through history?—academic research is timidly becoming increasingly explicitly aware of the spatial aspect in George R. R. Martin's work.

Methodological clarifications

- 'Theoretical-methodological framework: spatial theory and hegemony':

The theoretical-methodological framework of this thesis will develop the theoretical tools upon which the whole study will rest, but it will also provide a critical analysis of said tools, as well as an explanation on how spatial articulations and hegemony converge and how we may apply this convergence practically. Because of this, the theoretical-methodological framework should be regarded as an integral part of this study, not as a background theoretical corpus that sustains the analysis; the theoretical-methodological framework is part of the analysis, and also works towards the objectives listed above, specifically by proposing a unified methodology between spatial and hegemony studies.

- The applicability of some of the theoretical concepts to the context of *ASoIaF*:

It is important to make clear that most of the critical sources dealing with concepts such as 'hegemony' or 'subalternity' used in this thesis were intended as tools to better understand the capitalist world and the power struggles and dynamics given within it. While George R. R. Martin's secondary world is essentially feudal, many of the mechanisms given to us by authors such as Gramsci, Poulantzas, Massey or Laclau to better understand capitalist hegemony and otherness are definitely applicable to the world of ice and fire.[13] In fact, we could take into account works such as Dan Hassler-Forest's "Worlds and Politics" (2018), which includes a section titled: "Game of Thrones as Fantastical Capitalism" in which he explores business, economics and ethics in the Martinverse, arguing that some social configurations as well as individual characters share neoliberal traits that embrace capitalist ways.

Of course, although some tools are universal and work very well as means of understanding power relations, some others are fairly specific to a contemporary capitalist context; for example, the idea of 'projective integration' as defined—and also coined—by Antke Engel's in the essay "Tender Tensions – Antagonistic Struggles – Becoming Bird: Queer Political Interventions into Neoliberal Hegemony" (2011):

[13] Another way to refer to Martin's secondary world.

> A decisive moment of neoliberal cultural politics is a mechanism of integrating social differences, which I have recently termed 'projective integration' (Engel 2007b, 2009). This is a process that makes use of visual imagery and that coins difference as cultural capital. [...] Projective integration fulfils a double function: normalized subjects can project their desire onto images of difference, while dissident or marginalized subjects enjoy inhabiting an avant-garde position. (74)

In the feudal context of Martin's secondary world, projective integration is usually not a solution unless we deal with a political project that may be presented as desirable for several parties, in which case different projects could be integrated within one all-encompassing hegemonic project, as we will see in the section of the analysis regarding Robert's Rebellion, or the War of the Five Kings. If the differing voices are culturally or racially different, the feudal context of Martin's world will generally punish them by relegating them to the margins of the main hegemonic project, or rejecting them altogether depending on the degree of socio-cultural difference—it is not the same to deal with the region of Dorne, which is hegemonically contained within the Steven Kingdoms in spite of the queerness with which it is represented, or about the Free Folk Tribes living beyond the Ice Wall—making little to no attempt for assimilation or integration.

With regards to hegemony, Gramscian concepts such as 'collective will', 'floating/empty signifiers' or 'consensus' are completely applicable in Martin's world, although they may not work in the same way they would in a capitalist context. For example, marriage and the joining of different ruling houses is a key hegemonising tool in the world of ice and fire which may not be as important in the capitalist world. This is because in Martin's universe each ruling house generates a strong brand of identity that usually conveys a stark religious, cultural and traditional feeling among the people, and the joining of two of them is also the joining of two different identities; it is the first step towards the fusion of two political and cultural projects, and thus a generator of consensus and collective will among the population.

The purpose of this clarification is no other than to make the reader aware of the applicability of these ideas to the feudal context of Martin's world, even if in some cases some adaptation might be needed. The aim is not to unfairly use a modern lens to criticise a feudal context, but to analyse and understand the power mechanisms given in

a contemporary work of fantasy that is strongly in touch with the primary world, regardless of its feudal ambiance.

- 'Space and place: two concepts with different implications for hegemony':

Although the conceptual differentiation between the concepts of 'space' and 'place' will not play a major role in the analysis, it has been included in the theoretical-methodological framework because it does add a very interesting approach to how hegemonic movements may articulate in space depending on how they are perceived or experienced. Likewise, it is a part of spatial studies which cannot be ignored in a study such as this one, and its implications for hegemonisation processes and social life in general are many and varied, as the subjective experience of space directly influences them.

Methodological precedents

The main methodological precedents upon which this work will build could be divided into two main groups: on the one hand, the theoretical corpus regarding the concept of hegemony—in which scholars such as Gramsci, Laclau or Massey are included—and on the other, the body of academic literature regarding spatial theory, which in many cases converges with the idea of hegemony—Massey, Lefebvre, Laclau, Certeau or Westphal are some of the main scholars used here.

To be more specific, we could mention Lefebvre's *The Production of Space* (1991), which proposes the Spatial Triad developed further in this thesis and which will constitute a main tool for the analysis of spatial articulations. On the other hand, Bertrand Westphal's *RFS* discusses the impact of fictional spaces on reality and viceversa, as well as the Spatial Turn that has been taking place since the end of the 20th century. To this, we can add Doreen Massey's *For Space* (2005), which deals with space as something changeable and political; something which affects and is affected by social life, and forms an integral part of the substrate of power relations.

Bakhtin's idea of the chronotope is also instrumental in spatial studies mainly through his well-known essay "FTCN" translated by Caryl Emerson and edited by

Michael Holquist in 1981—originally from 1937. Here he develops the idea of the 'chronotope'—time-space—fundamental for this thesis.

With regards to the concept of hegemony, it would be interesting to mention some marxist, post-marxist and/or gramscian scholars who have sowed the terrain for pieces of research such as this one. Among these, we have Nico Poulantzas with *State, Power, Socialism* (1978), where the class fight and capitalism's mechanisms are linked directly to the concept of spatial articulations, and space is understood as an integral and indivisible part of social life and power relations. In *Emancipations* (1996),[14] Ernesto Laclau echoes Gramsci and brings the idea of 'consensus'—which Gramsci regards as central to the generation of hegemony—to the field of poststructuralism, where he writes about 'empty/floating signifiers' such as 'consensus' or 'social order'. These can be charged with different meanings, always linked to the hegemonic or counter-hegemonic project that proposes its particularisms as 'solutions' for these concepts. Of course, we should not forget Gramsci's two main sets of writings from which these ideas come: the *Pre-Prison Writings* collected by Richard Bellamy and translated by Virginia Cox in 1994, and the *Prison Notebooks* written while he was imprisoned by the Italian fascist regime between 1929 and 1935. All of these works act as precedents within the field of studies of hegemony and/or their relevance in spatial articulations. Some of them have even played a central role in the emergence of highly spatially-centered areas of study such as geocriticism or ecocriticism—e.g., Westphal's *RFS*.

It is also important to mention that there exist several specific precedents in the analysis of spatial articulations of different phenomena. For example, in the field of sociology we find studies such as Haase and Pratschke's one funded by the National Development Area of the Republic of Ireland *Deprivation and its Spatial Articulation in the Republic of Ireland* (2004), where they analyse the spatial articulation of poverty and scarcity in the Republic of Ireland, or Doering, Silver and Taylor's "The Spatial Articulation of Urban Political Cleavages" (2020), where they provide an insight on the articulation of political ideologies in space.

In the field of political science, we have Chris Collinge's "Spatial Articulation of the State: Reworking Social Relations and Social Regulatory Theory" (1996), where he adopts a perspective that defends the proposition of an analysis of the concept of state in

[14] In this thesis we deal with the 2007 edition.

which the spatial operates at the same level as the historical—challenging the overly historicist perspective of Marxist currents—and where, in fact, scholar Nico Poulantzas is frequently quoted—also, Collinge repeatedly refers to the spatial turn. In addition to Collinge, Efstathios T. Fakiolas' article "Space control and Global Hegemony" (2009) argues that space control is one of the main means to establish and ensure the perpetuation of hegemony.

In cultural studies, we can find the collection of essays *Religion, Place and Modernity: Spatial articulations in Southeast Asia and East Asia* (2021), edited by Andrea Lauser and Michael Dickhardt. This compilation focuses on how religion and modernity articulate—and sometimes contrast—in space in different Asian contexts.

Another example that falls into the category of spatial articulations too, although more focused on racial issues, would be Shaka McGlotten, Dána-Ain Davis and Vanessa Agard-Jones' essay "Black Gender and Sexuality: Spatial Articulations".

We also find studies that explore spatial articulations from urbanism's perspective, emphasising the mechanisms of power and tradition that are fostered and reproduced through it. An example would be Xiao Hu's essay "Boundaries and Openings: Spatial Strategies in the Chinese Dwelling" (2008), which examines how the distribution of space in Chinese housing helps promote certain hierarchies and day-to-day functions which feed and perpetuate relations of power and tradition. As a second example within the field of urbanism, we could mention Silvia Bermúdez's essay titled "Santiago de Compostela and the Spatial Articulation of Power: From the Cathedral to the Cidade da Cultura" (2018).

In the field of literary fiction, though, no significant studies have been found in relation to the spatial articulations of power relations. Therefore, the novelty of this thesis lies, precisely, on providing the field of literary studies with an analysis of spatial articulations in relation to hegemony, an approach that has already been applied in different ways within other disciplines. Because time-space, societies, history and culture in modern fantasy works are prone to be fairly elaborated given the necessary worldbuilding labour, modern fantasy fictions based on secondary worlds of certain complexity are particularly susceptible for this type of analysis, as they give way to well-defined, rooted and complex recreations of spatial practices.

Structure

Although the main point of view of this work is a combination of the analysis of spatial articulations and hegemonic processes, different approaches will be explored under this same light. The structure of the study will be the following:

Chapter 1: will be constituted by a theoretical-methodological framework which will first set the context of the Spatial Turn, then outline the main critical references regarding the particular approach of this thesis, develop the critical tools that will be applied in the analysis, and finally combine the theory of hegemony and the theory of spatial articulations in a single, unified approach.

Chapter 2: will contain the analysis of the origins of the continent of Westeros—the main location in the world of *ASoIaF* that will be studied in this thesis—as well as the shifts in hegemony that took place through the centuries in the different colonial processes of said continent.

Chapter 3: will explore the main dichotomy between the 'within walls' and the 'outside walls' chronotopes in *ASoIaF*, as well as the implications of these two chronotopical frameworks in hegemonic relations.

Chapter 4: will study the alternative hegemonisation process that took place in the capital city of King's Landing, the region of the Riverlands and the region of the Crownlands due the ruling class' failure to keep hegemony through consensus and collective will.

Chapter 5: will analyse the hegemonic networks in the kingdom of the North, in the ice Wall that separates it from the lands beyond, and in the lands beyond the Wall.

Chapter 6: will study the alternative hegemonisation process that took place in the lands beyond the Wall due to the subaltern status of the inhabitants of these lands.

Conclusions: will contain the conclusions in relation to the proposed objectives.

Works Cited: will contain all the works cited in this thesis.

Appendices: will contain all the appendices referred in this thesis.

This structure is designed to help fulfil the previously formulated objectives in the following way:

Chapter 1 will address the way hegemony and space converge through the establishment of the framework of the Spatial Turn, which brings space to the foreground and establishes it as both a pre-condition and an effect of social life and, thus, of hegemonic relations. This will address the general, overarching aim of showing the plausibility of a combined methodological approach between the analysis of hegemonies and spatial articulations at its core, and it will then be reasserted through the practical examples given in the next chapters.

Chapter 1 will also address the convergence between discourses that we perceive as 'real' or 'fictional' and the inherent fluidity among them, which will work towards the stated aim of demonstrating the worthiness of the fantasy genre in academic research, that could help us understand social life in a different light.

Chapter 2 will discuss the different shifts in hegemony given in Westeros throughout the centuries along different colonial processes, as well as how each one of them is socially and spatially unfolded depending on the socio-cultural traits of each coloniser and colonised group. This focus on the listed aim regarding how processes of hegemonisation and domination may work in colonial contexts.

Chapter 3 will address the objective of presenting Bakhtin's 'chronotope' as a tool applicable to the analysis of hegemonic relations by showing how perceptions of time-space affect power relations and giving some practical examples.

Chapter 4 and 6 will analyse two different hegemonisation processes—that is, a counter-hegemonic narrative that becomes hegemonic, moving from the background of social life and spatial practice to their foreground—through the theory of hegemony in relation to the spatial articulations given both as a result and as a condition for these processes. These chapters propose practical applications for this unified methodological approach between spatial theory and the theory of hegemony, namely, an application aimed towards the analysis of dissenting social narratives and their articulations.

Chapter 5 will address the stated objective of demonstrating the plausibility and social utility of the analysis of hegemony and spatial articulations in a fantastic secondary world by outlining the main hegemonic relations given in the North, and the

different ways in which this hegemony is held and/or applied depending on spatial articulations. This provides a distance towards the primary world, and is perfectly applicable in 'real' processes so as to better understand conflict, peace, politics, geo-politics, means of production etc. and the spatial articulations they give way to.

In short, Chapter 1 will address the general aims of this work, while the rest will provide specific practical examples that will work towards the more specific aims, and towards the consolidation of the hegemony-spatial approach.

Chapter 1

Theoretical-methodological Framework:

A context for spatial theory and the theory of hegemony

The main purpose of the following sections is to establish a justified framework for the analysis of the spatial articulations of hegemonies in George R. R. Martin's secondary world, as well as to outline some of the theoretical-methodological tools that will be used through this thesis. There is a need both to set a context and to clarify why and how it is so utterly relevant these days to treat space as a primary approach for analysis that is horizontal and transversal to every cultural production, just as those of gender or race. In order to do this, we will start with an overview of the unfolding process of the Spatial Turn and some of its major critical contributors, followed by a summary of Bakhtin's key concept of 'chronotope', a review of the concept of hegemony with a focus on its spatial aspects, an analysis of the fluid and changeable dichotomy between the concepts of 'space' and 'place' and their hegemonic implications, and finally an assessment of the long-neglected social and cultural relevance of fictional spaces.

1.1. From the modernist historicist and temporal worldview to the Spatial Turn

In his preface to Bertrand Westphal's *RFS* Robert T. Tally Jr. highlights a core idea for Postmodernism; that is, that after the Second World War, with the emerging postmodern aesthetic sensibility and the consolidation of poststructuralist views, began a Spatial Turn. While the 19th and the early 20th centuries were mainly characterised by an extended faith in totalising narratives based on binary oppositions, the enshrinement of the temporal dimension and a belief in the rational unfolding of history, from the 20th century on, with the development of new communication technologies, the influence of the recession of colonialism, and the crushing effects of two World Wars as well as the emersion of an increasingly globalised context, space gained a new relevance as it drifted from the margins of critical debate to the very core of it (ix).

While it is true that postmodern sensibility is invariably linked to a crisis of grand-narratives and social and linguistic structures—Poststructuralism—this does not

mean that history is blindly rejected on behalf of a senseless collage of juxtaposed spatial images with no meaningful depth. It does mean, however, that due to the reasons mentioned in the previous paragraph along with some events that took place during the course of the 20th century such as World War II—which we will mention in the following paragraphs—the illusion of a history composed of structured social and cultural changes could no longer be maintained. There was a sudden, profound, and widespread realisation that society, culture and history were too chaotic, and their generalising interpretations too biased or ideologically compromised to be truthful. There were too many, and too diverse factors at play on each historical, social or cultural element to be able to properly shelter them under the umbrella of systematic structures. This, of course, resulted on the fragmentation of great narratives that is frequently associated with Postmodernity, and which has been fervently criticised by scholars who regard it as a threat to the unity and effectiveness of great social struggles such as Néstor Kohan, who in his book *Nuestro Marx* (2013) writes:

> [...] Contemporary postmodernism will approach a notion (f) which might be summarised as: There are no facts, nor truth, only interpretations and flat and equidistant cultural contexts. This formulation, so characteristic from Postmodernism's nihilist relativism, nourishes from Friedrich Nietzsche's thought, who acknowledged no truth; the only things that exist are perspectives from interpretations (which struggle against each other and are intertwined by the will of power). Making a political balance of these nihilist and postmodern stances where everything evaporates and all aspiration for truth dissolves (hence all possibility for criticism), Terry Eagleton concludes: 'It comes as no surprise that most of those who are currently indifferent to the idea of truth do not have a pressing political need for it"[15] [16] (49)

While this criticism is understandable, we may also argue that the bet in favour of micro-narratives is actually a transitional stage; a necessary step in order to voice the

[15] Terry Eagleton in "Acerca de Decir la Verdad" (2007) collected in *Diciendo La Verdad* (2007) edited by Leo Panitch and Colin Leys, page 314.

[16] Translation to English is mine. Spanish original here: "[...] el posmodernismo contemporáneo terminará acercándose a una noción (f) que podría sintetizarse: 'No hay hechos, ni hay verdad, sólo hay interpretaciones y contextos culturales aplanados y equidistantes'. Esta formulación, tan característica del relativismo nihilista del postmodernismo, se nutre del pensamiento de Friedrich Nietzsche, quien afirmaba que no hay verdad, lo único que hay son sólo perspectivas de interpretaciones (que están en lucha entre sí y entrecruzadas por la voluntad de poder). Haciendo un balance político de estas posiciones nihilistas y posmodernas donde se evapora y se disuelve toda pretensión de verdad (y por lo tanto, toda posibilidad de crítica), concluye Terry Eagleton: 'No sorprende que la mayoría de los que en la actualidad son indiferentes a la idea de verdad no tengan una necesidad política apremiante de ella.' (49)

particular narratives that have been relegated or even removed altogether by generalising discourses. One can theoretically claim that a grand fight with clear political goals such as the anti-capitalist struggle encompasses the ecologist, feminist, racial etc. struggles—which, in theory, may be true—but without specific attention to particular contexts, and to the concrete capitalist practices that affect and perpetuate each of those, we could not possibly strive to gather a diverse society immersed in the midst of an eye-opening process under the banner of one unified, intellectual and pragmatic struggle against the main oppressing system that is patriarchal capitalism.[17] There is a need for deconstruction first, a need to elaborate on micro-narratives that groups which suffer specific kinds of oppression can relate to, of course without losing sight of the fact that ultimately all of these converge into one great system of oppression, but also without falling into the somewhat naive assumption that a totalising accumulative historical discourse in the metaphorical form of a closed fist bound to crush capitalism is feasible in an era characterised by hyper-connectedness and hyper-information; a time when people are starting to identify the specific power systems that discriminate them for belonging to different minorities. In a sense, it is as if we had been operating an intricately complex machine without fully understanding either its inner mechanisms, or the inherently diverse and non-essentialist nature of truth that often leads to generalising interpretations of socio-cultural phenomena which, in turn, lead to greater oppression. Postmodernism provides a scope for this break with grand-narratives.

Therefore, when we talk about the Spatial Turn, we are in fact talking about something more that the increased relevance of the spatial;[18] we are talking about the crisis and fragmentation of linear, ever-advancing, and artificially rationalised historical discourses and grand-narratives into a horizontal sea of micro-narratives that operate simultaneously in history and space, a metaphor for the predominant worldview in the

[17] The main oppressing system is patriarchal capitalism. It is capitalism because of its global nature that affects all social life due to its profit-based system which give enormous worldwide power to private companies, applying a variety of methods that concentrate riches in certain countries while exploiting cheap-labour force by outsourcing production and inflating prices, thus profiting from keeping a wide gap between the rich and the proletariat—both in a local and global scale—and enhancing unbalance whilst taking away the individual's economic independence, who is forced to sell his/her labour for a salary. See *Marx's Capital* (1867), volume I, chapter 25: "The General Law of Capitalist Accumulation", pages 434 to 506, first English edition from 1887. It is patriarchal because of its structure based on consumer family units which favour the hetero-normative nuclear family in order to maintain the sexual division of labour and reproductive roles. See Zillah R. Eisestein's discussion around the sexual division of labour in *Capitalist Patriarchy and the Case for Socialist Feminism* (1979: 11-18).

[18] This is more an effect of the huge phenomenon of Postmodernity rather than the origin of it.

current era of juxtaposed systems that are not necessarily understandable by the sheer, orderly assessment of historical structures, but by the cautious horizontal analysis of the threads that unite them and the specific micro-systems that give birth to them, which in the postmodern era are laid out in a single, diverse and dynamic picture. This, of course, does not mean devoid of meaning, but rich and varied, for in the end that is how social life, and reality altogether, is: a constant, changeable spatio-temporal picture were many systems are operating and influencing each other at the same time. This is accurately synthesised by Doreen Massey in *For Space* (2005): "It is what I am calling space as the dimension of multiple trajectories, a simultaneity of stories-so-far. Space as the dimension of a multiplicity of durations" (24).

In conclusion, we could say that a more historicist perspective was inevitable prior to the development of superfast communication technologies and the much-improved sharing of information, for grand, filtered history was what reached people's ears. However, in an increasingly planetary frame of reference where uncountable interpretations, records, cultural products etc. of the past are as accessible as present ones and equally affect social life and spatial organisation, we can no longer pretend that grand-history and macro-narratives hold the sway they held before—not in the same way at least.

On the other hand, the faltering of the idea of 'depth' as an artificially constructed concept inherently associated to a kind of abstract, almost mystic, stratified meaning over time as a measure of the worthiness of things, has undoubtedly provided the perfect soil for the Spatial Turn to happen, for in this context that favours the vast horizontal extension of social life, space and location cannot help but be intertwined with all its layers, rather than take the role of a fixed scene passively changed by historical action; space matters, and it is physically articulated according to social interactions, practices and hegemonic relations. Similarly, in this current framework it is no longer sustainable to simply presuppose that history is empirical and follows some sort of intrinsic nature in which one could trace cyclic transformations without running into any kind of inconsistency or disruption. This smooth and untroubled assessment of history is only possible if we confine ourselves to hegemonic historical narratives which intend to launder discontinuities on behalf of an illusion of clean and logical transitions with no steps backwards. In his 1978 book *State, Power, Socialism*, Greek Marxist theorist Nico Poulantzas explains:

> From the growth of towns through communications, transport and military apparatuses and strategy, to the emergence of borders, limits and territory, we are dealing with so many mechanisms of organizing social space. Now, the attempt to trace the history and transformations of these mechanisms always runs up against the same problem: the historical changes which they undergo are not variations of an intrinsic nature, for these mechanisms have not such nature. Discontinuity is here of decisive significance. Towns, frontiers and territory do not all possess a single reality and meaning in both capitalism and pre-capitalist modes of production. And even if we manage to avoid the snare of that linear and empirical historiography which seeks to unfold the development of towns, frontiers and territory at a level of their own, we must still face the task of explaining discontinuities. (99-100)

Due to this increased critical awareness of the dangers of an essentialist perspective towards history and the spatial organisations it purportedly gives birth to, it was unavoidable that we would begin shifting from a traditional understanding of a space inevitably, almost tragically bound to the patterned and relentless unfolding of history, to a framework where space and time are understood as mingling dimensions forming the foundations of social life, and are therefore regarded together, not separately.

In *Postmodern Geographies: the Reassertion of Space in Critical Social Theory* (1989), American geographer Edward W. Soja echoes Poulantzas' core reasoning, and argues against the conception of geography as a mere reflective mirror, challenging purely historicist perspectives which ignore its deeper relevance. According to Soja, critical social theory has had to fight a long way against somewhat hollow practices that mystify change in the world in the sense that they attribute it to some specific factor which holds a sort of mystic power over any other thing. Among these we have Positivism, which only acknowledges the immediate truth gained through sensorial experience, Naturalism, which holds change accountable purely to natural laws, or religious beliefs that provide a rather essentialist insight based on the claimed existence of a generic or core human nature. He believes that, by having to constantly defend itself against these sorts of claims in favour of the influence of historical and social factors, critical social theory has placed exaggerated emphasis on historicist perspectives (14-15). It is because of this that he feels compelled to add a new definition for historicism that would acknowledge both its relevance and its limitations:

> I wish to give an additional twist to these options by defining historicism as the overdeveloped historical contextualization of social life and social theory that actively submerges and peripherializes the geographical or spatial imagination. This definition does not deny the extraordinary power and importance of historiography as a mode of emancipatory insight, but identifies historicism with the creation of a critical silence, an implicit subordination of space to time that obscures geographical interpretations of the changeability of the social world and intrudes upon every level of theoretical discourse, from the most abstract ontological concept of being to the most detailed explanations of empirical events. (15)

This is precisely why many Western social theorists have set time and history at the core of their analysis whilst disregarding the relevance of the material and spatial. Coming back to Poulantzas, he also problematises the somehow simplistic assumption made by earlier Marxist theorists that space and geography are strictly temporal and ideological, and its transformations therefore tied to the representations given by society and its classes to the spatiotemporal dimensions at each historical moment (98). He writes:

> In reality, however, transformations of the spatio-temporal matrices refer to the materiality of the social division of labour, of the structure of the State, and of the practices and techniques of capitalist economic, political and ideological power; they are the real substratum of mythical, religious, philosophical or 'experiential' representations of space and time. (98)

Instead of claiming a strict verticality in which time and history simply project themselves into a backdrop space below, he assumes spatiotemporal territory as a logical priority, the geographically located as a decisive, active agent on the unfolding of the capitalist—or any—system that represents both "presuppositions and embodiments of the relations of production" (119). This does not mean either that the spatial is the primal source from which social change stems, but that both the geographical and the temporal are matrices which form the core soil of social life and arise at the same time, indivisible and interwoven—we will later discuss the idea of the chronotope, or 'time-space', developed by Bakhtin in his 1937[19] essay "FTCN". Material space and time are understood as one single continuum, and as such, they form

[19] Translated by Caryl Emerson and edited by Michael Holquist in 1981. See Works Cited section for full reference.

the very substrate of State and power relations. According to Poulantzas: "Transformations of these matrices thus punctuate changes in the mode of production; and for this very reason, they are present in the material framework of the given State, structuring the modalities in which power is exercised" (99). Owing to this:

> ...the capitalist system has the peculiarity of reserving social space and time for itself: it intervenes in the erection of these matrices by tending to monopolize those procedures of space-time organization which are established through it as networks of domination and power. The modern nation appears as a product of the State, since its constitutive elements (economic unity, territory, tradition) are modified through the State's direct activity in the material organization of space and time. (99)

This inherent need for the capitalist State to monopolise social space-time hints at space's decisive role in social life, especially within capitalist states. Capitalism needs to dominate all the interwoven elements—means and relations of production, territory, culture, environment, interpersonal relations etc.—that compose social narratives in order to shape society in a way that suits aggressive production and liberal commerce.

In *Postmodern Geographies*, Soja makes a more generic claim about the spatial based on what Michel Foucault himself realised, and highlights how we need to deeply and critically rethink not only capitalist spatial dynamics, but also modern ontology and epistemology:

> Accompanying this call was another, more meta-theoretical project, a search for an appropriate ontological and epistemological location for spatiality, and 'active' place for space in a Western philosophical tradition that had rigidly separated time from space and intrinsically prioritized temporality to the point of expunging the ontological and epistemological significance of spatiality. Michel Foucault, an important contributor to this debate, recognized the philosophical invisibility of space relative to time [...]. His words are worth repeating: 'Space was treated as the dead, the fixed, the undialetical, the immobile. Time, on the contrary, was richness, fecundity, life, and dialectic.' To recover from this historicist devaluation, to make space visible again as a fundamental referent of social being, requires a major rethinking not only of the concreteness of capitalist spatial practices but also of the philosophizing abstractions of modern ontology and epistemology. (119-120)

This need to reconsider our understanding of time and space is now more apparent than ever after the Spatial Turn. With Soja, there were many other authors after the milestone of World War II who built on the realisation that space was being systematically set aside—such as Lefebvre, Foucault, de Certeau or Massey, all of whom will be referenced in the following pages. His study was, in fact, extensively based on Henri Lefebvre's ideas, who in *The Production of Space* (1991) claimed that the myth of a homogeneous and simplistic conception of the spatial was the result of sort of a 'phallic' division of power, which imposed the grand-narratives created by a plot of political, bureaucratic and economic powers upon the conceived abstract space; an institutional, profitable imposition of sorts. He wrote:

> We already know several things about abstract space. As a product of violence and war, it is political; instituted by a state, it is institutional. On first inspection it appears homogeneous; and indeed it serves those forces which make a *tabula rasa* of whatever stands in their way, of whatever threatens them – in short, of differences. These forces seem to grind down and crush everything before them, with space performing the function of a plane, a bulldozer or a tank. The notion of the instrumental homogeneity of space, however, is illusory - though empirical descriptions of space reinforce the illusion - because it uncritically takes the instrumental as given. (285)

The irreducibility of heterogeneous narratives however, is the chief driving factor of postmodern critical analysis. The cold, flattening gaze of hegemonic powers is becoming less and less able to straighten difference in order to suit the needs of revisionist[20] powers, and the instrumental illusion of homogeneity is fading as the grand pragmatism of the Euclidean conception of space[21] loses its footing. Lefebvre refers to Euclidean space as "defined by its isotopy[22]—or homogeneity—a property which guarantees its social and political unity" (285). He then goes on in the same page:

> The reduction to this homogeneous Euclidean space, first of nature's space, then of all social space, has conferred a redoubtable upon it. All the more so since that initial reduction leads easily to another—namely, the reduction of three-

[20] Revisionist here is used in its pejorative sense, namely when historical facts get distorted to fit the reality of a hegemonic power.
[21] Namely, the purely geometrical, representative, and mathematic formulation of bi and three-dimensional space developed by Euclid of Alexandria, which can be used to homogenise space by flattening difference.
[22] Isotopy as the repetition of a basic trait of meaning which endows the message with consistency and homogeneity.

> dimensional realities to two dimensions (for example a 'plan', a blank sheet of paper, something drawn on that paper, a map, or any kind of graphic representation or projection). (285)

What Lefebvre mentions here is greatly significant. Through his definition of the homogeneous Euclidean understanding of space, he is highlighting the crushing implications of the reduction of reality to its representation. Just like when we contemplate an urban or a natural landscape from a vantage point, the three-dimensional image shrinks into a two-dimensional one, and it resembles more a plan or a map, than an alive, dynamic, reality; a mountainous area becomes a strategic military location, a town is reduced to the representation of its areas suitable for construction for a real-estate company, an ecosystem becomes an available number of acres of good soil for sowing large states. The nature of social life, and of space itself, becomes representative, and it is that who represents who holds power over space.[23] It is the human gaze, the strictly visual and reductionist, what is effectively materialised on the physical environment. Therefore, "Finally, by assimilation, or perhaps by stimulation, all social life becomes the mere deciphering of messages by the eyes, the mere reading of texts. Any non-optical impression [...] is no longer anything more than a symbolic form of, or a transitional step towards, the visual" (286).

The tendency to rationalise is hardwired in the human brain, and when the observable landscape is composed of a too complex variety of elements—plus the changing itineraries or movements of these elements—the rationalisation of an almost infinite heterogeneity becomes too much for the human eye to bear, and thus we elaborate an oversimplified and superficial spatial vision. In reference to the human eye, Lefebvre adds:

> The eye, however, tends to relegate objects to the distance, to render them passive. That which is merely seen is reduced to an image - and to an icy coldness [...]. The rise of the visual realm entails a series of substitutions and displacements by means of which it overwhelms the whole body and usurps its role. That which is merely seen (and merely visible) is hard to see—but it is

[23] See the 1898 illustration of a French political cartoon called *En Chine. Le gâteau des Rois et... des Empereurs*—China. The cake of Kings and… of Emperors. This satire is a perfect illustration of the absolutely detached experience of space, where a continent is mercilessly simplified and reduced, not to its instrumental value in terms of resources, but merely to its worth as a prize, represented as a cake.

> spoken of more and more eloquently and written of more and more copiously. (286)

And it is even more significant when this substitution or 'passivisation' of the elements composing the landscape—meaning, the contemplated space—is carried out selectively, in order to bring out the wanted feature of the selected space with utilitarian purposes. By ignoring the heterogeneous and complex definitions of spaces and the bodies that inhabit those spaces, a ruling power might be able to foster biased and fictionalised spatial narratives depending on what suits its needs in a given historical moment.[24]

However, postmodern sensibility has allowed theorists and writers to revisit space in a different light. It is precisely the realisation of all the previously mentioned points what currently allows for a different interpretation of space, far from the eagle-eye-like vision predominant in most historical and cultural narratives which, even now, try to dismiss postmodern views as flat and devoid of that mystified intangible content that is 'depth'. We are now beginning to understand that space is irreducible, primal, and essential to social life. We strive for a narrower focus that may contribute, in time, to draw at least a more realistic picture of the heterogeneous micro-narratives forming physical and social space, as well as to define their effect on and difference with the human-imagined space. It is a time where the clear ideals of the Enlightenment hold no significant place; they are broken pillars, useful insofar as they help us understand how we came here. What Christine M. Battista and Robert T. Tally write in the introduction to *Ecocriticism and Geocriticism, Overlapping Territories in Environmental and Spatial Literary Studies* (2016) is representative of these ideas:

> The older sense of Enlightenment, with rationality conquering nature in the forms of modern science, leading irrevocably to the disenchantment of the world, seems to have tangled up in a complex skein of intersecting relations among nature, culture, and society. Under present circumstances in an age of globalization and of an increasingly planetary frame of reference, critical theory and practice has disclosed the inherently artificial and unsustainable means by which humans have sought to organize the real-and-imagined spaces of the world in pursuit of individual, social, and cultural development and progress. (2-3)

[24] Such is the case, for example, of frontier narratives in the North American colonial times that glorified the freedom of the New World and sought to encourage settlement—see writings by John Smith, Daniel Denton or John Lawson among many others.

That is, we have reached a moment of unprecedented critical awareness in which we have irrevocably noted the ineffectiveness of the generalising artificial constructs and socio-cultural organisations, the exhaustive critical—and rational—revision and the deconstruction of faulty old grand-narratives being absolutely necessary for the creation of a more inclusive and comprehensive future.

Additionally, we are dealing with a rupture in the time-space dichotomy on behalf of a more complex interconnection between the two. The passing of time is no longer intrinsically bound to the idea of progress, and progression is now understood as the uncertain, swirling sequence of events, which is no longer lineal. In *RFS,* Westphal highlights the powerful metaphor that dominated the understanding of time during the 19th century: "In the nineteenth century, time was compared to a tranquil, flowing river. To be sure, unfortunate events could disturb its course, but nothing could interrupt its flow" (9). And the flow of time was always advancing positively forward: "Progress and progression were virtually synonymous in the time of the Industrial Revolution" (9). In this framework, space was no more than the parameter where progress bound to time unfolded:

> Time contained progress, and time was enslaved to progress. Consequently, space became an empty container, merely a backdrop for time, through which the god Progress would reveal himself. And this scene was used to support the scenario that positivism (without much imagination) imagined: a space subjugated to the programmatic materiality of time. Space only mattered insofar as the "homogeneous flow" of time had to happen somewhere. (9-10)

However, along with the rise of telecommunications and the mastery of space through new means such as railways, the tendency to sacralise time began to dwindle, since a world that mastered space did not need to race against the clock to survey the globe. The world was already known and accessible for the most part, the prompt exploration of it was no longer a priority. Therefore, given the fact that space was somehow kept under control, and that the vastness of the world was no longer a crushing one, time had to be reformulated in order to suit Western institutionalised needs. Thus between 1883 and 1911, standardised time was established across the globe. The process began in North America due to the pressure of the American Railway Association, so as to make time more comprehensive, then it extended to European countries in 1890, and ended in

France in 1911 (10-11). The world was then divided in 15 time-zones, and a mastered and demystified time opened the way for an increasingly spatialised ontology.[25]

Nevertheless, Western standardised time was only one of the milestones that led space to be reconsidered in critical theory at a global scale. We have already mentioned that, according to Whestpal, "Progress and progression were virtually synonymous in the time of the Industrial Revolution" (9). This means that, when moving forward in the stream of time, it was a logical consequence that a positive technological, cultural, economical and social progression would take place too. Thus, despite the fact that in 1905 scientists such as Henri Poincaré, Hermann Minkowski or Albert Einstein published contributions that regarded time as a fourth spatial dimension of sorts instead of a separate one, this blow to its central position did not stir the perception of the masses (11).

> But for a new reading of time, and hence a different perception of space, there needed to occur an event powerful enough to engage all the people in the world, from Nobel Prize– winning physicists to anonymous citizens. This event, of course, was the Second World War. After that, in 1945, was it still possible, or even imaginable, to conflate chronological progression and the progress of mankind? If the gradual and progressive river of time led to Auschwitz, Mauthausen, Stutthof, or Jasenovac, sites of the abomination that drained the color off the map of Europe, or if that same river of time led to Hiroshima and Nagasaki and also to Dresden, where fire-bombing transformed a city into a lunar landscape, then it is better to dam the river entirely. The stream of time had allowed an unwelcome guest: perverse progress [...].
>
> At the end of the war, the two coordinates of the plane of existence were in crisis, and with them all that exists. Time was deprived of its structuring metaphor. Space, dangerously concentrated, got lost between the barbed wire of the camps and the rapid fire over the trenches. The straight line was dead. Decolonization shattered the legitimacy of entire organizations of the world, organizations that had been carefully developed over decades and centuries and had been supported by an entire system of morality. Time and space suffered irreparable harm, a chronic and topical disruption. (12)

[25] Here I find it necessary to clarify the fact that all these events such as the mastery of space through means of transport or the standardisation of time were carried out by imperialist powers all over the globe as a result of violent colonial practices. Nevertheless, their impact still had worldwide consequences which cannot be ignored.

And if the straight line had died, if time was no longer lineal and defined cycles did not exist, then space was, at least, no longer below time in significance as it used to be. The cataclysmic events of the two World Wars as well as the failure of colonies to impose a set of one-size-fits-all universal morals showed humankind that grand-narratives falter, and ultimately collapse, in the midst of a chaos and violence whose horror cannot be diluted in historicism, nor can millions of voices be drowned under a flattening and homogenising historical discourse. In the line of this, in *Spatiality* (2013) Robert T. Tally adds another decisive factor that contributed to the increasing consideration of the relevance of the spatial after the War, which is movement:

> If the metaphor of time as a smoothly flowing river and the evolutionary theory of history as progressively moving from barbarism towards civilization could not be maintained in the aftermath of concentration camps and atomic bombs, other real historical forces also helped shape the heightened attention to space in the postwar era. Certainly the massive movements of populations—exiles, émigrés, refugees, soldiers, administrators, entrepreneurs, and explorers—disclosed a hitherto unthinkable level of mobility in the world, and such movement emphasized geographical difference; that is, one's place could not simply be taken for granted any longer. The traveler, whether forced into exile or willingly engaged in tourism, cannot help but be more aware of the distinctiveness of a given place, and of the remarkable differences between places. (13)

After such a traumatic experience, it was the logical consequence that the world would stir, and that social, cultural and economic frontiers would not be able to remain unchanged and uncontested. The rise of movement and flow of population—mainly refugees—was the organic result of the traumatic experience of World War II. It was also the logical consequence that the increase in human movement would lead to the rise of a different understanding of space too, which was no longer static and definite, nor was it taken for granted. Therefore, even if the exact moment when the Spatial Turn—or the shift towards a more space-centred ontology—happened is impossible to establish, we can safely state that World War II, the rise of communication technologies—both material and immaterial—and the increase in the flow of people resulting from both the war and the improved means of transport, were chief driving factors that set the foundations of a more spatially centred critical theory.

To summarise, we may refer to a very interesting quote from Foucault's journal article "Of Other Spaces" translated into English in 1986—originally based on a conference from 1967 called "Des Espaces Autres":

> The great obsession of the nineteenth century was, as we know, history: with its themes of development and of suspension, of crisis, and cycle, themes of the ever-accumulating past, with its great preponderance of dead men and the menacing glaciation of the world. […] The present epoch will perhaps be above all the epoch of space. We are in the epoch of simultaneity: we are in the epoch of juxtaposition, the epoch of the near and far, of the side-by-side, of the dispersed. We are at a moment, I believe, when our experience of the world is less that of a long life developing through time than that of a network that connects points and intersects with its own skein. (22)

This is how the Spatial Turn started to take place—and is still taking place. As Foucault wrote, our current age is an age of juxtaposition, of simultaneity, of hyper-connection, and our experience of reality is more similar to a complex network of interrelations where both the past, the present and conceptions of the future are simultaneously active and find their articulation in social space—which is also much more concentrated and simultaneously accessible, physically or via representation, than in past centuries—than to an hourglass which leaves behind a mound of a seemingly rational, ever-accumulating past.

1.2. Bakhtin's chronotope

One of the most important contributions to the critical awareness of spatio-temporality in literary fiction was made by the well-known Russian scholar Mikhail Bakhtin. In his 1937 essay "FTCN", Bakhtin develops the concept of the chronotope—space-time, literally—which describes the intrinsic union of the temporal and the spatial dimensions that forms the substratum of both literature and social life. Bakhtin draws from Einstein's theory of relativity, which he uses as a metaphor that expresses the inseparability of space and time. The quote that most accurately summarises this idea in literature in the mentioned essay is the following:

> In the literary artistic chronotope, spatial and temporal indicators are fused into one carefully thought-out, concrete whole. Time, as it were, thickens, takes on flesh, becomes artistically visible; likewise, space becomes charged and responsive to the movements of time, plot and history. This intersection of axes and fusion of indicators characterizes the artistic chronotope. (84)

He underlines the fact that depictions of space and time change from one literary work to another, and that each genre in each historical epoch has its particular predominant chronotope. The first example he gives is that of the 'adventure-time' in Greek Romance. This refers to the kind of story that starts with two people meeting for the first time in a specific situation—usually a feast, a tournament or a celebration—instantly feeling a burning love and passion for one another, and then getting separated to live hundreds of adventures, fortunes and misfortunes in an overstretched temporal and spatial framework, only to be rejoined in exactly the same situation, feeling the same feelings as before, and with no psychological or emotional evolution whatsoever (89). We are thus presented with three main chronotopes in the story: the first, that is, when the lovers meet in the place of celebration and their love instantaneously builds-up; the last, when and where that love is consummated, and the adventure-time in the middle, which stretches in a sort of extra-temporal time—years, decades or even centuries without a relevant impact—and geography—usually across several countries—and contributes not to character development. In addition to this, one of Greek romance's chief traits is precisely its lack of cyclic time. In Bakhtin's words:

> No matter where one goes in the world of the Greek romance, there are absolutely no indications of historical time, no identifying traces of the era. [...]

> Thus all of the action in a Greek romance, all the events and adventures that fill it, constitute time-sequences that are neither historical, quotidian, biographical, nor even biological and maturational. [...] In this kind of time, nothing changes: the world remains as it was, the biographical life of the heroes does not change, their feelings do not change, people do not even age. This empty time leaves no traces anywhere, no indications of its passing. (91)

It is clear that if we compared a literary work such as this to, for example, James Joyce's *Ulysses* (1922), where all the action is concentrated and hyper-developed in one geographical space—Dublin—and on one single day—June 16th, 1904—through the technique of the stream of consciousness, or Anton Chekhov's realist plays which attempt to capture the naturalness and rawness of how people really speak and reflect about issues in their everyday contexts, we would be able to establish clearly different chronotopes, that is, different ways of literarily expressing space and time that may range from quotidian space-time to epic space-time.

In addition to being a defining trait of literary genres when analysed broadly, chronotopes can also be used to define different specific motifs within one literary work. In his essay, Bakhtin comments on the chronotope of 'the road' or 'open road', which is strongly associated with that of 'the meeting'. Simplified by Paul Smethurst in his book *The Postmodern Chronotope: Reading Space and Time in Contemporary Fiction* (2000):

> For example, the chronotope of the road in a Hardy novel often turns the space of the road into a place for meetings and a division between social groups, but it also transforms it into a duration, and Hardy often uses this temporal quality of the road to organise his plots. The literary chronotope allows the indicators of time and space to fuse into the road, which becomes a visible and concrete representation of that space-time. In modernist literature, the fusion of space and time in the novel's chronotope is sometimes designed to represent the experience of time passing as a 'thickened present'. In other modernist literature, chronotopes of particular places sometimes invoke other times, translating space and place into historical time, or the enduring time of nature. (68)

It is therefore clear that chronotopes can be used as artistic resources that enable the writer to thicken literary action by endowing spaces and places with specific kinds of

temporality. This leads us to the conclusion that chronotopes are an interesting point of analysis when studying the particular conceptions of time and space in different eras, for they are representative of culture. In fact, "Narrative art is always chronotopic, and the chronotope is always sensitive to larger cultural shifts" (70), and even if sometimes there is not a direct correlation between cultural forces operating in a certain time and the literary text, "the optic must take account of the filtering, refraction and inversion through which literature renders cultural systems" (70). That is, the person who analyses a chronotopic framework should be aware of the need to rethink and reformulate it in order to unmask what they have to convey about culture.

However, it would be wise to mention that chronotopes get more complex in a postmodern cultural framework, but also more interesting to study. Smethurst makes the distinction between a pre-modern chronotope where the extra-historical aesthetic form of the whole is laid out for the reader in coexistence with everything else—as in the Greek romance, where no trace of any moment in history is given due to the historical simultaneity in which everything is narrated, partially recovered in some postmodern narratives—the modernist chronotope where specific moments in time are forced upon the spatial axis "like the still frames of a cinema film" (68) in an attempt to capture a sacralised time, and the postmodernist chronotope, which we will develop now. Nonetheless, in order to understand how it works, we need to start with another extremely clarifying quote by Smethurst about the transition between event-driven and contingency-driven chronotopes:

> Here are two kinds of chronotopes, one in which locality or place is defined by its history, and the other in which events, or history, are governed by the relationships between things and people in space. Both chronotopes coordinate time and space, but in one, many events are used to define an object or point in space, whereas in the other, spatial properties determine a moment in time by producing an event. This distinction of Bakhtin's allows for a shift in dominant from the first (event-driven) to the second (contingency-driven) kind of chronotope coincidental with a shift in dominant from modernist to postmodernist in the narrative arts and a corresponding shift towards spatial concerns more widely in postmodernist culture. (69)

We could therefore quite safely speculate that the emphasis on spatial narratives that configure history characteristic from postmodernist culture emerges as a reaction

towards the event-driven spatial organisation which was dominant in modernist narratives, as it is explained in the previous section regarding the Spatial Turn.

The interesting thing that Smethurst points out about postmodernist chronotopes is the fact that they break with the traditional spatio-temporal divisions in the sense that they reject absolutes and problematise the previously taken for granted power relations and interactions (73). For example, they blur the frontier between high and low art by proposing a time and a space where they mix—as in Angela Carter's 1991 novel *Wise Children*, where the two main characters are born in a world of lowly culture and popular shows, but they relate to the world of high art through their illegitimate father, a Shakespearian actor, and refuse to stay in their intended 'place' in many aspects during the course of the novel—they contest class distinctions—as in *ASoIaF* (1996-) when Arya is divested from her noble status and shares the road to the Ice Wall in equal conditions with people belonging to the subaltern classes of the city of King's Landing down to its most eschatological consequences, far from the romanticised ideal of the nobleman or woman who runs away only for one night to mingle with the vassals in some kind of festival—or they subvert gender roles—as in David Ebershoff's *The Danish Girl* (2000), when the character Einar discovers he is not comfortable with being assimilated as a man by society during the specific chronotope of the sessions when he has to pose for his painter wife by wearing a dress and holding a bouquet of flowers.

Thus, chronotopes and the way they are created can be indicative of different hierarchies, hegemonic relations and class systems. This can be done, for instance, by creating spatio-temporal axes where these are subverted or, on the contrary, by neatly dividing each of them within its correspondent and 'acceptable' chronotopic frame. As a literary tool, they can be used for instance to emphasise the space and time of political meetings and the endless plots and encounters held within the high spheres while only depicting the consequences of these plots upon the rest of the world in broader brush-strokes,[26] or they can be used to develop the intrahistory of a certain village which is affected by these political decisions but without dwelling on the plots and schemes that took place in the power spheres in order to arrive to said intrahistorical consequences. In

[26] This is a recurring resource in *ASoIaF*, as we will later see in the section about the 'within walls' and 'outside walls' chronotopes.

the analysis of *ASoIaF*, we will see that there are indeed many examples of this throughout the saga.

1.3. Spatial articulation of the relations of hegemony and domination

According to the Oxford Dictionary, the definition of hegemony is quite simple: "Leadership of dominance, especially by one state or social group over others" ("Hegemony"). However, reality is actually quite more complex; any concept that deals with issues related to power relations is bound to be problematic and contested, or at least, extremely diverse on its interpretations. There are different ways of understanding hegemony, the one popularised by the Marxist philosopher Antonio Gramsci being perhaps the most referential one. According to Gramsci, hegemony is strongly linked to the idea of 'common sense'—*senso comune* in Italian—[27]meaning that the ruling class does not create but rather uses the existing amalgam of values, beliefs, traditions and ideas in order to establish its interests as bringers of order and essentially unchangeable, which, according to Walter L. Adamson in *Hegemony and Revolution: Antonio Gramsci's Political and Cultural Theory* (1980), "[...] is ordinarily very far removed from the real needs and interests of the masses of ordinary people who hold it" (150).

However, this 'common sense' can be but it is not essentially negative, and also exists in subaltern groups, which we will refer on a later quote. As scholar Kate Crehan writes in *Gramsci's Common Sense: Inequality and its Narratives* (2016): "For Gramsci, we could say, common sense is a multistranded, entwined knot of, on the one hand, clear sightedness (good sense), which is not fooled by the sophistry of spin doctors; but, on the other, blinkered sortsightedness clinging defensively to the comfortable and the familiar" (48). In other words, common sense is also the seed for the *buon senso*—good sense—which implies a critical analysis of that previously mentioned amalgam that composes common sense. Adding to this, Crehan continues by explaining how this intertwines with the exercise of hegemony:

> Emerging out of a world structured by inequality, common sense's ever-shifting accumulations of disparate truisms are the precipitates of heterogeneous life

[27] Gramsci uses the concept of 'common sense' in this way in some of his *Pre-prison Writings*—page 19 in the compilation edited by Richard Bellamy in 1994, or page 173 in his *Prison Writings* edited by Joseph A. Buttigieg in 1975.

