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“The Porning of High Medieval Fantasy: George R.R. Martin’s
A Song of Ice and Fire Series”

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To date, George R.R. Martin’s *A Song of Ice and Fire* series consists of five books: *A Game of Thrones* (1996), *A Clash of Kings* (1999), *A Storm of Swords* (2000), *A Feast for Crows* (2005), and *A Dance with Dragons* (2011). At least two more books are envisioned in the series, *The Winds of Winter* and *A Dream of Spring*, and perhaps an eighth. The series is a fantasy, set in the medieval settings of the Seven Kingdoms of Westeros and southern Free Cities of Essos beyond the narrow sea. The scope of the series is massive with thousands of characters, and the shortest of the five extent books is just over 800 pages while most are closer to a 1,000 pages and one exceeds 1,000 pages. In this fantasy medieval world, kings, usurpers, and queens fight for the Iron Throne which unites the Seven Kingdoms of Westeros. Though there seem to be cultures in Martin’s series where women have status and female sexuality is viewed positively (like the Summer Isles), the world Martin focuses on is one in which women, even queens and high born women, are repeatedly referred to as whores or cunts; women are dominated by men, often brutally; rape is normed as a *de facto* form of sexual relations between men and women; women have sex like men; a woman’s “no” really means “yes”; and some sexual violence is grotesque and sadistic. While Martin claims that he is just trying to

capture the realities of medieval sex, culture, and war (Brown), his “humilitainment” of women in particular smacks of the worst trends in contemporary porn and not of realistic sexual relations between medieval men and women.

The language choices Martin makes in the guise of realism are influenced by porn. In porn, “the viewer is openly encouraged—through the liberal use of terms like *bitch*, *slut*, and *cunt*—to find satisfaction in [the displeasure of the women shown] and their humiliation” (Sarracino and Scott 158). Carmine Sarracino and Kevin Scott highlight in their book, *The Porning of America*, the terms used in porn for women, “bitch, slut, and cunt.” While Martin prefers “whore” and “cunt,” the intent to demean and humiliate women through such language is similar. In both mediums, porn and Martin, the use of such terms acts to dehumanize the women and, therefore, rationalize the brutality done to them. The terms “whore” and “cunt” appear so regularly in Martin that readers may become desensitized to them though many women and men find the terms vulgar and distasteful—particularly “cunt” to refer to either female genitalia or a woman.

Jonathan Shay talks about Vietnam veterans using the term “cunt” to denigrate and objectify women in *Odysseus in America* and the efforts of himself and his staff to dissuade such language use because of its offensiveness (65). Jack Holland, in introducing his book on the topic of misogyny, talks about the word, “cunt,” and its place in the dehumanization and discrimination of women (2-3, 4-5). Gerda Lerner notes that “the vilest insults in every language refer to parts of the female body or to female sexuality” (232) in *The Creation of Patriarchy*, and Jessica Valenti quotes Robert Jensen’s linking the violent treatment of women in “gonzo porn” to the “explicitly

denigrating language that marks women as sluts, whores, cunts, nasty bitches, and so on” (85-86). Martin has many words he could use to reference a medieval sex worker; terms that were used at the time include the following: strumpet, cat, polecat, harlot, trollop, tart, minx, courtesan, Dutch widow, tramp, slattern, Jezebel, quean, punk, bawd, doll, gypsy, jade, malkin, hussy, wanton, and others (Hughes 363, 367-368), yet although he occasionally uses a different term, he chooses whore predominantly—a word Jensen references as popular in porn and stronger than words like bitch or slut in terms of degrading and dehumanizing the woman associated with that label.

Similarly, the emphasis on the word cunt for women’s genitals of all socio-economic and class levels—even aristocratic women—seems wholly influenced by the popularity of the term in porn both for genitalia and for women, and though Martin uses the word mostly to refer to female genitalia, he also has characters refer to women as cunts (Martin, *Dragons* 349-350, 531, 683, 767, 819, 824-825 are some examples) as well, just as is done so routinely in porn.

While it is clear from sources like Geoffrey Hughes’ *An Encyclopedia of Swearing* that “whore” and “cunt” and “fuck” are words that were used in medieval times they were used with less stigmatization than today; Hughes makes clear that modern society sees these terms as crude and vulgar and that lots of other words were used as synonyms for these words in medieval times (493-496 and 362-368, 110-114, and 188-194). Though Martin favors whore, cunt, and fuck, these are not the words of medieval authors such as Chaucer and Abelard and Heloise, albeit in translations.

Although it is true that in her prologue, the Wife of Bath uses the word cunt once (Levi 227), its reference is an example of one of the many lies about the wrongs she gets

her husbands to believe they have inflicted on her so that they submit to her governance of their households. In other words, she tells them that while drunk they have called her a cunt. By way of apology for using such a term, they give her power over household affairs. Her other references to her genitalia are much more circumvent: “organs of generation” (Levi 222), “my gadget” (Levi 222), “my quim” (Levi 230), “my pretty puss” (Levi 230), “my *belle chose*” (Levi 232), “what-have-you” (Levi 234), “secret place” (Levi 234). She doesn’t “fuck” her husbands; she accepts the marriage “payment” (Levi 222), “endure[s] his lust” (Levi 229), “mak[es] love” (Levi 236), and in her tale, women speak of “the pleasures of the bed” (Levi 242), and when the old woman transforms into the young, good wife, “they kiss; a thousand thousand times they kiss. And she obeyed him in all things that might afford him satisfaction or delight” (Levi 250).

Abelard is even more circumspect about his intimate relations with Heloise. Abelard references his “member,” “parts of shame,” “thorn in the flesh” (Radice 148), and “that part of my body which was the seat of lust and sole reason for those desires” (Radice 147). He references their intercourse with similar language: “my uncontrollable desire,” “our previous fornication and the wanton impurities” (Radice 146), “our impiety,” “my unbridled lust,” “those wretched, obscene pleasures, which we blush even to name” (Radice 147), and “carnal desire” (Radice 148). Granted that at the time of the Abelard and Heloise correspondence, they have both joined religious orders, but their language, while more pious than Chaucer’s, is still closer to Chaucer in tone than Martin’s with his emphasis on cock, whore, cunt, and fuck.

It isn’t that medieval texts didn’t use words like whore, cunt, or fuck; it is just that the female denigrating undertone of porn is missing. Ruth Mazo Karras, in *Sexuality in*

Medieval Europe, quotes a French medieval story about a fisherman married to a young wife: “A young and well-fed wife wants frequent fucking all her life” (13). The wife is healthy and, therefore, has a healthy sexual appetite which her husband strives to appease. The tone echoes Chaucer when the Wife of Bath exclaim, “I always had an itch for it!” (Levi 234) and “I mean to have my fun” (Levi 231)—both stories referencing the pleasures the females find in the marriage bed.

