



**A POSTHUMANIST CRITIQUE OF TARGARYEN-DRAGON
INTERDEPENDENCE IN *FIRE AND BLOOD***

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Abstract

Moving beyond anthropocentrism which privileges human sovereignty and political power, this research claims that Martin's text builds a human-nonhuman collaborative world where dragons as nonhumans act as co-constitutive, active agents shaping identity, history and power. George R.R. Martin's Fire and Blood scrutinizes the non-human agency through Donna Haraway's conceptual frameworks of companion species and sympoiesis highlighting the relationship between dragons and Targaryens. The study illustrates Martin's destabilization of human exceptionalism and political authority as an interspecies collaboration by foregrounding human-nonhuman relationship.

Employing Haraway's sympoiesis that species making with one another instead of being an autonomous being, this study demonstrates the Targaryen Empire as constructed by its collaboration with dragons. This research also claims that dragons not only construct the psychological and physical constitution of their dragon lords but they also shape legitimacy, succession, and territorial control as defeating weapons. The textual analysis of the main episodes of Fire and Blood demonstrates how the relationship between dragons and their riders challenge the binary differences between humans and animals. The text continuously portrays that the political imperial power, lineage and stability come through interspecies collaboration.

Dragons symbolizing non-humans appear as not only tools of power but significant actors who co-construct political structures, identity, and power dynamics in Westeros. This study analyzes the Targaryen's transcendence of human limitations through the usage of their dragons. By examining human-dragon relationship through a posthumanist approach, this study subverts the conventional perspectives of fantasy fiction offering a different paradigm that appreciates the value and agency of non-humans. It broadens the epistemological vocabulary of Haraway to a genre that prioritizes anthropocentric quests indicating a multispecies narrative of dependency, alliance, and co-evolution.

Keywords: Posthumanism, Companion species, Sympoiesis, Dragons, Identity construction

1. Introduction

This research investigates how George R. R. Martin's *Fire and Blood* deconstructs posthumanist perspectives of shared agency by illustrating dragons as both military weapons and co-constitutive agents. By incorporating Donna Haraway's frameworks of companion species and sympoiesis, this research argues that the relationship between Targaryen¹ and dragons is not only characterized by control but also by interdependence, violation, and hierarchy. Instead of representing dragons only as emblems of power, the research demonstrates them as non-human actors who unsettle anthropocentric perspectives of sovereignty, political authority, and identity.

Martin portrays dragons as more than emblems of royal prestige or decorative figures of fantasy. Such representation of dragons in the narrative raises a profound critical concern;

¹ House Targaryen is an honorable family residing in the imaginative world created by Martin. They are known for their dragon-riding lineage.

the text continuously blurs the boundary between interdependence and domination, companionship and control, agency and exploitation. Hence dragons not only support Targaryen superiority in Westeros but they also showcase how political power depends on non-humans who are neither completely autonomous nor fully subordinate. This tension makes the narrative effective setting for posthumanist analysis because it destabilizes the presumption that sovereignty, history, and identity are constructed by humans alone.

This study mainly investigates that how the presence of dragons demonstrates power contradictions. It also reveals an ecological dimension by highlighting how dragon warfare consumes life, turns non-humans into war weapons and disrupts ecological balance. So, the research can also extend the discussion towards SDG 15 because it showcases how superiority over non-humans generates political power and control while simultaneously destabilizing ecological balance.

This research deals with a posthumanist approach where “post” means moving beyond and “humanism” means a belief system focusing on humans and their values so posthumanism is moving beyond the notion of humanism (Braidotti 139). Haraway explains posthumanism as an aspect of her comprehensive evaluation of anthropocentrism and a requirement for understanding the complex relationship among diverse living entities. She reiterates that it is mandatory to challenge the concept of singular human situation and endorse all living things' interconnected and entangled nature. Instead of perceiving humanity as superior and separate from other living creatures, Haraway supports the perspective of sympoiesis, which is the interdependence and co-creation of all living forms (Haraway 42). From Haraway's viewpoint, posthumanism demands radical reconsideration of our position on the planet, provoking us to endorse multispecies existence and collective future.

This research incorporates Haraway's theories of companion species and sympoiesis in order to showcase the significance of non-human actors, the decentralization of humans highlighting the Targaryen-dragon bond in *Fire and Blood*. In Haraway's Companion Species, two contradictory words of 'companion' and 'species' create ways for living creatures to live well together and build different kinds of relationship on Earth (Haraway 24). Donna Haraway asserts that non-humans and humans shape the existence of each other creating complex networks of mutual dependence (Haraway 62). Though Targaryens and dragons appear to have a companionship in the text, this bond is troubled by power asymmetries and dynastic control complicating the idea of companionship.

