

EXISTENTIALIST FEMINISM IN *FURIOSA* A MAD MAX SAGA: WOMEN'S STRUGGLE BEYOND PATRIARCHAL DOMINATION

Alexander Ramin Wirija¹, Irma Rahmawati²

¹Universitas Dian Nusantara

²Universitas Dian Nusantara

e-mail: ¹311211012@mahasiswa.undira.ac.id, ²irma.rahmawati@undira.ac.id

Corresponding author: irma.rahmawati@undira.ac.id

ABSTRACT

This research explores the existentialist feminist representation of women in Furiosa: A Mad Max Saga (2024), focusing on their struggle to reclaim subjectivity and resist patriarchal domination. Grounded in Simone de Beauvoir's existentialist feminism, the research analyzes how female characters navigate a dystopian world controlled by male authority. Core concepts such as the Other, immanence, transcendence, freedom, and responsibility are used to interpret the journey of women from oppression to empowerment. This research employs a descriptive qualitative method, analyzing selected scenes, character development, dialogues, and cinematic techniques. While Furiosa is the central figure, the analysis also includes secondary female characters such as Mary Jabassa, Norton, and the Wives. The findings show that women are frequently treated as commodities or silenced objects, as depicted through scenes of confinement, trade, and suppression. However, the film also portrays acts of resistance, where women assert their agency through courage, strategy, and solidarity. Furiosa's transformation from being objectified as "the Other" to achieving autonomy through transcendence, exemplifies the existential journey toward subjectivity. This research concludes that Furiosa: A Mad Max Saga challenges traditional gender norms in the action and science fiction genres, offering a meaningful contribution to feminist film criticism and existentialist feminist analysis.

Keywords: *Existentialist feminism, Simone de Beauvoir, patriarchal domination, transcendence, action cinema.*

INTRODUCTION

The issue of gender roles and patriarchal domination continues to shape women's lived experiences, particularly in male-dominated societies. According to Simone de Beauvoir (De Beauvoir, 2018) Women are historically constructed as 'the Other', defined in opposition to men, who are considered the default Subject. This unequal positioning leads to limited agency and representation, especially in cultural fields such as film, where women are often objectified or assigned passive roles. Analyzing how films portray women is therefore essential to understanding and challenging these existential conditions.

Then, according to Benshoff and Griffin in their book "America on Film: Representing Race, Class, Gender, and Sexuality at the Movies" (Form, 2021), the representation of female characters in Hollywood has evolved since the 1930s, especially from the 2000s onwards, the role of women in action films has become more prominent, moving away from the traditional depiction of a life of dependency and toward depicting women as complex individuals. This marks an important shift in challenging traditional gender roles in cinema. As Aprilyani (2025) argues, the media plays a central role in sustaining patriarchal domination by portraying certain genders through narrow, stereotypical roles that restrict gender identity and agency.

Film is not only a source of entertainment but also a medium that educates and influences society, embedding ideologies, beliefs, and values from the creator's perspective into the minds of the audience (Khodthong, 2018). Gender representation in films significantly affects audience perceptions and social norms, potentially reinforcing or challenging society's views on the role and position of women. One of the recent films that explores women's resistance and empowerment within a patriarchal context is *Furiosa: A Mad Max Saga* (2024). This film presents a strong and resilient female character navigating a dystopian and patriarchal world. The researcher chose this film because of its portrayal of a female protagonist, Furiosa, who exemplifies resilience and leadership. Unlike *Fury Road*, this prequel centers on Furiosa's journey from childhood to leadership as an expression of female empowerment in a post-apocalyptic world.

This research adopts the theory of existentialist feminism proposed by Simone de Beauvoir. A key figure in modern feminism, Beauvoir emphasized women's experiences and social roles. One of her most well-known ideas is "You are not born a woman, you get to be" (De Beauvoir, 2018a). Her concept of existentialist feminism involves the struggle to liberate women from patriarchal structures through self-awareness and redefinition beyond socially imposed limitations. Her work *Le Deuxième Sexe* provides a philosophical foundation for modern feminism and encourages women to become aware of their societal position and take action toward freedom and equality.

Despite increasing interest in feminist film criticism, research specifically exploring post-apocalyptic action films through the lens of existentialist feminism remains limited. Most previous studies have focused on dramas, or mainstream comedies, leaving a gap in academic exploration of action sci-fi films like *Furiosa*, particularly with regard to how female protagonists confront patriarchal domination and enact resistance. This research addresses that gap by offering a feminist analysis of *Furiosa: A Mad Max Saga* as a unique cinematic text that positions its female characters, especially Furiosa herself as agents of resistance and existential transformation. By combining narrative and visual analysis, this research aims to deepen the understanding of gender representation in a genre historically dominated by male characters. It also seeks to show how cinema can function as a transformative space, challenging outdated gender norms and offering new models of female subjectivity, agency, and power. In doing so, this study contributes to feminist film criticism and expands the discourse on women's representation within action cinema.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Film Analysis

Film analysis involves a deeper understanding of how film elements, such as narrative, character, setting, and visual style, interact to create a meaningful viewing experience. Film analysis is a systematic process of understanding how a film creates meaning through various elements, including narrative, style, and cinematographic techniques. They emphasize the importance of observing how these elements interact to create a cohesive viewing experience

(Przylipiak, 2021). In this film analysis, the viewer or film critic considers not only what happens in a film but also how those events are structured and presented.