> worlds occupying quite different social and economic locations. The narratives that become hegemonic are those that reflect the world as seen from the vantage point of the rulers rather than the ruled. Those that emerge from the less privileged[28] locations are forced to exist within the interstices of the dominant explanations; an ability to impose commonsense truths, which assume that existing power relations are the only ones possible, is a crucial dimension of any power regime. Hegemony, it should be noted, does not require that those who are ruled, the subalterns, see their subjugation as justified, only that they see it as a fixed and unchangeable reality it would be futile to oppose. (51)

Therefore, hegemonic systems do not necessarily exercise domination in its strict sense, that is, they do not exercise direct physical power over society, but they frame their needs into general conceptions of order and common sense, making the subaltern classes assimilate them into their structural set of values—or at least presenting them as the only viable possibility—and only exercising direct domination when the very structure of this set of values is threatened. To be more precise:

> As we have been using it, Gramsci's concept of "hegemony" has two related definitions. First, it means the consensual basis of an existing political system within civil society. Here it is understood in contrast to the concept of "domination": the state's monopoly on the means of violence and its consequent role as the final arbiter of all disputes. Gramsci contended, however, that only weak states need to rely very often on the threat or use of force implied in their domination. Strong states rule almost exclusively through hegemony. In this sense, the importance of the concept is that it points to the need for the proletariat to develop political strategies which undermine the consent of the present ruling class. A central foundation of such strategies is the attempt to build an alternative proletarian hegemony within existing civil society upon which a post-revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat can be founded. (Adamson 1980: 170-171)

This reminds us about what Poulantzas writes regarding the spatio-temporal matrices that Capitalism strives to control in order to perpetuate its power mechanisms (1978: 98), which is an example of a certain type of hegemony. Capitalism does not usually exercise direct domination but hegemony upon most capitalist states. It does exercise domination upon subjugated and exploited states in order to perpetuate the capitalist

[28] Or subaltern.

way of life and imperial practices, but the control it holds over first-world states is mainly hegemonic; it selectively encourages existing notions of common sense—or generates new ones based on the existing ones—in order to foster production by promoting and capitalising certain values, such as meritocracy, reward-based incentives, romantic love, the nuclear family as a productive organisation, notions of acceptable activity and rest periods, notions of first, second and third class jobs—and who performs each—notions of good and evil etc. We could then state that ruling-class hegemony transpires every layer of social life.

However, despite his critiques towards hegemonic practices, Gramsci did not see hegemony as a bottomless pit, and could be shifted through the *buon senso*, or the critical sense. According to Richard Bower in *Architecture and Space Re-imagined* (2017) and from a spatial perspective:

> Gramsci critiqued hegemony as cultural practices of identity, institutional representation, and fundamentally as the suppression of alterity and otherness (Krishnaswamy, 2002, p. 115). However, he was also very careful to articulate hegemony as not defining an unchangeable inevitability but merely reflecting the implications of a dominant cultural power. (100)

He then goes on in the next page:

> Once again reflecting Lefebvre's conception of differential space, this positive conception of the inherent 'porosity' or hegemony also implies that the process of hegemonic development must be continuous, unfixed, and open. In contrast to the inherently false appearance of cohesion that sustains such hegemonic relations, space is rich with identities and communities that represent alternative and subaltern social relations. Gramsci posits that over time such identities have the potential to pass from isolation and exclusion to become protagonists, and eventually as potentially effective counter-movements to the cultural institutions and political ideology (1971, p. 170). (101)

This matches what was quoted a few pages earlier about the possibility to create a proletarian counter-hegemony that countered the imposed social order in a capitalist

context. Hegemony tends to suppress voices of otherness[29] [30] which are not part of the wide consensus or collective will that sustains it, but this otherness is also organised, articulated and sustained in social space by means of countercultural spaces, movements, communities etc. within the openings of the hegemonic system. Note that we are speaking about hegemony, not domination. The debate would be different if sheer power of domination were exercised to suppress alterity, rather than hegemony. However, we must take into account that:

> Such spaces are not panacea. Be they informal settlements in the global south like the much publicised Torre David in Caracas (Baan et al., 2012), or alternative socio-cultural movements in the Middle East such as the global Occupy movements, Arab Spring political uprisings, or even cultural phenomena like the Slow Food movement (Bower, 2016), none offer a solution for space. But in contrast to conventionally abstract and isolated Westernised space, they might exist as imperfect articulations of socially viable geometries of power that are practiced and performed in explicitly political, plural, and agonistic forms of space. Thus, they might also help to propose a re-imagining of space as a process of positive, open and self-aware spatial relations and the potential of a more socially articulated cultural hegemony [...]. (102)

What we infer from this is that space is full of potential, and that, for now, there has not existed any hegemonic discourse with the ability to completely drown the diverse variety of subaltern or counter-hegemonic voices that are to be found in any space. Not even the brutal domination exercised by the Nazis upon minorities was able to

[29] Definition given by Judith Butler in *Precarious Life* (2004): "If I am confounded by you, then you are already of me, and I am nowhere without you. I cannot muster the 'we' except by finding the way in which I am tied to 'you,' by trying to translate but finding that my own language must break up and yield if I am to know you. You are what I gain through this disorientation and loss. This is how the human comes into being, again and again, as that which we have yet to know" (49). That is, human identity is formed through a constant process of identification and processing of difference towards the Other. Definition as given by Jean-François Staszak in the *International Encyclopedia of Human Geography* (2009): "Otherness is the result of a discursive process by which a dominant in-group 'Us,' the Self) constructs one or many dominated out-groups ('Them,' other) by stigmatizing a difference – real or imagined – presented as a negation of identity and thus a motive for potential discrimination" (43).

[30] As mentioned in the introduction, hegemony in a capitalist context uses 'projective integration' to assimilate otherness and present it as cultural capital, seemingly embracing it, but actually contributing to its suppression by taking away the component of struggle and reducing differences and voices of otherness to their aesthetic and capitalisable qualities.

completely drown the myriads of counter-hegemonic[31] narratives that made portions of space their own.[32]

However, these counter-hegemonic spaces are not usually depicted in the hegemonic representations of space, which may also be oppressive. In *For Space*, Massey echoes Laclau: "space is equivalent to representation which in turn is equivalent to ideological closure" (25), that is, the idea of space as he understands it is that of the articulation of ideology and culture in space. This ideological 'making-sense' of space is an attempt to drown the inherent dislocation—or temporality—of the physical world (Massey 1994: 253), by which it means that every space is—to a greater or lesser extent—ideologically represented and provided with a subjective meaning or a closure that ignores the fundamental temporal and changeable quality of space. This is brought to the extreme on the spaces of representation—meaning a sheet of paper, a plan, a map, a report... as de Certeau conceives them in the chapter "Walking in the City" from his book *The Practice of Everyday Life* (1984) (94)—which are usually hegemonising spaces that depict a greatly partial picture of society. Laclau's conception of spatialisation[33] as explained by Massey reasserts the idea: "For Laclau spatialisation is equivalent to hegemonisation: the production of an ideological closure, a picture of the essentially dislocated world as somehow coherent" (25). Therefore, hegemonic powers that hold the main power for representation artificially produce an ideological closure in the space of representation which drowns dislocation and counter-hegemonic space in favour of a space of representation that suits hegemonic interests. In a writing from 1990 by Laclau collected in the volume edited by David Howarth *Post-Marxism, Populism and Critique* (2015), we read:

> [...] any representation of a dislocation involves its spatialization. The way to overcome the temporal, traumatic and unrepresentable nature of dislocation is to

[31] It is necessary to specify that counter-hegemonies are not created simply as a result of a will to oppose the hegemonic power, but exist as a precondition for power-shifts that do indeed counter the main hegemony and are often drowned by it, but are also simultaneously part of hegemonisation processes, and their social practices affect the way hegemonisation processes are unfolded. See page 49 in *Counter Hegemony and Foreign Policy: the Dialectics of Marginalized and Global Forces in Jamaica* (2001), by Randolph B. Persaud.

[32] For instance, clandestine Swing clubs where they played 'black music' in the Nazi Germany under huge danger (Zwerin 2000).

[33] In simple words, according to the Collins Dictionary: "'the process of causing something to occupy space or assume some of the properties of space'. Example: 'He was not just dealing with specific effects of the succession of technologies from oral to written to print to electronic, but with the spatialization of time'" ("Spatialisation").

> construct it as a moment in permanent structural relation with other moments, in which case the pure temporality of the 'event' is eliminated. (55)

In short, time is frozen and domesticated by space in order to form a coherent picture that obviates fundamental unrepresentability and changeability, and the issue of the impossibility of representation due to the ever-present dislocations that Laclau and other post-strucucturalist writers discuss is definitely perceivable into spatial practice—that is, the tangible physical organisation of culture and ideology outside representation which is the result of the dynamic reality of space and its inhabitants—but it is not acknowledged in the representations of space—or the blank space—which straightens dislocations so as to synthesise a portrait of a seemingly coherent space. This 'coherence' is, of course, an empty signifier such as the one of 'common sense' or 'social order'; these signifiers are that which the one who achieves the power to represent wants them to be, because, as Laclau writes in the 2007 re-edition of *Emancipations*, "[...] there is a structural impossibility in signification as such [...]. That is, the limits of signification can only announce themselves as the impossibility of realizing what is within those limits" (37). It is important to make clear that empty signifiers are not signifiers which can be attached to different signifieds in different contexts, for that would mean they are simply equivocal, but in no way empty—they would be fully realised in each context—it does not mean they are ambiguous either (36). "An empty signifier can, consequently, only emerge if there is a structural impossibility in signification as such, and only if this impossibility can signify itself as an interruption (subversion, distortion, etcetera) of the structure of the sign" (37). That is, a signifier is empty when it gives way to an interruption of the signifying system of differences,[34] when it refers to something which is absent and does not exist as a totality but as the multiple and different ways in which that particular signifier is perceived and fulfilled. Let us take the example of 'Order':

> 'Order' as such has no content, because it only exists in the various forms in which it is actually realized, but in a situation of radical disorder 'order' is present as that which is absent; it becomes an empty signifier, as the signifier of that absence. In this sense, various political forces can compete in their efforts

[34] As summarised by Laclau in *Emancipations*: "we know, from Saussure, that language (and by extension, all signifying systems) is a system of differences, that linguistic identities - values - are purely relational and that, as a result the totality of language is involved in each single act of signification" (37).

> to present their particular objectives as those which carry out the filling of that lack. To hegemonize something is exactly to carry out this filling function. (44)

This is better understood in this illustrative quote also by Laclau:

> If democracy is possible, it is because the universal has no necessary body and no necessary content; different groups, instead, compete between themselves to temporarily give to their particularisms a function of universal representation. Society generates a whole vocabulary of empty signifiers whose temporary signifieds are the result of a political competition. (35)

Therefore, the key why we are able to analyse hegemonic movements and implications by looking at spaces of representation is precisely in the issue of the impossibility of representation; the spatial coherence portrayed by the uppermost elites which finds its closure in the map, plan, book... produced by them will certainly be much more limiting and oppressive for fundamental alterity and otherness than the space represented by counter-cultural and counter-hegemonic movements which compete to increase their representativity, and form a more diverse collectivity in which all—or most—of them are included because they are perceived in differentiation with the homogeneous elite, and therefore search for a different type of spatial closure in the sphere of representation. The need to make sense of unrepresentable space in different ways depending on the needs and particularisms of each community gives rise to different hegemonic and counter-hegemonic narratives, which compete to fulfil the empty signifier's absence.

To better understand this, we need to delve into Lefebvre's Spatial Triad, which will be one of the main basic tools upon which our analysis of George R. R. Martin's secondary world will unfold. For him, space is ultimately produced by the interaction and dynamic interrelation of three main spatial spheres. It is worth to quote Lefebvre's full explanation in *The Production of Space*:

> A conceptual triad has now emerged from our discussion, a triad to which we shall be returning over and over again:
>
> 1. *Spatial practice,* which embraces production and reproduction, and the particular locations and spatial sets characteristic of each social formation. Spatial practice ensures continuity and some degree of cohesion. In terms of social space, and of each member of a given society's relationship to that space,

> this cohesion implies a guaranteed level of competence and a specific level of performance. (33)

Some pages later: "The spatial practice of a society secretes that society's space; it propounds and presupposes it, in a dialectical interaction; it produces it slowly and surely as it masters and appropriates it. From the analytic standpoint, the spatial practice of a society is revealed through the deciphering of its space" (38).

To understand Lefebvre's conception of spatial practice, we need to know that, as Margaret Sheehy writes in her essay 'Between a Thick and a Thin Place' (2004):

> Lefebvre (1991) did not want to reduce social practice to a mere transposition of the social map onto a map of space. This would relegate space to the background, as a mere setting for social practice. Lefebvre felt that space and social practice were of equal importance and that they could not be separated. His interest was to develop the theoretical possibility for changing hegemonic social practices by rendering them visible through the revelation of ideology at play in space. (95)

Therefore, the idea of 'spatial practice' is to merge both social practice—or social life—and space; it makes reference to the "...production and reproduction of relationships between people, people and things, and people and practice" (95). To simplify: spatial practice is composed by the interactions given between people and space that are organised in particular configurations whose mechanisms work in such a way so as to ensure a certain degree of cohesion and continuation of social life; it is the dynamic and alive space, perceived by the mere deciphering of its relations, and supposes both a pre-condition and a result for social life. After that:

> 2. *Representations of space*, which are tied to the relations of production and to the 'order' which those relations impose, and hence to knowledge, to signs, to codes, and to 'frontal' relations. (33)

Also, and more precisely: "conceptualized space, the space of scientists, planners, urbanists, technocratic subdividers and social engineers, as of a certain type of artist with a scientific bent—all of whom identify what is lived and what is perceived with what is conceived" (38).

Meaning, elements of representation such as plans or maps, which tend to impose different types of order and cohesion depending on who or what exercises that representation—a geographer, a social engineer, an urban planner etc. This is linked to Laclau's and De Certeau's ideas of spaces of representation, or 'blank spaces', as mentioned before. Last of all, Lefebvre writes about representational spaces:

> 3. *Representational spaces,* embodying complex symbolisms, sometimes coded, sometimes not, linked to the clandestine or underground side of social life, as also to art (which may come eventually to be defined less as a code of space than as a code of representational spaces). (33)

This last sphere is linked to the symbolic experience of space,[35] which gives birth to interpretations of space that are materialised into things such as art, actions of protest, symbolic codes etc. "This is the dominated—and hence passively experienced—space which the imagination seeks to change and appropriate. It overlays physical space, making symbolic use of its objects" (39).

What we may conclude out of this is that, in very broad terms, spatialisation equals different kinds of representation. However, Lefebvre's practical conceptualisation of space should be accompanied by an understanding of Massey's idea of fundamental spatio-temporality, which is often overlooked in favour of sheer spatiality.

Dissimilar scholars such as Laclau, Bergson, or de Certeau tend to, in a sense, 'kill' time which has been hegemonised by space just as time hegemonised space in previous centuries. They defend the claim that 'space equals representation', when perhaps it would be more accurate to say that 'space-time equals representation', because the nature of social life is not simply spatial, but spatio-temporal; it is a multiplicity of durations in space. In *For Space*, Massey writes:

> [...] even if we agree that representation indeed fixes and stabilises, what it so stabilises is not simply time, but space-time. [...] What is at issue, in the production of representations, is not the spatialisation of time (understood as the rendering of time as space), but the representation of time-space. What we conceptualise (divide up into organs, put it how you will) is not just time but

[35] It is also closely linked to the emotional and experiential component of 'place', which is developed in the next section about the hegemonic implications of space and place.

> space-time. In the arguments of Bergson and de Certeau too the issue is formulated as though the lively world which is there to be represented (conseptualised/ written down) is only temporal. It certainly is temporal; but it is spatial too. And 'representation' is an attempt to capture both aspects of that world. (27)

This collides, for example, with what Bergson wrote in his book *Matter and Memory* (1896). He separates movement—or progress—from immobility—or space—perceiving them as if they were two separate dimensions: the scenery and the movements upon it.

> Movement visibly consists in passing from one point to another, and consequently in traversing space. Now the space which is traversed is infinitely divisible; and as the movement is, so to speak, applied to the line along which it passes, it appears to be one with this line and, like it, divisible. Has not the movement itself drawn the line? Has it not traversed in turn the successive and juxtaposed points of that line? Yes, no doubt, but these points have no reality except in a line drawn, that is to say motionless; and by the very fact that you represent the movement to yourself successively in these different points, you necessarily arrest it in each of them; your successive positions are, at bottom, only so many imaginary halts. You substitute the path for the journey, and because the journey is subtended by the path you think that the two coincide. But how should a progress coincide with a *thing,* a movement with an immobility? (248)

But in doing so, Bergson overlooks a fundamental reality that is pointed out by Massey: "But then, the territory is integrally spatio-temporal. The path is not a static instantaneity" (28). From this, we could conclude two things: first, that representation is not simply the deadening of time—or movement—into a spatial picture, because the very line drawn as well as the very space of representation are spatio-temporal themselves, not dead immobilities, and they are therefore subjected to both change and space. In addition to this, if we transfered this very idea to the sphere outside representation, the result would the same: a real path, not a representation, is in itself changeable, and it is composed of micro and macro movements in space, therefore making it fundamentally spatio-temporal—or chronotopical. We can then close the circle by assuming that, if every space is spatio-temporal at its core, then when this space is represented we are essentially and unavoidably taking in both dimensions,

therefore making it inevitable that the captured representation will strive to encompass both of these fundamental aspects of reality, not just one of them.

It is therefore important to understand that space is essentially not fixed but changeable, and is composed of a multiplicity of durations. These durations which represent the fundamental changeability of space are conseptualised as temporal matrices which intertwine with spatial matrices, making space not just 'space', but 'space-time'. This idea is essential for this work because it justifies hegemonic movements in history—in the history of George R. R. Martin's secondary world in our case—as being necessarily spatial, and therefore its processes discernible by looking at the specific spatial articulations. It also provides a framework for Bakhtin's chronotope—time-space—and its value as a study ground for practices of hegemony in literature.

Coming back to the broader definition of hegemony: the stronger the cohesion between the accepted notion of order, common sense, individuals, society, economic powers and the ruling class, the more consistent the hegemony, and the less the State needs to exercise domination. For an effective hegemony, there needs to exist a 'collective will', that is, a collective sense of purpose that includes the people within the group or nation by means of political education. In *Gramsci, Culture and Anthropology* (2002), anthropologist Kate Crehan stresses the importance that this collectivity had for Gramsci, which he thought his birthplace, Italy, lacked: "The absence in Italy of a 'national-popular collective will' means that 'the people' are effectively excluded from the life of the 'nation'. In Gramsci's view, it is this absence that lies behind the general weakness and inadequacy of the Italian state" (159). It goes without saying that rather than picturing a specific agent or agents that exercise this control, we should instead try to picture a complex chain of institutional, cultural, social, and economic powers that complement each other and are in fact part of the same network of social life as we are, but use it so as to remain the strongest links by stengthening those parts of the net that suit them, and suppressing those that do not. Of course, in order to sustain the systems that allow for hegemony to perpetuate its complex net, the ruling class fosters specific spatial organisations and gives rise to others directly influenced by the need to create spaces of opposition against a specific type of hegemony.

Ernesto Laclau revisits Gramscian notions of hegemony by pushing the concept in a post-structuralist context, largely dragging from Derrida's theory of Deconstruction.[36] In *Emancipations,* he acknowledges the increasing challenges that the definition of hegemony is facing:

> Our societies are far less homogeneous than those in which the Marxian models were formulated, and the constitution of the collective wills takes place in terrains crossed by far more complex relations of power - as a result, inter alia, of the development of mass media. (82)

Then, he dissects hegemony by exposing its core problems and presenting us with a solution:

> The presence of empty signifiers - in the sense that we have defined them - is the very condition of hegemony. This can be easily seen if we address a very well known difficulty which forms a recurring stumbling block in most theorizations of hegemony – Gramsci's included. A class or group is considered to be hegemonic when it is not closed in a narrow corporatist perspective, but presents itself as realizing the broader aims either of emancipating or ensuring order for wider masses of the population. But this faces us with a difficulty if we do not determine precisely what these terms 'broader aims', 'wider masses' refer to. There are two possibilities: first, that society is an addition of discrete groups, each tending to their particular aims and in constant collision with each other. In that case, 'broader' and 'wider' could only mean the precarious equilibrium of a negotiated agreement between groups, all of which would retain their conflicting aims and identity. But 'hegemony' dearly refers to a stronger type of communitarian unity than such an agreement evokes. Second, that society has some kind of pre-established essence, so that the 'broader' and 'wider' has a content of its own, independent of the will of the particular groups, and that 'hegemony' would mean the realization of such an essence.

[36] See Jacques Derrida's 1966 lecture "Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences" published as an essay in *Writing and Difference* (1978), where he develops the theory of Deconstruction. In this lecture, he stresses the fact that there is no direct correlation between signifier and signified, therefore giving rise to methods of deconstruction that analyse specific texts by emphasising this lack of correlation and inherent openness of language studying the moments in the text when the intended meaning does not match the conveyed one, and the unity of the structure crumbles. When Laclau writes about empty signifiers that are used to refer to different signifieds depending on the specific social needs and on the needs of hegemonic powers, even if he acknowledges some of the Saussurian notions of the signifying system by describing it as a system of difference (Laclau 2007: 37), he is also being influenced by Derrida's conception of a fluid and open language that is not a closed structure and whose symbols can refer to multiple things besides the intended one, hence his emphasis on discontinuities and inconsistencies within the structures.

> But this would not only do away with the dimension of contingency which has always been associated with the hegemonic operation, but would also be incompatible with the consensual character of 'hegemony': the hegemonic order would be the imposition of a pre-given organizational principle and not something emerging from the political interaction between groups. (43-44)

First, he states how a class or group has traditionally been considered hegemonic when it presented its needs and purposes as the needs and purposes of the 'broader masses'. He then exposes the troublesome issue of what the 'broader masses' upon which hegemony is exercised mean, and proposes the two possible explanations: first, that society is constituted by the clashes and tensions between many small groups that form the whole. This would mean that the only possible definition of hegemony would be the thin equilibrium that is reached between these groups when the subtle—yet strong—power of the ruling classes is applied, or second, that there exists such a thing as the 'essence' of society, so that when we speak about the 'wider' or 'broader' interest, we are actually speaking about an ideal kind of order hegemonic powers strive for. He then points out how both of these definitions for hegemony are flawed; the first one because hegemony actually refers to a more solid unity, and the second because an essentialist perspective would absurdly sweep away both the contingency—or unpredictability—associated with hegemonic actions, and the consensual character that hegemony is supposed to have, as opposed to domination. He then solves these issues by defining hegemonic operations as the successful proposition of the needs or particularities of a specific group as the 'filler' of the empty signifier of 'communitarian order':

> Now, if we consider the matter from the point of view of the social production of empty signifiers, this problem vanishes. For in that case, the hegemonic operations would be the presentation of the particularity of a group as the incarnation of that empty signifier which refers to the communitarian order as an absence, an unfulfilled reality. (44)

The different stages of this process of establishing the interests of specific hegemonic or counter-hegemonic social groups as referential values for communitarian order—or other empty signifiers—articulate in space and translate into specific spatial movements and organisations, as it has been previously mentioned in Bower's quote from *Architecture and Space Re-imagined*. In the analysis of Martin's Secondary World, we will refer to some illustrative examples of specific cases when a counter-hegemonic

narrative proposes an alternative social organisation to that of the predominant hegemony by seizing the role of bringers of alternative embodiments for empty signifiers such as social order when the ruling powers fail to keep communitarian order.

1.4. Space and place: two concepts with different implications for hegemony

There is a tendency, even if it is not ideally and clearly defined, to draw a line between the concepts of space and place when used in opposition to each other. Whilst it is true that space is used rather generically in reference simply to physical space—as we have, in fact, used it repeatedly throughout this text—when used in opposition to the concept of place, it gives way to a variety of interpretations. That is, both of them refer to physical space, but there is much critical debate going on what each of them may imply when used as different sides of the same spatial coin. What is fairly clear is that they have different hegemonic implications, and are often used to promote or deter certain conceptions of space according to hegemonic interests.

Which is the difference between space and place? As simple as it seems, there is something on which everyone seems to intuitively agree, that is, that a space as such is somehow bigger, or encompasses greater extensions than a place does. In very generalising terms, the vast extension of the Sahara Desert tends to strike people more as a huge space than as a place,[37] which is a word that seems to have a more defined ring to it. For this same reason, we do not call the outer space the 'outer place'. Something so vast, so devoid of human presence and significance, cannot be called a 'place'.

Does therefore the distinction between these two concepts depend on the human factor? Does a humanised space become a place? Is space a vast extension of land with no particular cultural significance, while a place is a part in that space which is filled with cultural and emotional value? These questions do not have neither simple nor absolute answers, and it is important to understand that, as Westphal writes in *RFS*, "Not everything fits easily into the dichotomy of space and place" (5). According to

[37] With the exception, of course, of the people who dwell there, for whom it will have different emotional implications due to their lived experience.

Chinese-American geographer Yi-Fu Tuan[38] as quoted by Westphal with interesting remarks of his own:

> In *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience*, Yi- Fu Tuan viewed space as an area of freedom and mobility, while place would be an enclosed and humanized space: "Compared to space, place is a calm center of established values." This is a common view in the United States. For Tuan, space turns into place when it gains definition and becomes meaningful: "All people undertake to transform amorphous space into articulated geography." Place is a landmark upon which the eye pauses when it surveys a general scene, "a point of rest." This distinction between space and place has been studied by geographers, sociologists, and others who endeavor to add practical application to theoretical reflections. (Yi-Fu Tuan in *RFS*: 5)

Tuan's words somehow echo our natural intuition on the difference in meaning between space and place. For him place is, in a sense, the domestication of space. It is the articulation of geography, the definition of physical space through human influence; it is the emotional and cultural hegemonisation of portions of geography. Following this thread of thought, we could even argue that space can only be mastered by practical means, through means of transport that race across it as quickly as possible with the sole purpose of reaching places, but without really owning it. When Smethurst writes about Bakhtin's road chronotope, he says: "...the chronotope of the road in a Hardy novel often turns the space of the road into a place for meetings and a division between social groups..." (2000: 68). That is, the road is initially remarked as a space, and it only becomes a place once it takes on a role of cultural and social significance, that is, a place for meetings and social division.

To give an example, most of the vast wilderness from North America or Canada is nowadays mastered by means of high speed trains or roads, and it no longer poses a great difficulty—with some exceptions to be sure—to get from one side of the country to the other. However, this mastery is only utilitarian, and most of the prevailing space of wilderness remains ownerless and non-humanised,[39] not to mention the proliferation

[38] Original quote in Yi-Fu Tuan's 2001 edition of *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience* (1997), pp. 54/83/161—order as quoted by Westphal in *RFS*. See full quote in Works Cited section.

[39] By saying 'non-humanised' I mean devoid of quotidian human presence. That is, a company or a government may own vast spaces of wilderness to bureaucratic effects, but in reality, the space remains unknowable and unknown. It is only owned by the totalising and simplifying human gaze, and even if they modify it in some way, it will be from that totalising, utilitarian point of view.

of “false geographies” as Barry Lopez describes the manipulation of the “elements of the land” and the creation of “erroneous but useful patterns in advertising” (1989: 3) that promote and capitalise idealised and simplistic notions of the environment which lack the intimacy and complexity they deserve.

A place, on the other hand, is owned space. To a higher or lesser degree, it has some element of significance that defines it as such, something which allows the voyeuristic eye to rest from the endless wild or from the never-ending desert on a section of mastered, enclosed space which can be rationalised. The house or the home, the shrine in the mountains, the hut in the forest, the ski station... all these are places, landmarks in space which interrupt the homogenised spatial landscape. The vantage observer finds in them a point of rest which does not need to be forcefully rationalised as open space does, and the human wanderer finds respite on them from the overstimulation of the senses and the thoughts caused by the sheer experimentation of the heterogeneous reality of space. The role of experience is of the utmost importance, as we will later discuss.

This precise idea of a more or less clear division in the ontology of space and place is also echoed in Hubbard and Kitchin’s *Key Thinkers on Space and Place* (2011):

> For many geographers, place thus represents a distinctive (and more-or-less bounded) type of space which is defined by (and constructed in terms of) the lived experiences of people. As such, places are seen as fundamental in expressing a sense of belonging for those who live in them, and are seen as providing a locus for identity. (6)

In this case, the author includes ‘place’ under the umbrella term ‘space’, which is broader and encompasses other kinds of physical areas which are not under human cultural dominance, but still, he defines place as a sort of constructed space which is closely related to the human experience. More often than not we find spaces uncanny and unfamiliar due to the impossibility to make full sense of the infinity of elements and variations present in them, while places are subjective bits of enclosed, physical rationality in opposition to the vastness of spaces.

This is connected to what the British academic and geographer Nigel Thrift[40] calls 'embodiment'. In their aforementioned book, Hubbard and Kitchin present Thrift's conception of place:

> As Thrift (2003) contends, one thing that does seem to be widely agreed is that place is involved with *embodiment*. The humanistic use of methods that evoke the multisensory experience of place (i.e., its visual, aural, and tactile elements, as well as its smells and tastes) provides one means by which this bodily geography of place has been evoked, though the relationship between the human body and highly meaningful places is often more complex than even these methods can reveal. (6)

That is, the body experiences place through sensorial perception. It explores, it gets to know—and ultimately acknowledges—the lived space, turning it into an enclosed, distinguishable, highly emotional and cultural element: a place. This is precisely what makes people able to feel longing and attachment towards a certain place, the mystification of the bodily experience. It also raises the question of individual and fragmented space, that is, that space cannot be homogeneous if it is so utterly divided and dependant on experience. Similarly, this gives rise to another, very important quandary that is worth considering. If we are to avoid generalisations and oversimplifications for the sake of specificity, then we must at least acknowledge the problems that emerge with the highly individualistic meaning of place, if it is so emotionally conditioned. In *Key Thinkers of Space and Place*, Hubbard and Kitchin comment on various authors who have problematised the emotional factor of place:

> Focusing on the experiential properties of space, the writings of David Lowenthal, Anne Buttimer, David Ley, Edward Relph and Yi-Fu Tuan in particular were of great value in reminding geographers that people do not live in a framework of geometric relationships but in a world of meaning. For example, Tuan's (1977) poetic writings stressed that place does not have any particular scale associated with it, but is created and maintained through the 'fields of care' that result from people's emotional attachment. Using the notions of topophilia and topophobia to refer to the desires and fears which people associate with specific places, his work alerted geographers to the

[40] Original reference in Nigel Thrift's essay "The Still Point: Resistance, Expressive Embodiment and Dance" (1997), found in *Geographies of Resistance* (1997) edited by Steve Pile and Michael Keith, pp. 124-151. See full quote in Works Cited section.

> sensual, aesthetic and emotional dimensions of space. The humanistic tradition that these thinkers developed conceptualised place as subjectively defined. As such, what constituted a place was seen to be largely individualistic, although attachments and meanings were often shared (simply put, a place meant different things to different people). (6)

There, Tuan contests the widespread assumption amongst geographers that we live in a world of mere relational shapes, with no meaningful incidence whatsoever—this makes us recall the challenge to the Euclidean notion of space mentioned on earlier pages. Space is experiential, since we can only perceive it through experience, and that unavoidably triggers what Tuan calls the 'fields of care', which spring from people's particular feelings towards a place. He highlights the inevitable incidence of aesthetics, sensuality and emotion on the reading of space, which becomes a place when people are exposed to these. Many spaces remain devoid of anthropocentric meaning if there is no human being there to experience them, but their potential to eventually become places is uncontested, and it is then when subjectivity takes over. There can be a collective, more or less common, conception of a certain place, but the issue of individuality or subjectivity will always be there, whether we choose to overlook it or not.

From what we have been seeing, we may safely conclude two things. The first one, that the distinction between space and place lays on human experience. It is important to clarify that, us being humans using human language, will always be victims to anthropocentrism. This is unavoidable, since a completely detached experience is not reachable, and we can only wonder and theorise about it. Knowing this, and place and space being human-made concepts, we could regard space as the unemotional fringe of terrain, and things living upon and below that terrain, with the potential to experience portions of it and endow them with meaning, but not yet done so—not at least thoroughly and viscerally.

Of course, this unavoidably leads us to the conclusion that, what for one person might be meaningless open space, for another person it might not, and this precise subjectivity of the reality of space and place is what has incidence in hegemonic relations. Identity is bound to them; let us take, as an example, the case of my own birthplace: the Basque Country. The mythical, rural landscape of the land of the Basques has always been a key symbolic element of Basque nationalist identity. The figures of the *artzaina*—shepherd—or of the *mendizale*—mountaineer—are almost those

of mythical characters who merge with the grass, the trees, the rocks and the mountains of a land and a culture that has often reasserted its history and tradition in opposition to those of Spain. In *Spanish Places: Landscape, Space and Place in Contemporary Spanish Culture* (2012), professor Ann Davies writes about Basque Landscape and nationalism: "Landscape, space and place can be redolent of nationalism as well as nation, as is exemplified by the link commonly made by the rural and mountainous landscape and Basque nationalism" (60). In her book, she analyses precisely this idea as portrayed or conveyed by some film-makers through their films about the Basque country. Two pages later, she continues: "There has been a tendency in films about the Basque Country to figure debate about Basque national identity through its landscape, particularly when it comes to the militant Basque nationalism of ETA (Euskadi Ta Askatasuna, Basque Land and Liberty)" (62). Then, she quotes what academics Barry Jordan and Rikki Morgan-Tamosunas said about this tendency in *Contemporary Spanish Cinema* (1998):

> [...some filmmakers tended] to emphasize the folkloric, traditional, idyllically rural version of Basque life, disconnected from the outside world, a view which was largely out of step with political and social change in the region. Also, more widely, a politically radical Basque nationalism appeared to be somewhat in thrall to an essentialist vision of Basque culture and identity, predicated on just such a version of the Basque Country as an unchanging rural arcadia. (184)

The case of the Basque country is but one of thousands of examples where landscape becomes the catalyst for political and cultural debates about national identity in a politically and culturally contested context. In this case, the comprehensive chronotope of the 'unchanging rural arcadia', as Morgan-Tamosunas and Jordan name it, constitutes a spatio-temporal framework, and its particular, specific settings—a family *baserri*[41] for instance—meaningful place. The individual projects its experience of that particular setting on the 'rural arcadia' of the collective imaginary, and the collective imaginary finds its way into the individual's experience in relation with the community, thus influencing spatial organisation. This is illustrative that identity is simultaneously actively projected on and fed by space and place, and being so, conceptions of space and place are unavoidably political, and if they are political, they are ideological.

[41] Typical Basque cottage.

Interpretations of space and place being political, the natural conclusion is that them being human concepts—and therefore subjected to the human factor—would change according to who is experiencing them and how. In the case of the Basque conflict, there are two symbolic natural landscapes that collide; meaning the one of Spain and its plateaus, its villages, its traditions etc. and the one of the Basque country, with its mountains, its sea, its forests etc. The first landscape exalts Spanish pride, the politics and the culture of the country, but it will likely not stir the specific nationalist feelings of a Basque *abertzale*—nationalist—because of the lack of a symbolic connection strongly linked to the upbringing and life experience in that land, regardless of any other feeling it may cause. In turn, the latter's identity is ratified by the symbolic political quality of the mountain peaks, the green fields, and the myths of the Basque lands. The individual is fed by the cultural products and traditions from that land; he or she feels part of the community with a certain ideological configuration, and finds the own nationalist identity strengthened through the idealised never-changing rural Arcadia where cultural symbols are enhanced.[42] Of course, these pre-existing cultural and identitarian elements that are already an intrinsic part of social life are used as tools by hegemonic and counter-hegemonic[43] powers to foster specific values and ideas depending on what the momentary absence of communitarian order demands.

All this serves as exemplification that space and place are subjective, and their interpretation therefore tied to the relevant human gaze. However, we do not need to polarise two sides in order to see this. This difference in the reading of space and place happens in subtle ways inside one conceptualised landscape, and it is representative of power relations. The Basque rural landscape can stir both the proletariat's and the bourgeoisie's identity, but the practical and down-to-earth way in which it influences the peasant, who has a visceral, non-idealised day-to-day experience of that landscape, will never be the same as the way it influences the bourgeois, who most likely live in a privileged area of a city. So, it is clear that beneath the totalising, historical views on place, there lies a rich ecosystem of approaches dependant on the kind of relation to landscape individuals and communities have, which ultimately draws the bigger picture

[42] This could, of course, be applied to any identity with strong roots in the land, we are using but one example.
[43] Both 'hegemonic' and 'counter-hegemonic' are types of hegemonic powers, only the hegemonic one represents the ruling powers, and the counter-hegemonic one refers to the alternative emerging hegemonies that arise in opposition to the main ruling class.

by organising space depending on which view is, not the predominant one, but the most powerful one.

To further prove this point, we could extend this idea to the highly bureaucratic and detached view of the North American lands during their time of colonisation held by many colonisers and colonial institutions. These are the words of Frederick Jackson Turner, a milestone historian on the theory of the North American frontier, in "The Significance of the Frontier in American History" (1893):

> The peculiarity of American institutions is, the fact that they have been compelled to adapt themselves to the changes of an expanding people - to the changes involved in crossing a continent, in winning a wilderness, and in developing at each area of this progress out of the primitive economic and political conditions of the frontier into the complexity of city life. (1)

The institutional rhetoric Turner uses to talk about the advance of the colonisers is devoid of sympathy or hatred; he dissects its implications by completely disregarding the suffering of the indigenous. The very language he uses in the quote above suggests a failure to assess the visceral consequences of westward expansion: he talks about "winning a wilderness" as a prize, "crossing a continent" and ending what he understands as "primitive economic and political conditions" in order to introduce "the complexity of city life". He fosters a homogeneous spatial picture of the North American land which, either consciously or unconsciously, reinforces imperial hegemony by providing a framework for it; the 'civilising' mission becomes part of the imperial *senso comune*.

Through his words, Turner annuls the value of the Native American land by flattening it into a two-dimensional, white-centred, non-diverse portrait. The ideas of winning the wilderness and crossing the continent certainly have some implications to them; it is not a random choice of phrases. His speech aligns with that of an Empire which pictures its colonies as lands awaiting the exploitation of their resources. Once the wilderness is 'won', they will set trading posts, means of production, towns, villages etc. and begin feeding on it. The trees will be timber, the rivers will be dams and reservoirs, the soil will almost exclusively be farming ground, and the ways of the indigenous will either be a nuisance or they will be capitalised and sold as exotic amusements for the colonisers, serving as an obscure and queer source of inspiration for

imperial arts and literature. Turner's account of the indigenous does not go beyond the superficial recognition of the resistance they posed for the Westerner's advance. They are treated as a mere voiceless environmental factor which will perhaps be allowed to live on in reserves in the fashion of a folkloric reminder of what once existed:

> The wilderness masters the colonist. It finds him a European in dress, industries, tools, modes of travel, a thought. It takes him from the railroad car and puts him in the birch canoe. It strips him of his garments of civilization and arrays him in the hunting shirt and the moccasin. It puts him in the log cabin of the Cherokee and Iroquois and runs an Indian palisade around him. Before long he has gone to planting Indian corn and plowing with a sharp stick, he shouts the war cry and takes the scalp in orthodox Indian fashion. In short, at the frontier the environment is at first too strong for the man. He must accept the conditions which it furnishes, or perish, and so he fits himself into the Indian clearings and follows the Indian trails. (2)

For the American historian, Indians are just another component of the wilderness. In fact, after describing the coloniser's need to adopt Indian habits, he summarises "In short, at the frontier the environment is at first too strong for the man". Turner harbours a land that was already inhabited by a people and by a culture under the umbrella term 'environment'. Even if he recognises native American influence in the formation of American character, Turner is no less white-centred than his predecessors, like professor Herbert Baxter Adams, who in his book *The Germanic Origin of New England Towns* (1881) maintained that American culture was no more than an outgrowth of the European one (5). While the first one recognises a kind of homogeneous influence coming from the 'American setting', the second rejects the relevance of that setting altogether, but both of them approach what for them is the so-called New World from a homogenising point of view.

However, these two examples are only drops within an ocean. Every conflict, every system is unavoidably tied to space and place, and every conception of space and place is tied to the power balance among the different sides. With these two scenarios, we have shown how the conception of space and the construction of places upon that space shape identity and bias conflict and hegemonisation processes, thus rendering images of otherness and subalternity. It is possible to analyse the particularities of the exercise of hegemony by looking at how the agent, community or nation in question

interacts with space and place: is the ecosphere respected, or is it being used as a resource? Maybe as a trading post? How is the urban space divided? How does the individual or community assimilate its places and spaces?

One can ask these questions and many more in order to draw a clearer picture of spatialised power relations. We may say it has been proven that space and place are primary and transversal categories for analysis that, just as the categories of gender or race, can help us add to the understanding of the construction of power relations and identity. While it is true that, given the nature of this specific category, it is more prone to be more or less tightly linked to geocritical or ecocritical analyses, the treatment of space and place can also help us reflect on other areas of study such as feminism, racism, colonialism, postcolonialism etc. if we pay attention to the kind of way in which each person and community relates to place.

1.5. Real and fictional places: a blurring frontier

Therefore, if places and spaces are profoundly embedded into individual and collective identity and constitute a key element on hegemonic relations, then there is another very important issue that is worth considering within the framework of this research especially: which is the role of literary—and overall fictional—places and spaces? Do they also contribute to the creation of an identity, or are they just reflections of it? Can they help us understand spatial articulations of hegemony in the primary world? Acclaimed critic Stuart Hall provides an answer for this in "Who Needs Identity?" (1996):

> Identities are therefore constituted within, not outside representation. [...] They arise from the narrativization of the self, but the necessarily fictional nature of this process in no way undermines its discursive, material or political effectivity, even if the belongingness, the 'suturing into the story' through which identities arise is, partly, in the imaginary (as well as the symbolic) and therefore, always, partly constructed in fantasy, or at least within a fantasmatic field. (4)

Therefore, not only is fictionality relevant for the construction of identities, but it also is indispensible; we are trapped within our own particular worldview, and a worldview is

always subjective and multilayered. According to Hall, identities emerge from the narrativisation of the self, and this narrative is extensively based on fictional discourses of culture, religion, subalternity, opposition, space, tradition etc. with incontestable "discursive, material or political effectivity" (4), and doubtless incidence upon hegemonic and counter-hegemonic discourses. It is also worth to quote Tally and Battista (2016):

> Spatial criticism is not limited to the spaces of the so-called real world, and it sometimes calls into question any too facile distinction between real and imaginary places, as it frequently investigates what Edward Soja has referred to as the "real-and-imagined" places we experience in literature as in life. Indeed, although a great deal of important research has been devoted to the literary representation of certain identifiable and well-known places (e.g., Dickens's London, Baudelaire's Paris, or Joyce's Dublin), spatial critics have also explored the otherworldly spaces of literature, such as those to be found in myth, fantasy, science fiction, video games, and cyberspace. (ix)

Hall was advancing a necessary ground for Tally and Battista, who in their work advocate for the spatial analysis of all sorts of fictional locations that may help us understand how imaginary or fictionalised spaces and places unfold and contribute to the construction of identity narratives and thus to the articulation of space.

In the previous discussion about the way landscape stirred the nationalist feelings of the Basques, or about the British coloniser's two-dimensional gaze on the advance of the frontier, we were already hinting at Hall's ideas on identity and its fictionality. We have already mentioned that space can be understood as a place when surveyed and culturally reproduced through the human eye; the more a place is revisited in literature, art, politics etc., the more diverse meanings it gains—and thus the more potential to affect identity. These meanings are consumed by the human agent, creating a cultural prism. Everything the human agent observes and experiences will be processed by an intertextual thread of meaning under constant construction, which is woven in a certain social, cultural and spatial context. This biased consumption of

culture, even in a globalised framework, tends to be conditioned by people's specific native contexts to a great extent.[44]

This often—not always—leads to the assimilation of cultural productions by the human agent that somehow associate space and place with the familiar trait or ideology due to the role that the family and the native context play in the growth process of the individual. Thus, a Basque nationalist family will usually either consciously or unconsciously provide its descendants with literature, arts, crafts etc. that stress an imagined relation between the Basque land and the desire for independence and freedom by fostering that specific type of hegemony—or, rather, counter-hegemony—if not intrinsically ideological productions, at least interpreted through a given ideological lens. This individual might develop his or her character either in resemblance or opposition with the provided education and context, but even in a globalised framework where worldwide information is easily accessible, these two elements still form the grounds upon which identity is primarily built.

In our postmodern context especially, the new conception of spatiality allows for a specific place to be analysed from a variety of perspectives in order to generate a plural image that is both realistically and fictionally constructed. A person living in a country with more or less free access to culture can be influenced by very disparate ideologies. Nowadays, in Tally's words in the introduction to Westphal's *RFS*:

> [...] the realistic London of Dickens or Paris of Balzac are part of what [he calls] the literary cartography of the world, but so is Amaurotum, capital city of Thomas More's Utopia, or Minas Tirith, capital of Gondor in J.R.R. Tolkien's Middle-earth. So is William Faulkner's Yoknapatawpha County, which would seem to combine the referential space of Faulkner's own Oxford, Mississippi, with the imaginary spaces traversed by fictional Compsons, Bundrens, and Snopeses. (x)

All these places are both real and imaginary, as Dicken's London or Balzac's Paris exist and have existed in the minds of millions of readers, soaking up collective culture and shaping the cities themselves by acting as referential agents through which the people

[44] While it is true that in a globalised Western framework the child will likely have access to a wide variety of information—and will thus have a chance to widen the scope from the familiar to the global—the familiar, the native, still plays an important role. On the other hand, we must also acknowledge the fact that not everyone in the planet has the same possibilities when it comes to having access to the net and to a global context.

who actively participate in the creation of the urban map see them. At the same time, a real place like Mont Saint-Michel might recall echoes of the fictional Minas Tirith, compromising the engagement with the place of those people acquainted in any way with the *The Lord of the Rings* (1954-1955), just like the English countryside might evoke Tolkien's Shire and thus modify one's engagement with the location. In sort, "...geocriticism allows us to understand 'real' places by understanding their fundamental fictionality. And vice-versa, of course. We understand 'fictional' spaces by grasping their own levels of reality as they become part of our world" (x). This aligns, precisely, with what Westphal himself mentions in *RFS*:

> ...fictional discourse has gained the force of persuasion. And if credibility in fiction has always been measured in terms of the reference to the 'real' world, in the postmodern era one can no longer say that the world of cement, concrete, or steel is more real than the world of paper and ink. (3)

And to prove this point, one might recall how Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings* has stirred ecological discourse, as discussed by scholars such as Tom Shippey, Susan Jeffers or Matthew T. Dickerson, to the point of inspiring countercultural and counter-hegemonic lifestyles in ecovillages that propose different core notions of common sense and different models of communitarian order. These are settlements that provide people with the opportunity to adopt a sustainable way of life alternative to the consumerist society. Although one might be reluctant to admit Tolkien's direct influence on the creation and pollination of these types of villages—especially one who believes fantasy to have simply an escapist value—the truth is that there exist several academic works that establish a clear and reasonable relation between this way of living and Tolkien's literary production. For instance, in Ryan H. Edgington's essay titled "Be Receptive to the Good Earth: Health, Nature, and Labor in Countercultural Back-to-the-land Settlements" (2008) we read the following:

> Eleanor Agnew, who lived as a member of the Middle Earth commune in Vermont, suggests that American culture's "glorification of the pastoral, through song, poetry, literature and myth, fed our growing desire for the land." As is evident in the moniker "Middle Earth," the bucolic imagery of J. R. R. Tolkien's literary works *The Lord of the Rings* and *The Hobbit*, also influenced their conceptions of rural life. (286)

The very name—Middle-earth—of the ecovillage in which Eleanor Agnew lived exposes the direct and clear relation between Tolkien's work and many sustainable and countercultural settlements influenced by the echoes of his view on nature. Through the pastoral and the bucolic, Tolkien transcended the most contemplative and idyllic spheres of these genres and had a real revolutionary and alternative impact on humanity by actually changing many people's understanding of nature.

Also, in Lucinda Carspecken's study regarding sustainability and freedom titled *An Unreal State: Sustainability and Freedom in an Evolving Community* (2012), she dedicates the first chapter "That Dose of Unreality: an Introduction to Lothlórien Nature Sanctuary" (1) precisely to a natural sanctuary located in Indiana called Lothlórien, based on one of the Elven dwellings which appears in *The Fellowship of the Ring* (1954).

Given all of the above, we could surmise that the human mind is actually a multireferential and multilayered mix of symbols that constantly refer to each other, making connections and building new layers of symbolic meaning. If we perceive reality precisely by projecting previously assimilated references on it and interiorising new ones, then literature and art in general are as real and significant as the real world, for we, as rational beings, cannot perceive the real world without mirroring our inner desires, thoughts, imaginations and references into it, thus acting and shaping our surroundings accordingly, that is, engaging into spatial practice.

Chapter 2

Origins of Westeros

2.1. The configuration of a continent and the establishment of hegemonic networks by the timeline of *ASoIaF*

In the world of ice and fire, and more specifically in Westeros,[45] the general organisation of space has shifted several times according to hegemonic movements. In the timeline when the events in *ASoIaF* begin, the geographical and administrative configuration of space is the following: there are nine regions; all of them submitted to the ultimate rule of the Iron Throne, but managed by different ancient houses. The nine regions are the following—from south to north—: Dorne—house Martell—the Stormlands—house Baratheon—the Reach—house Tyrell—the Crownlands—house Baratheon—the Westerlands—house Lannister—the Riverlands—house Tully—the Vale—house Arryn—the Iron Islands—house Greyjoy—and the North[46]—house Stark. However, the Crownlands and the Riverlands are not actually considered kingdoms because they were created after Aegon Targaryen's[47] conquest of Westeros, and therefore did not belong to the original Kingdoms. Due to this, the name 'Seven Kingdoms' is maintained, although there are nine effective regions. All of these are ultimately subjected to the Iron Throne and are administered by it, even though some of them have more autonomy than others, as well as a more distinctive cultural and religious identity.

In order to understand how the configuration of the continent of Westeros when *ASoIaF* starts came to be, we ought to identify five main spatial-hegemonic processes in the history of George R. R. Martin's secondary world: The Dawn Age, The Coming of the First Men—and the subsequent Age of Heroes—the Coming of the Andals, the

[45] The continent where the Seven Kingdoms are located.
[46] North as a kingdom, first letter capitalised.
[47]Before the timeline of the saga, many more events took place that configured the geography of Westeros as we know it. Before the Targaryen conquest, Westeros went through several invasions and processes of colonisation that gave birth to the Seven Kingdoms. For further general reference on the history of George R. R. Martin's secondary world, see *The World of Ice and Fire* (2014). For specific reference about the Targaryen conquest, see page 31 of the same book.

Coming of the Rhoynar and Aegon's Conquest, the last four being essentially colonial processes.

