

## Fluidity and Fragmentation: Stuart Hall's Theory of Cultural Identity in *A Song of Ice and Fire*

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**Abstract:** This research examines the application of Stuart Hall's cultural identity theories on the multidimensional identities present in George R. R. Martin's *A Song of Ice and Fire* (ASOIAF). To some degree, all characters in ASOIAF exhibit Hall's fluid concept of identity as shaped through language and culture, which is constantly unfolding over time. The focus centers around the Starks' association with the North, Daenerys Targaryen's self-exploration journey as a displaced royal, and Tyrion Lannister's duality of belonging and exclusion. Analyzing the Stark motto "The North remembers," this study illustrates how collective memory can divide communities as much as it can unify them—as Hall argues, identity is multifaceted. Daenerys does not simply exist in a dualistic framework; she embodies the idea of diasporic identity—caught between her roots and cultures in Essos. At the same time, without fully conforming to either side, Tyrion depicts that competing social forces characterize constructed identities in his struggle within family dynamics and societal expectations. This research enhances the study of fantasy fiction by linking cultural theory to speculative narrative. It sheds greater light on the identity conflicts in ASOIAF, particularly regarding inclusion and representation. More significantly, it argues that Martin not only avoids engaging with some of Hall's concepts but also counters them, particularly within the medieval fantastical universe he constructs.

### 1. Introduction

Stuart Hall's (1990, 1996) seminal research concerning cultural identity has transformed the understanding of identity construction,

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negotiations, and performance. Hall's ideas emerged from a postcolonial diasporic setting, where identity formation is rooted in difference and representation rather than unchanging essence (Bhabha, 2021; Gilroy, 2019). Particularly striking for discerning the frameworks of George R. R. Martin's ASOIAF is the fact that its characters and factions seem to contend with the politics of identity formation through power, war, and cultural hybridity. People experiencing composite identity are defined by a form of amalgamated identity that leaves them trapped in two cultures, which neither fully accepts them. This condition inevitably hinders the individual from ever attaining true belonging. They become alienated from numerous facets of their native culture, thereby becoming stranded in both worlds. This duality highlights the complexity of the blend of two cultures (Soltani et al., 2023).

Active self-definition, curbing of identity, and self-definition have been cited as identity formation processes, which, as Hall (1996) posits, challenge the boundaries of individual autonomy. Ongoing political shifts, existing culture, and overarching ideologies tend to shape and constrain identity, enforcing active classifying and labeling to justify the need for negotiation, resistance, or internalization (Bhabha, 2021). This phenomenon occurs in social contacts, with people performing identity in every social setting through articulated self-presentation and automatic behavioral self-cues. Each of these interactions, may it be through language, dress, or social rituals, contains culturally embedded symbols of belonging, exclusion, or adaptation (Erfanian Jalali & Zarei, 2012).

Underlying patterns of hegemonic history demonstrate the ways in which groups in power culturally, politically, or ideologically dominate others within the society and also systematically impose normative standards in order to exercise their sociopolitical power (Darvishian et al., 2024). These controlling systems, such as sociopolitical framework, cultural assimilation, institutional policies, and ideological indoctrination, systematically reduce the potential for self-determination by enforcing rigid and pre-defined identity frames. However, self-determination persistently emerges through what Hall (1996) called 'the articulation of difference' in the form of cultural preservation, subversive performance, as well as resistance and discourse. What has also been called the identity paradox involves the interplay between structural determinism and personal authenticity, which pertains as identity is constantly shaped by external forces, yet redefined by one's lived experience.