Film analysis is essential for identifying how narrative and visual structures reflect and reinforce particular social ideologies. Film analysis plays a vital role in engaging in critical dialogue about cinematic works, allowing audiences to reflect on and challenge their perceptions (Mulvey, 2013). Film analysis fosters a shared experience in which audiences can share insights, debates, and interpretations, ultimately contributing to a broader cultural conversation about film. In this way, film analysis not only highlights the strengths and weaknesses of particular films but also encourages audiences to consider the social and historical contexts in which these films were made.

Narrative Theory

Narrative theory can be explained as a basic framework used by researchers to analyze how stories are structured and how elements such as theme, setting, character and characterization interact to create meaning. Narrative theory is an analytical approach used to understand how stories are constructed and how narrative elements function to create meaning. This theory includes an analysis of the forms, structures, and narrative techniques used in various literary and film works (Abrams, 2019). Narrative Theory serves as a foundational framework used to analyze how stories are structured and how elements like theme, setting, character, and characterization interact to produce meaning. It involves studying narrative forms, structures, and techniques in literature and film (Abrams, 2019). In this research, Narrative Theory is applied to examine how *Furiosa: A Mad Max Saga* constructs its narrative to portray patriarchal domination and the various forms of resistance shown by female characters, particularly *Furiosa*. This approach reveals the complexity of their journeys and emphasizes overarching themes of empowerment and defiance. This can be analyzed through several narrative elements: (1) character and characterization: According to M. H. Abrams (2019), characters are essential elements that bring a story to life, while characterization is the process of portraying them deeply and realistically. Characters communicate the emotional and psychological layers of a narrative, and effective characterization helps the audience connect with their struggles, choices, and growth. (2) setting: Based on Bordwell & Thompson (in Przylipiak, 2021), setting includes time and place, which shape meaning and atmosphere. In *Furiosa: A Mad Max Saga*, the post-apocalyptic setting like the Citadel intensifies the depiction of patriarchal control and the fight for liberation. The setting functions as an active narrative component that reflects mood, reinforces themes, and highlights power dynamics. (3) theme: As stated by Pannu & Chopra (2018), all forms of popular culture, including films, are defined by the themes they convey. In film, themes are delivered through characters and visuals, offering deeper engagement. In *Furiosa: A Mad Max Saga*, the theme of liberation from patriarchy is expressed not only through dialogue and character arcs but also through its harsh visual landscape. The theme actively shapes narrative meaning and audience perception.

Feminist Theory by Simone de Beauvoir (Existential Feminism)

This research uses one of the feminist theories that is relevant to my research, the theory is existentialist feminism put forward by Simone de Beauvoir in her famous creation, *The Second Sex* (De Beauvoir, 2018). This theory highlights how women are always defined by patriarchal

society not as "subjects" (humans who are completely independent and have agency), but as "the Other", an entity whose existence is seen only in relation to men. Simone de Beauvoir states that women are not born as "others," but are constructed into "others" through social, cultural, and political norms that limit their freedom (Shepherd, 2000). In the perspective of existentialism, freedom is the essence of human existence. However, women often lose this freedom because they live under patriarchal domination. De Beauvoir emphasizes that women must define themselves as subjects by overcoming the limitations imposed by society.

Existentialist feminism is a highly relevant theory for understanding the dynamics of gender roles and power structures in society. This theory provides a critical perspective to analyze how women are often defined as "others" in a patriarchal system (Mosier-Dubinsky, 2014). The theme of resistance and the search for freedom is central to the discourse of existentialist feminism. This resistance is not only a physical act but also a deep existential struggle for recognition. As Simone de Beauvoir said, women must assert their identity and reclaim their freedom by rejecting the roles imposed on them by society. This is in line with the idea of women as subjects in their own right, who are able to make choices and define their existence outside the limitations set by patriarchal norms.

