



ANGELIQUE
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SUPERNATURAL
FICTION
AS
RELIGIOUS
NARRATIVES

EXAMINING THE RELIGIOUS AFFORDANCE OF *A SONG OF ICE AND FIRE*
BY TESTING A NARRATOLOGICAL THEORY

Supernatural Fiction as Religious Narratives

Examining the Religious Affordance of *A Song of Ice and Fire* by Testing a Narratological Theory

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The Song of the Seven

*The Father's face is stern and strong,
He sits and judges right from wrong.
He weighs our lives, the short and long,
And loves the little children.*

*The Mother gives the gift of life,
And watches over every wife.
Her gentle smile ends all strife,
And she loves her little children.*

*The Warrior stands before the foe,
Protecting use where e'er we go.
With sword and shield and spear and bow,
He guards the little children.*

*The Crone is wise and old,
And sees our fates as they unfold.
She lifts her lamp of shining gold,
To lead the little children.*

*The Smith, he labors day and night,
To put the world of men to right.
With hammer, plow, and fire bright,
He builds for little children.*

*The Maiden dances through the sky,
She lives in every lover's sigh,
Her smiles teach the birds to fly,
And give dreams to little children.*

*The Seven Gods who made us all,
Are listening if we should call.
So close your eyes, you shall not fall,
They see you, little children,
Just close your eyes, you shall not fall,
They see you, little children.*

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Chapter 1: Introduction

“The gods made our bodies as well as our souls, is it not so? They give us voices, so we might worship them with song. They give us hands, so we might build them temples. And they give us desire, so we might mate and worship them in that way.”

- Said by Chataya to Tyrion Lannister in: George R.R. Martin, *A Clash of Kings*, p. 238.

1.1. The Study of Religion: Fiction-Based Religions

Looking back at the last two centuries, it seems that more and more distinct types of religions have appeared in the religious field. Especially the link between supernatural fiction and non-mainstream religion has given rise to more research on these new and distinctive religions.¹ With supernatural fiction, one can understand narratives that belong to their own fictional world, which exists only in the fantasy and imagination of the author or readers with a special focus on the supernatural, thus magic and anything beyond that is natural.² Supernatural fiction is present in most works of the fantasy, horror and science fiction genres. Various new and non-traditional religious movements have adapted supernatural fiction as a source for religious ideas, doctrines, and practices. This phenomenon caught the attention of certain scholars as Adam Possamai, Carole Cusack and Markus Davidsen.³

Possamai named these religions that base their belief system on supernatural fictional texts *hyper-real religions* and he defines them as a ‘simulacrum of a religion created out of popular culture that provides inspiration for believers/consumers at a metaphorical level’.⁴ Cusack, on the other hand, named these types of religions “invented religions”. These, according to her, are religions ‘that announce their invented status’.⁵ Davidsen uses the term *fiction-based religion* because, according to him, it is ‘a religion that uses fictional texts as its main authoritative, religious texts’.⁶ Davidsen’s concept of fiction-based religion is very similar to Possamai’s term hyper-real religion (though more accurate), but it differs from Cusack’s definition. Cusack’s concept does not only include fiction-based religions, but also parody religions as for example the Church of the Flying Spaghetti Monster. And as

¹ C. Cusack. 2015. *Invented Religions: Imagination, Fiction and Faith*. Farnham: Ashgate, p. 1.

² M.A. Davidsen. 2016. “From *Star Wars* to Jediism: The Emergence of Fiction-based Religion”, in Ernst van den Hemel & Asja Szafraniec (ed.), *Words: Situating Religion in Language*, New York: Fordham University Press, 376-389, p. 377.

³ Cusack, *Invented Religions*, p. 1-2; Davidsen, M.A. 2013. “Fiction-based religion: Conceptualising a New Category Against History-Based Religion and Fandom”, in: *Culture and Religion* 14 (4), 378-395, p. 378-380; A. Possamai. 2005. *Religion and Popular Culture: A Hyper-Real Testament*. Brussels: P.I.E. Peter Lang, p. 71-72, 79.

⁴ Possamai, *Religion and Popular Culture*, p. 79.

⁵ Cusack, *Invented Religions*, p. 1.

⁶ Davidsen, “From *Star Wars* to Jediism”, p. 377; M.A. Davidsen. 2014. *The Spiritual Tolkien Milieu: A Study of Fiction-Based Religion*. Leiden, p. 74.

Davidson points out, this is problematic because parody religions indeed announce their invented status but fiction-based religions claim for themselves to be real religions.⁷

There are various examples of fiction-based religions and one that is well-known is Jediism, a religion based on the fictional Force religion in *Star Wars*. The ideas and beliefs of Jediism are inspired by the Force as the supernatural power. Therefore, the religious practices performed by the adherents of Jediism are cornered around the interaction with the Force. This can be done through prayers, meditation or other performed rituals. The Jediists have no real place to perform these rituals or to worship the Force and therefore the internet is used to communicate to other members of this religion. Thus it is not an institutionalized organisation, it is rather a network of individuals and groups with communities online although some meet face to face.⁸ Another example of fiction-based religions is the Tolkien Spirituality. J.R.R. Tolkien was a philologist, professor of English Language and above all, a famous writer, well-known from the books *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings*. The literary mythology described by Tolkien in these books became a source of spiritual inspiration for some of its readers and so a religious movement emerged. Some of the adherents of the Tolkien religion believe that Middle-earth is a place that actually exists and the members communicate through rituals with the gods of Tolkien's fictional world.⁹

But how could it be that these two works of fiction gave rise to a religion, while this did not happen with other fictional narratives as for example *The Wheel of Time* by Robert Jordan or *Harry Potter* by J.K. Rowling? There seem to be some fictional texts that can give rise to a religion and thus *afford religious use* while other fictional texts do not. But what is it that makes supernatural fiction to afford religious use? Precisely this question is discussed by Davidson in his article "The Religious Affordance of Fiction: A Semiotic Approach". In this article, he explains that there are certain textual features that make it possible for supernatural fictional texts to afford religious use. These textual features are rhetorical strategies that are mostly employed in religious narratives, but they can be imitated by fictional texts as well.¹⁰

1.2. The Definition of Religion

Before we go on, it is important for this research to explain the terms *religion* and *religious affordance*. Within the field of the Study of Religion, the definition of religion has always been an important and immense challenge. Many scholars came up with functional as well as substantive definitions of religion; all try to give attention to the practical, theological, individual and/or collective dimension of religion as much as possible. All the known definitions of religion will not be discussed here, but it is important to give a workable definition of religion that is usable for this research. First of all, the definition of religion should be substantive (explaining what religion is) as well as functional (explaining what religion does). In my opinion, the substantive part of the definition of religion is that religion is the belief in supernatural agents. The functional part is that

⁷ M.A. Davidson. Forthcoming. "The Religious Affordance of Fiction: A Semiotic Approach", in in: *Religion* 46 (4), paragraph 1. Introduction.

⁸ Davidson, "From *Star Wars* to Jediism", p. 377.

⁹ Davidson, *The Spiritual Tolkien Milieu*, p. 18-20.

¹⁰ Davidson, "The Religious Affordance of Fiction", paragraph 1. Introduction.

believers need to have a meaningful relationship with these supernatural agents or beings through religious practices.

In short, the definition of religion that will be used in this thesis is: 'religion is the belief in supernatural agents and the need for a meaningful relationship with these supernatural agents through religious practices'. With these religious practices the ways in which believers communicate with the supernatural agents through prayers, rituals, acts or symbols can be understood. Especially the functional essence of religion can be used to test if a phenomenon has a religious content or not. As Davidsen has pointed out in his article, fans of *Star Wars* or *Lord of the Rings* do not communicate through rituals or prayers to the (fictional) supernatural beings in these narratives, while the Jediists or adherents of the Tolkien religion do.¹¹

1.3. What is Religious Affordance?

Star Wars, as well as *Lord of the Rings*, are fictional texts. Yet, these fictional narratives are used for a religious purpose; some of the readers choose to make these narratives authoritative for their own religious life. These texts thus afford religious use. The idea of *religious affordance* used by Davidsen derives from the concept of affordances from ecological psychologist James Gibson. To give a short explanation; objects or artefacts have affordances that are functions intentionally designed. But they can also afford use that was not intended. A plate for example affords to be eaten from, which is its intended use but it can also afford to be thrown at somebody when you are angry, which is obviously possible, but it is not its intended use. Davidsen argues that this is the same for (fictional) texts; the intended use of fiction is to read it as fiction and play with it as fiction, as fans do when they dress up as characters. This is the *fictional affordance*. But some fictional narratives have another, unintended, affordance as well: *religious affordance*. Here, the texts afford a religious reading instead of a fictional reading, and communication with the supernatural beings instead of playing with it as fiction. These texts thus afford religious use.¹²

Davidsen argues that a fictional text needs certain textual features, or veracity mechanisms as he calls them, to afford religious use. If this theory is correct, then we should be able to predict if certain fictional texts could eventually give rise to a fiction-based religion or if this is not possible at all. Take for example the series of novels *A Song of Ice and Fire* written by George R.R. Martin, which are very well-known because of the immense popular television series *Game of Thrones*, which is based on these novels. These books are highly praised and not only because the fantasy novels seem so close to reality. Of course, according to many reviews, the main attraction of the novels is the way in which readers recognise and identify themselves, their own conflicts, egos and interests, as well as the conflicts of this world in the characters and fictional world portrayed by George Martin.¹³ But the books are also recommended because of the detailed and diverse description of religion, magic, and how these supernatural powers are such a realistic part of the fictional world. Because of this

¹¹ Davidsen, "The Religious Affordance of Fiction", paragraph 2.1. How Religious Traditions Work.

¹² Ibid, paragraph 1. Introduction.

¹³ Article on the reality of *A Song of Ice and Fire* by D.G. Walter, 2010.

marvellous epic fantasy work, with all grey characters, a Manichaeian struggle between good and evil, and a fictional historical world, many proclaim Martin as the American Tolkien.¹⁴

Martin is being compared to Tolkien, and in his works religions play a huge role; the author invented a fictional world with fictional religions which are considered to be very realistic. However, unlike the books of Tolkien, the fantasy novels of Martin did not give rise to a fiction-based religion. The adherents of Jediism, as well as those of the Tolkien Spirituality are mostly found online and keep in touch with each other through forums and discussion blogs. Therefore, if there would already be any sort of fiction-based religion on the novels *A Song of Ice and Fire* and/or the television series *Game of Thrones*, the internet would be the best place to find it. There are many blogs and discussions on forums and websites on these novels and television series, such as the fans sites Westeros.org, watchersonthewall.com and towerofthehand.com. Although many theories on particular magical occurrences can be found, there was nothing to be found that pointed towards a fiction-based religion. Therefore, one could say that at this moment there is no fiction-based religion on the fantasy novels *A Song of Ice and Fire* and/or the television series *Game of Thrones*. But one should also take into account that the series are not yet complete. Only five of the seven books are written (book six will probably be published in 2016) and *Game of Thrones* season six is now broadcasted. In this season, many religious and magical events occur. Also, the show runners of this series have said that there will be two more seasons after season six (although with less episodes).¹⁵ These coming additions could influence the reception of *A Song of Ice and Fire* and *Game of Thrones* and it is possible that later on fiction-based religion on this series can be found. But on this very moment, no such thing exists.

1.4. The Religious Affordance of *A Song of Ice and Fire*

This can give rise to a number of questions. There is no fiction-based religion found on *A Song of Ice and Fire*. Why not? Which textual features does this narrative lack to afford religious use? And does this confirm the veracity mechanisms theory of Davidsen? Is there a possibility that *A Song of Ice and Fire* will give rise to a religion in the future? To analyze the material and to answer the research questions, I will use different theoretical tools of *narratology*. Especially Davidsen's narratological theory of veracity mechanisms will be used and therefore his article *The Religious Affordance of Fiction: A Semiotic Approach* will be consulted frequently, but other narratological tools will be used as well.

This thesis will be built up as followed; in the second chapter the material will be introduced. This contains information about the author, the books, the television series, the narrative itself, and the fandom of this narrative. Chapter three will discuss the method that is used to answer the research question. In this chapter the differences between fictional and religious narratives will be discussed, as well as the distinctive features of religious narratives, with the help of narratological tools. It will also be explained which textual features are necessary for fictional texts to afford religious use in general. In chapter four the analysis of the material will start; here the concept of

¹⁴ Articles on *A Song of Ice and Fire* by A. Flood 2015, L. Grossman 2005, L. Miller 2011, and an interview with George R.R. Martin by T. Robinson, 2002.

¹⁵ Articles on *Game of Thrones* by D. Birnbaum 2016, and M. Walsh, 2016.

narrative religion will be explained and also the different invented religions that are present in the novels will be presented. In chapter four it will be analyzed which textual features of the veracity mechanisms theory of Davidsen the text of *A Song of Ice and Fire* contains, and which it lacks to afford religious use. The last chapter will be used to systematize and reflect on these findings and this will also answer the question why the books of George R.R. Martin did not give rise to a fiction-based religion and whether this narrative has potential to afford religious use. This thesis will close with a discussion on whether the outcome of this research has any particular relevance or consequences for the field of the study of religion.

Chapter 2: *A Song of Ice and Fire* by George R.R. Martin

The deep red eyes carved into the pale trunk still watched him, yet somehow he took comfort from that now. The gods were looking over him, he told himself; the old gods, gods of the Starks and the First Men and the children of the Forest, his father's gods.

- Thoughts of Bran Stark in: George Martin, *A Game of Thrones*, p. 573.

2.1. The Biography and Reception of George R.R. Martin

A Song of Ice and Fire is written by the American author, screenwriter, and television producer George Raymond Richard Martin. Martin was born on September 20 in 1948, in Bayonne, New Jersey. He is a famous novelist and short story writer, especially in the genres of science fiction, horror and fantasy. Martin studied Journalism at the Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois, and graduated for his bachelor summa cum laude in 1970. A year later he completed his master in Journalism, also at the Northwestern University. As a child, Martin already wrote short fantasy and science fiction stories and he continued doing this even during his study and also frequently attended fantasy and science fiction conventions. He became a Journalism instructor in 1976 at Clarke College in Dubuque, Iowa but he resigned two years later to become a fulltime writer.¹⁶

Martin received many awards for his novels and short stories in the science fiction, fantasy and horror genres. He won, for example, the Hugo Award, an award given for the best fantasy or science fiction work during a science fiction convention that is organized every year by the World Science Fiction Society. After one of his novels, *The Armageddon Rag* (1983), became a huge commercial failure as a book, a producer optioned the film rights of this novel. Although the film was never produced, Martin was asked to write for other series, as *The Twilight Zone* (1985) and later for *Beauty and the Beast* (1987-1990). But after this, Martin returned to long-form fiction again because his television pilots and screenplays did not sell as well as he hoped and Martin wanted to write things that people would actually read.¹⁷ This resulted into the epic fantasy novel *A Game of Thrones* (1996) which was intended to be the first book of a trilogy *A Song of Ice and Fire*, which eventually would develop into a series of seven volumes. Subsequent books in this series are *A Clash of Kings* (1999), *A Storm of Swords* (2000), *A Feast for Crows* (2005), and *A Dance with Dragons* (2011). The last two books of *A Song of Ice and Fire* have yet to be published and are called *The Winds of Winter* (which can be expected to come out in 2016) and *A Dream of Spring*.¹⁸ The *Song of Ice and Fire* series is immensely popular; many millions of books have been sold and the series has been translated in

¹⁶ R. Pallardy. 2015. *George R.R. Martin*. Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc. Available from: <https://www.britannica.com/biography/George-R-R-Martin>

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid.

