

HOUSE OF THE DRAGON: A FEMINIST ANALYSIS OF FEMALE LEADERSHIP IN A PATRIARCHAL SOCIETY

Kanaya Aurella Izzasamura¹

¹English Studies Program, Faculty of Cultural Sciences, Universitas Padjadjaran

¹E-mail: kanaya23003@mail.unpad.ac.id

ABSTRACT. Women in medieval fantasy narratives have historically been marginalized, particularly through their exclusion from political agency and representation. This feminist study examines HBO's popular series, *House of the Dragon*, analyzing key characters Rhaenyra Targaryen and Alicent Hightower to uncover how systemic patriarchy shapes their leadership and political strategies. Through textual and visual analysis, this research explores women's agency in patriarchal society, asking whether the series critiques or replicates misogyny. Findings reveal that *House of the Dragon* reflects misogynistic norms, such as Rhaenyra's claim to the Iron Throne—though named heir by the previous King—is constantly challenged due to her gender. At the same time, Alicent leverages the patriarchal structure to gain political influence. *House of the Dragon* may intend to critique patriarchy by highlighting Rhaenyra and Alicent's struggles and framing their power as a form of resistance. However, it inadvertently reinforces patriarchy by punishing both characters for attempting to dismantle the system.

Keywords: Patriarchy, Medieval fantasy, *House of the Dragon*, Political strategies

HOUSE OF THE DRAGON: ANALISIS FEMINIS TENTANG KEPEMIMPINAN PEREMPUAN DALAM BUDAYA PATRIARKI

ABSTRAK. Perempuan dalam narasi fantasi-medieval secara historis telah mengalami marginalisasi, terutama melalui pengecualian mereka dari agensi dan representasi politik. Studi feminis ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji serial populer HBO, *House of the Dragon*, dengan menganalisis karakter utama Rhaenyra Targaryen dan Alicent Hightower untuk mengungkap bagaimana sistem patriarki membentuk kepemimpinan dan strategi politik mereka. Melalui analisis teks dan visual, penelitian ini mengeksplorasi agensi perempuan dalam budaya patriarki, mempertanyakan apakah serial ini mengkritik atau memproduksi misogini. Temuan mengungkap bahwa *House of the Dragon* mencerminkan norma-norma misoginis seperti: Klaim Rhaenyra atas Tahta Besi, meskipun ditunjuk sebagai pewaris oleh raja sebelumnya, sering kali ditantang karena jenis kelaminnya, sementara Alicent memanfaatkan struktur patriarki untuk mendapatkan pengaruh politik. *House of the Dragon* mungkin bermaksud untuk mengkritik patriarki dengan menonjolkan perjuangan Rhaenyra dan Alicent, menggambarkan kekuatan mereka sebagai bentuk perlawanan. Namun, tanpa disadari, serial ini justru memperkuat patriarki dengan menghukum kedua karakter karena berusaha untuk meruntuhkan sistem tersebut.

Kata-kata Kunci: Patriarki, Fantasi abad pertengahan, *House of the Dragon*, Strategi politik

INTRODUCTION

Many fantasy narratives depict numerous magical worlds in which women are subjected to oppression and exploitation (Phil & Bruckner, 2021). Within these settings, women are systematically excluded from political life by the male authorities who dominate the laws, which gives men the power to define, determine, and interpret truth and knowledge to maintain their control over the subordination of women (Lerner, 1986). In *House of the Dragon*, this systemic exclusion of female authority manifests through the succession crisis that drives the narrative, in which Rhaenyra's right to the Iron Throne is constantly challenged because she is a woman, who, in a traditional patriarchal society, is

only meant to be a wife and a mother. As defined by Aina (1998), patriarchy is a system that provides material advantages to men while placing constraints on the roles and activities of women, ensuring their conformity to particular gender roles. The idea that gender roles and identities are biologically determined, which was the foundation of patriarchal society, is contested by Simone de Beauvoir's statement: "*One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman*" (de Beauvoir, 1949, p. 234). Her statement challenges the belief that the roles of women and men in society are predetermined at birth, shaped instead by cultural norms, traditions, and expectations. This concept is vividly embodied in Rhaenyra's transformation: she begins as a rebellious

princess—a trait traditionally associated with boys—who resists conventional female roles, such as motherhood, but ultimately adapts to these expectations and becomes a mother of five children.

