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George R. R. Martin and the Two Dwarfs



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GEORGE R. R. MARTIN AND THE TWO DWARFS

Mia Harrison

Introduction

In 2011, George R. R. Martin's television series *Game of Thrones* was released to wide critical acclaim. The TV program and the literary series it is based upon (called *A Song of Ice and Fire*) have regularly been praised as notable examples of disability representation in pop culture—a significant acknowledgment considering how frequently the subject of disability is misrepresented or entirely absent in popular media. When characters with disabilities do find their way onto the page or screen, they are regularly portrayed as something to fear, laugh at or pity.¹ Disability in media is overwhelmingly defined by society's negative perception of it, and when allowed to present this perception unchallenged, writers (intentionally or otherwise) encourage audiences to maintain these harmful values.

It is important to investigate prevailing depictions of disability in pop culture in order to separate nuanced and constructive (or deconstructive) disability representation from the plethora of stereotypes audiences are regularly faced with. Critical disability studies allows audiences to understand textual representations of disability by critiquing the cultural construct of the ideal body. Crucial to critical disability studies is the sociopolitical analysis of disability. The social model of disability recognizes that society caters to a particular type of body and famously makes a distinction between what is considered an impairment of the mind or body, and the social barriers erected by a society that deems impairments to be undesirable.² Thus, disability should not be thought of as an inherent state, but rather the product of a society that fails to accommodate bodies that do not meet an assumed level of normativity.³

Though the social model encourages important critical enquiry into the validity of “impairment” as an inherent state, Mitchell and Snyder posit a cultural analysis of disability that may be more useful when investigating the role of fictional media in both presenting extant cultural values, and establishing structures for future social paradigms. The cultural model of disability recognizes the relationship between “disability” as a product of discrimination and the environmental and cultural obstacles that people with disabilities necessarily face.⁴ Characters with disabilities rarely occupy a significant role in literature and media, and when critics study these characters, they often interpret them metaphorically, failing to account for the political discourses that guide these representations.⁵ The cultural model critiques narrative efforts to portray the problem of social disablement while still exploring the experience of living with a disability. An example of this can be seen in the riding saddle designed by Martin's Tyrion Lannister, a protagonist with

dwarfism, and how it empowers a boy who is emasculated after losing his ability to ride with a regular saddle. Stories such as this recognize the practical difficulty of physical disability, while situating it within the wider social problems of ableism and patriarchy. Narratives that fail to recognize such a relationship often present characters who occupy a generic Otherness, without the nuance of personality or personal history.⁶

Imaginative fiction in particular has the unique ability to explore sociopolitical issues in ways that disrupt hegemonic narratives without presenting an obvious threat to audiences' ideologies. The fantasy genre can be defined by its use of magical or supernatural devices, characters and worlds, and its ability to present the "real world in disguise" encourages audiences to imaginatively engage with narratives in order to understand the social structures and rules textually presented, using their own lived experiences as a guide.⁷ *Game of Thrones* and *A Song of Ice and Fire* are interesting case studies because while they offer problematic representations of disability, they also present examples of how imaginative fiction can live up to the potential of the genre. Of his (literally) thousands of characters, Martin is renowned for presenting more characters with disabilities than other fantasy series of such popularity.⁸ In addition to his critically acclaimed character, Tyrion Lannister, Martin provides audiences with a boy who is paralyzed, a scholar who is blind, a soldier who loses a hand, a man with a learning disability, among many others. Despite this, both the show and books still fall victim to the use of simplistic disability tropes and the sheer length and detail of the series provides plenty of opportunities for more problematic examples of disability representation.

As an adaptation, *Game of Thrones* shifts the form of the original story from literature to television media and thus makes some necessary (author-approved) changes to plot and character. Though Linda Hutcheon claims in her work, *A Theory of Adaptation*, that the dramatization of the novel requires a distillation of size and complexity, I argue that this is not the case with *Game of Thrones*.⁹ Indeed many characters arguably gain complexity, and though some elements are taken out of the story, new ones are also added. This is made possible primarily by the length of time given (the series enters its seventh season of ten hour-long episodes in 2017) and the limited censorship imposed by its network, HBO. It is therefore interesting to note which characters do not make the cut.