45 different languages. The fourth and fifth book of this series both became No. 1 on *The New York Times* Bestseller List.¹⁹

A Song of Ice and Fire is categorized as belonging to the epic fantasy genre. In his childhood, Martin read books of many genres and it did not matter for him if it was science fiction, fantasy, horror or historical fiction. Because he read these kinds of books, he knew he would write in these genres as well.²⁰ One author that inspired Martin and was of particular importance to his writings in the fantasy genre was Tolkien, who, according to Martin, defined the genre of fantasy itself with his work *The Lord of the Rings*. Other authors whose books Martin loved to read and influenced his fantasy works are Howard Phillips Lovecraft, Tad Williams and Jack Vance.²¹ But besides the fantasy and science fiction, Martin also loves the historical fiction genre and he tries to combine these genres in *A Song of Ice and Fire*.²² In 2007 *A Song of Ice and Fire* was adapted by the television channel HBO and made into a television series that is called *Game of Thrones*. The first show of this fantasy drama series premiered in 2011 and at this moment season six is broadcasted. Martin works as executive producer for this series and contributed scripts for various episodes together with the showrunners D. B. Weiss and David Benioff. *Game of Thrones* is one of HBO's biggest hits and has attracted a record number of viewers, with an average of more than 14 million viewers per episode. Moreover, the television series is broadcasted in more than 150 countries and it is the world's most illegally downloaded show. Season three even became the fastest selling TV box set in the United Kingdom in a decade.²³

The TV series is widely praised by critics because of the extensive and complex story, the compelling characters, and the high quality of the production. Also the performance of the large cast has been admired on a wide scale. The series has won many awards as Primetime Emmy Awards (which is awarded to the most excellent TV program's broadcasted during primetime), Hugo Awards and a Peabody Award (an award giving for distinguished programs on television or radio). And from among the ensemble cast, Peter Dinklage has won a Golden Globe Award and two Emmy Awards for his performance as Tyrion Lannister.²⁴ However, some parts of the series, especially the sexual violence against women, the female nudity, and other violent scenes, have caused much criticism as well.²⁵ Despite the criticism, the show's rating goes up every season and it is still watched by millions of people.²⁶ Also the television series has contributed significantly to the popularity of the books and the sales of other collectible items.

Many reviewers compare George R.R. Martin with Shakespeare and Tolkien, but others go as far as saying and claiming that Martin is even better than Tolkien. The arguments that are used to support this claim are that he writes fantasy novels for grown-ups 'with a blunt and bawdy

¹⁹ Article on the popularity of *Game of Thrones* by D. Itzkoff, 2014.

²⁰ Interview with George R.R. Martin by E. Cogan, 2002.

²¹ Howard Phillips Lovecraft has written horror fiction, Tad Williams is a famous fantasy and science fiction author, and Jack Vance is an American mystery, science fiction, and fantasy writer.

²² Interviews with George R.R. Martin by E. Cogan, 2002, and W. MacLaurin, 2000.

²³ Articles on *Game of Thrones* by S. Hughes, 2014, and D. Itzkoff, 2014.

²⁴ Ida R. Adi. 2012. "Popularizing Epic Narrative in George R.R. Martin's *A Game of Thrones*." In: *Humaniora*, 24 (3), 303-314, p. 304; Article on *Game of Thrones* by M. McNamara, 2011.

²⁵ Articles on the violence in *Game of Thrones* by M. Davies, 2013, D. Itzkoff, 2014, S. Kornhaber, C. Orr and A. Sullivan, 2015, C.J. Anders, 2012, and M. Leon, 2015.

²⁶ Article on *Game of Thrones* by M. Leon, 2015.

earthiness²⁷, intriguing conflicting religions, realistic and grey characters, and explaining skillfully the complexity of the world and its various levels of society.²⁸ In interviews, George Martin frequently states that he is a huge fan of Tolkien and that he admires him. Martin believes that Tolkien's work defines the modern fantasy genre. He also says that there have been many other writers in the historical fiction genre who attempted to follow in Tolkien's footsteps, some with success, which led to more "Tolkien imitators" as Martin would call them. But Martin disliked most of these writers because, according to him, they adapted the worst things of Tolkien, namely the quasi-medieval setting with knights and princesses that Martin explains as the "Disneyland Middle Ages". But this does not grasp what the Middle Ages were actually like, states Martin. He wants to combine fantasy and magic with the realism of historical fiction.²⁹

According to Martin, this view of combining fantasy, magic and realism can be found throughout the *A Song of Ice and Fire* novels. One example of fantasy, explains Martin, is the world he created, that can be seen as a secondary world. It is not another planet, it is earth but not our earth. This is an important fantasy aspect of the story according to him. But the books are also realistic, states Martin, as can be seen in the grey characters but also because of the (by Martin invented) religions that play a huge role in the novels. Martin describes himself as a lapsed Catholic and says that one could consider him an agnost or atheist. He explains that he would like to believe there is more to life and that this world is not the end, but that he is too rational to be really convinced of this idea. However, he is very interested in religion and spirituality and therefore Martin wanted religion to be an important aspect in his books.³⁰

2.2. The Story of *A Song of Ice and Fire*

The fictional world of *A Song of Ice and Fire* is called the Known World and is divided in four continents: Westeros, Essos, and the lesser important Sothoryos and Ulthos (see figure 1). This fictional world has a medieval setting and especially the continent Westeros can be compared to Europe in the Middle Ages. However, this fictional world of Martin has some interesting features that are special for the Known World. One of them is for example the duration of seasons; springs and autumns can be extremely long and summers and winters can last a couple of years or even a decade. The most important continent of the Known World in the narrative is that of Westeros. This continent is divided in two parts: the realm that is called the Seven Kingdoms and a piece of land to the very north of this continent, separated from the Seven Kingdoms by a huge wall of ice, that is that is called the Lands of Always Winter.

2.2.1. The History of Westeros

Martin did not only invent a fictional world with strange continents, long seasons, different languages and religions, he also created a history for this world, especially for the continent

²⁷ Book review on *A Dance With Dragons* by J. Vandermeer, 2011.

²⁸ Article on *A Song of Ice and Fire* by D. Jennings, 2011 and a book review on *A Dance with Dragons* by J. Vandermeer, 2011.

²⁹ An interview with George R.R. Martin by J. Poniewozik, 2011.

³⁰ Interviews with George R.R. Martin by M. Gilmore 2014, and J. Hibberd, 2011.

Westeros. This history begins with the prehistory when Westeros was inhabited by non-human races as Giants and the Children of the Forest, a mysterious race that did not become taller than human children, preferred to live in the forest and possessed magical powers. Later, the first human race, the First Men, arrived in Westeros, coming from Essos. The First Men started a war with the Children of the Forest but after some years they called a truce and lived peacefully together in Westeros for some thousand years. The First Men even adopted the religion of the Children of the Forest and started to worship the Old Gods.³¹

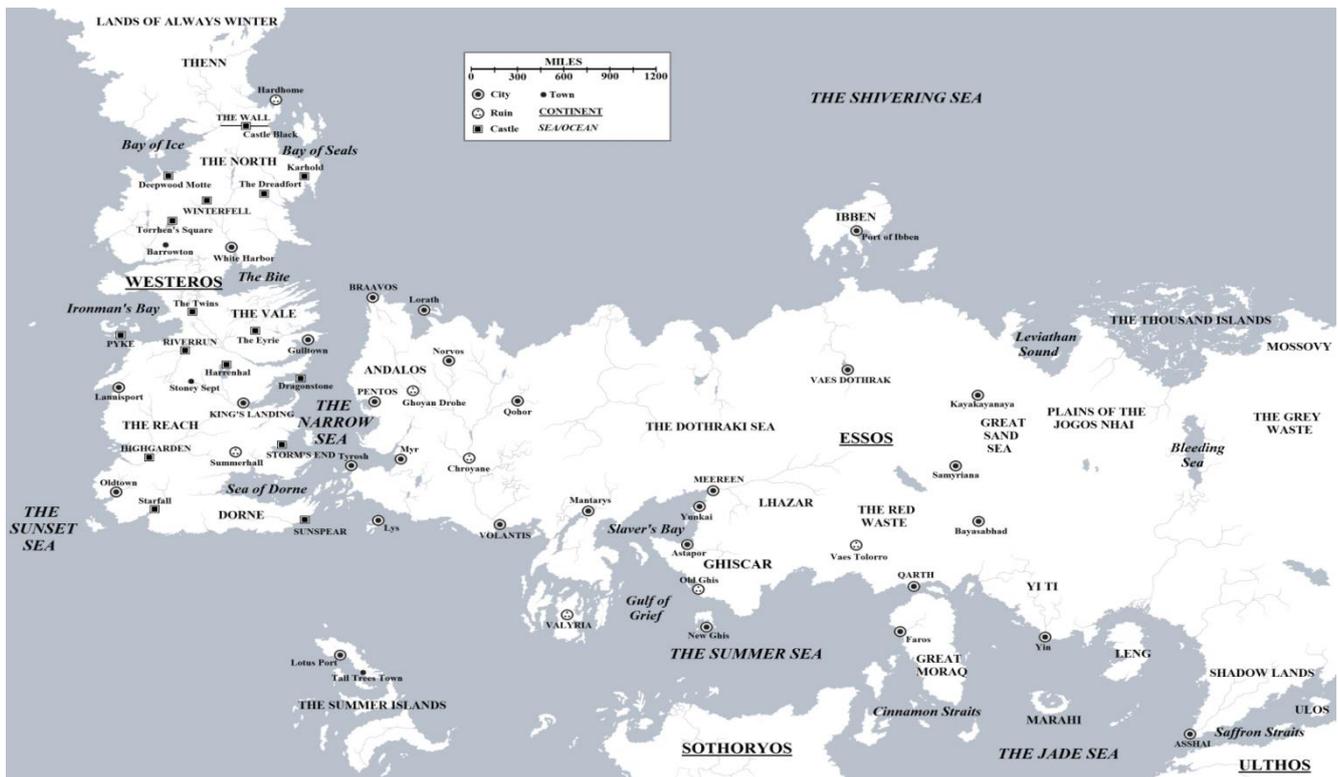


Figure 1: Map of the Known World³²

A few thousand years after the First Men invaded Westeros, another human race arrived, namely the Andals. Also coming from Essos, the Andals made landfall on the east coast of Westeros and conquered all the lands in the south of this continent and slaughtered all the Children of the Forest who were still living in the south. The First Men remained the most important population in the North with the Old Gods as their religion. Together with the Andals, the religion of the Faith of the Seven came to Westeros. Because the Andals now inhabited the South, the Faith of the Seven became the ruling religion in this area. During the centuries that followed the invasion of the Andals, hundreds of little kingdoms were present in Westeros. These eventually turned into seven large kingdoms that were all independently ruled by a powerful royal family.³³

³¹ George R.R. Martin. 1996. *A Game of Thrones. A Song of Ice and Fire*, volume 1. New York: Bantam Books. Edition used: Martin, George R.R. 2011. *A Game of Thrones. A Song of Ice and Fire*, volume 1. New York: Bantam Books, p. 517, 738.

³² Map of the Known World: http://iceandfire.wikia.com/wiki/File:Ice_and_Fire_World_Map.png

³³ Martin, *A Game of Thrones*, p. 739.

However, some three hundred years before the narrative of *A Song of Ice and Fire* begins, the seven kingdoms were conquered by House Targaryen, a family who came from the continent Essos. Ever since this conquest, the Seven Kingdoms of Westeros became one kingdom. This kingdom is divided between many hundreds of noble families or “houses” (as they are called in the books). The King of the Seven Kingdoms has the ultimate power in Westeros and this power descends through the nine Great Houses. Most of the nine Great Houses are descendants of the seven royal families who had ruled the Seven Kingdoms before the conquest. Only one region of the Seven Kingdoms was split up and is now reigned by two families instead of one. The Targaryen family also became one of the nine Great Houses because of the conquest of Westeros. These nine Great Houses rule over different regions of the continent and have the authority and power over their vassal houses.

At the moment when the narrative of the novels starts, Robert Baratheon is the King of the Seven Kingdoms and House Baratheon rules the Stormlands and the castle Storm’s End in the southeast of Westeros and the sigil of this house is a stag. On figure 2 one can see where to locate these Houses with help of their sigils. Lord Eddard Stark of House Stark, who lives in Winterfell, rules over the north of Westeros and is therefore called Warden of the North. Their sigil is a direwolf, a large and strong species of wolf. House Stark is one of the few Great Houses that descend from the First Men and still worship the Old Gods.³⁴ All the other Great Houses, with the exception of House Greyjoy who worship the Drowned God, have the Faith of the Seven as their religion. The third Great House of Westeros is House Arryn that rules over the Vale in the central east of Westeros. Their stronghold is the castle the Eyrie, their sigil a falcon and the Lord of House Arryn is the Warden of the East. Another important Great House is House Lannister, which is one of the most powerful and richest houses in the Seven Kingdoms and has a lion as sigil. Tywin Lannister of House Lannister is Lord of Casterly Rock and rules over the west of the Seven Kingdoms and is also Warden of the West. His daughter, Cersei Lannister is married to King Robert Baratheon and therefore the Queen of the Seven Kingdoms.

House Tully, with a fish as sigil, is the fifth Great House, resides in Riverrun and rules over the Riverlands,

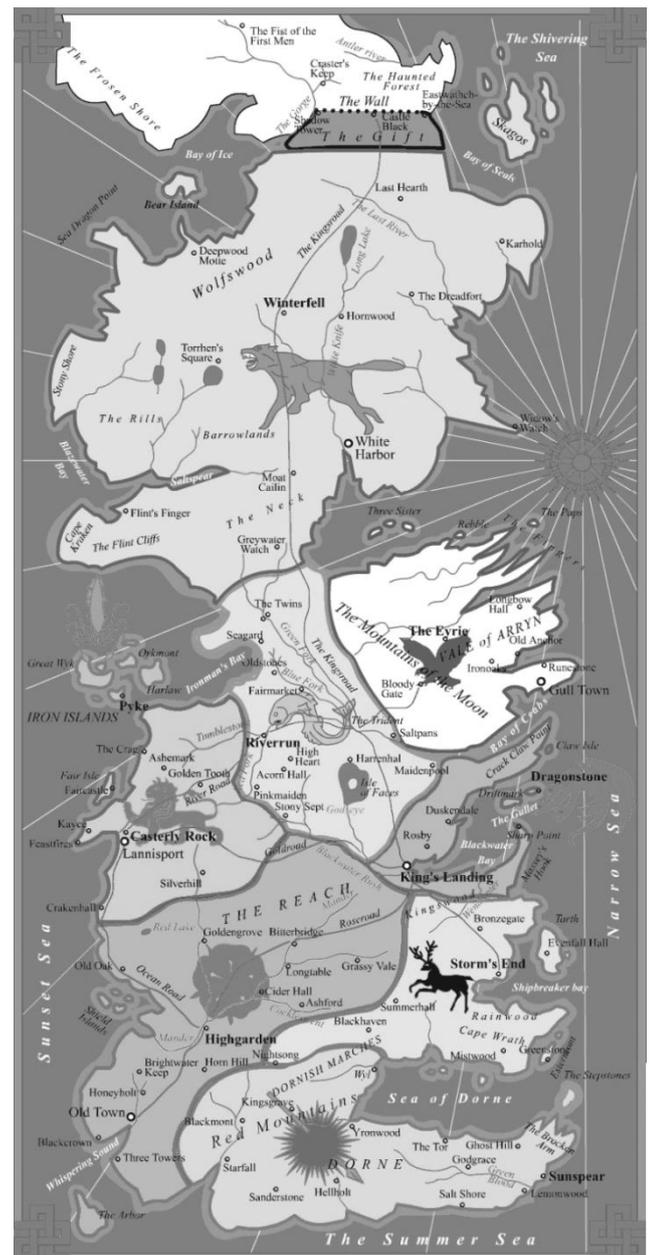


Figure 2: The Map of Westeros³⁵

³⁴ Martin, *A Game of Thrones*, p. 570.