The construction of rigid gender roles within patriarchal societies also influences the perception and acceptance of female leadership. Male dominance in the political sphere, particularly in leadership positions, is rooted in a centuries-old system that benefits men exclusively. In a male-centered world, traits such as “dominance,” “independence,” and “competitiveness” shape society’s perception of a leader. For this reason, women face prejudice as leaders because people tend to assume that leadership is a masculine trait (Paxton et al., 2020). Furthermore, female leadership reinforces the system and confronts patriarchal norms through governance.

This patriarchal system that disadvantages women is represented in *House of the Dragons* as a mirror of real-life Middle Ages, where society is constructed by men, thus creating a system that only benefits men. As Phil and Bruckner (2021) note, medievalism is especially common in fantasy narratives like *House of the Dragons*, where a certain degree of female subordination is often embedded within political systems, trapping women in the role of “the Other” in a male-dominated world. In this context, the long-established system in which men hold power causes Rhaenyra to struggle in her pursuit of the Iron Throne, as her claim is continually undermined by gender-based prejudice and societal expectations. Numerous medieval-fantasy narratives still reflect this system, such as works like *Game of Thrones*, *The Lord of the Rings: The War of the Rohirrim*, and *The Witcher*. However, fantasy offers elements such as magic, mythical creatures, and non-human races (elves, dwarves, etc.) to compensate for the power imbalance — whether physical or societal — between men and women. As Zipes argues in his book *Breaking the Magic Spell: Radical Theories of Folk and Fairy Tales* (2002), “the fairy tale’s main impulse was at first revolutionary and progressive, not escapist, as has too often been suggested” (p. 42). He also argues, “folks and fairy tales present a challenge, for within the tale lies the hope of self-transformation and a better world” (p. xi). Although Zipes does not directly mention fantasy, fairy tales resemble fantasy by introducing unrealistic elements that challenge reality’s constraints and offer symbolic pathways to liberation. Similarly, *House of the Dragon* employs dragons and other fantastical elements as tools to

compensate for the power imbalance between men and women. Since dragons are regarded as the ultimate symbol of power in Westeros, they can be interpreted as extensions of agency and authority—particularly for Rhaenyra, whose bond with her dragon challenges the patriarchal notion that power and dominance belong solely to men. Furthermore, medieval-fantasy narratives are not only representations of patriarchal norms but also a form of resistance to the system.

Academic discussions of gender roles, patriarchy and misogyny, and gender politics have been widely published from time to time—contributing feminist discussion such as *patriarchy and the challenge of feminism* (Walby, 1990; Bennett, 1997), *intersection of race and sex* (Crenshaw, 1989), *gender and politics* (Scott, 1988; Butler, 1990), *fantasy literature and revolutionary* (Zipes, 1979; Haraway, 1991; Young, 2015). Researchers focus on singular, outstanding women like Daenerys Targaryen, who abolished the slave system; Cersei Lannister, who controls and dominates politics behind the scenes; and Yennifer of Vengerberg, who gains great power after sacrificing her motherhood. Also, gender and sex are widely discussed as factors that shaped female leaders’ choices, public perceptions, and leadership strategies to challenge patriarchal norms. However, the question arises: how can the collective strength of two or more women challenge systemic oppression? More importantly, not only gender and sex that are affecting public perception about female leaders, but also race and the legitimacy of her children.

This study aims to highlight the representation of female leadership in medieval-fantasy narratives and to analyze how Rhaenyra Targaryen and Alicent Hightower make different choices and employ distinct strategies to maintain their positions despite being trapped in the same circumstances. It also aims to prove whether HBO’s series *House of the Dragon* reinforces or challenges the patriarchal system and misogyny.