In fact, colonial space could be considered as a spatial category in itself—and thus worth taking into account in this chapter—as it presents certain common traits that carve the fight for the land and the cultural impositions on the very landscape. In "Introduction: Making Space in Settler Colonies" (2010), scholars Tracy Banivanua and Penelope Edmonds provide information that fits well as an introduction for this chapter:

> In geopolitical terms, the impact of settler colonialism is starkly visible in the landscapes it produces: the symmetrically surveyed divisions of land, roads, power lines […]; carved and preserved national forest […]; and the socially coded areas of human habitation and trespass that are bordered, policed, or defended. Land and the organized spaces on it, in other words, narrate the stories of colonisation. (2)

2.1.1. The Dawn Age

In the Dawn Age, as it is written in *WoIaF*—maester Yandel, the fictional writer of the book, will be referred to as 'the narrator'—"On Westeros, from the Lands of Always Winter to the shores of the Summer Sea, only two peoples existed: the children of the forest and the race of creatures known as giants" (5). The map of the Dawn Age in Westeros is devoid of regions, cities, towns or villages. On its two-dimensional representations—understood as by Lefebvre in his Spatial Triad—the space of the Dawn Age is shown as a piece of land with no geographical boundaries.[48] This happens because Westeros was not ruled by humans and was therefore regarded as a virgin land despite it being inhabited by the Children of the Forest and the Giants, which gives us the first clue on the anthropocentrism affecting spatial practice through hegemonic powers in George R. R. Martin's secondary world. Just as in the primary world, representation is not objective, and even if it is true that one of the reasons why the Dawn Age is portrayed as empty may be linked to the fact that, as it is mentioned in *WoIaF*, there are few accounts of that time (5), there is also the issue of the postcolonial bias in spatial representation.

[48] See appendix A.

We know for certain that, according to George R. R. Martin's writings, the previous civilisations of humans did leave some records about the Dawn Age, however few: "What little is known to us of those days is contained in the oldest of texts: the tales written down by the Andals, by the Valyrians, and by the Ghiscari, and even by those distant people of fabled Asshai" (5), and many of the habits of the Children of the Forest and the Giants are neatly gathered in *WoIaF*, which points at the fact that there is indeed some information on where the main Children's and Giant's settlements were located. However, Martin and his team chose not to include a more elaborate map among the accounts of the Dawn Age which were diegetically written by maesters of the citadel in Oldtown.[49] We should not forget that the maesters are a Westerosi[50] order, subjected to Westerosi hegemony, and thus to a colonial past that needs justification. They relegate the Children to a status of mythic characters, and the lack of representation or exhaustive research about their lives and societies may answer to a need to muffle the bloody history behind their colonial past, which also serves as a way to maintain the mystery around the figure of the original tribes of Westeros; if they are elevated to the status of mythological beings under tailored representation, then all the problems and specificities of the colonial process are removed in order to give way to a cloudy, romanticised heritage. In *Game of Thrones versus History: Written in Blood* (2017), Brian A. Pavlac writes:

> The maesters mythologize the Children of the Forest in much the same way that the Romans and the Anglo-saxons mythologized the original tribes that occupied the British Isles. According to Barry Cunliffe, the Romans saw the British Isles as mysterious and otherworldly, "places where anything could happen."[51] (74)

This exoticisation fosters a softened picture of a colonial past that prevents historical memory, enhances otherness, and allows for abusive spatial practices to be sustained in time. In "Black Jungle, Beautiful Forest: A Postcolonial, Green Geocriticism of the Indian Sundarbans" (2016), Luca Raimondi establishes a connection between postcolonial studies and geocriticism by emphasising the process of "representation and

[49] Headquarters of the Maester order in Westeros; they are the gatherers of knowledge and scholars within Martin's secondary world.
[50] Westeros demonym.
[51] Original quote in *Britain Begins* (2013): "[...] the distant offshore islands of Britain were places of mystery and of promise. Set far out into the surrounding ocean, they were liminal places—places where normal rules held no sway, places were anything could happen" (1).

textualization of the unknown 'Other'" (115),[52] which in the case of Martin's secondary world is mainly carried out by the maesters:

> In his 2007 monograph La *géocritique: réel, fiction, espace* (Paris: Minuit), Westphal establishes a close link between geocriticism and minority discourses, not least postcolonial theory; indeed, questions of space and place have always been central to postcolonial literary criticism. It is currently understood that the colonial conquest of overseas territories was preceded and sustained by a cultural process of representation and textualization of the unknown "Other", shaped into familiar forms and reconceptualized through accepted metaphors. (115)

Some pages earlier, we have also written about the homogenising narrative that Turner used in his spatial rhetoric about the non-colonised lands in North America; he talked about "winning a wilderness" (1), the wilderness being, in this case, the chosen term to refer to what it actually was a heterogeneity of villages, cultures, dwelling places, places of worship, trails, trading routes etc. In the case of *ASoIaF*, the result is similar. The representation in the form of a map of the time before the humans came to settle in Westeros is that of an empty landscape, in line with the myth of the virgin land that is there to be won characteristic in colonial narratives, a concept that according to scholar Anne McClintock in *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest* (1995) involves:

> [...] both a gender and racial dispossession. Within patriarchal narrative, to be virgin is to be empty of desire and void of sexual agency, passively awaiting the thrusting, male insemination of history, language and reason. Within colonial narrative, the eroticizing of 'virgin' space also effects a territorial appropriation, for if the land is virgin, colonized peoples cannot claim aboriginal territorial rights, and white male patrimony is violently assured as the sexual and military insemination of an interior void. (30)

The myth of the empty, virgin landscape that was so widespread during colonial times finds a fictional representation in Martin's secondary world. It is the translation of male dominant narratives into practices of spatial representation; an eroticisation of landscape that excites the imagination and creates a representational space—again, in the sense of

[52] Essay published in *Ecocriticism and Geocriticism: Overlapping Territories in Environmental and Spatial literary Studies* (2016).

Lefebvre's Spatial Triad—that encourages patriarchal imagination by means of art, novels, symbols etc. which exoticise the myth of the virgin land ripe for conquest and exploitation. This exoticisation shrouds space and place in a cloak of mystery and helps generate a homogeneous narrative of thrill and emotion for the new around a land that was neither new nor uninhabited. This is complemented by an institutionalised representation of space that deliberately ignores inner alterity and heterogeneity by producing an empty geography that emphasises possibilities for development, expansion, and sparks a craving for capitalising the richness of the supposedly non-capitalised resources by ignoring native societies, worldviews, and the spatial practices and means of production which result from those worldviews. After all, if something can be taken, why not take it? Why not exploit the resources available in that so-called 'virgin' land? Why not expand if strength allows it? All of these rhetorical questions were, and somehow still are in capitalist states, *senso comune* in the Italian, Gramscian sense which puts emphasis "on the held-in-common (comune) nature of the beliefs"; that which is "accepted beyond question" (Crehan 2016: x). This is what happened when the First Men—the first wave of colonisers—arrived to Westeros, but in order to better understand the process, we should give more information regarding the societies of the Giants and the Children of the Forest before all else.

First of all, the Giants were "...huge and powerful creatures, but simple" and were always "...ranging were they would and taking what they wanted" (*WoIaF*: 5). Their social organisation was practically non-existent, and they "...had no kings and no lords, made no homes save in caverns or beneath tall trees, and they worked neither metal nor fields" (6). In contrast, the Children of the Forest lived in society, working tree barks and leaves for garment, wood for the building of bows and small weapons, and building "...shelters of leaves and withes up in the branches of trees—[like]secret tree towns" (7). Therefore, in the Dawn Age we encounter a practically unspoiled Westeros in the environmental sense with two main peoples; the Giants, being creatures with no fixed homes that did not alter the terrain save for some burial grounds, and who roamed freely across the land with no centralised ties to any homeland, and the Children, who did live in society and create towns, but integrated the structures as well as they could into the natural world, claiming no strict ownership over the land.

Giants were solitary creatures with no hegemonic networks as such, and therefore had a very loose and mobile spatial organisation, while the Children did have

a kind of hegemony that was inherently intertwined with the natural world; their speech was based on the sounds they heard every day, and it sounded as "the song of stones in a brook, or the wind through leaves, or the rain upon the water" (6). Their gods were the "innumerable gods of the streams and forests and stones" (6), the weirwood trees were sacred for them, and their ruling class was formed by the 'greenseers'[53] or 'skinchangers', who had a special relationship with nature due to their ability to communicate with animals and mingle with their spirits,[54] which gave them a more visceral and biocenctric knowledge of the world. Their hegemony was an ecocentric type of hegemony, and their notion of 'common sense' was that of respect for nature; they could not even abide the idea of forcing their homes into the land, for that went against their *senso comune,* because the cultural, religious and social aspects that built their hegemonic system were all woven into the fabric of the landscape. The greenseers, having a deep knowledge and understanding of the ways of nature, fostered a model of ethics and social life that placed nature at its core.

This ecocentric society was abruptly disrupted when the First Men came into Westeros and "Unlike the Children, [they] farmed the land and raised up fortrings and villages. And in so doing, they took to chopping down the weirwood trees..." (8). There are accounts of similar situations happening in the primary world when a kind of hegemony of nature is established, presenting the preservation and respect for the natural environment as the filler of the empty signifier of social order as well as the central perception of common sense. In his essay "Going Back into a Future of Simplicity: Taiwan Aborigines' Sustainable Utilization of Natural Resources" (2016) collected in *Ecocriticism in Taiwan: Identity, Environment and the Arts* (2016), scholar Ming-Tu Yang explains how in Lanyu—also known as the Orchid Island, in Taiwan—the aborigines refused to modernise their houses, which were built as in harmony with the environment as possible:

> Taiwan's aborigines built their own houses, wove their own clothes, and prepared their own food. In building houses they used only local, natural and durable materials such as hardy lumber, pliable but strong bamboo, and everlasting slate for the columns and main structures. [...] The traditional

[53] "[...] the Children were led by their greenseers, and there is no doubt that they could once be found from the Lands of Always Winter to the shores of the Summer Sea" (*WoIa*F: 7).
[54] "[...] they were capable of communicating with animals in a way that we cannot achieve [...]" (*WoIaF*: 6).

> aborigines built only small houses, having no interest in pretentious mansions. A good example was found in Lanyu. The local government of the Taitung Hsien urged the people of Lanyu to demolish their traditional houses and build modern houses under the governmental financial support in 1960. But two tribes refused to follow the government's housing policy. The main concern of the Lanyu people, like that of other aboriginal people, with regard to the houses was safety, practicality and harmony with nature. They did not like to build large houses to assert pride of wealth and to proclaim presumptuously the mastery of human intelligence over the unruliness of nature. [...] They like to place their houses so as to integrate them into nature [...]. (11)

The case of the Lanyu is, in many aspects, similar to that of the Children of the Forest. Overlaying their social order, there was an alternative type of hegemony that did not come from human-like institutions—although it was of course processed through human-like constructs outside of the capitalist morale—it was the hegemony of nature, so interwoven with their way of life that it was profoundly embedded into their notions of common sense. How could the government ask the Lanyu to build modern houses if they were not going to be properly integrated within the ecosphere? Just as they integrated their houses into nature and crafted their own things based on durability and practicality, the Children wove their own clothes, built tree towns integrated within forests, and worshiped the Old Gods of nature, that is, their social—and thus spatial—configuration was primarily based on the hegemony of nature promoted by the greenseers.

The First Men, on the other hand, represent precisely that need to reassert human mastery over nature by building villages, ringforts and needlessly large structures that kept nature at bay; in the universe of George R. R. Martin—or Martinverse—they embody the first disruption of the overlaying hegemony of nature which is replaced by the pure hegemony of the human sustained upon the domination of natural spaces. Thus, both the Children and the First Men represent two very different types of spatial practices based on their opposite notions of common sense with regards to the environment and the land: the dominant expansive and the respectful integrative.

2.1.2. The coming of the First Men

The First Men where a race of humans who came from Essos, and they came into Westeros by the thousands:

> Why these people left their homelands is lost to all knowing, but when they came, they came in force. Thousands entered and began to settle the lands, and as the decades passed, they pushed farther and farther north. [...] Unlike the children, the First Men farmed the land and raised up ringforts and villages. And in so doing, they took to chopping down the weirwood trees, including those with carved faces, and for this, the children attacked them, leading to hundreds of years of war. (*WoIaF*: 8)

It was the beginning of a rather impervious process of colonisation, which also provoked a sudden shift in spatial organisation due to the exercise of domination by the First Men upon the land, and thus upon the Children. We say 'impervious' because it was not a process of colonisation in the sense we generally understand it; it did not bring with it the establishment of hegemony among the native society of the Children,[55] nor a real assimilation of the ways of the First Men by the Children. Instead, pure domination was exercised upon them with genocidal intention, and they were violently relegated rather than assimilated within the colonial society. However, if we take into account the general definition of colonialism given by the Oxford Dictionary, we could indeed call it a process of colonisation: "The policy or practice of acquiring full or partial political control over another country, occupying it with settlers, and exploiting it economically" ("Colonialism").

The initial intention of the First Men was simply to get rid of the Children of the Forest in order to be able to impose and establish their society without any constraints, which was quite far from the Children's idea of a society built around the hegemony of the natural world. The first men enjoyed nature[56], but they tamed 'natural space', and enforced different degrees of 'urban space', and their advance was swift because their hegemonic values[57] fostered the expansion and perpetuation of their towns and villages with the unrestrained use of available resources. Nature was *Bestand* for them, in the

[55] I have repeatedly mentioned the Children, but the Giants, who were a race that also inhabited the lands of Westeros at the time, have not been forgotten. However, since they did not organise themselves in societies or even villages, they did not pose a real defined threat for the colonisers.
[56] *WoIaF*: 222
[57] The values fostered by their ruling class—small-scale monarchies—and model of production.

Heideggerian sense, "standing-reserve" (17), or stock-piled resources, as he describes it in "The Question Concerning Technology" (1977).[58] The problem of this perspective is that, as William Lovitt writes in the introduction to his translation of Heidegger's collection of essays *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays* (1977): "[...] when man becomes subject, when from out of his consciousness he assumes dominion over everything outside himself, when he represents and objectifies and, in objectifying, begins to take control over everything" (xxix). It is also worth to quote Heidegger's essay directly from the same book:

> Everywhere everything is ordered to stand by, to be immediately at hand, indeed to stand there just so that it may be on call for a further ordering. Whatever is ordered about in this way has its own standing. We call it the standing-reserve [*Bestand*] .The word expresses here something more, and something more essential, than mere "stock". The name "standing-reserve" assumes the rank of an inclusive rubric. It designates nothing less than the way in which everything presences that is wrought upon by the challenging revealing. Whatever stands by in the sense of standing-reserve no longer stands over against us as object. (17)

Heidegger explains the undignifying status of *Bestand*, which is not considered an object, but has a different kind of status altogether, a thing whose only role is to stay there until needed for utilitarian purposes.

We should therefore try to imagine the extent of the harshness of the clash between such different social models with profoundly different notions of *senso comune* or "that which is accepted beyond question"; two completely opposite worldviews unchallenged for thousands of years: the utilitarian mindset of the First Men that ethically enabled them to use and utilitarise any resource at hand in order to build their structures and produce an urban space where their human-centred social life could unfold in distinction and opposition to wild natural space, and the respectful integrative ways of the Children, whose social life was always aligned with ecocentric values as a result of a strong collective will of preservation boosted by the special awareness of the greenseers, and therefore produced an space integrated within nature. As it has been mentioned before, their very speech sounded like the sounds of nature, and language

[58] Originally "Die Frage nach der Technik" (1949).

being the vehicle for culture and the main tool with which we unfold our social life, it is easily perceived how deep biocentric hegemony was woven within their way of life.

Therefore, as the First Men enforced their artificial kind of space upon the lands of Westeros and radically altered biocentric spatial organisation with their spatial practices of domination and notions of *Bestand*, the Children grew angry, wary, and afraid, and responded with years of bloody wars and skirmishes with the purpose of defending their land. They even modified the topography of the continent by using the greenseers' dark magic to break the only earth link between Westeros and Essos[59]—where the First Men came from—called the Arm with the waters of the ocean, which was later renamed as 'the Broken Arm'.[60] See quote from *GoT*: "The old songs say that the greenseers used dark magics to make the seas rise and sweep away the land, shattering the Arm, but it was too late to close the door" (905).

However, the First Men were bigger and stronger, and most importantly, they were prepared to use any resource at hand in order to win, which rendered the Children's not so permissive ways too weak to withstand such a war: "The wars went on until the earth ran red with blood of men and children both, but more children than men, for men were bigger and stronger, and wood and stone and obsidian made a poor match for bronze" (905).

These brutal conflicts ended with the Pact of God's Eye where the Children, knowing that they would lose for good if the struggle continued, "gave up all the lands of Westeros save for the deep forests" (*WoIaF*: 8), resulting on another, more lasting shift on spatial articulations. This time, there were several isolated forested cores to which the hegemony of untamed nature was relegated, and the rest, where the human hegemony sustained on the ideology of *Bestand* was chief.[61] In *GoT* we get a bit more information on the outcome of the Pact:

> Finally the wise of both races prevailed, and the chiefs and heroes of the First Men met the greenseers and wood dancers amidst the weirwood groves of a small island in the great lake called Gods Eye.

[59] Compare maps in appendices A and B.
[60] This particular defensive deed would be decisive in later centuries and millennia, for it made it more difficult or even impossible for other peoples to cross from Essos to Westeros, and it also affected trade routes and relations of hegemony and domination.
[61] But with some alterations regarding religion and spirituality from the parth of the First Men, which we will specify in the next pages.

> There they forged the Pact. The First Men were given the coastlands, the high plains and bright meadows, the mountains and bogs, but the deep woods were to remain forever the children's, and no more weirwoods were to be put to the axe anywhere in the realm. So the gods might bear witness to the signing, every tree on the island was given a face, and afterward, the sacred order of green men was formed to keep watch over the Isle of Faces. (905)

While before the Pact the encounters between the Children and the First Men had been mainly hostile, after the war ended, there began a process of what might be called a cultural exchange without assimilation from the part of the colonised but with some of what could be called cultural appropriation from the part of the First Men. Although the Children were not so keen on assimilating the First Men's ways, which had cost them so dearly in blood and land and collided too aggressively with their own, the First Men did adopt some of the elements of the culture of the Children: "The Pact began four thousand years of friendship between men and children. In time, the First Men even put aside the gods they had brought with them, and took up the worship of the secret gods of the wood" (905).

However, in spite of all the ongoing debate, the idea of assimilation tends to be linked generally—although, again, subjected to ongoing discussion—to a minority cultural or ethnic group being diluted and absorbed by a majority one. See some examples: Joseph Fitcher in *Sociology* (1957): "[...] a social process through which two or more persons or groups accept and perform one another's patterns of behavior. We commonly talk about a person, or a minority category, being assimilated into a group or a society [...]" (229). Margaret A. Gibson in *Accommodation without Assimilation* (1988): "I use the term assimilation to describe the process whereby individuals of one society or ethnic group are incorporated or absorbed culturally into another" (24). And, to wrap it up, the official, current definition of the concept of assimilation in anthropology given by Elizabeth Prine in the Encyclopedia Britannica:

> Assimilation, in anthropology and sociology, the process whereby individuals or groups of differing ethnic heritage are absorbed into the dominant culture of a society. The process of assimilating involves taking on the traits of the dominant culture to such a degree that the assimilating group becomes socially indistinguishable from other members of the society. ("Assimilation")

Therefore, we could say that what happened with the Children and the First Men was more of a process of relegation and re-accommodation by the Children to the spaces yielded by the First Men than one of assimilation. The Children established themselves, we assume, rather impermeably, because even if in the hegemonic historical narrative enacted by the descendants of the First men we are told in a sweeping and somewhat naive statement that the Pact was followed by "four thousand years of friendship between men and children" (905),[62] the Children that do remain alive in the timeline of the *ASoIaF* do not show any signs of assimilation of the ways of the First Men. In fact, they express a deep sorrow for the loss of untamed nature and their exile beyond the Wall as well as for their dwindling numbers:

> "Where are the rest of you?" Bran asked Leaf, once. "Gone down into the earth," she answered. "Into the stones, into the trees. Before the First Men came all this land that you call Westeros was home to us, yet even in those days we were few. The gods gave us long lives but not great numbers, lest we overrun the world as deer will overrun a wood where there are no wolves to hunt them. That was in the dawn of days, when our sun was rising. Now it sinks, and this is our long dwindling. The giants are almost gone as well, they who were our bane and our brothers. The great lions of the western hills have been slain, the unicorns are all but gone, the mammoths down to a few hundred. The direwolves will outlast us all, but their time will come as well. In the world that men have made, there is no room for them, or us." (*DwD*: 644)

On the other hand, the First Men took influence from the ways of the Children in their own terms, especially with regards to religion. Probably them taking up the gods of the Children and forsaking most of the previous ones they had[63] is related in a way to their interactions with them after the Pact, which were not too frequent, we can assume, due to the very different dwelling models of both the Children and the First Men that probably isolated ones from the others. The Children were not likely to enter the forts and villages built with *Bestand* were the First Men lived, and the First Men were not

[62] This is in fact told by Maester Luwin, an intellectual man trained in the Citadel of Oldtown, the main institution in charge of keeping knowledge, and the gatherers and recorders of the main historical narratives in Westeros. His historical discourse is a product of the winner's narrative.

[63] References to the Gods the First Men worshiped before the Old Gods are found in the books. Some examples are: The Lady of the Waves (*DwD*: 176), The Lord of the Skies (176), The Drowned God (795). These Gods were a reflection of the human-centered culture of the First Men—the titles of 'Lady' and 'Lord' reassert this—as opposed to the Gods of the Children, which did not have names and were not human-like.

likely to enter the deep forests that had been granted for the Children, not even for timber or hunting prey, for the untouchability of these locations was one of the chief conditions of the Pact. However, the main reason why they took up the Old Gods is probably a result of their daily interactions with the weirwood trees that were left uncut near the lands of the First Men. They may have been swayed by their sometimes supernatural influence,[64] and due to this pull and the occasional bits of influence coming from the Children, they may have felt compelled or encouraged to build many of their villages and forts risen after the Pact around the forests containing weirwood trees, thus organising space around these elements under the subtle influence of the echo of the hegemony of nature that ruled the culture of the Children, and ultimately taking up their Gods.

This taking up of the Children's religion by the First Men could be considered as cultural appropriation for two main reasons: the first, because the First Men in this case represent the winners of the colonial process that drove the Children away from their lands and hugely decimated their numbers. The second, because after having done so in ways that were absolutely harmful towards their ecocentric religious beliefs, they took the Children's ancient gods of nature as their own, the gods of the culture and the way of life they had sought to eradicate. According to Jonathan Hart in his essay "Translating and Resisting Empire: Cultural Appropriation and Postcolonial Studies" (1997): "[…] culture is the material, spiritual and artistic expression of a group that defines itself or that others define as culture, both according to daily lived experience and according to practice and theory" (138), and "Appropriation is the making of what belongs to one individual or group into the property of another individual or group. That something can be tangible or intangible property" (138). Therefore, if we take into account both of these definitions of 'culture' and 'appropriation', then: "Cultural appropriation occurs when a member of one culture takes a cultural practice or theory of a member of another culture as if it where his or her own or as if the right of possession should not be questioned or contested. This same appropriation can happen between groups as groups" (138). What the First Men did, after they chopped down many of the sacred weirwood trees and built their villages and towns out of stone and timber, can

[64] The weirwood trees actually had eyes sometimes, when the skinchangers of the Children—and some of them of the First Men—used their powers to see through them, just like Bran does: "Those were shadows of days past that you saw, Bran. You were looking through the eyes of the heart tree in your godswood" (651).

only be described as appropriation; again, just like the trees and stones had been *Bestand* for them, they also took a religion that was there for the taking.

The main issue is that if the First Men as a race had undergone an arch of redemption and increased awareness across generations that changed their spatial practices and ultimately led them to take up the gods of the Children, it would have been more of a process of positive assimilation. However, the version of the religion of the Children that the First Men assumed was more of a comfortable combination between their previous values that allowed them to use nature as *Bestand*, and an aesthetic love for the nature in the new land they had conquered. They took the spiritual lore of the Old Gods, but they left out the hegemony of nature which was chief and instrumental in the Children's spatial practices and social life. To see the truth of this claim, we need only to have a look at the Age of Heroes as described in *WoIaF*, where the First Men left many traces of buildings and forts they had continued to build and live in as they always had: "[…] yet unlike the children of the forest and the giants, the First Men of this Age of Heroes left behind some ruins and ancient castles that can corroborate parts of the legends, and there are stone monuments in the barrow fields and elsewhere marked with their runes" (10). In the same way, the descendants of the First Men that live in the North—Stark, Karstark etc.—in the timeline of the saga and maintain the worship of the Old Gods do not show a particularly ecocentric awareness, and their love for nature is mostly limited to the esoteric and spiritual praise of the elements of nature that conform the imaginary of their identity.[65] In fact, they kept on raising even bigger forts, villages and castles; the keep of Winterfell and the city of Oldtown in the North where the legacy of the First Men remains strong in *ASoIaF* are examples of this.

Therefore, although the appropriation of a part of the Children's biocentric religion did affect spatial organisation in the space produced by the First Men, it was not decisive in their enforcement of urban space upon the land. In fact, the First Men, in line with their dominant ways, built their castles and keeps around the pieces of forest

[65] The Stark words "Winter is Coming", and the reiterative references to the natural landscape of the North that are not found so often in the descriptions of the other kingdoms throughout the books highlight this. See reference to the Stark words in page 24 in *GoT*, and a reference to the northern landscape in page 41 of the same book as examples.

that contained the sacred weirwood trees[66] in a gesture that was probably intended as a sign of respect, but a kind of respect still framed within their utilitarian *senso comune*. In doing so, they enclosed nature for their private use in order to satisfy their spiritual needs whenever they wanted by framing and creating places with emotional and religious significance for them, but loosing the real wild spirit of the faith in the Old Gods.

After the Pact was established, for the only humans in Westeros at the time it was the beginning of what was later baptised by the descendants of the clear winners as the Age of Heroes, "[...] in which kingdoms rose and fell, noble houses were founded and withered away, and great deeds were accomplished" (*WoIaF*: 10), planting the seeds of the Seven Kingdoms, and glorifying the age of human hegemony and domination. However, there is a certain event that must be mentioned before moving forward to the next waves of conquest because of its key relevance in spatial hegemonies during the timeline of *ASoIaF*, and which we will discuss in later sections. The event is called 'The Long Night', and is described in *WoIaF* as:

> […] when a season of winter came that lasted a generation – a generation in which children were born, grew into adulthood, and in many cases died without ever seeing the spring. […] Yet there are other tales – harder to credit and yet more central to the old histories – about creatures known as the Others. According to these tales, they came from the Frozen Lands of Always Winter, bringing the cold and darkness with them as they sought to extinguish all light and warmth. (11)

This event was key because after the Others were defeated and driven back North to the Lands of Always Winter, it led to the construction of the Ice Wall which is central to the Martinverse. The Wall was built by the Children, the Giants and the First Men at the northernmost side of Westeros in order to prevent the Others—also known as 'white walkers'—from coming back.[67] The Others are presented as a uniform mass of evil and darkness; mindless walking corpses that brought unbearable cold with them, and

[66] In the North, where the legacy of the First Men remains most vivid in the timeline of the saga: "Up here it was different. Here every castle had its godswood, and every godswood had its heart tree, and every heart tree its face" (GoT: 27).
[67] See page 12 in *WoIaF*.

therefore we cannot speak about any kind of hegemonic intention they had.[68] They are portrayed more as a phenomenon similar to climate change or a natural disaster rather than as a group with a purpose to establish, and once they were defeated, the spatial organisation remained more or less the same after the damage was repaired; they were a parenthesis in the history of the first inhabitants of Westeros.

2.1.3. The coming of the Andals

As written in *WoIaF*: "the Andals originated in the lands of the Axe, east and north of where Pentos now lies" (17),[69] that is, they originally came from the same continent as the First Men (Essos). In the same page, we are told that they were at first a migratory people who did not remain in one place for long and had loose spatial ties, but in their case, this was precisely what in the end led them to create their empire: "they travelled south and west to carve out Andalos: the ancient realm the Andals ruled before they crossed the narrow sea" (17). The book does not specify how they did it, and it is true that the statement is somewhat sweeping, but we can quite logically assume that most likely some of the people became sedentary when they arrived to a place of interest that provided a comfort or a resource important enough for them to decide to stay and leave the nomadic lifestyle.

Andalos extended from shore to shore at the west of Essos, from the Narrow Sea to the Shivering Sea to be more specific, and it was settled partially by the Andals claiming uninhabited lands for themselves, and by using the force of iron tools and weapons to subdue the few tribes that did inhabit the Flatlands, the Velvet Hills and the coastal regions. According to *WoIaF*, the working of iron that gave them the edge against the other dwelling tribes in those lands was a result of early interactions with the civilisation of the Rhoynar, who were already advanced and knew of the working of metal. Evidence of ancient Rhoynish outposts is claimed to have been found also in Andal lands (17). These ancient Rhoynish outpost could represent evidence of a spatial configuration that echoed some kind of hegemony of the Rhoynar upon the Andals when they were less consolidated in their lands, or maybe a colonial intention by the

[68] To get a better grasp on this phenomenon, we should have to wait until the last books of the saga get published.
[69] Check appendix C.

Rhoynar[70] that was not fully carried out. It could have also been a friendly exchange, a result of Rhoynish incursions within Andal territory for exploration, but the need to build fully developed outposts that lasted enough to leave consistent ruins behind seems to answer more to a colonial purpose, or at least, to a need to find resources and create located means of production in order to exploit them.

What is very clear is that the advantage given to the Andals by iron tools defined their spatial practice, in the sense that it allowed them to exercise domination upon native tribes in order to expand their territory,[71] and also their conquest of Westeros. For the Andals, the historical justification of colonialism extended especially by septons and septas[72] was the following: "[...] it is said that the Seven themselves walked among their people in the hills of Andalos, and it was they who crowned Hugor of the Hill[73] and promised him and his descendants great kingdoms in a foreign land" (17). Of course, the actual reason was very different: the Andals had to retreat back to their original lands of the Axe due to the rise of the Freehold of Valyria, which made a show of power by colonising the lands previously belonging to Andalos, and then many of them sailed to Westeros in search for available lands to expand freely (18).

So far, we have seen how both the First Men and the Andals elaborated a historical justification for their ruthless expansion. In order to understand how colonial hegemony works, it is very necessary to highlight how a land that is actually inhabited by a heterogeneity of cultures and societies is portrayed as virgin, fertile, untainted, or simply available[74] by means of institutionalisation and representationalisation[75] of space. As a parenthesis; in the primary world, the civilising mission was a powerful message backed by hegemonic powers—meaning economic powers such as investors, trading companies, banks etc., or political powers such as governments, religious institutions etc.—which monopolised the spaces of representation, and was normalised by embedding it into general notions of common sense by means of the imagery created

[70] The earliest accounts of the Rhoynar tell us that they were not interested in expansion (*WoIaF*: 22), but perhaps in the times that these records do not cover, they did express some interest in it.
[71] Such is the case of the 'hairy men', who are believed to have settled the lands of Ib before the Andals wiped them out.
[72] The priests and priestesses of the Faith of the Seven, the original Andal religion.
[73] A king blessed by the seven Gods who appears in *The Seven Pointed Star*—the religious book of the Faith of the Seven—and guided the Andal civilisation to the new lands.
[74] These very adjectives are inevitably linked to a patriarchal narrative that eroticises that which it deems—from its privileged point of view that does not represent reality—'untainted' or 'virgin'.
[75] Meaning, to produce representational space as understood by Lefebvre.

in representational space that was the emotional or attractive part of the institutionalised 'moral' space of representation which enabled its intertwining with collective culture. In a few words: abusive spatial practice within colonial spaces—as in Lefebvre's spatial triad—is silenced by the moral justification given by hegemonic powers. While space is being forcefully modified by means of spatial practices of force, decimation or domination, the colonial mission secures itself an ethical and moral framework back where the dislocated central hegemony operates through means of empty representations of space and an exoticised representational space which romanticises it. This justification is interestingly spotted by scholar Gayatri Spivak on her reading of *Jane Eyre*'s (1847) character St. John Rivers in her article "Three Women's Texts and Critique of Imperialism" (1985), a missionary in India, whose moral and ethical justification of the colonial mission is a parody of wider colonial narratives, yet also very illustrative.[76]

In the line of what Spivak notes, these dichotomies that St. John Rivers proposes, these substitutions, they are not of an essential immobile nature prior to colonialism. They are inventions of an imperial state that seeks to present itself as the bringer of order, thus conveniently presenting polarised signifiers with strong pejorative or positive cultural meanings on its own terms—e.g. 'civilisation' and 'order' become empty signifiers, which the empire aims to fulfil in order to end radical 'disorder' or 'savagery'. The voices of the subaltern are drowned, and the imperial narrative speaks both for the colonised and the colonisers. This is similar to what happens during the Dawn Age in George R. R. Martin's secondary world; the writers of the history of the Dawn Age are humans that descend from the colonisers, and therefore need an ethical and moral framework that justifies—and even glorifies—their history. In the case of the Andals, it is the maesters of the Citadel secondarily, and the religious institution of the Faith of the Seven primarily that provide a moral justification for their invasion.

In the case of the Andals, religion had the strongest influence as filler of the empty signifier of social order. In fact, it is said that after the Valyrians denied them the worship of the Seven in Essos, "[...] the warriors of the Andals carved the seven-pointed

[76] "Earlier in the novel, St. John Rivers himself justifies the project: 'My vocation? My great work?... My hopes of being numbered in the band who have merged all ambitions in the glorious one of bettering their race-of carrying knowledge into the realms of ignorance-of substituting peace for war-freedom for bondage-religion for superstition-the hope of heaven for the fear of hell?' (JE, p. 376). Imperialism and its territorial and subject-constituting project are a violent deconstruction of these oppositions" (249).

star upon their bodies and swore by their blood and the Seven not to rest until they had hewn their kingdoms from the Sunset Lands" (*WoIaF*: 18). This religious zeal is representative of the clear superior hegemony of the religious institution upon the Andal civilisation, probably a result of the desperation caused by their forced retreat and the failure of their ruling class to keep their lands during the Valyrian expansion. The transformative and political aspect of religion is emphasised by Gramsci, whose "view of the 'religions' is instructive because it emphasizes the element of struggle, of process of politics" (Bellah 1980: 88).[77] In his prison notebooks, Gramsci writes: "The three elements—religion (or "active" conception of the world), State, party—are indissoluble, and in the real process of historico-political development there is a necessary passage from one to the other" (Gramsci in Hoare and Smith 1971: 266).[78] To summarise Gramsci's ideas, scholar Bruce Grelle provides and interesting and synthesised insight into a 1977 essay by Venezuelan author Otto Maduro called "New Marxist Approaches to the Autonomy of Religion" in his book *Antonio Gramsci and the Question of Religion: Ideology, Ethics and Hegemony* (2017):

> Firstly, religion is not regarded as a mere passive effect of the social relations of production; it is an active element of social dynamics, both conditioning and conditioned by social processes.
>
> Secondly, religion is not always a subordinate element within social processes; it may often play an important part in the origination and consolidation of a particular social structure.
>
> Thirdly, religion is not necessarily a functional, reproductive or conservative factor in society; it is often a main (and sometimes the only) channel to bring about a social revolution. (13)

The Andals, "made zealous by the conflict and flight [...] carved the seven-pointed star upon their bodies" (*WoIaF*: 18), and set off to Westeros with a renewed purpose. In this case, religion was the catalyst for deep social change, and its hegemonic effectiveness was largely proven by the capability of its narrative to unite a diverse civilisation under one political plan and one aesthetic symbol, the symbol of a new promised land.

[77] Quote from *Varieties of Civil Religion* by Robert Bellah (1980).
[78] Quote from *Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci* (1971), edited by Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell-Smith.

In this situation, the divine promise of a new land and a blessed saviour king who was indivisible from the faith of the Seven—Hugor of the Hill—was the hegemonic narrative that took over the signifier of order left empty by the previous ruling classes. It sank into the awareness of the Andal peoples filling them with hope for a new future in a different place where they could carve new and stronger kingdoms, while the intertextual romanticised reference to the primary world's 'Land of the Setting Sun'[79] reinforces the idea of an idealised representational space that directly affects spatial practice. This massive migration of the Andals left the Axe mostly uninhabited, and it was soon assimilated into the dominating hegemony of the Valyrian Freehold.

When the Andals arrived in Westeros, they landed on the Fingers, within the Vale of Arryn,[80] and, driven by a religious zeal that made them believe these lands were their right, they did it in a quite aggressive manner: "Sweeping through the Vale with fire and sword, the Andals began their conquest of Westeros. Their iron weapons and armor surpassed the bronze with which the First Men still fought, and many First Men perished in this war" (19). Once again, the superiority of the tools of the invaders was instrumental for the conquering of Westeros. However, this time the invasion was not aimed at genocide towards the humans inhabiting the continent, and was not as impermeable as the previous one either. The Andals were, after all, humans too, and originally from the same continent as the First Men, which made it much easier for them to ultimately merge or assimilate the First Men into their culture.

At some point, the Andals kings "shifted from conquest to consolidation" (20), and this process was carried out in two main ways: by allowing for certain freedom of religion, and by buffering the impact of imperial practices through marriage between ruling classes from both sides in order to strengthen hegemony by minimising both the feeling of invasion and the impact on identity conflicts, ensuring the future generation's integration within the hegemonic project. In *Love and Marriage in the Middle Ages* (1994), Georges Duby writes about the marriage institution:

> The permanent character of such structures within human is instituted unifiedly by nature and by nurture. For what matters is the reproduction not only of individuals but also for the cultural system which unites them and orders their relationships. To the dictates of the individual genetic code are therefore added

[79] In reference to the non-colonised North American Lands.
[80] See appendix B.

> the dictates of a collective code of behaviour, of a set of rules which also claim to be inviolable. [...] in short, rules whose object it is, naturally, to establish a couple, to make official the mingling together of the blood of two families, but more importantly to sanction the union not only of two individuals but also the joining of two social units, of two 'houses' so that a similar one may be created. The cultural system I am describing is the system of kinship, the code I am describing is the code of marriage. Indeed, at the core of these regulating mechanisms which have a fundamental social function lies marriage. (3)

This medieval way of consolidating hegemony through marriage is a very common practice in Westeros which, as described by scholar Carolyne Larrington in *Winter is Coming: The Medieval World of Game of Thrones* (2016), "strikes all sorts of resonances with the cultures of medieval Europe and Asia" (xv). The Andals, after making it plain that their power was too great for the First Men to resist, shifted to a consolidating stance; that is, they switched from domination to hegemony. In this way, they were able to assimilate most of the ancient houses of the First Men, while minimising the cultural clash, and legitimating their claim to the lands.

However, not all of the First Men of Westeros submitted to this consolidation process easily. The ironborn, dwellers of the Iron Islands,[81] thought they were safe for a very long time, until the gaze of the Andals turned towards them many years later:

> [...] at first, the new Andal kings sought to force worship of the Seven on the ironborn, but the ironborn would not have it. Instead they allowed it to coexist with their worship of the Drowned God. As on the mainland, the Andals married the wives and daugthers of the ironborn and had children by them. But unlike on the mainland, the Faith never took root; more, it did not hold firm even among the families of Andal blood. In time, only the Drowned God came to rule over the Iron Islands, with only a few houses remembering the Seven. (*WoIaF*: 20)

In fact, shortly after the arrival of the Andals, when House Hoare was in power, they allowed a sept[82] to be built in Great Wyk,[83] followed two generations later by another

[81] It is not known whether the ironborn are actually First Men, or if they are descendants from another race of humans that came from a different land. What is clear though is that the islands are close enough to Westeros to be subjected to the changes given in this land.
[82] The name for the temples of the Faith of the Seven.
[83] The largest of the Iron Islands.

one in Old Wyk,[84] resulting in an uprising that ended up with burned septs and massacred septons and worshipers of the Seven. Both of these islands were of high relevance for the ironborn; Great Wyk because, being the biggest of the Iron Islands, it was key in terms of production and gathering of resources such as ore (176), few farming lands as well as some remaining[85] forests for timber that still existed there. However, Old Wyk was considered to be the holiest of the islands (176), for it was there where the ancient Grey King[86] of the isles had had his seat. The ironborn there took this as a great slight to their ancient faith, because their religious and cultural sentiment had strong spatial roots in that place. This was because religion being a cultural process leading to specific spatial configurations and practices which in turn lead to the production of meaningful places,[87] the disruption of this sacralised place or 'point of rest', by foreign spatial practices was bound to cause tensions. It is worth to quote Roger W. Stump's *The Geography of Religion: Faith, Place and Space* (2008), where he underlines the connection between the worldview produced by religion and interaction with space: "The worldview and ethos of a religion have important connections to the ways in which believers understand and interact with the natural and cultural environments that they inhabit" (17). He then debunks the notion of religions as transcendental truths that are over earthly variables: "[...] despite their representation as universal truths transcending the particular, religious systems are interpreted and realized by adherents in specific local contexts. As a result, the contextuality of place pervades the religious dimensions of cultural experience" (17). He finally adds: "More generally, as religions spread out of their original hearths, they are typically transformed by tensions between received traditions and local practices and exigencies" (17).

If religions have strong ties to space, and what is more, if they are strong producers of particular geographies or places due to their highly cultural and social relevance, then the natural conclusion is that in a time of conquest and colonisation such as the one the Iron Islands where undergoing, the spatial sensitivity of religion would be enhanced as a way of reasserting their heritage in the face of colonisers. In the Iron Islands, but particularly in Old Wyk, the embodiment or projection of ironborn religious

[84] Another one of the Islands, located near to Great Wyk, in the gulf of the island, with great religious significance.
[85] The reason why we write 'remaining' is because, as specified in *WoIaF*, pp. 176-177, the shipwrights of the isles chopped down most of the forests during the early stages of ironborn history.
[86] The most ancient and legendary king of the Iron Islands. The ironborn claim he was descended from the Drowned God (*WoIaF*: 178).
[87] See Yi-Fu Tuan qtd. In Westphal 2011, section 1.4.

and cultural identity was deeply spatially rooted; it was a place in the sense we have clarified in the previous section, and the sea-imagery linked to the faith in the Drowned God was strongest there.[88] Because of this, the tensions that Stump mentions in his book which spring when a religious practice becomes dislocated—the Faith of the Seven in this case—and which in peaceful circumstances should result in adaptations or accommodations, in this case they escalated to great peaks of violence. The ironborn, especially the ones dwelling in Old Wyk, reasserted their identity in opposition to that of the Andal invaders, and the places and landscapes of Old Wyk were sacred symbols of this. Here we should recall Ann Davies' idea which was quoted some pages before regarding landscape and nationalism: "Landscape, space and place can be redolent of nationalism as well as nation" (2012: 60). Old Wyk was the primary historical, religious and mythical landscape that symbolised the ironborn as a nation sharing a particular identity.

To wrap this up, we need to mention how: "It was the North, and the North alone that was able to keep the Andals at bay, thanks to the impenetrable swamps of the Neck and the ancient keep of Moat Cailin.[89] [...] and so the Kings of Winter preserved their independent rule for many centuries to come" (*WoIaF*: 20). A full section will be dedicated to the geography and spatial articulations of hegemony in the North. For now, it is only relevant to mention how the Andals could not colonise it, and thus were not able to impose their cultural and religious practices upon them. The Children, in turn, were not so lucky, and:

> [...] the Andals proved bitter enemies to the remaining children. To their eyes, the children worshipped strange gods and had strange customs, and so the Andals drove them out of all the deep woods the Pact had once given them. [...] And what the First Men could never succeed in doing—eradicating the children entirely—the Andals managed to achieve in short order. (19)

All of these events gave rise to a new age of Andal hegemony where all of the southern kingdoms where submitted to their culture and religion as well as to their resulting

[88] Aeron Damphair, an ironborn priest: "Look not to me, nor to the laws of men, but to the sea. Raise your sails and unship your oars, my lord, and take yourself to Old Wyk. You, and all the captains and the kings. Go not to Pyke, to bow before the godless, nor to Harlaw, to consort with scheming women. Point your prow toward Old Wyk, where stood the Grey King's Hall. In the name of the Drowned God I summon you" (*FfC:* 39).

[89] See appendix F. Ancient fortress of the First Men, located to the North of the Neck, east of the Kingsroad.

spatial practices, but with the Iron Islands constituting a conflictive space, and the North remaining impermeable and independent.[90]

2.1.4. The coming of the Rhoynar

The Rhoynar were, as opposed to the Andals and the First Men, quite a peaceful people. They dwelt along the banks of the Rhoyne river which "stretched across much of western Essos"[91] (*WoIaF*: 21), and they worshiped the river as a God, calling it 'Mother Rhoyne'. Just like the First Men worshipers of the Old Gods organised space around the sacred groves of weirwood trees, the Rhoynish[92] articulated their spaces around the river Rhoyne, which they also deemed sacred. In fact, "[...] it is said their people had their own magic—a water magic very different from the sorceries of Valyria, which were woven of blood and fire" (21), and which represents the deep connection they had with nature and the waters of the river.

Another thing that distinguished them from the Andals and The First men was their lack of interest in aggressive expansion (22). They are portrayed as people whose lives orbited around the river, and who did not strive for anything besides living and thriving peacefully on its shores, where they had everything they wanted. It was precisely the richness and fertility of the lands around the river as well as their means of production that configured their sedentary spatial practice; the Andals, in turn, unfolded their spatial practice around the fact that they dwelt in flatlands or rocky mountains with scattered farming lands and resources, thus needing to move for sustenance.

To summarise these two attitudes towards space, Deleuze and Guattari give us a precise description in *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (1980): "sedentary space is striated, by walls, enclosures, and roads between enclosures, while nomad space is smooth, marked only by 'traits' that are effaced and displaced with the trajectory" (420). While sedentary—or striated—space is held and enclosed by building structures that concentrate social life and effectively connect and gather the means of production, nomad—or smooth—space is marked only by specific landmarks: "The nomad has a territory; he follows customary paths; he goes from one point to another;

[90] For a more accurate visualisation of the process, check map in appendix D.
[91] See appendix E.
[92] How the people who dwelt near the Rhoyne were called.

he is not ignorant of points (water points, dwelling points, assembly points, etc.)" (419). The nomad also organises space according to the production of social space, but each point is linked by a smooth space that is not enclosed and therefore offers a potentially infinite number of possibilities for movement from landmark to landmark; "In striated space, one closes off a surface and 'allocates' it according to determinate intervals, assigned breaks; in the smooth, one 'distributes' oneself in an open space, according to frequencies and in the course of one's crossings" (481). The specific point in nomad space "[...] exists only as a relay. A path is always between two points, but the in-between has taken on all the consistency and enjoys both an autonomy and a direction of its own" (419). The in-between gains exceptional importance in nomad space, constituting a rather open chronotope because it gives the infinity of itineraries exceptional relevance, and thickens the potential space-time—the path and the journey—which lies around the points within smooth space by giving it a decisive role in the unfolding process of nomadic lifestyle. On the other hand, sedentary space associates with a chronotope where space-time is concentrated within a domesticated and clearly outlined space of pre-established connections and interactions between points where social life unfolds as in a defined network. One is enclosed, the other one is open.

However, according to Westphal in *RFS*, "smooth space is constantly threatened by the striating that civilized, settled society imposes. We must at all costs render smooth space metric, or measurable" (40). Deleuze and Wattari acknowledge this ambiguity in striation and smoothness in both directions:

> And no sooner have we done that than we must remind ourselves that the two spaces in fact exist only in mixture: smooth space is constantly being translated, transversed into a striated space; striated space is constantly being reversed, returned to a smooth space. In the first case, one organizes even the desert; in the second, the desert gains and grows; and the two can happen simultaneously. […] it is possible to live striated on the deserts, steppes, or seas; it is possible to live smooth even in the cities, to be an urban nomad. (1980: 474-475/481)

Nevertheless, even if the striated-smooth changes happen bidirectionally, the existence of a schizophrenia in society that seeks to render every smooth space measurable and/or striated is undeniable, and thus the changes are indeed bidirectional, but also

asymmetrical: "there exist two nonsymmetrical movements, one of which striates the smooth, and one of which reimparts smooth space on the basis of the striated" (480).

This drive was precisely what led the Andals to eventually become sedentary and settled; the 'water point', 'the dwelling point', 'the assembly point' etc. eventually became concentrated in different locations all over the lands they had previously wandered—with pathways to link them—thus creating a striated, sedentary space; that is, modifying smooth space by influence of striation. In a sense, they did the same the First Men did when they arrived to Westeros: they enforced urban space upon untamed natural space, the town and the village upon the smooth space of nature, and smooth space was relocated, modified or displaced by influence of striation—crops, farming lands, forests for timber...[93]

In *The Production of Space*, Lefebvre writes about space: "It would be more accurate to say that it is at once a precondition and a result of social superstructures" (117), that is, space both conditions and is shaped by social life; it is not simply the scenery where social life unfolds and is altered by it, neither is it just that which conditions social life; it is both of them at the same time. He then adds: "networks of exchange and flows of raw materials and energy fashion space and are determined by it" (117). Given the configuration of Roynish cities and towns as independent units with delimited territories, each with its farming lands and access to river or sea waters—all of them along the shores of the Rhoyne and with access to either the rich waters of the river or to the Summer Sea, as is the case of the great port city of Sarhoy, or the ancient city of Sar Mell[94]—we can conclude that their spatial configurations and practices were based mostly on zero-kilometre and self-sufficient production of resources due to the proximity of both the river and its fertile banks, which both conditioned and were modified by the configuration of Roynish means of production. Among the Rhoynish cities, Sarhoy is the only one that is specified to be essentially a port city with brimming commerce and with direct access to the Summer Sea.[95] For this reason, we could

[93] While it is true that the previous inhabitants of the continent had created some forms of striated space, the First Men took this process much further. We must not forget that the Children of the Forest organised their dwellings with minimal environmental impact, and the Giants were inherently wanderers and nomads.

[94] See appendix E.

[95] We find a quote with this information in *WoIaF* on page 268 through the history of the Free City of Volantis: "For much of its early history Volantis benefited from the trade between Valyria and the Rhoynar, waxing ever more prosperous and powerful... whilst Sarhoy, the ancient and beautiful Rhoynish city that had previously dominated the commerce, suffered a corresponding decline".

hypothesise that the Rhoynish only engaged in trade for extra goods such as spices or exotic products. In fact, even if more information would be needed to fully confirm this, in *WoIaF* it is specified that what is called the Second Spice War between the Valyrians and the Rhoynish started due to Valyrian dragonlords who joined to sack and destroy the port city of Sarhoy (*WoIaF*: 22). Given the name of this war, we can quite accurately hypothesise that the Valyrians, by sacking and destroying Sarhoy, cut the Roynish supply of these types of non-essential goods, thus leading to war.

For many years they thrived along the banks of the Rhoyne; they had everything they needed, and despite being peaceful people, they had fearsome power and magic that made them a difficult prey for conquest: "By and large a peaceful people, the Rhoynar could be formidable when roused to wroth, as many a would-be Andal conqueror learned to his sorrow" (22). However, they did not have something which the First Men, the Andals and the Valyrians had: a strong united hegemony. "Though united by blood and culture and the river that had given them birth, the Rhoynish cities were elsewise fiercely independent, each with its own prince... or princess, for amongst these river folk, women were regarded as the equals of men" (21). They were organised in cities and towns, each with its own ruling class, but each of these locations formed one individual isolated core with its own small-scale hegemony, which worked for them whilst they were the strongest civilisation with the most powerful magic, but they proved too divided when the greater unified threat of the Valyrian expansion materialised.

