
| RESEARCH ARTICLE

Reclaiming Female Subjectivity: Lyra's Agency and Resistance within Patriarchal Structures in *Deny Me, Dragon King*

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| ABSTRACT

Deny Me, Dragon King, a fantasy romance distributed through Drama Box, portrays Lyra, a human woman rejected by the Dragon King Kael following a false prophecy. Her return with their half-dragon daughter, Amber, challenges a social order shaped by gender, species hierarchy, and royal authority. Using qualitative textual analysis and drawing on Simone de Beauvoir's concept of woman as the "Other," Judith Butler's theory of gender performativity, and Bell Hooks's feminist critique of sexist oppression, this article examines Lyra's marginalization, resistance, and female agency. It argues that the series both reproduces patriarchal romance conventions and creates space for female self-definition. Ultimately, the series emerges as an ambivalent feminist text in which motherhood, resistance, and romantic reconciliation complicate the struggle for autonomy.

| KEYWORDS

Feminist literary criticism, Patriarchy, Female agency, Otherness, Gender performativity, Motherhood, Fantasy romance

| ARTICLE INFORMATION

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1. Introduction

1.1 Background of the study:

Contemporary popular culture frequently uses fantasy worlds to explore social conflicts involving gender, power, class, sexuality, and hierarchy. Rather than removing these concerns from reality, fantasy often makes them visible through exaggerated institutions such as kingdoms, prophecies, bloodlines, magical laws, and supernatural hierarchies. *Deny Me, Dragon King* offers a productive subject for feminist analysis because its romantic narrative unfolds within an unequal structure of power. The series centers on Lyra, a human woman, and Kael, the Dragon King, whose relationship is disrupted by a prophecy that later proves to be false. Following Kael's rejection, Lyra raises their half-dragon daughter, Amber, and eventually returns to the dragon realm when Amber's health becomes critical. Through this narrative, the series brings questions of gender, social belonging, parental responsibility, and institutional authority into its representation of romantic conflict.

At first glance, the narrative appears to follow a familiar pattern of romantic rejection, separation, and possible reconciliation. However, Lyra's rejection carries implications that extend beyond the breakdown of a personal relationship. As a human woman in a dragon-dominated society, she occupies a vulnerable position within a hierarchy that privileges supernatural status, royal authority, and established bloodlines. Her relationship with Kael further complicates this position because he possesses political power and institutional influence that she does not.

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The false prophecy can therefore be examined not merely as a plot device but also as a mechanism through which authority legitimizes exclusion and determines whose identity, intentions, and claims are considered credible. From a feminist perspective, Lyra's experience raises questions about who has the power to define women's identities and how women negotiate systems that restrict their autonomy.

Drawing on Simone de Beauvoir's concept of woman as the "Other," Judith Butler's account of gender performativity, and Bell Hooks's understanding of feminism as resistance to sexist oppression, this article examines Lyra's movement from an identity imposed by others towards a more self-determined position. Initially, she is defined through her human status, her exclusion from the dragon hierarchy, and her relationship with a powerful male sovereign. As the narrative progresses, her decisions, particularly those concerning Amber's survival and dignity, provide grounds for examining her capacity to act beyond the expectations imposed upon her. Her return to the dragon realm can consequently be interpreted as more than a return to a romantic relationship: it is also a confrontation with the social and institutional structures that previously marginalized her.

Although feminist scholarship has extensively examined gender, power, and female agency in literature and popular culture, the representation of these issues in contemporary short-form fantasy romance remains an area that deserves further critical attention. In particular, the relationship between female agency, social exclusion, and romantic reconciliation in *Deny Me, Dragon King* provides an opportunity to examine how feminist concerns are represented within this narrative form. By focusing on Lyra's experiences within a hierarchical supernatural society, this study explores how the series negotiates the tension between female self-determination and patriarchal authority.