Tyrion Lannister, one of the shows most beloved characters and a man with dwarfism, is an excellent (though we will see imperfect) example of complex disability representation in pop culture. Absent entirely from the show is Penny, another character with dwarfism who is a woman. Together, these characters represent much of what the wide spectrum of disability representation has to offer. This comparison also serves to highlight a key failing of many popular fantasy stories—a notable lack of intersectional disability representation. This chapter is not interested in medium specificity and the conventions unique to different methods of storytelling. Given the popularity of *A Song of Ice and Fire* (both before and since the creation of *Game of Thrones*), it is useful to study this source material to understand why Tyrion is such a strong character and Penny comparatively less so. To explore both the potential of the fantasy genre, and some of its weaknesses, this chapter therefore focuses on these two most prominent dwarfs of Martin's *A Song of Ice and Fire*.¹⁰

The Function of Disability in Narrative Fiction

Disability has two primary functions in fiction: as a standard form of characterization and as a metaphorical device.¹¹ In both of these cases, physical disability and behavioral differences function as simple visual cues to distinguish a character or concept, without necessarily producing a complex subject. The disabled body might stand as a narrative emblem of the physical limitations of the "normal" body, or as a reminder to the audience of the fragility of their situation,

but it rarely acknowledges the impossibility of the ideal body—that normality functions within the social and historical limitations of its time and location.

The ideal body is enabled by the minoritization of difference, where the concerns of those who are “different” are claimed as limited to a specific group and not impacting the wider community. When “difference” is legitimized as a valid concept, and not simply the product of a socially maintained notion of normalcy, certain humans and qualities are categorized as “normal,” encouraging the social degradation of individuals who possess other qualities. This social categorization is known as “stigmatization,” and crucially, it is the dominant group in society that has the power to define which differences are inherently inferior.¹²

Most stigmatized characters are denied the right to actively impact the perception society has of them.¹³ Resistance culture in fiction allows characters with disabilities to reject the dominant paradigms that would mark them as less valuable, giving them the power to create their own autonomy.¹⁴ In resistance culture, authors create an empowering identity by rejecting hegemonic discourse and encouraging “freakery” as a natural part of the human experience, rather than something that separates a character from the rest of humanity.¹⁵ Freakery is not an inherent trait of an individual; rather, it is the celebration or exploitation of an individual’s bodily difference, framed by a set of cultural expectations.¹⁶ This is especially powerful in fantasy narratives, where freakery is employed frequently by the genre as a spectacle of Otherness. By rejecting the conventional usage within the genre, and instead integrating freakery into the politics of the narrative, fantasy writers have the ability to invite the audience and the “freak” to stand side by side, gazing in upon the social constructions that produce stigmatization.

Over the last few decades, scholars have begun to acknowledge the subversive power of fictional depictions of disability.¹⁷ Transgressive reappropriation recognizes how rejecting a euphemistic lexicon and reclaiming derogatory descriptions can force audiences to face their own ignorance and cultural violence. Though bodies viscerally described as “twisted” or “mutilated” encourage the audience’s fascination with physical difference, this does not mean representation of such characters is necessarily exploitative. Martin’s Tyrion Lannister is one such example of this; though Martin often confronts readers with details descriptions of Tyrion’s body, these are always framed by the personal experiences and prejudices of the various characters voicing them.

Conversely, *A Song of Ice and Fire* also presents its readers with a motley collection of “freaks” for the reader to enjoy at a simpler level. These minor characters are distinct from Tyrion, as their difference is not coded as “disability,” but instead using a fantasy lexicon, establishing them as a viable source of entertainment. By saying someone *is* a type of person rather than *having* a particular quality, they are established as fundamentally different, creating a greater social distance between the “normal” viewer and the stigmatized subject.¹⁸ Fantasy writers might thus be forgiven this use of “coding,” as such social categorization can be excused as a convention of the genre.¹⁹

The freak has the dual role of reassuring the audience of their normality, and standing as a symbol of freedom from culturally enforced homogeneity, allowing the audience to identify with subjects from a safe distance.²⁰ One way that Martin integrates this fascination of the freak into *A Song of Ice and Fire* is through the use of canonical mythology and folklore, evident in lines such as, “He says that it is good luck to rub the head of a dwarf.”²¹ These mythologies are generally exaggerated to highlight the absurdity of such beliefs, as demonstrated in Tyrion’s retort: “Tell him that it is even better luck to suck on a dwarf’s cock.” The functional use of disability in fiction is a key component of “narrative prosthesis,” a phrase used to describe the historical exploitation of the disabled body as a source of cultural resistance or representational power in fictional narratives.²² Narrative prosthesis allows us to explore the contrast between the way society seeks to minimize and hide disability, while literature exploits the visibility of physical disability as a literary device. The purpose of this is not to condemn fictional narratives, but

rather to acknowledge the complex relationship between stories and reality, and understand the ability of fiction to impact the experiences of people with disabilities.