The Valyrians did not sweep the Rhoynish away, as they did with many other peoples; the Rhoynish's power was still too great and too established in their lands regardless of their lack of unity. Instead, the process of conquest was far subtler and probably not planned per se:[96] it started with the coming of Valyrian adventurers, traders and exiles that began to have contact with the Rhoynish, who welcomed them at first. Nonetheless, "As those first Valyrian outposts grew into towns, and those towns into cities, however, some Rhoynar came to regret the forbearance of their fathers" (22). With the establishment of commercial relations and the building of trading posts, the Valyrians strengthened their position in Rhoynish lands until their great city of Volantis

[96] In the books, it is not specified whether the Valyrians had actually planned to conquer the Rhoynish, or if, on the contrary, it was the result of a process that simply unfolded given certain circumstances. Looking at the tide of events, this was likely the case.

competed even with the port city of Sarhoy, and eventually their expansive mindset collided with the Rhoynish more circumscribed way of life. The first inevitable war that made all the built-up tension explode began "when the Valyrians netted and butchered one of the gigantic turtles the Rhoynar called the Old Men of the River and held sacred as the consorts of Mother Rhoyne herself" (22). This was later baptised as the First Turtle War, followed by the War of Three Princes, the Second Turtle War, the Fisherman's war, the Salt War, the Third Turtle War, the War on Dagger Lake, the Spice War etc (22).

All of these wars exploded into a key conflict that would change both Rhoynish hegemony and spatial practice. This was the Second Spice War, when three of the Valyrian dragonlords joined in order to invade and plunder the city of Sarhoy in the Summer Sea. Shocked by these events and by the enslavement of many of the Roynish dwellers of the city, the remaining Rhoynar princes decided to join together to end the Valyrian threat (22). This suffering served as a catalyst for the Rhoynish people to join under a purpose of restoring 'order', which was incarnated into a leader called Prince Garin. However, after Garin was defeated and captured in the battle of Volantis, this purpose was reincarnated into Princess Nymeria, who understood that she could not win against the Valyrian threat, and abandoned the Rhoynish lands for good to set sail with her fleet in the search for a new land for her people.

After a lot of wandering and many misfortunes that decimated their numbers, Nymeria and the remaining Rhoynish landed in Dorne:[97] "Dry, desolate, and thinly peopled, Dorne at this time was a poor land where a score of quarrelsome lords and petty kings warred endlessly over every river, stream, well, and scrap of fertile land" (25). We must note here the absolute contrast between the fertile lands of the Rhoynar and the barren ones in Dorne. While the Rhoynish were seen mainly as "unwelcome interlopers" (25) that posed a threat for their already scarce resources, the Martell Lord of the Sandship took advantage of the situation and struck a deal with Nymeria in order to form an alliance through marriage. In this way, he increased the size of his army by tenfold, and was able to subdue all the Dornish houses until house Martell dominated the whole of the region. After these events, generations passed and this domination

[97] See appendix F.

started to shift towards hegemony as the Dornish adopted many of the laws and customs of the Rhoynish (25), and both cultures merged to become one.

One thing worth noticing is that the gaze of the narrator of *WoIaF* deliberately idealises and exoticises the civilisation of the Rhoynar with descriptions that enhance the beauty of its cities and its people:

> Fishers, traders, teachers, scholars, workers in wood and stone and metal, they raised their elegant towns and cities from the headwaters of the Rhoyne down to her mouth, each lovelier than the last. There was Ghoyan Drohe in the Velvet Hills, with its groces and waterfalls; Ny Sar, the city of fountains, alive with song; Ar Noy on the Qhoyne, with its halls of green marble; [...] Art and music flourished in the cities of the Rhoyne [...]. (21)

This echoes a form of romantic otherness similar to that conveyed by the gaze of imperialist primary world literature when writing about places such as India during the British Empire. Chris Bongie, in his book *Exoti*c *Memories: Literature, Colonialism, and the Fin De Siecle* (1991) defines exoticism as:

> [...] a nineteenth-century literary and cultural practice that posits another space (the space of the Other) outside the boundaries of a society that to some observers, in the aftermath of the political and technological revolutions at the end of the eighteenth century, seemed inalterably modern and deeply alienating. (270)

It is worth to mention this because the maesters of the citadel being the only formal source of historical information in the secondary world of George R. R. Martin other than the oral tradition, the notions they convey and how they describe historical and spatial processes affects relations of hegemony and otherness, which consequently alter spatial practices and articulations. In fact, it is very interesting how the First Men and the Andals are not exoticised at all by the gaze of the narrator of *WoIaF*, choosing instead to explain the spatial practices and historical processes that led them to move to Westeros quite plainly,[98] while in the case of the Rhoynish we do obtain a lot of subjectively enhanced information about their ways of life and the shape of their cities and landscapes. In the line of this, it is also worth to note how in the timeline of *ASoIaF* we know that the Andals and the First Men are direct ancestors of the peoples who

[98] In the case of the First Men, we do not even know how their initial homeland was.

inhabit the middle and northern part of Westeros and still follow their traditions, while the Dornish mingled strongly with the exiled Rhoynish—as we will explain later in this section.

Dorne is precisely the most marginalised and exoticised kingdom, while the central and northern kingdoms present different degrees of religious and cultural ties to a rooted past: in the case of the Andal descendants the worship of the Seven, and the worship of the Old Gods in the case of the Northern descendants of the First Men. Dorne, on the other hand, echoes the exotic kind of otherness imposed on the historical narrative of the Rhoynish but in a less glorified way: "The southernmost of the Seven Kingdoms is also the most inhospitable... and the strangest, to the eyes of any man raised in the Reach or the westerlands or King's Landing. For Dorne is different, in many more ways that can be told" (*WoIaF*: 235). "Like Dornish food and Dornish law, Dornish speech was spiced with the Flavors of the Rhoyne" (*DwD*: 21), "but the Dornishmen all spoke too quickly for him to understand. Dornish women were lewd, Dornish wine was sour, and Dornish food was full of queer hot spices" (*DwD*: 717). This marginalisation that is backed by the historical narrative fostered by the maesters directly affects hegemony in Westeros; Dorne, despite belonging to the Seven Kingdoms, has very different values and is assimilated in a very different way by the central ruling classes, thus constituting an important source for potential insurgence.[99]

[99] It is true that the North is inherently insurgent too, but for different reasons: while Dorne's history is full of invasions, petty wars and impositions, the North is seen as a much stronger and independent kingdom, which was only ultimately subdued by Aegon's Conquest of Westeros, and even then, they retained a great part of their sovereignty. They are still portrayed as a strong society with fearsome and respectable shades of otherness, while Dorne is the marginalised Other within Westeros.

2.1.5. Aegon's conquest

Interestingly enough, the last step before the configuration of the Westeros from the beginning of the *ASoIaF* saga started with the Doom of the Valyrian Freehold,[100] which was precisely the direct cause of the previous two big westward migrations that deeply affected Westerosi hegemony and spatial organisation. Valyrians had a queer kind of history, with four key facts that configured their spatial practice: first of all, they were native to the volcanic mountains of the Fourteen Flames, where dragons dwelt, and learned how to tame them. Not only did they tame them, but they also developed a symbiotic relationship with them so that their very culture was interwoven with the dragon character and fire-imagery: "The tales the Valyrians told of themselves claimed they were descended from dragons and were kin to the ones they now controlled" (*WoIaF*: 13), and some of them were even blessed with the blood of the dragon, which meant that fire and heat could not harm them; see Daenerys' example in *GoT*:

> The third crack was as loud and sharp as the breathing of the world. When the fire died at last and the ground became cool enough to walk upon, Ser Jorah Mormont found her amidst the ashes, surrounded by blackened logs and bits of glowing ember and the burnt bones of man and woman and stallion. She was naked, covered with soot, her clothes turned to ash, her beautiful hair all crisped away … yet she was unhurt. The cream-and-gold dragon was suckling at her left breast, the green-and-bronze at the right. (988)

On the other hand: "The Valyrians had no kings but instead called themselves the Freehold because all the citizenry who held land had a voice" (*WoIaF*: 13). This means that hegemony in Valyria was necessarily fluid and disputed among the freeholding families, although "It was rare for Valyria to be swayed by one freeholding family alone although it was not entirely unknown either" (13).

Another of the key facts was their ultimate victory against the coetaneous civilisation of the Ghiscari: "The Valyrians learned one deplorable thing from the Ghiscari: slavery. The Ghiscari whom they conquered were the first to be thus enslaved, but not the last" (15). This takes us to the last feature that configured Valyrian character as a society, namely the availability of ore in their native lands that made them greed for more (15).

[100] Approximately two centuries after the destruction of the Rhoynar.

These four features of the Valyrian Freehold: the taming of dragons, the fluid hegemony, the use of slaves and the availability of ore greatly influenced their expansive and abusive spatial practices. On the one hand, dragons made for a fearsome and almost invincible weapon against anyone who dared stand in the way of the Valyrians; they represented the ultimate war-machine for domination that could bring utter destruction to any opposition. In fact, that is how they ended their disputes against the Ghiscari for good, with fire and blood, and by assimilating the remains of their civilisation into the Valyrian Freehold. This great advantage in war matters, when combined with the huge workforce provided by slavery—which in addition increased every time they conquered a new region—proved extremely profitable when it came to mine the ore in the Fourteen Flames. Therefore, the availability of resources and the optimal means to turn them into assets came together making the native land of the Valyrians a huge located resource and a center for means of production. Once both this mining industry and the control over the dragons were secured, it was only a matter of time that, in a fluid hegemony where all of the land-holders held a vote and shifted up and down in influence as members of the ruling class, an expansive will would take over due to the increasing competition among the families as well as the increasing need for slave workforce to sustain expansion.

After they effectively defeated and exiled the Rhoynar, Valyrians dominated the whole of western Essos: "from the narrow sea to Slaver's Bay, and from the Summer Sea to the Shivering Sea" (26). With the Valyrians, the slave trade thrived, and with this huge workforce they mined gold, silver and all kinds of minerals in the mines beneath the chain of volcanoes to the south of the Painted Mountains called The Fourteen Flames. Established as they were, they made an interesting move, and feinted for westward expansion across the narrow sea by building a fort at Dragonstone,[101] an island very close to Westeros, which would be instrumental for Aegon's conquest.

This outpost of Dragonstone acted as a first point of contact with Westeros, and just like they did with the Rhoynish before they drove them out, they engaged in trade with the Westerosi. Valyrians had no equals as blacksmiths and craftsmen, and the spells they imbued their tools and weapons with made their products a very valuable asset. Because of this, Westerosi lords started to demand more and more of their

[101] See appendix F, to the middle/left, next to the 'Narrow Sea'.

products, especially those made of Valyrian steel (26). These demands set a route of trade by sea that increasingly secured the outpost of Dragonstone, while "[...] the dragonlords thus continued their schemes and intrigues on their native continent" (26).

However, the plans that the central Valyrian government presumably had to expand to Westeros took a fatal turn when the Doom of Valyria came. It is not specified what or how the doom came to be, but according to the narrator, there is a certain consensus that what befell Valyria was a kind of natural disaster (26), probably a chain of volcanic eruptions which destroyed the whole empire and annihilated most of the dragonlords,[102] except for Aenar Targaryen, Aegon Targaryen's[103] ancestor, who had already moved with his family to Dragonstone as a response to his daughter Daenys' prophecy in which she foretold the doom. For generations, the Targaryens dwelt in Dragonstone, occasionally intervening in the affairs of Essos after the Doom, until Aegon Targaryen took possession of his lord-title and turned his gaze westward:

> The Westeros of Aegon's youth was divided into seven quarrelsome kingdoms, and there was hardly a time when two or three of these kingdoms were not at war with one another. The vast, cold, stony North was ruled by the Starks of Winterfell. In the deserts of Dorne, the Martell princes held sway. The gold-rich westerlands were ruled by the Lannisters of Casterly Rock, the fertile Reach by the Gardeners of Highgarden. The Vale, The Fingers, and the Mountains of the Moon belonged to House Arryn... but the most belligerent kings of Aegon's time were the two whose realms lay closest to Dragonstone, Harren the Black and Argilac the Arrogant. (45)

One by one, with more or less difficulty, Aegon and his family subdued all of these kingdoms, allowing each of them to keep certain religious, cultural and social autonomy, even the King in the North by the time, Torrhen Stark, ultimately bent the knee and pledged loyalty to Aegon Targaryen. Once the Seven Kingdoms of Westeros had been "hammered into one great realm" (45), Aegon made his seat in the emergent town of King's Landing, where he and his sisters first set foot on Westeros. He then created the region of the Crownlands in order to encompass the lands around the city of

[102] The Valyrian ruling class, masters of dragons.
[103] The future conqueror of Westeros.

Kings Landing, and the Riverlands, which had previously been claimed both by the Stormlands and then by the Ironborn.

In the timeline of the *ASoIaF* saga, the configuration of the nine regions and the Seven Kingdoms remains more or less the same, with some changes in sovereignty. The ruling king is a Baratheon, after Jaime Lannister assassinated the last Targaryen king—also known as the Mad King—and stepped aside to give the Iron Throne to Robert Baratheon as culmination for the rebellion against the violent rule of the Mad King. The administrative regions remain similar at the very beginning of the books except for the downfall of house Targaryen; some of the key movements in spatial practice and hegemony that happen afterwards will be developed in the next sections.

Chapter 3

The 'Within Walls' and the 'Outside Walls' Chronotopes

There is a need to recover Bakhtin's concept of chronotope in order to understand the literary technique that George R. R. Martin uses to differentiate two main spatio-temporal frameworks that give way to opposite narratives which are maintained throughout the saga: the chronotope of the court, and the chronotope of the common folk. To be more precise, we might as well establish a more spatially descriptive difference, that is, the 'within walls' chronotope and the 'outside walls' chronotope. These two ideas might seem too general at first, but through this analysis we will use them in reference to two specific types of defined narratives where we can actually isolate two main ways of experiencing space and time in a manner that is extremely relevant for the unfolding of hegemonic relations and spatial practices in George R. R. Martin's work. The within walls chronotope will make reference to the plots, schemes and strategies that take place within the walls of keeps, and which are carried out by kings and queens, noblemen and women, maesters, advisors, councillors etc. The outside walls chronotope, in turn, will refer to how these decisions shape the world of the common people, which is the wide world outside the isolated walled cores of the privileged and the ruling classes. The multifocal and heteroglossic narrative technique that Martin uses is instrumental in this case, because by choosing to narrate events from the perspectives of a wide range of characters pertaining to different contexts, or who shift between contexts, he allows the reader to witness different points of view towards certain events.

In the Martinverse, because of the way the world is organised, there is a marked tendency towards this chronotopic differentiation. In Westeros, each region is ruled by a main house from an isolated keep which forms the hegemonic core, and the rest of the terrain is dotted with other smaller isolated keeps belonging to lesser houses pledged to the main house, which act as its representatives and help establish and maintain their hegemonic network, acting as a kind of hegemonic transmitters. These ruling houses, in turn, owe fealty to the Iron Throne, which constitutes the central core to which all the hegemonic strings ought to be ultimately tied to. Of course, this is but the theoretical

situation; Martin's world is alive with socio-political and cultural schemes, influences, tensions and pressures, but the explanation illustrates the point of the importance of hegemonic networks in space. In the case of Winterfell, which forms the core of the kingdom of the North, there is the walled keep where the Starks dwell, and then there are smaller houses with their respective keeps all over the Northern lands: the Karstarks in Karhold, the Reeds in Greywater Watch, the Boltons in The Dreadfort, the Hornwoods in Hornwood etc. To provide another example, in the Riverlands we have the Tullys in Riverrun as the main ruling house, and then there are the Freys in The Twins, the Mallisters in Seagard, the Brackens in Stone Hedge etc.

In the Free Cities of Essos, the model is not exactly the same, but it still follows the within walls/outside walls dichotomy. Each Free City has its own ruling class that is clearly separated from the common people: the Great Pyramid in Meereen where the ruling house dwells and Daenerys carries out her schemes, and the loyal noblemen/women and landowners who perpetuate this hegemony from smaller states. The case of Astapor is similar; the pyramids are home to the Good Masters, the privileged slave owners.

Because of this particular spatial organisation, in *ASoIaF* the narrative is constantly shifting from the within walls to the outside walls chronotope. When we are within walls, time is concentrated into one small scenario where great decisions are taken, schemes are carried out, and power balances are shifted, all of these with great impact on the spatial practice of common people outside the four walls in the way of massive migrations, exiles, the destruction of the land which affects means of production and resources, changes in the hegemonic balance that affect social structures etc.

In the outside walls chronotope, in turn, the consequences of these decisions escape the homogenising illusion of the concentrated time-space within the walls, and are fully unfolded in the whole of the space and time of Martin's secondary world, creating a very different chronotope where the real implications, both wanted and unwanted, of these decisions and schemes are fully laid out. In short, the consequences are experienced by individual characters as constitutive parts of their environment.

The opposition between two chronotopes where the narrative action thickens in different and mutually affected ways is not unknown in the field of literary studies.

There is a tendency to analyse chronotopes as opposites or counterparties to enhance contrast between different depictions of time-space with different socio-cultural implications, especially in the postmodern chronotope, which is characterised by its ability to subvert conventions, as explained in the section about the chronotope from the theoretical framework of this work. Scholars Anna de Fina and Jan Blommaert discuss this notion in relation to the type of identity linked to specific chronotopes. In "Chronotopic Identities on the Timespace Organization of Who We Are" (2017), they write:

> It is thanks to this concept of chronotope that Bakhtin was able to address the co-occurrence of events from different times and places in novels, the fact that shifts between chronotopes involved shifts of an entire range of features and generated specific effects. He saw the interplay of different chronotopes as an important aspect of the novel's heteroglossia,[104] part of the different "verbal-ideological belief systems" that were in dialogue in a novel, because every chronotope referred to socially shared, and differential, complexes of value attributed to specific forms of identity, as expressed (in a novel for example) in the description of the looks, behavior, actions and speech of certain characters, enacted in specific timespace frames. Importantly, Bakhtin assumed also that chronotopes involve specific forms of agency, identity: specific patterns of social behavior "belong", so to speak, to particular timespace configurations; and when they "fit" they respond to existing frames of recognizable identity, while when they don't they are "out of place", "out of order" or transgressive. (3)

Also, in "Insights and Challenges of Chronotopic Analysis for Sociolinguistics" (2020), De Finna highlights this same idea through one specific case scenario in China:[105] "Chronotopes can also be related by contrast, as discussed by Gao, in her analysis of people's reaction to change in West Street, Yangshuo, in southern China and of the

[104] First part of the definition by *Oxford Reference*: "The existence of conflicting discourses within any field of linguistic activity, such as a national language, a novel, or a specific conversation" ("Heteroglossia").

[105] It is important to point out that, according to Bakhtin, chronotopes may not only be artistic or literary, but also 'real life chronotopes'. See example quote from "FTCN": "A real-life chronotope of meeting is constantly present in organizations of social and governmental life. Everyone is familiar with organized social meetings of all possible sorts, and how important they are" (99).

different identities which they associate with chronotopes that represent diverging value systems" (199).[106]

In short, each time-space—or chronotopic—frame contains different identities and value systems that give way to different implications. In *ASoIaF*, the within walls chronotope is characterised by diplomatic interactions, large-scale schemes involving individual desires and ambitions, concentrated time and space, and a noble or 'high class' register of speech and behaviour, while the outside walls one is generally characterised by extensive time-space, the presence of collective will and multitudes, large scale movements—migrations and such—and a 'lower-class' register.

Therefore, the conclusion of this is that the hegemonic mechanisms of the ruling-classes in Martin's secondary world are mostly laid bare for the reader to see and reflect on through the within walls chronotope. Martin develops both chronotopes in detail through the saga, and this gives us the chance to analyse hegemonic and counter-hegemonic mechanisms in a very interesting manner by looking into the ways the narrative unfolds and shifts between these two main time-space configurations. It is important, however, to point out that chronotopes are not homogeneous and absolute. This means that they may be composed of other, smaller chronotopical units, or that they may intermingle or be disrupted, for example, when a character generally framed in the within walls chronotope carries relevant traits of the within walls time-space interactions to the outside walls chronotope; what we are doing here is establishing general observable tendencies.

[106] To give another example of contrasting chronotopes, in his essay "Gender and Chronotope" (1998), Joe Andrew uses the city/nature dichotomy two establish to chronotopic tendencies in the society tale in Russian literature: "Moving yet further from the centre, as it were, we come to another, opposite chronotope to that of the city, namely the use of nature and/or isolated places" (133).

3.1. The War of the Five Kings: five 'within walls' chronotopes with 'outside walls' hegemonic and counter-hegemonic implications

Understanding this basic chronotopical differentiation is essential to grasp the subtleties of many of the power shifts that take place in the Martinverse. The roots of many of the changes in spatial practice start in the within walls chronotope, in fact, most of the ones that take place in *ASoIaF* are triggered when Lord Eddard Stark, warden of the North and the King's Hand[107] at that time, starts looking into Jon Arryn's untimely death, the previous King's Hand. In fact, Arryn's death is the trigger and starting point of most of the narratives in the saga, because it is followed by Eddard Stark's arrival to the capital, who is not satisfied with the explanation he is given for Arryn's demise, and starts investigating, which leads to him finding out that all of queen Cersei Lannister's sons and daughters are bastards born from incest with her brother Jaime Lannister, precisely what Jon Arryn was looking into. This process is unfolded almost exclusively in the within walls chronotope involving members of different ruling classes. Within the walls of Winterfell:

> Ned crossed the room, took her by the arm, and pulled her to her feet. He held her there, his face inches from her. "My lady, tell me! What was this message?" Catelyn stiffened in his grasp. "A warning," she said softly. "If we have the wits to hear." His eyes searched her face. "Go on." "Lysa says Jon Arryn was murdered." His fingers tightened on her arm. "By whom?" "The Lannisters," she told him. "The queen." (*GoT*: 75-76)

Within the walls of an inn in King's Landing where Catelyn and Eddard see each other in secret:

> "The Lannisters are merciless in the face of weakness, as Aerys Targaryen learned to his sorrow, but they would not dare attack the north without all the power of the realm behind them, and that they shall not have. I must play out this fool's masquerade as if nothing is amiss. Remember why I came here, my love. If I find proof that the Lannisters murdered Jon Arryn…" (248)

Within the chambers of the King's Hand:

> The Grand Maester nodded. "I recall now, the widow is sister to your own noble wife. If an old man may be forgiven his blunt speech, let me say that grief can

[107] The Kings main advisor and confidant.

> derange even the strongest and most disciplined of minds, and the Lady Lysa was never that. Since her last stillbirth, she has seen enemies in every shadow, and the death of her lord husband left her shattered and lost." "So you are quite certain that Jon Arryn died of a sudden illness?" "I am," Pycelle replied gravely. "If not illness, my good lord, what else could it be?" "Poison," Ned suggested quietly. (310)

There are in fact many examples of this—for further reference the first book of the saga could be consulted, *GoT*. In *ASoIaF*, most royal or ruling-class intrigues are described with patient detail, and the weight of these interactions is concentrated within certain enclosed settings. These intrigues are relevant because they lead to actions which affect hegemony in the realm, and thus spatial practices and articulations: Jon Arryn's passing is the trigger of the War of the Five Kings because it leads to Cersei framing Ned Stark for treason in order to avoid responsibility for her actions, to Catelyn seizing Tyrion Lannister for allegedly trying to murder Bran Stark,[108] to Eddard being executed, and thus to a rebellion against the crown led by Robb Stark, Eddard Stark's son and heir.

It is necessary to underline that, while Eddard's assassination is the trigger, the narrative of an independent North had long since been growing in the hearts of Northerners, and although the murder of the warden of the North is the main catalyst, revenge is by no means the main purpose; there is a great political depth, and Ned's death is the trigger. The rebellion is the seed of the War of the Five Kings, which involves five pretenders to a King's seat, framed within but not limited to five different within walls chronotopes based on five political purposes, each represented by a different king, and which we will analyse now.[109]

[108] The Stark boy witnessed Cersei and Jaime Lannister having incestuous sexual intercourse in Winterfell during the visit of King Robert to propose Ned Stark as Hand of the King, and Jaime left him in unconscious state by pushing him out of a tower's window. Someone tried to murder him while he slept to prevent him from speaking once he woke up from the coma.
[109] These are mostly introduced in the second book of the saga, *CoK*.

3.1.1. Stannis Baratheon

In Dragonstone there is Stannis Baratheon, who believes the Iron Throne to be his right because if all of Cersei's sons and daughters are bastard born, then he should be Robert's legitimate heir:[110] "Stannis had removed himself to Dragonstone, the Targaryen island fastness he had conquered in his brother's name. He had given no word as to when he might return" (*GoT*: 338). In the first book, we learn about him through his absence, and although he used to be a part of the Small Council[111] in the Red Keep of King's Landing, in the books Stannis' main within walls chronotope is Dragonstone, and even more specifically the room of the Painted Table—a table in Dragonstone carved in the shape of the Seven Kingdoms and painted with their colours. The way Stannis rules, interacts and behaves is profoundly embedded into the bleak scenario of Dragonstone; he is a grim man. In Renly Baratheon's words: "He goes to his marriage bed like a man marching to a battlefield, with a grim look in his eyes and a determination to do his duty" (335). The chamber of the Painted Table is described as an inhospitable place: "Lord Stannis Baratheon's refuge was a great round room with walls of bare black stone and four tall narrow windows that looked out to the four points of the compass" (*CoK*: 14), which is in line with the physical description of the man himself:

> Stannis Baratheon, Lord of Dragonstone and by the grace of the gods rightful heir to the Iron Throne of the Seven Kingdoms of Westeros, was broad of shoulder and sinewy of limb, with a tightness to his face and Flesh that spoke of leather cured in the sun until it was as tough as steel. *Hard* was the word men used when they spoke of Stannis, and hard he was. Though he was not yet five-and-thirty, only a fringe of thin black hair remained on his head, circling behind his ears like the shadow of a crown. (14)

The Painted Table represents his ambition for ruling the Seven Kingdoms:

> In the center of the chamber was the great table from which it took its name, a massive slab of carved wood fashioned at the command of Aegon Targaryen in the days before the Conquest. [...] Aegon's carpenters had shaped it after the land of Westeros, sawing out each bay and peninsula until the table nowhere ran straight. On its surface, darkened by near three hundred years of varnish, were

[110] He is King Robert's brother, next in line.
[111] A Small Council composed of a few advisors and led by the King.

> painted the Seven Kingdoms as they had been in Aegon's day; rivers and mountains, castles and cities, lakes and forests. (14)

The table in Stannis' room mystifies the space of representation, it turns it into representational space; it is a detailed, three-dimensional portrait of the Seven Kingdoms with artistic pretensions, but a representation nonetheless. It suggests Stannis' utopian desire to rule the kingdoms which never gets fulfilled; he has the eye of a cartographer, in Lefebvre's words: "The eye, however, tends to relegate objects to the distance, to render them passive. That which is merely seen is reduced to an image - and to an icy coldness" (1991: 286). According to Björn Sundmark in "Mapping Middle Earth: A Tolkienian Legacy" (2017):

> The location is important: high up in Dragonstone Castle, commanding a view in all directions, the reader of the map merges into a reader of the land itself, map and land becoming one. [...] The map provides the illusion that Westeros can be reduced to a map. Always a false presumption, in this case it becomes particularly ironic since Stannis Baratheon's power at this point in the narrative does not extend much beyond the chamber of the Painted Table at Dragonstone. But power and political realities are not Stannis' forte. Instead he sees in the map a mystical connection between the land (the "hills, mountains, castles, cities," etc.) and his claim to it ("My realm"). (233)

Stannis is confined into Dragonstone, and he spends most of his time within that chamber that is the reflection of his inner landscape of sorts. The chamber of the Painted Table is a place with strong emotional significance for him, because it contains the mystified representation of that which he desires, which is projected within his consciousness as some kind of totalising utopia where the whole of the heterogeneous space of Westeros is imagined and embodied into a concentrated place.[112] It depicts his mystified ambitions, which are relevant because they are translated into actions which challenge hegemony, and affect the way he proposes his way of ruling as a counter-hegemonic narrative as well as the way other agents behave towards him, because it is based on a mystified ambition for his birth-right claim, moral righteousness[113] and

[112] Here we are using the concepts of 'space' and 'place' as developed in section 1.4.

[113] "We're fortunate my brother Stannis is not with us. Remember the time he proposed to outlaw brothels? The King asked him if perhaps he'd like to outlaw eating, shitting, and breathing while he was at it" (*GoT*: 335).

inflexibility.[114] The room is plain and hard just like his character, and the only colours to be seen are those of the Painted Table, just as his ambitions are the only spark within his grim personality.

In that room, he refuses to make common cause with anyone who is not in league with his own ambitions; he sees in black and white:

> "As you intend to sail, it is vital that you make common cause with Lord Stark and Lady Arryn …" "I make common cause with no one," Stannis Baratheon said. "No more than light makes common cause with darkness." Lady Selyse took his hand. Stannis nodded. "The Starks seek to steal half my kingdom, even as the Lannisters have stolen my throne and my own sweet brother the swords and service and strongholds that are mine by rights. They are all usurpers, and they are all my enemies". (*CoK*: 29)

And in that room, he complains about how the lords pledged to Storms End, the Baratheon castle, backed his brother Renly's claim to the throne and not his own (15), which leads him to assassinate his own brother with blood magic in order to have his allies rally to his side, and then schemes to take the capital city of King's Landing.

However, while Renly had woven a true sort of hegemony based on an alternative hegemonic narrative which combined a strong political leadership with a youthful, permissive spirit that hinted at a prosperous and fair rule of the Kingdoms, Stannis was only able to call upon duty and fear; their sectorial proposals of 'social order' were opposite and necessarily partial, yet Renly's one generates a greater consensus among the masses than Stannis' one. The reason why this happens is because Renly's proposal of social order generates a kind of 'collective will', not perhaps in the same way as a radical democracy needs to create a collective will in order to operate healthily—which scholars such as Laclau and Mouffe defend—because Renly is still a leader within a feudal context, but he is able to carry out a "[...] spontaneous aggregation of a plurality of different actions and struggles" (Kioupkiolis 2016: 153) by, on the one hand, generating an Other that negates the mass that follows him: "[...] hegemony then consists in the construction of a collective will, for instance of 'the people', and this always goes hand in hand with the construction of an 'other' that negates the people" (Prentoulis and Thomassen 2014: 219), an Other which, in this

[114] He is often described as a man who would break before he bends: "Stannis is pure iron, black and hard and strong, yes, but brittle, the way iron gets. He'll break before he bends" (*CoK*: 108).

case, are both the Lannisters and Stannis, who are seen as enemies and as undesirable ruling class alternatives, and then by extending the notion that he is a sympathetic king of the people, strong in the face of adversity yet gentle and tolerant in his rule.

Stannis however does not generate consensus among his followers, and his claim lies only upon hard facts. Renly's bannermen join him after their king's murder solely because he is the second-best choice, but their fealty is only sustained by a purely legal claim to rule, and is by no means hegemonic. First of all, because Stannis' counter-narrative does not generate a collective will: his claim is largely individualistic, and he does not strive to convince anyone but himself that he is the rightful heir; he is not able to see beyond hard facts, and he believes that everyone should follow him only because it is written on paper that they should do so. This leads him to neglect the task of building a consistent counter-hegemonic narrative which should be as little partial as possible—or, in other words, as inclusive as possible—meaning that he is only able to generate hegemony among a reduced group of people with a code of honour as strict as his who agree with that perspective.

Before going further, it is important to clarify that through this analysis we will not be using the concept of 'collective will' in exactly the same way in which it is normally used, that is, to describe the process of generating a healthy democracy. Martin's secondary world being a feudal context as well as a profoundly masculine society with a ruling class generally composed of kings and lords, cannot possibly generate "an adequately democratic decision-making scheme as the one which empowers the individual to bring her public wills to the attention of the public (e.g. in public forums and public deliberations) and further empowers her to conjoin these wills with the similar wills of her fellow citizens" (Behrouzi 2006: 27). In a feudal society with clearly defined social classes and the existence of capital punishments, the mass can only hope that their ruling class is as merciful, representative and understanding as it can be. Because of this, we will refer to a different kind of collective will, one which gathers some of the characteristics of the traditional academic definition such as the ability to generate consensus among the people by conjoining different partial narratives, but not losing sight of the actual political system we are dealing with, and understanding that this collective will is mostly generated among the ruling classes—with some exceptions, as we will see in later sections—lesser or greater, in the form of a consensus—or lack of it—with the particular hegemonic or counter-hegemonic

narrative proposed by certain agents usually belonging to one or another ruling class. This consensus usually depends on the tolerance, flexibility and willingness to include a diversity of voices who propose different kinds of public wills. For instance, Behrouzi writes:

> The objective of this conjoining of the public wills of the individual citizens is to produce what will be referred to from now on as collective wills of the community, or the nation, on the issues of public interests.[...] Finally, it is assumed here that in conjoining the expressed wills of citizens in order to amalgamate-compose a collective will on each decision-making occasion, the envisioned scheme would use a complex procedure that would be broadly regarded by the public as being a reasonably fair and accurate method for amalgamating-composing a collective-will (or a public decision) out of the wills entered into it by individual citizens. (27-28)

If instead of regular individual citizens we thought about particular members of varied ruling classes, then the definition would suit the context of *ASoIaF* fairly accurately. Of course, a king would not pay special attention to the individual notions of public will of the subaltern classes, but given the great variety and amount of lesser ruling classes organised in feuds in Martin's secondary world, there is still a need to generate a collective will or consensus among these in order to sustain healthy hegemony and avoid the exercise of domination which they are entitled to because of the absolutist context, but is not as effective. We also assume that while some of the lesser houses may rule exclusively through domination upon their subordinates, some others may, on the other hand, rely on listening to the public needs interpreted by individuals or families in order to establish some kind of consensus among the people, thus needing to generate a sort of collective will in a smaller scale.

Stannis' incapability of generating a collective will among his potential allies and subordinates renders his efforts to effectively fill the empty signifier of social order sterile, while Renly's willingness to listen to different needs and opinions as well as his greater ability to adapt and assess the real situation prove very effective in the process of generating hegemony. In fact, instead of making alliances and truces, Stannis' way is to use the magic of R'hllor, the God of Light to whose faith he has converted through the influence of the Red Priestess Melissandre, in order to murder and get rid of his competitors:

> The leech was twisting in the ring's grip, trying to attach itself to one of his fingers. "The usurper," he said. "Joffrey Baratheon." When he tossed the leech into the fire, it curled up like an autumn leaf amidst the coals, and burned. Stannis grasped the second. "The usurper," he declared, louder this time. "Balon Greyjoy." He flipped it lightly onto the brazier, and its flesh split and cracked. The blood burst from it, hissing and smoking. The last was in the king's hand. This one he studied a moment as it writhed between his fingers. "The usurper," he said at last. "Robb Stark." And he threw it on the flames. (618)

The aim is to render himself and what he represents as the only possible alternative instead of working on proposing himself as a suitable and desirable choice; a rather dominant attitude, quite contrary to the necessary consensus for a consistent hegemony. This course of action leads him to ride north of the Wall in order to help the Night's Watch repel the wildlings with the intention of letting them pass through the Wall fleeing the threat of the white walkers as long as they fight for him in order to help him win the Iron Throne through the generation of a debt, as nobody else would do it in his own terms. When they refuse, he defeats the wildlings easily, as the Night's Watch could not have done, pretends to have killed the king beyond the Wall,[115] Mance Rayder, and thus changes the power balance in the northernmost side of Westeros: in one movement, he destroys the fragile hegemony that Mance had achieved to establish among the quarrelsome Free Folk societies. Mance had united them under one strong purpose: the purpose of survival as well as the promise of a safe land where they would unfold their lives without fear. By offering an encompassing counter-hegemonic narrative in the form of a purpose transversal to all the different hegemonic narratives constitutive of the different tribes, he had achieved unprecedented unity among the Free Folk. Mance's counter-narrative made the Free Folk abandon their home villages and leave them empty, thus changing spatial practice by abandoning their dwellings and means of production and livelihood in order to form a great community half army, half refugee column in a desperate attempt to assault the Wall and try to cross to the other side in a massive migratory movement for survival. Stannis ends this when he 'kills' Mance, and the wildlings, with the breaking of their unity, stop being a real threat to the kingdoms.

[115] In the books, he does not actually kill him; he pretends to have done so and binds him to her as a servant through the magic of R'hllor.

The schemes and plans that lead to this decision are originated in the within walls chronotope, which is filled by Stannis' presence and identity; time is concentrated in that space where the particularities of his character unfold in interaction with himself and other few characters, and his particular counter-hegemonic narrative finds sublimation especially within the four walls of the chamber of the Painted Table, where he looks over the space of representation of Westeros with the totalising eyes of a cartographer. However, this concentrated narrative energy gets unleashed in the outside walls chronotope, giving way to a series of narratives with huge impact on spatial practice which are developed in a much more extended time and a much wider space: the killing of Renly and the disbandment of his host, the battle of the Blackwater during the assault of Kings Landing which kills many warriors—mostly Stannis'[116]—the killing of Mance Rayder and the rupture of the wildlings unity which leads to them becoming prisoners on the southern side of the wall while their homes lay abandoned to the north, and the winning over of some of the Mountain Clans to his cause are some of them.

3.1.2. Renly Baratheon

In opposition to Stannis' dominant ways with which he intends to get allies by making far-fetched promises without bargaining and always positioning himself as the absolute and indisputable authority, Renly stands out for his flexibility and cheerful character. The way people speak of him is full of colourful metaphors and joyful imagery: "The brother Renly has left Highgarden with his fair young queen, his flowered lords and shining knights, and a mighty host of foot. He marches up your road of roses toward the very same great city we were speaking of" (*CoK*: 170). While he moves at his own slow pace towards the city of King's Landing, the young king's encampment is described as the absolute opposite of grim: it is like a city on the march, a bustling setting full of excess:

> Thousands of cookfires filled the air with a pale smoky haze. The horse lines alone stretched out over leagues. A forest had surely been felled to make the tall staffs that held the banners. […] She saw men with spears and men with swords,

[116] Along with the micro-narratives that come out of this, such as Sandor Clegane's—also called the Hound, Geoffrey Baratheon's bodyguard—desertion fleeing from King's Landing.

> men in steel caps and mail shirts, camp followers strutting their charms, archers fetching arrows, teamsters driving wagons, [...] Near all the chivalry of the south had come to Renly's call, it seemed. The golden rose of Highgarden was seen everywhere: sewn on the right breast of armsmen and servants, flapping and fluttering from the green silk banners that adorned lance and pike, painted upon the shields hung outside the pavilions of the sons and brothers and cousins and uncles of House Tyrell. (*CoK*: 375)

And the setting is the reflection of Renly's character, very different from Stannis':

> Small wonder the lords gather around him with such fervor, she thought, he is Robert come again. Renly was handsome as Robert had been handsome; long of limb and broad of shoulder, with the same coal-black hair, fine and straight, the same deep blue eyes, the same easy smile. The slender circlet around his brows seemed to suit him well. It was soft gold, a ring of roses exquisitely wrought; at the front lifted a stag's head of dark green jade, adorned with golden eyes and golden antlers. (378)

Renly's within walls chronotopes are also the absolute opposite of Stannis'. His own pavilion at the camp is full of belongings and ornaments, in contrast to the bare walls of the room of the Painted table where Stannis carries out his schemes:

> The pavilion was larger than the common rooms of many an inn and furnished with every comfort: feather mattress and sleeping furs, a wood-and-copper tub large enough for two, braziers to keep off the night's chill, slung leather camp chairs, a writing table with quills and inkpot, bowls of peaches, plums, and pears, a flagon of wine with a set of matched silver cups, cedar chests packed full of Renly's clothing, books, maps, game boards, a high harp, a tall bow and a quiver of arrows, a pair of red-tailed hunting hawks, a vertible armory of fine weapons. (384)

Lord Caswell's keep,[117] despite not being great or big, is filled and enlightened with Renly's presence; the hall where they hold the night feast when Catelyn arrives to parley with him is full of lively young knights (386), and during the feast we are given a cheerful image of Renly that perfectly fits the setting where he moves. Later, Renly asks Catelyn to climb to the keep's tower in order to discuss politics, and they move to a location with a less loaded atmosphere, but still within walls, where he discusses with

[117] The keep in whose lands Renly's host is encamped.

her his intention of not ruling over a broken kingdom (391), and therefore suggests that she pleads Robb Stark to bend the knee so as to end the war, not just appealing to duty as Stannis would have done, but also making an offer of generosity, always striving for consensus, even within the absolutist framework: "If your son supports me as his father supported Robert, he'll not find me ungenerous. I will gladly confirm him in all his lands, titles, and honors. He can rule in Winterfell as he pleases" (391). This is why Renly's rule is more hegemonic than Stannis', which is based on dominance; he is prepared to concede and negotiate, at least up to a great extent, and anyhow we must not forget that, as we read in John Storey's *Inventing Popular Culture: From Folklore to Globalization* (2003):

> Although hegemony implies a society with a high degree of consensus, it should not be understood to refer to a society in which all conflict has been removed. What the concept is meant to suggest is a society in which conflict is contained and managed. That is, hegemony is maintained (and must be continually maintained: it is an ongoing process) by dominant groups and classes "negotiating" with, and making concessions to, subordinate groups and classes. (49)

Thus, conflict is inevitable and even healthy within a hegemonic society, but the system ought to have the ability to manage it and find outcomes for potential difficulties and clashes. This is something that Renly is prepared to do, while Stannis would not possibly tolerate a challenge to his rightful authority, which he sees as something unbreakable and unbending.

When Stannis besieges Storms End and meets with Renly to parley, they do it in the open air, but still surrounded by their banner men and while riding their horses on empty neutral ground, metaphorically bringing the within walls chronotope with them. In this moment, we see both of their proposed narratives collide. Stannis stresses his imagery of duty: "'Kings have no friends,' Stannis said bluntly, 'only subjects and enemies'" (*CoK*: 526), while Renly points out how nobody wants Stannis as king: "'The whole of the realm denies it, brother,' said Renly. 'Old men deny it with their death rattle, and unborn children deny it in their mothers' wombs. They deny it in Dorne and they deny it on the Wall. No one wants you for their king. Sorry'" (527), and displays his joyful character:

> Renly's hand slid inside his cloak. Stannis saw, and reached at once for the hilt of his sword, but before he could draw steel his brother produced … a peach. "Would you like one, brother?" Renly asked, smiling. "From Highgarden. You've never tasted anything so sweet, I promise you." He took a bite. Juice ran from the corner of his mouth. (529-530)

When he is killed with dark magic by his brother Stannis, he is killed within the silken walls of his comfortable pavilion (556-557), and this within walls event, in a short and momentary action, wipes away the hegemonic network Renly had managed to create through the generation of a collective will. In the absence of their king, the great host disintegrates, and that itinerant setting that was like city on the march where tourneys and performances were being held and families were going on about their lives vanishes. The consequences of that one event, which takes place in the within walls chronotope and in just one intense and concentrated moment of action, get articulated in the outside walls chronotope in the form of a series of big events and changes over a long period of time which completely modify spatial practice as well as power balances, and affect micronarratives. These entail the disbandment of the lively setting of the camp, the return of some of Renly's banner men to their own keeps and the rallying over to Stannis' side of some of them (587). Some of the effects in the micronarratives of specific characters are: Brienne and Catelyn's flight to Riverrun—as they were in the tent with Renly when the murder happened and had no way to prove their innocence—Sir Loras'[118] wrath which leads him to assassinate some of Renly's guards, and Mace Tyrrel[119] becoming part of the small council in King's Landing.

[118] The commander of Renly's Kingsguard—or Rainbow Guard, as Renly baptised it.
[119] Loras' and Margaery's father.

3.1.3. Robb Stark

To the North, there is Robb Stark, Ned Stark's son, who when he learns about his father's execution, becomes the living symbol of retribution in the northernmost kingdom. In the within walls chronotope of the Great Hall of Riverrun, the Northern lords and ladies gather in a war council in order to decide the course of action after Ned Stark's execution. The exercise of violent domination by the main ruling class—the Lannisters, although disguised as a fake Baratheon who is in reality a Lannister bastard—upon the people living under the rule and protection of lesser houses weakens their hegemonic grasp, leading to the creation of a desire of opposition and retribution among certain lords and ladies. During this war council in the Great Hall, there is strong talk of vengeance:

> "What did Torrhen and my Eddard die for, if I am to return to Karhold with nothing but their bones?" asked Rickard Karstark. "Aye," said Lord Bracken. "Gregor Clegane laid waste to my fields, slaughtered my smallfolk, and left Stone Hedge a smoking ruin. Am I now to bend the knee to the ones who sent him? What have we fought for, if we are to put all back as it was before? (*GoT*: 975)

In addition to that, Lord Umber appeals to the strong sense of culture and identity rooted in the North, and renders the southern kingdoms as undesirable Others by reasserting Northern identity. In doing so, he endows Robb Stark with symbolic quality, and with a short speech he seizes the perfect moment to place him as filler of the empty signifier of social order left weakened by the Lannisters, who with their actions had cut the last thread that bound the North to their cause hegemonically, which was strongly reliant on the purpose of Robert's rebellion and on Robert himself. With Robert and Eddard dead, who fought together in the rebellion when their counter-hegemonic narrative actively meant something—to get rid of Aerys II the Mad King and his cruel rule and propose a fairer one (*WoIaF*: 127-129)—and the Lannisters exercising the rule of domination through a Baratheon puppet—the bastard boy king Joffrey Baratheon—the Northern independent spirit rises again to take over a position of power that can no longer be fulfilled by the hegemony of the crown:

> "MY LORDS!" he shouted, his voice booming off the rafters. "Here is what I say to these two kings!" He spat. "Renly Baratheon is nothing to me, nor

> Stannis neither. Why should they rule over me and mine, from some flowery seat in Highgarden or Dorne? What do they know of the Wall or the wolfswood or the barrows of the First Men? Even their gods are wrong. The Others take the Lannisters too, I've had a bellyful of them." He reached back over his shoulder and drew his immense two-handed greatsword. "Why shouldn't we rule ourselves again? It was the dragons we married, and the dragons are all dead!" He pointed at Robb with the blade. "There sits the only king I mean to bow my knee to, m'lords," he thundered. "The King in the North!" (976)

In that Hall, Lord Umber generates a strong emotional consensus among the lesser lords and ladies, and most importantly, he injects them with a collective will based on two things: the purpose of vengeance against the central ruling class, and the promise of a kingdom where the particular Northern culture, religion and identity are of primary relevance and do not submit to anyone else's. It is interesting to note that he does this by mentioning three elements of special spatial significance that directly appeal to a Northern sense of belonging and tradition linked to the land: the wolfswood, the barrows of the First Men and the Old Gods, which do not have names and are deeply associated with the land.

This phenomenon is similar to the one we described in the section about the colonial past of Westeros regarding the spiritual and traditional hegemony in the Iron Islands which was strongly embedded into spatial consciousness. In order to appeal to Northern heritage, Umber mentions three key elements linked to space that represent different aspects of their traditional hegemony: the wolfswood as the physical representation of their ancient link with nature that dates back to the Dawn Age and to the times of the Children of the Forest; the barrows of the First Men, which represent their human cultural heritage and serve as a tangible proof of the particularities that build their identity in opposition to the non-Northern; the Old Gods, which act as the spiritual representation of the land they inhabit, giving a mystified status to it. This posits a rather perennialist-primordialist type of nationalism, in the sense that Valencian politician Jaime Pastor describes in *Los Nacionalismos, el Estado Español y la Izquierda* (2012): "assessing from the beginning of the 21st century, we may group the main schools or paradigms for the interpretation of national phenomena in the following

way: […] perennialist (which highlights its continuity or recurrence in the past and present), primordialist (which finds its origin in a distant past)" (17).[120]

The Northern independentist narrative draws strength from the weakened position of the central hegemony in King's Landing, and brings the particular Northern religious and cultural sensitivities back to the foreground by using the purported roots in an ancestral past. According to Roger W. Stump:

> As a factor in conversion, religious hegemony can take diverse forms. The establishment of a state religion represents an obvious expression of hegemony, linking religious affiliation and political identity. The conversion of a ruler may have similar effects [...]. Less formally, a hegemonic religion may develop pervasive influences through its incorporation into ordinary realms of daily life [...]. A dominant religious group may similarly exert influence through the prominence of its institutional infrastructure, especially if it encompasses secular functions such as education or healthcare. [...] non-adherents may face various types of discrimination or social exclusion. Through recurring interactions with existing beliefs, moreover, others will gain increasing familiarity with the dominant religion over time, and because of its associations with local power structures may gradually come to accept it as being normative. (2008: 89)

These are precisely the reasons why the North is the kingdom most susceptible for an uprising through reassertion of cultural and religious identity. Religion is of primary importance in the medieval society of *ASoIaF*, and a major generator of hegemony, because it transpires all the layers of social life and affects spatial practice. In the Martinverse, space is organised to a great extent in alignment with religion; we have already discussed the spatial organisation of the Iron islands and its locations of key religious significance in the section about the colonial past of Westeros, or about the spatial organisation of keeps in the North around the sacred weirwood trees. However, it is made clear that the North did not undergo the religious conversion that other regions underwent during the several processes of colonisation we have already written about, and the hold of the central hegemony of the Iron Throne is weakest there because

[120] Translation to English is mine. Spanish original here: "haciendo balance en los inicios de este siglo XXI podríamos agrupar las principales escuelas o paradigmas de interpretación de los fenómenos nacionales en las siguientes: […] la perennialista (que resalta ya sea su continuidad o su recurrencia en el pasado y en el presente), la primordialista (que remite su origen a un pasado lejano)" (17).

of it. The North did not go through the stages of religious assimilation and moral reformulation that the institution of the Faith of the Seven imposed on other regions with the help of political institutions, including the Iron Islands—although it is also weak there, because the Faith of the Seven coexists with that of the Drowned God—and having its own ancient cultural and religious system of values and traditions fully alive, it favours a strong counter-hegemonic and autonomous narrative barely under the crown's hegemonic influence.

