Women in Game of Thrones: *Power, Conformity and Resistance.* Valerie Estelle Frankel. Jefferson: McFarland & Company, 2014. p/bk 206 pp. ISBN: 978-0-7864-9416-3. Price £26.74.

Frankel's *Women in* Game of Thrones: *Power, Conformity and Resistance* deals with issues surrounding gender and sexuality that are being discussed by fans of the show on various fan forums. The show itself has been on air (on HBO) since 2011 and has enjoyed immense popularity both in the U.S. and abroad since its launch. Based on George R. R. Martin's fantasy book series A *Song of Ice and Fire*, the show has also been criticized for its gratuitous display of explicit sexuality and violence, as well as its portrayal of nudity - nearly always female. At the same time, the show has also been paradoxically praised for its feminism and its representation of powerful women - women who either contend for reigning power themselves (Daenerys), those who manipulate the holders of power (Cersei), or those who carve a niche for themselves to loyally fight in the midst of patriarchy controlled warfare (Brienne, and to some extent Arya). There are on the other hand women characters who primarily identify themselves through their spouses or children (such as Catelyn), those whose femininity is shown as weakness (like Sansa), and numerous prostitutes that are fetishized (Shae). The book speculates on each character's position and tries to pinpoint the weaknesses of seemingly "strong" characters, as well as the strengths of seemingly "weak" characters.

Valerie Estelle Frankel has already written several books on the series [*Winning the* Game of Thrones: *The Host of Characters and their Agendas* (2013), *Winter is Coming: Symbols and Hidden Meanings in* Game of Thrones (2013), and *Symbols in Game of Thrones: The Deeper Meanings of Animals, Colors, Seasons, Food, and Much More* (2014)] as well as on other popular series and films. While obviously in high command of her subject matter, it is also obvious that she expects the same from her reader. The main difficulty in reading this book is its careless and swift meandering between the novels and the TV series, which is hard to follow. With every character discussed, the writer also compares the representation in Martin's books with that of the show, creating frequent tangents that mostly confuse the reader. While the book displays one of the actors on the show on the cover, it is never certain whether any chosen topic will be discussed as

relating to the show or Martin's book series. Likewise, some characters from the novels that were not visualized on the show are discussed as well as characters invented solely for the commercial concerns of the show.

Another element that I found confusing was the need to ground claims in historical fact. Although Martin is said to have been inspired by certain events in British history (mainly the Wars of the Roses) in creating the fantastical world of *Game of Thrones*, it seems to be rather far-fetched to try to point out parallels where they simply do not exist. While historical ties are intriguing at times, claiming that a character performs an action because that's how it would be done "in medieval times" is anachronistic at best. At times, *Women in* Game of Thrones seems to take it upon itself to "prove" that the series parallels medieval history through claims such as: "By today's standards the marriage [between Daenerys and Drogo] is shocking but in medieval Europe where Martin's series is based, this was far less so" (148). As previously stated, much of this information does serve as fascinating anecdotal information, yet adds another dimension to the already confusing novels-TV show-history triangle that the writer tries to cover.

That being said, the discussion revolving around the use of Jung's archetypes and tropes in the series is both thought-provoking and refreshing. Frankel links the characters both in the books and on the show by identifying the anima/animus aspects of the warrior woman, the bodyguard, the pirate, the career woman, the widow, the femme fatale, the crone, the maiden, the trickster, and so on. While the interest in including every single character is a little overwhelming, the analysis is certainly thorough and worthwhile. The feminist concern in establishing the strengths and weaknesses of the woman characters in *Game of Thrones* does not waver throughout the book and, although many likable characters who seem taboo-breaking at first glance are heavily deconstructed (by the end of the book Daenerys remains the only positive role model), the book is persistent in establishing a firm grounding in its definition of a strong woman. The book would be best for readers who are acquainted with Martin's books, and who also follow the series.

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