Kim Phillips and Barry Reay, in *Sex before Sexuality*, acknowledge the use of coarse language, “fuck, arse, prick, balls, cunt” in medieval texts while also naming a range of metaphors for sexual intercourse including “a ferret hunting for a rabbit in its lair, a squirrel searching for nuts.... [having] a final course... [being] skewered or turned on a spit.... [seeding] a garden, [grinding] (grain), [plowing] a field... [polishing] a ring ... [getting] plunged, [or getting] greased” (122). These “inventive” metaphors have more in common with Chaucer and Heloise and Abelard than they do with Martin.

Martin’s abasement of women, young woman at that, can be recognized early through his refusal to see rape has having serious and lasting consequences. Midway through the first book, *A Game of Thrones*, Tyrion Lannister tells the sellsword, Bronn, the story of his relationship with Tysha. Lord Tywin Lannister, Tyrion’s father, and Jamie Lannister, Tyrion’s brother, had decided that at thirteen, Tyrion, a dwarf, should have carnal knowledge of a female, so they found a virginal, orphaned, approximately fourteen year old, farmer’s daughter and convinced her to allow them to stage a sexual assault from which Jamie and Tyrion could rescue her and give her the chance to thank Tyrion for her rescue. The deception worked, and Tyrion not only had sex with Tysha but also fell in love with her and managed to marry the girl in secret. He spent two weeks

in love with his wife until his father found out. Then, Lord Tywin humiliated Tyrion in the harshest possible manner. Jamie was forced to tell Tyrion that Tysha was a prostitute, and Lord Tywin allowed the girl to be gang raped by his guardsmen and forced Tyrion to watch (Martin, *Thrones* 457-458). Readers aren't told how many men raped the girl—only that they paid her a silver coin for each “turn” and that by the end “she had so many silvers the coins were slipping through her fingers and rolling on the floor” (Martin, *Thrones* 458). The final humiliation is that Tyrion is forced to go last and pay the girl, his wife, a gold coin. Thus, Lord Tywin has taken Tysha, Tyrion's wife, and dehumanized her into a prostitute/whore in Tyrion's eyes—as she “services” the guardsmen and himself for payment. Only at the end of the third book, *A Storm of Swords*, does Jamie reveal to Tyrion that Tysha was not a prostitute (Martin 1064-1065). That revelation enrages Tyrion and gives him the fury to say things to hurt Jamie and to confront his father (Martin, *Swords* 1066, 1071-1073). Lord Tywin dismisses Tyrion's questions about Tysha whom he so thoroughly sees as only a mechanism for teaching his son a lesson that he doesn't remember her name nor what happened to her afterward—saying that she went “wherever whores go” (Martin, *Swords* 1073). In the fifth book, *A Dance with Dragons*, “where whores go” becomes a quest of sorts for Tyrion (Martin 17-18, 21, 82, 114, 190, 237, 289, 290, 438, 529, 532, 535) because Jamie's revelation makes Tyrion realize that he is an accomplice in his wife's rape, and he agonizes over it (Martin, *Dragons* 21, 190, 362) at several times.

Tysha's story smacks of pornographic influences in several ways. She is a crofter or farmer's orphan daughter, perhaps fourteen years old, and not a professional prostitute. She experiences two weeks of sexual relations with Tyrion, who loves her and is tender

with her. Then she is taken to the Lannister guardhouse and raped by numerous men she does not know. There is no description of her reaction to this treatment. But the contrast between having sex with Tyrion alone in their cottage and being gang raped by a parade of unknown men is huge. Yet there is no description of her crying, struggling, fighting, or screaming at such treatment. In fact, the description of her handling the silver coins suggests that she submits to such treatment willingly, without pain, and is even pleased by the day's work. This is porn fantasy. Pamela Paul, in *Pornified*, describes such fantasy women in porn in the following ways:

The women in pornography exist in order to please men, and are therefore willing to do anything. They will dominate or act submissive. They can play dumb or talk back, moan quietly or scream, cry in anger or in pleasure. They will accommodate whatever a man wants them to do, be it anal sex, double penetration, or multiple orgasms. The porn star is always responsive; she would never complain about a man being late or taking too long to come. (44)

If we apply Paul's description to Martin's scenario, the fantasy is that Tysha submits to gang rape and doesn't complain; she exists to please men whether Tyrion or the guardsmen. Her own desires or needs or feelings are hidden from Tyrion, the guardsmen, and readers because they are inconvenient to the fantasy of her enjoying or at least tolerating being gang raped. There is also an implied disposableness to Tysha. Where she goes is of no interest to Lord Tywin, and Tyrion's oft repeated phrasing, "where whores go," emphasizes them, prostitutes (his wife included), as passing, disposable, forgettable, and/or interchangeable, just like one porn fantasy can be followed by another and another.

This is also a norming picture of rape because it presents rape, the rape of a nearly fourteen year old girl by a barracks of men as not a big deal—not as something she

struggled against or that would give her nightmares or Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder for the rest of her life. She gets paid for it and disappears from the cast of characters to go “wherever whores go” just as easily as today’s porn stars disappear from the minds of consumers of porn.

Another example of what Martin leaves out and another trivialization of rape is what happens to Lollys, Lady Tanda’s daughter, in *A Clash of Kings*. During the riot the day Princess Mycella Lannister sails for Dorne, Lollys is pulled from her horse and raped by what Tyrion estimates as fifty men:

Lady Tanda’s daughter had surrendered her maidenhood to half a hundred shouting men behind a tanner’s shop. The gold cloaks [kingsguard] found her wandering naked on Sowbelly Row. (Martin, *Kings* 600)

Naked and wandering after being raped by fifty violent men during a riot? She is not described as bloody, cut, bruised, crying, or distressed, other than being naked and wandering, as in dazed and confused. After her ordeal, she is embarrassed to be seen in public (Martin, *Kings* 816), but whether that is because of the rape or because she is visibly pregnant and unmarried remains unclear. Shae, Lollys’ maid and Tyrion’s secret lover/prostitute, describes Lollys’ condition with the following dismissive words:

She sleeps. Sleep’s all she ever wants to do, the great cow. She sleeps and she eats, Sometimes she falls asleep while she’s eating. The food falls under the blankets and she *rolls* in it, and I have to clean her.... All they did was *fuck* her. (Martin, *Kings* 780)

Lollys does not appear to be plagued by nightmares of the gang rape; she sleeps.

