

Exploring Medieval Female Archetypes in *Game of Thrones*

Candy Ho Lok Tung

(Supervisor: Prof. Jason Gleckman)

Abstract

HBO's *Game of Thrones* (2011-) is an adaptation of the original novel series *Songs of Ice and Fire* by George R. R. Martin (1948-). It has since then replaced the novel series and become the focus of popular and academic discussion and criticism. The show has been known for complex plot, willingness to push through the boundaries of television and media. It has also presented itself as a mixture of fantasy, history and contemporary and even realistic portrayal of society.

The roles of men and women in Medieval literature and in the show often reflect the Medieval norms and standards in real life. A strong influence from and reference to the Medieval period can be observed in *Game of Thrones*. By looking into different Medieval female archetypes, one can see how the fantasy world resembles the history. Martin has created a complicated world where the characters are all in some sense, relatable to the audience. Just like us, the characters are bounded by duties, restrictions, and pressure. In such regard, Martin offers a chance for the audience to examine not just the complexities of history and high-fantasy realm, but also the societies we live in. *Game of Thrones* has portrayed a spectrum of female characters that can be fitted into different Medieval female archetypes, such as the Medieval warrior women and the evil women. Their multifaceted characteristics, struggles and maneuvering through societies or even politics are some of the ideas that are at heart of the story. *Game of Thrones* has therefore provided female role models in a world of complexity that resembles the history and the contemporary society. This paper aims to examine the Medieval female

archetypes in HBO's *Game of Thrones*, and how the female characters conform or break out from the traditional roles and the archetypes.

Reflections

This capstone project concludes my experience as an English Literature student in CUHK. The Literature courses that I have taken has provided me a good lens to view the world from a multitude of perspectives under guidance but without restriction. It allows me to experience things I may not otherwise ever experience. My education confronts me with perplexing contradictions: such as how Arts can be both beautiful and harmful, and how it can be used for the sake of pure artistic enjoyment but also bears various responsibilities when I study *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. It also requires me to delve into everything from as small as a grain of sand to something as big as Nature or as complex as the idea of morality and meaning of life. This capstone project is not just a chance for me to explore the topics that I am interested in, but also an intellectual experience to conclude my four years of education as a Literature student.