By bringing feminist theories of otherness, gender performativity, and resistance into conversation with a contemporary short-form fantasy romance, this study evaluates both the challenges the series poses to patriarchal assumptions and the limitations of its representation of female autonomy. It argues that Lyra's character offers a useful basis for investigating the tension between self-determination and romantic dependence. Rather than presuming that the narrative either fully subverts or simply reproduces patriarchy, the article considers how these competing tendencies coexist within the series.

1.2 Research Questions

This research aims to address some level of clarification for the following questions:

1. How does *Deny Me, Dragon King* construct Lyra as the "Other" in relation to Kael and the dragon court?
2. How does Lyra's conduct challenge conventional gender expectations and repeated performances through which femininity is socially constructed?
3. To what extent does the narrative establish female agency, and to what extent does its resolution remain dependent on romantic reconciliation and male recognition?

1.3 Research Objectives

The objectives of this study are:

1. To examine how *Deny Me, Dragon King* constructs Lyra as the "Other" within the power structure of Kael's dragon realm.
2. To analyze how Lyra's actions challenge conventional gender expectations and socially constructed performances of femininity.
3. To evaluate the representation of female agency in the series, particularly the tension between Lyra's self-determination and the narrative's dependence on romantic reconciliation and male recognition.

2. Literature Review

Feminist scholarship on popular romance provides an important starting point for understanding the tension between women's agency and patriarchal narrative conventions. In *Reading Romance*, Janice A. Radway challenges the assumption that romance narratives can be understood only as instruments of women's dependence. Her study considers the meanings women readers make from romance and the social circumstances in which reading takes place. Although the present article focuses on the drama rather than its audience, Radway's work is useful because it cautions against treating romance as either automatically oppressive or inherently empowering. This perspective supports an ambivalent reading of *Deny Me, Dragon King*: the series may reproduce familiar romantic hierarchies while also creating space for Lyra's self-definition (Radway).

A related debate appears in research on the relationship between romance and agency. Thompson, Koski, and Holyfield discuss how popular romance has often been condemned as part of a patriarchal apparatus, while other critics identify oppositional meanings and empowering possibilities within the genre. Their discussion is relevant to Lyra's story because her return to Kael cannot be treated as proof of either complete submission or complete liberation. Instead, the feminist question is whether her decisions are represented as meaningful choices and whether the narrative acknowledges the unequal conditions under which those choices are made (Thompson et al.).

Research on the television series *Anne with an E* offers a closer comparison in terms of female subjectivity and resistance to gender conventions. Camila Andrea Picardo Barrientos examines how the series represents female characters negotiating patriarchal expectations and argues that its protagonist's agency challenges established gender rules. This approach provides a useful parallel for analyzing Lyra's movement from a woman defined by others to a character who acts according to her own priorities. The comparison is not that the two narratives are identical, but that both can be studied through the conflict between restrictive gender norms and female self-assertion (Picardo Barrientos).

Studies of Chinese television drama also demonstrate that female resistance and patriarchal romance can coexist in the same narrative. A recent article on the television adaptation *Empresses in the Palace* explores how adaptation reshapes the representation of antiheroines, female violence, and heterosexual romance. Its analysis suggests that genre conventions can either contain or open up challenges to patriarchal order. This insight is relevant to *Deny Me, Dragon King*, where fantasy, royal authority, and romantic reconciliation may limit Lyra's autonomy even as her actions challenge the system that excluded her ("Television Adaptation").

Research on the Chinese drama *Delicious Romance* similarly identifies a tension between celebrating women's autonomy and reaffirming traditional expectations surrounding marriage and family. This is particularly pertinent to the present study because *Deny Me, Dragon King* frames Lyra's agency through motherhood, family ties, and the possibility of romantic restoration. The central issue is therefore not simply whether the heroine becomes powerful, but whether the narrative allows her identity and choices to retain value beyond her relationship with the male protagonist ("Celebrating Women's Autonomy").