Whether this is due to a rape induced depression or her pregnancy, readers aren’t told, but it is associated with her being pregnant. Again, Lollys’ absence of stronger PTSD symptoms than possible depression, encourage the idea that rape is without significant

consequences for the victim. Jonathan Shay summarizes symptoms of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder in *Achilles in Vietnam*, his book on Vietnam veterans dealing with PTSD; after a traumatic event, a person suffering from PTSD can have any combination of the following symptoms: recurring nightmares, flashbacks, jumpiness or anxiety caused by anticipating more trauma, health problems caused by persistent jumpiness/anxiety, distrust and suspicion, expectations for betrayal and exploitation, paranoia, drug and/or alcohol abuse, social isolation, despair and meaninglessness, suicide, self-destructive behavior (Shay xx). Lollys sleeps, but her sleep is undisturbed by nightmares and she shows no signs of panic or trying to avoid places that would remind her of the gang rape or any of the other symptoms summarized by Shay and detailed more fully in the American Psychological Association's *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual for Mental Disorders*, fourth edition (*DSM-IV*) for PTSD.

Adding to this trivialization of rape and its consequences is the marriage of Lollys to Bronn, Tyrion's former sellsword and a newly made knight. When Tyrion points out that Lollys is pregnant with another man's child, Bronn doesn't care: "When she pops him out, I'll get her big with mine" (Martin, *Swords* 897). The implication is that the experience of gang rape will not scar, damage, or disrupt Lollys' sexual relationship with her husband; rape is nothing out of the ordinary—nothing that could do lasting psychological or physical damage—nothing that would mar her sexual relations with the first man after being raped.

Additionally, in several places in the series, Martin has characters suggest that women actually need a good raping. For example, when Queen Cersei goes to the Great Sept, the new High Septon tells her that in their time of war, "even the silent sisters

[women of their religious order] have been raped” (Martin, *Crows* 601), the queen’s silent thoughts are as follows:

Cersei did not intend to squander Tommen’s [the young king’s] strength ... guarding the wrinkled cunts of a thousand sour septas. *Half of them are probably praying for a good raping.* (emphasis in original) (Martin, *Crows* 601)

Again, the trauma of rape is completely dismissed by such a statement. Further, the implication is that women don’t understand or give vent to their sexual appetites; thus, rape becomes a sexually liberating experience. This is a complete justification from this perspective of rape instead of a realistic expression of rape, its consequences, and female sexuality. The prevalence of rape in Martin’s series, especially rape without significant consequences to the victims (from the examples listed above to the constant refrain that rape is part of “the way of war”) encourages readers to desensitize themselves to rape. Pamela Paul quotes Gloria Steinem on the message of porn, “Violence, dominance, and conquest. It is sex being used to reinforce some inequality, or to create one, or to tell us that pain and humiliation are really the same as pleasure” (121). Sex in porn with its emphasis on the sexual violence done to women by men and the sexual domination of women by men serve to reinforce the inequality of sexes and misogyny—to normalize sexism and misogyny, and this is what Martin reproduces in his series. Also what better way to dismiss rape as a traumatic event than to have a woman character, Queen Cersei, advocate its merits?

A different refrain of women need to be raped occurs when Ser Hyle Hunt joins Lady Brienne of Tarth in her search for Sansa Stark; he relays to her that his former lord, Lord Randyll Tarly, thought that she would “benefit from a good hard raping” (Martin, *Crows* 524) because she has the audacity to wear mail, bear arms, and fight like a man.

Thus, raping, presumably, would remind her that she is a woman. No woman wants to be raped; even as a female sexual fantasy, sexual submission is not about being actually physically raped; it is about pulling down inhibitions and exploring a woman's full and complete sexuality by a loving and attentive lover—not brutal sexual assault (Roiphe 27-28). Rape in Martin, as in porn is about male pleasure, male orgasm. Female pleasure is not a consideration; women scream in many of Martin's sex scenes but whether in pleasure or pain usually is unclear (Martin, *Kings* 69; Martin, *Crows* 693; Martin, *Dragons* 335) and irrelevant by porn standards centered on male pleasure.

In Martin, as in porn, women are supposed to achieve sexual satisfaction by having vaginal sexual intercourse when their partners do—even though we know female sexual satisfaction may need much more stimulation than male sexual satisfaction. Pamela Paul quotes one sex therapist as describing this disconnect between female and male sexual arousal in the following language: “In real life, sexually speaking, women are Crock-Pots and men are microwaves” (151). In other words, sexual arousal for women takes some work, foreplay (caresses and kissing), while men need relatively little to achieve sexual arousal. Yet Martin re-enforces the porn lesson that “women usually want what men want” (Paul 19) instead of examining realistic sex where there is mutual pleasuring or where women do not achieve orgasm by vaginal penetration alone.

One of the few places that Martin seems to accurately represent the trauma of rape is through Daenerys' point of view after the Dothraki horse lords have conquered the Lamb Men:

Across the road, a girl no older than Dany [Daenerys] was sobbing in a high thin voice as a rider shoved her over a pile of corpses, facedown, and thrust himself inside her. Other riders dismounted to take their turns.... The girl being raped

made a heartrending sound, a long sobbing wail that went on and on and on. Dany's hand clenched hard around the reins, and she turned the silver[horse's] head. "Make them stop," she commanded Ser Jorah.... Across the road, the girl was still crying, her high sing-song tongue strange to Dany's ears. The first man was done with her now, and a second had taken his place. (Martin, *Thrones* 667-668)

The men around Dany, Ser Jorah, and her husband's bloodriders, Jhogo, Aggo, and Rakharo, and the warrior, Quaro, find her request to make the rapists stop baffling: "This is how it has always been," protests Ser Jorah while Quaro claims that the "riders do her honor" by raping her (Martin, *Thrones* 668). Dany claims the girl, Eroeh, as a servant and claims other women as servants to stop their being raped as well, much to the displeasure of the Dothraki warriors. Though Dany manages to save a handful of women from rape or gang rape, she has not altered the Dothraki practice of raping the girls and women of the people they conquer. Dany is indulged in her desire for girls and women to be treated with tenderness and respect, only because she is married to Khal Drogo, the leader of their khalasar (Martin, *Thrones* 668). Although the pain and agony of the Eroeh's rape is conveyed to an extent, the pain of the other women Dany saves is not, and none of the women seems to suffer from long term consequences of being gang raped; no mention is made of nightmares or other symptoms associated with PTSD. When Khal Drogo becomes a living shell of the man he had been, most of his khalasar abandon him and her, and Eroeh gets worse than what Dany saved her from when she is raped and killed (Martin, *Thrones* 758), re-enforcing the idea that women are raped as part of life because Dany's intervention has not stopped the inevitable.