By declaring Robb Stark king in the North, years of otherness and an underlying will for independence get sublimated into that specific moment in the within walls chronotope of the Great Hall of Winterfell. The North reasserts itself as an independent kingdom with its own identity through the consensus of the biggest part of the lesser and greater lords and ladies, who act, in a way, as spokespeople for the inhabitants in the North, who follow the ancient ways for the most part. This is favoured by the clear strangeness with which people from the southern kingdoms regard the North, see examples: "Bogs and forests and fields, and scarcely a decent inn north of the Neck. I've never seen such a vast emptiness. Where are all your people?" (*GoT*: 41), "Family mottoes, touchstones, prayers of sorts, they boasted of honor and glory, promised loyalty and truth, swore faith and courage. All but the Starks. *Winter is coming*, said the Stark words. Not for the first time, she reflected on what a strange people these northerners were" (24), "Using some vile sorcery, your brother fell upon Ser Stafford Lannister with an army of wargs, not three days ride from Lannisport. Thousands of good men were butchered as they slept, without the chance to lift sword. After the slaughter, the northmen feasted on the flesh of the slain" (*CoK*: 540).

Thus, the repeated rendering of the Northerners as heathen and queer had already been slowly eroding central hegemony there, making Northerners mistrustful of southrons—as they call them—and Eddard Stark's execution provides a political justification for taking action, leading to the decision of declaring the North an independent kingdom, which concentrates years of submission to hegemonic identity into one climatic event, entailing massive outside walls consequences. By declaring the North an independent kingdom, Robb becomes an enemy of the crown in King's Landing, and this is followed by a series of battles such as that of the Whispering Wood, where he seizes Jaime Lannister, and his father Tywin Lannister decides to take action against the Starks by setting the Riverlands afire in order to prevent the Northern

army from finding food and shelter in their march to the capital (*GoT*: 942-943); he turns the region into a smoking ruin, thus creating a massive flow of immigrants whose means of production and livelihood have been destroyed and are therefore forced to go to the capital in their quest for survival, changing spatial practice and articulations in both the Riverlands and King's Landing.

3.1.4. Balon Greyjoy

While Robb is waging war against the crown, Balon Greyjoy, lord of the Iron Islands seizes the opportunity to reassert ironborn identity, and he too declares himself king of the Iron Islands: "I am the Greyjoy, Lord Reaper of Pyke, king of Salt and Rock, Son of the Sea Wind, and no man gives me a crown. I pay the iron price. I will take my crown, as Urron Redhand did five thousand years ago" (*CoK*: 205). He does it within the walls of the Sea Tower, while rejecting Robb Stark's offer of an alliance. It is worth noting how Pyke, the keep of the Greyjoy, ruling class of the Iron Islands, is described as "Drear, dark, forbidding. Pyke stood atop those islands and pillars, almost a part of them […]" (182). It is a keep which merges with the landscape of the islands, and the sea imagery that is so woven into the identity of the ironborn—as mentioned in the section about the colonisation process of Westeros—is present in every name and description of the place. The Sea tower, where Balon expresses his intention of declaring himself king of the Iron Islands and the North, is described in the following way:

> The Sea Tower rose from the outmost island at the point of the broken sword, the oldest part of the castle, round and tall, the sheer-sided pillar on which it stood half-eaten through by the endless battering of the waves. The base of the tower was white from centuries of salt spray, the upper stories green from the lichen that crawled over it like a thick blanket, the jagged crown black with soot from its nightly watchfire. Above the Sea Tower snapped his father's banner. The Myraham was too far off for Theon to see more than the cloth itself, but he knew the device it bore: the golden kraken of House Greyjoy, arms writhing and reaching against a black field. (182)

It is there where Balon first puts his intention of proposing his counter-hegemonic narrative as hegemonic into words; the very name of the tower refers directly to the sea,

and in the first conversation Balon has with his returned son[121] in that same place, he resents the influence the Starks have had upon him, and reminds him of all of the attributes a 'true' ironborn should have. In other words, both the scenario and the key event of the conversation between the Greyjoy father and son constitute a reassertion of identity. The conversation in the Sea Tower is the first direct contact we have as readers with the ruling class of the Iron Islands, and it is then when we learn of ironborn character and of Balon's intentions which will change the power balance in the North. The Sea Tower could therefore be regarded as a specific chronotope where ironborn historical narrative thickens and takes on flesh in the gloomy, sea-battered scenario: "I will take my crown, as Urron Redhand did five thousand years ago" (205). The weight of ironborn history and tradition as reapers who, as their family moto goes, "do not sow" (*CoK*: 187) but rather take what is there for the taking, compels Balon to reject the crown Robb Stark is prepared to give him on behalf of a crown taken forcefully.

Still within the walls of Pyke, Lord Balon Greyjoy reveals the fullness of his plans to the Greyjoys. First of all, he holds a feast in the Great Hall while seated on the Seastone Chair,[122] where other ironborn lesser houses are introduced: "Dagmer Cleftjaw had not yet returned from Old Wyk with the Stonehouses and Drumms, but all the rest were there—Harlaws from Harlaw, Blacktydes from Blacktyde, Sparrs, Merlyns, and Goodbrothers from Great Wyk, Saltcliffes and Sunderlies from Saltcliffe, and Botleys and Wynches from the other side of Pyke" (434-435). Then he calls the people sitting with him on the dais to a more exclusive meeting in a more private place to fully discuss his intentions, therefore leaving behind the setting of the Great Hall of Pyke, which is a place with strong historical significance but for a more public use; a place for the gathering of the representatives of greater and lesser ruling classes from the iron islands.

Then the Greyjoy members of the family move into lord Balon's solar, and there near the fire, the lord of Pyke conveys his intentions of taking the North when Robb Stark is away fighting against the crown. The solar constitutes a within walls chronotope similar to that of the Sea Tower; it is a more private place where conspiracies exclusive to the closest members of the ruling class can be held. There,

[121] It is in the Sea Tower when Balon Greyjoy first meets his son Theon after ten years held as a hostage by the Starks.

[122] A legendary throne of great significance for the ironborn: "Lord Balon occupied the Seastone Chair, carved in the shape of a great kraken from an immense block of oily black stone. Legend said that the First Men had found it standing on the shore of Old Wyk when they came to the Iron Islands" (*CoK*: 435).

Balon sends Asha to take Deepwood Motte, the keep of the Glovers, a Northern house, and Theon to raid the Stony Shore, a coastline in the North to the south-west of the Wolfswood. However, Balon's intention is not in any way similar to Renly's or to Stannis', both of which intend to generate a consensus among the people they want to rule over—regardless of the adequateness of their methods. Instead, Balon intends to, as Robb, reassert and re-empower ironborn identity and heritage, but first and foremost intends to get retribution for when he was defeated by Robert Baratheon and Eddard Stark during Robert's rebellion against the Mad King due to his decision of declaring the Iron Islands an independent kingdom back then.

These decisions, of course, result in a series of outside walls implications such as the taking of several keeps in the North like Deepwood Motte or Moat Cailin by the ironborn (*CoK*: 440), and the taking of Winterfell by Theon Greyjoy. However, they are not able to hold them for long because they are only relying on sheer military power, and do not actually propose any kind of desirable counter-hegemonic narrative in the North which could strive for a wider consensus than the one already established. Instead, they simply follow their traditional way of life as raiders and plunderers, and invade the North when it is weakest. In other words, their brief rule is not hegemonic but coercive and dominant; they do not begin working on a suitable counter-hegemonic narrative before they rise to power in order to secure their position, and they remain an alien element within the lands they intend to rule over. This impossibility of ruling legitimately and solidly through coercion and domination is expressed throughout Gramsci's *Prison Notebooks* (1971), and accurately summarised in Kylie Smith's and Richard Hownson's essay "Hegemony and the Operation of Consensus and Coercion" (2008):

> This exposes the reality that authority expressed as domination can never exist as legitimate—that is, with full consensus. Subalternity is evidence of this impossibility. In fact, hegemonic authority exercised as domination must impose coercion at some level of intensity and focus so as to ensure the dominant interests are protected. (6)
>
> [...]
>
> In an aspirational hegemony, the leading group seeks to develop a balance where consensus is emphasised over coercion and where the hegemony is not

> defined by certain hegemonic principles that demand the hegemony be closed down or ossified as a way of protecting them. (19)[123]

Due to the lack of a convincing narrative that actively includes the Northern people within their idea of society, their grasp in the Northern lands is very weak, and they are soon driven out by the Boltons, who despite being a Northern house are loyal to the crown, and their rule is also non-hegemonic but dominant. We do not know yet how long the rule of the Boltons will last due to the saga being still unfinished, but in *DwD* we do learn how most of the Northern lords and ladies are not pleased with their rule: "At Eastwatch, the black brothers told him there was no love between the Manderlys of White Harbor and the Boltons of the Dreadfort. The Iron Throne had raised Roose Bolton up to Warden of the North, so it stood to reason that Wyman Manderly should declare for Stannis" (*DwD*: 272), as well as the regular citizens: "'What did any Bolton ever know o' honor?' said the Eel's proprietor as he filled their cups with more brown wine" (280). This discontent could potentially lead to rebellion once the dominant grasp of the crown is relaxed and the lesser Northern houses have more room for action, as it is clear that the Boltons are not quite able to generate collective will among the population.

Another one of the of the great outside walls consequences brought through the ironborn invasion as well as the crown's actions is the Red Wedding, when Robb and Catelyn Stark are killed by the Freys acting on Lord Tywin's orders. When Robb learns that a great part of the Northern territory has been claimed by the ironborn, he halts his southward advance and instead starts going back north in order to take back the lands invaded by the Greyjoys. In the way to his homeland, he is killed along with his mother and his trusted lords and ladies, resulting on a rupture of the Northern purpose and the disbandment of the armies, contributing to the creation and increase of guerrilla groups such as the Brotherhood Without Banners which thrive outside walls in the Riverlands especially, and try to protect the common people from Lannister abuse.

[123] Essay collected in *Hegemony: Studies in Consensus and Coercion* (2008), edited by Richard Howson and Kylie Smith.

3.1.5. Joffrey Baratheon

The last of the kings in the War of the Five Kings would be Joffrey Baratheon, who is proclaimed king of the Seven Kingdoms immediately after his father's death, despite Robert's written will which said that Eddard Stark should take up the rule of the kingdoms until the boy Joffrey came of age. In addition to that, Joffrey has no real birth-right to the throne, being a Lannister bastard born of incest. Eddard tries to comply with Roberts will first by using the paper Robert signed in his deathbed, then by revealing the truth in the throne room in front of the whole court, all of this with the supposed aid of the City Watch, which has been bought to help Robert's cause. However, Cersei had been quicker than Eddard and had already bought the Watch to ensure her own son was immediately placed on the Iron Throne.

All of these schemes take place within the walls of the Red Keep, which we could quite safely describe as being the most notorious chronotope of this kind in the whole saga. There are many political decisions and plots with great outside walls consequences which are decided in the chronotopic frame of the Red Keep: King Robert's royal order for the annihilation of the exiled Targaryens which leads to generating the ambition to take back the Seven Kingdoms in Daenerys Targaryen and configures her character, the murder of Tywin Lannister and Joffrey Baratheon leading to the coronation of Tommen Baratheon, and hence to the rise in power of the religious hegemony of the Faith Militant. These are but some of many similar examples.

These schemes are effectively woven into the setting of the keep, which is often described as a place of secrecy and riddled with hidden passages: "There had always been talk of secret passages within the Red Keep. Maegor the Cruel was supposed to have killed the men who built the castle to keep the knowledge of them secret" (*FfC*: 69). "If any of them were hiding in the tower, we would have found them. I've had a small army going at it with picks and hammers. We've knocked through walls and ripped up floors and uncovered half a hundred secret passages" (243). The distribution and design of the Red Keep is essential to the story; it is designed in a way that naturally intermingles with the narrative: the infinity of secret passages to match the frequent plots that take place inside, the inner and outer stepped design that highlights power balances etc.

When Joffrey takes the Iron Throne, the setting of the throne room is very different from that of the Great Hall of Winterfell, Balon's Solar, Stannis' room of the Painted table, or Renly's encampment. The main trait that makes this particular location distinctive is its width, length, and a stepped design that evokes a power that is non-hegemonic but mostly dominant, and which is emphasised during Joffrey's coronation: "It was a long walk to the far end of the hall, where Joffrey waited atop the Iron Throne [...] Five knights of the kingsguard—all but Ser Jaime and Ser Barristan—were arrayed in a crescent around the base of the throne [...] Above them, Prince Joffrey sat amidst the barbs and spikes in a cloth-of-gold doublet and a red satin cape" (*GoT*: 644-645). In addition to that, Joffrey is a reckless boy with violent tendencies, and his first command as king is an impulsive cry for death: "'Kill him!' the boy king screamed down from the Iron Throne. 'Kill all of them, I command it!'" (646). However, Eddard is seized instead and thrown into a dungeon to await trial.

In the end, Joffrey decides to execute Eddard Stark for treason acting against the advice of all the people surrounding him, who try to prevent an unnecessary war, and thus the War of the Five Kings that had been brewing for a long time officially starts, with its consequent impact outside the walls. However along with Joffrey's fickle rule, Tywin Lannister pulls the strings from the shadows and makes the strategic decisions. While Joffrey simply does what he wants by invoking his absolute rights as king, usually against the general interest, Tywin is cold and cunning. He has no real scruples and is prepared to do whatever is needed to ensure the perpetuation of his legacy and the solidity of the central rule, but the option for a peaceful resolution is taken away by Joffrey's decision to execute the Stark lord. Given the situation, Tywin decides to set the Riverlands on fire in order to dissuade lesser lords and ladies from joining the Starks, and to prevent their armies from feeding off the land. The huge spatial and hegemonic consequences of these actions will be extensively developed in the next chapter.

These five examples are but some among a great number of within/outside walls chronotopes we can find in *ASoIaF*. In the saga, there exists a clear differentiation between the within walls and outside walls chronotopes. On the one hand, we have the ruling class schemes and narratives which are held indoors, and not just in any indoor setting, but within places that are most often reflections of the individual's or the ruling class' character, desires and ambitions, that is, enclosed places as opposed to open

spaces which actively contribute to the presentation of the particularities of a small group or individual as fillers of the signifiers of social order or common sense.

We have seen it in the case of Stannis Baratheon and the room of the Painted Table, which highlighted the homogenising cartographer's view of the land as a graspable and objectified whole. Renly Baratheon in his own ornamented pavilion located at the core of his cheerful, diverse camp that looked like a city on the march and portrayed his conciliatory will, representing a setting where people could unfold their everyday lives even in the midst of a military conflict. Robb Stark and the Great Hall of Winterfell, where he is collectively elected as King in the North in a moment of exaltation of identity, the Great Hall being a place almost exclusively designed for collective consensus. Balon Greyjoy and his Great Hall with the Seastone chair, as well as his damp and unwelcoming solar, a private place as opposed to the Great Hall where he decides to invade the North—a personal decision based on a will for retribution and not on a collective consensus, reason why it is presented in the solar and not in the Great Hall with the rest of representatives of the ruling classes—all of them strongly associated with imagery of sea and water. Joffrey and the Red Keep he never leaves, thus rendering him unable to propose any counter-narrative not based exclusively on the application of force due to his lack of knowledge about the world outside.

These indoor locations are not just containers for the action, but an inherent part of the time-spatial narrative of the story; Robb Stark could not have been collectively elected as King in the North in his own bedchamber; it had to be in the Great Hall of Winterfell, a space for assembly and collective negotiation where his father had once sat, symbolising both the somehow democratic nature of his rule,[124] and the Northern will for retribution for Eddard Stark's death, which emphasises the crown's disregard towards the North. At the same time, Stannis' grim and inflexible character as well as his frustrated ambition was effectively materialised in the room of the Painted Table, the table being the representation of the kingdoms just like his rightful place as king of the Seven Kingdoms did not leave the theoretical realm of representation, and was constantly frustrated by reality. Also, Joffrey's and Tywin's dominant rule was accurately integrated within the stepped space of the Red Keep, a fortress which sits

[124] 'Somehow democratic' because even if he was collectively raised to the status of king, it was a deed done only among representatives of the many ruling classes.

atop a hill overlooking the city, and which is in addition built with many different levels so as to highlight the ruling classes' detachment from common life outside the walls.

In the next section, we will analyse how certain decisions taken within the walls of the Red Keep provoke different spatial articulations and hegemonic shifts.

Chapter 4

Hegemonisation Process I

4.1. Counter-hegemonic spatial articulation during the Sparrow Revolution in the city of King's Landing; a case in point

In this section, we will follow the unfolding process of the counter-hegemonic narrative fostered by the poorest representatives of the Faith of the Seven from the beginning to the end of the saga so far. We will analyse how the damage inflicted upon the subaltern people and their lands in the Crownlands and the Riverlands as a result of the War of the Five Kings started a strongly spatialised hegemonisation process that ultimately contested the central rule of the crown.

4.1.1. Introduction to the context of the Sparrow Revolution: an overconcentration of power in a single space

In order to picture the context that gave way to the Sparrow Revolution, we need to understand what happens when hegemonic power gets too concentrated within one space, as well as some historical precedents from *ASoIaF*. To do this, we may recall the way historical empires have, on many occasions, perpetuated their influence. In *Introducing Globalization: Ties, Tensions and Uneven Integration* (2012) scholar Matthew Sparke writes:

> In historical empires, the two forms of hegemony sometimes operated in distinct spatial zones with military hegemony abroad and socio-cultural hegemony at home. For example, during the original Pax Romana of the ancient Romans, brutal hegemonic dominance of the empire's enemies in the periphery combined with the hegemony of free "Bread and Circuses" to ensure support from the plebs in Rome. [...] the Romans also tried to supplement their military hegemony with efforts to enlist peaceful consent in the colonies. But as with many empires that followed, the efforts of sociocultural hegemony still worked much better at home. (243)

Despite the arguable use of the concept of "brutal hegemonic dominance", which seems somewhat contradictory—if hegemony is based to a great extent on consensus and collective will, can it be also brutally dominant? The idea of a hegemony or dominance distributed in different spatial zones is central to the Martinverse. Such is the case, for example, of the Valyrian Freehold: "The Valyrians had no kings but instead called themselves the Freehold because all the citizentry who held land had a voice" (*WoIaF*: 13). However, as their empire expanded, they ruled most of the colonies with an iron fist, making thousands of slaves and quenching revolutions with dark magic and violence: "As Valyria grew, its need for ore increased, which led to even more conquests to keep the mines stocked with slaves" (13).

Being a Valyrian rightful citizen and landowner, however small the piece of land, was a privilege. This was possible due to the superior military and productive power of the Valyrians, who had mastered certain types of dark magic as well as dragons, had plenty of ore to work and trade with, and preserved their culture impermeably as a way to reassert their power over the colonies. To retain dominance over the conquered regions it was enough to ensure the support of Valyrian citizens.

Spatial articulation in the Valyrian freehold was therefore affected by this political system, in which it was important to own a piece of land in the capital, because it legitimated belonging to the core of the empire, thus transforming space into a good that did not only serve as a means of production, but also as a socio-political and cultural tool which validated citizenry. At the same time, space itself affected the development of the empire as well as its spatial articulation; Valyrians, in their early stages, dwelt in the volcanic mountains known as the Fourteen Flames, and it was in these mountains both where dragons dwelt and where the richest deposits of ore were located. These two features of their dwelling place profoundly affected their cultural identity, as well as their policies of expansion.

Among the people in Valyria, governance was a floating signifier referring in this particular case to the free and collective competition among the different particularities and needs of local landowners, from the humblest to the most powerful; all of them were in the game at one scale or another, and could shift within it.[125] In

[125] This actually led to having two or three powerful families that always disputed power among each other, but there was always the possibility to rise in the ranks for more humble families.

"Governance: An Empty Signifier?" (2009) Claus Offe argues how the concept of governance constitutes an empty signifier because it is so broad and so subjected to context and to the behaviour of social agents that its definition could ultimately be boiled down to "regulating issues and solving collective problems" (557). He writes: "The unresolved polysemy of the concept enables its protagonists to connect it to all kinds of positive adjectives and to embed it into a harmonizing rethoric" (557). However, we could add a detail worth considering, which is that, as Renate Mayntz writes in "Governance im Modernen Staat" (2004): "A selective research interest in problem solutions and their preconditions is permissible as long as one does not *ex definition* assume that political reality is always about solving collective problems and not–in addition or even primarily–about gaining and holding on to power" (72). For Valyrians, governance referred to different signifieds when it came to the capital of the Freehold or the different types of colonies, that is, while governance in the capital was based on the free competition for power—and the gaining of it was a chief driving factor—in most colonies it referred to oppression and domination, and to a system of autonomies based on trade, marriages and Valyrian immigration in some others.

In the colonies, the general tendency was to rule through fear and dominance, with the exception of some privileged cities which, for various reasons, were able to retain a certain degree of sovereignty, and their belonging to the empire was somewhat more based on hegemony and mutual consensus—with different degrees of imposition of course. Such is the case of the cities of Qohor and Norvos, which were founded due to religious schisms (*WoIaF*: 15), or Volantis and Lys, which were founded by "wealthy merchants and nobles who purchased the right to rule themselves as clients of the Freehold rather than subjects" (15). In the case of Pentos and Lorath, they were cities which existed before the Freehold, and retained some of their autonomy in exchange for paying homage to Valyria, and were also hegemonically retained within it through key marriages and the influence of Valyrian immigration (15).

After the fall of the Freehold, Aegon Targaryen, coming from a lineage of privileged freeholders of Valyrian tradition, sought to conquer the Seven Kingdoms and carve them into one great kingdom. The expansive will of his people was obviously woven into his identity, and despite him having few vassals in Westeros, he had dragons, which made his victory against the Westerosi kings possible with a small number of soldiers. In spite of his success in conquering the Seven Kingdoms, some

through war, some through peaceful surrender, ruling them proved particularly difficult precisely because the cultural, social and religious differences between them were too great to overcome, which was the reason why establishing the purpose of one single strong, united and centralised kingdom as the driver of collective will was a way of creating hegemony that was very difficult to implement; an artificial vision of sorts.

Although more permissive with the colonies than the Valyrian model of governance, the Westeros of Aegon was still in some ways similar. It is true that each kingdom held some autonomy, but they were still non-assimilated colonies claimed in a very short span of time that had to pay homage to a foreign crown in the then new city of King's Landing, echoing the Valyrian centralised system that strove to retain the ultimate power at the core of the empire, the capital city, in spite of being composed of very diverse people and regions. However, Valyrian central hegemony was more solid precisely due to free competition, a core characteristic in the Freehold which was removed in Aegon's Westeros, and with it the landowner's right to vote.

Thus, the result was the formation of an empire, a mirage of a single and united kingdom that was somewhat more lenient with the way colonies ruled themselves by establishing wardens on each so-called kingdom, but which was ultimately ruled by one seemingly uncontested dynasty that actually made this central rule weaker, for not only did it hold less power than the Freehold—which allowed at least to maintain most colonies through open domination, without a pretence for an hegemonic and integrative project—but also intended to project a fake image of hegemony and consensus under the purpose of one solidly united kingdom while having to defend an uncontested central dynasty. This rendered the vision of a united Westeros as an illusion perpetuated across generations, but never fully realised; in fact, the Targaryen rule was characterised by uprisings from lords and ladies who longed for the old days when they were independent, religious upheavals, skirmishes and revolutions that had to be suppressed, and which found their sublimation in Robert's Rebellion,[126] right before the start of the timeline of the saga. The only kings who were able to create some kind of hegemonic narrative able to integrate at least some of the diverse discourses composing Westeros were Jaehaerys I, who created a unified code of law for all the kingdoms approved by

[126] This does not mean that Robert's rebellion carried the common purpose of all the previous rebellions with it; rather, it means that it was the one that actually reached the status of hegemonic narrative during the time when the hegemonic project of the crown was weakest, and did not have enough power to maintain the rule through open domination and suppression either.

all of them, restored the schism with the Faith—which ended in bad terms after Maegor the Cruel's reign—and did works to improve the health conditions of the realms (60), and Aegon V, who "enacted numerous reforms and granted rights and protections to the commons that they had never known before" (108) by listening to the demands of the people, even if this meant that some lords and ladies defied him openly.

In other words, the narrative of a united Westeros was barely capable of integrating dissenting voices and minimising otherness, and was therefore never able to produce a real hegemony but something more similar to an empire, even if the way Westeros is presented in the books may effectively trick the reader into thinking about it as a smaller kingdom due to the multifocal narrative technique that jumps from one kingdom to another, making them seem closer and more connected than they actually are—the fact that they use the same language may also trick the reader into this conception. As defined in *Hegemony or Empire: The Redefinition of US Power under George W. Bush* (2006): "*empire* has a territorial dimension and implies control over subjects, while *hegemony* refers to a more informal means of persuasion and subjugation of other players in the international arena. Empire is a more realist and military system, while hegemony is more liberal and institutional" (David: 219).

In Westeros' imperial model, space is concentrated in the capital which is King's Landing, and that constitutes the central and 'default' space in which the idea of a unified kingdom is unfolded, while the other kingdoms constitute 'Other' spaces that are understood in differentiation with the central one. Spatial articulation is therefore orbital, that is, the rest of the kingdoms ought to orbit around a single place which is the capital. An example of this is the road network whose construction was started by Jaehaerys I, all of the roads stemming from the capital, and with a main road called "the kingsroad" (*WoIaF*: 62), making the capital the centre of all kingdoms, and giving it a name that directly evokes the king. Also, the Crownlands, and especially King's Landing, are presented as a default 'westernised' and white setting to which all the other kingdoms are compared, especially Dorne and The North due to their non-Andal past—see examples of this exoticisation in *DwD*: 21/717 and *GoT*: 27 respectively—as well as the people and places in Essos (*GoT*: 33 and *CoK*: 397-398).

All of this inevitably leads us to the conclusion that such a centralised absolute power which seeks to unify such different cultures and societies is utopian, and virtually impossible to fulfil through a single hegemonic model; instead, it will be unavoidably

composed of several partial hegemonies that integrate different discourses, and which will always contest the central government, with sheer domination as its main alternative.

It is necessary to understand all of this in order to depict how hegemony and domination work in the Seven Kingdoms, as well as why the capital is so central in political importance. King's Landing is not only the capital of Westeros, but also the seat of colonisers and a point of ethno-cultural reference, because it actively projects a white, westernised image of a One that serves as a point of reference through which the reader assesses the subdued kingdoms, especially those with non-Andal heritage, and which are presented with an exoticised sense of queerness. On the other hand, society in the Seven Kingdoms is fluid and certainly not unified, as it is composed of a discursive heteroglossia[127] and a diversity of groups which compete with each other to gain social, political, cultural or religious relevance; because this fact remains unacknowledged by the central government which seeks to hammer the kingdoms into a homogeneous region, then the system is mostly dominant and not very hegemonic.

After Robert's rebellion, even if the foreign dynasty of the Targaryen was overthrown, Robert kept basically the same geopolitical distribution of the kingdoms as well as the same system based on the concentration of power in King's Landing and the Crownlands, and therefore hegemony in the kingdoms was hardly improved aside from the fact that it was now a king with Westerosi ancestry that occupied the throne, but this narrative alone had little hegemonic relevance besides a traditional value which could not hold for too long. All in all, he was not the worst of kings, and was able to hold a certain peace among the kingdoms with the help of his small council and allies, Ned Stark—who was his personal friend—being one of the most important ones, for he helped manage the North which was always difficult to rule from the center due to their distinctive cultural and political identity. However, after Robert died and Joffrey Baratheon ordered Ned Stark executed, the War of the Five Kings evidenced how truly fragmented the kingdoms were, and to what extent the capital of King's Landing was the place where most tensions were originated due to the extended centralised realms which tried to foster an unreal and suppressive vision of what the Seven Kingdoms where, trying to flatten alterity and feigning to be united, but never integrating the diverse regional discourses, much less the voices of the commons.

[127] Mikhail Bakhtin "Discourse in the Novel" (1981), pp. 259-422.

When the war starts, the little consensus Robert had been able to command in both nobles and commons is destroyed as the ruling class in King's Landing evidences its moral decay and lack of a compelling socio-political narrative. With Robert, at least the purpose of the Rebellion against the oppressive Targaryen dynasty and the rule of the Mad King was strong; Aerys had broken what little hegemony his predecessor may have commanded by raising taxes and indiscriminately punishing behaviours he deemed incorrect or suspicious both among the commons and nobles (*WoIaF*: 113-121), centralising all riches in the city of King's Landing while putting strain on the peripheral kingdoms. This led to several revolts which were brutally quenched, such as the one in Duskendale, a city that rebelled against the increasing economic pressure the throne was exercising upon it, after which Aerys ordered the whole ruling house as well as any remaining relatives completely exterminated (118).

Robert tried to heal as many of the wrongs done by Aerys as he could, and while he reigned, the purpose of this healing commanded certain collective agreement both among nobles and commons. When he rebelled against the mad king, the purpose of the rebellion became the hegemonic narrative in Westeros, which was able to integrate the counter-hegemonic discourses of independentism, of the commons and of the nobles into a unified hegemonic narrative; in Dollinger's words from his work *Changing Narratives of Youth Crime: From Social Causes to Threats to the Social* (2020): "[...] if there is a coalition of different discourses with particular key narratives, then a hegemonic narrative becomes evident" (Chapter 5.1). This encompassing narrative extended over the reign of Robert, but since "Differences cannot and do not have to be fundamentally eliminated if a hegemonic narrative is established" (Chapter 5.1), then the very creation of a hegemony by Robert's narrative[128] was the first step towards the fragmentation of the illusion of a unified Westeros, because it was also the opening channel for the long-suppressed diversity of voices in the continent to recover their ability to speak up. Robert's narrative drew upon the subaltern's voices to build a compelling purpose that the oppressed by Aerys' regime could attach to, and thus got a commitment with this diversity of narratives, which he honoured during his reign by

[128] When we say 'Robert's narrative', we actually mean the whole collectivity of agents that had a role to play in the establishment of the counter-hegemonic narrative of the revolution.

maintaining a certain balance—although by no means absolute—[129]between the centralised model of government and open ears to the different demands.

However, by the last stages of his rule, Robert had already become lazy and oblivious to his duties, and when he dies and Joffrey takes over the throne, the thin hegemonic ties that bound the kingdoms together through the purpose of the rebellion are cut, and the independentist movements in the North[130] and in the Iron Islands[131] are sparked thanks to the strength they had recovered through Robert's more lenient rule, while the Stormlands rise up in arms in order to claim the throne for Renly Baratheon by confronting his brother Stannis who is the rightful heir, and Dorne plots a royal marriage with Daenerys Targaryen in order to make an powerful alliance.

In the face of this, the reaction in King's Landing led by Twin Lannister—who is the true ruler in the shadows—is, again, resorting to protect the capital and looking for alliances in the closest southern kingdoms, that is, the ones most in tune with their own way of life and therefore with less defined borders; the Ones: the Reach and the Lannister lands, the latest being basically an integral part of the new crown's narrative, and should therefore not be considered something separate. These alliances ensure King's Landing's access to resources and supplies and make it self-sufficient and independent from the other regions, thus enhancing its sovereignty and ability to manoeuvre.

[129] Balon Greyjoy declared himself King of the Iron Islands during Robert's reign, and rose in arms against the Iron Throne. Robert decided to suppress this revolution via domination and strength, which led to another revolution during the War of the Five Kings, due to the fact that this narrative was not integrated within Robert's hegemonic narrative.

[130] In the North, the independentist narrative had always existed mostly in a cultural sense. However, since Ned Stark, Robert's childhood friend, was the warden at the time of Robert's rule and the North took a very active part in the uprising against the Mad King, it was well integrated within Robert's narrative. This stops when Ned Stark is executed by Joffrey, and the independentist narrative enters the political sphere too.

[131] In the Iron Islands, the independentist narrative had always been hegemonic. However, it was suppressed by the domination exercised by the Targaryen dynasty and Robert's rule, and was therefore never truly silenced.

4.1.2. The Sparrow Revolution

In the times when the Andals arrived to Westeros, their religious zeal which was linked to their colonial purpose backed by the divine promise of new lands for thriving was a decisive factor in their expansion within the continent. By the time this purpose was fulfilled, the Faith was already so powerful that it had its own army, and throughout the history of the kingdoms it often disputed hegemony with the crown. The army of the Faith was called the Faith Militant, and they answered to the High Septon, the greatest representative of the Faith (*WoIaF*: 45). This army was divided into two main orders: the Warrior's Sons and the Poor Fellows; the first ones were all anointed knights who gave up their lands and titles to become fighters in the service of the Faith, and the second ones were the military branch of the Begging Brothers, who were poor and humble people who wandered the kingdoms devoting their lives to the Seven.

Due to violent uprisings and clashes during Maegor the Cruel's reign between the crown and the faith, the Faith Militant was outlawed (58). Later, during Jaehaerys I's rule, amnesty was offered to the prisoners taken during Maegor's time in exchange for the dissolution of the military religious organisation (62). For many years it remained like this, and the Faith was without an army of its own, until the events of *ASoIaF*, when the War of the Five Kings[132] sparked the fury of many humble people and created a perfect context for the comeback of the order of the Poor Fellows.

The overconcentration of power in the reduced setting of King's Landing and the Crownlands over the years without a real hegemonic work outside of these locations, inevitably resulted on a certain desensitisation and disconnection from the lands and the peoples outside that context; they were understood by the crown as foreign to King's Landing and the Crownlands, and thus evidenced the failure of the project of a homogeneous and united Westeros, which was actually full of alterity. Because of this desensitisation, Tywin was able to take suppressive action not only against the ruling classes that opposed the crown, but also against the common people who lived in the lands of Westeros, especially the Riverlands, due to their geopolitical particularities. As written in *WoIaF*:

[132] The war which starts when King Robert Baratheon dies and several suitable candidates for the rule of the kingdom start fighting for their right to the throne: Stannis Baratheon, Renly Baratheon and Joffrey Baratheon. Meanwhile Balon Greyjoy and Robb Stark try to become independent from the rule of the Iron Throne and recover their own kingdoms.

> No other land in the Seven Kingdoms has seen so many battles, nor so many petty kings and royal houses rising and falling. The causes of this are clear. Rich and fertile, the Riverlands border on every other realm in the Seven Kingdoms save Dorne, yet have few natural borders to deter invasion. (151)

During the War of the Five Kings, the Riverlands were what lay between the Crownlands, the allies of the crown, and their enemies—the North, the Iron Islands and some Riverland houses such as the Tullys—due to their nuclear position at the heart of Westeros; they were the most exposed kingdom. That and their inherent fertility and richness meant that they had enough productive power to sustain the armies of the crown's opponents, which along with the lack of hegemonic work outside the boundaries of King's Landing, led Tywin to make the decision of plundering the Riverlands:[133]

> "Let them," Lord Tywin said. "Unleash Ser Gregor and send him before us with his reavers. Send forth Vargo Hoat and his freeriders as well, and Ser Amory Lorch. Each is to have three hundred horse. Tell them I want to see the riverlands afire from the Gods Eye to the Red Fork." […] "Lord Tywin glanced at Tyrion. "Your savages might relish a bit of rapine. Tell them they may ride with Vargo Hoat and plunder as they like—goods, stock, women, they may take what they want and burn the rest." (*GoT*: 943)

However, his concern towards King's Landing is different. While he spurs plundering in the Riverlands just to undermine the Northern armies with no concern for the inhabitants whatsoever, he does not want to see King's Landing follow the same fate: "'Then you had best learn to control them. I will not have the city plundered.' 'The city?' Tyrion was lost. 'What city would that be?' 'King's Landing. I am sending you to court'" (*GoT*: 943). The city is what truly matters, and it needs to be defended at all costs because it is where the real power is concentrated. That is why the Iron Throne constitutes such a powerful symbol; it symbolizes the concentration of power and the pretence for union. However, as Professor Dodik Ridho Nurrochmat writes in his dissertation *The Impacts of Regional Autonomy: on Political Dynamics, Socio-Economics and Forest Degradation* (2005):

[133] The only explanation for such drastic action is that the crown had barely worked on integrating the Riverlands in their political project—and thus evidences the severely deficient hegemony in Westeros—as the implications of burning and laying waste to them are huge both in terms of politics and resources; Tywin's actions can only be explained through a conscious and utter disregard for these implications.

> Centralized government systems usually face huge problems in the countries with large land area and/or high population density. The top-down approach of the centralized government system creates a large gap between planning and implementation. It is too difficult and too costly to govern effectively when the population and the land area are very large. Large countries are likely to have large variation among regions in climate, geography, and economic base, so that centrally-mandated uniformity in the provision of government services is likely to be quite inefficient. Moreover, there are diseconomies of scale in trying to govern large countries which relate to the manpower costs of bureaucracy, the time required to approve local decisions, and the problems of communications (Alm and Bahl 1992: 2). (1-2)

Tywin's within-walls decisions in the king's name break any hegemonic link the crown may have had with the Riverlands. He decides to set the Riverlands on fire at the common room of the Inn of the Crossroads, the same place where Tyrion Lannister had been seized by Catelyn Stark and brought to trial to the Eyrie. The setting constitutes an interesting within walls chronotope; it is a place of transit and a crossroads, and both in Tyrion's case and in Tywin's their planned course of action is interrupted there by an unexpected event, which actually presents them with a metaphorical crossroads: in the first case, because he gets seized on charges for attempted murder, and in the second, because he learns of his son's defeat and seizure in the battle of the Whispering Wood. Both deviations from the initial plan bring about great power shifts in Westeros as well as outside-walls consequences.

Thus, as a consequence of the crown having failed to properly incarnate the floating signifiers of order and stability, counter-hegemonic narratives begin to thrive outside-walls along the war-torn countryside of the Riverlands. There are two main movements that get articulated in this ravaged space: the Brotherhood Without Banners and the Poor Fellows along with the Begging Brothers—these last two are presented together, because they are part of the same movement, the Poor Fellows being the military branch of said movement. In *Architecture and Space Re-imagined,* Richard Bower summarises Gramsci's ideas on counter-hegemonic movements:

> [...] space is rich with identities and communities that represent alternative and subaltern social relations. Gramsci posits that over time such identities have the potential to pass from isolation and exclusion to become protagonists, and

> eventually as potentially effective counter-movements to the cultural institutions and political ideology (1971, p. 170). (101)

Both the Brotherhood and the Poor Fellows are representative of counter-hegemonic narratives that had been in isolation up until that moment. The Brotherhood is newer, because it gets founded at the beginning of the timeline of the saga, after a party of knights and soldiers is sent by Eddard Stark when he is hand of the king in order to bring Gregor Clegane to justice, and which is defeated in the battle of Mummer's Ford (*GoT*: 574/ 739). The remaining and surviving members of the host continue operating in the Riverlands as a guerrilla group with the purpose of protecting the smallfolk after having seen the atrocities performed there by the crown's men. By leaving their within-walls settings as knights, the members of the brotherhood experience the outside-walls reality of the innocent peasants who suffer the consequences of war; they get to see their individual stories, and the detailed, long-lasting consequences of the injustices committed on behalf of the crown. These experiences rearticulate the purpose of their group as defenders of the voiceless victims, and they start to take in anyone who wishes to fight against oppression, no matter their banners, hence the name Brotherhood Without Banners.

The case of the Poor Fellows is of great interest, because as explained earlier in this section, they were actually a military religious order that had been outlawed and had allegedly disappeared, shifting from the hegemonic foreground to isolation across the ages. However, during the War of the Five Kings, the order comes back in the form of a popular movement which denounces the crown's injustice against the common people, thus starting to move back to the foreground little by little. See their first appearance in the saga as a unified movement:

> "The sparrow is the humblest and most common of birds, as we are the humblest and most common of men." The septon had a lean sharp face and a short beard, grizzled grey and brown. His thin hair was pulled back and knotted behind his head, and his feet were bare and black, gnarled and hard as tree roots. "These are the bones of holy men, murdered for their faith. They served the Seven even unto death. Some starved, some were tortured. Septs have been despoiled, maidens and mothers raped by godless men and demon worshipers. Even silent sisters have been molested. Our Mother Above cries out in her anguish. It is time for all anointed knights to forsake their worldly masters and

> defend our Holy Faith. Come with us to the city, if you love the Seven." (*FfC*: 89)

With this plea, the septon who is the spokesman of the group shows their abhorrence for the acts committed by the crown's men, and explains their intention to go to the capital in order to express it in front of the king and demand protection. They seek justice and retribution for the injustices committed against them, and the desperation they have been induced to after losing their homes and lands to the destruction of the crown makes them resort to the gods. It is the combination of the will for retribution, the desperation that makes them seek shelter in the gods, and the failure of the ruling class to include them in their hegemonic narrative that ultimately leads them to articulate their revolution through religion; they find a justified way to claim their rights in their historical past. This is a primordialist tendency similar to the one we mentioned earlier in this work (Pastor 2012: 17), which could be applicable not only to national identities, but also to social movements. The tendency to use roots in the historical past in order to justify present movements and revolutions is commonplace, see the example of Feminism mentioned in Astrid Henry's *Not my Mother's Sister: Generational Conflict and Third-wave Feminism* (2004): "Returning to the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries to establish their historical roots, the feminists of the late 1960s created a generational structure between two eras of feminism […]" (53), or Fran N. Egerton's *Roots of Ecology: Antiquity to Haeckel* (2012), where he develops the history of Ecology and ecological science from antiquity in Greece and Rome to Ernst Haeckel, a German naturalist who lived between the 19th and 20th centuries, and who coined the modern word 'ecology' itself.

In *Hegemony: A Realist Analysis* (2003), scholar Jonathan Joseph writes the following about hegemony and spatial practices: "Hegemony works alongside spatial practices in the production and reproduction of particular locations, ensuring continuity and cohesion. It also works alongside ideology in developing representations of space which are tied to the dominant material practices" (173). That is, abusive spatial practices in the Riverlands modify and articulate space in a negative way by destroying the material means of production and the dwelling places, and thus stir certain ideologies giving way to counter-hegemonic narratives that also articulate space through spatial practice. In the case of the Brotherhood Without Banners, by impacting geopolitics at a small scale, protecting towns and villages from destruction and by

establishing a base at Hollow Hill from which they extend their influence (*SoS*: 567-568), and in the case of the Poor Fellows, by gathering more and more desperate people who have lost everything and engaging into one massive migratory movement towards the capital of King's Landing moved by a religious ideology based on humility and piousness and the purpose of obtaining retribution for the wrongs done by the ruling classes. Their spatial articulation is further developed when they arrive to the capital, and before we get into this, it is worth to quote Jonathan Joseph again to reinforce these ideas:

> In other words, space and ideology are inextricably bound in a basic material sense. Space acts as the site of ideological articulation and symbolic interaction. Space, in short, is representational, and, of course, the control of representation is crucial to the process of hegemonising. So from these material relations arise strategic relations, driven by hegemonising processes. The relation between space and ideology is both given and potential. Out of the necessary relation come different articulations and projects. Space is both necessary to the reproduction of ideology and the terrain for its application. (174)

If we have a look at the layout of King's Landing,[134] the first thing we notice besides its walls are three main landmarks that preside its stepped design, each of them atop one of the three hills within the city: the Red Keep on Aegon's Hill, the Sept of Baelor on Visenya's Hill, and the ruins of the Dragonpit on the Hill of Rhaenys. While the Dragonpit is no longer of use due to the extinction of dragons,[135] the Sept of Baelor and the Red Keep are still key buildings in the city; each of them represents one pillar of social life and politics: the faith and the crown. Both of these have strong significance in people's lives, and therefore on spatial practice, the most obvious example of this being precisely the privileged locations of both the Sept and the Reed Keep, where the Iron Throne is. In order to reach the keep, in addition to climbing Aegon's Hill, there is a long flight of serpentine stairs (*CoK*: 313) that emphasises its disconnection from the real life of the capital. Given the fact that power in King's Landing is so centralised in the Red Keep—the king, the king's hand, the small council etc.—to dwell in the Red Keep is to adopt a cartographer's view of the city and its problems. We could draw a

[134] See Appendix H.
[135] However, the Dragonpit was representative of Valyrian domination during the reign of the Targaryens, as the dragons were a symbol of their superior military power.

parallelism here with Certeau's description of the view from the summit of the World Trade centre in New York:

> To be lifted to the summit of the World Trade Center is to be lifted out of the city's grasp. One's body is no longer clasped by the streets that turn and return it according to an anonymous law; nor is it possessed, whether as player or played, by the rumble of so many differences and by the nervousness of New York traffic. […] The panorama-city is a "theoretical" (that is, visual) simulacrum, in short a picture, whose condition of possibility is an oblivion and a misunderstanding of practices. (1980: 92-93)

That is, to dwell up there is to adopt the view of the city as a panorama, a setting that is theoretically alive with micro-narratives and spatial practices but is unavoidably misinterpreted and simplified to a higher or lesser degree—depending on the dweller's previous experience outside that setting, if any—due to the consequent detachment that comes from being lifted to such a position of privilege. Here it would be interesting to recover a quote by Lefebvre from an earlier section in this work that summarises this:

> The eye, however, tends to relegate objects to the distance, to render them passive. That which is merely seen is reduced to an image - and to an icy coldness. [...] The rise of the visual realm entails a series of substitutions and displacements by means of which it overwhelms the whole body and usurps its role. (286)

In conclusion, to be not only surrounded by walls but also placed at a vantage point over a city such as King's Landing entails a passivisation and homogenisation of the spatial practices and articulations given in the city; a very small minority of privileged people is raised to the position of the Red Keep and dwells there for generations with minimal contact with the vast majority of the inhabitants.

The Sept of Baelor is also at the top of a hill, and it is surrounded by a white marble plaza (*FfC*: 139), highlighting its detachment from the everyday lives of the common people through a combination of luxurious materials and white steps and towers which convey a message of ungraspability, as if the gods were something out of reach for the common people.

There is also a clear division in spatial articulation between the rich areas of town and the poorest ones. While the poorest people live in the area named Flea Bottom

to the west side of the Hill of Rhaenys, a place riddled with narrow and twisty streets and alleyways (*GoT*: 885) where it is patent that people build their houses and huts in any available spaces without regulation, the richest people live to the east of the same hill in wider and more orderly streets.

This division makes it clear that the power within the city is also unevenly spread, as the richest and ruling classes are clearly isolated from the rest and organise in closed communities. During the War of the Five Kings, due to food shortages caused by the impossibility to get supplies either from the Riverlands due to Tywin's mentioned war policies or from the Reach due to a military blockage, the little goods that still come into the city are diverted towards the more privileged, so that they can keep their level of life. This results in a riot (*CoK*: 658) that prepares the ground for the people to adhere to the Sparrow movement when they arrive to the city, and delivers the coup de grace to the lasts shreds of hegemony Joffrey's crown commanded, mostly remnants of Robert's.

When Margaery Tyrrell is betrothed to Joffrey to consolidate the alliance between Tyrrells and Lannisters as a strategy to strengthen their dominant position in the face of the other five opponents presenting alternatives to the faltering hegemony, Margaery attempts to start some hegemonic work even before she arrives to the capital by sending wagons of food to the starving people of King's Landing (*SoS*: 528). However, even if she gains the sympathy and admiration of a sector of the population due to this, she is doing so through philanthropic work that in no way substitutes the generation of a consistent collective will or common project, and is certainly not enough to deescalate the growing tension in the city. Scholar Francie Ostrower writes in 'Philanthropy, Prestige and Status' (2016):

> […] philanthropy is itself a mark of privilege and high social status. It is a part of elite standing, which is perceived as one of the very defining characteristic of being upper class. […] The association between philanthropy and privilege means that philantrophic involvements are viewed as symbolic of the donors' personal success and affluence. (217)

In other words, Margaery's work is done by herself and for herself; it is her who gains admiration in some sectors of the population due to grand gestures that momentarily ease the lives of some people, but the work is ultimately a symbol of her own social success. It may also be a way to reassert her somehow hegemonic and consensual figure

over her future husband's dominant and coercive ways, but this does not prove to be of much use when she is taken prisoner by the Faith, aside from the articulation of a small populist movement of people who call for her freedom to no avail (*FfC*: 907). However, this happens time after the Begging Brothers—or Sparrows—have already reached power, and we should therefore take a few steps back. Nevertheless, it was necessary to draw a complete picture of the situation regarding hegemony in King's Landing before the Begging Brothers arrived in order to see what kind of socio-political climate received them.

As a summary, we could say that the ruling class of the city had retreated to an even greater extent to life within the walls of the Red Keep as the inhabitants of King's Landing took the streets and engaged in riots and protests due to the famine caused by the military blockage carried out by Mace Tyrrell when he was on Renly Baratheon's side. The ruling class' answer to this is to establish a curfew as well as an increased control over the people, enhancing the already huge breach between them and the 'common' population, who seem to live in different worlds; literally in three spatial zones: the one within the walls of the Red Keep, the one outside these walls but within the walls of the city where protests, riots and famine are commonplace, and the one outside of the city walls, where long queues of immigrants, merchants and refugees crowd together trying to get into the safety of the city, fleeing from their ravaged homelands.

By the time the Begging Brothers arrive to the city, their numbers have increased vastly, and the people of the city are prepared to receive their counter-hegemonic narrative as a desirable alternative to that of the ruling class. When they get to King's Landing, they immediately start preaching their own reading of the Faith of the Seven, articulating their ideology and their social movement in the streets rather than in the enclosed settings atop the hills, or from a detached position of power. They actively include the subaltern classes and speak to them at their level about the injustices that have been inflicted upon them. The ruling class expresses concern over this fact, perceiving the first signals of threat: "Sparrows, Your Grace. Septon Raynard says there may be as many as two thousand in the city, and more arriving every day. Their leaders preach of doom and demon worship…" (*FfC*: 341), but the movement is largely underestimated by Cersei at first: "As for these pink sparrows, so long as they preach no treason they are the Faith's problem, not ours" (342-343); her vantage view

enables her to see the bigger picture, but it also renders social movements homogeneous, preventing her from properly assessing the amalgam of counter-hegemonic discourses actually present among the Sparrows. It is not simply a religious movement, it is the recipient of all the disconformities generated by the crown; some people join the movement because they have been stripped of everything they owned, including the lands that fed them due to Tywin's effort to keep enemies at bay by destroying the means of production as well as dwellings. Some other people adhere to the movement because they believe the moral of the ruling class to be corrupt, and many of the people from the city join it as a reaction to the famine provoked by the War of the Five Kings, while the ruling class kept eating and drinking without restraint.

The result of all this is that the production of space as well as people's engagement with it is greatly altered. There are three main ways in which this happens:

Firsly, the Riverlands, once fertile and populous due to the availability of water for the transport of goods, fishing etc. and the richness of farming lands, become empty and barren after they are plundered and burned. They go from being a farming space of production whose rivers are used as channels to transport resources, and where villages thrive, to being a wasteland full of corpses, burned fields and ruins.

Secondly, inhabitants of the Riverlands stop unfolding their spatial practice all over the lands, and concentrate in one itinerant group which slowly marches towards the capital. Instead of sedentarily developing their day-to-day lives in fixed places, they set out to cross the space between them and the capital, becoming circumstantially nomad.