Tyrion Lannister

The reader is first introduced to Tyrion Lannister through the eyes of Jon Snow, a point-of-view character in *A Song of Ice and Fire*:

Tyrion Lannister, the youngest of Lord Tywin's brood and by far the ugliest. All that the gods had given Cersei and Jaime, they had denied Tyrion. He was a dwarf, half his brother's height, struggling to keep pace on stunted legs. His head was too large for his body, with a brute's squashed-in face beneath a swollen shelf of brow. One green eye and one black one peered out from under a lank fall of hair so blond it seemed white.²³

Martin's description of Tyrion demonstrates how affective depictions of freakery can be used subversively. The word "dwarf" is generally associated with classic fantasy representations such as the seven companions of Snow White or the characters of a Tolkien novel.²⁴ Martin confronts this expectation by reminding his audience that Tyrion is not another species—he is as human as his brother and sister. Where Cersei and Jaime are tall and beautiful, Tyrion is short and ugly. Unlike his siblings, Tyrion waddles and struggles to keep up with the party due to his "stunted legs." Martin's dwarfs cannot be considered quaint and inherently "different" creatures, as most other dwarfs in the fantasy genre are; they are human beings, and thus will always be compared to the "normal" humans who surround them.

The dwarf is typically a supporting character, animated and interesting, but only in its peculiarities and never valuable beyond fitting its narrowly defined role in the narrative. In the tradition of popular literature, we would expect Tyrion to remain within the personal narratives of other characters, always being peered in on by other characters, but never given the opportunity to voice his own opinions.²⁵ Tyrion, however, quickly unravels this expectation. He is witty and entirely aware of his position in society. Shortly after his introduction in the story he quips, "Dwarfs don't have to be tactful. Generations of capering fools in motley have won me the right to dress badly and say any damn thing that comes into my head."²⁶ Tyrion's self-deprecating humor takes the power out of the insults of other characters, and his witty observations quickly mark him as one of the most perceptive characters in the series. In his own words, he has a "realistic grasp of [his] own strengths and weaknesses," and so focuses his energy on improving his knowledge of the world he lives in.²⁷ Tyrion's comments demonstrate that he understands the potential of transgressive reappropriation, and that his jokes should not be considered off-handed remarks. Rather, they are a considered and targeted commentary on the way he is treated by society.

Tyrion is an imperfect character, and in many ways it is his flaws that endear him to audiences as a realistic and complex human being. He reflects early in the series how he becomes "uncomfortably aware of his deformities and shortcomings" whenever his father looks at him, displaying the first signs of a long-borne conflict that eventually escalates to patricide.²⁸ The relationship between father and son is bitter and painful. It is not until *A Storm of Swords* that Tyrion (after being falsely accused of murdering the King) is finally able to articulate to his father the unfairness of the way he has been treated: "I am guilty of a more monstrous crime ... I was born. I lived. I am guilty of being a dwarf, I confess it ... I have been on trial for being a dwarf my entire life."²⁹

Tyrion attempts to force his father and the rest of the court to admit their prejudices and the part they play in his trial, but is met with laughter and contempt. Though his father claims he is

not on trial for being a dwarf, the reader understands this as false; Tyrion's trial elucidates the collective prejudices of the society he lives in, where presenting the freak as a straw man is more valuable than real justice.