METHOD

The data for this research were collected from both seasons of the popular HBO series —*House of the Dragon*, the prequel to *Game of Thrones*—with 18 episodes in total as its primary source material. *House of the Dragon* consists of 10 episodes from the first season and eight from the second, with each episode averaging approximately 1 hour, including the series introduction and closing credits. The dataset was compiled from notes,

comprising visual and textual elements, such as symbolic imagery and dialogue between characters — particularly exchanges involving Rhaenyra Targaryen and Alicent Hightower.

This research examines representations of female leadership in mass media, with particular focus on medieval fantasy narratives through feminist theory, intersectional analysis, medievalism studies, and textual-visual frameworks. Drawing on existing studies related to media representations of women (Bruckner, 2021; Carroll, 2014; Arnellyka, Pasaribu, & Pramianti, 2023), women in politics (Paxton, Hughes, & Barnes, 2021; Robinson, 2017; Eagly & Karau, 2002; Yepik, 2022; Chikwe et al., 2024), how legitimacy of her children weakens her power (Klosko, 2007), and patriarchal system (Jamal, 2023; Hooks, 2004; Spivak, 1988; Kandiyoti, 1988) this study employs a theoretical approach. Furthermore, to deepen the understanding of these previous frameworks, the analysis combines Beauvoir's (1949) feminist concepts—particularly her critique of woman as "the Other" in a male-centered world—with Butler's (1990) theory of gender performativity, applying this framework to the research object, *House of the Dragon*. The study draws on perspectives on women in medievalism and high fantasy (Zipes, 1979; Bruckner, 2021; Friedan, 1963) to provide a broader context for this research, which is further analyzed through visual and textual analysis to investigate both narrative and cinematic content and how audiences perceived the series.

The findings demonstrate how Alicent and Rhaenyra navigate patriarchal constraints through their oppositional strategies. The results of this analysis were presented in the following section, which analyzed character dialogues and selected scenes from *House of the Dragon* (2022-2024). The research dataset was compiled based on the thematic relevance to the issue under examination and was followed by analysis supported by theoretical frameworks. To help the reader visualize, the researcher has included screenshots of referenced scenes alongside the analysis.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Gendered Resistance to Female Leadership

House of the Dragon, the prequel of Game of Thrones set 172 years before Daenerys Targaryen, tells the story of a powerful royal dynasty. The Targaryen family has a centuries-long history of ruling the Iron Throne with their dragons. In *House of the Dragon*, where patriarchy remains deeply entrenched in society, spanning from commoners to

royalty, women's role is reduced and limited to their domestic duties—seeking fulfillment as wives and mothers (Friedan, 1963). If a man's success is measured by his wealth, status in society, and victories, a woman's value is measured only by her ability to produce male offspring. This gendered expectation is conveyed through female characters like Queen Aemma Arryn, the mother of Rhaenyra Targaryen, who was forced to secure a successor to the Iron Throne, even if it cost her life. In Season 1, Episode 1, Aemma says to her daughter while lying in her childbed, "*You will lie in this bed soon enough, Rhaenyra. This discomfort is how we serve the realm,*" highlighting women in medieval times, as Friedan (1963) notes, were expected to devote their lives to their husbands and bearing children. Following the delivery of a son, Aemma dies due to her stomach being cut open in the process of delivering the baby. Ironically, the newborn dies shortly after his mother's death. In the absence of a male successor, King Viserys I Targaryen had to choose between his younger brother, Daemon Targaryen, and his only daughter, Rhaenyra Targaryen, as a successor. Due to Daemon's malicious nature, King Viserys I named his daughter as heir to the Iron Throne.

Tracing historical precedent, Queen Elizabeth I ascended the throne after her brother, Edward VI, died without male heirs. On the other hand, in a similar situation, Queen Elizabeth II became heir to the throne after her uncle, Edward VIII, abdicated. These cases illustrate that, as Arnellyka et al. (2023) note, while the British Empire has witnessed strong female rulers, the system was not designed to put women in power. Robison's (2017) argument, "*she never would have come to the throne but for male failures,*" also emphasizes that the system accepted female rulers as an alternative when no male successor was available. This historical precedent parallels the crisis of succession in *House of the Dragon*, where King Viserys I Targaryen declares his daughter Rhaenyra as heir specifically because there is no suitable male successor.