Taken together, these studies show that feminist analysis of popular screen narratives must account for both resistance and ideological limitation. Existing scholarship discusses romance readership, female agency in television fiction, and the negotiation of patriarchal values in Chinese dramas. However, the present study applies these concerns to *Deny Me, Dragon King* as a vertical short-form fantasy romance, focusing specifically on the intersections of gender, species hierarchy, royal authority, motherhood, and female subjectivity. The article does not claim that no previous research on the series exists; rather, it offers a focused close reading of how the narrative both constrains and enables Lyra's agency.

3. Theoretical Framework

Simone de Beauvoir's *"The Second Sex"* remains foundational to feminist thinking because it examines how woman is positioned as 'Other' in relation to a male subject who is treated as the universal or normative human subject. Routledge's philosophical overview of Beauvoir emphasizes that women have historically been defined as the absolute Other from a dominant male point of view, while Beauvoir rejects the assumption that Femininity is a fixed natural essence. Her famous formulation that one becomes a woman directs attention toward the social production

of gender rather than purely biological destiny. (Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy). Beauvoir's concept is especially useful for *Deny Me, Dragon King* because Lyra's exclusion operates through several layers of otherness. She is not simply 'woman'; she is a human woman in a dragon kingdom. The dragon community therefore has an additional category through which her difference is marked. Her humanity becomes a sign of inferiority, and her femininity intensifies her vulnerability. The narrative thus permits a feminist reading of otherness as relational: Lyra becomes subordinate because the dominant institution defines itself as superior.

Judith Butler's theory of gender performativity provides a second analytical tool. Butler challenges the idea that gender is simply an inner essence expressed through behavior. Instead, gender is repeatedly produced through socially regulated acts, norms, expectations, and performances. Scholarly discussions explain that gender becomes intelligible through repetition and social sanction; individuals who fail to perform expected gender roles can be treated as threatening to the dominant order. (Butler, Morgenroth and Ryan). Applied to the series, performativity helps explain why the female character is expected to occupy recognizable positions: beloved woman, rejected woman, mother, potential royal partner, or socially acceptable female subject. Lyra becomes disruptive when she refuses to remain confined to one of these roles. She is emotionally vulnerable, but vulnerability does not prevent her from making decisions. She is a mother, but motherhood does not erase her individuality. She needs help from the royal system, but she enters that system with a purpose rather than simply waiting for rescue. Her repeated acts therefore produce a different version of femininity, one grounded in endurance, decision-making, and self-definition.

Bell Hooks defines feminism as a movement to end sexist exploitation and oppression. Her formulation is useful because it moves feminist criticism away from the simplistic assumption that feminism means women must defeat men. Instead, feminist analysis asks how systems of domination operate and how individuals can resist them. Routledge's description of Hooks's work similarly emphasizes her focus on sexism, exploitation, oppression, and the institutional dimensions of gender inequality. (Hooks). This approach prevents the article from treating Kael as the only problem. Kael is undoubtedly powerful, but the larger issue is the social structure that makes his judgement decisive. The prophecy, court, royal hierarchy, species hierarchy, and cultural assumptions about female legitimacy collectively produce Lyra's vulnerability. A feminist reading therefore examines both interpersonal power and institutional power.

4. Methodology

This study employs a qualitative textual analysis informed by feminist literary and cultural criticism. As *Deny Me, Dragon King* is a visual short-form drama rather than a conventional printed literary text. This study examines its narrative structure, character development, dialogue, representation of gender relations, social hierarchies, recurring motifs, and major plot developments. These elements are interpreted as textual evidence to explore how the series represents patriarchy, female marginalization, motherhood, resistance, and women's agency.

The primary source is the 2026 mini-series *Deny Me, Dragon King* which is catalogued as a Drama Box production and comprises fifty short episodes. The analysis focuses on selected narrative events and character interactions relevant to the study's research questions. Particular attention is given to Lyra's treatment within the dragon hierarchy, her relationship with Kael, her role as Amber's mother, and her efforts to negotiate the social and institutional structures that constrain her autonomy.