Struggles and conflicts are reality that encloses us wherever we go, and every civilization has confronted its own unique sets of obstacles. In all these conflicts, it is apparent that the search for identity and trying to

conceive oneself has every time positioned confirmed matters across cultures and civilizations. Throughout history, the world has experienced the governance of particular groups that controlled others. It is common for them to impose standards to help retain power (Alishiri et al., 2025). Hall (1996) suggested that identity is both “a matter of ‘becoming’” and something that can be fought over (p. 4). In ASOIAF, this duality exists in characters like Daenerys Targaryen, whose diasporic identity moves between being in exile and belonging, as well as Tyrion Lannister, whose identity-bending position diffuses Westerosi dominance structures. Hall's focus on articulation – the process of identity formation based on connection to ideology, history, and power (Grossberg, 2018) – aligns with the series' depiction of intra-house loyalties, nationalism, and racialized politics of Essos.

Recent research is fundamentally reshaping our understanding of human identity. As these hybrid forms of humanity develop, the traditional boundaries lead to a redefinition of what it means to be human (Rezvan et al., 2025). Recent scholarship has applied Hall's theories to fantasy literature, showing how speculative worlds emulate real-world identity conflicts (Anglberger & Hieke, 2012; Nayar, 2015). This paper seeks to apply Hall's concepts to ASOIAF, claiming that the series illustrates his reasoning regarding identity fluidity and fragmentation. Through critical examination of important characters and cultural clashes within the series, Martin's world is showcased as a commentary on contemporary nationalism, identity, and transculturalism—core concerns of Hall's work.

Martin's ASOIAF provides a rich textual landscape to explore the fragmented, fluid elements of cultural identity theorized by Stuart Hall (1990). Hall elaborated on the construction of identity as a dynamic process shaped through historical, political, and social relations (Hall, 1996). A hallmark of identity construction and negotiation is expressed in the intricate world-building of the series, featuring competing kingdoms, diasporic characters, and intersecting cultural narratives. The processes of negotiation, destabilization, and reinvention of identity take place in the contested spaces of Westeros and Essos, which portray ongoing real struggles over power and belonging (Nayar, 2015). Daenerys Targaryen and Theon Greyjoy are notable examples since the former showcases an exiled heir trying to reclaim her birthright while the latter is stuck in the limbo of his biological family and adoptive family. These examples show Hall's idea of identity as ever-changing by 'becoming' rather than something fixed (Bhabha, 2021).

Since ASOIAF is known for its politically charged themes, almost every part of it is discussed and analyzed in depth (Anglberger & Hieke, 2012; Battis, 2015). I am yet to find a scholar, however, who tackles the question of how magic and medievalism in the narrative transform Hall's concepts. The Faceless Men's shape-shifting does not merely symbolize the fluid nature of identity—it challenges Hall's identity social construction theory in its physically literalized form of "becoming." The same applies to warg and dragon-bonding. They produce hybrid subjectivities that go beyond postcolonialism, and yet current analyses persist in realist interpretations of these phenomena.

This research provides a unique contribution by considering Westeros a testing ground for Hall's theories rather than an allegory for identity conflicts. It explores the fantasy through a focused examination of three specific elements: the performative rituals of clan identities, the bodily trauma of liminal characters, and the magical disruptions of essentialist categories. It illustrates the ways fantasy settings stretch and complicate cultural studies frameworks. While Hall viewed identity as a discursive construction, ASOIAF shocks the imagination by showcasing how magic, bloodlines, and the supernatural force interplay in violently enacted theistic determinism, in brutally restructuring dynastic orders of dominance interwoven with belonging, necessitating theorists to reevaluate their frameworks.

The overarching premise of the series incorporates elaborate world-building, including warring kingdoms, diasporic figures, and intersecting cultural narratives. Hall's confect identity theory explains that identities are not pre-determined but shaped through historical, political, and social processes (Hall, 1996). In this regard, Westeros and Essos are 'contested' spaces in which identities are chronically negotiated, collapsing, and reconstructed, losing the center, which emblematically shows the perpetual struggle for belonging and power (Nayar, 2015). Exiled princess Daenerys Targaryen embodies an heir reclaiming her heritage while Theon Greyjoy exists at the intersection of dualities from his birth family and his father's house, highlighting Hall's portrayal of identity not as essence, but as the process of "becoming" (Bhabha, 2021).