During the process of choosing a successor, the council's members actually objected to naming Rhaenyra heir because she is a woman. As Lord Strong comments at the council table in Season 1 Episode 1, "*Rhaenyra? A girl? No queen has ever sat on the Iron Throne.*" Women, regardless of status, face prejudice when seeking to become leaders because of gender stereotypes that portray women as having communal characteristics, such as being

affectionate, helpful, sympathetic, interpersonally sensitive, nurturant, and gentle (Eagly & Karau, 2002). This contrasts with a leader's attributes, which are usually seen as more assertive, controlling, and confident in tendency. Based on these stereotypes, Rhaenyra, a woman, is seen as unfit to rule the kingdom because she lacks the qualities of a leader. "In general, prejudice toward female leaders follows from the incongruity that many people perceive between the characteristics of women and the requirements of leader roles" (Eagly & Karau, 2002, p. 574). Even while enduring prejudices as heir to the Iron Throne, Rhaenyra faces a more challenging situation when her father, King Viserys I, chooses to marry her closest friend, Alicent Hightower, and subsequently fathers a son. The child, named Aegon Targaryen, poses a direct threat to Rhaenyra's succession rights, as the royal court now recognizes a legitimate male heir—albeit younger than Rhaenyra. This later sparks a civil war between the two family factions.

Trapped in the same cage, Alicent—who becomes Queen Consort—leads the members of the Small Council after King Viserys I becomes unable to attend meetings due to his illness. Despite being a Queen, Alicent faces the same prejudices as Rhaenyra, where their decisions are often questioned until validated by a man. In *Inheritance of Power in Mercia by Princess Aelfwyn*, YEPIK (2022) comments that a woman could rule while her husband was absent, and her ability to rule was often contingent on their relationships with male figures. De Beauvoir (1949, p. 21) reinforces this dynamic: "He is the Subject; he is the Absolute. She is the Other." This underscores that Alicent, like most women in her position, is never the true power. She exists in relation to men: her father, her husband, and her son. This is further reinforced when Rhaenys (Rhaenyra's supporter) tells her, "You toil still in service to men. You desire not to be free, but to make a window in the wall of your prison, in Season 1, Episode 9. Her obedience stems from societal pressures that considered a 'good' woman to be a silent one who restricted herself to domestic duties and upheld the family's good name (Bratsch-Prince, 2004). de Beauvoir's (1949, p. 12) statement: "One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman," parallels Alicent's situation, where she is forced to 'perform' femininity since her teenage years in order to be acknowledged as a good wife and Queen, unlike Rhaenyra, who conforms to gender stereotypes. One of Alicent's lines in Season 1 Episode 7, "What have I done but what was expected of me? Forever

upholding the kingdom, the family, the law, while you flout yours and do as you please. Where is duty? Where is sacrifice? It's trampled under your pretty foot again,' indicates that she has always been adopting traditional women's characteristics, while Rhaenyra can be free from such expectations. These paradoxical situations, in which female leaders are expected to be assertive yet still live up to societal expectations of women, known as the double bind, force women leaders onto a narrow and challenging path to achieve success in their leadership (Chidinma Favour Chikwe et al., 2024).

The title "The Queen in Chains" is applied to Alicent, underscoring the paradox of her character: despite her status, she lacks freedom and is bound by patriarchal norms. This paradox is epitomized in her seven-pointed star necklace—a symbol of the Faith of the Seven that serves both as a chain and a shield. As a chain, the necklace represents Alicent's eager conformity to the woman the patriarchal system instructed her to be: faithful, virtuous, and submissive (Jamal & Mohammed, 2023). By adopting these stereotypes, her decisions are often dismissed, as she does not meet the qualities expected of a leader. However, when Alicent embraces these 'feminine' attributes, she conforms to social 'standards' and is praised for her womanhood. In this case, the necklace serves as her shield from societal scrutiny.