Secondary sources include relevant feminist scholarship and theoretical works by Simone de Beauvoir, Judith Butler, and Bell Hooks. These sources provide the conceptual framework for interpreting otherness, gender performativity, and resistance to sexist oppression. Additional reliable sources may be consulted to establish the series' publication and plot context. The analysis brings these theoretical perspectives into dialogue with the drama's narrative and character representations rather than treating the theories as fixed explanations of every event. Since the series is recent, the study does not assume the existence of an established body of scholarly criticism on the drama. Instead, it offers an original feminist interpretation of the series while recognizing that its conclusions are limited to the narrative and representations examined.

5. Findings and Discussion:

Lyra as the Feminized Other: The first major feminist pattern in the series is the construction of Lyra as the Other. The opposition between dragons and human immediately creates a hierarchy in which one identity is treated as powerful and the other as inferior. The available series descriptions explicitly characterize humans as socially subordinate in the fantasy world and identify Lyra's return as a confrontation with the world that previously rejected her. This species hierarchy parallels the gender hierarchy: the Dragon King occupies the position of sovereign subject, while Lyra initially appears as the socially powerless outsider. Beauvoir's model clarifies the significance of this arrangement. The Other is not merely someone who is different; the Other is produced in opposition to a dominant subject. Kael's authority gives him the power to determine the meaning of events. When a false prophecy is presented as truth, Lyra's own knowledge of herself becomes less authoritative than the institutional interpretation imposed upon her. Her voice is displaced by a discourse controlled by others. The feminist significance lies precisely in this displacement: a woman's identity is being narrated for her. The false prophecy can therefore be interpreted as a symbolic technology of patriarchy. Patriarchal systems frequently work through claims that appear objective, natural, sacred, or inevitable. A prophecy has precisely this kind of authority. It does not sound like a personal accusation; it sounds like destiny. Once the prophecy is accepted, Lyra's exclusion appears necessary rather than chosen. This study consequently exposes how ideological authority can transform prejudice into apparent truth. The treatment of Lyra's sexuality is equally significant. Her intimacy with Kael is followed by social rejection, and the female body becomes entangled with questions of legitimacy, bloodline, and danger. The plot later reveals that Lyra carries Kael's child, transforming what the dominant order treated as a threatening relationship into a familial connection. This reversal is feminist in potential because it destabilizes the original judgement: the woman who was treated as contaminating or dangerous is revealed to be central to the continuation of the royal family itself.

Patriarchal Sovereignty and the Politics of Decision: Kael's position as Dragon King gives him a concentration of political, social, and romantic power. His personal decision has public consequences because his authority is institutional rather than merely interpersonal. A feminist reading therefore asks what happens when a ruler's private interpretation of a woman determines her social status. The answer is exclusion. Lyra is cast out, and the consequences of that decision are born disproportionately by her. The gendered imbalance is important: powerful men may participate in a relationship and subsequently retain political legitimacy, whereas women can bear the social and reproductive consequences of the same relationship. The narrative makes this imbalance visible through Lyra's years of separation and her responsibility for Amber. This does not mean that the series presents Kael as an uncomplicated villain. In fact, the romance depends on his eventual recognition of the truth and his attempt to repair the consequences of his earlier judgement. From a feminist perspective, however, remorse is not identical to structural equality. A male ruler realizing that he was wrong does not automatically eliminate the conditions that gave him the power to make the decision in the first place. The narrative is strongest when read as exposing this tension rather than simply celebrating romantic reconciliation.

Lyra's Return from Object of Desire to Subject of Action: One of the most important feminist reversals occurs when Lyra returns to the dragon realm. A conventional romance heroine might return primarily because she cannot escape her love for the hero. Lyra's return is more materially motivated: she needs access to a healer capable of helping Amber. Her movement is therefore structured by necessity, responsibility, and choice. This distinction changes the narrative position of the heroine. Lyra is no longer waiting to be selected. She is the person who enters the dangerous social space because she has a goal. Her action is not dependent upon romantic permission. She uses the available political world instrumentally, even though that world once denied her dignity. Her return also reverses the geography of power. Previously, Kael could determine whether Lyra belonged in his realm. Later, Lyra decides that the realm is worth entering because her own purpose requires it. The same kingdom that once defined her as an outsider becomes a space in which she exercises agency. This is a subtle but significant transformation from being positioned by power to negotiating with power.