³⁵ The Map of Westeros: <http://imgur.com/gallery/XhQ1lpu>

the central lands of Westeros. The daughter of Lord Tully, Catelyn Tully, is married to Eddard Stark. The sixth Great House of Westeros is House Greyjoy who rule over the Iron Islands off the west coast of Westeros and Lord Balon Greyjoy resides in the castle of Pyke. House Greyjoy is mix of descendants from the First Men and the Andals and have their own religion; the Drowned God. Their sigil is a kraken. More to the south of Westeros, House Tyrell rules over the Reach, a fertile and vast land in the southwest of Westeros. Lord Mace Tyrell is seated in Highgarden and is Warden of the South and this house has a rose as sigil. In the far south of Westeros, in the peninsula of Dorne, rules House Martell from their castle Sunspear and their sigil a sun, pierced by spear. The last Great House of Westeros is House Targaryen whose original residence was Dragonstone, an island on the east coast of Westeros. When this house conquered the Seven Kingdoms three hundred years ago, the Targaryen family became the royal House of the Seven Kingdoms and made King's Landing the capital of the kingdom. They conquered Westeros with help of their three dragons and therefore, the sigil of House Targaryen is a three-headed dragon. House Targaryen was replaced by House Baratheon during Robert Baratheon's Rebellion, or the War of the Usurper, some seventeen years before the start of the story in *A Song of Ice and Fire*. After this war, only three members of House Targaryen survived, who all fled to the continent Essos.

2.2.2. A Summary of A Song of Ice and Fire

The actual story of these novels consists of three main narratives that take place on the continents Westeros and Essos. The main narratives start at the end of the Long Summer that lasted more than ten years, seventeen years after Robert Baratheon rebelled against the 'Mad King' Aerys Targaryen and became king in his place. The first main narrative takes place in the north of the continent Westeros where the Wall, an immense wall of ice, defends the Seven Kingdoms, the realm of Westeros. North of this Wall rises the threat of a long and cold winter together with the Others, a race of ice demons, that is marching south. The second narrative is about the civil war that breaks out in the Seven Kingdom between several competing Great Houses for the control of Westeros and the Iron Throne after King Robert Baratheon dies. The third narrative is about Daenerys Targaryen, who is the daughter of the deposed king Aerys Targaryen of the Seven Kingdoms (dethroned by Robert Baratheon) and therefore the rightful heir. However, she is an exile on the continent Essos and seeks to return to Westeros to claim the Iron throne. In the books these three main narratives become intertwined and increasingly dependent on each other. The story is told by Martin from a third-person perspective and the chapters are presented through different "point of view" characters. Each chapter tells the story through the character it is presenting. Therefore, the reader experiences the thoughts, the memories, the happenings, and what this particular character hears and sees, per chapter. Accounts and characters that occur outside this person's sight are not experienced by the reader. Because Martin uses many different 'point of view' characters, from nine in the first book up to thirty-one in the fifth book, the reader obtains a multi-faceted view of the story.

The first book *A Game of Thrones* starts with King Robert Baratheon who rides north to visit Lord Eddard Stark and his family. Eddard Stark is a close friend of Robert Baratheon and together they have led the rebellion against the Targaryen dynasty, which ruled the Seven Kingdoms for three

hundred years. King Robert usurped the Iron throne and now, after the suspicious death of his former Hand of the King, the king's closest advisor and authorized to make decisions in the king's name, he comes to Eddard to name him Hand of the King. Eddard accepts the King's request and turns south to King's Landing, the capital of the Seven Kingdoms, to reign together with King Robert and to investigate the murder of the former Hand of the King. During this first main narrative, the readers get familiar with the Stark family, Eddard, his wife and his six children. But these are not the only major characters. Together with King Robert, the members of House Lannister come, which include the Queen Cersei, Robert's wife, and her two brothers Jaime and Tyrion Lannister, all part of the most powerful and richest House of the Seven Kingdoms (in table 1 an overview of the nine Great Houses and their important characters can be found). From the beginning there is a tension between the Stark and the Lannister families and this tension grows throughout the first book. At the end of *A Game of Thrones* King Robert dies and his son Joffrey Baratheon succeeds him. However, Eddard Stark finds out that Joffrey is not the rightful heir because he is born out of incest between Queen Cersei and her twin brother Jaime. Because of this, Eddard tries to take the Iron Throne from Joffrey and Stark is accused of treason and later executed.³⁶

In the second book *A Clash of Kings* the Seven Kingdoms are falling apart during the reign of King Joffrey, whose claim is supported by House Lannister. In the North, Robb Stark, son of Eddard Stark, raises an army to take revenge for his executed father and eventually calls himself King of the North and has the support of the Northern houses. Stannis Baratheon, brother of Robert Baratheon, names himself King of the Seven Kingdoms because of the claim that Joffrey is a child of incest (although this is not acknowledged by many) and is the rightful heir to the Iron throne. However, Renly Baratheon, the youngest brother of Robert and Stannis, names himself King of the Seven Kingdoms too because he thinks that he is a better king than Stannis and he receives the support of House Tyrell by marrying the daughter of Lord Tyrell. On the Iron Islands, Balon Greyjoy of House Greyjoy uses the chaos to crown himself King of the Iron Island and now Westeros counts five kings in total. The first king to leave the game of thrones is Renly Baratheon who is killed by a magical shadow of Stannis Baratheon. This piece of magic is performed by the Red Priestess of the Lord of Light Melisandre, who is also a shadowbinder and can give birth to shadows that will do what their master asks of them. Melisandre supports Stannis' claim and grows to be his most important consultant. After Renly is killed, Stannis makes for King's Landing to conquer the Iron Throne but is defeated by forces of House Lannister and House Tyrell (who after the death of Renly decided to support King Joffrey). Robb Stark still remains King of the North and is leading his armies south to the Riverlands where he is very successful and defeats all the armies of House Lannister that stand in his way.³⁷

In the third book *A Storm of Swords* the chaos in the Seven Kingdoms continues. Robb Stark has to return to the North with his armies, because his lands are under attack by men of the Iron Islands. But on his way home, Robb is betrayed by House Frey, an important vassal house of House Tully, because Robb promised to marry one of the daughters of Lord Frey but instead falls in love

³⁶ Martin, *A Game of Thrones*.

³⁷ Martin, George R.R. 1999. *A Clash of Kings. A Song of Ice and Fire*, volume 2. New York: Bantam Books. Edition used: Martin, George R.R. 2011. *A Clash of Kings. A Song of Ice and Fire*, volume 2. New York: Bantam Books.

with another girl whom he marries. House Frey therefore makes a secret allegiance with House Lannister and kills Robb during a wedding. King Joffrey is engaged to Margaery Tyrell, daughter of Lord Tyrell of Highgarden and one of the saviors of King's Landing during the attack by Stannis Baratheon. However, King Joffrey is poisoned at his own wedding and Tyrion Lannister, the youngest brother of Queen Cersei Lannister, is accused of this crime. Tyrion is imprisoned and eventually sentenced to death, but his brother Jamie frees him from his cell. Before Tyrion escapes King's Landing and leaves for Essos, he kills his father Tywin Lannister, who was the Hand of the King during Joffrey's reign. Meanwhile the second main narrative in the North of Westeros becomes more important. The Night's Watch, a military order who holds and guards the Wall, also protects the realm from the ice demons that are called "the Others" and the Wildlings, a human race that lives north of the Wall and call themselves the "Free People". The Others are rising in the north and with them an army of dead men rises as well. The Wildlings are fleeing for this army of ice demons and are attacking the Wall to find a passage to the Seven Kingdoms. The Night's Watch is not strong enough to fight all those Wildlings but Stannis' armies (or what is left of it after the failed attempt to conquer King's Landing) have sailed north and have come to help the Night's Watch; Stannis then saves them from the Wildling attacks and stays with the Night's Watch to plan his further steps.³⁸

The fourth book is called *A Feast for Crows* and this book focuses only on the narrative in Westeros, south of the Wall. It begins with the crowning of Tommen Baratheon, brother of Joffrey and also a result of incest of Queen Cersei and her twin brother Jamie, as King of the Seven Kingdoms. But because King Tommen is only just a child, his mother Cersei Lannister rules the kingdom instead as Queen Regent. Cersei, however, is overwhelmed by paranoia because she believes a disastrous prophecy in which all her children will die and she will no longer be queen, appears to be coming true, starting with the death of her son Joffrey. At the same time, the civil war in the Seven Kingdoms continues and fearsome tales of Daenerys Targaryen, who conquers city by city in Essos, reach Cersei as well. To strengthen her position, Cersei replaces all persons around her by men who are loyal to her. Due to a combination of fear, grief, and a lust for power, Cersei attempts to plot the downfall of Margaery Tyrell, who is now Tommen's wife and has become Queen of the Seven Kingdoms in Cersei's place. However, this attempt results into the imprisonment of Cersei herself by the High Septon, the head of the religion the Faith of the Seven, and the Faith Militant, the military order of the Faith of the Seven. This order was disbanded centuries ago but Cersei accepts the request of the High Septon to bring the Faith Militant back to life again. However, the High Septon and the Faith Militant turn against Cersei and imprison her because she is accused of incest and plotting the death of Robert Baratheon and the former High Septon.³⁹

The fifth book *A Dance with Dragons* starts with the characters of the main narratives in the North of Westeros and of Essos, who were not mentioned in *A Feast for Crows*. Therefore, this book does not begin immediately after the events of the previous book but rather at the same time. In the

³⁸ Martin, George R.R. 2000. *A Storm of Swords. A Song of Ice and Fire*, volume 3. New York: Bantam Books. Edition used: Martin, George R.R. 2011. *A Storm of Swords. A Song of Ice and Fire*, volume 3. New York: Bantam Books.

³⁹ Martin, George R.R. 2005. *A Feast for Crows. A Song of Ice and Fire*, volume 4. New York: Bantam Books. Edition used: Martin, George R.R. 2011. *A Feast for Crows. A Song of Ice and Fire*, volume 4. New York: Bantam Books.

North of Westeros, Stannis plans to retake the North but first he has to reinforce his armies. When he marches for Winterfell, the most important castle and stronghold of the North and the former home of House Stark, Stannis is forced to stop three days before he reaches the castle due to a winter storm. At the Night's Watch, Jon Snow, a bastard son of Eddard Stark, has become the Lord Commander and as the threat of the Others is coming closer to the Wall, he is facing some tough decisions. When Jon Snow decides to help the Wildlings, which is the natural enemy of the Night's Watch, and grants them passage to the south of the Wall to save them from the Others, Jon Snow is killed by his own men.

At the same time, during the two main narratives in Westeros, the third narrative takes place at the continent Essos. Here, Daenerys Targaryen is trying to find her way back to Westeros to conquer the Seven Kingdoms. She has three dragons in her possession and with the help of her dragons, Daenerys purchases an army and begins to conquer the cities Astapor, Yunkai and Meereen in the Slaver's Bay, in the central south of Essos and tries to abolish slavery as well. After she has conquered these cities, she settles in Meereen to act as a queen but is finding her people hostile towards her new policies; the city was rich because of its slave trade, which has been prohibited by Daenerys. Tyrion Lannister is trying to make his way to Daenerys to offer her his help to conquer the Seven Kingdoms. Tyrion starts this journey travelling with a group that consists of one of the old Hands of the last Targaryen king as well as another passenger who is presumed dead. This other passenger is Aegon Targaryen, grandson of the last Targaryen king, nephew of Daenerys Targaryen and the actual rightful heir of the Seven Kingdoms. Tyrion is eventually taken by a slave master who, along with a great force of Yunkai, wants to overthrow Daenerys and make a slave city of Meereen again. In order to bring peace to Meereen and stop the siege from Yunkai, Daenerys marries an important master and noble of Meereen but this marriage is not for long, as at the end of the fifth book, Daenerys goes missing.⁴⁰

Of course, with two books that have yet to be written and published, much more will happen to develop this story. Besides that, this is only a very short and concise summary; there are many more important characters and storylines that could not be discussed here. Also, there is much history to be found in the books and many descriptions of customs, the races of men and the religions. All this material is far too extensive to discuss here, however the religions mentioned in the books are, of course, important for this research. Therefore the religions of *A Song of Ice and Fire* will be discussed in detail further on in this thesis when the concept of *narrative religion* will be explained.

Table 1: The Nine Great Houses of Westeros and Their Important Characters:

House	Important Characters	Religion
Baratheon: Royal House	Robert Baratheon: King of the Seven Kingdoms & Cersei Baratheon – Lannister: Queen of the Seven Kingdoms and daughter of Lord Tywin Lannister	The Faith of the Seven

⁴⁰ Martin, George R.R. 2011. *A Dance with Dragons. A Song of Ice and Fire*, volume 5. New York: Bantam Books. Edition used: Martin, George R.R. 2012. *A Dance with Dragons. A Song of Ice and Fire*, volume 5. New York: Bantam Books.

Lord of the Stormlands and Storm's End.	Their children: Joffrey, Myrcella and Tommen Baratheon Renly Baratheon: Youngest brother of Robert Baratheon Stannis Baratheon: Brother of Robert Baratheon	R'hllor, The Lord of Light Old Gods of the Forest
Stark: Warden of the North and Lord of Winterfell.	Eddard Stark: Lord of Winterfell and Warden of the North & Catelyn Stark-Tully: Wife of Eddard Stark and daughter of Hoster Tully Their children: Robb, Sansa, Arya, Brandon and Rickon Stark Jon Snow: Bastard son of Eddard Stark and brother of the Night's Watch	
Lannister: Warden of the West and Lord of Casterly Rock	Tywin Lannister: Lord of Casterly Rock and Warden of the West His children: Cersei and her twin brother Jaime, Tyrion Lannister:	The Faith of the Seven
Greyjoy: Lord of the Iron Islands and Pyke	Balon Greyjoy: Lord of the Iron Islands and later King of the Iron Islands Aeron Greyjoy: Brother of Balon Greyjoy and Priest of the Drowned God	The Drowned God
Tully: Warden of the East and Lord of the Riverlands and Riverrun	Hoster Tully: Lord of the Riverlands and Warden of the East His children: Catelyn, Lysa and Edmure Tully	The Faith of the Seven
Arryn: Lord of the Vale and the Eyrie	Jon Arryn: Lord of the Vale Lysa Arryn-Tully: Wife of Jon Arryn and daughter of Hoster Tully Their child: Robin Arryn	The Faith of the Seven
Tyrell: Warden of the South and Lord of the Reach and Highgarden	Mace Tyrell: Lord of the Reach and Warden of the South His daughter: Margaery Tyrell	The Faith of the Seven
Martell: Lord of Dorne and Sunspear	Doran Martell: Lord of Dorne and Sunspear	The Faith of the Seven
Targaryen: Former royal House	Viserys Targaryen: Son of the deposed king Aerys Targaryen Daenerys Targaryen: Daughter of the deposed king Aerys Targaryen Aegon Targaryen: Son of Prince Rhaegar, the oldest son of king Aerys Targaryen	The Faith of the Seven

2.3. Fandom of *A Song of Ice and Fire*

The popularity of *A Song of Ice and Fire* and the television series *Game of Thrones* is immense. As a result, an international community of fans of the books and TV series has emerged; the *A Song of Ice and Fire* fandom. This term is used to describe the communities 'consisting of dedicated followers of any cultural phenomenon, such as a television series or serial or a particular film genre or film star'.⁴¹ These type of communities meet in real life at, for example, fiction conventions, but they can mainly be found online on various fan sites.⁴² One of the main fan websites of *A Song of Ice and Fire* is Westeros.org which was established by a fan in 1999 and has more than seventeen thousands members registered. This website offers the largest discussion forum on *A Song of Ice and Fire* and *Game of Thrones*, gives news and information about the series, is home to an online text-based role-playing game and has its own wiki website on the series that is edited by members of the forum.⁴³

Other fan sites are Watchersonthewall.com who wanted to create a community where the fans of the books and TV series could come together and provides discussion forums, news reports and reviews.⁴⁴ Towerofthehand.com also offers discussion forums and detailed information about the history of the story as well as summaries of the book. Another fan site, Winteriscoming.net, states to be a source of news, speculation, rumors and discussion on the TV series *Game of Thrones*.⁴⁵ Other discussions forums or blogs can be found on Fleabottom.net, and on more general websites as Tumblr and Reddit. There are also fan sites that provide podcasts that cover the series, as for example Gameofowns.com and Podcastoficeandfire.com. These podcasts offer discussions on chapters of the books, episodes of the television series and the latest fandom theories on the story.⁴⁶ Besides these fan websites, there is also an unofficial fan club that operates globally and is called the Brotherhood Without Banners. It was formed in 2001 and George R.R. Martin regards the founders and longtime members as good friends.⁴⁷ Martin also has his own official website, Geogerrmartin.com, which offers a lovely blog as well.