Haraway's theory of Sympoiesis highlights that no one can act alone; all creatures are interlinked and interdependent within complex larger systems (Haraway 87). Symbiosis is not always mutually beneficial but sometimes one organism is getting more advantage than the other as noticed in the case of Targaryen-dragon relationship where Targaryens are getting more benefits from their dragons as dragons serve as the symbol of power, fear, conquest, dominance, and intimidation. On the other hand, dragons get food, care, and guidance from Targaryens so Targaryens are getting more benefits in this relationship. Here, Haraway's concept is valuable because it not only offers interspecies collaboration, but it also reveals the unequal and unstable multispecies bond.

1.1. Research Objectives:

- To analyze the importance of non-human creatures focusing on the Targaryen-dragon sympoiesis in *Fire and Blood*
- To investigate how post-humanist analysis of the text deconstructs human exceptionalism and challenges the anthropocentric perspectives

- To examine the role of dragons in Targaryen's identity construction, power, and the political structures of Westeros

1.2. Research Questions:

1. What is the significance of non-human actors challenging anthropocentric perspectives in George Martin's *Fire and Blood*?
2. What role do dragons play in identity construction, power, and dominance of Targaryens in *Fire and Blood*?
3. How do Haraway's theoretical frameworks of Companion species and Symptoiesis explore the relationship between dragons and their riders in *Fire and Blood*?

1.3. Significance of Research

This research is significant within the field of literature reorienting the traditional literary researches by challenging anthropocentric perspectives. This research considers dragons as active agents instead of portraying them as mere allegory or background offering an innovative interpretation of Martin's work and also expanding the critical discourse to incorporate how non-humans affect politics, and identity. By incorporating Haraway's frameworks, this innovative work encourages researchers to review a more intricate interconnected web of existence reflecting human and non-human interdependence.

This study connects literary discourse to sustainability goals by reflecting how exploitation and power in *Fire and Blood* illustrate contemporary challenges in handling biodiversity. By depicting non-human forces through the emblem of dragons, the subtle investigation of agency and dependency portrays that power and identity are not solely determined by humans instead they rise from the interdependence and interconnections of various life forms linked within a dynamic network. This analysis critiques human exceptionalism and highlights the fact that humans cannot act alone in this world instead, non-human forces actively conduce to human procurements providing fresh insights in the field of posthumanist studies.

2. Literature Review

George R. R. Martin's *Fire and Blood* is a fusion of epic fantasy and historical fiction including strong aspects of political conspiracy, magical elements, and mythical creatures that are the prominent features of the fantasy genre. It has also been adapted into an HBO TV series, *House of the Dragon* (Shayo and Goyaz). *House of the Dragon* popularized its themes and characters showing a unique bond of Targaryens with their dragons that seek the attention of several audience. Since *Fire and Blood* was published in 2018 so it gained limited scholarly attention of only a small cohort of researchers leaving a significant research gap that offers a detailed exploration of the novel through numerous critical lens.

Miftahul Rizaldi analyzed superstitions and their impact on characters during the chaotic events of the civil war, Dance of the Dragons in *Fire and Blood* by applying Canadian psychologist, Stuart Vyse's concept of superstition who mentioned that lack of understanding and illogical connections result in superstitions. He talked about the psychological impact of superstitions and examined the whole narrative to reveal the characters' belief in different cultural practices and deities affecting their decisions and actions. He also highlighted that the superstitious behavior of the people of Westeros misguided them leading to wrong decision-making (Rizaldi 46). Moreover, the depiction of the superstitious beliefs leads to social division as different houses hold different conflicting beliefs causing social unrest and some people believe that taking a bath with dragon's blood can clean all the sins of a person demonstrating how superstitions influence the irrational people of Westeros. Rizaldi mentioned that the people of Westeros following the religious sect, Faith of the Seven, consider Targaryen's association

with their dragons as suspicion. This cultural prejudice is also a consequence of their belief in superstition which depicts Targaryens and their dragons as dangerous and unnatural creature leading to military and social unrest (Rizaldi 47). Rizaldi illustrated the broader impact of magical thinking and superstitions in the medieval context. Overall this research dealt with the operation of superstitions in literary writings reflecting broader cultural and psychological aspects.

David Levesley talked about the literary text and TV adaptation of *Fire and Blood*, *House of the Dragon* which is a prequel series of the widely popular and acclaimed TV series *Game of Thrones* which also draws its narrative basis and data sources from the literary canvas of George R. R. Martin. Levesley criticized *Fire and Blood* as a lengthy and dry history of Targaryen lineage saying that it feels more like homework than an engaging continuation of the series and Martin connects reader with a distant and disconnected universe (Levesley). He criticized Martin's detailed writing style comparing it to Gibbon's historical text of *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* and his negligence in showcasing a significant portrayal of women in the history of Westeros instead of focusing on the patriarchal narrative. Another point of disappointment that he raised was the minimal description of Valyria which is a key point of Targaryen mythology. He concluded that *Fire and Blood* failed to meet the expectations of fans of *Game of Thrones* (Levesley). Levesley emphasized the negative facet of *Fire and Blood* considering it dry and lengthy and neglected its potential value and positive elements within the book. Levesley criticism expressed his personal dissatisfaction rather than a fair review leading to a lack of credibility and integrity as it did not reflect other readers' perspectives who may find it valuable.