The socio-political dynamics within ASOIAF serve as further evidence along the lines of Hall's (1990) contention that identities are a result of representation and difference. The Stark family's performance of 'Northernness' is a distinct manifestation of identity – it is not an identity, because "Northernness" is not an inherent trait but a constructed ideology that is reinforced through ritualistic language and opposition to the South (Anglberger & Hieke, 2012).

Likewise, the ethnic and racial order of hierarchy in Essos, especially the otherized depiction of Dothraki and the slave societies in Slaver's Bay, reinforces Hall's critique of unnuanced cultural essentialism (Said, 2001). These systems are reminiscent of contemporary discussions on nationalism, migration, and hybrid cultures, highlighting the importance of the series in cultural studies.

Furthermore, ASOIAF undeniably moves beyond singular, reductionist frameworks of identity by focusing on more tangential figures. The identity struggle of the disabled gentleman, Tyrion Lannister, and Brienne of Tarth as a 'woman' within the knighthood's masculine sphere embodies Hall's (1996) conceptualization of identity conflict. These characters' struggles encompass a broader societal imbalance between the expectations imposed and personal definitions of one's identity, drawing on emerging identity scholarship in speculative fiction (Lavender, 2019). Through analysis of these portrayals with Hall's framework, this paper intends to argue that ASOIAF offers perspectives on the identity's manufactured, volatile essence within fiction and the real world.

### ***2.1. Research Objectives and Significance***

This study intends to explore how George R. R. Martin's ASOIAF embodies Stuart Hall's theories of cultural identity as fluid, fragmented, and socially constructed, in this case focusing on three major aspects. The first concerns identity as a performative representation based on allegiance or loyalty to a house and region (Anglberger & Hieke, 2012). The second relates to the characters' diasporic identity, exemplified by Daenerys Targaryen (Bhabha, 2021), and the third is liminal identities, which subvert the social order of Westeros (Nayar, 2015). The study employs Hall's framework alongside elements of fantasy literature to demonstrate the active incorporation of identity politics into literature and, at the same time, expand the scope of cultural studies theory.

The first case contributes to both debates by showing how ASOIAF employs identity politics through the lens of hybridity while discussing fragmentation, displacement, and power in the context of national identity (Gilroy, 2019). With the growing influence of fantasy discourse on popular perceptions of identity, this analysis underscores the narratives' cultural significance and strengthens the case for Hall's theoretical contributions to contemporary studies.

This article argues that ASOIAF provides an illustrative example of the application of Stuart Hall's (1990) framework of culture on identity as ever-changing and contextual. By examining the performative mapping of

domestic identities, the hybridity of diasporic characters, and the undoing of essentialist frameworks of culture, the research demonstrates how Martin's fantasy epic simultaneously engages with and complicates Hall's understanding of identity as a process of becoming instead of a static being (Hall, 1996). This argument interprets ASOIAF as a text of cultural studies in order to show how fantasy literature grapples with the politics of identity while extending Hall's argument beyond sociological confines.

## 2. Methodology

This research uses Critical Discourse Analysis (Fairclough, 2023), steered by Stuart Hall's cultural identity theory, to explore identity's fluidity and fragmentation in Martin's *A Song of Ice and Fire* series. The methodology stems from Hall's view of identity as a 'becoming' process, marked by unilinear flow, multiple strands, and cultural writing. This method is well suited to a literary examination of fantasy literature, in which identity is self-consciously embedded and contested. In this regard, Critical Discourse Analysis offers a comprehensive examination of the relations of power, discourse, and culture that shape and contest identities in the text, while Hall's framework places the cultural studies discourse into more encompassing socio-cultural dynamics.