⁴¹ D. Chandler and R. Munday. 2011. *A Dictionary of Media and Communication*. Oxford University Press. Available from: <http://www.oxfordreference.com.ezproxy.leidenuniv.nl:2048/view/10.1093/acref/9780199568758.001.0001/acref-9780199568758>

⁴² Interview with George R.R. Martin by T. La Gorce, 2006.

⁴³ Westeros.org, 'About'.

⁴⁴ Watchersonthewall.com, 'About Us'.

⁴⁵ Towerofthehand.com, 'About the Site'; Winteriscoming.net, 'About Us'.

⁴⁶ Gameofowns.com, 'About' .; Podcastoficeandfire.com, 'About'.

⁴⁷ Article on *A Song of Ice and Fire* by L. Miller, 2011.

Chapter 3: A Narratological Method

God is one, Septon Osmynd had taught her when she was a girl, with seven aspects, as the sept is a single building, with seven walls. The wealthy septs of the cities had statues of the Seven and an altar to each.

- Thoughts of Catelyn Stark in: George R.R. Martin, *A Clash of Kings*, p. 495.

Fiction-based religions are religions that use fictional narratives as their main authoritative, religious texts. Of course, such a fictional narrative needs certain features to afford religious use. *A Song of Ice and Fire* is a fictional narrative that seems to have, on the surface level, much potential to give rise to a religion, but this has not happened. To understand why *A Song of Ice and Fire* does not afford religious use, this fictional narrative has to be analyzed and this will be done with the help of narratological tools. Narratology is a discipline of humanities and can be described as a theory and systematic study of narrative texts and structures, and their typical characteristics and principles. This method is based on the assumption that there are certain features that are universal and thus can be found in all narrative texts. These features or characteristics can be used to analyse individual narratives. With the use of narratology, one can examine how a narrative is composed, how it works, how a message or idea can be communicated, how a narrative can convince its audience and how the author of the text can influence the audience's interpretation of the message. Narratology is thus the study of narratives, although the more technical and linguistic approach of this subject. In this thesis, the method that will be used to analyze *A Song of Ice and Fire* includes different aspects of narratology, offered by various scholars.

To examine how fictional texts can afford religious use, it is important to discuss the distinctive features of religious narratives. This can provide some insights in what a text needs to become an authoritative, religious narrative. One important claim of religious texts, which is also highly contested, is the claim that they belong to the category of factual narratives, because they refer to the actual world, as factual narratives do. There are a few differences between fictional and factual narratives. The first difference was just explained; a factual narrative is referential, fictional narratives however have no reference in the real world. To understand this difference, the narratological theory of the different levels of a narrative⁴⁸ will be discussed further on in this chapter. Secondly, factual narratives claim that these references are true and that they communicate the truth about the actual world while fictional narratives make (in most cases) no such claims.⁴⁹ Religious narratives also use rhetorical strategies to make the narrative more veracious. Such strategies are called "veracity mechanisms" and fictional narratives can imitate these mechanisms as well. In chapter five, the different mechanisms will be further described. A third difference is more narratological of nature; in factual narratives, the author is the same person as the narrator while in

⁴⁸ A narrative consist out of different levels; the content of the narrative itself and the way in which this content is said.

⁴⁹ Jean-Marie Schaeffer. 2009. "Fictional vs. Factual Narration", in: Hühn, Peter, John Pier, Wolf Schmid, and Jörg Schönert (eds.), *Handbook of Narratology*. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 98-114, p. 98-99.

fictional narratives the author (who is part of the real world) differs from the narrator (who is part of the fictional world).⁵⁰ This difference can be explained with the help of the communication model, a narratological tool that explains how the author communicates the narrative to the reader with help of the narrator. In factual narratives, this is all about the actual world. In fictional narratives however, there is a difference between the author and narrator.

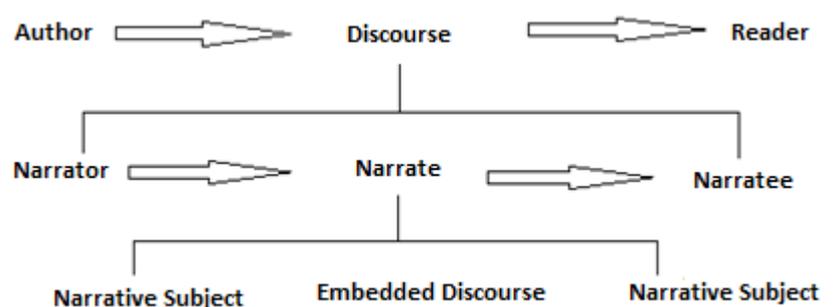
3.1. The Communication Model by Ole Davidsen

The communication model of the Danish scholar Ole Davidsen shows how a narrative can be seen as a process whereby a certain message is communicated from the author to the reader.⁵¹ This model contains two levels; the first level is about the communication itself and the second level is all about that which is communicated. The first level can be called the “Communication Level” and this level takes place outside the actual story: the author communicates a written text or a “discourse” to the reader. The second level can be found inside this written text and is called the “Narration/Enunciation Level”. On this level the narrator communicates the narrate or the story to the narratee in the discourse. Inside this narrate another sub-level can be found where the narrated persons are described as narrative subjects. This sub-level is the utterance of the narrate through the narrative subjects:⁵²

Model 1: The Communication Model:

Outside text: Communication level:
1st level

Inside text: Narration/Enunciation level:
2nd level



The narrator is an inter-textual person or voice with a communicative role from which the narrative originates, whose viewpoint is used to tell the story, and from which references to characters, events, and actions that this narrative is about are made.⁵³ Of course there are different types of narrators; some are actually present in the story and can become visible through a first-person narration. This narrator can sometimes be perceived as the implied author when the texts evokes an

⁵⁰ Gérard Genette. 1991. “Fictional Narrative, Factual Narrative.” *Poetics Today* 11 (4), 755-774; p. 765-768.

⁵¹ Seymour Chatman. 1980. *Story and Discourse. Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film*. London: Cornell University Press, p. 19.

⁵² Chatman, *Story and Discourse*, p. 31-32; Davidsen, Ole. 1995. “Is there a Monkey in this Class.” *Semeia: An Experimental Journal for Biblical Criticism* 71, 133-160; p. 136-138; Davidsen, Ole. 1993. *The Narrative Jesus. A Semiotic Reading of Mark’s Gospel*. Aarhus: Aarhus University Press, p. 25-28.

⁵³ Uri Margolin. 2009. “Narrator”, in: Hühn, Peter, John Pier, Wolf Schmid, and Jörg Schönert (eds.), *Handbook of Narratology*. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 351-369; p.351.

author-image through stylistic or ideological signs in the text.⁵⁴ However, the author can also use an implicit narrator, which is a narrator who does not actually appear in the text but is still part of the text and is important to form the worldview of the narrative. The implicit narrator presents characters, can take part in scenes as an agent or observer, and describe the scenes. He can tell the actions and happenings only through the eyes of the characters and shows the story without being seen. The implicit narrator never uses the first person narration.⁵⁵

The narratee is the fictive reader, the addressee of the narrator to which the narrator directs its narrative.⁵⁶ The narratee can also be the implied reader; this is the counterpart of the implied author. It is the image of the reader that the author had in mind during his writing and this particular image can also be found in the text through specific indexical signs.⁵⁷ Within the story, the author can use narrative subjects or characters to tell parts of the narrative through direct or indirect speech placed in the narrative. George R.R. Martin uses an implicit narrator in his novels *A Song of Ice and Fire* to describe scenes, actions, thoughts and events that are happening in the fictional world through the eyes of different characters. But the author himself or the narrator never appears in the actual narrative.

In fictional narratives, as in *A Song of Ice and Fire*, the author is a different person than the narrator. Here, the author communicates a written text to the reader in our world. In this written text, the narrator, who is part of the fictional world, tells a story to the narratee, who is also part of the fictional world. In factual narratives, the difference between the communication level and the narration/enunciation level blurs because the author is the same person as the narrator and therefore, both are part of the real world, which means that the reader can identify himself with the narratee in the story. This is one important difference between fictional and religious narratives. However, when the communication and narration levels blur in fictional texts as well, and the difference between the author and narrator is not clear anymore, it is possible for readers to think that the author communicates a narrative about the real world instead of the fictional world. And this can make a fictional narrative more able to afford religious use.

3.2. Genette, Greimas, and the Russian Formalists: Levels of Narrative

Although there is no general theory on religious narratives, there are scholars who used semiotics and narratology to find general features and strategies of such texts. One has already been mentioned, namely Ole Davidsen, but also another Scandinavian scholar Anders Petersen worked on the theoretical study of how religious texts work. They both believe that there are certain textual features that are distinctive for religious narratives and that these features can be found on two different levels within the narrative. Davidsen and Petersen used the theory of narratology of Gérard

⁵⁴ Wolf Schmid. 2009. "Implied Author", in: Hühn, Peter, John Pier, Wolf Schmid, and Jörg Schönert (eds.), *Handbook of Narratology*. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 161-173; p.161.

⁵⁵ Luc Herman and Bart Vervaeck. 2005. *Handbook of Narrative Analysis*. Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, p.16 -19.

⁵⁶ Gerald Prince. 2009. "Reader", in: Hühn, Peter, John Pier, Wolf Schmid, and Jörg Schönert (eds.), *Handbook of Narratology*. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 389-410; 398, 404-405.

⁵⁷ Schmid, "Implied Author", p. 169.

Genette, especially on the narrative levels, and Algirdas Greimas’ study of narratives semiotics to understand and explain the distinctive features of religious narratives.

Genette and Greimas are both French structuralists, in which contemporary narratology finds its roots. Before the French structuralists, the Russian formalists were important for the scientific discipline of narratology and the French therefore recognize them as their precursors. The structuralist distinction between the narrative text as it appears and the levels that can be found in the narrative text is based on formalists’ ideas.⁵⁸ Genette’s theory on narrative and narration is an example of this. He divides the narrative text into three different levels. The first level is the *narration* (in English also the term “narrating” is used) and Genette describes this term as ‘the producing narrative action and, by extension, the whole of the real or fictional situation in which that action takes place’.⁵⁹ The second level according to Genette is *narrative* (in French it is called *récit*) and with this term he means ‘the signifier, statement, discourse or narrative text itself’.⁶⁰ Genette calls the third level *story* (in French *histoire*) and explains this as ‘the signified or narrative content’.⁶¹

Greimas did not divide the narrative text into three different levels, but in two. He explains that the first level of a text is the “narrative utterance” and describes this as “that which is said”. This is the content of a narrative text and this level corresponds with the third level of Genette, namely the story. Greimas’ theory of the levels of narrative comes close to the Russian formalists theory of narrative construction. The Russian formalists explain the term *fabula* as the raw material of the story and the chronological order of events, which is similar to Genette’s term “story” and Greimas’ “narrative utterance”.⁶² The second level of Greimas’ theory is called the “narration” and Greimas explains this as the way in which the content of a narrative is told. This is the enunciation of a narrative text.⁶³ Greimas’ level “narration” covers both the narration and narrative level of Genette. The same is true for the Russian formalists term *sjuzhet*, which is the way in which a story is organized or presented (see table 2).

Table 2: Levels of Narrative:

Greimas	Genette	Russian formalists
Narrative utterance = (that which is said)	Story	Fabula
Narration = (the way in which that is said)	Narration and Narrative	Sjuzhet

First, it is important to understand these two levels of the narrative text in order to explain and structure the distinctive features of religious narratives. From now on, these two levels will be

⁵⁸ Herman and Vervaeck, *Handbook of Narrative Analysis*, p. 41.

⁵⁹ Gérard Genette. 1980. *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press. Translated from French by Jane. E. Lewin. Originally published as “Discours du récit” in *Figures III*, Paris: Editions due Seuil, 1972, p. 27.

⁶⁰ Genette, *Narrative Discourse*, p. 27.

⁶¹ *Ibid*, p. 27.

⁶² Herman and Vervaeck, *Handbook of Narrative Analysis*, p. 46.

⁶³ Davidsen, “The Religious Affordance of Fiction”, paragraph 2.2. How Religious Narratives Work.

referred to as *story*, by which is meant the content of the narrative and that which is said. *Narration*, will be used to refer to the way in which the content is said. Two of the distinctive features of religious texts can be found on the story level and are related to the actual content of the narrative. Two other features of religious texts are intrinsic to the narration level, and these features are important for how and in which way the religious narrative is told. Secondly, the levels of narrative are essential in understanding how the rhetorical strategies of religious texts, the veracity mechanisms, can be used by fictional texts to afford religious use.

3.3. The Four Distinctive Features of Religious Narratives

The first distinctive feature of religious narrative that can be found on the story level is a fundamental one: all religious narratives contain supernatural beings such as gods, demons or other spiritual beings with supernatural power. A second characteristic on the story level is that religious narratives especially focus on and emphasize the relationship between supernatural beings and human through religious practices. Therefore religious narratives give rise to *narrative religion*. Narrative religion tells about religious practices or gives instructions how people can engage in these practices through characters in the narrative itself. The function of narrative religion is thus to set an example for how believers can perform this religion and how they can have a relationship with supernatural beings in their own world.⁶⁴

But these two features (supernatural beings and narrative religion) on the story level are not enough to explain why some narratives afford religious use and others do not. *A Song of Ice and Fire* for example is a fictional narrative that contains both these two features, but is still considered a fictional text that tells about the fictional world. It is not seen as a religious or a factual narrative that speaks of the real world, and this is a difference between fictional and factual narratives that was mentioned before. And precisely this distinction is an important feature of religious narratives on the narration level. As is discussed earlier, factual narratives have references to the actual world. Religious texts also claim to do this, but they do not only claim to tell the truth about supernatural beings; they also claim that they are holy texts and stem from a supernatural source, which gives them even more authority. Although this is a distinctive feature of religious narratives, not all religious texts use this characteristic. So, it can be part of the rhetoric of religious narratives, but it is not a defining feature.