Stefanie Lethbridge scrutinized the human-animal relationship, agency, and dynamics of heroism in the television adaptation of Martin's *A Song of Ice and Fire*, *Game of Thrones*, a chronological successor of *House of the Dragon* (television adaptation of *Fire and Blood*). Lethbridge contended that it subverted the conventional ideas of heroism showcasing various characters involving animals having heroic traits often neglected in traditional chivalric narratives. She illustrated the differences between grim reality and high idealism in describing chivalry. The author noticed flaws in the characters of knights and nobles as the knights were sometimes represented as deficient figures showcasing their beastly traits instead of their virtual tendency of chivalry (Lethbridge 4). On the other hand, in contrast, animals like dragons and dire wolves demonstrated self-sacrifice, bravery, and loyalty representing the exemplars of heroism. The dire wolves showed a deeper bond to old gods and the natural world (Lethbridge 1). Lethbridge focused on the importance of animals addressing that they are not passive but active agents in the series. The relationship between wolves and Stark children highlighted the aspect of interconnectedness especially when Stark children felt the existence of their wolves even after their death emphasizing the deep-rooted influence of this companionship (Lethbridge 9). The researcher also mentioned the contribution of dragons through Daenerys character that they symbolize destruction and power but they also portray agency that surpasses human control. Lethbridge explored the evolution of dragons from war tools to sentient beings, having independent will, highlighting their power, authority, and strength (Lethbridge 3). The bond between Daenerys and her dragons is complicated; she tries to control their powers and faces tragic consequences for exercising immense force. Lethbridge incorporated a theoretical framework involving concepts from cultural studies, animal studies, and eco-criticism to explore the roles played by animals in GOT. Lethbridge criticized a reductionist approach that animals must not be viewed as just metaphors and symbols



highlighting their significance and agency and focused on the idea of animal agency which postulated that non-humans are also independent participants within the narrative having their own perceptions and societal behaviors different from humans (Lethbridge 7). The author also employed the framework of biosocial networks to point out the interconnectedness of humans and animals and how their relationship showcases themes of cooperation, survival, and heroism in challenging conditions (Lethbridge 3). Lethbridge's work mainly focused on dragons and direwolves omitting other non-human entities illustrated in the narrative. Furthermore, the article criticized animal's reduction to symbols, it still mentioned symbolic interpretations. The study did not comprehensively elucidated critiques and opposite viewpoints regarding the portrayal of animals in *Game of Thrones*. Mentioning the counterarguments and critical points could further strengthen the research offering a more balanced analysis.

Modern researchers emphasize on collaboration, shared responsibility, and interconnectedness of multiple species and different disciplines. In this context, a modern researcher, Jessica Conway's work introduced the main themes of human and non-human collaboration, Haraway's sympoiesis and chthulucene, posthumanist pedagogy, and interdisciplinary techniques to literacy as a guidebook for education in unstable times. The author investigated the intricate bond between humans and non-humans using Haraway's concepts of sympoiesis and Chthulucene for collaborative responsibility and creation (Conway 5). Conway portrayed a world where all humans and non-human forces are intricately connected employing the theoretical framework of Chthulucene and sympoiesis to present new understanding across different fields/areas (Conway 20). The application of Haraway's framework challenged traditional boundaries providing a new understanding of education and literacy in the context of social interdependencies and ecology. Conway utilized a diffractive reading approach driven by the posthumanist theory of Karen Barad who focused on the co-construction of reality and knowledge through discursive practices (Conway 67). Conway's argument revolves around the concept of sympoiesis that knowledge should be collectively created admitting the interconnectedness of all living species (Conway 27). She promotes an inclusive approach that appreciates the role of non-humans in the learning process. Additionally, she talked about the concept of metacognition which is having thoughts about one's own thoughts and controlling one's own cognition (Conway 82). The author considered it important for effective learning that helps students to adapt and understand methods and strategies. Conway promoted a transdisciplinary method to education mentioning that visions and perceptions from different fields can improve people's understanding of literacy instruction and metacognition.

Janne Hirvisaari investigated the theme of deconstruction of power structures and speciesism within George Orwell's *Animal Farm* by applying theories of poststructuralist and critical posthumanism. Speciesism is the belief that humans are superior to all other living creatures. The research emphasized how *Animal Farm*, being a political allegory, insightfully comments on the replication of oppressive frameworks of species and marginalization of non-humans. In this posthumanist analysis, the theoretical framework emphasized how the narrative criticizes human-centered perspectives that always snub non-humans. Hirvisaari removed humans from the text for a posthumanist experiment to analyze inherent biases and animal status in humanist thought (Hirvisaari 3). The researcher incorporated post-structuralism in his work for the deconstruction of binaries like human/animal, challenging human superiority in these relations (Hirvisaari 17). This method revealed how anthropocentrism shapes cross-species interactions in a posthuman scenario. By emphasizing pigs' empowerment and their

representation of human tyrants, the research demonstrated that they repeat the same kind of inequalities that are rejected and challenged by posthumanism.