Thirdly, when they arrive to the capital, the population of the city dramatically increases as more and more refugees arrive along with the big Sparrow movement, rearranging certain spaces such as the plaza in front of the Sept of Baelor, where the Sparrows set their central base (*FfC*: 582), and appropriating the streets by preaching their faith and camping in them (580), intervening places such as brothels, and ultimately the Great Sept of Baelor by breaking into it in order to raise their own designated leader as the next High Septon (587).

That is, the Riverlands become mainly a kind of nomad space with no referential points of rest or enclosed places but for those into which different ruling classes have retreated—Riverrun or The Twin Towers—and which do nothing but fuel the Begging

Brother's—or Sparrow's—counter-hegemonic narrative. Richard van Leeuwen develops in detail some of Deleuze and Guattari's ideas which were mentioned earlier in his book *The Thousand and One Nights: Space, Travel and Transformation* (2007):

> Deleuze and Guattari conceive the construction of space as a continual interaction between two types of space which represent the contrast between dynamic and static visions of space, mobility and immobility: 'smooth' space and 'striated' space. The first is a space which is open and unlimited by external boundaries or internal divisions; it is a space in which the traveler can roam at will, led by a sense of direction, by events that occur on the way and by intuitive responses to the qualities of the landscape. It is not occupied by its inhabitants, who are rather diffusely distributed over its surface. Striated space, in contrast, is bounded and closed; its surface is quantified and divided into compartments of various statuses; it is organized on the basis of policies and ideologies; it is stable and occupied by sedentary people. Striated space is conquered as the expense of nomad space, but, conversely, when striated space recedes, nomad space advances. (16)

This is useful in order for us to be able to grasp how the two main types of space are understood in opposition to each other. However, even if the post-war Riverlands do share some common traits with smooth space in terms of mobility and dispossession, they are less than that; they become a hostile, blank space of sorts. Before the plundering, it was a smooth spatial region with plenty of space for roaming, not possessed but rather sparsely populated with the exception of places such as Riverrun or The Twins, which could be regarded as striated spaces that interrupted the smoothness of the space of the Riverlands, creating ideologically articulated islands that served as points of reference and hegemonised the inhabitants of the lands through political networks of influence.

However, during the war they eventually become a blank space in which one simply cannot remain; not for dwelling, not for wandering. The landscape has lost its value as a means of production, as a dwelling point, and even as a space for roaming freely. Most of the striated spaces that populated the smooth space are destroyed, abandoned or isolated, and the Riverlands become circumstantially nomad, not as the established day-to-day spatial practice of the region where space is sparsely divided and experienced in a mobile way by its dwellers or passers-by, but as a momentary

configuration resulting from the lands becoming hostile and uninhabitable either sedentarily or in a nomad way, a space that needs to be abandoned as soon as possible and is therefore crossed by the Sparrows only to be left behind. The characters who roam this war-torn space do it with a certain purpose, aiming to leave promptly,[136] and those that remain are the ones who plunder,[137] or who defend from the plundering.[138]

However, it is precisely the process of the Riverlands becoming uninhabitable that articulates the movement of the Sparrows; what starts as a refugee column heading towards the safety of the capital, becomes a socially and ideologically articulated movement formed by people who have been unfairly forced out of their lands; an illustrative example of how spatial practices affect ideology and hegemony.

The capital, in turn, is a clear example of striated space: a bounded space "divided into compartments of various statuses [...] organized on the basis of policies and ideologies" (16) in Leeuwen's words. We have already written both about how important the power of spatial representation is, and about the spatial distribution of King's Landing; each social class inhabits a different area of the city and unfolds its day-to-day life in different locations. What enables the Sparrows to command hegemony among the people is precisely the comprehensive aspect of their narrative, that is, the taking possession of the biggest space of all spaces in which King's Landing is divided: the space of the subaltern—both ideologically and materially.

While the privileged enclosed spaces are few and isolated, most of the city is composed of spaces where the working and poor classes unfold their lives, and it is there where they preach their ideas, set their camps, and spread their message.[139] These actions are aided by the hijacking, first of the plaza in front of the Sept of Baelor, and then of the Sept itself. They bring the revolution that started in the streets to the institutions once they have enough power, and they manage to overturn the law that forbade the Faith Militant by negotiating the forgiveness of the debt owed by the crown to the Faith, thus legally restoring the order of the Poor Fellows.

[136] Brienne when she is requested by Catelyn to bring Jamie Lannister to King's Landing and needs to cross the Riverlands (*SoS*: 24).
[137] Ser Gregor and his men, sent by Tywin to plunder the Riverlands (*GoT*: 943).
[138] The Brotherhood Without Banners, that aim to protect the less privileged (*SoS*: 567-568).
[139] Two Sparrows are seen in Cobbler's Square, a working class setting, preaching to hundreds of people (*FfC*: 554).

The peak of this revolution could presumably be Cersei's walk of atonement. Both Margaery and Cersei are arrested by the Faith on the grounds of moral defilement, and thus debunk the myth of the untouchability of the ruling class, who had not been truly challenged by the commons in a very long time. By recovering the legal status of the Faith Militant through social organisation, they also renovate the institution of the Faith and break its reliance on the ruling class, which up until that moment had managed to keep the Faith at its mercy. Their position becomes powerful not only because of its social support, but also because of their recently recovered military power, which has been obtained through social revolution. They are now in position not only to hegemonise, but also to dominate. With the arrests of both noblewomen, they are able to keep the new boy-king Tommen Baratheon and the Small Council in check, and with Cersei's walk of atonement—or walk of shame—they make a show of their newly gained power for domination. In fact, the walk of atonement is a highly spatialised process, in which Cersei is forced to walk naked from the Great Sept of Baelor to the Red Keep[140] (*DwD*: 1213) as a way to take away her power and face the subaltern in their own arena. During the walk, she is brutally divested from her privileged status as well as her dignity, as a way for the Sparrows—now institutionalised—to reassert their dominant power over the ruling class, which according to the Sparrow's narrative should be held accountable for their sins and injustices to the same extent as the subaltern classes; it is a symbolic act which aims to set a precedent.

In summary, we could say that the nature of hegemony is inherently dynamic; it is a continual process that shifts and transforms social life, always contested by counter-hegemonic narratives which also affect these social practices and, in doing so, they transform and rearticulate space. In this particular case, dominant and oppressive acts exercised by the ruling class due to an excessively centralised hegemony that failed to integrate—or at least appease—alterity, result in many people turning towards a particular religious narrative that reclaimed the power of the many—the common people—instead of the centralised power of the privileged few. Damages inflicted upon the land bring about great spatial modifications that force people to abandon what had previously been a dwelling space, now transformed into a space perceived as blank, with a potential neither as a means of production nor as a striated space composed of

[140] See appendix H.

relevant places and networks of social life. These people leave their villages and houses, and join forces to march towards the capital in order to make their voices heard, and once there, they take the streets and start preaching their own narrative in the locations where people are most affected by the abusive practices of the ruling class. By doing so, their power and influence start to increase, until they are in position to actually contest the central hegemony of the crown and make demands by reappropriating the institution of the Faith[141]—which had been a subordinate to the crown for very long—thus recovering their long lost 'historical right' to arm themselves. Once this is done, they pose a solid counter-hegemonic threat to the narrative of the crown, and actually exercise domination and abuse upon certain members of the ruling class as a way to reassert their power, which, once institutionalised, becomes not only hegemonic and commander of collective will, but also dominant and coercive.

We could close this section with a quote from Hagai Katz's "Global Civil Society Networks and Counter Hegemony" (2007), which underlines the potential quality of civil society as a fertile soil for revolution and counter-hegemonic narratives that may actually take hegemonic positions:

> But civil society à la Gramsci is also where leadership and movement from below can emerge, where deprivation is mobilized through consciousness, and a revolution can be attempted. [...] Civil society, and not the state as in Hegel, is the active and positive movement of historical development. It is the creative space, where subaltern groups, encouraged by intellectuals, can coalesce, form a *historic bloc*, and engage in a counter-hegemonic *war of position* to alter society. (188)[142]

[141] Also, they literally occupy the Sept of Baelor; an enclosed, vantage space.

[142] While in the case of the Sparrow Revolution it is not intellectuals who spur the revolution, there is a religious leader who has thoroughly studied the Seven Pointed Star—the religious book of the Faith of the Seven—and who establishes his own interpretation as common sense and generator of collective will, endowing the movement with content and purpose.

Chapter 5

Nothern Realms:

The North, the Wall and the lands beyond

The whole north[143] is likely the location with the most consistently built narrative in *ASoIaF* because it is constructed through the view of multiple characters that dwell in it or form part of it in one way or another. However, before anything, there is a need to recall an idea which is central to this study: space and hegemonic relations do not interact in a cause-effect way, but rather they both form part of a unified dynamic process; they unfold at the same time and inherently affect each other. Hegemony-spatial articulations could, in a sense, be regarded as something similar to time-space, that is, hegemony is affected by spatial articulations just to the same extent to which spatial articulations are affected by hegemony; they are dynamic, co-dependent phenomena.

In this section, we will outline hegemonic relations in the North, the Wall and the lands beyond—this last one will be only briefly outlined in this chapter, as it will be developed at length in the following one—as well as their articulations in space. In the case of the kingdom of the North, we will mainly focus on a portrait of hegemonic ties and configurations as they stand at the beginning of *ASoIaF*, and in the case of the Wall and the lands beyond, we will follow Mance Rayder's process of unifying the diverse clans of the Free Folk—called Wildlings by people from south of the Wall—through a process of hegemonisation and his attempt to cross the Wall in order to escape the Others—also called white walkers—as well as the liminal qualities of the Wall which affect hegemonisation practices.

[143] North—beginning with capital 'N'—: kingdom/ north—beginning lower case 'n'—: cardinal point.

5.1. The North: hegemonic ties and spatial articulations

The four main defining features of the northernmost kingdom are: its extension, which accounts for a third part of the whole of Westeros, its sparsely spread population, the non-Andal heritage, and its rough and cold climatic conditions (*WoIaF*: 135). It is a kingdom which is composed of vast extensions of smooth space with no settlements whatsoever, in some cases lacking even roads, and this factor is plays a key role in the way power dynamics unfold. Hegemony in the North does not work like in the other kingdoms mainly due to two main reasons: firstly, because their culture was untouched by the Andal invasion in spite of the repeated efforts for colonisation, and therefore the faith in the Old Gods remains alive,[144] and secondly, because of the overall physical qualities of the Northern landscape which largely affect the dweller's spatial practices.[145]

This last factor resulted in a greater isolation of the population, which was concentrated in different settlements that had little to no contact among them for months, sometimes even years, due to the impossibility to travel from one point to another due to blocked roads, snows, treacherous paths and freezing cold temperatures. This precise feature also played a key factor in the repelling of external invasions, which somehow recalls Charles XII of Sweden's efforts to challenge Russia in 1708-1709.[146] The isolation gave way to different cultures that developed varied habits and traditions, and that is why the North relies more on religious, almost esoteric hegemony than on administrative hegemony. Each Northern dwelling, town or region enjoys greater autonomy than their counterparts in southern kingdoms, mainly because of climatic and geographical circumstances rather than social, and this gives way to a different spatial organisation, practice, and social life. See the example of the Late Woodland Period (500-1000 AD) in eastern North America, where contacts between different peoples living in the same area were reduced due mostly to geographical and topographical factors:

> There seems to have been a breakdown of communication and trade between the different regions, and localities were isolated from each other. Local

[144] *WoIaF*: 135-136.
[145] *WoIaF*: 135.
[146] See entry for "Battle of Poltava" in the *Envyclopaedia Britannica* ("Battle of Poltava").

> varieties of culture developed, most of which were a regression from the Hopewell[147] that preceded them. [...] In the central Ozark Highland area of Missouri there was an unelaborated village life that had not been affected by the Hopewell development. This was understandable in view of the isolation of many villages and the lack of general contact, which was difficult to maintain in an area of deep valleys separated by narrow ridges and expanses of prairie. [...] upon the disappearance of the Hopewell, the isolated bands that were living in the north-eastern area and in the Ozark highland, which had only occasional contact with the Hopewell traders, seemingly expanded into numerous villages. These small bands of potters, adapted to both the prairie and forest, moved frequently but between a relatively small range [...] they were content to stay within the localized area, depending upon hunting, fishing, and collecting vegetable foods. Trading was only with neighboring groups [...] (Chapman E. and C. 1983: 63-64)

While hegemony during the Hopewell period shared little with the feudal social order prevalent in *ASoIaF*,[148] the topographical and geographical factors that resulted in different degrees of isolation of several communities are commonplace. In the North, we can also find clans and tribes that, due to their prolonged geographical isolation, had very little contact with society in the kingdoms, Stark hegemony, and even less with the rule of the crown. Among these we can find the Mountain Clans, the Stoneborn of Skagos, or the Crannogmen of the Neck (*WoIaF*: 139-140). This diversity of people called for a common ground as well as a certain social consensus if some kind of hegemony was to be maintained, as hegemony "involves the power to define what counts as 'legitimate' areas of agreement and disagreement" (Pitsoe and Letseka 2018: 177-178). If day-to-day life or ways of governance among the different societies do not provide a consensus strong enough to generate a hegemonic *Weltanshaungen* (Gramsci in Buttigieg 2007: 183)—or worldview—then some other thing may; in the case of the

[147] "Hopewell culture**,** notable ancient Indian culture of the east-central area of North America. It flourished from about 200 BCE to 500 CE chiefly in what is now southern Ohio, with related groups in Michigan, Wisconsin, Indiana, Illinois, Iowa, Kansas, Pennsylvania, and New York. The name is derived from the Hopewell farm in Ross county, Ohio, where the first site—centring on a group of burial mounds with extensive enclosures of banked earth—was explored" ("Hopewell Culture").

[148] It was more based on trade, the creation of mutual obligations among tribes, and the emergence of the so-called 'Big-men', who were men that did not necessarily have any kind of formal status in the tribe, but were able to command collective will and hegemony through persuasion, networks of influence, and material goods (Galloway 1995: 37).

North, both religious feeling and a shared ancestry present this common ground that enables the exercise of a degree of hegemony.

Due to its climatic conditions as well as its large surfaces of exposed windswept plains and rugged cliffs in some of the coastal areas, the lands of the North are far less fertile than those of the southern kingdoms—save, perhaps, Dorne. This inevitably leads to vast extensions being completely unsuitable for dwelling, and therefore utterly uninhabited, without even the presence of places or 'points of rest' that interrupt the smoothness of the landscape such as isolated farms or homesteads. This quote by Robert Baratheon is highly illustrative: "Bogs and forests and fields, and scarcely a decent inn north of the Neck. I've never seen such a vast emptiness. Where are all your people?" (*GoT*: 41).

The North is different from other kingdoms because, just like the sea is the smooth space par excellence regardless of the constant efforts for striation by establishing trade, fishing and transport routes which have resulted in an ultimate space of deterritorialization formed by an infinity of trajectories—but never really striated—(Deleuze and Guattari 1980: 387), the vast empty spaces of the North resemble it insofar as its surfaces are as uninhabitable and as resistant to striation as that of the sea. They are crossed on a regular basis—especially during summer, when the weather conditions allow for less isolation and more movement—but they are a space of transit, never really articulated. The quality of being uninhabitable in a striated/sedentary way is something that the sea shares with the desert, and the North is, to a great extent, composed of great extensions of cold desert. The desert does not provide enough located resources to supply a stable source of nourishment for a permanent settlement to thrive, or enough shelter against climatic phenomena, and thus forces its inhabitants—when inhabited—to lead a nomadic life, searching for temporary vegetation, water, or any necessary resources:

> In smooth space, the line is therefore a vector, a direction and not a dimension or metric determination. It is a space constructed by local operations involving changes in direction. These changes in direction may be due to the nature of the journey itself, as with the nomads of the archipelagoes (a case of "directed" smooth space); but it is more likely to be due to the variability of the goal or point to be attained, as with the nomads of the desert who head toward local, temporary vegetation (a "nondirected" smooth space). (478-479)

Smooth space is directional and made of trajectories. The example given is that of the nomads who cross space by drawing changeable paths depending on the availability of resources, which is a form of inhabitation, but smooth space is not always inhabited, sometimes not even nomadically. Such is the case of these extensions of windswept plains in the North (*WoIaF*: 135), or the deserts of Dorne (*WoIaF*: 235-236), which serve as spaces of transit, trade, hunt, war etc., but not as dwellings of any kind. In regions with an abundance of these smooth spaces, hegemony needs to work differently to be effective, because it cannot be uniformly spread or easily held through an uninterrupted network of more or less numerous inhabited places within striated space which interact and influence each other through trade and socio-cultural relations, thus perpetuating hegemonic values over the whole extension of the region.

In the North, striation is given in key parts of its landscape, and it is there were the population gathers: mountains, forests, rivers and coasts; places with a more or less decent number of available resources. If we pay attention to the map of the North in appendix F, we will see how Deepwood Motte, Cerwyn and Winterfell articulate around the Wolfswood; Last Hearth and Karhold around other wooded areas; Torrhen's Square, Ramsgate, Widow's Watch, White Harbor, Oldcastle, Moat Cailin, Flint's Fingers, Greywater Watch and Barrowton around areas with access to water—river or sea—and the Mountain Clans build their villages and dwellings near the northern mountains beyond the wolfswood, in the valleys and meadows by the Bay of Ice (*WoIaF*: 139)—not represented on the map. In appendix G, we can see the contrast in the spatial articulation of striated space between the North and the southern kingdoms. In the last one, names of villages, towns and cities are dotted all over the map, while the North's spatial organisation is shown to be remarkably sparser.

However, these places are separated by the smooth spaces we have been referring to, some of them being more geographically isolated than others from the cores of hegemonic influence, and therefore boasting all sorts of differences in terms of culture, society, economy, tradition etc. Because of this, for the ruling class to hold an effective hegemony and command some kind of collective will—in the case of the North, the Stark rule—there is a need to resort to a more spiritual kind of hegemony, largely based on religion[149] and the spiritual conception of landscape. It is religion and

[149] The worship of the Old Gods.

landscape together because when an administrative or political hegemony is not possible due to fundamental differences in the way societies in the North work—as well as the impossibility to establish a unified administration in such a sparsely and unevenly populated region—similarities must be found, and the worship of the Old Gods which is commonplace in the North is perfect for this because it is not simply an anthropocentric religion, it is a religion which presents the very land where Northerners dwell—an essentially common denominator for all Northern societies regardless of their other particularities—as a constituent part of identity due to its strongly biocentric component. This different way of commanding hegemony becomes patent for example in Lord Umber's speech when Robb Stark is raised to the status of King in the North, and he mentions elements that compose the Northern land as symbolic for Northern identity during a key shift in hegemonic powers: "Why should they rule over me and mine, from some flowery seat in Highgarden or Dorne? What do they know of the Wall or the wolfswood or the barrows of the First Men?" (*GoT*: 976). The fact that Umber refers to the barrows of the First Men as something so relevant for Northern identity can be explained by this quote from the *Encyclopedia of Geography* (2010) edited by Barney Warf:

> The construction of place is recursive: Place reproduces the beliefs that have produced it, and these beliefs eventually come to appear self-evident and a matter of common sense. This issue has been examined in the construction of commemorative places which aim to "etch" a particular collective memory into the cultural landscape, thereby asserting certain ideologies as dominant while marginalizing others. (1419)

There are particular places which constitute strong symbols for identity and reassert the dominance or superiority of a certain culture and tradition over another in space. The barrows of the First Men, even though they were built in ancient times, and most likely without any particular symbolic intention other than commemoration for their dead, gain key political relevance in the timeline of *ASoIaF* because they act as reminders of the distinguishing cultural and religious heritage of the Northerners and play a role in spreading cultural hegemony through a perennialist and primordialist view of history.

In opposition to this traditional and religious hegemony with a distinctive seal of identity, the kingdoms south of the North, which had all been conquered several times before Aegon and therefore do not have a history of cultural and religious consistency

and continuity, are much more influenced by the crown's hegemony in opposition to the Northerners' strong resistance to it that stems from historical, geographical and topographical factors, leading to a strong perennialist/primordialist kind of nationalism as described by Jaime Pastor (2012: 17).

Opposite to this, the crown's rule is mostly coercive; the ruling class in King's Landing does not appeal to ancient heritage, gods, or cultural identity in order to spark a will to fight for one's land, instead, most political decisions are privately taken within walls only among a few people and without representatives of the houses which do not belong to the central ruling classes.[150] These are represented in the narrative as chronotopes that concentrate great decisions and actions with huge outside wall consequences within four walls in rooms that are usually quite literally obscure, dimly lit,[151] and create a sensation of secretiveness.[152] On the contrary, the Great Hall of Winterfell is vast and full of representatives that witness Robb's rise to kingship, and they all have a say on the matter, which is actually decided there on-site (*GoT*: 976-977). Both of them are events that take place within walls, as is the tendency in *ASoIaF*—explained in Chapter 3—with ruling class decisions, but the way it is done is less collective and integrative in the case of King's Landing's ruling class, and when events happen in the room of the Iron Throne that are witnessed by the noblemen and women, they are usually performances previously rehearsed and planned in secret which have a predetermined outcome.[153] In *SoS*, after Robb Stark is murdered during the Red Wedding, Tywin, Cersei, Joffrey, Tyrion, Kevan Lannister and Grand Maester Pycelle gather at the Tower of the Hand and discuss how coercion will win them allies:

> "Wars do not win themselves, Tyrion," Cersei said with poisonous sweetness. "Our lord father won this war." "Nothing is won so long as we have enemies in the field," Lord Tywin warned them. "The river lords are no fools," the queen argued. "Without the northmen they cannot hope to stand against the combined power of Highgarden, Casterly Rock, and Dorne. Surely they will choose submission rather than destruction." "Most," agreed Lord Tywin. "Riverrun remains, but so long as Walder Frey holds Edmure Tully hostage, the Blackfish

[150] See events after Lord Tywin's murder (*FfC*: 65-77), as well as repeated references to secret passages and doors (66), treasons and schemes (68) and whispered voices (69).
[151] See references to the room of the Painted Table (*SoS*: 604-605)
[152] See references to the Small Council (*SoS*: 969.970)
[153] See events previous to Joffrey's coronation (*GoT*: 628-629), the coronation itself (*GoT:* 644 – 647), the events previous to Tyrion's trial as well as the trial itself (*SoS*: 1092 – 1114).

> dare not mount a threat. Jason Mallister and Tytos Blackwood will fight on for honor's sake, but the Freys can keep the Mallisters penned up at Seagard, and with the right inducement Jonos Bracken can be persuaded to change his allegiance and attack the Blackwoods. In the end they will bend the knee, yes. I mean to offer generous terms. Any castle that yields to us will be spared, save one." (876-877)

At no point do they discuss how they can win allies by generating some kind of collective will or integrative project, not even among the other non-central ruling classes; coercion is generally the way.

Given the difficulties and the isolation that Stark hegemony needs to face when spreading its rule, it becomes quite apparent that the hegemony of the crown hardly reaches all the Northern corners, if at all. The Northern locations most dependant on the crown's hegemony as they stand at the beginning of *ASoIaF* before the Stark rebellion are the city of White Harbor and Winterfell.

5.1.1. White Harbor

White Harbor is the only city in the North, and it is also the smallest city in the Seven Kingdoms. Due to its proximity to the frontier with the southern kingdoms,[154] it is also one of the locations with most influence coming from Andal heritage; although the worship of the Old Gods exists there—as well as an ancient godswood—the Faith of the Seven is hegemonic. This stems from two main reasons: the geographical proximity to the south that results in an influence through trade and immigration, and the fact that White Harbor is the seat of House Manderly, an Andal house exiled from the Reach many years before Aegon's conquest which was welcomed by the Starks of Winterfell, and therefore come from Andal tradition and follow the Faith of the Seven (*DwD*: 273/354).

Its access to the sea, being the major port in the North, allows for trade opportunities in all directions, and ships from many different places are a common sight at the docks (274), thus making it more diverse than other locations in the same region. These aspects result not only in a cultural melting pot, but also in a greater subjection to

[154] See appendix F.

the crown's hegemony, as it becomes patent in *ASoIaF*, when this particular liminal[155] stance between Northern and Southern heritage and Northern and Southern administration put the Manderlys at a difficult position during the War of the Five Kings, in which they need to declare their favour either for king Tommen or Stannis after Robb Stark is slain[156], and their loyalties are put to the test. White Harbor is not as shrouded in the ancient mysticism of the North as other locations in the kingdom given its largely Andal heritage, and thus the dominant *Weltanshaung* is much closer to that of the southern kingdoms, and, consequently, its model of governance. The proximity of the city to the White Knife river also allows for traffic of goods that come from the sea to inner parts of the North, reaching even Winterfell.

5.1.2. Winterfell

Winterfell is the ancient seat of house Stark, and although the name refers to the castle itself, it is more than that. Rather than just a castle, Winterfell "sprawls across several acres of land, encompassing many freestanding buildings" (*WoIaF*: 143). Besides, outside the walls of Winterfell lies the Winter Town, which is fairly empty during summer, but fills up to the brim during winter with people who seek the shelter and protection of the Starks (*GoT*: 485). This is another example of the radical change in spatial practices in the North in accordance with environmental conditions. Social life changes completely along the different seasons, and what is a deserted town during summer with only an inn and a few inhabitants, becomes a city alive with trade and movement in winter.

The reason why Winterfell is built where it is traces back to the times of the First Men. The castle sits atop underground thermal waters and hot springs, some of which have been modified to flow through Winterfell's walls. The value of these springs in the bleak of winter, as explained in *WoIaF*, is easily imaginable (143). This would constitute a second example of spatial articulation according to the particularly harsh environmental conditions of the North.

[155] As defined in *Encyclopedia.com*: "Liminality is the experience of being betwixt and between. In his book *The Rites of Passage* (1909), the folklorist Arnold van Gennep first isolated and named the rites of passage that accompany changes of place, state, social position, religious calling, and age in a culture" ("Liminality"). The word 'liminal' comes from the latin root *limen*, meaning 'threshold', and describes a transitional stage between two points ("Liminal").
[156] See references to Lord Manderly's—the ruler of White Harbor—actions in *FfC*: 487.

When Torrhen Stark finally surrendered and submitted to Aegon the Conqueror and his appalling military power (*WoIaF*: 41), the Starks of Winterfell pledged alliance to the Iron Throne in King's Landing, and the North became part of the Seven Kingdoms of Westeros. Due to this, Torrhen Stark was bitterly remembered by many as "the King Who Knelt" (41), although he avoided an unnecessary bloodshed by deciding not to wage a war that was already lost; he went against the Northern collective will that was largely rooted on nationalist pride and religious identity, and thus failed to embody the model of governance that the Northern ruling class proposed as *senso comune*, but not only that, he also played against the Northern *Weltanshaung* by allowing outsiders to administrate the kingdom, even if some authonomy was guaranteed. This forceful integration in Aegon's narrative of a united Westeros along with the perennialist/primordialist nationalism of Northerners resulted in a mostly administrative hegemony of the Iron Throne that opened the door for treaties, marriages and agreements with the southern kingdoms, but even during the timeline of *ASoIaF* this mingling with Andal descendants has not yet been going on for long enough so as to establish a cultural and religious hegemony too, and Northern traditions still remain strong thanks to the somewhat autonomic system that allows for the North to hold some sovereignty, even though the final word is always the Iron Throne's.

Since House Stark of Winterfell is established as the central administrative rule in the North—operating as wardens—it is in the interest of the Iron Throne to strengthen its—at least—administrative hegemony there. From the times of Aegon, the attempts to knit the realm together with the North in it have been carried out in a variety of ways: through marriages such as Torrhen Stark's daughter with the lord of the Eyrie,[157] the more recent marriage of Eddard Stark to Catelyn Tully from the Riverlands (*GoT*: 72), or the prospective marriage of Sansa Stark to future king Joffrey Baratheon (*GoT*: 72).[158] Other attempts include the many rewards obtained by Lord Cregan Stark during the Targaryen civil war of succession—also named The Dance of Dragons—for his loyal support to Aegon III, which made the Starks more overtly loyal to the Targaryen rule (*WoIaF*: 141).

[157] This marriage, so recent after the North's submission to the central rule of the Iron Throne, caused widespread discomformity among northerners, and some of Torrhen sons even considered open rebellion (*WoIaF*: 141).

[158] See Georges Duby's quote in section 2.1.3. about the importance of marriages in the Middle Ages for the establishment of hegemonic influence.

Due to all of these historical events Winterfell, being the seat of house Stark, remains a location in the North particularly tied to the rule of the Iron Throne. Robert's Rebellion and the fall of the by then completely corrupt Targaryen dynasty, in spite of resulting in friendlier terms between the North and the southern kingdoms given the fact that Robert and Eddard were close friends and partners in a battle for a common cause, did not lead to a revival of the independentist narrative in the North. This administrative hegemony, however, fails to hold in place when Robert dies and Joffrey becomes king in spite of Eddard Stark's accusations of him being a bastard born of the incest between queen Cersei and her brother Jaime Lannister, also acting against Robert Baratheon's written will which specifies that Eddard should be acting king until Joffrey comes of age (*GoT*: 617). Eddard is judged as a traitor and imprisoned, only to be executed later. This act breaks all hegemonic links and allegiances between the North and the Iron Throne, and the will for a truly independent North takes the power of a hegemonic narrative not only in a cultural, traditional and religious sense, but also in the administrative, political sense.

Due to these events we may conclude that, during Robert's rule, it was only logical that Winterfell being the main representative of the hegemony of the crown in the North due to the status of its ruling class as wardens—not kings—the ruling houses from other locations were also closer to the rule of the crown the closer they were in administrative terms to the rule of Winterfell, given the fact that the way for the crown to extend its administrative hegemony in the North was through the use of the wardens in Winterfell as spokesmen or transmitters of its policies. However, this order is broken when Eddard is slain (*GoT*: 892), and when the ruling class in Winterfell declares itself an enemy of the crown and recovers the Northern perennialist/primordialist (Pastor 2012: 17) narrative, loyalties get divided; that is when the power of religious and traditional hegemony with a nationalist component is put to the test among the different houses. Of course, the conditions for this break are most easily given in the North because while Robert may have achieved to command the necessary administrative hegemony for it to remain integrated within the project of the Seven Kingdoms, geographical, topographical and climatic differences that result in a greater need for a religious and cultural consistency—previously discussed in section 5.1.—as well as their historical narrative of continuity, provide a suitable context for the schism, when triggered by Eddard's execution.

Opposed to Winterfell or White Harbor that are the strongest links with the Iron Throne in the North—at least at the very start of *ASoIaF*, before Robert's death—the locations and communities in the North with the most tenuous connection to the crown's hegemony are The Mountain Clans, the Stoneborn of Skagos and the Crannogmen of the Neck.

5.1.3. The Mountain Clans

The Mountain Clans are comprised by a series of clans that inhabit the mountainous regions beyond the wolfswood, the valleys and meadows, and the area along the Bay of Ice as well as certain rivers of the North (*WoIaF*: 139).[159] While they owe allegiance to the Starks, and have in fact remained loyal to them throughout history for the most part, their particular spatial and social organisation in isolated geographical regions has given rise to different power dynamics among themselves, along with particular practices that do not take place in other, less isolated, regions.

The first thing that must be noted about the Mountains Clans in relation to the hegemony of the Iron Throne is that their dwellings and villages do not appear on the maps created by maesters: "'Those mountains?' Stannis grew suspicious. 'I see no castles marked there. No roads, no towns, no villages.' 'The map is not the land, my father often said. Men have lived in the high valleys and mountain meadows for thousands of years, ruled by their clan chiefs'" (*DwD*: 323-324). In *The Production of Space*, Lefebvre stresses how the interplay between the three types of engagement with the spatial—spatial practice, representations of space, and representational space—affects the production of space: "It is reasonable to assume that spatial practice, representations of space and representational spaces contribute in different ways to the production of space according to their qualities and attributes, according to the society or mode of production in question, and according to the historical period" (46). He also focuses on the specific impact of representations of space: "We may be sure that representations of space have a practical impact, that they intervene in and modify spatial textures which are informed by effective knowledge and ideology. Representations of space must therefore have a substantial role and a specific influence in the production of space" (42). This is because representation is also a means of

[159] See appendix F.

hegemonisation, which is the inevitable result of the interplay between intertextuality, historical context and ideology. In *Imagining the Other: The Representation of the Papua New Guinean Subject* (2007), Regis Tove Stella writes in reference to Papua New Guinea, but begins with a general claim that was commonplace during European colonialism:

> Colonial space was brought under European surveillance by being treated either as a tabula rasa (blank sheet) or as a palimpsest (a tablet or parchment reused after earlier writing has been erased). […] A primary function of European descriptions of the Papua New Guinean landscape was to suppress any sense of indigenous people's presence. (51)

While counter-hegemonic representations may still exist in situations of hegemonisation (Hetherington 1997: 20), hegemonic representations of space have the power of drowning, silencing or manipulating majority conceptions of geography, which directly affect representational space and spatial practice.[160] Due to their inherently diverse and changeable nature, these "established relations between objects and people in represented space are subordinate to a logic which will sooner or later break them up because of their lack of consistency" (Lefebvre 1991: 41), but their influence upon spatial practices and social life may hold sway regardless because of the hegemonic nature of said representations that foster certain spatial and social dynamics, notwithstanding their truthfulness, accurateness or doubtful ability to stay faithful to the represented elements in the face of changing time-space and ideological bias.

By omitting the Mountain Clans on hegemonic maps—and we can safely assume that masters knew about their existence given the fact that the Starks and other houses in the North interacted with them politically, culturally and socially on a regular basis, and there are plenty of records of their existence as well as their articulation in space (*WoIaF*: 139)—the Mountain Clans are conceived as marginal societies to the eyes of the central ruling class, and their exclusion from the hegemonic narrative affects both their engagement with societies linked to the rule of the Iron Throne as well as with other lesser ruling classes. In turn, these societies' engagement with the clans is

[160] In colonial processes, when the dominant—scarcely hegemonic—imperial representations of space are imposed over the indigenous ones by ignoring diversity, culture and native relations of otherness, they often translate into actual spatial practices and force themselves upon the land and social life. We only need to take a look at the clearly artificial and overly rigid boundaries present in the African and North American continents that tended to disregard differences among local cultures and frontiers.

either non-existent or strongly conditioned by the feeling of otherness and queerness fostered not only by their geographical isolation and differences in culture, but also by their omission from the main hegemonic project of a united Westeros, which enhances the breach between them and the rest of the Westerosi.

Because of this rejection of the clans as a constitutive part of the Seven Kingdoms, the administrative rule of the Iron Throne is basically non-existent among them; they are bound to the Starks mostly by traditional and religious hegemony, and even though they were officially included within the North by the Kings of Winter (*WoIaF*: 139), not even the Starks find it easy to fully subject them to the rules of the kingdom. In fact, it has been common for the Starks to need to intervene on-site in the disputes between clans when they got out of control (*WoIaF*: 139), due to the fundamental differences among them which stem from years of isolation and lack of full integration into the common social, political and cultural narrative of the North. They are still independent societies which do not form part of a common project, and they boast a fairly wide diversity of narratives instead. In fact, there are about forty different clans in the area, but the most powerful are the Norreys, the Burleys, the Harclays, the Flints, the Liddles, the Knots and the Wulls, this last one being the most prominent among them (*WoIaF*: 139).

It has been mentioned earlier how the clans' particular articulation in space results in special kinds of spatial practices that shape their identity in a unique and markedly different way. Given the fact that the regions where they dwell are barely inhabitable during winter, the youngest members of the clans usually need to go to Winter Town to seek the protection of the Starks and withstand the harsh winter years, adding to the population of Winter Town, which stays half-empty most of the summer, and straining the population at the clans' homelands: "It has always been a harsh life up there. When the snows fall and food grows scarce, their young must travel to the winter town or take service at one castle or the other" (*DwD*: 933).

This is undoubtedly a decisive mechanism for Stark hegemony to hold among the Mountain Clans, for in Martin's secondary world seasons last years rather than months,[161] and this makes that the amount of time that a youngster belonging to the clans spends in close proximity to the Stark rule may cover some key years in the

[161] See reference to a three-year winter and to a nine-year summer in *GoT*: 255.

establishment of individual identity and ideology. By getting members of the clans' future generations to live under the Stark rule and/or fostering them in certain castles, they are perpetuating Stark hegemony through education, so that when these youngsters go back to their homelands they may hold the Stark rule in some regard at least.

In her thesis *Schools, Hegemony and Children's Agency: a Sociological Study with Children on their Schooling Experiences* (2011), Patricia Ann Rose summarises Durkheim's socialisation theory: "Durkheim (1961) identified that children were especially amenable to socialisation as they easily developed habits through repetition and imitation and their suggestible nature made it easy for adults to manipulate ideas to ensure conformity" (17). If children are naturally susceptible to adult inputs that shape their identities in order to guarantee conformity, then it is only logical that Mountain Clan children fostered by Starks or Stark lieges during key years of their development will, as adults, generally retain some loyalty towards them, thus helping perpetuate Stark hegemony in the far reaches of the North.

Another habit rooted among the Mountain Clans that is not present in other societies in the North is the intentional suicide of the elders in order to ensure food and resources for the younger when winter strikes too hard: "The old men gather up what strength remains in them and announce that they are going hunting. Some are found come spring. More are never seen again" (*DwD*: 933). This habit, which recalls the Norse legend of the *Æ*ttestup,[162] is on the one hand a reflection of the extent of the harshness of the conditions that the Mountain Clans had to face, and, on the other, of the constant process of social renovation that came out of such extreme measures which enabled the young to step to the foreground perhaps earlier than in other, less harsh, societies.

An additional factor which directly affects their social organisation is the fact that due to their articulation near the Gift—a region to the south of the Wall controlled by the Night's Watch—in some cases, or along the Bay of Ice in some others, some clans have lived in constant fear of either Free Folk or Ironborn raids, and thus have had to harden their defences and their characters to the point in which military organisation

[162] Ættestup/Ättestupa: kin/family precipice. Unproven Norse legend which suggests that elders occasionally threw themselves off cliffs in order to spare the young from the burdens of caring for them when they could not contribute to the farm anymore. See the English version of the Icelandic saga "King Gautrek" in *Seven Viking Romances* (1985), pp. 138-170.

is deeply ingrained within their identity. However, they boast an adamant adherence to the laws of hospitality and guest-right for those who they consider friends (*WoIaF*: 139). This is almost a need so as to ensure the survival of their societies due to the critical conditions they endure, often needing a point of rest between journeys across the hostile smooth space of transit[163] of the mountains; yet another example on how space has shaped their social configuration.

All in all, the Mountain Clans are in fact somehow under Stark hegemony, but the mechanisms used to generate social consensus and agreement in order to ensure hegemony need to be different from the ones used in the rest of the North due to the special needs they have as a result of their articulation in geography as well as their relation with the rest of Westeros. Given the impossibility of creating a populous town or community in such a difficult natural environment, they are organised in many small clans, each of them taking a small portion of the land, and they are retained within the Stark project through the systems discussed in previous paragraphs. The hegemony of the crown, as explained before, is practically non-existent, and only reaches them in a residual way through those Stark laws and influences which are commonplace in all the kingdoms and thus need to be enforced by the wardens in the different regions.

5.1.4. The Stoneborn of Skagos

Among all societies in the North, the Stoneborn who dwell in the island of Skagos are the ones with fewer ties to Stark hegemony; in fact, they hold no hegemony at all among them, nor have they held any in the past (*WoIaF*: 139-140). The island where they dwell is located to the north-east of the North, and about half of it lies to the south of the Wall—where the keeps of the three main clans in the island are, Deepdown, Kingshouse and Driftwood hall, belonging to clans Crowl, Magnar and Stane respectively—while the other half lies north of the Wall in relation to the mainland.

Being an island, this distribution should not be particularly important due to the fact that the position of the Wall plays no significant role in it, but it is remarkable that the three main settlements in the island are in fact positioned to the south of the Wall.[164]

[163] Smooth space as in Deleuze and Guattari (1980), not literal smooth space.
[164] See appendix F.

This cannot be, however, due to some potential fear of the Free Folk—or wildlings, as people south of the Wall call them—because there are not any reports of raids or attacks coming from the lands beyond the Wall in the island of Skagos. In fact, quite the opposite, as the Skagosi are suspected to have been responsible for the massacre of Hardhome, the only town to the north of the Wall at the time (148). This could speculatively mean that the Skagosi were actually feared and respected even by the Free Folk, and the location of their keeps may be purely circumstantial, perhaps answering to some topographical factors such as mountain ranges that prevented them from settling further north.

The only relation Skagosi had with Starks was developed in the past, when they had ships to cross the Bay of Seals and reach the North, and it is said to have been based on trade as well as raiding (140). However, the Stark attempts to conquer them were all unfruitful, and resulted mainly in bloodshed, rebellions and thousands of dead, until King Brandon Stark IX destroyed their ships, thus leaving them with no means to reach the mainland (140).[165] According to the information we have, no hegemony seems to have been attempted in order to include them in the project of the North, much less in that of the Seven Kingdoms, and force and domination were the only methods used. When these ways did not work, they were actively isolated in their island in order to prevent them from reaching the North and having any relation with its people, be it for trading or raiding.

It is remarkable how the narrator of *WoIaF* writes about Skagosi with a strong subjectivity that he does not use with other societies. The amount of information given about them is even less than the one given about the Mountain Clans, and what little data we have is full of pejorative impressions: "A huge, hairy, foul-smelling folk […]. For most recorded history they have remained an isolated, backward, savage folk […]" (*WoIaF*: 139-140). This suggests a strong component of marginalisation and otherness in the way the rest of the people in the Seven Kingdoms regard the Skagosi. Unlike Dorne, which is also portrayed as somehow queer and different from the archetypical model of 'oneness' but remains within the system, the Stoneborn are simply left outside of it altogether, both physically and culturally isolated by an insurmountable obstacle

[165] Given the barren and rocky nature of the islands, which were full of mountains, it is very likely that once their ships were burned, they had little to no trees to rebuild them, and one can only assume how long it would take for new trees to grow properly in such a harsh environment.

which is the sea, having no ships to cross it. Their contacts with mainlanders are reduced to the occasional stranded seafarers who happen to land on their shores, and they are described by the fictional author of *WoIaF* as "[...] as like to murder those who land upon their isle as to trade with them" (*WoIaF*: 140).

Recovering the previously quoted definition of otherness by Jean-François Staszak in the *Encyclopedia of Human Geography* (2009): "Otherness is the result of a discursive process by which a dominant in-group "Us," the Self) constructs one or many dominated out-groups ("Them," other) by stigmatizing a difference – real or imagined – presented as a negation of identity and thus a motive for potential discrimination" (43). In the case of the Skagosi, it is impossible for the reader to know to what extent their savage ways are true, and to what extent they are fictionalised in order to foster a stigmatised version of their society, given the fact that assimilation by the Northerners was not possible and were therefore completely casted out. The discourse built by the narrator of *WoIaF*, whom we take to be a representative of the central institution of knowledge in the Seven Kingdoms which is the Citadel of Oldtown, is based on a vague narrative that overtly shows fear and rejection of the Skagosi society, backed by an obscure account of their history which seems more legend and superstition than fact. The consolidation and dissemination of this narrative answers most likely to the failure of the hegemonic system to integrate Skagos either through conquest, suppression and assimilation, or through hegemony and agreement, and thus are branded as uncivilised and bloodthirsty in order to differentiate them from their model of 'oneness'. While the legends probably contain fact, they appear to be intentionally darkened.

Something similar happens with the Mountain Clans. However, since they have remained within Stark hegemony throughout history (*WoIaF*: 139) and thus somehow assimilated, they are not actively looked down on and feared, even if still marginalised. In that sense, it could be said that they are conceived as queer and strange by those who belong to the traditional model of 'oneness' in the Seven Kingdoms, but they are still inside the system, even if at the furthest margins.

5.1.5. The Crannogmen of the Neck

The Crannogmen of the Neck are the most secretive people in the North, and undoubtedly the ones with the most particular spatial articulation. They dwell in the Neck, a region at the southernmost side of the North which is somewhat narrow and has a common border with the southern kingdoms. It is full of swamps, bogs, and branches of the Green Fork river.[166] As people, they are said to be fairly small because their blood mingled with that of the Children of the Forest, but the narrator of *WoIaF* writes that "[...] more likely it results from inadequate nourishment, for grains do not flourish amidst the fens and swamps and salt marshes of the Neck, and the crannogmen subsist largely upon a diet of fish, frogs, and lizards" (140).

Their spatial articulation is fairly singular due to several reasons; strategically speaking, the fact that the main connection between the North and the rest of the southern kingdoms is a fairly narrow region full of swamplands and marshes was the main reason why the North was not conquered until Aegon, for it is a difficult terrain for those not familiar with it, full of water, quicksand, and dangerous animals. This military advantage also comes with a strong drawback, which is the previously mentioned impossibility to grow certain nourishments such as grain in a landscape like that. However, the most interesting feature of the spatial articulation of the Crannogmen is that they raise their dwellings on floating islands that do not always stay in the same place: "A dozen streams drain the wetwood, all shallow, silty, and uncharted. I would not even call them rivers. The channels are ever drifting and changing. There are endless sandbars, deadfalls, and tangles of rotting trees. And Greywater Watch *moves*. How are my ships to find it?" (*SoS*: 780).

The fact that most constructions in the swamps of the Neck float on water, and thus do not stay in one place, makes it impossible to pinpoint the exact location of certain buildings or places on the map. This special spatial articulation of the Crannogmen is interesting because it enhances the problem of the inaccuracy of the representations of space, which are naturally inconsistent and strive to provide an ideological closure and make sense of ungraspable diverse space (Massey 1994: 253).[167]

[166] See Appendix F.
[167] See section 1.3.

It also poses a challenge for external hegemonisation processes, for it is very difficult to hegemonise a space that cannot even be represented *grosso modo*, pinned down, or modified to perpetuate hegemonic values through the modification of representational space, representations of space, or spatial practices (Lefebvre 1991:33). How can an external party which does not understand Crannogmen space, and hence Crannogmen spatial practice and strongly spatialised social life, spread consensus and establish hegemony in such an impervious and changing land which requires generations of knowledge and interaction with it in order to be known? Not even Starks have fully hegemonised the Crannogmen, in fact, the communications between them and the Stark rulers are mostly performed via raven (*CoK*: 364-365), and little is actually known about what goes on in the swamps of the Neck.

In short, we could say that Crannogmen live a particularly spatialised life in very close interaction with their surroundings: they adapt to them, change with them, fight through them and, in order to hegemonise them, there is an unavoidable need to understand their space, because it is very tightly woven in their social life and has little common points with the external kingdoms that could serve as a departure line for external hegemonisation processes.

Their space is a space that drifts somewhere inbetween nomad and sedentary. In "RV Urbanism" (2008), Deane Simpson writes influenced by Deleuze and Guattari's conceptions of nomad and sedentary spaces:

> Nomad space is characterized by the dominance of the trajectory of movement (pathway or line) over the destination (node or fixed point) [...] Therefore, the space between points is critical. This functions in contrast to sedentary space, which privileges the fixed point over the line. [...] Nomad space is defined by characteristics rather than borders, as in the case of sedentary space. The nomadic trajectory that defines a line differs from the sedentary route. It distributes people in an open borderless space without fixed enclosure, in contrast to the function of the sedentary road that divides precise shares of space, controlling communication between individual properties. Nomads therefore, according to these accounts, promote a form of space that is both indefinite and non-communicating. (243)

In nomad space the trajectory or the line is not fixed, and the way eclipses the node or destination. There are practically infinite possibilities to get from one fixed point to

another, and the inherent openness of nomad trajectories is what enhances the importance of the space in-between points; it is this space were the nomad spends most of the time, while he/she reaches nodes only to leave them behind after their purpose has been served.

Sedentary space, in turn, is composed of fixed points that are connected to each other by predetermined paths, and spatial practice unfolds and flows within that concentrated system of structures that is for example a village or a city. Communication in space is controlled and definite, while in the case of nomad space is not controlled and it is indefinite (243).

The interest of Crannogmen space is that it is neither nomad nor sedentary; if fixed points or nodes move as well as people, then they can sometimes join to form paradoxically temporary sedentary spaces, with predetermined pathways that connect one node with another in the form of floating roads, bridges, or routes on the water, but which rearrange themselves every now and then in different ways. The inhabitants of the swamps can therefore be said to be half-nomad half-sedentary, living both in structures of nodes and fixed points where social life can unfold on its rails, or in mobile trajectories that freely unfold along open space. We cannot really describe them as fully nomad, because their structures are not as provisional as a tent or a temporary pavilion; they are actual houses, and even castles, and their area of movement is not that wide; they do not need to move long distances in order to get resources, nor do they move that frequently.

For example, Greywater Watch, the seat of House Reed—the most prominent house in the Neck—could be said to me a 'mobile node'. It is a floating keep that is also built in the fashion of the dwellings of the Crannogmen, and is composed of several buildings, towers and bridges that connect them. We could say that Greywater is, in itself, a sedentary space with nomad qualities (*CoK*: 813). This means that it can just as well be moving around the Neck on its own, or settling for a time near other dwellings, thus forming a temporary sedentary village.

With regards to the Reeds who inhabited the castle, they were very loyal to the Stark rule before and during the timeline of *ASoIaF* due to the repeated contacts Lord Howland Reed had with the Stark family, and due to the fact that the Reeds played a decisive and active role in Robert's Rebellion, Howland being one of the closest friends

to Eddard Stark (*CoK*: 364). When the War of the Five Kings starts, the Reeds are unhesitant to declare for Robb and are tasked with the defence of the Neck (*GoT*: 739), plainly showing their absolute adherence to the project of an independent North. Stark hegemony is mainly held through a loyalty largely reliant on the Reed's active participation in the common project of the rebellion against the Mad King which made them an integrative part of the same socio-political revolutionary movement, as well as the mentioned early positive contacts between the Reeds and the Starks.

Another reason why Starks may be able to hold a fairly solid hegemony over the Reeds, besides the historical one, might be the relative freedom they have under the Stark rule to unfold their lives in isolation and secrecy, without a lot of intervention from the ruling house in the North, and even less from the Iron Throne. It is precisely in the acceptance of their markedly different ways without much interventionism where Starks are able to command consensus among the Crannogmen; as long as they are under the Stark rule, the Iron Throne will trust that the warden in the North keeps them in check, and thus make no moves to disrupt their ways of life.

Because of this, the hegemony of the Iron Throne does not hold much sway in such an isolated and secretive land. Given the nature of a region that cannot even be geographically located due to its changeable quality, nor easily conquered due to its treacherous topography, it was never really in sustained contact with the rest of the kingdoms. When the North submitted to Aegon, some lords and ladies urged Torrhen Stark to fortify Moat Cailin and face Aegon in the swamps of the Neck (*WoIaF*: 42), but Torrhen refused and surrendered instead, most likely due to the appalling airpower Aegon had thanks to dragons, which would have rendered their efforts to defend the North futile regardless of their advantages on the ground. This means that even when the North was included within the Seven Kingdoms, the Neck remained mostly untouched, and only exposed to Stark hegemony through the historical loyalty owed to them by the ruling house in the Neck.[168] Of course, the region became part of the Seven Kingdoms through Torrhen's surrender, but just as the Mountain Clans were isolated in their mountains and only received the echo of the Iron Throne's administrative hegemony working through Stark influence, the Crannogmen too were for the most part oblivious to their belonging to the Seven Kingdoms, and kept on living in the same way.