However, it is obvious that religious texts do not consider their narratives to be part of a fictional world, but of the real world and this is the fourth important feature of religious narratives. This claim of the author that the world of the religious narrative is not a fictional world, but the actual world, takes place on the narration level. Thus the difference between fictional and factual texts, namely that the factual texts, and therefore also religious narratives, claim to speak about the real world is the most distinctive feature of religious narratives. But this does not mean that supernatural fiction cannot use this feature to afford religious use; fictional narratives can imitate this rhetoric of religious narratives with the help of the veracity mechanisms.⁶⁵

⁶⁴ Davidsen, "The Religious Affordance of Fiction", paragraph 2.2. How Religious Narratives Work; Davidsen, *The Spiritual Tolkien Milieu*, p. 101-102.

⁶⁵ Davidsen, "The Religious Affordance of Fiction", paragraph 2.2. How Religious Narratives Work.

3.4. The Tentative Conclusions of Markus A. Davidsen's Narratological Theory

The levels of narrative are not only useful to make a distinction between the four features of religious narratives; these levels are also important to understand Davidsen's narratological theory about veracity mechanisms. Veracity mechanisms are rhetorical strategies used in religious narratives to make their narrative more veracious. Supernatural fiction can use these veracity mechanisms as well and in some cases, as with *Lord of the Rings* and *Star Wars*, this leads to the religious affordance of fiction. But these two examples of supernatural fiction that gave rise to fiction-based religions do not use all ten veracity mechanisms given by Davidsen, and they also both use different mechanisms. This suggests that there is not really one formula of veracity mechanisms that can make supernatural fiction to afford religious use. Therefore, Davidsen proposes two tentative conclusions on this particular subject.

First of all, Davidsen believes that his narratological theory on veracity mechanisms helps explain why some fictional texts do afford religious use and why others do not. Secondly, he thinks that there are certain veracity mechanisms that are more powerful and persuasive than others, which is closely related to the two levels of narrative⁶⁶. Three of the ten veracity mechanisms can be found on the story level and are strategies that can be used to strengthen the content of the narrative itself. Of course, this is necessary because for a fictional narrative to afford religious use, it needs to present supernatural beings. A link between the fictional and the actual world, however, is what enables supernatural fiction to afford religious use. The veracity mechanisms that operate on the narration level can offer this link. These mechanisms can blur the metaphorical line between the author and the narrator, and between the reader and the narratee. These mechanisms help to present the narrative as more of a direct type of communication between the author and the reader, which makes the narrative more than just a fictional narrative.⁶⁷

So far, the narratological tools and their relevance has been discussed, as well as the four distinctive features of the religious narrative. The *A Song of Ice and Fire* novels contain the first two features of supernatural beings and narrative religion; this will be discussed in the next chapter. Because these novels did not give rise to a fiction-based religion, it is possible to say that *A Song of Ice and Fire* misses the two distinctive features on the narration level. This will be discussed in chapter four, where it will be explained how several rhetorical mechanisms can make religious narratives veracious.

⁶⁶ Davidsen, "The Religious Affordance of Fiction", paragraph 5. Four Tentative Conclusions.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

Chapter 4: The Religions of *A Song of Ice and Fire*

“On one side is R’hllor, the Lord of Light, the Heart of Fire, the God of Flame and Shadow. Against him stands the Great Other whose name may not be spoken, the Lord of Darkness, the Soul of Ice, the God of Night and Terror.”

- Said by Melisandre in: George R.R. Martin, *A Storm of Swords*, p. 348.

4.1. The Narrative Religions of *A Song of Ice and Fire*

In the previous chapter it was discussed that two of the distinctive features of religious narratives are the presence of supernatural beings and narrative religion. Narrative religion communicates about these supernatural agents and how to have a relationship with them. Narrative religion gives instruction on religious practices by the means of characters, and through this information people can perform these practices in the real world. The function of narrative religion is thus to set an example for how believers can perform this religion and how they can have a relationship with supernatural beings in their own world. But not only religious narratives have this feature; fictional narratives can have it as well. Mostly, narrative religion is based on *fictional religions*. A fictional religion is a self-invented religion, created by the author. This religion has a fictional narrative and fictional characters that practice this religion.⁶⁸ In *A Song of Ice and Fire*, many of these fictional religions can be found, some very important, others less so.

4.1.1. The Religion of the North: The Old Gods of the Forest

The first religion that is introduced in the books is the religion of The Old Gods of the Forest. The Old Gods are a number of nameless nature gods, the spirits of trees, streams and even rocks.⁶⁹ Therefore, this religion can be characterized as a non-institutionalized animist religion, because its adherents believe that some trees, animals or other objects can possess a spiritual essence. The religion of the Old Gods is based on practices and doctrines of pagan beliefs, Celtic religion and fantasy elements invented by Martin himself.⁷⁰ The Old Gods were first worshipped by the Children of the Forest, the original inhabitants of Westeros and a non-human race, who carved faces into weirwood trees, through which the Old Gods are present.⁷¹ When the First Men came to conquer Westeros, they came to worship the Old Gods as well. The Old Gods are worshipped in Godswoods, which are small areas of forest with one or more sacred weirwood trees in it. Many followers believe that the Gods can see through the faces in the weirwood trees, that there their prayers can be heard and that the Gods have power only in the region where the sacred weirwood trees are present.⁷² This religion has no ceremonies, except for the ceremony of marriage, for which the blessing of the Gods are asked. The religion has no hierarchies of priests or holy texts, although some of the Children of

⁶⁸ Davidsen, “From Star Wars to Jediism”, p.377.

⁶⁹ Martin, *A Game of Thrones*, p. 8, 577, 737; Martin, *A Dance with Dragons*, p. 14, 495-496.

⁷⁰ Article on *A Song of Ice and Fire* by S.K. Gopal 2013, and an interview with George R.R. Martin by D. Anthony, 2011.

⁷¹ Martin, *A Game of Thrones*, p. 23, 241, 573.

⁷² Ibid, p. 510, 573, 577-578.

the Forest had magical abilities, such as prophetic dreams, and were seen as the wise men of their kind. These wise men were called “greenseers”, and they had magical abilities as prophetic dreams and power over nature. Descendants from the First Men can possess these magical abilities as well. In the novels there is only one greenseer left, the three-eyed crow, and this last greenseer lives north of the Wall with the last Children of the Forest. The power that the Old Gods possess is experienced as real in the narrative and the Old Gods are still largely worshipped in the North of Westeros; it is also the only religion north of the Wall.⁷³

4.1.2. *The Main Religion of Westeros: The Faith of the Seven*

When the Andals invaded Westeros some thousand years after the First Men, another religion was brought to this continent, namely the Faith of the Seven. The Faith of the Seven is the main religion of the Seven Kingdoms and is mostly worshipped in the south of Westeros. The Faith believes that there is one god with seven aspects or faces that represent different parts of life. The Mother represents peace, mercy, life, fertility and the birth of children. The Father represents divine justice and judges over the souls of the dead. The Maiden stands for innocence, purity, beauty and love. One can turn to the Warrior to ask for protection, strength and courage during the war. The Crone stands for wisdom and knows the fates of all men. Often she is represented carrying a lantern to show the way the worshipper has to go. The Smith stands for smithing, building, farming and other craftsmanship. The Stranger represents death and the unknown.⁷⁴ Because of its seven aspects or faces, the deity is also called the Seven-faced God, but is mostly simply named ‘the Seven’.⁷⁵

This religion knows many ceremonies, has its own sacred text *The Seven-Pointed Star*, as well as its own rituals, prayers and symbol, the Seven Pointed Star.⁷⁶ This symbol is important in explaining the complex theological concept of seven persons that are all part of one god; the star has seven points but they are all part of the same star.⁷⁷ The Faith is more organized than the religion of the Old Gods, and has a complex internal hierarchy. The temples of the Faith are called septs and a male minister is a septon, whereas a female minister is called a septa. The sept is used by followers to worship the Seven-faced God, and believers gather together for group prayers, which can involve the singing of hymns to praise the god.⁷⁸ The head of this religion is called the High Septon and this person is chosen by the Most Devout, which is the ruling council of the Faith, and the highest ranking clergy.⁷⁹ In the books, two High Septons die and the third High Septon that is chosen is called the High Sparrow, because he is chosen as head of the religion by the “sparrows”. The sparrows are refugees of the war and are the poorest people, who have sworn their lives to the Faith of the

⁷³ Martin, *A Game of Thrones*, p. 577; Martin, *A Storm of Swords*, p. 239.

⁷⁴ Martin, *A Clash of Kings*, p. 145-146, 495-496, 498; Martin, *A Storm of Swords*, p. 239, 262; Martin, *A Feast for Crows*, p. 527-528.

⁷⁵ Martin, *A Game of Thrones*, p. 23, 132; Martin, *A Feast for Crows*, p. 526.

⁷⁶ Martin, *A Game of Thrones*, p. 739; Martin, *A Clash of Kings*, p. 651, 867; Martin, *A Storm of Swords*, p. 385, 640-641; Martin, *A Feast for Crows*, p. 527, 579; Martin, *A Dance with Dragons*, p. 88.

⁷⁷ Martin, *A Clash of Kings*, p. 811; Martin, *A Storm of Swords*, p. 978.

⁷⁸ Martin, *A Game of Thrones*, p. 23.

⁷⁹ Martin, *A Feast for Crows*, p. 586-587.

Seven.⁸⁰ The High Sparrow is also allowed to restore the Faith Militant, the military order of the Faith of the Seven, to prevent the attacks on septs and followers of the Faith and to bring justice.⁸¹

The Faith of the Seven can be characterized as an institutionalized pluriform monotheism, where seven different gods are seen as individuals with their own characteristics (divine pluriformity), and at the same time as part and aspects of one divine being (monotheism). The practices and doctrines of this religion are institutionalized. This religion is loosely modeled on the medieval Catholic Church and especially the idea of the trinity is used, only Martin portrays the god with seven aspects instead of three. The hierarchy of the Faith of the Seven also is parallel to that of Catholicism, especially the idea of the High Septon. This corresponds with the concept of the Pope, and the septons and septa's who have to swear a vow of celibacy, and the restored Faith Militant can be compared to the Knights Templar.⁸² The Seven do not really seem to have any power in the narrative, although it is the most popular religion of the Seven Kingdoms. There are inhabitants of Westeros who are most devote to the Faith, but also many who doubt the existence of this god.⁸³

4.1.3. *The Religion of the Iron Islands: The Drowned God*

Another religion that is frequently discussed in the books and that is present at Westeros is the religion of the Drowned God. This deity is worshiped on the Iron islands, on the west coast of Westeros. Adherents of this religion believe that the Drowned God created the Ironborn, the inhabitants of the Iron islands, to practice piracy and raiding. For outsiders this religion may be seen as a justification for plundering, but the Ironborn take the religion of the Drowned God very seriously and the belief system is well developed. The Drowned God is always in an eternal struggle with the Storm God, who sends storms to the sea to dash the Ironborn ships. While the followers of this religion believe the Storm God to live in a castle in the sky, they believe that the Drowned God lives in a hall beneath the ocean. This religion can therefore be characterized as a dualistic religion, because there are two gods that oppose each other. The Ironborn also believe that when a man drowns, the Drowned God takes him to his watery halls to feast on fish and to be tended by mermaids for eternity.⁸⁴ The Iron Men are loosely based on the Vikings, and so the deity of the Drowned God is inspired by Norse religious and mythical systems. For example, that the Drowned God dwells in his hall under the ocean and the Ironborn will feast with him in his halls when they die, corresponds with the halls of Valhalla in the Norse myths.⁸⁵

The religion of the Drowned God has no holy texts and temples, but it does have its own ceremonies, prayers and priest cult, and the Ironborn worship the Drowned God wherever the land meets the sea. The priests are called the Drowned Men and perform different ceremonies, such as anointing devotees with sea water — which is believed to be holy water —, baptizing children and drowning ceremonies, in which the priest is actually drowns someone by holding them under water

⁸⁰ Martin, *A Feast for Crows*, p. 586-588, 591-597.

⁸¹ Martin, *A Feast for Crows*, p. 591-603; Martin, *A Dance with Dragons*, p. 928-933.

⁸² Article on *A Song of Ice and Fire* by S.K. Gopal 2013, and an interview with George R.R. Martin by D. Anthony, 2011.

⁸³ Martin, *A Clash of Kings*, p. 21, 757, 791.

⁸⁴ Martin, *A Feast for Crows*, p. 25, 28-31, 36, 39; Martin, *A Dance with Dragons*, p. 378, 384.

⁸⁵ Article on *A Song of Ice and Fire* by S.K. Gopal 2013.

until they stop breathing. Then they are brought ashore where they start to breathe again. The Ironborn also drown their enemies as a sacrifice to the Drowned God.⁸⁶ At the head of this priesthood of the Drowned Men stands Aeron Greyjoy, a brother of King Balon Greyjoy of the Iron Islands. In his earlier life, Aeron Greyjoy almost drowned in a storm but eventually washed up ashore alive. Because of the near-death experience, he became a devoted worshipper of the Drowned God and dedicated his life to him.⁸⁷ After this experience, he started spreading the word of the Drowned God, taking part in the religious practices, living solely on the beach, and eventually he became the leader of the Drowned Men and became highly respected by the Iron Men in general.⁸⁸ Although the character of Aeron Greyjoy believes the Drowned God to be a very real and powerful god in the narrative, the power of this god is not recognized by others except for the Iron Men, of whom some also even question the power and existence of this god.

4.1.4. *Spread among the Known World: The Lord of Light*

The fourth important religion within the fictional world of *A Song of Ice and Fire* is the religion of the Lord of Light, a deity who is also called R'hllor, the Red God, and the God of Flame and Shadow.⁸⁹ The Lord of Light derived from and is widely worshipped on the continent Essos. This religion only has few followers in the Seven Kingdoms, but it is still an important religion in the books, especially for one of the three main narratives.⁹⁰ The religion of the Lord of Light also has a dualistic worldview; it is centred on the belief in the existence of two deities, R'hllor, who is the god of light and life, and the Great Other, who is the god of darkness, death, ice, and cold. This religion is inspired by Zoroastrianism; especially the idea of duality, the concept of the ultimate good god and the ultimate evil god are similar. Due to this worldview, the adherents of this religion believe that R'hllor is the one true god and all the other gods (the Old Gods, the Seven, the Drowned God) are false gods or demons.⁹¹ Therefore this religion can be characterized as an exclusive ditheism; no other gods except for the Lord of Light and the Great Other exist. The followers of the Lord of Light believe also believe that a great battle is to come, in which the living have to fight the army of the god of darkness and cold, the Great Other. But it has been prophesized that a warrior will come, chosen by the Lord of Light, called the Prince That Was Promised, who will combat the darkness.⁹²

The Lord of Light is also described as a 'fire god', and its priests are therefore called the 'fire priests', or also the 'red priests', because they always wear red clothing and robes. The Red Priestess Melisandre is the most important character for this religion in the books. She is also called the Red Woman and she is from Asshai in the very east of Essos. Melisandre is a priestess of R'hllor as well as a shadowbinder. She is an important figure in the main narrative because she is the most influential

⁸⁶ Martin, *A Clash of Kings*, p. 175; Martin, *A Feast for Crows*, p. 23-25, 39; Martin, *A Dance with Dragons*, p. 817.

⁸⁷ Martin, *A Clash of Kings*, p. 174-176; Martin, *A Feast for Crows*, p. 35.