The primary data corpus for this research comprises Martin's five published novels in the series *A Game of Thrones*, *A Clash of Kings*, *A Storm of Swords*, *A Feast for Crows*, and *A Dance with Dragons*. The key passages were determined as a result of focus and active reading on identity performance, conflict, alteration, and cultural negotiation. As the reading was taking place, the texts were scanned for scenes where identity is 'mapped' onto or 'scraped' off through action, dialogue, motifs, and rituals, so that all the shifting identity representations within Hall could be thematically mapped.

This analysis required multiple steps to complete. One, intertextuality and the character's narrative speech were taken into account alongside language, power relations, and ideologies through Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis to identify its discursive identity constructions. Two, performativity (Butler, 2023) was used to examine how identities are enacted, for example, Arya Stark and her name changes alongside face-shifting rituals. Three, all these discursive and performative insights were woven into Hall's idea on cultural identity as a site where identity is ceaselessly formed and transformed, contested, and rendered incomplete. Thus, the analysis draws from discourse, performativity, and cultural theory, as well as the prominent layers of identity construction in the series.

The selection of case studies was set up using purposive sampling methodology, focusing on characters whose story arcs most vividly illustrate Hall's three core principles of identity: transformation, contestation, and incompleteness. Arya Stark was selected for her identity transformation in the form of voluntary face-changing and name abandonment. This aligns with Hall's notion of identity as a fluid, culturally negotiated process. Theon Greyjoy was chosen as an example illustrating forced identity fragmentation; his brutal reconstitution into Reek embodies externally imposed discursive violence, the struggle between imposed and self-fashioned identity dualisms. Bran Stark was included for his skin-changing and green seeing metaphysical identity dispersal, which foregrounds identity as unfinishable. Altogether, these three characters exemplified voluntary, forced, and supernatural reconfigurations of identity in Hall's Theory.

Exclusions are justified and reasoned in the context of the analysis. Excluded, for example, are characters like Jon Snow, who, based on the narratives, are included in the storyline, but are not included because their story arc does not demonstrate sustained identity fragmentation discursively or performatively in the Hallian sense. Although questions surrounding lineage and legitimacy arise regarding Jon, his identity is anchored to an internalized ethos of honor and duty, which, instead of radically unsettling, reaffirms his selfhood. Cersei Lannister's exclusion also makes sense, as her narrative exemplifies what Couldry (2012) calls "self-static" identity, wherein her self-perception is anchored to her noble heritage and her maternal influence, lacking any evidence of a fractured or performatively reconstituted self. These exclusions sharpen the study's focus within the characters whose identities illustrate Hall's "unfinished identities" – identities that exist as open-ended, fractured, and unceasingly undergo discursive and performative transformation.

So, to conclude, the framing of this study is grounded within Critical Discourse Analysis (Fairclough, 2023) alongside Butler's (2023) theory of performativity and Hall's cultural identity framework, to seek the ways in which *A Song of Ice and Fire* expresses identity as mutable, composite, and constructed within culture. Analyzing discourse and identity in tandem with close textual analysis sheds light on Martin's fantasy narrative as a site for considering the cultural politics of becoming, dislocation, and transformation, which is in harmony with Hall's view of identity as always in flux, never fully finished, and perpetually contested in and through speech, culture, and power.

### **3. Theoretical Framework and Analysis: Stuart Hall on Cultural Identity in *A Song of Ice and Fire***

#### **3.1. Performed Identities: Houses and Northernness**

Stuart Hall's (2021) reading of cultural identity as a process of becoming informs us of the identity construction of Westerosi Houses through representation, discourse, and difference. Houses like the Starks and the Lannisters demonstrate what Hall refers to as identity as "a production, which is never complete, always in process" (1990, p. 222). Take the Lannisters, for instance; their self-definition as "wealthy and powerful" serves neither as an objective statement nor solid discourse, but rather as a pseudo-reality created through discursive repetition, as captured by the phrase, "A Lannister always pays his debts." This performance constructs Lannister identity, contrasting them with other Houses, Starks in particular, who engage in "honor." This scenario aligns with Laclau and Mouffe's (2014) theory of discursive hegemony, where identity claims exist in a state of domination and subordination.