The review aims to provide a theoretical foundation for understanding how female characters in *Furiosa: A Mad Max Saga* are represented and how they resist the forms of domination they encounter within the narrative. This research uses Simone de Beauvoir's Existentialist Feminism theory as the main basis of analysis. Key concepts include: (1) the Other: The concept of women being positioned as "others" in a patriarchal structure. In Simone de Beauvoir's theory, it is explained that in a patriarchal world, women are often considered weak or even not considered as independent individuals or main subjects (De Beauvoir, 2018). They are placed as "the Other", which means that their existence is seen from a male perspective and is only a complement. Women are not given space to determine their own lives, but their roles are determined by men. It can be concluded that women are not considered as the main characters in their own lives, but are judged, controlled, and even ignored by a system that prioritizes men as the center of power. (2) immanence: Immanence refers to the condition in which women are confined to passive, static, and repetitive roles within patriarchal society. According to Beauvoir, women are traditionally assigned domestic, reproductive, or supportive functions that prevent them from realizing their full human potential (Day, 2014). This passive condition limits their movement, agency, and intellectual development. Women in immanence are reduced to mere being in itself, existing only in relation to men, rather than as autonomous subjects. In *Furiosa*, immanence is shown when female characters are treated as objects, bartered, silenced, or imprisoned with little control over their own decisions or bodies. (3) transcendence: Women's efforts to transcend passive roles and achieve autonomy through conscious action. In Simone de Beauvoir's theory, transcendence is a process when a woman tries to get out of a passive position, then take control of herself (Day, 2014). In Beauvoir's view, this is a characteristic of women who are able to make their own life choices, take risks, and act consciously to achieve freedom, meaning they have carried out transcendence. It can be concluded that transcendence is a moment when women struggle to be able to act because of their own awareness, not because they are forced or directed by others. (4) freedom and responsibility: Women's existential awareness

to act freely by taking responsibility for decisions. True freedom according to Beauvoir does not only mean freedom from oppression, but also the courage to actively take responsibility for one's own decisions and actions (Shepherd, 2000). Women who are aware of their rights as free human beings must dare to face the risks of their choices, even if they are difficult choices. A free woman is not only one who can choose, but also one who is ready to face the consequences of her choices. She is aware that freedom comes with responsibility for her life.

RESEARCH METHODS

This research uses a descriptive qualitative research approach. This approach was chosen to conduct an in-depth analysis of the representation of female characters in the film *Furiosa: A Mad Max Saga*. According to (Creswell, 2018), descriptive qualitative research is used to explore and understand the meaning given by individuals or groups to a social or human problem. This method is suitable for research that aims to describe phenomena, processes, or certain characteristics of an object, where in this research, the topic is the representation of female characters in films.

Descriptive qualitative research focuses on interpreting and explaining how elements in films, such as narrative, character development, and visual representation can contribute to understand the dominance and resistance of female characters. The purpose of this research is to capture the essence of the film's narrative and its alignment with feminist theories, particularly Simone de Beauvoir's existential feminism.

By using a qualitative approach, the researcher was able to examine the complex interactions between, setting, and characterization, providing a comprehensive understanding of how *Furiosa: A Mad Max Saga* depicts the struggles and agency of its female protagonist.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

This chapter presents the results and discussion based on a qualitative descriptive analysis of the film *Furiosa: A Mad Max Saga* (2024). The main focus of this analysis is to identify the results of the forms of patriarchal domination experienced by female characters and how they resist this domination, using Simone de Beauvoir's existentialist feminist theory as the main framework. The findings are obtained through an in-depth analysis of certain scenes, dialogues, and visual elements that represent gender representation in the film. For example, in one key scene, young *Furiosa* is referred to by *Dementus* as "a gift, a prize worth trading," clearly showing how she is treated as an object, not a subject. By analyzing how the film shapes female characters, especially *Furiosa* who becomes an active agent and not just an object, this chapter reveals how the film represents women as existential subjects who resist patriarchal domination and challenges traditional gender roles from the perspective of Beauvoir's main concepts: the Other, immanence, transcendence, and freedom. The results of this study will be divided into several sections, each section supported by textual and visual evidence from the film and analyzed through an existentialist feminist approach. As an introduction, this chapter also provides an overview of the film to clarify the context analysis that will be discussed.

To provide context for the analysis, it is important to first understand the narrative framework of the film. *Furiosa: A Mad Max Saga* (2024), directed by George Miller, is a science fiction action film that serves as a prequel to *Mad Max: Fury Road* (2015). The film explores the origin story of Imperator Furiosa, depicting her journey from a kidnapped child to a strategic leader of resistance in a patriarchal dystopia. Set in a barren, post-apocalyptic desert where water, fuel, and fertile land are scarce commodities, the world is dominated by violent patriarchal figures such as Dementus and Immortan Joe. The narrative begins with young Furiosa's abduction from the Green Place, a peaceful matriarchal society into the hands of power-hungry warlords. She becomes a bargaining object between Dementus and Immortan Joe and grows up in the Citadel under constant oppression. Her transformation into a resilient and calculating warrior reflects not only physical survival but also psychological and ideological resistance. This is emphasized through the visual motif of Furiosa being constantly watched or surrounded by male forces, reinforcing her status as the "Other". Disguising herself as a male and initiating strategic rebellion, Furiosa embodies a gradual assertion of agency against patriarchal domination.