⁸⁸ Martin, *A Clash of Kings*, p. 173; Martin, *A Feast for Crows*, p. 23-41.

⁸⁹ Martin, *A Clash of Kings*, p. 18-20.

⁹⁰ Ibid, p. 473.

⁹¹ Martin, *A Clash of Kings*, p. 606, 621, 814; Martin, *A Storm of Swords*, p. 348-351, 500, 1057-1059; Martin, *A Dance with Dragons*, p. 146, 150, 906, 910.

⁹² Martin, *A Clash of Kings*, p. 148-149; Martin, *A Storm of Swords*, p. 1078; Martin, *A Feast for Crows*, p. 744.

advisor of King Stannis Baratheon.⁹³ Melisandre believes that Stannis Baratheon is the reborn Azor Ahai, chosen by the Lord of Light. According to her, Stannis is the Prince That Was Promised, who will swing the sword Lightbringer and will defeat the Great Other in the great battle that is to come after the Long Summer.⁹⁴ She counsels Stannis and helps him defeat his enemies by using magic, such as seeing visions in flames and giving birth to a shadow, who kills his brother King Renly Baratheon. Because Melisandre's magical actions are very real in the narrative, Stannis and the people around him are more and more convinced of the magical powers of Melisandre and her god R'hllor, although Stannis is very sceptical about the existence of gods in the beginning of the story.⁹⁵

The worship is centered around fire and light, mostly bonfire, but sometimes also more extreme cases where non-believers are sacrificed in the fire. Visions about the future from the Lord of Light can be received by the priests through looking into the flames, and the red priests are also able to perform magic.⁹⁶ This fire worship is also inspired by Zoroastrianism.⁹⁷ Like the Faith of the Seven, the religion of R'hllor also has its own symbol, a fiery heart. It also possess several holy texts and has its own temples, where the red priests conduct bonfires and sing prayers to the R'hllor and ask him to bring back the dawn.⁹⁸ The Faith of the Seven however believes in seven heavens and seven hells, whereas the religion of the Lord of Light considers the current world to be hell, and claims that the Lord of Light will save his faithful followers from this place.⁹⁹ In the novels, the priests of the Lord of Light seem to possess real magical power and even the people around these priests, who do not believe in the Lord of Light, believe in the power of their magic.

4.1.5. *On the Continent Essos: The Many-Faced God*

Another religion that is present in the books is the religion of the Many-Faced God. This deity has a temple in Braavos, one of the nine Free Cities on the continent Essos and he is worshipped by a mysterious cult of assassins, who are known as the Faceless Men.¹⁰⁰ The Faceless Men believe that there is only one god, namely Death, and that this god is actually worshiped by adherents of all the religions in the world only under different names as the Old Gods, the Stranger from the Faith of the Seven, the Drowned God and other gods of the continent Essos.¹⁰¹ Therefore, this religion can be characterized as an inclusive monotheism, because it recognizes the existence of many gods but believes that all these different god are actually one and the same, and only carry different names. That is why the Faceless Men also call their deity the Many-Faced God, and they believe that death is a gift from this deity to end human suffering. These assassins see themselves as the servants of the

⁹³ Martin, *A Clash of Kings*, p. 18, 20.

⁹⁴ Martin, *A Clash of Kings*, p. 148-149; Martin, *A Storm of Swords*, p. 349.

⁹⁵ Martin, *A Clash of Kings*, p. 162; Martin, *A Storm of Swords*, p. 500.

⁹⁶ Martin, *A Storm of Swords*, p. 348-351; Martin, *A Storm of Swords*, p. 723-724; Martin, *A Dance with Dragons*, p. 612-614, 895.

⁹⁷ Interview with George R.R. Martin by D. Anthony, 2011.

⁹⁸ Martin, *A Clash of Kings*, p. 146, 475; Martin, *A Storm of Swords*, p. 468, 490.

⁹⁹ Martin, *A Dance with Dragons*, p. 764.

¹⁰⁰ Martin, *A Feast for Crows*, p. 138.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid*, p. 722.

Many-Faced God, and give the gift of death to end the lives of men who are suffering or those who cause suffering to others.¹⁰²

Although this religion has a temple, there are no known worship services or prayers. The only clergy are the Faceless Men, who only worship through their actions, the assassinations. Their temple is open for any who seeks a gentle and painless death; there they can drink of poisoned water, which will let them sleep and never wake up.¹⁰³ In return the faces of these corpses are used by the Faceless Men, who have the magical ability of shapeshifting and thereby can make use of other faces during their assassination actions. In the narrative, the Faceless Men thus have real magical power, but it is not clear how many adherents this religion has, and whetherif people really believe in the Many-Faced God except from the Faceless Men.

4.1.6. Other Religions on the Continent Essos

On the continent of Essos many more religions can be found, such as the religion of the *Horse God*, who is worshipped by the Dothraki. The Dothraki are a human race of nomadic horse-mounted warriors who live on the central lands of Essos. Horses are very important in the Dothraki culture and this can thus also be seen in their religion with the worshipping of the Horse God.¹⁰⁴ The Dothraki believe that the Horse God is the best and strongest god, and only worship this deity. However, they also accept the existence of other gods, as for example the Great Shepherd, the deity of the Lhazareen, a race of shepherds that live on the continent Essos.¹⁰⁵ The religion of the Dothraki can therefore be seen as a monolatrist religion, as it worships one god, but recognizes the existence of other gods. Another known religion in Essos is the Ghiscari religion, which has followers in the cities of the Slaver's Bay, Astapor, Yunkai and Meereen that have their origins in the old Ghiscari Empire. The religion of the gods of Ghis is centered around priestesses, who are called 'Graces' and who gather in the Temple of the Graces. Little is known of this religion because only a few details are given in the *A Song of Ice and Fire* books.¹⁰⁶ Other Free Cities or other cultures on the continents Essos, Sothoryos and Ulthos might have different religions as well, but those are not mentioned or only vaguely described in the novels. For an overview of the different types of narrative religions and their characteristics, see table 3.

4.1.7. Magic in the Known World

Besides religion, magic plays an important role in the novels as well. It is been described in the books as a powerful and supernatural but little known force in this fictional world. In Westeros there are only a few who still believe or show an interest in magic.¹⁰⁷ On Essos however, magic is still practised although its power and the effects are questioned. With the rebirth of the dragons in the first book *A Game of Thrones*, the power and the role of magic slowly becomes greater and greater. Practitioners

¹⁰² Martin, *A Feast for Crows*, p. 445-447, 453-454; Martin, *A Dance with Dragons*, p. 656-657, 917.

¹⁰³ Martin, *A Feast for Crows*, p. 447, 451.

¹⁰⁴ Martin, *A Game of Thrones*, p. 758; Martin, *A Clash of Kings*, p. 703; Martin, *A Dance with Dragons*, p. 765, 1027.

¹⁰⁵ Martin, *A Game of Thrones*, p. 672-674, 758-759.

¹⁰⁶ Martin, *A Dance with Dragons*, p. 168, 322, 325, 438-439, 633, 765.

¹⁰⁷ Martin, *A Clash of Kings*, p. 442.

of magic notice that more spells are working and that their power increases. This is because of the close connection between dragons and the power of magic.¹⁰⁸

There are a few types of magic that are present in the books. First the control of the elements; the priests of R'hllor seem to have some control over fire, and some wizards of the Rhoynar were able to manipulate water and use water magic. Other types of magic are visions and prophecies. Some descendants of the First Men and the Children of the Forest have the "greensight" and experience prophetic dreams.¹⁰⁹ The priests of the Lord of Light are able to see visions by looking at the flames.¹¹⁰ A third type of magic is that of skinchanging, which is also called warging in the novels. This is the ability to enter the mind of an animal or human and to control and/or experience its actions.¹¹¹ Also magic concerning the dead is present in the books. Some priests of R'hllor can perform the "last kiss", a ritual where the priest fills its mouth with fire and breathes this flame into the dead body, by which they can raise a man from the dead. Magicians, at least some of them, can also use spells, light and shadow to change their appearance or that of others.¹¹²

At the continent Essos magic is practised more than in Westeros. Especially in the far east of Essos, blood magic is performed as well as Shadow-birthing. Blood magic is done by a "maegi", a sorceress, and involves sacrifices of both humans and animals to perform magic, while shadowbinders can give birth to shadows, who will do what their master asks of them, after they have had sexual intercourse with a man. Melisandre performed this rite with Stannis Baratheon and gave birth to a shadow that killed Stannis his brother, Renly Baratheon. These different kinds of magicians, like the shadowbinders, the maegi's and the red priests who can perform magic are mostly found on the continent Essos.¹¹³ In Westeros magic is less common, apart from the magic used by some of the Children of the Forest or the First Men, who have the ability of greensight or skinchanger, and the red priests who have travelled to Westeros and the Alchemists' Guild, and claim to be a society of learned men that have knowledge of ancient abilities and magic.¹¹⁴

There are thus many fictional religions present in the books as well some kind of supernatural forces, which is here referred to as magic. In the novels, some followers of certain religions have these magical powers and are able to use these supernatural forces. The novels, then, have presented many different fictional religions; religions and practices invented by the author. But the question is, can these fictional or narrative religions of *A Song of Ice and Fire* function as a "model religion" that the reader can perform in the real world? Are there certain mechanisms in the text that can connect the fictional world of the narrative, and thus the fictional religions, with the real world of the reader? To answer this question, it is important to return to the article *The Religious Affordance of Fiction: A Semiotic Approach* of Davidsen.

¹⁰⁸ Martin, *A Clash of Kings*, p. 718, 944; Martin, *A Storm of Swords*, p. 462.

¹⁰⁹ Martin, *A Game of Thrones*, p. 736, 738; Martin, *A Clash of Kings*, p. 440-442.

¹¹⁰ Martin, *A Clash of Kings*, p. 18-20; Martin, *A Storm of Swords*, p. 590-591.

¹¹¹ Martin, *A Dance with Dragons*, p. 3-17, 75.

¹¹² Martin, *A Storm of Swords*, p. 471-473, 535-537.

¹¹³ Martin, *A Game of Thrones*, p. 709-715, 798; Martin, *A Clash of Kings*, 20, 502-503, 621-623; Martin, *A Storm of Swords*, p. 350.

¹¹⁴ Martin, *A Clash of Kings*, p. 310, 441.

Table 3: The Narrative Religions and Their Characteristics:

Religion	Place of Worship	Head/Leader of Religion	Region	Houses, Groups and Characters
Old Gods of the Forest	Weirwood trees with faces	Three eyed raven	The North of Westeros	House Stark Free People
Faith of the Seven	Septs	High Septon	The South of Westeros	House Baratheon House Tully House Arryn House Lannister House Tyrell House Targaryen House Martell
Drowned God	Sea and beach	Priest of Drowned God	Iron Island on the west coast of Westeros	House Greyjoy Aeron Greyjoy
R'hllor, Lord of Light	Around bonfires	Red Priests	Essos, Dragonstone, an island on the east coast of Westeros	Stannis Baratheon Melisandre
Many-Faced God	House of Black and White	The Faceless Men	Braavos, Essos	Arya Stark
Horse God	Vaes Dothraki (only city of the Dothraki)	Dosh Kaleen (widows of the <i>Khals</i> , the leaders of the Dothraki)	Dothraki Sea, Essos	Dothraki
The Great Shepherd	Temples or god's houses	Maegi's	Lhazar, Essos	Lazharen
Gods of Ghis	Temple of Graces	The Green Grace	Slaver's Bay, Essos	The Ghiscari people of Astapor, Yunkai, Meereen

Chapter 5: Veracity Mechanisms in *A Song of Ice and Fire*

“Death is not the worst things,” the kindly man replied. “It is His gift to us, an end to want and pain. On the day we are born the Many-Faced God sends each of us a dark angel to walk through life beside us. When our sins our sufferings grow too great to be borne, the angel takes us by the hand to lead us to the nightlands, where the stars burn ever bright.”

- Said to Arya Stark in: George R.R. Martin, *A Feast for Crows*, p. 449.

5.1. The Ten Veracity Mechanisms of Davidsen’s Narratological Theory

The presence of supernatural beings and narrative religion in *A Song of Ice and Fire* is not enough to give rise to a fiction-based religion. Davidsen’s narratological theory on veracity mechanisms can help explain why some fictional texts with supernatural agents and narrative religion do afford religious use and others do not. There are ten different veracity mechanisms; seven that can be found inside the narrative itself and three can be found in transtexts, certain texts that can be linked to the story through the author. These ten veracity mechanisms are present on the two different levels of narrative; three on the story level and seven on the level of narration (see table 4). The mechanisms on the story level strengthen the content of the narrative by showing the veracity of the supernatural beings and the relationship that humans can have with them in the narrative itself.¹¹⁵ The veracity mechanisms on the narration level however, can make the supernatural beings seem real in the actual world because they can create a truthful link between the fictional and actual world. These mechanisms can blur the distinction between the author and the narrator, and in this way the fictional story can be read as a narrative that the author tells to the reader about the actual world. The veracity mechanisms on the story level are fundamental, but the mechanisms on the narration are the most powerful and persuasive strategies. These strategies can make the reader interpret the fictional narrative as a veracious story. Thus to understand why *A Song of Ice and Fire* has not given rise to a fiction-based religion, it is important to discuss which veracity mechanisms there are, how they work and which veracity mechanisms *A Song of Ice and Fire* contains and which it lacks.

Table 4: The Ten Veracity Mechanisms and The Narrative Levels

	Textual Veracity Mechanisms	Transtextual Veracity Mechanisms
Story Level	Matter-of-Fact Effect Onomastic Anchorage	Hypotextual Foundation
Narration Level	Teacher Discourse Justification Author-Narrator Conflation Reader Inscription Thematic Mirroring	Paratextual Priming Metatextual Reflection

¹¹⁵ Davidsen, “The Religious Affordance of Fiction”, paragraph 3. A Catalogue of Veracity Mechanisms in Supernatural Fiction.

5.1.1. The Matter-of-Fact Effect

The first veracity mechanism that will be discussed, and that is also present in *A Song of Ice and Fire*, is the *matter-of-fact effect*. Davidsen explains that this effect occurs when ‘an all-knowing narrator tells a story involving supernatural agents and presents these supernatural agents as straightforwardly real within the narrative world’¹¹⁶. This mechanism is the most fundamental one, according to Davidsen, and is part of all religious narratives and of most supernatural fiction. Also in fictional narratives, supernatural beings can be very real in the narrative world; they are approached by other characters, communicate with them and/or act within the narrative. The power and actions of these supernatural beings are presented as real, just as prophecies really do come true and magic really works in these narrative worlds.¹¹⁷

In *A Song of Ice and Fire* many different religions, and thus supernatural beings, are present but not all are presented as being straightforwardly real in the narrative world. The four most common religions in these novels are the Old Gods of the Forest, the Seven-faced God, the Drowned God and R’hllor, the Lord of Light. The power and even the existence of the gods, especially of the Seven-faced God and of the Drowned God, is doubted by some characters within the books. There are quite a lot of sentences as “If there are gods, surely they will forgive me”¹¹⁸, “There are no true knights, no more than there are gods”¹¹⁹, “If there are gods, why is the world so full of pain and injustice?”¹²⁰ Because the narrative of *A Song of Ice and Fire* has an implicit narrator and the author tells the story through the eyes of the different characters, the characters themselves tell about the supernatural beings. Therefore it depends on the characters whether or not the different religions present in the books are questioned or highly believed in.