Another aspect of Martin's attempt at the normalization of rape is his references to "first night," whereby a nobleman was entitled to have sex with the wife of any man sworn to him before the man himself has sexual relations with her—thus having the first

night with the wife. Roose Bolton justifies the rape of Ramsay Snow/Bolton's mother by referencing his right to first night (Martin, *Dragons* 429). Ramsay Bolton mentions Theon Greyjoy's right to first night as the Prince of Winterfell as a taunting reference to the creature, Reek, that Ramsay has created out of Theon (Martin, *Dragons* 499). Martin also references it in terms of the bad will sowed between Prince or King Aerys Targaryen and Lord Tywin Lannister when Aerys regrets not being able to bed Tywin's bride because first night has been discontinued (Martin, *Dragons* 577). Though Martin makes these references, Ruth Mazo Karras is insistent that the myth of first night is just that, a myth, and was in no way practiced as "institutionalized" custom:

The husband, and no one else, had legal rights to sex with the wife. A persistent myth holds that medieval custom allowed a lord to deflower his serf women on their wedding nights. This myth still appears, for example, in the 1995 film *Braveheart*, even though historians have demonstrated repeatedly, for more than a century, that such a custom did not exist. (86)

Martin's references to first night, then, do not add historical accuracy to the sex lives of medieval people in his fantasy world, but serve to further the idea that rape was normal, wide-spread, part of life, and no big deal—an idea that must be appealing to Martin, Martin's readers, and the men who increasingly watch pornography featuring rape and female torture and humiliation.

Further, Martin takes porn-inspired debasement of women and violence toward them to new levels in fiction to keep up with raunchier trends in porn. According to Pamela Paul, because pornography has infiltrated the culture so widely, pornography "programming has become increasingly raunchy over time.... [so that] vaginal penetration and anal sex" are becoming too tame and "viewers are encouraged to trade up... to harder fare" (55). Carmine Sarracino and Kevin Scott, in *The Porning of*

America, echo Paul when they say that the push to raise “the shock bar” has impacted porn: “porn, too... is subject to this imperative to exceed itself. It has arguably responded to this imperative by becoming increasingly dark: that is more and more marked by humiliation and real violence” (113-114). For example, at the porn site, “The Home of the Asshole Milkshake,” “viewers are ‘educated’ as to how multiple men can anally penetrate a woman and then force her to drink the ejaculated semen extracted from her own anus. Others can be ‘entertained’ by viewing *Forced Entry*, a video simulating vivid rape and murder scenes of women” (Paul 239-240). It is through this lens of raunchy pornography that we should view the brutalization of women in Martin by such characters as the Mountain that Rides, Rorge (disguised in the Hound’s helm), and the Bastard of Bolton.

Ser Gregor Clegane, or the Mountain that Rides, is responsible for the murder of infant prince Aegon Targaryen and the rape and murder of his mother, Princess Elia of Dorne, during Robert’s Rebellion (Martin, *Swords* 975-976). Later Lord Tywin Lannister unleashes him on the westlands to “plunder and rape” early in the series to draw Ned Stark away from King’s Landing (Martin, *Thrones* 463-470). When that plan fails, the Mountain that Rides remains plundering and raping with his men. Arya Stark is captured by him and his men and is forced to witness or hear about his torture, rape, and murder of the villagers where she is held and elsewhere (Martin, *Kings* 413-417, 467-468). Rorge, dressed in the Hound’s, Sandor Clegane’s (Ser Gregor’s brother) distinctive helmet, leads the slaughter and raping in the Salt pans—complete with eating of women’s breasts (Martin, *Crows* 647, 665). Both Gregor Clegane and Rorge are sadistic in the

sexual violence that they perpetrate on women and reflect these dark trends in porn referenced by Paul and Sarricino and Scott.

Though both Ser Gregor's and Rorge's treatment of women is grotesque and animalistic, the Bastard of Bolton, or the man who takes the name Ramsay Bolton, is worse. Ser Wyman Manderly tries to describe his crimes to Ser Davos Seawroth with the following description:

“[The Bastard of Bolton] is a great hunter,” said Wyman Manderly, “and women are his favorite prey. He strips them naked and sets them loose in the woods. They have half a day's start before he sets out after them with hounds and horns. From time to time some wench escapes and lives to tell the tale. Most are less fortunate. When Ramsay catches them he rapes them, flays them, feeds their corpses to his dogs, and brings their skins back to the Dreadfort as trophies. If they have given him good sport, he slits their throats before he skins them. Elsewise, t'other way around.” (Martin, *Dragons* 391)

The misogyny in the brutality of these men's actions toward women seems to be a clear reflection of increasingly shocking and mutilating tendencies in porn. Sarricino and Scott elaborate about the current trends in violent porn:

Violent porn is perhaps no longer even porn at all, but something else, quite sinister, that exists not in an imagined world, but in the real world. For what it sells is not vicarious but actual: not the fantasized experience of sex with an attractive woman, long the hallmark of masturbatory porn, but the viewer's involvement in and responsibility for, through the sustaining financial support of his subscription to such sites [as *Scream&Cream*, *Goregasm*, and *Rotten*], her bodily injury. The viewer's pleasure, then, is for the most part psychological, not sensual—a sadistic gloating over the female's actual blood and tears. (159)

The violence done to women in Martin's series is excessive—especially because despite the widespread knowledge of the crimes, these characters are not brought to justice or are only brought to justice after long years of waiting and vendetta.

Prince Oberyn of Dorne finally manages to avenge his sister's (Princess Elia 's) rape and murder after sixteen years of waiting, but it costs him his own life as well (Martin, *Kings* 975-976), and Gregor Clegane isn't punished for the crimes he perpetrates on the smallfolk of Westeros. Lady Brienne kills Rorge, but she is fighting to stay alive more than she is attempting to achieve justice for the victims of the Saltpan (Martin, *Crows* 794-799). Jon Snow, the Lord Commander of the Nights' Watch makes the following statement about the Bastard of Bolton: "This creature who makes cloaks from the skins of women has sworn to cut my heart out, and I mean to make him answer for those words" (Martin, *Dragons* 911) at the end of the fifth book. But he is not pledging justice for the women; he is pledging to make Bolton answer for threatening to cut his heart out and eat it. In "Sexual Variations" by Cory James Rushton, he references the "first known sexual serial killer," nobleman Gilles de Rais, the "perpetrator of the ritual and sexual murder of dozens of children," but he was brought to trial and executed for his crimes in 1440 (98-99). In medieval times, men such as Gilles de Rais were brought to trial and held accountable for their crimes whereas extreme sexual violence against women in Martin is part of the "entertainment" just as in dark porn.