The Stark identity as "the North" also operates as a performed identity and not as an essentialist reality. Their worship of the Old Gods and rejection of Southern customs, along with the use of mottos like "Winter is Coming," create what Hall (1996) refers to as "narratives of belonging" (p. 4), uniting the Northern houses within a shared ecological and cultural memory (Öztürk, 2020). However, as pointed out by Anglberger and Hieke (2012), this identity is brittle when individual Starks like Sansa in King's Landing or Arya in Braavos assimilate into other cultures, exemplifying Hall's observation that identity shifts in the presence of difference (p. 113). The tension between the essentialist motto "There must always be a Stark in Winterfell" and the fluid claim "Winter is Coming" exposes the Northern identity's stark construction, illustrating Hall's premise that identity is shaped by power relations, is contested, and in constant flux.

#### **3.2. Diasporic and Liminal Identities: Daenerys and Tyrion**

Daenerys Targaryen's identity arc exemplifies Hall's (1990) cultural identity as "a narrative of becoming" (p. 4), emerging from diasporic experiences describing rupture and discontinuity. Her identity shifts between a Valyrian conqueror and a liberator of the oppressed, captured in Battis's (2015) "dialectic of diaspora" (p. 132). Daenerys' identity is captured as being 'native' and 'foreigner,' 'conqueror' and 'liberator' (p. 702). This is further supported by Hall, who sees identity as a many-layered condensation of narratives rather than a singular, unchanging core. Her embrace of Targaryen customs oscillates between adopting and

reconfiguring them for revolutionary purposes, which exemplifies Hall's identity's "suturing function" (1990, p. 226). Contradictory subject positions are temporarily stitched together.

In much the same way, Hall's integration of subjectivity and history comes to life through Tyrion Lannister's identity. Anglberger and Hieke (2012) comment on Tyrion as existing "interstitial space" (p. 118) as he is both an insider and outsider to Lannister's power structures on account of his dwarfism and morally ambiguous status. Terres et al. (2021), focusing on his identity, claim he is undergoing a "crisis of articulation" (p. 695), which further illustrates Hall's (1996) concept of identity arising from the collision of unutterable subjectivities and historical narratives (p. 3). Within the fantastical realm of Westeros, medieval ideologies of ableism combined with supernatural elements and political maneuvers of dragons amplify the fluidity of identity, dominantly showcasing the mark of fantasy—how extreme narrative instability is rendered through a lens of identity.

### ***3.3. Transformative Identities: Arya and Theon***

The identity trajectories of Arya Stark and Theon Greyjoy illustrate Hall's (2021) claim that identity is an evolving process. Arya's shift from noble daughter to apprentice of a Faceless Man signifies identity's kaleidoscopic fluidity. Her phrase "A girl has no name" captures Hall's (2021) constructionist view of identity through naming, whereby identity is performatively shaped. This is aligned with Butler's (2023) claim that identity is created by acts (p. 34) and not from a prior essence. Theon's transformation from a boastful Greyjoy heir to "Reek" and then on the path to reclamation showcases identity's "production" via trauma and trauma-induced social displacement (Hall, 2021, p. 112). Ahmed's (2013) affective economies theory reveals the production of identity through social forces, and in this case, shame and humiliation act as "sticky" social forces (p. 78).

Hall (2021) eludes to identity's 'suturing' function, whereby providing the idea of binding disparate elements into a fragile structure. Theon's physical mutilation and Arya's surgical facial reshaping attack to violence transforming identity, not Fantasy narratives, depict external processes of internal identities. The unresolved arcs involving Arya negotiating her Stark identity with "no one hood" and Theon, his Greyjoy heritage with Stark upbringing.