[168] The Crannogmen were included within the kingdom of the North through the key marriage between King Rickard Stark and the last Marsh King's wife, whom he had slain (*WoIaF*: 141).

Since the Neck had remained untouched for most of Westerosi history, this led to the development and thriving of quite a different culture and society adapted to its particular conditions. We have already written about their floating dwellings, and to that, we could add their unusual military strategies which were not in harmony with Northern values and included fighting with poisonous weapons in guerrilla groups, and using the terrain of the swamps to hide and ambush rather than face enemies directly (*CoK*: 365). It was also said that the Crannogmen had cohabited with the Children of the Forest for a time, and that influence had instilled some of their magic and ways of life in them (*CoK*: 813), thus making them a people who drift somehow between the ways of the First Men and the Children; while their socio-political structures theoretically work in the same way as in the rest of the kingdoms, both *WoIaF* and *ASoIaF* hint at mysterious connections between Crannogmen, nature, and the Old Gods, as seen in the previous references.

All this leads to a fairly strong feeling of otherness with superstitious nuances that is conveyed especially by those living closest to their lands; see disdainful comments made by Freys when Meera and Jojen Reed visit Winterfell (*CoK*: 363), or what is written about them in *WoIaF*: "South of the Neck, the riverfolk whose lands adjoin their own say that the Crannogmen breathe water, have webbed hands and feet like frogs, and use poisons on their frog spears and arrows" (140).

5.2. The Wall and the lands beyond

5.2.1. Introduction to the Wall as a liminal space

The great ice Wall that separates Westeros from Free Folk territory is a location of great interest. It was built during the Dawn Age, likely in collaboration between the First Men, the Children of the Forest and the Giants (*WoIaF*: 145), to prevent a certain undefined threat from entering their domains.[169] The Wall is guarded by the Night's Watch, an order in charge of protecting the Westerosi kingdoms from whatever menace may come from the lands beyond.

It is said to be "a hundred feet tall at its highest point" (145), and a hundred leagues long from coast to coast (145), that is, from the coast near the Bay of Seals to The Gorge,[170] covering all the width of the northernmost side of the North. In the past, there were nineteen strongholds belonging to the Watch standing along the whole length of the Wall, but by the time events in *ASoIaF* start, only three of those castles remain manned (145-146): The Shadow Tower, Castle Black and Eastwatch-by-the-Sea[171] (146).

In the past the Watch was very well regarded, and it is believed to have served a great purpose, but it has seen a steep decline over the years, transitioning from the status of a necessary order composed of capable knights that protected Westeros from the threats coming from beyond the Wall, to a recipient for criminals and exiles formed by an assorted group of people from various complicated backgrounds (146).

The Wall is, perhaps, the most interesting element in the North with regards to spatial articulations. It is what separates not only the North from the lands beyond, but also the 'civilised' world from the 'uncivilised' from the point of view of the Westerosi. That fact alone is interesting; Westeros presents, in a way, a gradation of otherness that seems nuclear: the Crownlands and the Reach are regions that represent the main model of 'oneness' which stems from the widespread cultural and religious hegemony of Andal heritage, and the further we move from this essential core that fosters the ideal of a homogenised Seven Kingdoms, the more pronounced the feeling of otherness in

[169] Likely the threat was that of the Others, also named White Walkers, which were undead blue-eyed wights with a thirst for death and destruction (*WoIaF*: 11).
[170] See appendix F.
[171] See appendix I.

opposition to that ideal is. As we move to the South, climate starts becoming drier and sunnier, until Dorne is reached. Dorne is often described as queer in opposition to the Ones[172] given the fact that they were not descended from the Andals but from the Rhoynar, and thus their culture is different in many aspects.

On the other hand, climate starts becoming colder the more we move to the North, and the different societies dwelling there—e.g.: Mountain Clans, Skagosi, Crannogmen, Starks—are depicted in varied levels of otherness measured mainly but not only[173] by their difference with that religious and cultural model promoted by the Andal regions,[174] mostly in relation to their level of adherence to the ways of the First Men—while the Starks are in close socio-political contact with worshipers of the Seven and a sept exists in Winterfell, the Mountain Clans live mostly detached from all that save for their occasional contacts with Starks.

The Wall marks the definite break between the model of oneness[175] promoted by the crown of Westeros and the central regions that holds more or less sway in different parts of the continent, and those who represent the absolute Other. The Wall is the patent recognition of that oneness; while in the past it may have been a useful defensive tool, by the timeline of *ASoIaF* it has already been playing the role of a frontier element in the spatial articulation of the hegemonic project of Westeros for centuries. In fact, people who dwell south of the Wall call the inhabitants of the lands beyond 'wildlings', as a derogatory expression that makes reference to their supposedly savage ways, using it as an umbrella term that encompasses the whole diversity of tribes, towns and societies that live north of the Wall. The very narrator of *WoIaF* somehow unintentionally acknowledges this oversimplification: "In the lands beyond the Wall live the diverse people – all descended from the First Men – that we of the more civilized south name wildlings" (147).

On the other hand, some of the dwellers north of the Wall—the ones organised in largest and most numerous groups—call themselves the 'free folk', while they use the umbrella term 'kneelers' for those living south of the wall (147), in reference to their

[172] See example quotes in section 2.1.4.
[173] All societies are understood in opposition to the 'Other which is not me', then the Crannogmen are also Others for the Starks, but they are still within the umbrella of Northern culture and heritage.
[174] See example quotes in section 2.1.3.
[175] Common values, moral, religion, social organisation etc. of the privileged descendants of Andal conquerors.

social organisation that involves no queens, kings, lords or ladies; they only follow who they want to follow.

The inherent imperviousness of the structure of the Wall makes contact between the free folk and the people who dwell south of the Wall practically non-existent, and only limited to occasional raids by the free folk among the mountain clans, or the rare person or group of people that manages to climb or cross the Wall and get to the other side.[176] However, the case of the space of the Wall itself is different, because it constitutes a microverse in itself; it is a liminal space that generates a different kind of society that is at the threshold between the social order of the Seven Kingdoms and that of the lands to the north. In fact, the liminality of the Wall is manifested in several different ways in *AWoIaF* and across the storyline in *ASoIaF*.

According to German Folklorist Arnold Van Gennep in his well-known work *Rites of Passage* (1960), all societies are composed of social groups and subgroups which can come in the form of religions, cults, trades, professions etc. (1), and in order for an individual or social group to transition from one to another, there are certain rites of passage that need to take place. These rites undergo three main stages: the preliminary stage—separation from the previous group—the *liminal* stage—transitional step when the individual is at the threshold in-between two stages—and the postliminal stage—adherence to the new group (11). In addition to that, Gennep also dedicates the chapter of his book "The Territorial Passage" (15) to the spatial dimension of liminality, where he deals with frontier or border spaces. About those, he writes:

> The prohibition against entering a given territory […] has been expressed with the help of milestones, walls, and statues in the classical world, and through more simple means among the semicivilized. Naturally, these signs are not placed along the entire boundary line. Like our boundary posts, they are set only at points of passage, on paths and at crossroads. (17)

That is the case of the ice Wall, which was built at the passage between the kingdom of the North and the lands beyond. The interesting aspect of this is that the Wall was not originally intended simply as a social and cultural frontier, hence its exaggeratedly massive and stout construction, but as a means of protection against a genuinely destructive threat that came from the far north: the white walkers. However, as the

[176] See Bran Stark's encounter with wildlings south of the Wall (*GoT*: 492).

centuries passed without the white walkers—or the others—returning, different societies developed at each side, and its purpose changed and became just that, a disproportionate frontier between two different cultures set at a passage point.

Adding to Van Gennep's quote, scholar Bjørn Thomassen reclaims the spatial dimension of liminality in "Revisiting Liminality" (2012): "Van Gennep clearly saw territorial border zones or border lines, thresholds or portals, as structurally identical with the intermediate period of a ritual passage: spatial and geographical progression correlates with the ritual marking of a cultural passage" (24). That is, these spaces may be classified as liminal spaces;[177] they are the spatial manifestation of rites of passage, and they imply both a physical and cultural transition from one system of socio-cultural structures to another, which may be experienced by the individual or group either as a complete rite of passage due to a necessary full or partial break with the previous group—an immigrant or a refugee—or as the ghost of a rite of passage—a tourist,[178] a business traveler.

These spaces are generally spaces of transition where two cultures—the host culture and the guest culture—interact. In the modern world, physically established borders such as the wall between Mexico and the USA, or between Spain and Morocco are often also spaces of violence, and their porosity is limited due to prejudices and aggressive immigration policies.[179] Nevertheless, they are thresholds between one social system and another that the individual or group must cross in order to fulfill a rite of passage, be it out of necessity, or out of will. However, it is important to note that it is not only frontier or border spaces that possess a liminal quality; any space that finds itself in-between roles to a greater or lesser degree can be liminal. In fact, the case of the ice Wall in the Martinverse is a special one, because we could argue that it is liminal in

[177] Dissambiguation: the concept of 'liminal space' is often used in art to refer to locations of transition such as airports, train stations, waiting rooms… or spaces that close temporarily to open again later: schools, businesses… (Cambride Art Association). While this is closely related with the way we will deal with the concept in this work insofar as we will refer to transitional spaces too, in art it is the aesthetic side which gains the most relevance. Through this work, we are focusing mainly on the social, cultural and experiential quality of these spaces.

[178] According to Kevin Meethan in "Walking the Edges: Towards a Visual Ethnography of Beachscapes" (2012): "Tourist behavior is different from the usual established routines of daily life and involves separation, the crossing of a threshold, a limited time is spent as a tourist, and a crossing back into the accepted routines and spaces of daily life" (70).

[179] See *The Guardian*'s section dedicated to the US border on URL: https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/us-mexico-border, or *elDIario.es*' section dedicated to Melilla at the border between Spain and Morocco on URL: https://www.eldiario.es/temas/melilla/.

mainly two different ways, and each of them affects how hegemonic relations are unfolded in space.

5.2.2. Liminality in the ruins along the Wall

The most clearly remarkable liminal quality of the Wall is also the most visible when confronted with its map,[180] that is, the presence of ruins of past strongholds that one can find along its whole extension. In "Urban Exploration as Adventure Tourism: Journeying Beyond the Everyday" (2012), scholar Emma Fraser accurately synthesizes anthropologist Victor W. Turner's ideas[181] regarding the liminal state of ruins developed in *The Anthropology of Experience* (1986):

> Turner's last words on liminality, though still in reference to van Gennep's rites of passage, open up the term for a broad engagement with ruins as ambiguous sites 'detached from mundane life' (Turner in Turner and Bruner 1986: 41), a space in which ordinary experience is suspended, where a 'fructile chaos, a storehouse of possibilities…a gestation process' (Turner in Turner and Bruner 1986: 42) bears the potential for both a post-liminal state (in which the ruin can become something else, razed or rejuvenated) and a unique or unusual experience which stands against tradition.[…] Ruins as liminal landscapes, therefore, are sites that provide the necessary 'stage… for unique structures of experience' (Turner in Turner and Bruner 1986: 41). (148)

While the ruins of these strongholds lay abandoned, the wish to re-man them is present throughout the saga in the chapters that take place at the Wall; the potential to renew them and make them functional again is something that is there—their potential as a post-liminal stage—and influences the spatial practice and articulation of the Night's Watch: "'If we man Greyguard from the Shadow Tower and the Long Barrow from Eastwatch…' 'Greyguard has largely collapsed. Stonedoor would serve better, if the men could be found. Icemark and Deep Lake as well, mayhaps'" (*CoK*: 701). When Jon Snow becomes the commander of the Night's Watch and lets the Free Folk cross to the southern side of the Wall, he grants the ruins of two holdfasts to two different groups, infusing them with a new life; a post-liminal stage in which the ruins stop being in an

[180] See appendix I.
[181] I use Fraser's synthesis and not the original source because it provides both an accurate summary and an interesting insight. Refer to the works cited section for the full reference of the original source.

undefined state of liminality in order to transition to a next step when they serve both as dwellings and strongholds for a group of Free Folk which is socially and culturally very different from the one that had traditionally inhabited them (*DwD*: 1288). These actions change the behavior of the Night's Watch due to the reluctance of some members to see the wildlings as friends rather than enemies, therefore power relations are necessarily shifted.

On the other hand, besides places with a post-liminal potential, ruins are also "a unique or unusual experience which stands against tradition. […] Ruins as liminal landscapes, therefore, are sites that provide the necessary 'stage… for unique structures of experience'" (Turner in Turner and Bruner 1986: 41)" (25). The experience in ruins is nothing like any other, and can only take place in those settings with certain features—abandonment, decay, lack of former activity etc. Ruins may lead to discoveries, to reflections around the expiration and temporality of space, to the revision of history, to its sacralisation or to the rejection of that which is dead and lost. They feed myth, and thus shape behaviours and social life, and, as a result, spatial practice. Jon Snow discusses the prospective post-liminal stages of some of the ruins, while Bran's party, in his journey towards the north of the Wall, stumbles upon the Nightfort and experiences it in a very different way.

In their case, the approach to the ruins of the ancient holdfast is experiential, and it does not take into account the post-liminal potential; instead, Bran recalls all the events, real and myth, that had taken place within its walls of which he had heard through Old Nan, his wet nurse (*SoS*: 927). The empty, dark and still corridors of the ruins create an eerie atmosphere, and it feels as if the dark events that took place in the Nightfort had somehow left some remnants that could be felt in the air. Jojen Reed and Bran have a conversation about how old the ruins are, and Bran is scared about what might be lurking in the shadows due to all the stories he had been told as a child (*SoS*: 932). For him, the experience is revelatory, it means leaving everything familiar behind and crossing into the unknown; it means embracing the mystic part of himself and pursuing the visions of the Three-eyed crow that are guiding him on his journey. When his companion Meera Reed minimises the importance of the ruins and refers to them as something irrelevant, Bran's thoughts take a very different turn: "'It is only another empty castle,' Meera Reed said as she gazed across the desolation of rubble, ruins, and weeds. *No*, thought Bran, *it is the Nightfort, and this is the end of the world*. In the

mountains, all he could think of was reaching the Wall and ending the three-eyed crow, but now that they were here he was filled with fears" (*SoS*: 926). By referring to the Nightfort as the end of the world, a place that for Bran embodies all the fear and violence that is commonplace in the hard world of *ASoIaF*, he is addressing it as a physical representation of a rite of passage, it is the culmination of his liminal stage, and it somehow breaks the link with the preliminary state of his life in the Known World, resulting both in individual growth and social change, because he is crossing the Wall to join the remaining Children of the Forest and learn their ways, embracing the post-liminal stage.

Ruins can be interpreted and experienced in several different ways; we can address them through their post-liminal potential, through what they tell us about history as spaces of memory where time lies still as a remnant of what it was, and even as milestones in the landscape that mark a passage point—just like the Nightfort, a fortress attached to the giant ice Wall which provides access to the other side through a tunnel. Also, with their mere presence, the ruins along the Wall condition hegemonic processes, as the exploitation—or lack of it—of their post-liminal potential directly influences the political strength of the Night's Watch's project as defenders of the realm as well as the perception of its members, which are all aware of the glorious past of the order and can draw from that historical narrative to nourish their own expectations and will to belong to it. In fact, when Jon Snow becomes commander of the Night's Watch, he sets his mind on garrisoning all the abandoned forts along the Wall, also with the purpose of commanding hegemony among the members of the Watch through the establishment of a narrative that seeks the restoration and renovation of the organisation:

> Jon did not intend to be remembered as Sleepy Jon Snow. "Thirty men will stand a better chance than none," he told Giant. "True enough," the small man said. "Is it just to be Icemark, then, or will m'lord be opening t'other forts as well?" "I mean to garrison all of them, in time," said Jon, "but for the moment, it will just be Icemark and Greyguard." (*DwD*: 150)

5.2.3. Liminality at the Wall

The second liminal quality of the Wall speaks for itself given its status as a frontier space. In fact, one could argue that its liminality is enhanced in comparison with similar spaces in the primary world by the fact that most people who go there remain there; it is a destination—hardly final, although at times it may seem so given its prison-like conception—a dwelling place. Nevertheless, while many people within the Martinverse perceive the Wall as a rock-bottom of sorts for mainly criminals, exiles and political prisoners (*SoS*: 7),[182] it is far from being so. At the Wall, there are no shifts for its workers, no life for its dwellers outside of its context; there is where they unfold their lives, and to both sides lay two completely different socio-cultural and religious systems that affect spatial practice and social life at the Wall and are, in turn, affected by it. The inhabitants of the Wall experience liminality on a regular basis; they experience it as settlers who do not aim to push the borders forward but are in contact with the world beyond them all the same, never fully establishing themselves and thus actually living in permanent liminal conditions.[183]

In Bakhtin's "FTCN", he introduces the idea of the 'threshold chronotope', which he associates to breaking points in a life, moments of crisis and change as well as the fear to step over the threshold (248). He also gives the example of Dostoevsky's literature:

> In Dostoevsky, for example, the threshold and related chronotopes—those of the staircase, the front hall and corridor, as well as the chronotopes of the street and square that extend those spaces into the open air—are the main places of action in his works, places where crisis events occur, the falls, resurrections, renewals, epiphanies, decisions that determine the whole life of a man. (248)

We could argue that the Wall is in fact such a chronotope, and the heteroglossic narrative technique Martin uses which isolates the chapters that take place at the Wall

[182] See Tyrion's impressions about the Wall in *GoT*: 152.

[183] This configuration unavoidably echoes Hadrian's Wall in the primary world—started building in 122 AD—which constituted a similarly liminal space that pushed the northern Pict tribes of the province of Britain even further north, giving them a profoundly subaltern status. However, the purpose of Hadrian's Wall "…was to control movement across the frontier and to counter low-intensity threats. There was no intention of fighting from the wall top; the units based on the wall were trained and equipped to encounter the enemy in the open" ("Hadrian's Wall"). Contrary to this, the Wall in *ASoIaF* was in fact designed to enable fighting from the top, but it still shares many features with Hadrian's Wall in terms of liminal status.

through different perspectives creates the feeling of a separate time-space in which events unfold both in a different way and at a different pace. Events that take place in Westeros arrive as an echo, as the gaze of the inhabitants of the Wall is fixed northwards, and the citizens of the Seven Kingdoms do not pay any special attention to the Wall or the Night's Watch, which they consider to be an obsolete, demoted order.[184]

This turns the Wall into a chronotope of its own with the permanent quality of a threshold where individuals are faced with the unknown; some of them choose to venture into the lands beyond, and some of them choose to remain at the threshold in-between what is perceived as the civilised world by the southerners and what they perceive as wild and hostile. The Wall is a fixed threshold chronotope with which different characters and groups interact in different ways; the way the threshold quality of the Wall affects the Free Folk is different to the way in which it affects the Night's Watch, Samwell Tarly as an individual, Bran Stark and his group, Jon Snow or Stannis Baratheon. There are huge variations among these stories, but the Wall influences all of them as an overarching threshold space, very often leading to character breakthroughs.

Take the case of Jon Snow, who arrives to the wall as the bastard son of the warden in the North Eddard Stark, and is presented with a reality very different to that of the Seven Kingdoms once his life at the Wall starts. He journeys beyond the Wall due to his status of steward to the then Lord Commander of the Watch and falls in love with a Free Folk woman, but retains his loyalty to the Watch, and when he reaches the position of Lord Commander of the order (*SoS*: 1336) he strikes a historical deal with the Free Folk and garrisons several of the ruined castles with them (*DwD*: 995). All of this would not have happened if Jon Snow had not left Winterfell and his whole bias as a Westerosi noble—a bastard, but a noble still—in order to live at the liminal space of the Wall. Both the path to the Wall (*GoT*: 152) and the whole of his experiences at the Wall shape his character and make of him a commander that acts as the bridge between the world beyond the Wall and the Wall itself, already divested from the strong negative bias he was raised with regarding the Free Folk.

[184] "'Stop it,' Jon Snow said, his face dark with anger. 'The Night's Watch is a noble calling!' Tyrion laughed. 'You're too smart to believe that. The Night's Watch is a midden heap for all the misfits of the realm. I've seen you looking at Yoren and his boys. Those are your new brothers, Jon Snow, how do you like them? Sullen peasants, debtors, poachers, rapers, thieves, and bastards like you all wind up on the Wall, watching for grumkins and snarls and all the other monsters your wet nurse warned you about. The good part is there are no grumkins or snarls, so it's scarcely dangerous work.'" (*GoT*: 152)

Another clear example is Samwell Tarly, who arrives at the Wall as a craven boy who is scared of everything, and the context and the environment he is confronted with both at the Wall and beyond—he actually sees and kills a white walker (*SoS*: 312)—hardens his character, and he is sent by the commander Jon Snow to the Citadel of Oldtown to become the next maester of the Night's Watch (*FfC*: 113). He also claims the child of a Free Folk woman, Gilly, as his own, thus going against everything that he was taught by his family, especially his father, who has a deeply traditional and intolerant personality (*GoT*: 329).

From the side of the Free Folk, when offered a peace treaty, the then leader of the Free Folk succeeding Mance Rayder—who had been purportedly executed after losing to the combined forces of the Night's Watch and Stannis Baratheon—Tormund Giantsbane, goes to the Wall after agreeing to the terms John Snow proposed him in order to cross the Wall with the purpose of leaving behind the increasing threat of the white walkers (*DwD*: 995). He then gets the then abandoned fort of Oakenshield, and garrisons it with his own people; another breakthrough that changes the essence of what the Wall and the Night's Watch mean, as both groups are forced to get along and the previously ruined castles along the Wall stop being in a state of liminality without any defined role and gain a new, post-liminal, purpose.

Of course, the tension at the Wall increases after this decision (*DwD*: 379/738-739/1010-1017), and Jon is questioned by several brothers of the Night's Watch, while others accept the Free Folk with more ease. This difference in attitude towards the new dwellers of the Wall highlights the liminal quality of the Wall, as the behaviour of both members of the Free Folk and the Night's Watch differs depending on the experienced degree of liminality; it is not the same to be Jon Snow and Qhorin Halfhand, or Allister Thorne and Janos Slynt. The first two have often journeyed beyond the Wall, and have interacted with Free Folk on an equal level, while the other two retain a strong bias given their completely detached experience from the Free Folk, as well as some base educational bias.

However strong the personal bias is, what is true about the Wall is that it provides the opportunity to transition from one world to another, and each and every person dwelling there is given that possibility. Breakthroughs—both individual and collective— such as the ones we have been mentioning take place there that could not

take place anywhere else, precisely because of the liminal quality of the Wall, which is quite clearly a threshold chronotope given its spatial and social organisation that constantly promotes change and acts along the *ASoIaF* saga both as a separation and as a meeting point of two very different cultures, thus inherently encouraging realisations which often mean that the individual or the group needs to face a certain fear or rejection of that which is different in order to either come to terms with it or not, leading to change in behaviour or in politics.

Due to all of this, it becomes obvious that liminality at the Wall directly influences hegemonic processes there, as the particular political decisions taken by Jon Snow would not have come to be if Jon had not experienced the world of the Free Folk and thus changed his bias while still retaining loyalty for the Night's Watch and its purpose; an inherently liminal position. Similarly, Tormund Giantsbane likely would have not negotiated anything with Jon if he had not gotten to know him beyond the Wall, or Val—Mance Rayder's wife—would not have served as a bridge between Free Folk and Night's Watch if she had not experienced the reality of the Wall from the inside, as well as the reality of her people (*DwD*: 733). The quality of being an in-between space is what shapes everything at the Wall and its surroundings, rendering it an integral part of the cultural and political processes that happen there—also spatial practice—which arise indivisible and interwoven: event-location; time-space, and what takes place there often plays outside the rules or conceptions of acceptability promoted in the Seven Kingdoms.

Chapter 6

Hegemonisation Process II

6.1. Mance Rayder's hegemonisation and unification process as the King Beyond the Wall: the Free Folk Revolution

This section aims to provide another, different example with regards to the unfolding of hegemonisation processes in time-space. In section 4.1., we analysed how a social movement such as the Sparrow movement was able to provide a counter-hegemonic discourse that affected and was affected by space, and which arose as a reaction to the corruption of the ruling class of Westeros. The role of this section will be to analyze how Mance Rayder was able to unify all the Free Folk tribes beyond the Wall through a different kind of hegemonisation process in the light of the theoretical framework that has been used through this thesis.

The first idea we need to establish is that each hegemonisation process is unique, and has particular nuances, contexts and pre-conditions. Because of this, analysing them through a rigid framework might not be very effective. Of course, there are some tendencies that are commonplace, but it is better to think of the theoretical tools we use to analyse them as flexible threads of thought we need to apply while paying attention to the particularities of each process, that is, the opposite of the one-size-fits-all approach, because each socio-cultural configuration is different, and different conditions may apply when it comes to achieving a working hegemony—as we have been seeing through this thesis with the examples of the Mountain Clans, King's Landing, the Crannogmen of the Neck etc.

In the case of the Free Folk, it is important to underline that each tribe has its own habits, and we are therefore not dealing with one big tribe with a uniform way of living, for that would have made the hegemonisation process impulsed by Mance Rayder relatively easy to carry out. Instead, we deal with a huge variety of people, from the tribes of the Frozen Shore who could walk barefoot on the snow, to the dwellers of the mountain valley of Thenn, who are said to be the last of the First Men, or the cave dwellers, who painted their faces in blue, purple and green colours (*SoS*: 257-258).

However, there is one loose trait that all of them share, which is the idea of freedom, and following—in the event that they follow someone—only who they deem worthy of being followed. This idea is shared by all of them, even if some of them actually name themselves the Free Folk, while others do not translate it into specific words: "The largest and most numerous of the various peoples beyond the Wall named themselves the Free Folk" (*WoIaF*: 147). Being such a diverse community—and the term 'community' may be troublesome here, as forcing them within the same group is something more characteristic of the extended homogenising perspective towards the Free Folk in the Seven Kingdoms—there are different kinds of hegemonic relations that operate within each tribe. Nonetheless, on this section we will focus on how Mance Rayder was able to create an overarching hegemony in order to unify all of them with two main goals in mind: the short-term purpose of survival, and the long term purpose of thriving past survival.

Because Free Folk only accept the rule of those who they decide to follow and not who the social fabric imposes on them, and because of their identity-defining resistance to kneeling or submitting to any kind of leader, global hegemony among the tribes relies largely on consensus as well as convincing. Wildling societies are all subaltern collectives with regards to the people south of the Wall given their displaced status—they are confined to the north and have to live with the threats that lie beyond, threats from which the southerners are protected by the Wall—and according to Richard Hownson and Kylie Smith in "Hegemony and the Operation of Consensus and Coercion" (2008): "[…] subalternity as an identity and practice has inherently the potential to critical elaboration and, therefore, the progression from common sense to good sense,[185] from disunity to unity, and from hegemony marked in the final analysis by dogma and coercion, to hegemony marked in the final analysis by openness and consensus" (4-5). Many of the Free Folk are not aware of their subaltern status, and they have come to believe that the only possibility for them is to live with the constant threat of the harsh climate conditions, the white walkers, and other beasts dwelling north of the Wall; they build their society and unfold their lives around that unavoidable truth—we have already mentioned how many Free Folk had not even seen the Wall before *ASoIaF*. The Free Folk Revolution changes that by convincing them through the development of a *buon senso*, and endows them with a critical awareness of their

[185] See reference to *buon senso*—good sense, or critical sense—in section 1.3.

situation by making them realise the systematic and institutionalised oppression exercised upon them across the centuries coming from southern kingdoms, which is based on the active spatial displacement exercised by the Wall and the institutions sustaining it. In *Spatial Practices: Models of Action and Engagement with the City* (2020), scholar Melanie Dodd writes about the intrinsic partiality of the institutional representation:

> Acts of resistance have always needed to show their versatility, as they exist outside of the institutionalized franchise of representation. Institutionalization creates value, stature and a platform for the ideas and practices within. Although this franchise tends towards growth over time, it is nowhere near complete (such a status may not even be achievable). As such, there is a necessity to operate outside of this franchise as a catalyst for continued change and improvement in citizen representation. (28)

Another mechanism Mance uses in the hegemonisation process is precisely a form of 'projective integration', which has been outlined in the introduction to this thesis through an essay by Antke Engel (2011). This is a method—or rather a socially either conscious or unconscious phenomenon—which does not really work in the feudal context of the Seven Kingdoms due to its integrative and somehow consensual nature that integrates difference. However, it works well in the Free Folk society, precisely due to their reluctance to simply take for granted the homogeneous governance coming from a unified ruling class that aims to control and guide their social and cultural life:

> Mance Rayder spoke the Old Tongue, even sang in it, fingering his lute and filling the night with strange wild music. Mance had spent years assembling this vast plodding host, talking to this clan mother and that magnar, winning one village with sweet words and another with a song and a third with the edge of his sword, making peace between Harma Dogshead and the Lord o' Bones, between the Hornfoots and the Nightrunners, between the walrus men of the Frozen Shore and the cannibal clans of the great ice rivers, hammering a hundred different daggers into one great spear, aimed at the heart of the Seven Kingdoms. He had no crown nor scepter, no robes of silk and velvet, but it was plain to Jon that Mance Rayder was a king in more than name. (*SoS*: 258)

This quote hints at the huge adaptability that Mance's political project ought to have had in order to succeed; negotiations and peace treaties had to be encouraged, and while

it is true that in some cases domination was exercised, the extract from *SoS* points at a great amount of negotiation, but above all, it suggests a big work in terms of integration and acceptance of difference, as each clan was moved by very different socio-cultural structures, and all of these had to have a place within Mance's project in order for it to work. Recovering Engel's quote:

> A decisive moment of neoliberal cultural politics is a mechanism of integrating social differences, which I have recently termed 'projective integration' (Engel 2007b, 2009). This is a process that makes use of visual imagery and that coins difference as cultural capital. [...] projective integration creates alliances and supports processes of hegemonic consensus production. (74)

Whilst it is true that Engel coins the term in order to make a critique of a very specific neoliberal context in which some—not all—social differences—Engel focuses on queer identities—are integrated due to their economical and social profitability, the term could, with some modifications, be applied to the context of *ASoIaF* outside the capitalist hegemonic framework. In the case of the hegemonisation process initiated by Mance Rayder, the integration of difference in culture and race is not carried out with the aim to generate economic profit, but with the purpose of uniting all—or most—Free Folk tribes in order to breach the Wall and break the social order that sustained the unfair southern policies which perpetuated their confinement to the north, long after the purpose the First Men had when they built the Wall (*GoT*: 960) stopped being relevant. The essence of the idea of projective integration is, though not equal, at least similar in many aspects: to integrate difference and quench dissent through amiable mechanisms for the sake of obtaining benefits for a bigger hegemonic project. In this particular case, the integration of a variety of socio-cultural narratives and subalternity within a bigger narrative of a united Free Folk society; this would provide a higher chance for survival.

Given all the previously mentioned particularities of Free Folk societies, it is obvious that, in order to generate such an all-encompassing hegemony, there is an unavoidable need for the articulation of a purpose strong enough to generate a widespread agreement among very different societies and peoples which, in some cases, are involved in quarrels or even warfare (*WoIaF*: 147). Of course, space is also a decisive factor here, as each tribe lives in a very different environment, most of which are so isolated that many Free Folk have not even actually seen the Wall in spite of its great size (258). Due to all of this, it has been rare in the history of the continent of

Westeros—but not unknown—to see what the dwellers of the Seven Kingdoms call a 'King Beyond the Wall': "The first King-Beyond-the-Wall according to legend, was Joramun […] The last King-Beyond-the-Wall to cross the Wall was Raymun Redbeard" (147/149).

In the timeline of *ASoIaF*, it is Mance Rayder who is taking the baton as king (*GoT*: 14), a deserted brother of the Night's Watch who dedicates most of his life to uniting all the tribes and clans under two purposes: to survive, and to start to thrive behind the wall, where conditions are much safer; that is, to stop being physically and socio-culturally kept apart as the ultimate subalterns in Westeros. The coming threat of the white walkers is a trigger for this revolution to happen, but the secondary aim of the Free Folk Revolution is to have a chance to thrive as people, not simply live at a perennial situation of survival.

It becomes clear, then, that in both the Sparrow Revolution and the Free Folk Revolution there exist some common grounds: in both cases, what sparks the need to create a new counter-hegemonic discourse[186] is, as the very concept clearly conveys, a need to react against a certain systemic oppression. Also in both cases there is a leader through whom this discourse is channelled—the High Sparrow and then Mance Rayder—but who places the welfare of the people at the centre in a way the hegemonic system does not. Both of these narratives aim to propose alternative signifieds for floating signifiers—integrity, social order, governance—with both a short-term purpose and a long-term purpose: in the case of the Sparrow Revolution, first and foremost to put an end to the immediate suffering of the people, and then to establish a new system which seeks to eradicate corruption and place the common people at the centre. In the case of the Free Folk Revolution, to survive the threat of the white walkers and the increasingly harsh conditions beyond the Wall in order to settle behind the Wall and start a new, safer, and more united society.

[186] In the case of the Sparrow evolution, the discourse is mainly counter-hegemonic because it is primarily directed against the ruling classes of Westeros as a reaction to their dominant and corrupted ways. In the case of the Free Folk Revolution, it might be considered counter-hegemonic at one level given the reaction against their displaced status as the main Others in the continent, sustained by the Westerosi system through cultural bias and actual systemic policies—like the institution of the Night's Watch—and as hegemonic at another, given their inherent need for unity caused by the harsh environment where they live which calls for a united front and some kind of social order, however difficult it is to establish—in this last case, the rendering of an hegemonic narrative would not be prompted by any reaction against any policy or system; it would be motivated just by a widespread need, and thus we would not need to use the prefix 'counter'.

There are more aspects in which both revolutions converge, but mainly two fundamental differences which make the Free Folk Revolution much more difficult to carry out in the long term than the Sparrow Revolution: socio-cultural differences, and spatial articulations.

While diversity is definitely enriching, to gather Westerosi people who in addition mostly come from one specific region—the Riverlands—under one movement, or to integrate the huge socio-cultural diversity that exists beyond the Wall under one narrative is not equally easy. It may work to fulfil the short-term purpose, as survival is a very basic instinct, but in the long term there are too many differences in social configurations and traditions—as well as a general sentiment of independence and freedom—to hold a successful centralised hegemony, which makes the Free Folk Revolution a somewhat fickle project that dissolves to a great extent after the defeat in their attempt to cross the Wall (*DwD*: 1095). This is why a form of projective integration is essential for the Free Folk to unite, as each socio-cultural narrative needs to be integrated within the overarching counter-hegemonic narrative of the revolution due to Free Folk resistance to change or adaptation to a common project ruled—or represented—by a centralised group of people which needs to be followed in order for it to come to fruition. Also, the Free Folk unification and revolution is a deliberately planned movement, which of course stems from a need generated by a series of external causes, but is still proposed and brought to life by a reduced cluster of followers of Mance Rayder.

The Sparrow Revolution on the other hand is much more organic. Rather than adapting to each different narrative, it serves as a projection of the most general demands and frustrations of the common people channelled through religious feeling and sparked by the burning of their homes and lands (*FfC*: 554), but adopting a *buon senso* approach that exposes the failure of the crown and its allies to uphold their definitions of common sense, governance and social order. Given its fairly generic claims—justice, fighting against corruption, covering the basic needs of people etc.—voiced with a perfect timing when certain floating signifiers had stopped accurately pointing at their intended signifieds due to the crown's corruption, the project in itself was naturally attractive for the common people, and acted more like a magnet than an active seeker of adherents.

With regards to spatial articulations, as the Seven Kingdoms are far more connected through both hegemonic networks and physical roads and routes—save, perhaps, the North—and as the War of the Five Kings strikes hardest in one particular space which is the Riverlands, the creation of counter-hegemonic movements is much more possible. People are driven out of their lands, and the refugee column across the Riverlands (*FfC*: 88-89) becomes the first source from which the Sparrow Revolution draws its strength. When the Riverlands are changed by becoming a blank space not suitable for either nomad or sedentary life, people start moving towards the capital, and in order to do so they must cross a ravaged land which is full of other people who are already highly susceptible for adherence to a counter-hegemonic project that offers alternative values to those corrupted by the crown.

In the case of the Free Folk Revolution, however, there was not a sudden event or widespread realisation that more or less organically gave birth to a specific movement which answered to a commonly felt need; it was Mance Rayder and his followers who became aware of an increasing urgency for safety, and decided not just to take small-scale action, but to initiate an active large-scale hegemonisation process of consensus-generation. However, to make such a project work in such geography and with only a weak pre-consensus regarding the need to change their ways in order to survive was not a small task. If we look at appendix J while also paying attention to the clans and tribes that Mance united—see *SoS*: 258—we can easily understand the spatial isolation that, as in the previously referred Hopewell period,[187] resulted in a greatly independent and oblivious existence of different societies within one shared territory interrupted by a difficult topography, notwithstanding the climatic factors.

The Hornfoots live to the south of the Haunted Forest which is full of dangerous beasts and wights (*GoT*: 10/ *SoS*: 21), while the Nightrunners live to the north, with the whole forest lying between them. The walrus men inhabit the Frozen Shore, which lays directly to the west of the Wall past a huge mountainous chain called the Frostfangs where Shadowcats dwell (*CoK*: 846), and only feasibly accessible from beyond the Wall through the Skirling Pass.

The cannibal Ice River clans lived to the North of the walrus men at the fork of the Ice River, far from any explored or mapped area—looking at the map in appendix J,

[187] See section 5.1.

we can see that the only mapped elements near the Ice River clans are the Ice River and the Frostfangs. The Thenn lived even further north, in the valley of Thenn, which is, in addition, hidden within the Frostfangs (*DwD*: 932), and hence difficultly accessible.

It becomes clear, then, that to establish a common hegemonic project among all of these environmentally and climatically isolated societies is no small task. Isolation plays a central role in hegemonic relations, as "social groups are often defined by their spatial configurations: their relative spatial isolation and claims to territory are the root and symbol of their existence" (Corbridge and Agnew 2003: 15). If relative spatial isolation is in itself an identity-defining factor of social groups, then it is a major factor in the lands north of the Wall that complicates both the generation of the necessary consensus and collective-will for the establishment of a working hegemony, and the required flow of communication through paths, trading routes etc. that facilitate them.

Whilst the ruling class of the kingdom of the North is able to hold a certain centralised hegemony through different mechanisms such as religious sentiment, tradition, or conflict mediation—as it is more extensively explained in the 5.1. section of this work regarding the North and the spatial articulations of its operating hegemonic ties—the societies beyond the Wall have no such things. The closest thing to an encompassing hegemonic narrative among the Free Folk is captured within this previously mentioned quote from *WoIaF*: "The largest and most numerous of various peoples beyond the Wall named themselves the free folk, in their belief that their savage customs allow them lives of greater freedom than the kneelers of the south" (147).

The awareness of being freer than their southern neighbours in itself constitutes a hegemonic narrative that shapes their traditions, culture, and spatial practice in opposition to southern habits; the freedom to settle wherever they wanted, to take collective decisions, or for women to go to battle: "Jon took their measure with a glance: eight riders, men and women both, clad in fur and boiled leather, with here and there a helm or bit of mail" (*SoS*: 115).

This collective, more equalitarian—though not completely, as women are actually fairly discriminated too in spite of everything[188]—mindset actively understood by the Free Folk in opposition to southern or 'kneeler' values shapes everything, from

[188] "And when the Thief was in the Moonmaid, that was a propitious time for a man to steal a woman, Ygritte insisted. 'Like the night you stole me. The Thief was bright that night'" (*SoS*: 438).

the way they fight, to the political decisions they make, and to the way they articulate in space, either in a nomad way[189] or sedentarily.[190]

Apart from this awareness, there was little that the different Free Folk societies shared before Mance besides the language and, in some cases, religion. According to Corbridge and Agnew in *Mastering Space: Hegemony, Territory and International Political Economy* (2003): "The actual spatial organization of the world, however, has always been more complex than the simple assimilation of all social cleavages into a superordinate state-territorial spatial form" (14-15). This is a reminder that the common perception of the lands beyond the Wall in the Seven Kingdoms can, in fact, be fairly homogeneous, as they force them into their own conceptions of state and nation; a nation full of chaos and disorder, but a nation nonetheless. They understand the Free Folk as one homogeneous people in spite of the vague acknowledgement of difference we can find in *WoIaF* (147-148), and they understand the historical Kings Beyond the Wall as failed attempts to emulate the social articulation of the floating signifier of order prevalent in the Seven Kingdoms that resulted in warfare waged against the Night's Watch and the Wall more than anything else, which, to the eyes of the Westerosi, turned the Kings Beyond the Wall into warlords more than into monarchs (*WoIaF*: 147).

Nevertheless, this perspective is most likely biased, as we can conclude with some certainty given the first-hand experience reported in the books regarding the Free Folk Revolution. Mance actually cares about the people: "'Blood,' said Mance Rayder. 'I'd win in the end, yes, but you'd bleed me, and my people have bled enough'" (*SoS*: 1245). This, along with the patent difficulty in consensus-generation among the diverse communities in the lands beyond the Wall, inevitably leads us to think that behind these attempts to cross the Wall by force, there had to exist some long-term hegemonic project strong enough to bring them together through the generation of collective-will and widespread consensus.

Another reason why we might strongly doubt the objectivity of the common conception of the Free Folk in the Seven Kingdoms is precisely the use of the term 'King Beyond the Wall', which speaks for the previously highlighted need to force Free

[189] See references to the people of the Frozen Shore, who lived along the Bay of Ice—see appendix J—in huts of ice and rode sleds pulled by hounds (*WoIaF*: 147).
[190] See the Free Folk sedentary village of Whitetree in appendix J, north of Castle Black, or references to Hardhome, a settlement approaching a town that existed in the lands beyond the Wall in *WoIaF*, page 148.

Folk society into Seven Kingdom socio-political standards of kingship and nation, as it is not a term that the Free Folk use. Similarly, the expression 'Beyond the Wall'—which has been used throughout this dissertation mostly for practical purposes, as all readers of *ASoIaF* know the lands the Free Folk inhabit by that name—reveals a highly spatialised marginalisation of the territory north of the Wall, rendering it a subaltern space of relegated outcasts—Others—who are not worthy of inhabiting the lands of the Seven Kingdoms, and who do not have the right to live behind the safety provided by the Wall against the horrors and hardships existing north of it.

Therefore, with this original lack of at least a somehow established base of hegemonic ties, the Free Folk Revolution needs to create an essentially new hegemonic network finding the few loose points in common that traversed all Free Folk societies, the main one of which is, of course, the land they shared, and then the need for survival in a difficult environment that shaped all their realities at a similar level. Mance and his followers spend a lifetime carefully weaving a brittle hegemonic network that appeals to a thin common sense and collective-will constructed on the grounds of survival and an either pre-existing or newly generated disconformity with being forcefully confined to the most inhospitable lands of the continent of Westeros. In the end, the hegemonisation tools used at the Free Folk Revolution boil down to the dissemination of the awareness that social and spatial change is necessary for survival, and presents the people with a choice: either stick to the dying social and spatial configuration in the lands beyond the Wall, or jump from the ultimate subalternity they are submitted to in Westeros to the forefront of social discourse by creating a counter-hegemonic movement that aims to show their needs to a society that had remained mostly oblivious to them for centuries. Mance and his followers present these needs as common sense, which generates a majority collective will that, while leaving room for dissent,[191] takes the place of a prevailing, transversal narrative that is finally capable of uniting the Free Folk.

[191] "'If I live that long. Some o' my own will spit on me when they hear these terms.' Tormund released Jon's hand" (*DwD*: 995).

Conclusions

Modern fantasy literature and ASoIaF as worthy of social and critical analysis

As stated in the introduction, the primary challenge of this thesis was to propose modern fantasy literature as a worthy and alternative way of looking at social life which could add interesting perspectives in the academia. This is achieved through *ASoIaF*, just like through Tolkien's work. One could argue that, while Tolkien's work certainly addresses general social issues such as ecology, loyalty, political alliances, friendships, power etc., Martin's work is more specific when it comes to deal with society's problems; Tolkien deals masterfully with grand narratives as it is usual in high fantasy, while Martin, also due to the more recent context of his work, adopts a more raw perspective that exposes political, territorial, racial or gender issues down to their hardest and most morbid consequences.[192] This thesis certainly does not aim to compare Tolkien's work to Martin's, as they belong to very different worlds, but it does aim to highlight the often neglected literary relevance of *ASoIaF*, a huge work with thousands of quality pages—as well as less popularised lore books which develop the history of the Known World such as *WoIaF* or *A Knight of the Seven Kingdoms* (2015) which gathers earlier novels set in the world of *ASoIaF* by Martin from 1998, 2003 and 2010—that is intrinsically elaborated, and which undoubtedly possesses the inner consistency of reality, as any reader—not show viewer—could attest. Naturally, in order to expose the validity of *ASoIaF*, a mention to Tolkien is unavoidable, as he was the main influence in Martin's work as well as the most relevant precursor of modern fantasy.[193]

That first general aim was presumably fulfilled through the pages of this work, as we have brought to the surface the political, cultural and social weight that lies behind the events in *ASoIaF*, in some occasions even making direct parallelisms with the primary world—as it is the case of the *Pax Romana*, the Hopewell period, the Swedish invasion of Russia, or the Lanyu people—but mostly by simply applying

[192] See reference to debate about Tolkien's recapitulation of the rhetoric of the heroic age that makes the reader look up to morally good or evil characters in opposition to Martin's use of bleak imagery and filth as a way to render characters more ambiguous and even despicable in some cases, making extensive use of irony (Young 2019: Chapter 1). Also, see reference to epic fantasy's tendency for moral straightforwardness—tendency, not rule—as well as the 'Dark Lord' trope (Garcia and Antonsson 2012: x)

[193] Young 2019: Chapter 1.

critical tools which have already been extensively used to analyse both the primary world and non-fantasy fiction—such as Gramscian hegemony, Bakhtin's chronotope or Lefebvre's Spatial Triad—in order to study power shifts and spatial articulations in a consistently built secondary world. If it were not for the fact that these fictional events were backed by a finely woven historical and legendary background, such an in-depth analysis would not have been possible.

This consistent background becomes especially obvious when Lord Umber's nationalist speech draws from the historical past of the North in order to spark an independentist feeling in the present through a perennialist kind of nationalism (Pastor 2012: 17), when looking into the particular religious and traditional hegemony predominant in the North, or in the historical roots of the Sparrow revolution that enable such a counter-hegemonic movement in the present.

These are but a few examples; if it were not for all the existing content behind each event in *ASoIaF* and its both legendary and historical background, an analysis of hegemonies or hegemonisation processes—with their spatial articulations—would not have been plausible, because one would simply not have meaningful patterns, traditions, historical territories, spatial distributions, origins, or any elaborated causes whatsoever to refer to in order to carry out a relevant study. As implied in the previous paragraph, hegemony in the North is not understandable without all the information regarding cultural heritage and the existing different peoples with their particular identities present in *ASoIaF* or *WoIaF*. Similarly, the way the Sparrow Revolution incarnates the floating signifiers of social order, governance, morality etc. is a result of a historical and religious process concerning both the different rules of Westeros and the evolution of the institution of the Faith, a process that has been used in this thesis to discern the underlying mechanisms of the Sparrow's hegemonisation process.

However, *ASoIaF*, as well as many other popular modern fantasy works, runs against the issue stated in the introduction when facing the academic world[194]; it is viewed as an intrusion, a mainstream phenomenon that, because it is so, does not hold intrinsic artistic value and therefore is not worthy of analysis. Tolkien has to a great extent overcome this barrier—and that is why he is used as a milestone author to compare other fantasy works with by many new critics—above all due to his work's

[194] See Mendlesohn and James 2012: 1-3.

outstanding narrative quality, the brilliance of its worldbuilding, and its genre defining trait, but likely also because of the author's closeness to the academic world, however criticised his work may have been in its time.

Because of it, this study has aimed to contribute—at least at a small scale—to showing how the analysis of a synthetic but consistent secondary world could give us a different, unexplored perspective towards the social mechanisms operating in the primary world through an academic standpoint, and in doing so, provide us with a very necessary distance and perspective towards world's events. As PhD professors Danielle E. Hartsfield and Sue C. Kimmel summarise in their book about teaching tools *Genre-Based Strategies to Promote Critical Literacy in Grades 4-8* (2020):

> A fantastical setting, characters or plot may allow for exploration of social issues from an outside perspective or from a perspective that puts distance between current political situations or personalities. For example, in Wishtree the tree's long life and wisdom provide a different narrator for a tale of prejudice and ecological consequence. The imaginary friend in Crenshaw, a giant cat with that name, offers humor and insight into heavy issues of homelessness and poverty. (88)

While Kimmel and Hartsfield approach this educational and critical quality of fantasy through a more childish setting, few could argue against the ability to overpass prejudice that fantasy fiction boasts when conveying a perspective that collides with one's own values, or simply an alternative insight into world's issues outside the common framework. As a rather extreme example, one could hardly get across a self-proclaimed fascist with a message of tolerance, equality and equity, but fantasy fiction may provide the necessary distance for the message to sink, at least to an extent, into the prejudiced mind of any kind.

Therefore, if *ASoIaF* takes place in a secondary world with the inner consistency of reality, as we may believe has been proven throughout this thesis and ratified in these last pages through specific examples—Umber's speech, Northern hegemony, ancient Valyrian system of governance, historical and religious roots of the Sparrow Revolution—then a critical analysis of its social, cultural, political and spatial mechanisms can only add to academic research in humanities. It may provide, as previously stated, an alternative approach to how we understand world's events, one

which deals with oppression, hegemony, space, colonialism etc. through a necessary detachment that places us outside of the reality we live in. This allows for an alternative perspective on different kinds of issues we would not be able to adopt through the direct analysis of world's events due to our sheer closeness and participation in it, which means that prejudice and bias are so intertwined with our identities that sometimes we are incapable of overcoming them—not, at least, fully. It is not a better way to understand the world; it is simply a different way that could potentially open many paths for research, and build a different kind of academic and social sensitivity, as Tolkien's works did when it came to fuel ecological awareness. By endowing trees and forests with a worth and dignity of their own outside of their dichotomic relation with the human race, he generated a different kind of awareness towards nature.[195]

With such a detailed piece of work that is so in touch not only with primary world history in intertextual terms, but also with the essence of how power shifts happen, human beings interact, and social movements are created, it is only logical that the reader will feel strongly drawn to its pages. The consistency with real world structures as well as the inner consistency of reality it boasts are probably two of the main reasons for its great success; it is a work that speaks, quite plainly, about existing in the world with all its complexity. Because of this, the mirror that fantasy places in front of us is especially powerful in *ASoIaF* precisely due to the extreme social, cultural and political lucidity of the books; it is arguably one of the most suitable modern fantasy books for the analysis of hegemonic processes in space, as both the world—narratively and cartographically—and the different societies are painstakingly represented. Their backgrounds and particularities transpire in the narrative action, thus making it perfectly suitable for the Gramscian approach—the main approach this work takes concerning hegemony—a point of view that largely draws from the narrative content of hegemonic and counter-hegemonic socio-political struggles in order to analyse the multilayered construction and incidence of floating signifiers such as 'common sense', 'social order' or 'governance'. All of this, of course, cannot be achieved without a consistently built secondary world with its own inner and identifiable social discourses. Similarly, the focus on the spatial articulations of such hegemonic and counter-hegemonic discourses is only feasible due to the solid

[195] See section 1.5. of this work regarding real and fictional places, where different sustainable communities that took inspiration from Tolkien's work are mentioned.

worldbuilding with the inner consistency of reality that we have been referring to throughout the last pages.