By concentrating on the exploitation of animals and oppression on the basis of social structures, the study stated that there must be a new discourse to highlight the importance of all species and creatures (Hirvisaari 70). The researcher represented language as a powerful tool used by animals to establish dominance and power over other animals reflecting contemporary societal and political structures where the tool of language causes power dynamics (Hirvisaari 40). This research contributed to posthumanist scholarship but contrasted in both scope and method from the current research i.e. the posthumanist analysis of *Fire and Blood*. The thesis on *Fire and Blood* focused on Haraway's companion species and sympoiesis demonstrating symbiotic collaboration instead of structural tyranny. Animals (dragons) actively participate in constructing the Targaryen's political reign, identity, and power in *Fire and Blood* differing from animals of *Animal Farm* who symbolize human powers. Though both narratives including *Fire and Blood* and *Animal Farm* demonstrate the contribution of non-humans in political structures but Martin's narrative offers a more optimistic posthuman vision based on shared existence and collaboration instead of imitating human behavior.

The originality and significance of this thesis lie in its distinctive post-humanist analysis of Martin's *Fire and Blood* particularly highlighting the Dragon-Targaryen symbiosis through the application of Haraway's theory of Sympoiesis. Previous researchers explored Martin's narrative and posthumanism from entirely different angles as compared to this study e.g. as mentioned above in the thesis; Rizaldi's analysis of *Fire and Blood* emphasized superstitions and their social and cultural effects on society and characters of the narrative. He applied a psychoanalytical approach to his work rather than a posthumanist approach. While Conway's research also employed Haraway's theory to analyze interconnectedness but she did not incorporate that theory into a specific literary text. Levesley criticism of Martin's narrative was also based on the narrative and stylistic elements of the text highlighting its limitations. The originality of this thesis lies in the application of Haraway's concept to *Fire and Blood* which has not been investigated through this framework before. Consequently, this study fills a gap by incorporating Haraway's theoretical frameworks with the posthumanist analysis of *Fire and Blood* highlighting the Targaryen- Dragon Sympoiesis that provides an original broader contribution to both posthumanist studies and Martin scholarship.

2.1. Research Gap:

This study is significant as it explores *Fire and Blood* through a post-humanist lens that has not been applied to this text so far. Despite the worldwide popularity of *Fire and Blood*, it has gained limited scholarly attention on academic level. Hence, only one research paper has been published on the narrative where the researcher examined superstitions and their sociocultural impact on the people of Westeros (Rizaldi 46) leaving a noteworthy gap, especially in the domain of posthumanist exploration. No study has yet analyzed the complex bond between dragons and their riders through posthumanist lens. The research fills the aforementioned gap and contributes to the broader discussions on *Fire and Blood* and posthumanism.

3. Research Methodology

This research is foregrounded in a qualitative research method that employs textual analysis as its core component to analyze the interspecies interaction between the Targaryens and their dragons in George R. R. Martin's *Fire and Blood*. The study explores how the Targaryen-dragon relationship questions typical anthropocentric ideas emphasizing the co-

evolutionary and symbiotic tie between humans and non-human species in Westeros. This research employs Haraway's concept of companion species to highlight how humans and non-humans cannot exist as autonomous entities but are connected through a sustained relationship (Haraway 17). And the other theoretical framework of sympoiesis is employed to challenge the idea of self-organizing systems, portraying that all living things are entangled within a large collaborative web of mutual production (Haraway 58). The aforementioned theories collectively offer a conceptual vocabulary to investigate how Targaryen political power, sovereignty, and identity are not solely achieved by human efforts but come out from a collaborative entanglement with their dragons.

The qualitative approach is chosen for this study because it allows in-depth analysis of power structures, meanings, and relationships that cannot be captured by quantitative method (Creswell 37). Textual extracts are selected from the narrative intentionally to focus on the significant episodes where Targaryen-dragon collaboration shapes identity formation, sovereignty claims, and political outcomes. Each extract is closely read and analyzed through Haraway's theoretical frameworks with additional references to the posthumanist concepts of Rosi Braidotti, Cary Wolfe, and Bruno Latour to highlight posthuman aspects of the narrative.

4. Analysis and Discussion

The analysis section of this study explores the pivotal extracts from the narrative through Haraway's theories of companion species and sympoiesis. In *Fire and Blood*, dragons are not just passive instruments rather, they act as co-constitutive forces whose connections and capacities actively design the ontological and political fabric of Westeros (Martin and Wheatley 8). Dragons, a symbol of demolition and power, play a strategic role in the Targaryen succession so this text provides extensive data for analysis employing posthumanism to *Fire and Blood* which has not been investigated through this approach earlier.