The brutality which Martin allows men to perpetrate on female characters re-enforces what Sarracino and Scott refer to as sinister—a psychological aspect where readers enjoy or gloat over the butchery and sexual abuse of women. It is ironic that Martin has several prominent characters make the observation that all people are human regardless of class, sex, even race or species. Prince Doran Martell explains the first Daenerys' realization to his nieces and daughter, in the pools of her Water Gardens, that the naked children looked all the same, "all innocent, all vulnerable, all deserving of long

life, love, and protection” (Martin, *Dragons* 510). It is the same sentiment that is shared by her later namesake, Daenerys Targaryen, the mother of dragons, when she will not be dissuaded from tending to her children, her people, and the displaced Astapori in the camps outside Meereen (Martin, *Dragons* 473-476). It is also the same sentiment that drives Jon Snow, the Lord Commander of the Nights’ Watch, to see wildings and even giants as people who deserve shelter from the Others and wights beyond the Wall (Martin, *Dragons* 521-522, 711-712). Despite this professed “humanity” towards all, people can be treated inhumanely in Martin, especially the powerless—and women—the most inhumanely of all (whether queens or slaves). The danger in portraying women being violently sexually violated is that it norms such behaviors in readers or viewers.

Pamela Paul says that

according to studies conducted on men during the 1970s and 1980s, men who were exposed to pornography were more inclined to agree with statements such as “A man should find them, fool them, fuck them, and forget them,” “A woman does not mean ‘no’ unless she slaps you,” and “If they’re old enough to bleed, they are old enough to butcher,” demonstrating an increase in what researchers term “sexual callousness” among men who consume porn. (151-152)

Paul is referencing data that is 30-40 years out of date and doesn’t take into account the explosion of pornography consumption that has been ushered in by Cable television and Internet access and what we can assume to be an increased sexual callousness that is reflected in Japanese *bukkake*, scatological porn, gonzo porn, Japanese anime and tentacle rape porn, and other “edgier” trends in porn including the sexual violence against women in Martin.

In addition, in Martin, women have sex like men. They are aroused as easily and are ready as fast, when all we know about male and female sexuality tells us differently. Christopher Ryan and Cacilda Jetha spend a significant amount of time in their book, *Sex*

at Dawn, on the “dual disappointment” of the “incompatibility between men’s and women’s sexual response” (245). To be more specific, Ryan and Jetha say that “when it comes to sex, men may be trash-talking sprinters, but it’s the women who win the marathons” (245). In other words, men are quickly aroused and quickly sated while women are not. Women need foreplay to get them excited for intercourse, but once aroused, women are not limited to one or a few orgasms but can continue as long as appropriate stimulation is provided. Martin certainly shows accurate male sexual response of quick arousal and quick orgasm, but he does very little with accurate representation of female sexual response. Often his female characters are “wet” or secreting vaginal lubricants at a mere touch of the breast or the suggestion of sex with a partner. For example,

Shae turned [Tyrion’s] head to kiss him. Her mouth was wet and hungry, and she did not even seem to see his scar, or the raw scab where his nose had been. Her skin was warm silk beneath his fingers. When his thumb brushed against her left nipple, it hardened at once. “Hurry,” she urged, between kisses, as his fingers went to his laces, “oh, hurry, hurry, I want you in me, in me, in me.” He did not even have time to undress properly. Shae pulled his cock out of his breeches, then pushed him down onto the floor and climbed atop him. She screamed as he pushed past her lips, and rode him wildly, moaning, “My giant, my giant, my giant,” every time she slammed down on him. (Martin, *Swords* 168-169)

Shae is a prostitute that Tyrion is employing to fake a relationship with him—although the lines between her as a prostitute and as a lover blur the longer they are together. The idea that she can kiss him, even “hungrily,” and be lubricated enough to “slam down on him” repeatedly, just isn’t realistic of real sex between a man and a woman, and only seems to re-enact porn images where the woman, (cunt, whore, bitch) is always ready to please effortlessly, and the sex is without awkwardness or pain.

Another example is when Daenerys has completed the Dothraki ritual of eating the stallion's raw heart to give her unborn son strength and bathes in the Womb of the World, a lake in Vaes Dothrak. After rising from the bath, she has sexual intercourse with her husband in a completely unrealistic fashion. Dany has just bathed; she has not been lubricated or sexually stimulated aside from helping Khal Drogo undo his pants. In addition, she has the pressure of having sex with her husband in front of the crones of *dosh khaleen* and the khalasar. With all this going on, he is just supposed to slide his penis inside her vagina without causing her pain according to Martin:

When [Daenerys] emerged from the lake, shivering and dripping, her handmaid Doreah hurried to her with a robe of painted sandsilk, but Khal Drogo waved her away. He was looking on her swollen breasts and the curve of her belly with approval, and Dany could see the shape of his manhood pressing through his horsehide trousers, below the heavy gold medallions on his belt. She went to him and helped him unlace. Then her huge khal took her by the hips and lifted her into the air, as he might lift a child. The bells in his hair rang softly.

Dany wrapped her arms around his shoulders and pressed her face against his neck as he thrust himself inside her. Three quick strokes and it was done. (Martin, *Thrones* 493)

If he rammed himself inside her as described by Martin, she would have been crying out in pain. We go right back to Pamela Paul's description of the porn star as ever ready to have sex and pleased by whatever sexual attention she receives from the man or men whether it is realistic or not: "[The woman in pornography is] easily aroused, naturally and consistently orgasmic, and malleable. She is what [the viewer] wants her to be.... She can't get enough [sexual pleasure] [she is] indiscriminating.... Each encounter begins anew, meeting as welcome strangers and parting with gratitude" (45). The problem is that this is a distortion of real sex and sexuality. What Paul states as absent in porn is also absent in Martin, "certain vital emotions are bypassed altogether.

Pornography contains little in the way of kissing, hugging, caressing or holding—all the supposedly ‘feminine’ aspects of sex that, stereotypes aside, can be key experiences for men as well” (85). Daenerys can accept Drogo’s penis being thrust inside her because she is a porn fantasy and not a real girl or woman.

Another example of unrealistic sex is given in the pornographic entertainment that is staged in honor of Dany in the last book:

The dancers shimmered, their sleek shaved bodies covered with a fine sheen of oil. Blazing torches whirled from hand to hand to the beat of drums and the trilling of a flute. Whenever two torches crossed in the air, a naked girl leapt between them, spinning. The torchlight shone off the oiled limbs and breasts and buttocks.