In addition to the difficult relationship with his father, Tyrion's encounters with women are also deeply impacted by his experiences of navigating a prejudiced society as a dwarf. Prostitution is frequently used as a substitute for romantic relationships, yet even this is fraught with political awkwardness, as demonstrated in *A Game of Thrones* when he requests the services of a prostitute:

“Be certain that you tell her who I am, and warn her of what I am.” Jyck had not always troubled to do that. There was a look the girls got in their eyes sometimes when they first beheld the lordling they'd been hired to pleasure ... a look that Tyrion Lannister did not ever care to see again.³⁰

Though Tyrion generally appears to be comfortable with who he is, the reality of stigmatization still has the ability to hurt him, especially when sex is involved. Prostitution constitutes a form of escapism for Tyrion, where he is able to play the role of a man unburdened by the social stigma of being a dwarf. These encounters allow Tyrion to put aside his sarcastic and confronting commentary, and instead construct a situation where he can (temporarily) pretend the hegemonic values of normalcy do not affect him.³¹

Yet even within his performative interactions with prostitution, Tyrion does not imagine that he is not a dwarf—instead he simply pretends that his corporeal difference does not matter. Tyrion embraces the subversive nickname the prostitute Shae gives him, delighting in being called her “giant of Lannister.” His ability to accept himself and reject the cultural scripts assigned to him, even during interactions that are inherently constructed and playful, suggests that at his core, Tyrion does not wish he was not a dwarf; rather, he wishes that his society accepted his body as normal. This distinction is at the heart of what sets Tyrion apart from so many popular depictions of disability. Tyrion rejects the idea that disability is a problem, and instead reminds audiences that he is simply a man whom society has refused to accommodate.

With Tyrion Lannister, Martin does what few other notable fantasy authors do: he creates a complex, relatable and strong yet flawed character with a disability. Tyrion is completely unlike the dwarfs of *Snow White* or *The Hobbit*—in fact, he is widely regarded as the best-written character of the series. Tyrion constitutes the “politicized prodigy,” a character able to claim his own identity, distinct from the colonized body of the freak show.³² He rejects the romanticization of disability, and resists the perilous temptation of viewing disability and pain as “more real” than the able body.³³ Tyrion's identity incorporates the lived experiences of having a disability in the culture he belongs to, but is not limited to such a definition and so is transgressive without escaping the reality of prejudice. In this way, Tyrion stands out as a character uninhibited by the strict disability tropes of the fantasy genre.

Penny

In contrast, Penny's primary role in the series is to provide a foil for Tyrion. First introduced as a court entertainer, Penny is immediately established as a source of embarrassment for Tyrion, due to the foolish and sometimes grotesque ways she presents herself. While as dwarfs, both characters face similar social and political obstacles, Penny's attitude and social situation are distinctly different to Tyrion's: where Tyrion resists cultural assumptions of his value in society, Penny literally performs her role with keen attention to the expectations of those around her. When she pleads, “We have to make them like us. If we give them a show, it will help them forget,” she explicitly vocalizes her perceived role in society.³⁴ While today the court-jester dwarf is

seemingly unique to fantasy literature, contemporary society continues to accept this caricature as a reality. The “dwarf” is first introduced to children through stories, and thus becomes the first point of reference for most people when they meet a person with dwarfism.³⁵ Though readers are positioned to pity Penny’s interpretation of her value, and consequently admire Tyrion for transgressing such an expectation, in reality, Penny is demonstrating how perceptive she is of the way disability narratives dictate her role in society. Her eagerness to conform to her expected role might seem undignified, but it allows her to safely navigate a prejudiced and often violent society.

Though Penny is superficially presented as a character with agency, her function in *A Song of Ice and Fire* suggests otherwise. She argues with Tyrion that to make others laugh, even through degrading actions (such as simulating crude sex acts with her brother), is “noble” and “honorable.”³⁶ This position is problematic in that it assumes that removing an individual from the category of “victim” provides them with the freedom to consent to exploitation, degradation and oppression. Consent theory assumes that the relationship between an individual and society is by choice, which ignores conditions of birth and circumstance as major contributing factors to social power.³⁷ Additionally, lack of coercion is not enough to claim an individual’s consent; that individual must also have access to a range of meaningful choices that they have the sufficient mental capacity to evaluate, and they must be given time and space to make their choice.