Implementing Haraway's theoretical frameworks, this study traces how the conventional narratives of human hegemony are depicted and disrupted by the Targaryen-dragon relationship. Targaryen's dependence on their dragons is continuously depicted throughout the text from Aegon's conquest to the final extinction of dragons during the reign of Aegon III. Thematic arrangement of this analysis traces how decentralization of humans, identity construction, sympoietic warfare, and dragon loss illuminate posthumanism in the text.

4.1. Human Decentralization and Dragons as a Co-Constitutive Force

Human decentralization and non-human recognition as constitutive of power and history are the core strategies of the posthumanist approach. The author of *Fire and Blood* repeatedly mentions that House Targaryen, with their dragons, also rules the sky (Martin and Wheatley 8). Consequently, the aforementioned reference traces the fact that dragons are autonomous actors who structure events in the narrative. These are the dragons that empower the Targaryens to rule the skies highlighting Haraway's stance that humans are not only the major participants in the "Chthulucene"² but other beings are also able to react and humans along with "biotic and abiotic" forces of the earth make the whole story (Haraway 55). By highlighting that dragons along with Targaryens also able to act and major participants in governance and conquest, Martin's stance aligns with Haraway's perspective of reknitting world's order surrounding multispecies collaboration.

² Haraway's concept of an ideal world where all humans and non-humans exist and evolve collectively through mutual connection and care.

The material force of Haraway's claim is clearly evident When Lord Rosby peacefully surrendered to Queen Rhaenys and her dragon Meraxes, without any conflict (Martin 12), Martin theatricalizes that dragons are deeply enmeshed into power structures of Westeros. The king's submission before dragon's breathing fire symbolizes that dragons act as companion species as Haraway mentions that they are co-participants instead of subjugated tools who can change human behavior. Haraway articulates in her book *When Species Meet* that dogs are mutual adapted partners of humans in the capitalist naturecultures (62). In the aforementioned stance, the dragons replace dogs clarifying the analogy/ analogous to that Kings bend not only in front of Targaryens but to dragons who possess powers. This scene also highlights Haraway's assertion that no can act alone in this world but connections are practical and functional (87). The lord's yielding is anchored in the material presence of dragon Meraxes-her threat, size, and burning flame. Hence Rosby's capitulation is contemplated as a multispecies negotiation and a companion species bond that showcases the non-reducible agency of dragons.

Aegon's military campaign reinforces the aforementioned Haraway's claim by highlighting the dependency between humans and non-humans at the battlefield. When Aegon sends out Orys to attack Lord Darklyn and Lord Mooton's massive army while he attacks on them from the sky with his dragon Balerion, leading to the death of both lords. In this way, he forms a dual-axis battle that is coherent to sympoiesis (Martin 12). Haraway describes sympoiesis as making together the worlds by organisms who cannot exist independently but come into being through their relationships (58). Neither Aegon's army nor his dragon's attack constitutes an adequate force independently, but the coordinate forces of the humans and non-humans in an interactive system co-produce the sympoietic victory that cannot be achieved alone. This dynamic can be further illuminated by Latour's Actor-Network Theory that describes that agency is distributed across grouping of both human and non-human actants whose interaction creates political and social effects (Latour 52). Hence, the Field of Fire is not solely Aegon's victory; it is a collaborative victory of a human-nonhuman network.

The aforementioned theoretical stakes are further confirmed by the burning of the massive castle of Harrenhal. When King Harren of the Harrenhal refused to surrender, Aegon burnt the entirety of the Harrenhal castle with the help of Balerion the Black Dread (Martin 18). Martin orchestrates an ecological horror by depicting the dragonfire as transforming stones, bread, wood, and life into a cascading material catastrophe. It was inconceivable for Aegon to vanquish the Harrenhal without Balerion, highlighting Haraway's notion that no one can act alone and non-human forces play a pivotal role in the story as connections are important for survival and existence. This scene is further clarified by Latour's actor-network theory which suggests that agency is circulated by human and non-human actants³ collectively within networks (Latour 52). According to this theory, Balerion, Aegon's dragon is considered as an actant whose fire restructures socio-political fabric where castles burn and kings bend their knees. The fiery participation of dragon in battlefield is considered as a co-constitutive force co-constructing feudal and political fidelity. Consequently, Bruno Latour's theory portrays the aforementioned conquest as a network in which dragons and humans are inextricably enmeshed.

³ According to Latour's ANT, actant is a human or non-human entity which acts or to which other actors of the network ascribe an action.

4.2. Sympoietic Warfare and Multispecies Battlefield

The Field of Fire shows the most inclusive stage of sympoietic warfare in the narrative; a scene where different actors participate to create Targaryen power. When two great kings from Mern and Reach gathered a mightiest army of 55,000 men, compared to Aegon who only had a fifth of their forces. Aegon soared over his foes upon Balerion to burn them in flame, with both of his sisters accompanying him on their dragons. The wind on the battlefield fanned the fire of dragons blowing the smoke into their foes' faces. The smoke caused by the Balerion fire blinded their adversaries (Martin 22-24). It is a theoretically notable portrayal that not solely human forces but multispecies assemblage operates posthuman warfare.