The three men were erect.... As the drums reached a crescendo, three of the girls leapt above the flames, spinning in the air. The male dancers caught them about the waists and slid them down onto their members. Dany watched as the women arched their backs and coiled their legs around their partners while the flutes wept and the men thrust in time to the music. (Martin, *Dragons* 203-204)

Despite the “fine sheen of oil” on the bodies of the naked dancers, there is not enough sexual foreplay or lubricant to make this physically possible without the women screaming in pain. The dancing is not erotic in nature, so there is no reason to assume that the women dancers are naturally lubricated through sexual arousal. Additionally, even if the women had been doused with oil before the performance, it would have run down their legs and significantly dissipated during the course of the performance, and the oil is not applied so thickly that it impedes the men from picking the women up. This sex scene is only possible through pornographic imagining of sex. Pamela Paul talks about exemplification theory in porn: “Studies show that men learn from and emulate what they see in pornography; experts refer to this as *exemplification theory*. ‘Each and every sexual act portrayed in pornography is treated as an exemplar of sexuality.... Thus, to

the extent that pornography shows almost all women screaming ecstatically when anally penetrated, for instance, exemplification theory projects the generalization that almost all women outside of pornography will do likewise” (18). The sexual acts in Martin are not anal sex, though he makes reference to the possibility of both women and men being anally penetrated throughout his series, but it is still unrealistic. The women dancers arch their backs—presumably in pleasure—but it can only be pleasurable in a porn fantasy where women have sex like men and don’t require foreplay or lubricant before penises are thrust into their vaginas.

Even where there is more tenderness and foreplay in sexual intercourse between a man and a woman, Martin still has women experience orgasm quickly which again happens more often in porn than in real life. Take for example the scene where Jon Snow performs oral sex with Ygritte, a couple of licks and bam, she is coming:

[Jon] pulled [Ygritte] close. “I love the smell of you,” he said. “I love your red hair. I love your mouth, and the way you kiss me. I love your smile. I love your teats.” He kissed them, one and then the other. “I love your skinny legs, and what’s between them.” He knelt to kiss her there, lightly on her mound at first, but Ygritte moved her legs apart a little, and he saw the pink inside and kissed that as well, and tasted her. She gave a little gasp.

“If you love me all so much, why are you still dressed?” she whispered.
“You know nothing, Jon Snow. *Noth—oh, Oh, OHHH.*” (Martin, *Swords* 364).

Granted, compared to the previous descriptions of penises being thrust into vaginas with no foreplay, there is some slight foreplay here—the kissing of each of her breasts and then her vagina—but realistically, there needs to be more going on for her to achieve orgasm.

Perhaps the most realistic description of tender sex and foreplay is between Dany and Khal Drogo on their wedding night. Dany is thirteen years old, and Khal Drogo is

thirty something, largely a stranger to Dany, and a man who doesn't even speak her language except for the single word, no. Dany is scared and begins to cry. Drogo wipes away her tears and says no. Readers infer that he will not have sex with her until she wants him to, and he initiates a slow and tender process of foreplay with them first disrobing and then touching (Martin, *Thrones* 107-108):

After a while he began to touch her. Lightly at first, then harder. She could sense the fierce strength in his hands, but he never hurt her. He held her hand in his own and brushed her fingers, one by one. He ran a hand gently down her leg. He stroked her face, tracing the curve of her ears, running a finger gently around her mouth. He put both hands in her hair and combed it with his fingers. He turned her around, massaged her shoulders, slide a knuckle down the path of her spine.

It seemed as if hours passed before his hands finally went to her breasts. He stroked the soft skin underneath until it tingled. He circled her nipples with his thumbs, pinched them between thumb and forefinger, then began to pull at her, very lightly at first, then more insistently, until her nipples stiffened and began to ache.

He stopped then, and drew her down onto his lap, Dany was flushed and breathless, her heart fluttering in her chest. He cupped her face in his huge hands and she looked into his eyes. "No?" he said, and she knew it was a question.

She took his hand and moved it down to the wetness between her thighs. "Yes," she whispered as she put his finger inside her. (Martin, *Thrones* 108)

Though this is detailed and realistic, it is not repeated. Khal Drogo is tender with Dany on their wedding night but not afterwards. Afterwards, she is raped by her husband every night until, unbelievably, she gets used to it:

Every night, some time before the dawn, Drogo would come to her tent and wake her in the dark, to ride her as relentlessly as he rode his stallion. He always took her from behind, Dothraki fashion, for which Dany was grateful; that way her lord husband could not see the tears that wet her face, and she could use her pillow to muffle her cries of pain. When he was done, he would close his eyes and begin to snore softly and Dany would lie beside him, her body bruised and sore, hurting too much for sleep. (Martin, *Thrones* 228)

Khal Drogo is an elite warrior and horseman to qualify him to be the khal of his khalasar.

He would be sensitive to every emotion and movement of his enemy and his horse; it is

not realistic for him not notice that he is hurting Dany when they have sex. His repeated rape of his wife every night negates the tenderness of their first sex. It encourages what Pamela Paul has referred to as sexual callousness and also a “sexualization of pain” (273). It is apparently okay in Martin that Drogo should rape his wife so forcefully that he leaves her “bruised and sore” and in so much pain that she cannot sleep, and because Dany comes to love this man, readers are left to draw the conclusion that there is nothing wrong with Martin’s portrayal of brutal sex as part of a normal sexual relationship between a man and a woman. To make matters worse, Martin suggests that having Drogo’s penis thrust into Dany’s vagina without lubricant or foreplay is something she can just get used to and eventually enjoy. Just as Dany gets used to riding her horse, she gets used to being ridden by her husband:

Her agony was but a fading memory. She still ached after a long day’s riding, yet somehow the pain had a sweetness to it now, and each morning she came willingly to her saddle, eager to know what wonders waited for her in the lands ahead. She began to find pleasure even in her nights, and if she cried out when Drogo took her, it was not always in pain. (Martin, *Thrones* 230)

Though Dany’s cries now include those of sexual pleasure, they are not “always” cries of pleasure, so again in Martin we have a re-enforced sexual callousness of men toward women and a sexualization of pain or a representation of pain being normal in a healthy sexual relationship between a man and a woman which firmly links Martin’s portrayal of sexual activity to standards in porn.