Penny consistently makes choices that are dictated by her fear of, and desire to please “big people.” Even her (self-assigned) name betrays the impact of cultural prejudices: “pennies” and “groats” (the name of her brother) are the smallest and least valuable coins in *A Song of Ice and Fire*, displaying Penny’s incredibly low perception of her own self-worth. Penny’s attitudes should not be considered as isolated or purely literary; Goffman recounts a similar perspective in *Stigma*:

I once knew a dwarf who was a very pathetic example of this, indeed. She was very small, about four feet tall, and she was extremely well educated. In front of people, however, she was very careful not to be anything other than “the dwarf” ... Only when she was among friends, she could throw away her cap and bells and dare to be the woman she really was: intelligent, sad, and very lonely.³⁸

This anecdote presents a complicated perspective on “passing,” an idea that is usually used in disability politics to describe a person who is able to hide their disability and pass as “normal.” In Penny’s case, as well as the example given by Goffman, passing instead requires the subject to exaggerate the aspects of their disability that society understands and behave in a manner that will be accepted within the narrowly defined role they have been allowed.³⁹ A sense of identity beyond their disability is not permitted, nor is self-pride. Ableist discourses encourage people with disabilities to act only as they are expected to act—disabled, inferior and helpless. This serves only to protect the insecurities and suspicions of those around them who consider themselves to be “normal.” Though Martin has been praised by many for the complexity of characters such as Tyrion, the multitude of minor characters who fall within disability stereotypes suggests that audiences continue to be comforted by characters who do not stray too far from the familiar roles prescribed by society. This, perhaps, explains why characters with disabilities are so regularly limited to stereotypical depictions in popular culture.

Intersectional Disability Politics

In addition to Martin’s arguable exclusivity when it comes to complex disability representation, *A Song of Ice and Fire* is also significantly lacking in intersectional disability representation. To explore intersectionality in disability politics, it is useful to apply the framework of “feminist

disability studies,” a critical structure that broadens inquiry into how the many systems associated with disability and feminism operate together to grant power and privilege to the established dominant paradigm.⁴⁰ Feminist disability theory is able to challenge the current understanding of human diversity, multiculturalism and body politics, to go beyond the explicit disability tropes of fantasy literature and address the intersection of disability with gender, race, sexuality, class, culture and wealth. The interplay of various political identities, and how they construct and contradict each other, must be considered before the experiences of people living under multiple systems of oppression can be adequately represented.

Fictional women with disabilities can be seen as a barometer for current attitudes towards women with disabilities in society, which makes Penny a crucial subject for analysis, as the only named female character in *A Song of Ice and Fire* who is considered to be disabled.⁴¹ Beyond her submissive behavior towards her brother and father, she is generally presented as genderless. She successfully disguises herself as a male to attract less attention, but even when she is clearly female, she is not treated like any of the other female characters in the series (where even the “ugly” women are sexually objectified). Penny’s virginity is not a conscious choice, but rather a consequence of the stigma attached to her body and her personal belief that no “big person” could be sexually attracted to her. Though Martin has created many female characters who transgress traditional feminine roles, Penny is not one of them.⁴² Gender and sexuality are denied to her, just as they are regularly denied to people with disabilities by writers and society. Thus Penny exemplifies the social myth that women with disabilities are neither feminine nor sexual.

Though the strength of fantasy comes from its ability to interpret and reflect the real world, the imaginative nature of the genre also allows room for exploration of what is *possible* when it comes to intersectional representation. Martin as a writer has the agency to present Penny as a desirable and sexual being with dwarfism, but sexuality is offered only to Tyrion, who, though impacted by cultural prejudice, is allowed the opportunity to pursue his sexual desires. Indeed Tyrion, were he not a dwarf, would be the veritable poster child for privilege—he is a white, heterosexual, cisgendered male, favored with wealth, education and political power. Though the presentation of a highly successful character with a disability is undoubtedly positive, readers of *A Song of Ice and Fire* are provided with few stories of individuals with disabilities who also experience discrimination based on factors such as gender, poverty or ethnicity. This may, perhaps, allow for a more optimistic portrayal of disability, but it means that readers who are objects of intersectional discrimination are lacking representation among the thousands of named characters in the series.

Intersectionality is a challenging issue for writers to address, as the diversity of experiences can be compounded in its subjects, but it is a reality that many readers face. By compartmentalizing discrimination, Martin submits to the dominant ableist narratives of society: he treats instances of discrimination as isolated events, and does not connect these narratives to a larger story. While his treatment of dwarfs or women is portrayed as part of a larger culture of systemized oppression, Martin never links the two. He similarly never explores how other forms of discrimination (such as racial or homophobic bigotry) impact individuals with disabilities who are already targets of oppression.