Multispecies coordination is clearly evident in the Field of Fire. Dragons are active agents whose semiotic and material presence alters the strategic logic of warfare. In this Chthulucenic atmosphere, both biotic and abiotic forces play their roles in the main story (Haraway 55). Here, the coalescence of dragons, flame, smoke, and wind forms a multispecies assemblage that surpasses anthropocentric dominance. Dragons, being biotic forces, are as crucial as King Aegon, Lord Mern, and Queen Visenya. Their fierce fire reshapes socio-political structures, challenging human centrality. Thus, draconic capabilities and anthropic strategy co-produce Aegon's victory in the Field of Fire. The larger human army is defeated by the smaller army of Aegon because of his powerful and rich sympoietic network.

4.3. Targaryen's Identity Construction

In *Fire and Blood*, Targaryen identity is not only the property of their bloodline but a posthuman identity constructed shaped through their interspecies entanglement. Aegon is also known as Aegon the Dragon as Martin states that Aegon the Dragon started ruling his realm from King's Landing (Martin 30), assigning him the identity of a post-human ruler whose reign originates from draconic companionship. Aegon is a hybrid post-human subject who is not entirely human nor entirely dragon, co-constructed by flame, alliance, and flight. Such identity construction of Targaryens aligns with Braidotti's idea that a post-human subject is a relational and nomadic becoming. Braidotti's concept of posthumanism consists of a more inclusive lens, moving beyond anthropocentrism to embracing non-humans as active actors (Braidotti 37). Aegon's sympoietic label of "the Dragon" is a co-performative blending of human and non-human forces. His sovereignty is inseparable from making-with Balerion's fire, Vhagar's roar, and Meraxes's wings.

The aforementioned argument and theme of the identity construction are further reinforced by a chapter title "Reign of the Dragon" in the narrative. Via this titular choice, Martin assigns the sovereignty not only to Aegon but also to his companion dragons, highlighting multispecies reign where power and political authority emerge from interspecies collaboration but not only from human descent. Being dragon-riders, House Targaryen dissolves the boundaries between non-human and human, reflecting Haraway's theoretical claim that connections create companion species and beings are not completely formed and exist without their partners as they shape each other's identities (Haraway 17). Aegon's label and rule are fully formed by the performative fusion of dragons and their riders. They shape each other's capacities to co-construct their identities together. This partnership blurs the boundaries between dragons and their riders' agency, illustrating dragons as co-sovereigns of their Targaryen partners.

In *Fire and Blood*, dragons are symbolic and narrative co-creators of the Targaryen lineage. As Cary Wolfe asserts that humanism does not allow us to move beyond the idea of human exceptionalism (Wolfe xv). Targaryens are not ordinary people because of their relationship with dragons; they exceed human subjectivity. Targaryens incarnate a posthuman assemblage

which conjoins draconic and human identities, effectually aligning with Braidotti's concept of "becoming-animal," blurring the constructed borders of anthropocentric self. Targaryens' hybrid identity blesses them with a divine self-conception, fortified by the Valyrian customs of the ecclesiastic legitimization of sovereignty, the symbolic fear of their dragons, and the attribution of divine labels to their dragons. Haraway's framework of companion species deconstructs the distinction between self and other, human and animal, focusing on co-constitution and co-evolution. Targaryens have a dynamic relationship with their dragons, shaping each other's subjectivity and capacities.

4.5. Disruption of Sympoietic Identity

The significant role of dragons in the identity construction of Targaryen is more legible in the moments of dragon absence from Targaryen life. A Targaryen without a dragon is considered weak as Aegon the Uncrowned, because in the early stage, he didn't "make-with" a dragon (Martin 85). Targaryens possessing dragons can fully access the dominance, authority and power of their house. Here, the dragons' presence as non-human actors is necessary for the supremacy and sovereignty of their Targaryen lords. Prince Aegon's power is not innate but co-created with a companion dragon aligning with Haraway's vision that no one can act alone but corridors and connections are material and practical (87). According to Haraway, Targaryens and their dragons form a kind of companionship, shaping each other's abilities. So Prince Aegon's weakness is not a collapse of an individual agency but a sympoietic bond disruption- Prince Aegon needs to form a sympoietic bond.

Wolfe asserts that posthumanism recognizes the autonomy of non-humans by decentering humans (Wolfe 120). In *Fire and Blood*, the dragons' autonomy revolves around Targaryen rule. Maegor's followers reveal an ideological belief that a Targaryen, without a dragon, cannot assert his claim, proving Haraway's concept that living things are incomplete without connections with others. The dragons' agency changes the sovereign from precarious exile into a powerful contender.