Motherhood as Burden, Knowledge and Agency: Motherhood is often represented in popular romance as a source of feminine sacrifice, and *Deny Me, Dragon King* uses that familiar convention while also giving it a more active function. Lyra's motherhood is initially a consequence of her relationship with Kael, but it later becomes the

reason she acts. Amber's illness gives Lyra a concrete objective that is independent of romantic fantasy. From a feminist perspective, this matters because motherhood becomes a form of narrative knowledge. Lyra understands the child's condition, recognizes the urgency of finding a healer, and takes responsibility for navigating a hostile environment. She is not merely an emotional mother whose suffering exists to make the audience sympathize with her. She is an acting subject. At the same time, the article should not romanticize maternal sacrifice. Feminist criticism must ask whether women are granted agency only when they perform care for others. Lyra's empowerment is strongest when her identity extends beyond motherhood. Her significance comes from her ability to choose, remember, negotiate, protect, and confront not simply from the fact that she is a mother. The series consequently contains both a conventional gender script and a partial revision of that script.

Gender Performativity and the Rewriting of Femininity: Butler's concept of performativity helps explain why Lyra's transformation should not be described merely as becoming 'stronger.' The more important question is how the series changes repeated acts through which femininity is recognized. In the early romantic framework, Lyra is positioned in relation to the Dragon King: she is the human woman who desires him, fears his power, and becomes vulnerable to his judgement. Later, she performs a different set of actions. She enters the dragon world with a purpose, confronts people who once rejected her, and places her daughter's survival above the approval of the royal order. This can be read as a form of gender trouble. Lyra does not abandon femininity; instead, she disrupts the assumption that femininity requires passivity. Her care is active. Her vulnerability coexists with courage. Her emotional attachment does not cancel her capacity for judgement. Her return to Kael does not necessarily mean surrender to him rather, it creates a situation in which the relationship must be renegotiated. The series therefore complicates the binary between the 'soft woman' and the 'strong woman.' Feminist criticism does not need to celebrate only aggressive or physically dominant heroines. Agency can also appear through persistence, strategic action, refusal, speech, care, memory, and the ability to make decisions under unequal conditions. Lyra's power is not identical to Kael's political power, but it is still meaningful because she acts without possessing the institutional privileges that he enjoys.

The Female Body, Bloodline and Legitimacy: The series also connects the female body with political legitimacy. Lyra's pregnancy and Amber's half-dragon identity make the female body a site where two worlds meet. This creates a tension common to patriarchal narratives: women can be socially marginalized while their reproductive capacities remain politically valuable. A feminist reading must therefore distinguish between being valued and being empowered. If a woman is respected only because she produces a royal heir, the underlying patriarchal logic remains intact. But if the narrative uses the child to reveal the injustice of the woman's earlier exclusion, then reproduction can become a mechanism for exposing contradiction. *Deny Me, Dragon King* move between these two possibilities. Amber confirms Lyra's importance to the royal family, but Lyra's own actions are what make the family's reconciliation possible. This distinction is crucial for publication-quality feminist criticism. It would be too simplistic to claim that the series is feminist merely because the heroine is eventually accepted by the royal family. Acceptance can itself be patriarchal if the woman must be validated by male authority. The more persuasive interpretation is that the narrative creates a gradual movement from validation by others toward recognition of Lyra's own subjectivity.

The Politics of the 'Second Chance' Romance: The second-chance romance structure is central to the series. Kael and Lyra are separated, truth is hidden, and the possibility of reunion becomes the emotional engine of the plot. Feminist criticism should not automatically reject romance; instead, it can ask what kind of relationship the romance imagines after the heroine has experienced injustice. The feminist potential of reconciliation depends on whether the narrative requires Lyra to forget the power imbalance. A merely romantic ending would say that love is enough to erase the past. A more critical ending requires recognition, accountability, and a redistribution of narrative authority. The story becomes more progressive when Kael's return is not treated as a reward for Lyra but as a consequence of his need to confront the damage produced by his earlier decision.