The perspective of the narrator is important for the position of the supernatural beings, but this is thus not the only perspective on the supernatural in the narrative. In religious narratives the characters do not always have the same opinion about the supernatural beings as the narrator, or as other characters and show situations from a different perspective. This can also be a rhetorical strategy to strengthen the position of the supernatural beings in the narrative. Laura Feldt wrote an article about a narrative in the Bible book of Exodus, in which the narrator claims that Yahweh has sent the plagues on Egypt and also Yahweh himself states in the narrative that it is him who caused these plagues. But for a long time the Israelites are not quite sure if they believe this claim. That means that there are multiple perspectives on the question of whether Yahweh sent the plagues or not; the perspective of the narrator, of Yahweh, of the Israelites, and of the Egyptians. The readers can therefore interpret the message of the story in different ways.

This polyperspectivism of the narrative can be used by the author to persuade the reader to accept a certain interpretation, by providing other perspectives. The narrative may have different perspectives, but their influence on the audience is not equal. The narrator makes the voice of

¹¹⁶ Davidsen, “The Religious Affordance of Fiction”, paragraph 3.1. Evidence Mechanisms: Matter-of-fact Effect, Teacher Discourse, and Justification.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ Martin, *A Clash of Kings*, p.21, about the Seven-faced God, said by Maester Cressen, the master of House Baratheon.

¹¹⁹ Ibid, p. 757, said by Sandor Clegane to Sansa Stark.

¹²⁰ Ibid, p. 791, said by Jaime Lannister to Catelyn Stark.

Yahweh more important than that of the Israelites and the Israelites eventually believe Yahweh. These two facts help to persuade the readers to believe that Yahweh indeed is a supernatural agent who can send plagues. Even the people who did not believe this at first, eventually change their opinion in the narrative.¹²¹ In *A Song of Ice and Fire*, the different perspectives of the various characters can also reinforce the veracity of certain religions or supernatural beings, especially when characters with a different faith recognize the authority or power of another religion.

The Old Gods of the Forest, for example, are highly believed in by the Free People, by most of the members of House Stark and other descendants of the First Men. Most characters recognize the power of the Old Gods in the northern area of Westeros, and even some adherents of the Faith of the Seven do.¹²² Especially the magical powers that belong to this religion, such as greensight and warging, are presented as real in the narrative and this makes the Old Gods more real as well. The same is true for the religion of the Lord of Light; although this religion is more popular on Essos than on Westeros, it is important for the main narrative. In the books there are a few red priests who perform magic with the help of R'hllor. They can see visions in fire, bring dead man back to life through a 'last kiss', and use spells to change the appearance of themselves or others, all through the power given by their god R'hllor, as the priests claim.

An important part of this religion is also a prophecy about a great battle that is to come after the Long Summer, in which the living will fight the army of dead, the army of the Great Other, the god of cold and darkness. This prophecy says that "In ancient books of Asshai it is written that there will come a day after a long summer when the stars bleed and the cold breath of darkness falls heavy on the world. In this dread hour a warrior shall draw from the fire a burning sword. And that sword shall be Lightbringer, the Red Sword of Heroes, and he who claps it shall be Azor Ahai come again, and the darkness shall flee before him."¹²³ This warrior is chosen by the Lord of Light, and called the Prince That Was Promised and he will combat the darkness that is to come.¹²⁴ Until now, only five of the seven books of *A Song of Ice and Fire* are written and published and this prophecy has not come true yet. But in the books is spoken of an army of dead men in the very north of Westeros, led by the ice demon the Others that is marching south. Therefore there is the possibility that the prophecy can come true in the books to come and this will make the religion of the Lord of Light seem more real, and this also gives the god R'hllor more credibility.

5.1.2. Teacher Discourse

The second veracity mechanism that can be found in *A Song of Ice and Fire*, and works on the narration level, relies more on the authoritative voice of narrative subjects instead of the narrator (which was the case with the matter-of-fact effect). With the *teacher discourse*, Davidsen means the discourse of authoritative characters, which claims to teach about matters of supernatural beings and their credibility to the characters with lesser knowledge (and with whom readers can identify). A good example of this mechanism in religious narratives is Jesus as a narrative subject who taught and

¹²¹ Laura Feldt. 2011. "Religious Narrative and the Literary Fantastic: Ambiguity and Uncertainty in Ex. 1-18." *Religion* 41 (2), 251-283; p. 266-267.

¹²² Martin, *A Game of Thrones*, p. 23, 517, 522

¹²³ Martin, *A Clash of Kings*, p. 148.

¹²⁴ Martin, *A Clash of Kings*, p. 148-149; Martin, *A Storm of Swords*, p. 1078; Martin, *A Feast for Crows*, p. 744.

instructed his disciples and indirectly also the readers. The author tries to convince the reader by speaking through a character with an authoritative voice to other characters who listen to these teachings. The author hopes that readers will identify with these last characters and also be persuaded by the authoritative voice of the first character, and thus be convinced by the message of the narrator himself.¹²⁵

This mechanism can also occur in supernatural fiction and can have the same convincing effect as in religious narratives. Davidsen argues that the teacher discourse is persuasive for three reasons. First, readers always respond to authoritative (fictional) teacher figures in a certain way. Take for example the narrative subject Albus Dumbledore in *Harry Potter*. This character is seen as an authoritative teacher figure and readers assume that such a teacher figure is wise, sincere and has much knowledge on the subjects that he discusses. Readers therefore attach an aspect of reality to the discourse of these teacher figures, even though they are unaware of this process, and despite the facts that these characters are purely fictional and their authority is based on a fiction narrative. The second reason is actually that has already been discussed before; the teacher discourse can be persuasive because readers identify themselves with the characters that are the pupils of the teacher figure. This strategy can create the feeling that the reader or viewer is addressed directly, which makes the message blend into the actual world. The third reason given is that the teacher discourse is a narrative within the narrative. This discourse exists on its own textual level within a narrative framework and therefore it can be seen relatively independent from the actual narrative. This means that readers can still believe that the actual narrative is fiction, but can be convinced that the instruction of the teacher discourse can apply for the actual world.¹²⁶ In *A Song of Ice and Fire* the four most important religions of Westeros all have a personage or character that is a sort of teacher figure for this religion.

For the religion of the Old Gods, this is the three-eyed crow¹²⁷, a man who lives north of the Wall with the last Children of the Forest. He is the last greenseer and has power of nature, he can influence plants and animals, he can see through the faces of the different weirwoods in Westeros and has prophetic visions.¹²⁸ Because the three-eyed crow is the last greenseer, he needs someone to succeed him. This person is Brandon Stark, a son of Lord Eddard Stark, who also has the greensight and is a warg (although in the beginning of the narrative, Brandon does not know this yet). To lead Brandon to him, the greenseer uses dreams in which he appears as a three-eyed crow to Brandon, in order to show him the way. This is why the last greenseer is called the three-eyed crow.¹²⁹ When Brandon eventually finds him, the last greenseer is teaching Brandon how to use his magical gifts.¹³⁰ The Red Priestess Melisandre is the most important personage for the religion of the Lord of Light. In the narrative she becomes the most influential and important advisor of Stannis Baratheon.¹³¹ She believes that the prophecy is about Stannis and that he is the reborn Azor Ahai,

¹²⁵ Davidsen, *The Religious Affordance of Fiction*, paragraph 3.1. Evidence Mechanisms: Matter-of-fact Effect, Teacher Discourse, and Justification.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*

¹²⁷ In the TV series this person is called the three-eyed raven.

¹²⁸ Martin, *A Game of Thrones*, p. 736-739; Martin, *A Clash of Kings*, p. 440.

¹²⁹ Martin, *A Game of Thrones*, p. 163.

¹³⁰ Martin, *A Dance with Dragons*, p. 501-505.

¹³¹ Martin, *A Clash of Kings*, p. 18, 20.

chosen by the Lord of Light to defeat the Great Other in the battle that comes after the Long Summer. Therefore Melisandre helps Stannis to become king of the Seven Kingdoms by using magic and her magical powers are very real in the narrative; even Stannis, who does not really believe in the existence of the gods, is more and more convinced of the power of the Lord of Light.¹³² However, at the end of the fifth book, it becomes clear that Melisandre may have misinterpreted the prophecy and that Stannis is probably not the reborn Azor Ahai after all. This could make Melisandre less reliable as a teacher figure.¹³³

The other two religions of Westeros, the Faith of the Seven and the religion of the Drowned God, also have characters that are at the head of these religions. For the Faith of the Seven the High Septon is the head of the Faith. The character of the High Sparrow, the third High Septon in the novels, is the most important character for this religion. During the leadership of the High Sparrow, the outward appearance of the Faith changes, as he transforms this religious institution into a humble and sincere institute that cares for the poor and has justice as its highest priority. However, his convictions are very extreme and quite fundamentalistic, and he uses violence to achieve this transformation of the Faith. Although the Seven-faced god does not seem to have any real power in the narrative, the High Sparrow can be seen as a teacher figure because of his struggle against the disproportional wealth and corruption of the clergy, and the unequal and unjust position of the common people. The most important personage of the religion of the Drowned God is Aeron Greyjoy, the younger brother of Balon Greyjoy, king of the Iron Islands. After he almost drowned in a storm, he became a fervent adherent of the Drowned God and dedicated his life to this god. Because of his dedication, he soon became the head of the priesthood.¹³⁴ However, the power and existence of the Drowned God is questioned in the novels even by the Iron Men, who are the only adherents of this religion. Therefore Aeron Greyjoy is not really an authoritative teacher figure in *A Song of Ice and Fire*.

So far, it can be concluded that the religions of the Old Gods and the Lord of Light are presented by the narrator as real in the narrative world. Both these religions also have authoritative characters who teach about these religions, and the supernatural beings, to the characters with lesser knowledge who they are guiding. In the later parts of the narrative, the Faith of the Seven is also presented by an authoritative teacher figure. However, this religion lacks the matter-of-fact effect, because although the Seven-faced god is worshipped broadly and is the most important religion of Westeros, the narrative does not present this god as straightforwardly real. The religion of the Drowned God is even a better example of this. The matter-of-fact effect can thus reinforce the teacher discourse mechanism.

5.1.3. Justification of the Tale

This is the third veracity mechanism that is present in *A Song of Ice and Fire* is the *justification of the tale*. This mechanism occurs 'when the narrator in one way or the other informs the narratee about

¹³² Martin, *A Clash of Kings*, p. 162; Martin, *A Storm of Swords*, p. 500.

¹³³ In the television series, Stannis died in season five and therefore he cannot be the reborn Azor Ahai anymore.

¹³⁴ Martin, *A Clash of Kings*, p. 174-176; Martin, *A Feast for Crows*, p. 35.

his own sources of information'.¹³⁵ The authors of factual narratives, as for example books on history or news reports, justify their narratives by using sources. Fictional narratives do not need this because their stories are fiction and they have no real sources to refer too. But authors of fictional narratives can still use this strategy, and create fictional sources to imitate an important feature of factual narratives. This can be done by using an apparatus; this is a source and critical material that mostly includes a glossary and notes that go together with the scholarly edition of the text. The use of an apparatus can strengthen the authority of the narrator, for it can give readers the feeling that the narrator presents a historical account rather than a fictional narrative.¹³⁶ *A Song of Ice and Fire* has an extensive apparatus; it has various maps of the continents Westeros and Essos, and sometimes even of cities. All books have appendixes, which present all great and minor houses, as well as other groups of Westeros and Essos. Moreover, George R.R. Martin even wrote books about the world and the history of *A Song of Ice and Fire*.¹³⁷

A second strategy for the author to strengthen the authority of the narrator and the narrative is by the claim that the narrator does not speak on behalf of himself, but on behalf of someone else who has more authority. This can come in three forms; the prophetic disavowal of authorships is the narrator's claim to speak on behalf of a supernatural being, who gave him a divine revelation. The second form is the testimonial strategy, where the narrator uses witnesses who were closer to the narrated report and emphasize this use in his narrative. And the last form is the recovered manuscript strategy, in which the narrator claims that his story is based on an older, more sacred and/or authoritative recovered manuscript.¹³⁸ However, this second strategy is not used by Martin in *A Song of Ice and Fire*.

5.1.4. *Transtextual Veracity Mechanisms*

Unlike the previously discussed mechanisms, transtextual veracity mechanisms are not to be found inside the narrative, but in texts that are related to the narrative. The narrative acquires its meaning. Examples of these kind of texts are metatexts, paratexts and hypotexts. Paratexts are texts published together with the main narrative but are not part of the narrative, such as a foreword, the book cover, etc. Hypotexts are known religious narratives that serve as a source for fictional narratives. Metatexts are texts that reflect on the narrative, such as interviews or letters of the author. Supernatural fictional narratives can link the fictional world to the actual world by metatextual reflection, hypotextual foundation, and paratextual priming.¹³⁹ In *A Song of Ice and Fire*, especially metatextual reflection is used, as George R.R. Martin has given many interviews that reflect on the narrative.

¹³⁵ Davidsen, "The Religious Affordance of Fiction", paragraph 3.1. Evidence Mechanisms: Matter-of-fact Effect, Teacher Discourse, and Justification.

¹³⁶ Ibid.

¹³⁷ Geogerrmartin.com, 'Books: Song of Ice and Fire'.

¹³⁸ Davidsen, "The Religious Affordance of Fiction", paragraph 3.1. Evidence Mechanisms: Matter-of-fact Effect, Teacher Discourse, and Justification.

¹³⁹ Davidsen, "The Religious Affordance of Fiction", paragraph 3.3. Transtextual Anchoring: Paratextual Priming, Hypotextual Foundation, and Metatextual Reflection.

In some of his interviews, he talks about religion in general and the religions in his novels. Martin says that he is not religious, although he calls himself a lapsed Catholic and he finds spirituality and religion very fascinating. Martin believes that religion is an important part of the real world and should therefore also be part of the narrative world.¹⁴⁰ About the religions in the books, Martin says that the readers are free to wonder which religion is more credible, and which teachings and practices of certain religions are more valid in comparison to other religions. Because, says Martin, this is also what happens in our actual world; there are many religions, and the truth of these religions is questioned as well. He also states that in *A Song of Ice and Fire*, no gods are likely to appear in Westeros, not more than they already do now. Therefore, the relations between the magical actions and power and the religions that is something that the reader can figure out by himself.¹⁴¹

Besides interviews with Martin, there are also other metatexts that can be linked to the narrative and that are important for the reception of the story. An example is various blogs by readers who link the fictional world to the actual world by explaining which narrative religion is based on real religions of our own world. On many of blogs, forums and even special Wikipedia sites, made by well-informed *A Song of Ice and Fire* and *Game of Thrones* fans, claims are made that the religions of Westeros and Essos borrow certain religious ideas and practices from religions of the real world, and interviews with Martin confirm these claims.¹⁴² As was discussed earlier, the religion of the Old Gods is based on the pagan and Celtic belief systems, blended with fantasy elements. The Faith of the Seven is inspired by the medieval Catholic Church, the Drowned God is loosely modeled on Norse religious and mythical systems, and the religion of the Lord of Light is based on Zoroastrianism. Martin says in an interview that he likes the idea of the duality of Zoroastrianism, because it makes more sense in our real world that there is an evil god who is responsible for all the bad and horrible things that are happening in this world.¹⁴³ These various metatexts on narrative religions inspired by real religions link the fictional world with the actual world, and in this way readers are more likely to read the story of supernatural fiction as a narrative about the actual world.