The dynamic interaction between Targaryens and their dragons resists binaries of supremacy and submission. Haraway's idea of making-with is valuable in investigating how Targaryens are dependent sovereign subjects entangled with their dragons politically, emotionally, and biologically. This interwoven identity is strikingly evident when Princess Rhaena and Prince Aegon secretly enter King's Landing in a wagon to take back their companion dragons (Martin 90). Their survival as political characters completely depends on their dragons, so they take risks to reclaim their dragons. Aegon the Uncrowned cannot confront Maegor, having the monstrous Balerion without Dreamfyre and Quicksilver. The aforementioned citation from *Fire and Blood* aligns with Haraway's notion that living things form links for existence and survival (Haraway 60). The identities of Rhaena and Aegon both as Targaryens and political figures, rely on their ability to possess their companion dragons. Aegon and Rhaena cannot survive and act alone without their non-human counterparts which became their existential necessity. Hence, the reference portrays the Targaryens' symbiotic orchestration that Aegon and Rhaena, without their dragons, cannot even dare to fight for the Iron Throne.

4.6. Expansion of Sovereign Power through Dragon Multiplicity

Sympoietic bond multiplication across Targaryen regime does not only accumulate power but it also co-constructs and expands sovereign authority by further diversifying and expanding the human-dragon network. The ideological prominence of Jaehaerys having two dragons is explicitly articulated when Lord Roger says that our prince commands not only one but two

powerful dragons, presenting him superior to Maegor having only one dragon (Martin 105). This excerpt demonstrates how the strategic position of a king is affected by the number of dragons he possesses. The multiplicity of companion dragons broadens the king's "becoming with many" increasing his ability to derive change, highlighting a companion species approach (Haraway 17). The additional dragons add variety to the shared relationship network, making the team more powerful and flexible. Latour states that humans mutually working with non-humans create "hybrid collectives" where action and power emerge from the whole team assemblages (Latour 43). Thus, Jaehaerys's power arises not only from his valor but from the hybrid collective of Targaryen-dragon companionship.

Latour's posthumanist idea of networked power is explicitly evident in the political economy of dragon eggs when the Lord of Casterly Rock had a desire that Rhaena get married to one of his sons because he wanted dragon eggs. With dragon riders, Lannisters would become equal to Targaryens (Martin 160). Casterly Rock Lord does not only want to acquire a status symbol but he also wants to have a non-human actant (Latour 46) into Lannister network to make it more influential. Dragon eggs are exceptionally scarce because they hold potential non-human creatures whose agency could change power structures in Westeros.

Haraway suggests that the close bond between species is helpful for the survival and empowerment of both partners (Haraway 17). Thus by holding dragon eggs, Lannisters can acquire new symbiotic companionships, accepting the fact that real power emerges from the collaboration with non-human allies. In political-economic constructs, dragon eggs are a form of valuable asset because they could flourish into influential non-human creatures. The Westerosi people trading, stealing, and fighting over dragon eggs portray that they are considered important potential instruments, just like marriage alliances and military armies.

4.7. The Consolidation and Disintegration of Targaryen Sympoietic Power

The relation between the density of sympoietic connections and the proportion of Targaryen ruling power reaches its peak during Viserys I's reign, determining that posthuman authority is relational and cumulative; the more comprehensive the human-dragon collaboration, the more unassailable and formidable the throne. Many people of Westeros believe that Viserys I's reign was considered the peak time of Targaryen's power as at that time there was a greater number of dragons than ever before (334). Haraway's notion that humans and animals come into being through the phenomenon of becoming-with one another (Haraway 17) highlights that how the dragon proliferation translates political supremacy; each dragon epitomizes an additional link within the dynastic web, multiplying the collective capacity of Targaryens for governance and action. During Viserys' reign, the dragons were not static tools, but they were active agents in the co-construction of dynastic identity and hegemonic authority of the Targaryens.

Wolfe's claim that posthumanism opposes the concept of humans as self-defining and autonomous beings (Wolfe 123) is clearly evident in King Viserys' identity construction by non-humans. King Viserys' reign was not solely a human achievement but it was symbiotically made up of human-dragon agency, ensuring that human supremacy is always connected with non-human agents in the world of Westeros. Viserys' legitimacy and his identity as a king rely on non-humans' agency emerging from a sympoietic bond where human and non-human form a dynamic web.

Braidotti's posthumanist idea of becoming-animal states the procedure through which human moves beyond anthropocentric self-perception through relationship with non-humans (Braidotti 37). Braidotti's concept finds its narration in the scenario where Prince Aemond lost

his eye but succeeded in claiming a dragon. But Aemond considered it a fair exchange as he finally got a dragon in this way (Martin 361). This reference highlights the significance of dragons for Targaryens that they can survive without an eye but they cannot survive without dragons. Targaryens consider dragons as fundamental for their identity and survival. Human limitations of Aemond are transcended via his symbiotic bond with a strong non-human creature, resonating with Haraway's stance of multispecies worlding that emphasizes how different organisms (humans and animals, etc.) exist, evolve, and construct the planet together.