This is also where Hooks's understanding of feminism is valuable. If sexism is a system rather than merely an individual attitude, then personal reconciliation cannot be the whole solution. The emotional relationship matters,

but the symbolic order that allowed Lyra to be dismissed must also be questioned. The series does not fully dismantle that order, but its revelation of the false prophecy weakens the ideological foundation of Lyra's exclusion.

Intersectional Dimensions: Gender and Species Hierarchy: Although the article is centred on feminism, the fantasy structure permits intersectional reading. Lyra's oppression is not caused by gender alone. Her humanity marks her as socially inferior in a dragon-dominated world. Her gender and species status therefore interact. A woman who belongs to the dominant dragon group would not necessarily occupy the same social position as a human woman such as Lyra. This intersection is important because feminist criticism increasingly recognizes that 'woman' is not a socially identical category for every female character. Power is shaped by multiple positions. Lyra's experience is determined by the combination of gender, species, romantic status, motherhood, and proximity to royal authority. Her marginality is consequently layered rather than singular. The fantasy setting thus makes visible a broader feminist principle: domination often works through overlapping hierarchies. A woman can be oppressed by patriarchy while simultaneously occupying a position of privilege in another hierarchy, or vice versa. The dragon-human offers a fictional vocabulary through which the series dramatizes this complexity.

Female Agency versus Romantic Dependence: A central problem for any feminist reading of romance is the question of dependence. Lyra needs the royal system because Amber needs a healer. She also remains emotionally connected to Kael. Does this make her dependent, or can dependence coexist with agency? The series suggests that it can. Agency does not require complete independence from every other person. A feminist understanding of agency recognizes that people make choices within constraints. Lyra does not possess Kael's political authority, but she can still decide what risks to take and what goals to pursue. Her return demonstrates constrained agency: she acts in a world whose rules she did not create. This is arguably more realistic than the fantasy of absolute independence. Women frequently negotiate power rather than simply possess it. Lyra's strength comes from her capacity to act strategically under conditions of inequality. Her story therefore moves beyond the simplistic model in which empowerment means becoming completely self-sufficient.

Ambivalence: Where the Series Reproduces Patriarchy: A scholarly article should also acknowledge the limitations of the text. *Deny Me, Dragon King* remains a romance designed around an exceptionally powerful male hero. Kael's status as Dragon King gives him narrative centrality, political authority, and the capacity to determine the heroine's circumstances. The plot's emotional resolution is still closely tied to the restoration of the romantic family. Moreover, the heroine's suffering is partly used as emotional material for the hero's redemption. This can reproduce a familiar romance convention in which female pain becomes the catalyst for male transformation. From a feminist standpoint, this structure is ambivalent: it gives the woman narrative importance but can still center the man's emotional journey. The most defensible conclusion is therefore not that the series is purely feminist. Rather, it is a contested text. It draws on patriarchal romance conventions while simultaneously creating moments in which those conventions are challenged. Its feminist value lies in the tension between those two impulses.

The feminist reading of *Deny Me, Dragon King* reveals a gradual transformation in Lyra's subjectivity, from a woman whose identity is determined by external authority to one who increasingly exercises agency through decision-making, resistance, and self-definition. This study explores how gender, species hierarchy, royal authority, and romantic relationships shape Lyra's experiences. Her journey is therefore significant not simply because she suffers rejection, but because she challenges the structures that attempt to define her identity and limit her autonomy.

In the early episodes (1–10), Lyra's rejection through the false prophecy establishes the unequal distribution of power between her and Kael. Her humanity and femininity position her within overlapping systems of exclusion, while Kael's royal status enables him to exercise authority over her fate. From Simone de Beauvoir's perspective, Lyra's position reflects the construction of woman as the "Other," whose identity is defined in relation to a dominant male subject. The opening conflict consequently establishes the central feminist question of the narrative: who possesses the authority to define a woman's worth and determine her future?