Conclusion

Though the level of attention *A Song of Ice and Fire* affords disability marks it as a relevant subject for critical analysis, the praise attracted by the series shows that the fantasy genre still has far to go in achieving adequate disability representation. Martin’s frequent use of disability tropes demonstrates the comfort of the genre in relying on simplistic motifs and tried plot devices in place of detailed character development. Though Martin has succeeded in creating a number of well-developed characters beyond these tropes, many fantasy texts do not make this effort and there is still a great deal of work to be done in investigating how more fantasy writers treat narrative disability, when

they address the topic at all. A more universalizing view of disability is necessary, where issues concerning a particular difference are understood as important for a wide range of identities.

Exploring intersectional discrimination is one way that writers can draw together multiple narratives to expose the underlying prejudices of a society. The imaginative nature of the fantasy genre offers the flexibility to allow for alternate narratives; in a world featuring dragons and magic, there is surely room for a woman with dwarfism who expresses her gender identity and sexuality uninhabited or disabled characters who transgress their culturally assigned roles without the privileges of race, wealth, class and education. It is also interesting to note that while Tyrion has been lauded almost universally as an interesting and complex character, Penny's exclusion from the television adaptation means she has been largely forgotten. The question must therefore be asked: Is Penny ignored because of the weaknesses of her character, or are the stories of characters like Penny simply less important to audiences? Though it can be argued that Penny's flaws would have made for a potentially harmful television inclusion, many of the other characters have been rewritten for *Game of Thrones* in ways that greatly strengthen them.⁴³ Popular fantasy has the capacity to provide complex and constructive intersectional disability representation; if it manages to achieve this, it will better reflect the real and diverse lives of people with disabilities.

Notes

- 1 Heather Stuart, "Media Portrayal of Mental Illness and Its Treatments: What Effect Does It Have on People with Mental Illness?" *CNS Drugs* 20, no. 2 (2006): 99–106.
- 2 s. e. smith, "To Go Where No Ism Has Gone Before: Disability at the Final Frontier," in *Shattering Ableist Narratives*, WisCon Chronicles, Vol. 7, ed. JoSelle Vanderhooft (Seattle, WA: Aqueduct Press, 2013), 83–95; Stef Maruch, "Panel Musings: Body Acceptance—From All Sides," in *Shattering Ableist Narratives*, WisCon Chronicles, Vol. 7, ed. JoSelle Vanderhooft (Seattle, WA: Aqueduct Press, 2013), 189–194.
- 3 Lennard Davis, "Constructing Normalcy: The Bell Curve, the Novel, and the Invention of the Disabled Body in the Nineteenth Century," in *The Disability Studies Reader*, ed. Lennard Davis (New York: Routledge, 1997), 9–10.
- 4 David Mitchell and Sharon Snyder, *Cultural Locations of Disability* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010), 5–12.
- 5 Rosemarie Garland-Thomson, *Extraordinary Bodies: Figuring Physical Disability in American Culture and Literature* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), 9–10.
- 6 For more on disability stereotypes in literature, see Garland-Thomson, *Extraordinary Bodies*; David Mitchell and Sharon Snyder, *Narrative Prosthesis: Disability and the Dependencies of Discourse* (Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 2000); Barbara Baskin and Karen Harris, *Notes from a Different Drummer: A Guide to Juvenile Literature Portraying the Handicapped* (New York: R. R. Bowker, 1977); Emiliano C. Ayala, "'Poor Little Things' and 'Brave Little Souls': The Portrayal of Individuals with Disabilities in Children's Literature," *Literacy Research and Instruction* 39, no. 1 (2010): 103–117.
- 7 Maria Nikolajeva, *Reading for Learning: Cognitive Approaches to Children's Literature* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2014), 44.
- 8 Pascal Massie and Lauryn Mayer, "Bringing Elsewhere Home: *A Song of Ice and Fire's* Ethics of Disability," in *Studies in Medievalism*, ed. Karl Fugelso (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2014), 45–59.
- 9 Linda Hutcheon with Siobhan O'Flynn, *A Theory of Adaptation*, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2013), 36.
- 10 This chapter looks at the first five books of George R. R. Martin's *A Song of Ice and Fire* series published by Harper Voyager, London: *A Game of Thrones* (1996); *A Clash of Kings* (1998); *A Storm of Swords Part 1: Steel and Snow* (2000); *A Storm of Swords Part 2: Blood and Gold* (2000); *A Feast for Crows* (2005); and *A Dance with Dragons* (2011).
- 11 Mitchell and Snyder, *Narrative Prosthesis*, 4–6.
- 12 Erving Goffman, *Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity* (London: Penguin, 1963), 66.
- 13 s. e. smith, "Defining Disability in a World that Fears Disability," in *Shattering Ableist Narratives*, WisCon Chronicles, Vol. 7, ed. JoSelle Vanderhooft (Seattle, WA: Aqueduct Press, 2013).
- 14 Garland-Thomson, *Extraordinary Bodies*, 123.