The plausibility of an analysis of the spatial articulations in relation to hegemony

The theoretical framework of this thesis has not only been the foundation upon which the analysis was based, but also an integral part of the study that aimed to prove something in itself. Besides a synthesis of the major contributions to the Spatial Turn through the field of geocriticism, space/place differences, spatial studies and the theory of hegemony—especially Gramscian hegemony—the theoretical framework has sought to propose an alternative methodology which incorporated spatial articulations as an inherent part of hegemonic and counter-hegemonic processes.

By not simply acknowledging, but also integrating spatial shifts within shifts in hegemony and vice versa, we have highlighted the core spatial quality of hegemony as well as the core hegemonic quality of space. Movements in both of these mutually affect each other, which results on space articulating and changing with hegemonic and counter-hegemonic movements in the status of a pre, during, post condition, and not as their detached result. Likewise, by acknowledging the identitarian factor of space, then it is only inferable that if representations of space present a simplistic ideological closure promoted by the representing agents in question (Massey 1994: 253), and spaces themselves pose great identitarian diversity due to the civil or bourgeois society that inhabits and produces them (Bower 2017: 101), then hegemonic movements which are generated mostly through the elaboration of fillers or embodiments for the floating signifiers of *senso comune* or 'collective will' are strongly dependant on space. This is because in order to produce hegemony, there is a need to produce—or use—identity, and identity is both produced and unfolded in space—both private and public.

The effectiveness of the analysis of hegemony and spatial articulations in a fantastic secondary world

If secondary world spaces are built within the same system of references as primary world spaces, then analysing the spatial practices and articulations within those secondary world spaces can prove even as effective as analysing them in the primary world, as the intertextual interplay goes both ways, and the study of secondary world spatial dynamics will help us understand these same dynamics—even if through a different lens—in the world that we perceive as real.

In this study, we have seen how hegemonic shifts affect and are affected by space. It is clear that the refugee column moving from the Riverlands and into the city of King's Landing during the Sparrow Revolution after Tywin has ordered to set them on fire (*GoT*: 943) may interact with signifiers of war, refuge seeking, immigration, control or crisis very present in the current affairs of the primary world, and which strongly affect hegemonic practices in First and Third World countries. Thus, it becomes plain that the signifiers playing within the field of those issues are not confined within two clear 'real' and 'fantasy fiction' compartments, but rather there exists an interplay between both within the same signification system, and we simply choose a scope through which we want to survey them.

The hegemonic implications of Bakhtin's chronotope in ASoIaF

In this thesis we have also aimed to prove the effectiveness of chronotopes as literary devices that play a major role in the conveyance of hegemonic and counter-hegemonic movements in *ASoIaF*. The spatial articulation of societies in both the Seven Kingdoms and Essos described in said section show one common trait, namely the marked separation between the ruling classes through isolated keeps, palaces, pyramids or walls, from the rest of the people whose dwellings either pile up below the main keep in the biggest cities—as it is the case of King's Landing (*GoT*: 205-206) or Mereen (*DwD*: 42/ 1269)—or sprawl across acres of land but still owe allegiance to the ruling classes dwelling within keeps in the most relevant or central towns and villages—Riverrun and The Crossing in the disputed Riverlands; see appendix G.

This results in a highly spatialised division of social classes as well as labour—those who work the land articulate very differently in space from those who are cobblers, merchants, soldiers etc.—and consequently, in a very clear chronotopical differentiation which is mainly dissected into two main chronotopes: the 'within walls' and the 'outside walls'. This is because the spatial articulation involving walls, keeps etc. along with the 'point of view' narrative style unavoidably creates two overarching chronotopical frameworks, one which unfolds through perspectives given from within walls and another one which unfolds outside of those walls.

That disparity is, in itself, a clear example of the hegemonic implications of literary chronotopes in the narrative of *ASoIaF*. According to Guattari in *Lines of Flight* (2016): "The categories of time and space, generally known as a priori and universal givens, despite the efforts of relativity, are the basic instruments that lead the capitalist mode of thought to polarise, to binarise, to 'determinise' its logical, scientific and political approaches" (192), which makes one think about how the capitalist system uses real-life chronotopes ("FTCN": 99) to perpetuate the structures needed for its success, a use that undeniably generates subalternity, as illustrated by Jacob W. Glazier in *Arts of Subjectivity: A New Animism for the Post-Media Era* (2019):

> […] capitalism, by contrast, produces subjectivities that are not only homogenized in their chronotope, all thinking in terms of separate planes of space and time as per logic of the proletariat workday, but also attempts to shut up aberrant or anomalous chronotopes, like the carnival, in so far as they interfere with worker efficiency, productivity or conformity. (131)

While the social system in *ASoIaF* is not strictly capitalist, the essence of the point we are trying to prove still stands; that chronotopes—real-life or literary as seen in Bakhtin's "FTCN" (99)—can both portray and shape primary and secondary world realities. This is precisely what we have intended to illustrate with the examples of the five rulers taking part in the War of the Five Kings. In that section, we have shown how 'within walls' chronotopes in *ASoIaF* propose an isolated time-space where fates of individuals, collectives, and even regions are shaped from within a concentrated inside space largely marked by secrecy, deviousness, and treason; each with its own particular qualities.

Consequently, 'outside walls' chronotopes are articulated via opposition to the 'within walls' concentrated chronotopes; these refer to the expanded consequences in time-space produced by the latter, which often translate into counter-hegemonisation processes when they impact negatively on society, such as in the case of the Sparrow Revolution. Of course, space in the Seven Kingdoms is mostly produced so as to perpetuate feudal social differences, and the central hegemony of the crown relies on said chronotopic differentiation to do so. Like the capitalist system, the feudal system in most locations in *ASoIaF* needs to dominate social time-space in order to preserve the hegemonic integrity of the leading model of social order, and both social life and spatial production are, therefore, modelled around that.

Hegemony and spatial articulations in Westeros' colonial times as an example of how hegemonisation processes may work in such contexts

The purpose of Chapter 2 was primarily to bring out the history and heritage of Westeros throughout the centuries in order to, firstly, understand the deep roots on which the hegemonic networks are secured when the timeline of *ASoIaF* starts, and secondly, to show how each historical moment is dominated by one class or society to a higher or lesser degree—regardless of the diverse sub-groups that may exist within the greater group. This has been done by studying the four colonial waves that made Westeros what is by the time *ASoIaF* starts, plus the earliest Dawn Age.[196]

From this part, we have learned how coloniser societies may apply different methods which go from the most purely dominant and violent, to the use of dialogue, the creation of pacts and the generation of consensus, largely relying on spatial articulations. While it is true that most of Westeros' previous colonisers applied domination above all, there were also other processes that took place which preceded or followed the dominant ways. Without aiming to fully develop them again, we may recall the philosophy of *Bestand* (Heidegger: 1977: 17) which strongly collided with the Children's intrinsic respect for nature; in this case, the chief driving factor that sparked

[196] Since we do not know anything beyond the Dawn Age, we cannot know if there was any society prior to the Children of the Forest, or if they were the very first inhabitants of what Westeros was when the world was created besides the animals.

the war among both societies was, indeed, the way space was understood and articulated by each of these races.

Aegon's institutionalisation and forceful centralisation of the different regions that shared the space of the continent of Westeros in not a very peaceful way resulted in a variety of dissenting counter-hegemonic voices rising and trying to reclaim what was lost such as The Dornish War (*WoIaF*: 49-50). Due to the previously mentioned prescriptive nature of Aegon's project of a united Westeros, the ideas and practices allowed within the institutionalised framework were very restrictive, and although he did allow for some cultural and religious difference (49), it was always within a certain framework of acceptability and tolerability.

We can fairly safely conclude, then, that colonial spaces constitute a particular category of spatial articulations that shapes both landscape and spatial practice, and overcentralises hegemony usually in a highly prescriptive manner, generating hegemonic and dominant structures as needed, and strategically relying on a combination of consensus and imposition. In addition to that, we can also reassert that the secondary world created by Martin rests on a rich foundation of social and cultural heritage that inherently shapes both the behaviour of the coloniser and the colonised.

The Sparrow Revolution and the Free Folk Revolution as integral hegemonisation processes

In this thesis two analyses of hegemonisation processes have been carried out, the Sparrow Revolution and the Free Folk Revolution. The aim of these was to provide a more practical application of the tools developed along this study by following two distinct hegemonisation processes and their respective spatial articulations. The second process regarding the Free Folk Revolution was, simultaneously, a comparison with the Sparrow Revolution that highlighted the main differences between both.

What we can conclude out of these sections is that, while the general tools of consensus versus coercion and hegemony versus domination can be considered a common ground in all hegemonisation processes, the application of any of them is completely dependent on the nuances generated by culture, tradition, spatial practice and social life. At the same time, it is important to highlight the fact that usually none of

these tools are applied singularly, but rather in combination with a higher or lesser degree of the others. The Free Folk Revolution starts as an individual realisation that Mance Rayder has regarding the alienation of the people north of the Wall, and initiates a process of generating a collective will by raising awareness among societies that, in some cases, did not have it. This is achieved both through means of generating consensus and by applying occasional practices of domination (*SoS*: 258), resulting in common space for all the tribes—his camp—giving way to a shared spatial practice which leaves behind the traditionally inhabited spaces of the Free Folk.

On the other hand, the ideas and narratives linked to the Sparrow Revolution are born more organically from a widespread discontent among the people whom the ruling class has abused, and the collective will to protest against the main hegemonic powers is already present. This will is channelled through the Sparrow movement, which presents itself as the mass-friendly alternative advocating the power of the many above the few, and proposes an alternative meaning for the floating signifiers of 'governance' and 'morality', one that exposes the injustices carried out by the upper classes (*FfC*: 89). In this case, the spatial articulation of the movement is largely influenced by the damage inflicted by the ruling class on the landscape of the Riverlands, which turns it into a hostile space and provokes a massive flight of refugees to the capital, emptying the once rich and fertile Riverlands and overcrowding the city's streets, making it practically impossible for the City Watch—also known as Gold Cloaks—to control the constant preaching against the crown's rule in the streets through sheer repression.

The last thing we may conclude out of these two analyses of hegemonisation processes in order to show their integrity is that, besides the previously mentioned general consensus/ coercion and hegemony/ domination dichotomies, floating signifiers play a central role in the success or failure of said movements; it is the inherent symbolic—and even linguistic—openness of social life what makes hegemony—or hegemonisation—possible; precisely the fact that society does not exist in a closed system of differential relations between signifiers which are simply reproduced, but in a flexible system that allows for certain signifiers to be 'filled' with alternative definitions, thus allowing for dissent and competition (Laclau and Mouffe 2001: 134).

For both the Sparrow Revolution and the Free Folk Revolution to enjoy a competent counter-hegemonic status and start a potentially successful hegemonisation

process, there is a need to present alternative articulations for signifiers such as 'governance', 'morality' or 'common sense', as they aim to uproot the hegemonic system, something which cannot be done without proposing alternative definitions to the floating signifiers that sustain it, and that will replace it. In the case of the Sparrow Revolution, 'governance' based on the rule of the many—at least what they propose at first, before they reach institutional power—a 'morality' based on the precepts of the Faith of the Seven, and a 'common sense' that challenges the established assumption that the ruling houses hold absolute power over the underprivileged people simply by historical rights, and replaces it with the logic of the rule of the majority. In the case of the Free Folk Revolution, 'governance' that relies on the union of all people beyond the Wall in order to survive and thrive, and a 'common sense' that contests the mostly uncontested, life-determining assumption that they belong to the north side of the Wall and have to stay there, bearing its dangers and harsh conditions.

Final conclusions

Having arrived to the end of this thesis, there are only a few issues that are worth highlighting. First, that modern fantasy fiction is a genre worthy of academic analysis, and which could give us a very necessary twist on the way we perceive reality if taken seriously; no quality worldbuilding work is simply escapist, and primary world social issues are equally represented there, just under a different light and with a different distance. *ASoIaF* is such a work, as it has been attested through the pages of this study.

Second, that space is a transversal category to all social issues, as spatial articulations play an integral role in their production and reproduction as well as in society's processes.

Third, that given the above argument, hegemonic relations are also affected by and affect space to the point that they are distinguishable only at a symbolic level, as they both form a substratum for power relations and social life.

Fourth, that given the argument above, and taking into account the fact that social life and power relations also unfold in time as well as in space, these are also separate only at a symbolic level, as they too form part of the previously mentioned

substratum for social life. Bakhtin's concept of chronotope helps break with this dichotomy.

Fifth, that given all of the previous reasons, an analysis of the spatial articulations of hegemony is not only useful, but can also constitute a compact theoretical framework in itself that might contribute to a more integral understanding of society's processes.

And last, simply a mention to the fact that this study has explored different research paths along the same axis of the spatial articulations of hegemony, but which they themselves could constitute thesis or article material; some of these will be presented in the following section.

Future lines of research

Through the process of this study, we have encountered many so-called 'golden nuggets' which we have had to dismiss in some cases, and to find a coherent way of integrating them in some others. These are some of the ones we may deem worthy of further research:

The chronotopical analysis of hegemonies in fantasy literature may help understand how time-space configurations operate in such secondary worlds, how these compare to primary world chronotopes, and what alternative perspectives they may provide. If a chronotopical framework is accurately isolated, and the operating hegemonic influences outlined, then it becomes much easier to address social issues in the light of their articulation in time-space. The same happens with the configuration of counter-hegemonic movements and the study of their time-space articulations. Fantasy provides an alternative view on said issues, but this methodology could also be brought to the primary world.

An analysis of the spatial articulations of hegemonic relations in modern conflicts—e.g. the power conflicts between USA, Russia and China, the Taliban conflict in Afghanistan or the refugee crisis in Turkey—could provide an interesting and alternative insight towards how defining features such as culture, religion, history, tradition, means of production, availability of resources, distribution of population,

politics etc. weave and shape conflict. The innovative angle is provided by a spatially centered analysis that, rather than providing a perspective based on an accumulative historical discourse, focuses on the simultaneous horizontal network of time-space—without lessening the importance of the historical discourse. This could be done by looking into the concentration and distribution of spatial practices, their influences and itineraries, the presence of empty spaces, the use of floating signifiers influenced by spatial conditions etc.

Gender studies could also benefit greatly from such an approach by analysing chronotopes and spaces traditionally associated with 'male' or 'female' conventions, as well as the way they contribute to or work against the perpetuation of the patriarchy through specific time-space configurations. Football stadiums—initially built for male players solely—single-sex schools, road infrastructures—a lot could be said about the male quality of destroying natural spaces in order to introduce roads and highways—brothels, men's clubs, certain types of bars—are the customers usually male? What practices take place there? Is it a space of leisure, of evasion from the family?—etc. Of course, this type of analysis could be carried out in countries on different stages of capitalist—or otherwise—development, which would give different results.

The spatial articulation of counter-hegemonic and hegemonic female narratives could also be of great interest: how do they articulate in the streets? Are feminist groups organised in assemblies? Which? What mainstream spaces do they dominate? Do these spaces challenge male hegemony, or are they somehow integrated within the hegemonic framework? Which non-mainstream spaces do they own? How do racialised women articulate in space? These are some of the issues that could be addressed in such a study.

The spatial articulation of environmental issues and sustainability—or lack of it—in *ASoIaF* could also have constituted an interesting analysis. While this study does give some vague brush-strokes with regards to such perspective, a whole piece of research specifically focused on it might provide a very interesting insight on how these issues are addressed in Martin's bleak secondary world. This could be done by looking into aspects such as resource gathering—the intensive mining under Casterly Rock—pollution and contamination in the big cities such as King's Landing, the biocentric philosophy of the Children of the Forest, the prevalence of the Old Gods of nature in the North, the burning of forests and fields with warfare purposes etc. Also, naturally, the

spatial articulation of ecological awareness and love for nature might pose a very interesting approach for study in *ASoIaF*, as it is different depending on the location, the qualities of the landscape, or the religion that holds hegemony.

A similar analysis to this one but specifically focused on the continent of Essos—which has a lot more research potential than what has been developed in this thesis, which was mostly focused on the continent of Westeros—could also be highly interesting, and it could provide some further insight regarding post-colonialism, white-saviourism—through Daenerys Targaryen's quest—or otherness given its echoes of a westernised conception of Asian locations.

The analysis of the spatial articulation of religious power and the way it is exercised in *ASoIaF* could provide a further insight on how religion perpetuates its hegemony through institutions and through floating signifiers that are imbued with their particular institutional needs.

The spatial articulation of outcasts and their role in the hegemonic or counter-hegemonic processes of *ASoIaF* may propose an alternative history that diverges from the canonical events in *ASoIaF*, thus exposing another side to spatial articulations or hegemonic and counter-hegemonic processes—Jaime Lannister's and Tyrion Lannister's separate journeys, Brienne of Tarth's, Jon Snow's shift from the privileged space of Winterfell to an space for outsiders and his rise to power there, Cersei Lannister's personnal an unrestrained quest for power, the spatial articulation of the Brotherhood Without Banners in hidding spots and along the Riverlands etc.

In terms of intertextuality, an intertextual analysis of the spatial articulations of hegemonic and counter-hegemonic processes in *ASoIaF* and in the medieval history of England could serve as a way to further connect modern fantasy works with primary world events. Another proposal would be an intertextual analysis of the spatial articulations of hegemonic and counter-hegemonic processes in *ASoIaF* and in pre-historical empires, or even an intertextual analysis of the spatial articulations in *ASoIaF* and in South and/or North American history.

These are but some of the many aspects that were considered as the thesis progressed. It becomes evident, then, that not just the literary analysis of modern fantasy, but literary analysis in general, opens up a vast field with a huge potential for

the analysis of social life. Above all, aside material practicality, effectiveness or usefulness, it offers an opportunity for learning. To look at things differently, through the renewed lens of literature, and more specifically modern fantasy literature, develops critical thinking, and helps with the encouragement of thoughts and actions outside the box. If we were to ignore the fundamental fictionality of social life and identity, we would miss many of the—sometimes colourful and sometimes bleak—nuances to be found in the world we inhabit, and thus dismiss the great influence of imaginative thought, as well as the ability to acknowledge and work with the diversity that is a pre-condition in all areas of social life. The importance of these aspects, of looking at things differently, sould never be disregarded.

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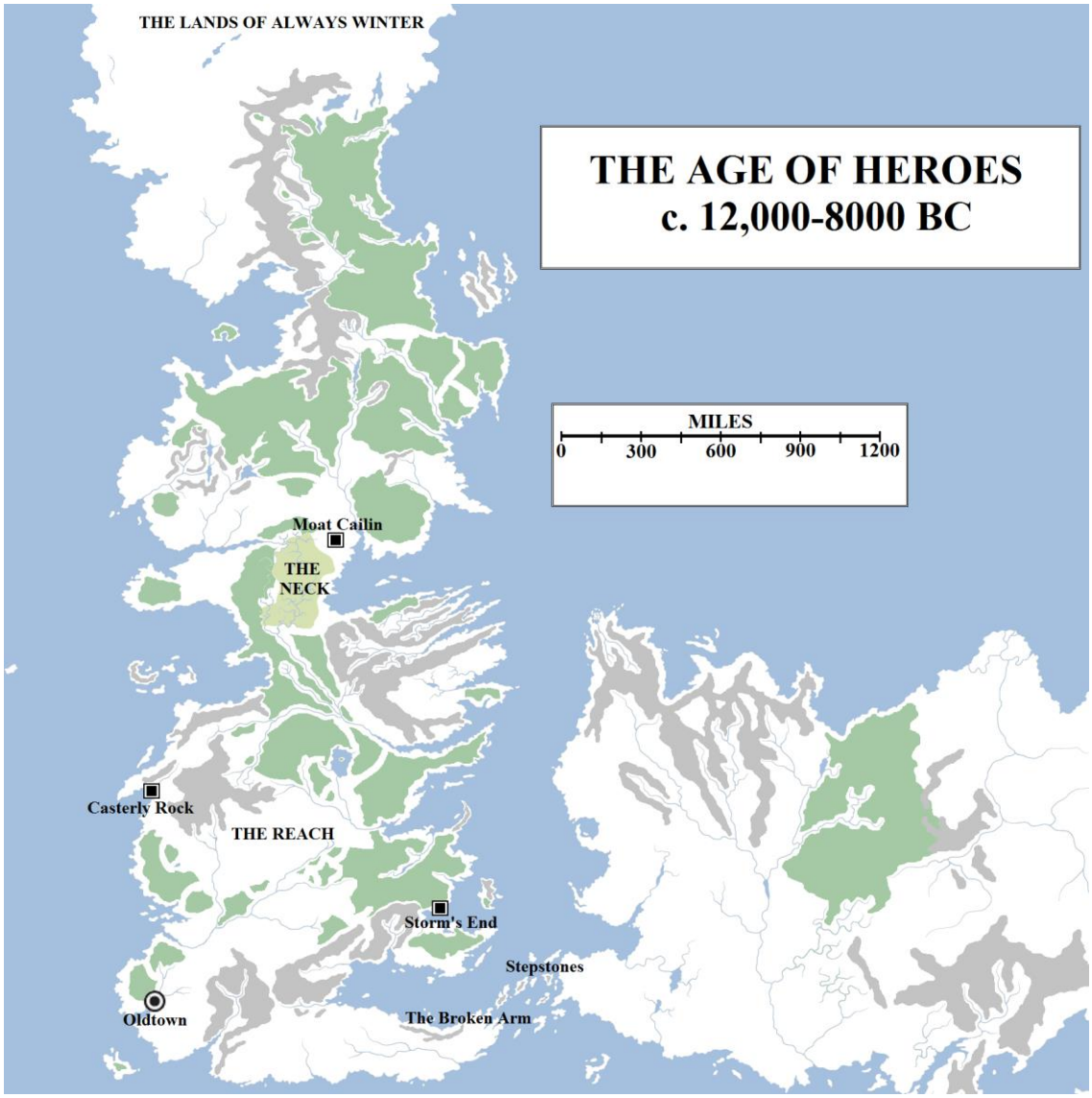
Appendices

A

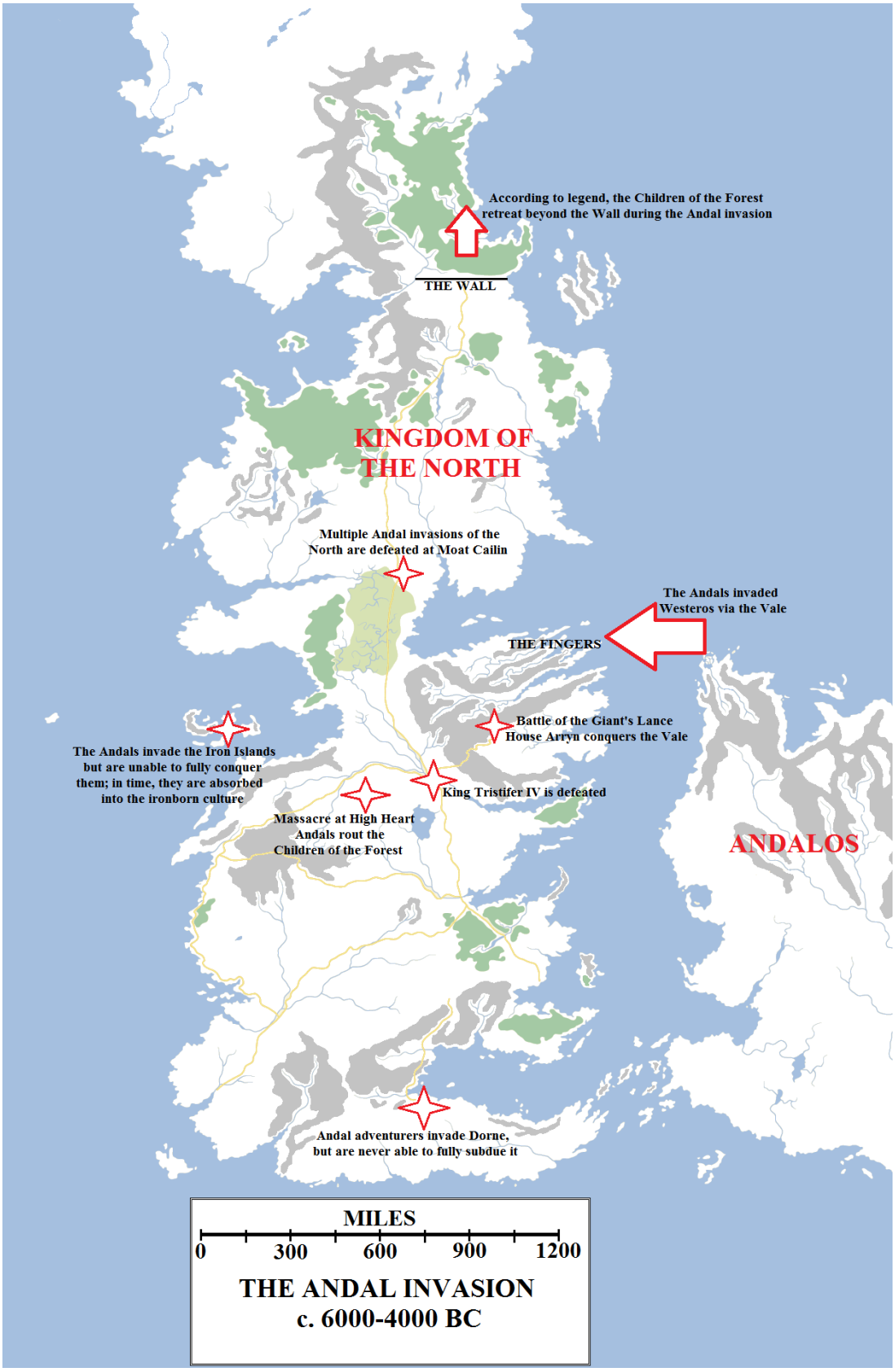
B


THE LANDS OF ALWAYS WINTER
THE AGE OF HEROES
c. 12,000-8000 BC
MILES
0
300
600
900
1200
Moat Cailin
THE
NECK
Casterly Rock
THE REACH
Storm's End
Stepstones
Oldtown
The Broken Arm

C


ANDALOS
c. 6000 BC
0
150 MILES 300
450
THE SHIVERING SEA
THE FINGERS
THE AXE
ANDALOS
VELVET HILLS
THE NARROW SEA
THE FLATLANDS
RIVER RHOYNE
THE HEEL OF ESSOS
THE STEPSTONES
THE SUMMER SEA

D


According to legend, the Children of the Forest retreat beyond the Wall during the Andal invasion
THE WALL
KINGDOM OF THE NORTH
Multiple Andal invasions of the North are defeated at Moat Cailin
The Andals invaded Westeros via the Vale
THE FINGERS
Battle of the Giant's Lance
House Arryn conquers the Vale
The Andals invade the Iron Islands but are unable to fully conquer them; in time, they are absorbed into the ironborn culture
King Tristifer IV is defeated
Massacre at High Heart
Andals rout the Children of the Forest
ANDALOS
Andal adventurers invade Dorne, but are never able to fully subdue it
MILES
0
300
600
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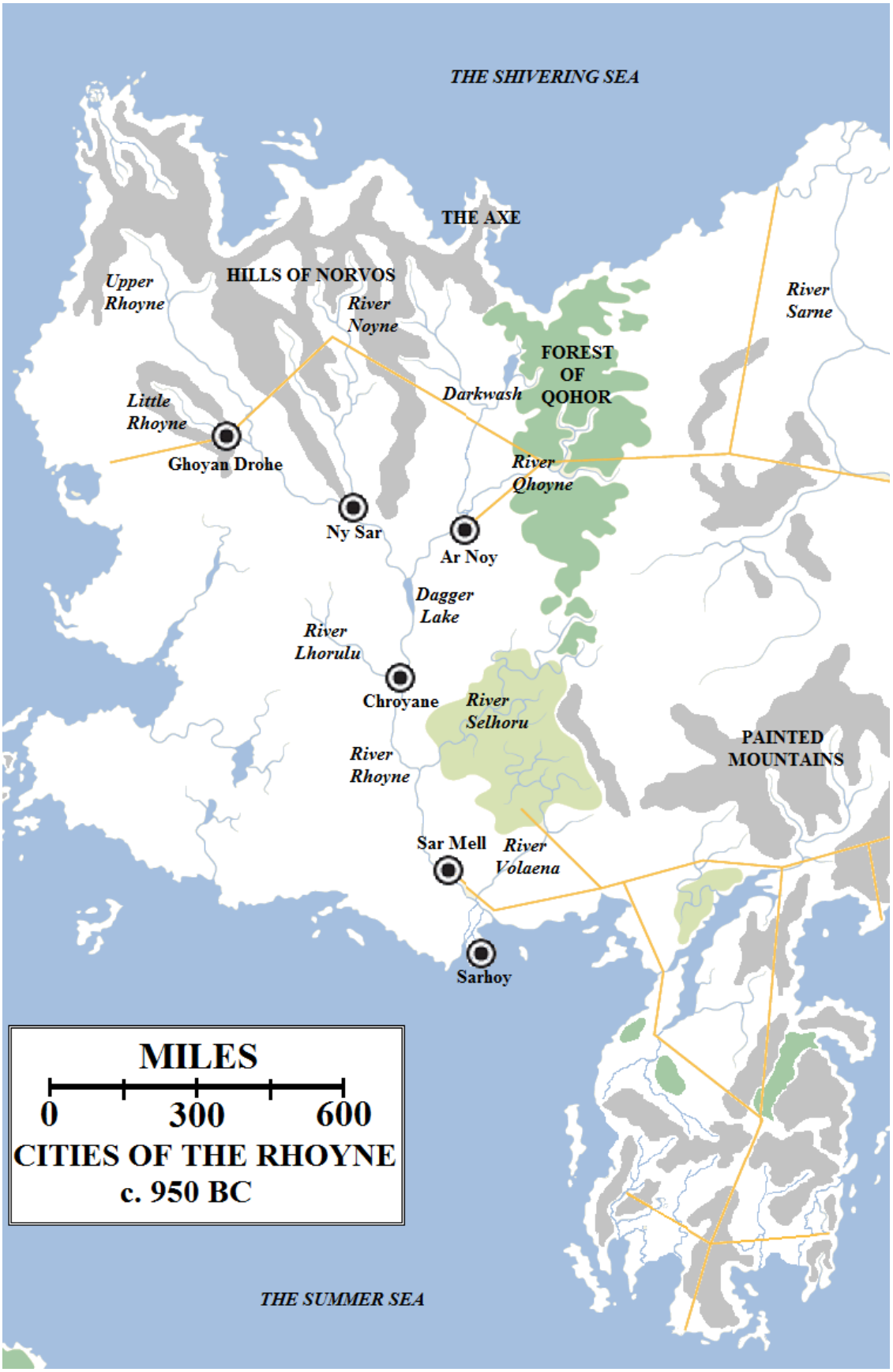
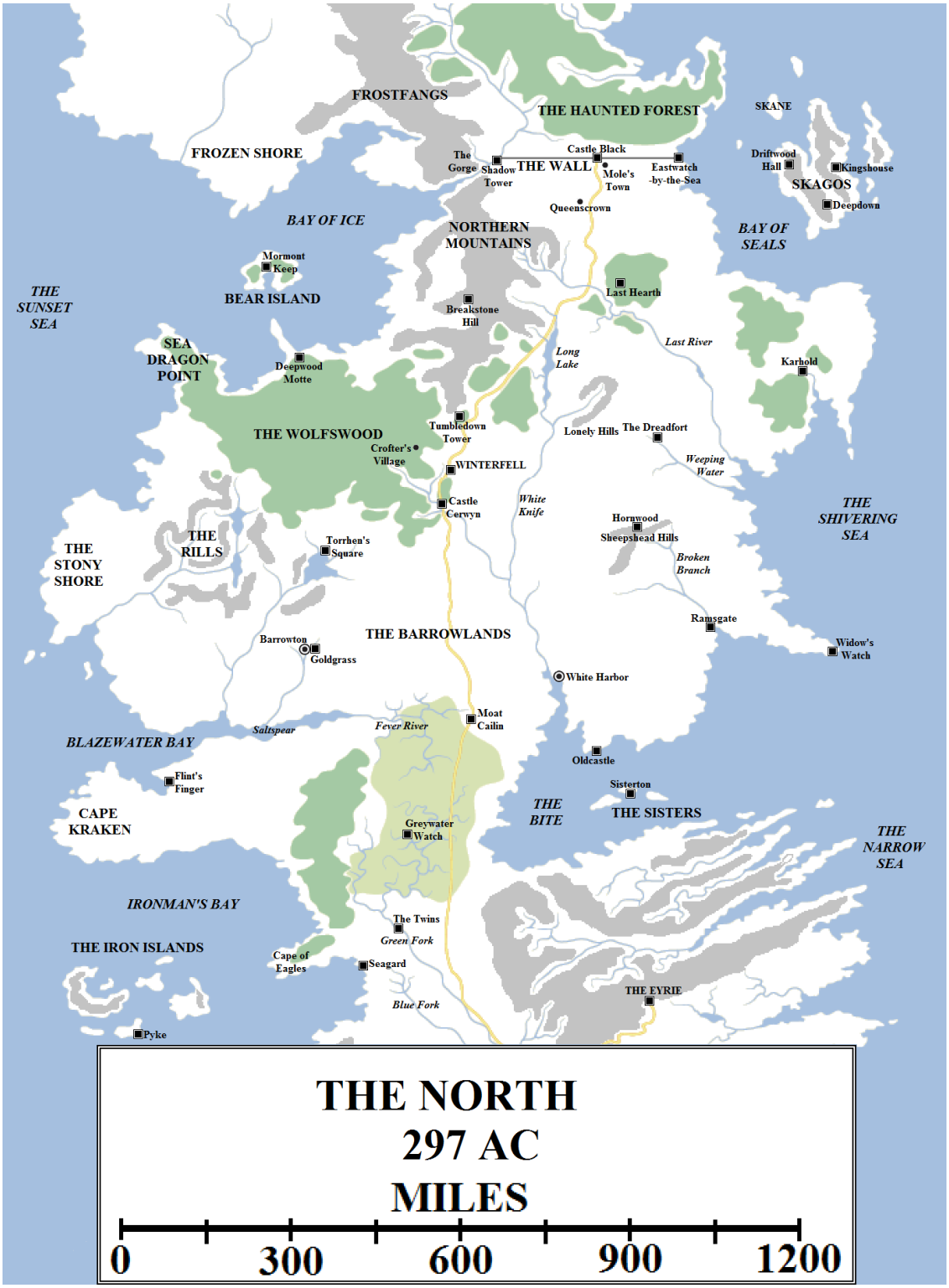
THE ANDAL INVASION
c. 6000-4000 BC

E


THE SHIVERING SEA
THE AXE
HILLS OF NORVOS
Upper Rhoyne
River Noyne
River Sarne
FOREST OF QOHOR
Darkwash
Little Rhoyne
Ghoyan Drohe
River Qhoyne
Ny Sar
Ar Noy
Dagger Lake
River Lhorulu
Chroyane
River Selhoru
PAINTED MOUNTAINS
River Rhoyne
Sar Mell
River Volaena
Sarhoy
MILES
0 300 600
CITIES OF THE RHOYNE
c. 950 BC
THE SUMMER SEA

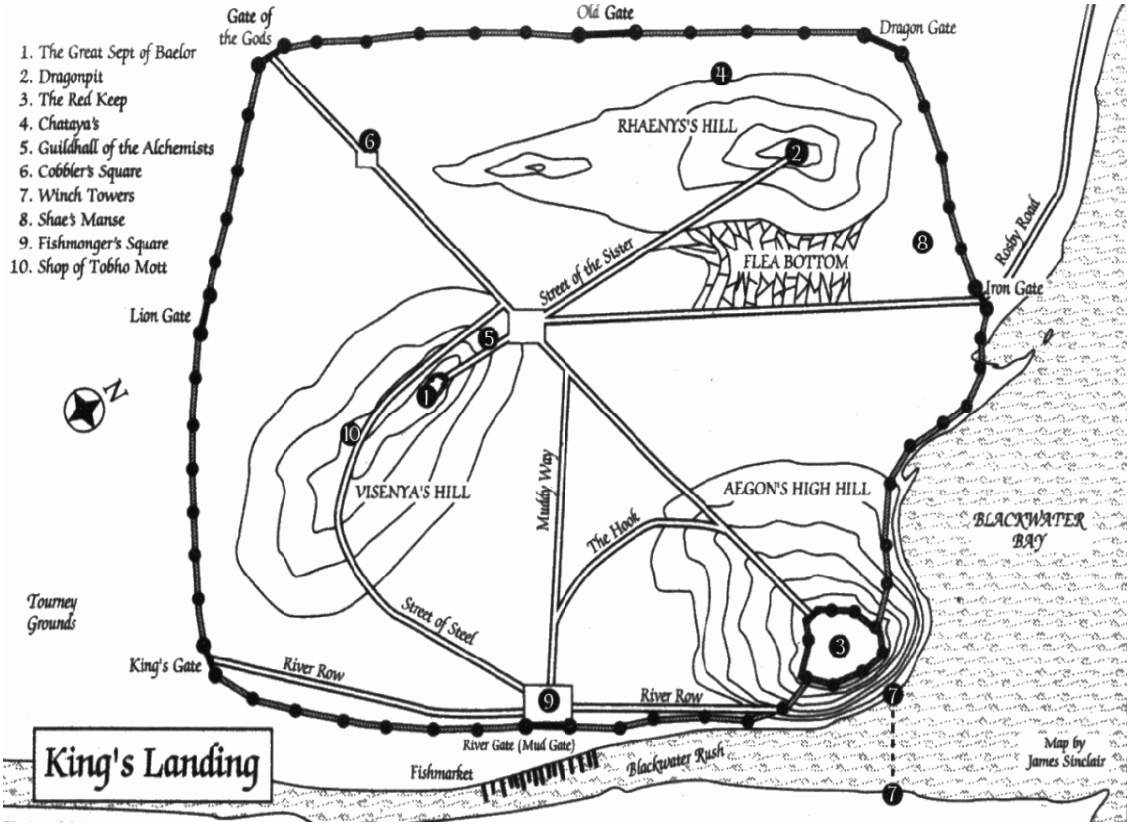
F


FROSTFANGS
THE HAUNTED FOREST
SKANE
FROZEN SHORE
The Gorge
Shadow Tower
THE WALL
Castle Black
Mole's Town
Eastwatch-by-the-Sea
Driftwood Hall
Kingshouse
SKAGOS
Deepdown
Queenscrown
BAY OF ICE
NORTHERN MOUNTAINS
BAY OF SEALS
Mormont Keep
THE SUNSET SEA
BEAR ISLAND
Last Hearth
Breakstone Hill
SEA DRAGON POINT
Deepwood Motte
Long Lake
Last River
Karhold
THE WOLFSWOOD
Tumbledown Tower
Lonely Hills
The Dreadfort
Crofter's Village
WINTERFELL
Weeping Water
Castle Cerwyn
White Knife
THE SHIVERING SEA
Hornwood
Sheepshead Hills
THE RILLS
Torrhen's Square
THE STONY SHORE
Broken Branch
Ramsgate
THE BARROWLANDS
Barrowton
Goldgrass
Widow's Watch
White Harbor
Moat Cailin
Saltspear
Fever River
BLAZEWATER BAY
Oldcastle
Flint's Finger
Sisterton
THE BITE
THE SISTERS
CAPE KRAKEN
Greywater Watch
THE NARROW SEA
IRONMAN'S BAY
The Twins
Green Fork
THE IRON ISLANDS
Cape of Eagles
Seagard
THE EYRIE
Blue Fork
Pyke
THE NORTH
297 AC
MILES
0
300
600
900
1200

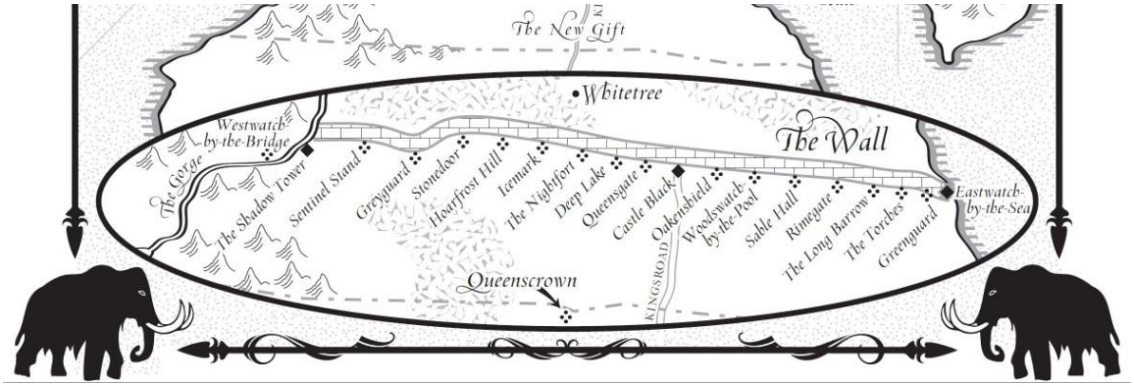
G


The Lands of Always Winter
The Frozen Shore
The Haunted Forest
Skane
Shadow Tower
Castle Black
Eastwatch
Skagos
Queenscrown
Bay of Ice
The Gift
Bear Island
Bay of Seals
Last Hearth
The Grey Cliffs
Karhold
Sea Dragon Point
Deepwood Motte
Kingsroad
Wolfswood
The Dreadfort
Winterfell
Hornwood
Torrhen's Square
Stony Shore
Castle Cerwyn
Barrowlands
The Rills
Ramsgate
Widow's Watch
The North
White Harbor
Moat Cailin
Blazewater Bay
The Neck
The Bite
Cape Kraken
Westeros
The Three Sisters
The Fingers
The Shivering Sea
Braavos
The Iron Islands
The Twins
Seagard
The Vale Of Arryn
Riverlands
Wendish Town
Pyke
Ironman's Bay
Kingsroad
The Eyrie
Runestone
Hills of Norvos
Bloody Gate
Gulltown
Raventree Hall
Westerlands
Riverrun
Crossroads Inn
Bay of Crabs
Braavosian Coastlands
Stone Hedge
Wickendon
The Crag
River Road
Andalos
High Heart
Harrenhal
Claw Isle
Faircastle
Golden Tooth
Ashemark
Acorn Hal
Isle of Faces
Maidenpool
Pinkmaiden
Antlers
Crownlands
Hornvale
God's Eye
Dragonstone
Casterly Rock
Stoney Sept
Essos
Rosby
Lannisport
Deep Den
Clegane's Keep
King's Landing
Blackwater Bay
Goldroad
Pentos
Searoad
Silverhill
Cornfield
The Narrow Sea
The Flatlands
Kingswood
Crakehall
The Reach
Tumbleton
Kingsroad
Haystack Hall
Red Lake
Bitterbridge
Old Oak
Grassy Vale
Felwood
Evenfall Hall
Roseroad
Goldengrove
Bronzegate
Long Table
Cider Hall
Storm's End
Ocean Road
Shield Islands
Summerhall
Shipbreaker Bay
Ashford
Griffin's Roost
Highgarden
Boneway
Rain House
Sea of Myrth
Tyrosh
Myr
Brightwater Keep
Blackhaven
Stonehelm
Stormlands
Bandallon
Horn Hill
Nightsong
Mistwood
Honeyholt
Vulture's Roost
Wyl
The Disputed Lands
Prince's Pass
Sea of Dorne
Oldtown
Kingsgrave
Uplands
Blackmont
Stepstones
Blackcrown
Skyreach
Yronwood
The Tor
Ghost Hill
Three Towers
Starfall
Dorne
Hellholt
Godsgrace
Sunspear
Sandstone
Sun House
Vaith
The Arbor
Lemonwood
Lys
Salt Shore
The Summer Sea

H

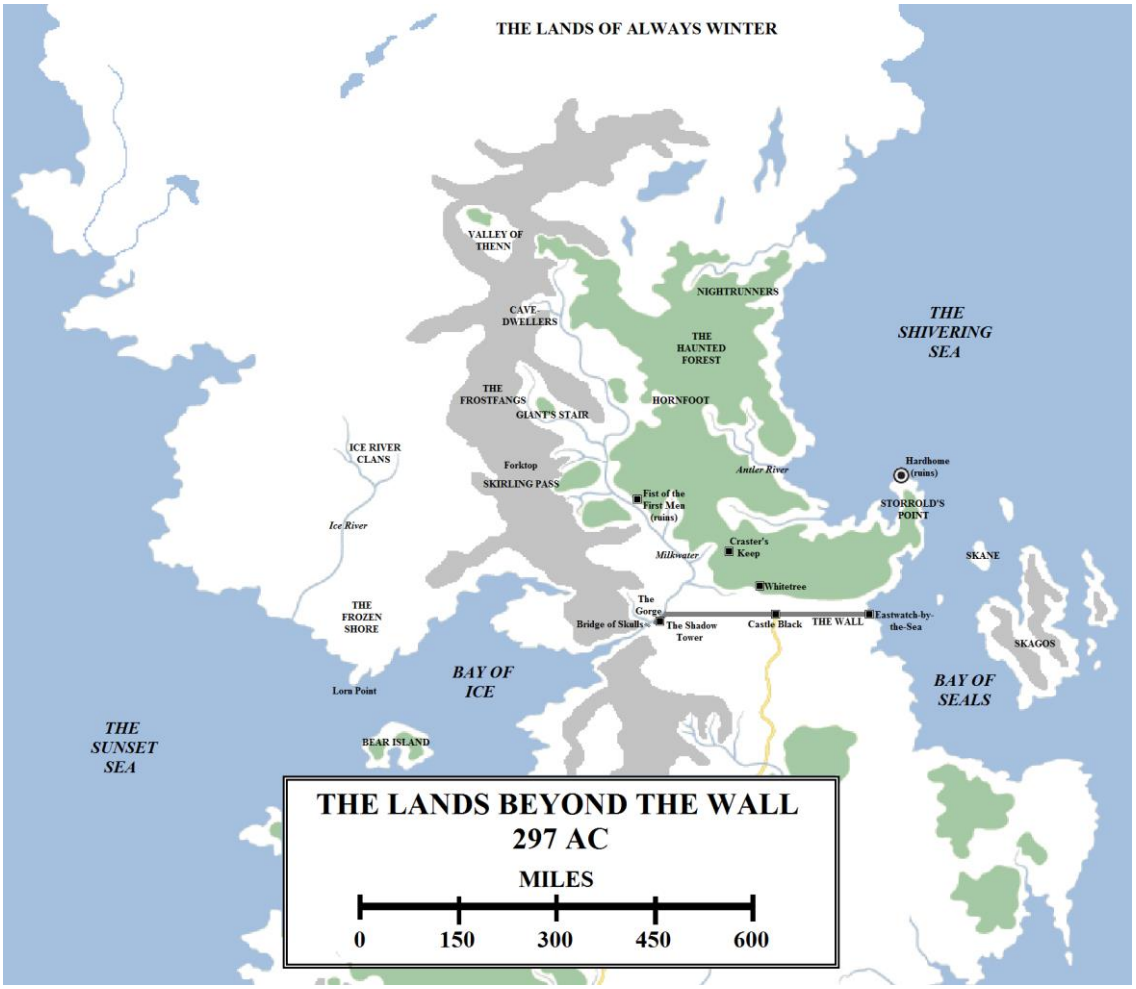

1. The Great Sept of Baelor
2. Dragonpit
3. The Red Keep
4. Chataya's
5. Guildhall of the Alchemists
6. Cobbler's Square
7. Winch Towers
8. Shae's Manse
9. Fishmonger's Square
10. Shop of Tobho Mott
Gate of the Gods
Old Gate
Dragon Gate
RHAENYS'S HILL
FLEA BOTTOM
Rosby Road
Iron Gate
Street of the Sister
Lion Gate
VISENYA'S HILL
Muddy Way
The Hook
AEGON'S HIGH HILL
BLACKWATER BAY
Tourney Grounds
Street of Steel
King's Gate
River Row
River Row
River Gate (Mud Gate)
Fishmarket
Blackwater Rush
King's Landing
Map by James Sinclair

I


The New Gift
Whitetree
The Wall
Westwatch-by-the-Bridge
The Gorge
The Shadow Tower
Sentinel Stand
Greyguard
Stonedoor
Hoarfrost Hill
Icemark
The Nightfort
Deep Lake
Queensgate
Castle Black
Oakenshield
Weeldswatch-by-the-Pool
Sable Hall
Rimegate
The Long Barrow
The Torches
Greenguard
Eastwatch-by-the-Sea
KINGSROAD
Queenscrown


Giant's Stairs
Frostfangs
Skirling Pass
Fist of the First men
Antler River
Hardhom
Craster's Keep
Haunted Forest
Westwatch
Whitetree
The Gorge
Shadow Tower
Castle Black
Eastwatch
Moletown
The Gift
Queen's Crown
of Ice
The New Gif

J


THE LANDS OF ALWAYS WINTER
VALLEY OF THENN
NIGHTRUNNERS
CAVE DWELLERS
THE HAUNTED FOREST
THE SHIVERING SEA
THE FROSTFANGS
GIANT'S STAIR
HORNFOOT
ICE RIVER CLANS
Forktop
SKIRLING PASS
Antler River
Hardhome (ruins)
Fist of the First Men (ruins)
STORROLD'S POINT
Ice River
Milkwater
Craster's Keep
SKANE
Whitetree
THE FROZEN SHORE
The Gorge
Bridge of Skulls
The Shadow Tower
Castle Black
THE WALL
Eastwatch-by-the-Sea
SKAGOS
BAY OF ICE
BAY OF SEALS
Lorn Point
THE SUNSET SEA
BEAR ISLAND
THE LANDS BEYOND THE WALL
297 AC
MILES
0
150
300
450
600

For those who helped forge this new link on my chain.