5.1.5. Onomastic Anchoring

This strategy, called *onomastic anchoring* by Davidsen, links the fictional world to the actual world on the story level by letting characters, events and places from the real world show up in the narrative. Certain aspects of the actual world overlap with the narrative world and this can produce an aura of factuality around the fictional narrative. Religious narratives use this mechanism often and an example can be found in the Gospels. In Luke, the narrator refers to historical places, persons and time and this creates the idea that his narrative is real. This veracity mechanism can also be used by supernatural fiction although these narratives do not refer to the real world but to a fictional world.¹⁴⁴ *A Song of Ice and Fire* does not have any onomastic anchoring, but Martin did say that his

¹⁴⁰ Interviews with George R.R. Martin by M. Gilmore 2014, and J. Hibberd, 2011.

¹⁴¹ Interview with George R.R. Martin by C.J. Anders, 2011.

¹⁴² Interview with George R.R. Martin by D. Anthony, 2011.

¹⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ Davidsen, "The Religious Affordance of Fiction", paragraph 3.2. Anchoring Mechanisms within the Narrative: Author-Narrator Conflation, Reader Inscription, Onomastic Anchoring, and Thematic Mirroring.

fictional world is based on medieval Europe and that the war between the five kings is inspired by the Wars of the Roses, a series of wars for the control of England.¹⁴⁵

5.1.6. Author-Narrator Conflation, Reader Inscription and Thematic Mirroring

On the narration level, three other veracity mechanisms can be found. However, these are not present in *A Song of Ice and Fire*. The *author-narrator conflation* is one of these mechanisms and to understand this concept, we return to the communication model that is discussed in chapter two. The communication model consists of two levels: outside the narrative the level of communication (the author to the reader) and inside the narrative the narration/enunciation level (the narrator to the narratee). Normally in fictional texts, the author is on a different level than the narrator because the author is a personage of our own actual world and the narrator of the fictional world. The author-narrator conflation is a strategy that undoes the separation between these two levels, and therefore the narrative can be interpreted in the light of the real world instead of the fictional.¹⁴⁶ Davidsen argues that this type of anchorage mechanisms is probably the most effective because 'it challenges fictional convention in the most direct way',¹⁴⁷ as readers expect this difference between the author and the narrator. For the very same reason, a feature of factuality is that the author and narrator are the same person. If readers regard the author and narrator as the same person, they can consider the information that the author is telling about the supernatural beings to refer to or to be real for our actual world as well.¹⁴⁸

Another strategy, the *reader inscription*, is similar to the author-narrator conflation, only here the narrator connects the story and thus the fictional world to the actual world of the reader in space or time. One way to do this is when the author directly and explicitly addresses an implied or generic reader through the narrator, by which the boundary between the narrative's world and the reader's world becomes indistinct.¹⁴⁹ Another way of reader inscription that can be used to link the world of the reader with the story in the fictional world, is through extended prolepsis. Davidsen explains this term as 'the inscription of the reader's present in the narrative's foreshadowed future'¹⁵⁰. An example of this can be found in the Gospels again, where Jesus speaks about the future, which is a time beyond the narrative itself and a reader can interpret these words as a truth for his own present. The last veracity mechanism is called *thematic mirroring* and through this strategy the author can push the reader in a certain direction on how to interpret the narration, by giving hints on the story level. This can be done through a narrative that is told by a character within the narrative framework and one can think of Jesus and his parables. The narrative that is told is

¹⁴⁵ Article on *Game of Thrones* by B. Milne, 2014.

¹⁴⁶ Davidsen, "The Religious Affordance of Fiction", paragraph 3.2. Anchoring Mechanisms within the Narrative: Author-Narrator Conflation, Reader Inscription, Onomastic Anchoring, and Thematic Mirroring.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

thematically linked to the main narrative and therefore can influence the interpretation of the story level.¹⁵¹

5.2. Veracity Mechanisms Working Together and the Mechanisms of *A Song of Ice and Fire*

Some of these ten veracity mechanisms work on the story level and others on the narration level. For supernatural fiction to afford religious use, the rhetorical strategy, the matter-of-fact effect, is fundamental. But only veracity mechanisms on the story level are not enough. To afford religious use, supernatural fiction also needs veracity mechanisms on the narration level, as is one of Davidsen's tentative conclusions. Another tentative conclusion is that there are some mechanisms that are more persuasive; Davidsen thinks that especially the teacher discourse, author-narrator conflation, and the reader inscription mechanism are powerful. When the two different types of veracity mechanisms work together, as for example the matter-of-fact effect and the teacher discourse, the reality of the supernatural beings on the story level is strengthened by the mechanism on the narration level, because on this level the link with the actual world can be interpreted as real. This may cause the narrative to be read as a veracious and a factual story.

To summarize, *A Song of Ice and Fire* has some important veracity mechanisms; the matter-of-fact effect and the teacher discourse. These are especially at work in the narrative religions of the Old Gods and the Lord of Light. The novels also make use of justification; the books have an apparatus that can strengthen the authority of the narrator and can make the fictional narrative look more real. Outside the text, many metatexts can be found on *A Song of Ice and Fire* that reflect on the narrative of the books.

¹⁵¹ Davidsen, "The Religious Affordance of Fiction", paragraph 3.2. Anchoring Mechanisms within the Narrative: Author-Narrator Conflation, Reader Inscription, Onomastic Anchoring, and Thematic Mirroring.

Chapter 6: Conclusion and Reflection

Tell him that the old powers are waking, that he faces giants and wargs and worse. Tell him that the trees have eyes again.

- Said by Qhorin Halfhand to Jon Snow in: George R.R. Martin, *A Clash of Kings*, p. 944.

The comparison between George R.R. Martin and J.R.R. Tolkien is striking; of course they are both famous because of the great work of fantasy novels they have written and the fictional worlds they invented. But there are also many differences, especially in the way characters are portrayed and the realism of the events in the books. The world described by Tolkien is mostly divided in two parts; good and evil. This is also true for the events and characters in this story; all of them are either good or evil. However in Martin's *A Song of Ice and Fire* series, the characters and events are much more complicated. Characters in this narrative are more egocentric. They can do both good and bad, their decision on which side to play often depends on what outcome is best for this specific character. But the most interesting difference lies outside the actual texts; Tolkien's books gave rise to a fiction-based religion while the fantasy novels of Martin did not.

The novels by Martin are therefore still regarded as a fictional texts, while the works of Tolkien are regarded, by some readers at least, as a religious narrative or in any case as a fictional narrative that can afford religious use. For a text to give rise to a fiction-based religion, and thus to afford religious use, the text needs to imitate the distinctive features of religious narratives. The fictional text should contain information about supernatural beings and provide narrative religion on the story level. On the narration level, the fictional narrative has to present the supernatural beings and the relationship between them and humans as real, and something that can become an aspect of the actual world. To imitate these features of religious narratives, Davidsen argues that fictional texts can use certain rhetorical mechanisms; textual features that are used by religious narratives as well. These textual features are needed to make the text veracious, and are therefore called 'veracity mechanisms'.

A Song of Ice and Fire certainly has two of these distinctive features; the novels tell about various religions with all their own gods, doctrine and practices, and some of them have real power in the narrative world. There are certain characters that seem to have some sort of relationship with their god(s). As was discussed in chapter five, two of the veracity mechanisms, the matter-of-fact effect and the teacher discourse, are present in the narrative religions of *the Old Gods of the Forest* and *the Lord of Light*. Both religions are presented by the narrator as real in the fictional world by showing the powers of the Old Gods and R'hllor in the texts. Both religions also have authoritative characters; the three-eyed crow for the religion of the Old Gods and Melisandre for the religion of the Lord of Light. Both these characters have a connection with their god(s) and teach or consult other characters with lesser knowledge about these supernatural beings and their powers.

Another veracity mechanism used by the novels to strengthen the authority of the narrator is justification; the use of apparatus, the various maps, appendixes and even extra books written about the history of the Known World, all of which can give the readers the feeling that the narrator is presenting a real world in the fictional narrative. Outside of the text, various metatexts can be found that state that most of the narrative religions are inspired by real religions; the religion of the Old Gods is, for example, inspired by animism, Celtic religious systems and pagan beliefs, while the religion of R'hllor is based on Zoroastrianism. The use of these real religions for the fictional religions links the actual world to the fictional world. George R.R. Martin also said in an interview that he likes the idea of the duality of Zoroastrianism, which he also uses for the religion of the Lord of Light. Martin said that it makes more sense in our real world that there is an evil god besides a good god, who is responsible for all the bad things that are happening in our world. This suggests Martin's preference for the religion of R'hllor, which again links the fictional world with the real world. This, in turn, can make readers more likely to read the fictional narrative as a text about the actual world.

That *A Song of Ice and Fire* did not give rise to a religion, even though the text contains information about supernatural beings and narrative religion, leads to the question of why this narrative actually did not give rise to a fiction-based religion? When we return to the narratological tools we used in the previous chapters, it can be concluded that *A Song of Ice and Fire* misses some veracity mechanisms. The novels are fictional texts that tell of a fictional world; a major difference with religious narratives, which claim to speak about the real world. Does this mean that *A Song of Ice and Fire* has enough veracity mechanisms on the *story* level, on that which is said, namely the presence of supernatural beings and narrative religion, but does not have enough veracity mechanisms on the *narration* level, on the way in which that is said? That it misses a link between the fictional and the actual world, between the author and the narrator, between the reader and the narratee by which a fictional narrative can be read as a factual story, as is one of Davidsen's tentative conclusions?

It was discussed that the veracity mechanisms used in religious narratives can also be used in supernatural fiction, by imitating these rhetorical strategies. In some cases this leads to the religious affordance of fiction as *Lord of the Rings* and *Star Wars*. But these two examples of supernatural fiction that gave rise to fiction-based religions do not use all the ten veracity mechanisms of Davidsen's theory, and they also both use different mechanisms. For example, *Star Wars* has the matter-of-fact effect, the metatextual reflection and the teacher discourse mechanism, which are very important for the religious affordance of *Star Wars*. In the novels of Tolkien, however, all mechanisms present, except for the teacher discourse. In this case, the veracity mechanism author-narrator conflation is essential for the religious affordance of this text.¹⁵² This means that there is not one formula of veracity mechanisms that can make supernatural fiction to afford religious use.

When we return to Davidsen's tentative conclusions, we can understand the importance of the veracity mechanisms on the two different levels of narrative. Supernatural fiction that only has mechanisms on the story level does not afford religious use, while text that also include veracity mechanisms on the narration level, do. Additionally, some veracity mechanisms are more powerful;

¹⁵² Davidsen, "The Religious Affordance of Fiction", paragraph 5. Four Tentative Conclusions.

and *A Song of Ice and Fire* misses some of these powerful and persuasive veracity mechanisms on the narration level, such as author-narrator conflation and reader inscription. However, *A Song of Ice and Fire* has the same veracity mechanisms present in the text as *Star Wars*; the matter-of-fact effect that is fundamental, the teacher discourse, which is a powerful and persuasive veracity mechanism on the narration level, and the metatextual anchorage. The novels by Martin even contain one more mechanism than *Star Wars*; justification. This means that *A Song of Ice and Fire* includes veracity mechanisms that could make the text afford religious use. And yet, this has not happened; there is no fiction-based religion been found on these novels.

Although *Star Wars* did give rise to a fiction-based religion and Martin's novels did not, this does not mean that the narratological theory or the tentative conclusions of Davidsen are wrong. As was discussed earlier, Davidsen states that the veracity mechanisms could help explain why some supernatural fiction afford religious use and why others not. Secondly, he suggests that some mechanisms are more powerful, and that a fictional narrative needs mechanisms on the story as well as on the narration level to afford religious use. These conclusions explain why *Star Wars* and *Lord of the Rings* did give rise to a fiction-based religion and why *Harry Potter* did not. This means that the narratological theory of Davidsen is useful.

While the same veracity mechanisms are at work in *Star Wars* and *A Song of Ice and Fire*, their outcome is different. This can mean a few things; first, it is possible that although Davidsen's theory is not wrong, it is not strong enough to explain all sort of supernatural fiction that did not give rise to a fiction-based religion, and should therefore be refined. Secondly, it is possible that Davidsen's theory is correct but that the veracity mechanisms are not as strong in *A Song of Ice and Fire* as is the case with *Star Wars*. Third, it could be that Davidsen's theory is correct, that the veracity mechanisms are strong enough, and that *A Song of Ice and Fire* does afford religious use; there is no fiction-based religion yet, but this may come in time. For example, it could be that the teacher discourse mechanism, which is very essential for the religious affordance of *A Song of Ice and Fire* as it is for *Star Wars*, is too weak. This can be due to the fact that there are multiple religions in the books, that there are various authoritative characters, like the three-eyed crow and Melisandre, and that the authority of these characters is sometimes doubted as well.¹⁵³ It could also be because the books as well as the television series are not finished yet. When the prophecy of the Lord of Light about the great battle that is to come will become true in the narrative, and the powers of this god and his priests grows throughout the coming books, this could strengthen the matter-of-fact and even the teacher discourse mechanism.

Besides the teacher discourse and the unfinished narrative, it could also be that the metatextual anchorage mechanism is not strong enough to convince the readers of the veracity of the narrative religion in *A Song of Ice and Fire*. Although Martin has admitted that the Old Gods and the Lord of Light are inspired by religions of the real world, and he has said that he prefers the religion of R'hllor because of its duality, he also mentioned not to be religious and that the readers have to sort out for themselves how to interpret the relations between the magical actions, powers and the religions. A final reason that could explain why there is no fiction-based religion on *A Song of*

¹⁵³ In the fifth book, the statement of Melisandre that Stannis Baratheon is the reborn Azor Ahai and will fulfil the prophecy, is more and more doubted. In the television series, Stannis even dies in season five.

Ice and Fire yet, is that it takes some time for a fictional text to become a fiction-based religion. The first *Star Wars* movie came out in 1977, while Jediism only developed as a visible and organized religious movement in the mid 1990's with the upcoming mass access to the Internet.¹⁵⁴ The first *A Song of Ice and Fire* book was published in 1996, but there are still two books coming and the television series only started in 2011. It could be that some time is needed for a fiction-based religion on *A Song of Ice and Fire* to come into existence. There is, in any case, enough fandom on the books as well as on the television series.

In conclusion it can be said that the fact that there is no fiction-based religion on *A Song of Ice and Fire* does not necessarily mean that Davidsen's theory is incorrect. It seems, for now, that the veracity mechanisms that are present in the novels are not strong enough for this narrative to afford religious use. This, too, depend on the two books that still need to be written; it could be that finishing the story strengthens some powerful veracity mechanisms, such as the teacher discourse. Or even new veracity mechanisms could be introduced in the text, which could make the narrative more convincing to afford religious use. But especially stronger or more veracity mechanisms on the narration level are necessary; *A Song of Ice and Fire* presents enough supernatural beings and narrative religion, it only needs a stronger link from the fictional world to the actual world for the text to afford religious use.

But when it turns out that no fiction-based religion will eventually emerge from the *A Song of Ice and Fire* novels, the theory of Davidsen will need some refinement, so this theory can explain why supernatural fiction with weak veracity mechanisms does not afford religious use. And so this theory can still be of relevance for the research field of fiction-based religions. Another interesting topic to examine is to find out what other aspects, besides a fictional text that afford religious use, are needed for a fiction-based religion to develop. It could be that when these fictional narratives are made into films or television series, that this has some effect on the fandom, and maybe also on the development of a fiction-based religion. Another aspect that can be of influence is the Internet; most of the fandom and communities of other fiction-based religion can be found online. Therefore it might be interesting to examine the relationship between Online Religion and fiction-based religion. Concluding, the narratological theory of Davidsen's is useful, but more extensive research on the subject of fiction-based religion and how supernatural fiction can afford religious use can be done.

¹⁵⁴ Davidsen, "From Star Wars to Jediism", p. 377.

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