- 15 Garland-Thomson, *Extraordinary Bodies*, 133.
- 16 Robert Bogdon, "The Social Construction of Freaks," in *Freakery: Cultural Spectacles of the Extraordinary Body*, ed. Rosemarie Garland-Thomson (New York: New York University Press, 1996), 24.
- 17 Mitchell and Snyder, *Narrative Prosthesis*, 35.
- 18 There is opportunity for further research into the distinction between difference marked as "disability" and fantastical difference in the fantasy genre. Fantasy coding may be theorized as a form of stigmatization used to distance fantasy narratives from disability discourses, or as a conscious resistance against the euphemistic language accepted in modern society, thus establishing the fantasy setting as distinct from a contemporary setting. For further reading on the shift to "people-first" language in contexts other than the fantasy genre, see Helena Halmari, "Political Correctness, Euphemism, and Language Change: The Case of 'People First,'" *Journal of Pragmatics* 43, no. 3 (2011): 828–840.
- 19 Martin's lexicon regarding disability is consistent with the language of the fantasy genre, where terms such as "dwarf" or "imp" are socially acceptable (though generally not welcomed by those to whom they are directed) within the context of the fictional society.
- 20 Loni Reynolds, "'The Mad Ones' and the 'Geeks': Cognitive and Physical Disability in the Writing of Jack Kerouac and Allen Ginsberg," *Journal of Literary and Cultural Disability Studies* 9, no. 2 (2015): 155–156.
- 21 Martin, *A Dance with Dragons*, 331.
- 22 Mitchell and Snyder, *Narrative Prosthesis*, 49.
- 23 Martin, *A Game of Thrones*, 48.
- 24 Leslie Fiedler, *Freaks: Myths & Images of the Secret Self* (New York: Touchstone, 1978), 43.
- 25 Davis, "Constructing Normalcy," 21.
- 26 Martin, *A Game of Thrones*, 53.
- 27 Martin, *A Game of Thrones*, 118.
- 28 Martin, *A Game of Thrones*, 590.
- 29 Martin, *A Storm of Swords 2: Blood and Gold*, 389.
- 30 Martin, *A Game of Thrones*, 655.
- 31 For further analysis of Tyrion's sexuality, see Charles Lambert, "A Tender Spot in My Heart: Disability in *A Song of Ice and Fire*," *Critical Quarterly* 57, no. 1 (2015): 20–33; and Massie and Mayer, "Bringing Elsewhere Home."
- 32 Garland-Thomson, *Extraordinary Bodies*, 131.
- 33 Tobin Siebers, "Disability in Theory: From Social Constructionism to the New Realism of the Body," *American Literary History* 13, no. 4 (2001): 749.
- 34 Martin, *A Dance with Dragons*, 616.
- 35 Fiedler, *Freaks*, 39.
- 36 Martin, *A Dance with Dragons*, 512.
- 37 David Gerber, "The 'Careers' of People Exhibited in Freak Shows: The Problems of Volition and Valorization," in *Freakery: Cultural Spectacles of the Extraordinary Body*, ed. Rosemarie Garland-Thomson (New York: New York University Press, 1996), 38–40.
- 38 Goffman, *Stigma*, 134.
- 39 Tobin Siebers, "Disability as Masquerade," *Literature and Medicine* 23, no. 1 (2004): 2–4.
- 40 Rosemarie Garland-Thomson, "Integrating Disability, Transforming Feminist Theory," *National Women's Studies Association Journal* 14, no. 3 (2002): 4.
- 41 For further reading on the relationship between women with disabilities in fiction and society, see Deborah Kent, "Disabled Women: Portraits in Fiction and Drama," in *Images of the Disabled, Disabling Images*, ed. Alan Gartner and Tom Joe (New York: Praeger, 1987), 47–63.
- 42 Notable examples include Arya and Brienne.
- 43 For example, Daenerys, Sansa and Yara (named Asha in the books) are all arguably stronger female characters in the television adaptation.