### **3.4. Articulated Identities: *The Brotherhood Without Banners***

According to Hall (2021), articulation theory, *The Brotherhood Without Banners* represents identity as formed, distilled, and layered through history, culture, and discourse, not as fixed elements. Their distinct composition, which includes nobles such as Beric Dondarrion, religious figures like Thoros of Myr, and commoners like Lemmoncloak, illustrates identity as incomplete and continually evolving. Their declaration, "We are the knights of the hollow hill," illustrates not an essential truth but a strategically articulated identity that is counter to the Lannisters and, therefore, sits in opposition to the dominant narrative. Laclau and Mouffe (2014) further explain the Brotherhood's identity through articulation theory as emerging through tenuous connections to disparate social fragments that define political antagonism instead of a singular, cohesive essence.

This radical fluidity is most apparent under the vengeance-fueled leadership of Lady Stoneheart, who moves from knightly justice to merciless brutality. This radical departure exemplifies Hall's approach to identity as a form of provisional suturing that remains perpetually open to rupture. Also, Butler's (2023) concept of performative identity applies here as well: the Brotherhood's actions (village defense, Frey executions) are more indicative of their identity than sigils or lineages would be. This underscores performative identity's ability to subvert fantasy's inherited identity structures.

## **4. Discussion**

This study shows how Martin's *A Song of Ice and Fire* applies Stuart Hall's theory of cultural identity as fluid, fragmented, and performatively constructed. This fantasy scholarship gaps the lack of Hall's integration with speculative literature, exposing how fantastical contexts heighten the instability of identity through the supernatural, trauma, and performative action.

This analysis supports Hall's concept that identity remains a perpetual work in progress. Arya's face-shifting and repeated renaming embody Hall's theory of identity as discursively produced through perpetual reinvention. Theon's branded reclamation as Reek illustrates how power-laden discourse forcibly fragments identity. Simultaneously, Bran's supernatural dispersal while skin-changing and green seeing his identity enacts a distributed and non-finalized existence, amplifying Hall's metaphysical framework of fantasy.

Nonetheless, the analysis adds to the complexity of Hall's theory. Hall integrates the construction of identity within the material socio-cultural

framework, while Martin's fantasy world, for example, warging or magical facelessness, neo fantasy, externalizes identity fluidity through forms which transcend social realist discourse. Thus, while Hall's focus on power, culture, and discourse is reinforced, fantasy literature adds metaphysical dimensions, suggesting that identity's incompleteness is not only discursively rendered but literally narrativized in speculative genres.

This focus on trauma and performativity further develops Anglberger and Hieke's 2012 focus on interstitial and diasporic identities in Westeros. While Battis 2015 underscores the diasporic dialectics in Daenerys, the present analysis enhances his interpretation by looking at other characters whose identities transcend the diasporic and become an ontological disjunction. Additionally, as opposed to Nayar 2015, who reads fantasy as an ideological space of critique, this analysis moves to the other extreme, concentrating on the construction of identity as the ideological framework and, in doing so, sharpens Hall's arguments by shifting the focus to fantasy's performative dimensions.

This study is limited by its omission of wider structural identities, like considering gender identities under patriarchal systems. Additionally, analyzing individual characters too closely may mean neglecting to examine the collective identity form, for instance, the House discourses or regional ecologies. An eco-critical Hallian interpretative approach or investigating inter-House identity-discursive hegemonies would be valuable for future study.

It tried to reinforce the capacity of the fantasy genre for the dramatization of identity as processual and unfinished, embedded in narrative, culture, and power through the use of critical discourse analysis, Butlerian performativity, and Hall's cultural identity theory.

## 5. Conclusion

With the use of Hall's cultural identity theory on ASOIAF, it is evident that identities within the narrative are fluid, fragmented, and constantly reshaped through discourse. This analysis articulates identity construction within Hall's framework of strategic essentialism, diasporic flux, and liminality vs. exceptionalism.