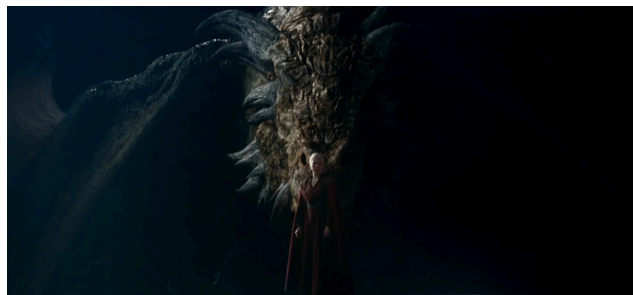
Rhaenyra, on the other hand, refuses to adhere to patriarchal norms that expect women to be silent, submissive wives. In Season 1 Episode 1, when her mother tells her that "the childbed is our battlefield," Rhaenyra responds, "I'd rather serve as a knight and ride to battle and glory." Though she is officially named heir, Rhaenys' remark in Season 1 Episode 2—"Men would sooner put the realm to the torch than see a woman ascend the Iron Throne"—reveals how Westerosi patriarchal society rejects female rulership. Rhaenys' opinion also suggests she doubts Rhaenyra's succession, underscoring that both women and men uphold the patriarchal system. As Hooks (2004) argues, we all collude with patriarchal culture to make men feel they can have it all. The gender bias Rhaenyra experiences does not stop there; she is often excluded from decision-making despite her status as the Queen and is underestimated by her subordinates at the Small Council, as implied when the men around her mock Rhaenyra's proposal. Additionally, she tells her advisor in Season 2 Episode 5, "The way they spoke at my Small Council today... They speak around me, not to me," illustrating the council members' lack of

trust and gendered dismissal of her authority. Spivak (1988) states: “*the Subaltern cannot speak,*” mirroring that Rhaenyra’s voice—a woman, who is excluded from the hierarchy of power—is drowned out by the Small Council. These examples demonstrate that Rhaenyra faces persistent gender bias throughout her journey as heir and later as Queen.

As though womanhood alone were not enough to challenge Rhaenyra’s claim, the persistent speculation regarding her children’s illegitimacy substantially weakens her hold on power. Klosko (2007) argues that one of legitimacy’s meanings refers to the qualities a leader must possess to be morally acceptable to the people. The question regarding the legitimacy of her children destabilizes the realm, leading to political tension, especially when alternatives existed within the family. The spreading of such rumors leads to the birth of a new one: Rhaenyra is accused of sleeping with other men while her husband is healthy and alive. Stood in stark contrast to Alicent’s persona as the ‘virtuous queen,’ Rhaenyra’s perceived sexual autonomy becomes constructed as transgressive within the patriarchal power structure, while Alicent’s performative chastity reinforced traditional gender norms. In Season 1 Episode 8, Ser Vaemond contested Lucerys Velaryon’s Driftmark succession, proclaiming: “*You dare tell me who deserves to inherit the name Velaryon. That is no true Velaryon, and certainly no nephew of mine.*” This shows that society does not accept a bastard inheriting the throne or the family name.

Furthermore, Chidinma Favour Chikwe et al. (2024) argue that “*if women display too much warmth, they risk being seen as lacking in authority or leadership competence.*” In contrast to Alicent who possesses communal characteristics and conforms to patriarchal norms as her strategies to gain influences, Rhaenyra gradually embraces the masculine traits of a leader who is often seen as domineering, ambitious, and assertive as her political strategies—as Carroll (2014, p. 61) comments, “*while female warriors in medievalist fantasy may be free to be women, they must still take on masculine roles in order to be considered as strong as the men.*” In later episodes, Rhaenyra’s characterization grows more dominant and assertive, as seen in Season 2 Episode 6, where she slaps a member of the Small Council for lecturing her on her decision as the leader, and then adds, “*I think it is my fault that you have forgotten to fear me.*” Her decision to adopt these agentic characteristics results in her gaining

more power as the number of people who doubt her decreases at the end of Season 2.