Haraway's perspective that only humans cannot further construct power but "made-with" a multispecies partnership (Haraway 58) finds narration in the description of Aegon III, also known as "Dragonbane." People also called him "Aegon the Unhappy" and "Aegon the Unlucky" because at that time Targaryens lost their dragons after the Dance of Dragons (Martin 536). Without dragons, Aegon III is considered unlucky as he cannot construct power without his non-human companion. People of the Westeros saw the absence of dragons (non-human forces) as a major weakness of a King, attributing misfortune to him. The absence of a non-human companion overshadow the political power of a Targaryen King. The absence of dragons retroactively co-constructs the socio-political identity of Aegon III, supporting Wolfe's claim that in posthumanism, identity does not solely depend on individual characteristics but on their relations with others (Wolfe 102). The loss of dragons indicates the end of the posthuman era, re-establishing the anthropocentric vulnerability.

The posthuman analysis of *Fire and Blood* highlights that dragons are not only symbolic metaphors and narrative embellishments but true ontological companions of Targaryens. Dragons reconstruct identity, history, power, and agency through their actions and bonds with Targaryens. Haraway's theoretical frameworks of companion species and sympoiesis provides a potent approach to investigate the multispecies collaboration and companionship in *Fire and Blood*. Haraway's claim that earthlings can never act alone, resonates with Martin's work where humans and dragons make-with each other their new world.

In *Fire and Blood*, the Targaryen-dragon bond epitomizes more than a simple relationship of a rider and a beast, which forms a co-dependent system reflecting Haraway's concept of "making-with" or sympoiesis. Both dragons and their riders have a shared history of interconnection demonstrating how power, agency, and identity are shaped through interspecies bond. *Fire and Blood* being a posthumanist text subverts the concept of anthropocentrism and reshapes Targaryen heritage through multispecies entanglement.

Conclusion

This research investigated Martin's *Fire and Blood* using a posthumanist lens applying Haraway's frameworks of sympoiesis and companion species to explore the interspecies relationship between humans and non-humans. The research analyzed how dragons not only act as magical emblems or literary devices but also as core actants who reshapes the Targaryen socio-political hegemony, identity, power, and dominance in the Seven Kingdoms. It also indicated how the Targaryen-dragon bond in the text challenges the anthropocentric perspectives that history, political control, and power are solely human initiatives. This research demonstrated how humans are connected to other non-human actors in a symbiotic entanglement which constructs the ontological framework and history of Westeros. The main key findings of this research include:

A key finding of this research is that the Targaryen hegemony and power cannot be separated from their dragons, and this was continuously depicted, such as the strategic failure of dragonless kings. Another key finding of this study is that dragons challenge the



anthropocentric perspectives by sympoietically co-creating power with their dragon lords. By demonstrating dragons as active participants, this research questions the notion of human exceptionalism. One of the key findings of this research is that power is redefined as distributed and co-constructed by multispecies agency.

Despite revealing the valuable insights, this thesis has some limitations; sympoietic ecological paradigm comprehensively discussed by Haraway is not briefly discussed in this research. Though the research mainly emphasized the biotic relationship between humans and dragons, it neglected Haraway's discussion of forming connections with non-living things like weather, bacteria, and soil. So, this posthumanist research is partial, only focusing on living sympoiesis and neglecting the crucial relationships with natural elements. Another notable limitation of this thesis is that it could be a comparative analysis including TV adaptation of *Fire and Blood*, *House of the Dragon* or *Game of Thrones* to enrich the research. A comparative analysis of *Fire and Blood* and *Game of Thrones* could provide a profound posthuman criticism.

Despite the aforementioned limitations, this research offers a substantial contribution to posthumanist literary criticism. Firstly, this research actively engaged Haraway's theory with a modern fantasy text, an incorporation scarcely seen in research literature. Secondly, this research broadened the discussion on multispecies relationships in fantasy fiction, providing a comprehensive analysis that focuses on power dynamics, co-agency, and emotional interdependence. This study not only criticized the anthropocentric perspective of power but also introduced a collaborative and distributed concept of agency.

Future researches may take several orientations on the basis of this literary work. A comparative study of *Fire and Blood* and *Game of Thrones* could provide a diachronic view on human-dragon bonds. Secondly, researchers could apply ecological posthumanism to *Fire and Blood* exploring the effects of dragons on abiotic environment and how they are affected by abiotic forces such as climate, soil, agriculture, architecture, and geography. For example, the effect of dragonfire on biodiversity and landscapes could be analyzed through Haraway's ecological sympoiesis and Chthulucene.

By incorporating posthumanist approach on a fantasy novel, this research imparts to existing scholarly discourse on identity, political power, and multispecies relationality. This research provides a captivating claim that dragons are philosophical provocations raising the perception that what it is meant to be with another and what it is meant to be a human. This study gives a lesson that no one can act alone in this world.



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