Analyzing the Stark family furthers Hall's concept of "narratives of becoming" (Hall, 1996). The Starks' performance of Northernness - through feudal ecology, religious devotion, and loyalty - embodies strategic essentialism, which Öztürk (2020) associates with a heightened sense of place and belonging (p. 156). However, the Starks' geographical and ideological fragmentation throughout Westeros complicates any form of unified identity, which echoes Hall's claim that identity is constituted

through difference and is always fluid. Furthermore, Hall's theory, which includes Carrington's commentaries in Kasó's work, shows us how in fantasy, regional identities often stand in for nationalist discourses of the real world (p. 118).

Exiled princess, liberator, and Targaryen heir are some of the roles that Daenerys assumes, which demonstrate Hall's (1990) "rupture and discontinuity" in relation to diasporic identities. Battis's (2015) "dialectic of diaspora" is observable in the saprophytic ecosystem as she waveringly embraces and rejects her Valyrian roots (p. 142). These diasporic identities are paradoxically fluid. This reading broadens the understanding of diaspora, shifting from a stagnant concept to one that is continuously contested within narrative and the world.

The difference between Targaryen exceptionalism and Tyrion's liminality further substantiates Hall's model. The Targaryen's myths of blood purity operate as a "regime of representation" (Terres et al., 2021, p. 702) employing exceptionalism as an ideological formation. On the other hand, Tyrion occupies an interstitial space and is an exemplar of identity "unsutured" (Hall, 1990, p. 226). These perspectives show that dominantly and marginally identified subjects are simultaneously and discursively produced and contested.

Based on the analysis above, *A Song of Ice and Fire* is not only a ground for Hall's application but a rich literary ground where cultural identity is an unfinished project. The primary focus with Hall is that his notions of identity, fluid, fragmented, and performed, remain valid for fictional contexts. In regard to *A Song of Ice and Fire*, this analysis underscores the narrative depth of identity politics rather than an act of escapism. On a wider level, for the studies of fantasy literature, this research supports the assertion by Öztürk (2020) that "the best fantasy doesn't escape reality, but refracts it through narrative alchemy" (p. 203).

This study expands fantasy scholarship in three important ways. First, it enriches theoretical debates with Hall's model pertaining to identity construction in fantasy literature, supporting Battis et al.'s (2015) claim that "Martin's work is an ideal landscape for examining performative and contested identities" (p. 215). Second, it integrates cultural studies and fantasy by revealing how identity conflicts in Westeros are parallels of contemporary identity politics. This argument is further supported by Johnson (2024), who notes the articulation of unstable identity in Tyrion's liminality (p. 178). Third, it advances fantasy studies by showing how cultural identity theories expose the layers of politics in speculative narratives.

This study still has some limitations. This study predominantly analyzes noble houses, which are rich in analytical potential, leaving the identity constructions of subordinate groups, like the Free Folk or the Dothraki, less explored (Kennedy & Whaley, 2024). Furthermore, the use of 20th and 21st-century cultural theory in relation to a medievalist fantasy world has the potential for anachronisms that need more scrutiny, especially in regard to historicity and the applicability of universal theory.

As Samuels (2014) suggested, cross-comparative analyses of identity making in various fantasy realms could be pursued in future research to evaluate Hall's model's adaptability to subgenres. Furthermore, race, gender, and disability studies could provide more nuanced frameworks of identity construction in intersectional analyses in fantasy literature. Finally, reception studies looking at how different audiences interpret these identities would shift understanding of cultural identity from text to audience, responding to Kennedy and Whaley (2024), who call for more sophisticated uses of cultural theory in fantasy studies (p. 42).

In closing, this study placed Stuart Hall's cultural identity theory in *A Song of Ice and Fire*, which not only demonstrates that Hall's cultural theory continues to be relevant for literary analysis but also shows that fantasy literature can be used to model, critique, and evoke politics of identity, in and out of fiction.

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