Rhaenyra and Vermithor
(*House of the Dragon*, 2024)

In this scene, the visual symbolism where Rhaenyra stands before Vermithor—the second largest dragon in Westeros—constructs her authority as a Targaryen Queen. Dragons, especially the big ones, are the symbol of power and wealth in Westeros; dragons can burn the whole city into ashes, and dragons have a big appetite. The Targaryen family is the only family able to tame dragons in the current era, which is the source of their power to reign for hundreds of years. This symbolism becomes significant to Rhaenyra’s character transformation; it illustrates dominance as she now possesses the second-largest nuclear weapon on her side. However, in the process of claiming Vermithor, many commonfolk must be sacrificed to find the right rider. She makes a risky decision, putting dozens of lives at risk. This highlights that, by adopting masculine traits, she also becomes increasingly heartless compared to earlier episodes, when she still cared about the well-being of those around her and the realm. In Season 2 Episode 4, for instance, she tries to sue for peace with Alicent, saying, “*I inherited 80 years of peace from my father. Before I was to end it, I needed to know there was no other path.*” Rhaenyra, in order to be seen as a good female leader, adopts the “mad queen” persona—when in fact, she is only adapting to the patriarchal norms where masculinity holds the true power.

Trapped in the System: Performance and Punishment

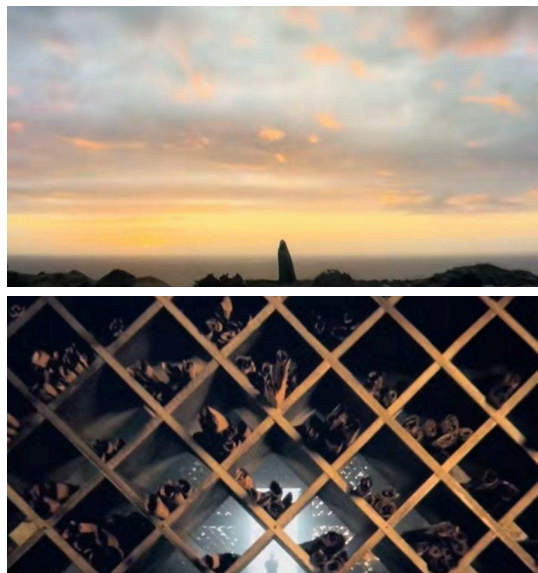
“*Patriarchy is a political-social system that insists that males are inherently dominating, superior to everything and everyone deemed weak, especially females*” (Carroll, 2014, Chapter 2). De Beauvoir (1949) argues that women in a patriarchal society are defined as weaker or inferior in relation to male characteristics such as mastery, assertion, and dominance—reinforcing Hook’s claim that the

system excludes women from the power hierarchy. To survive in such a world, women have to make strategic choices to gain power within the patriarchal system. These strategic choices are called patriarchal bargains, a feminist theory that holds that such bargains exert a powerful influence on the shaping of women's gendered subjectivity and determine the nature of gender ideology in different contexts (Kandiyoti, 1988). Based on Kandiyoti's statement, Rhaenyra and Alicent have bargained with the patriarchal system their entire lives. For instance, Alicent performs hyperfemininity to gain influence through her obedience and her son, Aegon. In contrast, Rhaenyra performs hypermasculinity — such as dragonriding, physical dominance, and violence — to stabilize her authority in a world that equates leadership with men. Both women's strategies align with Judith Butler's argument that "gender proves to be performative" (1990, p. 33). Their performances, though oppositional, reveal gender as a construct that must be reiterated in order to survive within patriarchy; however, the performance does not fully liberate either of them from systemic oppression.

Patriarchy has no gender, as Hooks mentioned in *The Will to Change*. Both men and women have contributed to the system, whether consciously or unconsciously. Rhaenyra and Alicent's performance reinforces patriarchal structures, as Kandiyoti (1988, p. 275) argues that "such bargains exert influence on the shaping of women's gendered subjectivity and determine the nature of gender ideology", revealing that while performing hyperfemininity, Alicent contributes to the idea that women have to be obedient and submissive. Additionally, Rhaenyra's adoption of hypermasculine traits reinforces the notion that leadership is a masculine activity.