The sex scene between Asha Greyjoy, heir of the Ironborn, and one of her men, Qarl the Maid, highlights three of Martin’s porn-like qualities: no means yes, quick female sexual arousal, and the sexualization of pain:

Qarl followed [Asha] up to Galbart Glover's bedchamber. "Get out," she told him.

"I want to be alone."

"What you want is me." He tried to kiss her.

Asha pushed him away. "Touch me again and I'll—"

"What?" He drew his dagger. "Undress yourself, girl."

"Fuck yourself, you beardless boy."

"I'd sooner fuck you." One quick slash unlaced her jerkin. Asha reached for her axe, but Qarl dropped his knife and caught her by the wrist, twisting back her arm until the weapon fell from her fingers. He pushed her back onto Glover's bed, kissed her hard, and tore off her tunic to let her breasts spill out. When she tried to knee him in the groin, he twisted away and forced her legs apart with his knees. "I have you now."

"Do it," she spat, "and I'll kill you in your sleep."

She was sopping wet when he entered her. "Damn you," she said. "Damn you damn you damn you." He sucked her nipples till she cried out half in pain and half in pleasure. . . . He fucked her till she screamed, and then again until she wept, before he finally spent his seed inside her womb. (Martin, *Dragons* 334-335)

In the passages that follow, readers learn that Qarl and Asha have had an ongoing relationship for some six years or more, and this is supposed to legitimize the fact that Asha says no but, in fact, is willing to have sex with Qarl and enjoys the sex they have (at least partially). No means yes in Martin, as in porn. It is also reminiscent of the scene where Jamie Lannister has sex with his sister, Queen Cersei, in the Great Sept. Despite her protests and struggles against him, she acquiesces. She moans and eventually croons, "Yes . . . my brother, my sweet brother, yes, like that, yes" (Martin, *Swords* 851). In terms of Qarl and Asha, he kisses her and cuts her clothing off—not exactly foreplay when coupled with her actively struggling against him—and yet she is "sopping wet." It is just not realistic. Jamie and Cersei don't engage in foreplay in the Great Sept either, but Cersei is menstruating which is supposed to provide the sufficient lubricant to make his hasty penetration not painful—not particularly realistic but perhaps slightly more believable than Asha's being sopping wet, which seems to epitomize Pamela Paul's

description of women in pornography as “easily aroused, naturally and consistently orgasmic” (45). Finally, Martin gives readers the sexualization of pain, in Qarl who supposedly genuinely cares about Asha but is willing to have sex with her so forcefully that she is shedding tears in pain; that this is acceptable to either of them is just straight from images in porn where men have become desensitized to violence against women, and both women and men are expecting a certain amount of female pain in sexual intercourse.

Martin claims to be creating a realistic medieval experience for readers in his novels:

A novel for me is an immersive experience where I feel as if I have lived it and that I’ve tasted the food and experienced the sex and experienced the terror of battle. So I want all of the detail, all of the sensory things—whether it’s a good experience, or a bad experience, I want to put the reader through it. To that mind, detail is necessary, showing not telling is necessary, and nothing is gratuitous. (Brown)

But Martin’s “realism,” isn’t medieval realism. As discussed previously, medieval language did include words like whore, cunt, and fuck—but these words were far from the dominant way to address women, women’s genitalia, or sexual intercourse, and Martin’s predominant use of such terms is more reflective of the language of today’s porn than medieval language. Likewise, Martin’s depictions of sexual relations between medieval men and women highlight the degradation, humiliation, and brutalization of women which again shows more similarities to porn than to documented sexual relations between medieval men and women.

An important point that Ruth Mazo Karras, in *Sexuality in Medieval Europe*, makes is that medieval people had a very different world view than twenty-first century

Americans have with more complete scientific, medical, psychological, sexual, and technological knowledge. Martin creates a world with many different religions, possibly as a vehicle for presenting his porn influenced sexuality instead of realistic medieval sexuality with all the associations to sin and restrictions that the Christian church espoused. The northern men of Westros, have the old gods, the gods of the Children of the Forest and the First Men. In the southron lands, the Seven are worshipped in their septs. The Ironmen worship their Drowned God while Melisandre of Asshai has introduced R'hllor, the Lord of Light to Stannis Baratheon and his followers. In Dorne, they worship Mother Rhoyme. Beyond the Narrow Sea, there are a host of other gods. Braavos has temples for many different gods on the Isle of the Gods: the Many-Faced God, the Lord of Light (R'hllor), Lord of the Woeful Countance, Aquan the Red Bull, the Great Shepherd, the Silent God, among others.

Whereas in Medieval Europe, although you had Christians and Jews and Muslims (in Spain), the world is predominantly Christian because Jewish and Muslim communities were segregated and thus largely confined to themselves. Also though different religions, they all share the core of the Old Testament, and thus all three inherit the misogyny of the story of Adam and Eve eating of the fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thereby creating original sin. Karras emphasizes that the medieval period is very important in the "history of sexuality" because it is during this period that the Catholic Church formulates much of the teaching and attitudes about sexuality that continue to influence us today (20). Sexuality as we now understand it is not how medieval people viewed sexuality. Our categories of heterosexual and homosexual, for example, would have been alien to them (Karras 7). Medieval people

would have identified more with categories of who was chaste and who was sexually active (Karras 9).

Originally, celibacy was idealized, and marriage was seen as a necessary compromise from the ideal. One of the precedents for idealized celibacy is Saint Paul who in his first letter to the Corinthians says,

It is good for a man not to touch a woman. Nevertheless, to avoid fornication let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband. Let the husband render unto the wife due benevolence: and likewise also wife unto the husband. The wife hath not power of her own body, but the husband: and likewise also the husband hath not power of his own body, but the wife.... I say therefore to the unmarried and widows, It is good for them to abide even as I. But if they cannot contain, let them marry: for it is better to marry than to burn. (7:1-4, 8-9)

So the ideal is chastity, but for those who cannot contain their sexual urges, it is better to marry and have sex within marriage than is to sin and have sex outside marriage. Karma Lochrie in discussing heterosexuality of the Middle Ages writes that “the medieval ideal is ... chastity, or sexual abstinence, not heterosexuality, which falls into the category of ‘venereal acts,’ a category that is never completely exempt from sin” (41).

Two things happen by about the Twelfth Century that change notions toward marriage. One is the “stress [on] the sacramental nature of marriage... [which] resulted in a downplaying of the critique that even marital sex [was] sinful” (Karras 68); the other is the idea of courtly love (Karras 91-96) which espoused the idea that “women are entitled to love” (Karras 91), even if it is seen as chaste love. The sacramental nature of marriage and the destigmatization of sex in marriage meant that medieval people could enjoy sex and eventually leads to Chaucer’s Wife of Bath recounting the pleasures of the

marriage bed, and the literature of courtly love elevated women's status in terms of positions of power within relationships.