The middle episodes (11–30) develop the relationship between female subjectivity, motherhood, and constrained agency. Lyra's responsibility for Amber becomes an important motivation for her decisions, but motherhood does not constitute the entirety of her identity. Her determination to seek help for her daughter demonstrates her

capacity to act purposefully within a system she does not control. Judith Butler's theory of gender performativity helps explain how Lyra challenges conventional expectations of femininity. Although she occupies socially recognisable roles such as mother and vulnerable woman, she does not remain confined to passivity or dependence. Her actions suggest that female agency can emerge even within restrictive gender and power structures.

The later episodes (31–50) invite consideration of revelation, accountability, and the possibility of renegotiating unequal relationships. From a feminist perspective, the exposure of deception or hidden information is meaningful only insofar as it challenges the authority that enabled Lyra's exclusion. Similarly, reconciliation with Kael cannot automatically be regarded as a feminist resolution. The essential question is whether Lyra's dignity and autonomy receive recognition independently of the male sovereign's approval. A romantic ending may repair a personal relationship while leaving broader institutional inequalities intact; therefore, the narrative must be assessed in terms of both emotional reconciliation and the redistribution of power.

Bell Hooks's understanding of feminism as resistance to sexist exploitation and oppression further broadens this interpretation. Lyra's struggle cannot be reduced to a conflict between two individuals because her vulnerability is shaped by the prophecy, royal hierarchy, and social assumptions surrounding gender and humanity. Examining these structures makes it possible to distinguish interpersonal conflict from institutional power. Together, the perspectives of Beauvoir, Butler, and hooks illuminate different dimensions of Lyra's experience: her positioning as the "Other," her resistance to restrictive gender expectations, and her struggle against systems of domination.

Ultimately, *Deny Me, Dragon King* provides a framework for examining the relationship between romance and female self-determination in a short-form fantasy drama. Lyra's agency does not necessarily depend on escaping every restriction; rather, it emerges through her ability to make decisions, pursue her priorities, and resist being defined exclusively by a powerful man. The feminist significance of her journey therefore rests on whether the narrative recognizes her as an autonomous subject whose identity extends beyond romantic desirability, rejection, and motherhood.

6. Conclusion

Deny Me, Dragon King can be productively read as a contemporary fantasy romance in which the struggle for love is also a struggle for narrative authority. Lyra begins as an excluded human woman whose identity is determined by a patriarchal and species-based hierarchy. The false prophecy symbolizes the ideological mechanisms through which domination can be presented as destiny. Her rejection demonstrates the consequences of a social order in which male authority is treated as more credible than female self-knowledge. Yet the series does not leave Lyra in the position of the Other. Her return, motherhood, persistence, and decision-making create a gradual movement toward subjectivity. She does not simply wait to be restored to the Dragon King's favor. She returns because she has a purpose. Her actions demonstrate that agency can exist even when institutional power is unequal. The narrative's strongest feminist dimension is therefore found in the heroine's ability to act within and eventually challenge the structures that once defined her. At the same time, the series remains ambivalent because its final emotional logic is still shaped by romance, royal power, and family restoration. It does not offer a complete feminist revolution. Instead, it provides a popular-cultural space in which patriarchal assumptions can be exposed, questioned, and partially rewritten. Such ambivalence is precisely what makes the text worth studying in English literary and cultural studies. The series demonstrates how contemporary popular narratives can recycle traditional gender scripts while simultaneously opening those scripts to revision. Ultimately, Lyra's journey may be understood as a movement from being spoken about to speaking through action; from being defined by a powerful man's judgement to defining herself through her own choices; and from being treated as an outsider to becoming an indispensable subject in the narrative she inhabits. In this sense, *Deny Me, Dragon King* offers a compelling case for examining how feminist ideas of otherness, performativity, and resistance operate within the increasingly popular form of the vertical short drama.

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