However, by reconstructing their gender, Alicent and Rhaenyra remain under systemic oppression. Alicent's symbol of faith—her necklace—gradually shrinks over time and eventually disappears, underscoring that although she finally breaks free from societal expectations, she also loses her shield from scrutiny. By the end of Season 2, Alicent is ready to abandon everything: her status, her children, and her wealth. This serves as a form of punishment for her attempt to dismantle the system, highlighting that a woman cannot wield power while retaining freedom. On the other hand, while Rhaenyra consistently defies societal expectations by adopting masculine traits, she remains trapped within the same system where there

is no other option for women to wield power. However, by the end of Season 2, in a masculine way (Carroll, 2014), she mirrors the violence of the male rulers she once resisted, demonstrating the inescapable cycle of gendered power dynamics.



Rhaenyra and Alicent's symbolic scenes
(*House of the Dragons*, 2024)

In S2E8, *House of the Dragon's* final shot inverts the symbolism, foregrounding Rhaenyra by iron bars with stacks of parchment scrolls—a visual metaphor for her imprisonment and subjugation under the accumulated weight of Targaryen historiography. The documents' material renders her queenship not as a sovereign authority but as a form of confinement. This serves as a form of punishment for Rhaenyra. In contrast to Rhaenyra's shot, Alicent's symbolizes liberation; she finally breaks free as she abandons everything she has achieved through her lifelong sacrifice.

While *House of the Dragon* critiques issues within patriarchal society—such as rigid gender roles and systemic inequality—it simultaneously reinforces the system by punishing women like Rhaenyra and Alicent who attempt to dismantle it. Though the writers' intention may be to expose these injustices, as Ross (2011) argues, media texts can be interpreted oppositionally by audiences. Thus, *House of the Dragon's* message remains contingent on viewer subjectivity. Nevertheless, from the researcher's perspective, the series contains elements that contribute to the very centuries-old system it scrutinizes.

CONCLUSION

House of the Dragon both critiques and reinforces the patriarchal system deeply entrenched in our daily life by exposing the brutal constraints of a male-dominated society in Westeros while revealing the ways female characters navigate its oppressive structures. The series demonstrates how key characters like Rhaenyra Targaryen and Alicent Hightower are forced to make questionable choices in order to survive in a world that systematically disadvantages them. Through a feminist lens, it can be revealed that both characters have different ways to bargain with patriarchy despite being trapped under the same system. Rhaenyra's claim to the Iron Throne, though named heir by the King, is constantly questioned because people see her gender as a weakness. To strengthen her political influence, Rhaenyra adopts masculine traits as society expected of a leader. Alicent, on the other hand, becomes a pawn in her father's political schemes all her life by adopting the obedient woman characteristics, gaining influence through her children, and being manipulated. Their struggles are shown throughout the series, highlighting how patriarchal society harms women regardless of whether they conform or rebel.

The series goes beyond mere victimization; it grants Rhaenyra and Alicent layered, complex personalities and goals. Rhaenyra's defiance of patriarchal tradition and Alicent's strategic compliance represent two sides of the same coin—both are brilliant survival tactics under systemic oppression, both are their ways to bargain with patriarchy, both grant them power and influence. However, the series does not romanticize their resistance to the system. Instead, it underscores the high price of their choices, where Rhaenyra's ambition to claim her throne leads to isolation and violence. At the same time, Alicent's obedience to patriarchal expectations traps her in a cycle of resentment and loss. Ironically, though they were once friends and raised in the same oppressive society, they ultimately became bitter rivals—each shaped by the very system that sought to control them. Their rivalry shows how thoroughly patriarchy has poisoned Westeros: men, women, elders, and children—redirecting women's rage horizontally against each other instead of dismantling the system. Women in *House of the Dragon* are far behind true liberation, as the tradition is rooted in every aspect of their everyday life, including their minds. In conclusion, while *House of the Dragons* highlights the struggles of female characters and the brutal side of the patriarchal society, the series does not offer

easy solutions to the patriarchy it depicts. It only serves as a medium to represent women and as a mirror to reflect our own world, our own patriarchal society. The series's strength does not lie in eradicating patriarchy; instead, it lies in its portrayal of how the system operates—forcing viewers to understand the brutality of such a system and pushing them to realize that the expectations still linger to this day.

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