Ruth Evans, in her introduction to *A Cultural History of Sexuality in the Middle Ages*, reiterates Karras on the importance of the literature of courtly love, stating that it is “an important milestone in the shift’ from an ideology of sex for procreation to an ideology of sex for pleasure” (9). For this group of sexualized people, the distinctions would have been between what was seen as natural sex and unnatural sex. Karras quotes William Peraldus, a moral writer of the Middle Ages, on unnatural sex or sin: there is “that which is ‘against nature in terms of the manner,’ when a woman is on top or some other unusual position is used for heterosexual vaginal intercourse, or ‘against nature in terms of the substance when a woman obtains or consents that semen is spilled elsewhere than in the place deputed by nature” (17). In other words, the missionary position is seen as natural sex but any position in which the man is not on top is considered unnatural. Also considered unnatural would be oral sex, anal sex, homosexual sex, any sex where semen is deposited outside the vagina, and any attempts at birthcontrol or abortion. Apply these ideas to sex as depicted in Martin, and a lot of Martin's sex is unnatural. As Karras points out, it is hard to know how Church positions and teachings on appropriate sex translated into medieval people's actual sex lives (118-119), but the medieval world was one profoundly impacted by the power of the Church to reach into all aspects of people's lives (birth, death, health, diet, family relations, clothing, sexuality). Even people who transgressed the Church in terms of sexual relations would understand their actions in terms of transgression and sin. Abelard may be an extreme example, as man sworn to the Church, but his references to his sexual relations with

Heloise associate them with sin and shame (as previously described). Martin usually only finds shame in terms of sexual relations in terms of women—and yet this shame does not stem from religious traditions that codify misogyny like Christianity but from a pervasive misogyny that echoes the misogyny of porn in language, depictions of rape, extreme sexual violence, and women having sex like men.

There is another point referenced by Saint Paul about husbands having power over their wives' bodies and wives likewise having power over their husbands' bodies that is worth exploring in terms of rape and sexual violence toward women. While rape was certainly part of medieval sexual relations, Karras notes that

what we would call marital rape seems notably absent in medieval sources.... Medieval people would have seen that it was possible for a husband to compel his wife by violence to have sex with him, we do not see this happening. There are cruel husbands in medieval stories who beat their wives, but sexual violence does not appear among the mistreatment by husbands. This hardly means that sexual violence by husbands against wives never took place, but it would seem to indicate that people did not take it as routine. (86)

Again in discussing heterosexual relations in marriage, Karma Lochrie discusses the rise of “compassionate marriage” in the late Middle Ages which “[promotes] a new discourse of friendship, mutuality, and eroticism between spouses” (51). This picture of amicable sexual relations between a husband and a wife is represented in some of Martin’s couples, Catelyn and Ned Stark for example, but many more wives are sexual abused and/or physically abused by their husbands: Rhaella and Aerys Targaryen, Cersei and Robert Baratheon, Daenerys and Khal Drogo, Sansa Stark (the potential wife of Joffery for a few years) and Joffrey Lannister, Lady Hornwood and Ramsay Bolton, Arya Stark (really Jeyne Poole) and Ramsay Bolton. Karras points out that “many medical writers in the Christian tradition held that mutual pleasure in marital sex was important because it

promoted conception” (20). Mutual pleasure in sex in Martin is largely absent, because, like porn, Martin is fixated on male sexual pleasure rather than realistic female sexual experience or pleasure.

Another significant aspect of medieval sexuality would have been the restrictions on sex that the Church demanded. As Karras notes,

The liturgical calendar was full of feasts and fast days on which marital intercourse was forbidden; Sundays and sometimes other days of the week were taboo as well. Couples were not supposed to have sex during the woman’s menstrual period, or in between the time they made a confession and the time they received the sacrament of the Eucharist. The penitentials of the early Middle Ages were particularly restrictive about the dates on which one could legitimately have sexual intercourse. Fewer than half the days in the year would have been permissible: Sundays, Wednesdays, Fridays, many holidays, and all of Advent and Lent were days of abstention, as well as women’s periods of menstruation, pregnancy, and lactation. (75)

The only place in Martin’s five books where there is any reference to abstaining from sex is suggested is when Jamie Lannister returns to Kings’ Landing after his imprisonment and has sex with this sister, Cersei, (against her will, at first, “no” means “yes”) in the Great Sept. When Jamie tears away her smallclothes or underwear, he sees that she is menstruating or has her “moon’s blood,” but “it made no difference” (Martin, *Swords* 851). Martin doesn’t say that having sex with a woman while she is menstruating is taboo, but that Jamie notes it and chooses to ignore it gives the suggestion that there may be some religious or social taboo associated with having sex with a menstruating woman.

Nowhere else in Martin is the abstinence suggested; in fact, Drogo has sex with Dany in public while she is visibly pregnant (Martin, *Thrones* 493). The omission of abstinence as an aspect of medieval sexuality in Martin is not realistic to the reality of

sexuality for medieval people just as the focus on rape and violent sexuality more reflects the trends in today's porn than the lived lives of medieval people.

The danger in brushing aside the blatantly porn influenced aspects of George R.R. Martin's *A Song of Ice and Fire* series as realism in the portrayal of medieval sexuality is that we accept all of ugly misogynistic aspects of pornography as normal and fail to open up a dialogue about what more realistic sexualities of both men and women are and could be. Michael Eric Dyson challenges hip hop artists and the wider culture to think about different sexual dynamics between men and women that would challenge our "brutally sexist culture" when he says that "one can have really liberating erotic experiences with women as equals" (111). He goes further to say

But we've got to learn as black men—that sexism and misogyny *are* our issues and *do* affect us as black men, because a world that makes women less than they ought to be, makes us as men less than we ought to be. (121) (emphasis in original)

Martin misses the opportunity to envision different sexual dynamics and perpetuates the worst in sexual relations between men and women. Jessica Valenti in *The Purity Myth* charges that "the most radical thing we can do to confront women's objectification and humiliation in some porn is to engage with it in a critical way" (211). Despite Martin's assertions that he is recreating realistic descriptions of medieval sexuality in his *A Song of Ice and Fire* novels, their overtly misogynistic qualities reflect contemporary abasement and "humilitainment" of women seen today's porn, especially in his use of whore and cunt to refer to women, his depictions of rape, savage brutalization of women, women having sex like men instead of depicting realistic female sexual pleasure, and

perpetuating the myth that women want to be raped or don't mean "no" when they say "no."

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