

Sexuality and gender problems in game of thrones

[Entertainment](#), [Movie](#)



Game of Thrones: Gender, Sexuality, Class, and Social Stratification

It is very common for several TV shows or movies to reflect real life society, depending on what genre. Game of Thrones, a TV adaptation of George RR Martin's A Song of Ice and Fire series depicts our society very well; despite the fact that it takes place in a fantasy medieval-like land, called Westeros. This show puts an emphasis on both gender and sexuality, with men being dominant in that society while women are often referred to as the inferior. It also includes several double standards for men and women and comprises compulsory heterosexuality. The show also heavily focuses on class and social stratification: the differences between two of the main classes in the show and the characters who wish to have more and more. Society in this particular show includes open systems, so several characters have moved up or down between different classes.

On Game of Thrones, there are several huge differences between the way men and women are treated. Men are seen as superior, while women are the inferior sex. The two are sorted into their specific gender roles as they were many years ago, and still are today. Jobs and duties are especially gendered in the show. For example, men are seen as warriors and are very strong. Women, on the other hand, are only meant to cook the food and clean the house, or in the case of highborn women, provide heirs for their husband. Noble women's opinions are not completely trusted the way the men's' opinions are: " My mother wishes me to let Lord Eddard join the Night ' s Watch. Stripped of all titles and powers, he would serve the realm in permanent exile. And my Lady Sansa has begged mercy for her father. But they have the soft hearts of women. So long as I am your king, treason shall

never go unpunished. Sir Ilyn, bring me his head” (“ Game of Thrones”). In this particular scene, Lord Eddard is to be shown mercy so long as he swears fealty to King Joffrey. His mother, Queen Regent Cersei had previously advised him to not execute the prisoner, as it would start a war that he would not be able to win. Nevertheless, the King believes that the opinions of the women are not valid and executes Eddard, starting a war. In this society, gender roles are very divided, but not as much as they used to be: “ We typically accept ‘ masculine men’ and ‘ feminine women’ as normal. That is, we expect individuals to possess unambiguous sex organs and to adopt the gender role that is consistent with their biological sex” (Brym 78). In this particular TV show, most men are shown wearing armor, as they are all knights, while women are only to wear dresses. There is one particular character, Brienne of Tarth, who defies the typical gender roles. In the first scene she appears in, she is participating in a fight with another knight. After she wins, she is told to take off her helmet. She does so, revealing that she is, in fact, a woman and not a man. This shocks many people in the crowd because most of them do not believe that women are capable of such things. Even though she has proved to be a very good warrior, she is still the subject of misogyny. Another character, Cersei Lannister, wishes that she could be a man so that people would take her more seriously. She believes that she is very clever and a great ruler; however, no one listens to her because of her sex and she is treated like she is owned property: “ You ‘ re my daughter! You will do as I command and you will marry Loras Tyrell and put an end to the disgusting rumors about you once and for all” (Game of Thrones). Since

Cersei's husband is dead, it is her father who regains control of her. There is no denying that it is a man's world in Game of Thrones.

Sexuality is viewed as something. Something that is heavily believed in by most characters is called compulsory heterosexuality: " Even today, many people assume that individuals should desire only members of the opposite sex. Sociologists call this assumption compulsory heterosexuality" (Brym 79). Less people believe in this as they used to; however, it is still a present belief in some people. Compulsory heterosexuality is very much demonstrated in the Game of Thrones world. Marriages to make alliances are done so only between men and women and those who are even rumored to be anything other than heterosexual are immediately considered an outcast. While in their land, it's a violation of social norms, it isn't against the law just yet: " No, he was a known degenerate...I've considered making his perversion punishable by death" (" Game of Thrones"). In this scene, Margaery reveals to her fiancée that her ex-husband wasn't interested in the company of women, to which the King responds that he wants to make anything other than being heterosexual punishable by death. He does not say this in front of anyone other than her, it is suggested that many people who he rules over agree with him and would be perfectly fine with him making this law. However, there is one area of the kingdoms, called Dorne, where the people do not agree with this. Rather than believing in heterosexuality, they believe in something called the queer theory: " The provocatively labeled stream of thought known as queer theory denies the existence of stable sexual orientations altogether. From the queer theorist's point of view, when we apply labels like heterosexual, bisexual, gay, and

lesbian to ourselves or others, we are adopting official or at least socially accepted labels that fail to capture the fluidity and variability of people's actual identities and performances" (Brym 85). Much like queer theorists, the Dornish people believe that anyone should be able to love whomever they want, without having a label put on them. Dorne itself is seen as the outcast part of the kingdoms because of their beliefs on sexuality and are not usually taken very seriously.

Another subject covered in class that can be applied to Game of Thrones is class and social stratification. There are a few different categories in which this tv show's society is divided. First, there is the royal family, who rule over all seven kingdoms. Next, there are the liege lords; there is one per kingdom and each kingdom as several other lords as well as knights. These three classes are considered to be highborn. There is also the middle class, who is mostly ignored in the show. Lastly, there are the peasants, the biggest class. The present day Canadian society allows for a lot of movement in between classes, which means that it has an open system: "in which merit, rather than inheritance (or ascribed characteristics), determines social rank and in which social change is therefore possible" (Brym 130). There are many characters in the show that went from having very little to being very important and quite wealthy. The first is Varys, a man who was initially born a slave and was sold to many different masters. After being left in the streets to die, he eventually moved from being a slave to being a beggar. That isn't much movement between classes; however, he did not go from being owned property to being free. After being a beggar, he eventually moved to being a thief of goods, but eventually switched to learning secrets. He began to do

this professionally and becoming a spymaster led him to wealth. Finally, he was recruited to be on the royal small council and became one of the most important people in the world: “ Step by step, one distasteful task after another, I made my way from the slums of Myr to the Small Council chamber. Influence grows like a weed. I tended mine patiently until its tendrils reached from the Red Keep all the way across to the far side of the world where I managed to wrap them around something very special” (“ Game of Thrones”). Another character that moved from one of the lowest classes to one of the highest is Lady Melisandre. This character was also born a slave, but managed to move classes by preaching her faith to Lord Stannis Baratheon, the younger brother of the king. She then had an influence over Stannis and his entire family, allowing her to be wealthy as well. While Westeros also has an open system, it does not allow as much movement as our society. While Varys and Melisandre are two characters that went from being slaves to very powerful people, there are several people who do not respect or trust them because they were not born into wealthy or powerful families.