Visually, the film features iconic Mad Max aesthetics: vast deserts, war vehicles, dystopian industrial design, and high-intensity combat scenes. In addition to *Furiosa*, the film highlights other significant female characters like Mary Jabassa, Norton, the Wives, and the women of the Green Place, each contributing to the film's broader theme of female resistance. These elements make *Furiosa* a rich subject for analysis using Simone de Beauvoir's existentialist feminism, particularly the concepts of "the Other," immanence, and transcendence. The film offers a complex representation of how women survive, resist, and reclaim autonomy within a genre historically dominated by masculine narratives.



4.1 Figure of the Settings and Costumes in *Furiosa: A Mad Max Saga*

Discussion

Patriarchal Domination Experienced by Female Characters

The first scene exist at (23:46), Simone de Beauvoir's theory of women as "the Other" and "things" is dramatically manifested when Dementus captures and makes Mrs. Furiosa a mere tool to satisfy his desires. In the framing of this scene, the camera focuses on the figure of Mrs. Furiosa who is tied up, becoming "bait" for information about the location of the Green Place. Dementus, as the perpetrator of domination, speaks in a high and loud tone:

Dementus: "Tell me where you came from, and we will cease and desist. All you have to do is just point, point me in the right direction and I'll take you home."

This scene clearly illustrates that Dementus makes Mary Jabassa as an object so that Furiosa gives the location of the Green Place and Dementus can fulfill his desire and wish to go and loot the Green Place. The sentence reveals two things: first, the reduction of Mrs. Furiosa's existence to a bait so that Furiosa tells the location of the Green Place, and second, Dementus's will that sets aside Mrs. Furiosa's right to life and dignity. In Beauvoir's perspective, the scene illustrates the loss of women's capacity for transcendence because they are positioned only as objects of manipulation. This contrast is further strengthened by the angle of the shot that shows Mary Jabassa's body bowed and vulnerable, while Dementus's position threatens by holding Furiosa's body tightly, this shows a clear hierarchy of power and domination. Narratively, this scene functions as the peak of cultural and existential conflict: cultural because it illustrates the objectification of women by patriarchy (Dementus represents the patriarchal power that feels entitled to women's bodies and information), and existential because Mary Jabassa refuses to continue being "the Other" by trying to fight back even though it ultimately leads to her death. The death of Furiosa's mother at the hands of Dementus not only marks the failure of the resistance effort, but also triggers a transformation in the young Furiosa's character: the loss of her mother figure drives her to reclaim her own existential agency and to seek her revenge against Dementus.

Visually, the power dynamic in this scene is emphasized through the cinematographic choices. A close-up shot captures Mary Jabassa in a bent and restrained position, highlighting her vulnerability. Simultaneously, Dementus is shown holding Furiosa tightly while asserting dominance, reinforcing the imbalance of power. The lighting is dim, creating a tense and intimidating atmosphere that enhances the sense of threat. The framing reinforces the patriarchal hierarchy, where Dementus is in control, while Mary Jabassa and Furiosa are shown in vulnerable positions, voiceless and dominated by Dementus. This visual directly reflects Beauvoir's theory where women are depicted as "Others," stripped of their rights and positioned under the power of male authority. This scene is the starting point of Furiosa's trauma and motivation to retaliate and reclaim her agency.



Figure 4.2 Scene when Dementus threatens Furiosa to give the location to the Green Place.

Women as Commodities

In the Scene at minute (55:32), we witness the negotiation between Dementus and Immortan Joe, who openly include Furiosa in the “exchange” list along with water, gasoline, and potatoes. Furiosa stands between them as if she is no more valuable than the negotiation of the logistics commodities they are discussing. Meanwhile, Immortan Joe coldly expresses his desire by saying:

“And I want to take this girl, who's not your daughter.”

According to Simone de Beauvoir, women in patriarchal structures are often constructed as “the Other” or objects that can be traded and controlled. Here, the objectification reaches its peak: Furiosa has no voice or choice, forced to only “become” something that can be negotiated. This line reduces Furiosa’s identity to an item of trade, devoid of voice or choice. Her value is determined not by her autonomy but by her role in the patriarchal bargaining process. This moment is a vivid realization of that concept. Furiosa is presented as an object of transaction, which signifies her full placement in immanence, a state of being acted upon rather than acting. She is not permitted to speak, move, or express resistance at that moment, because her fate is being decided without her.

The visual framing shown emphasizes that the system of power views women as strategic commodities, not dignified subjects. The shot frames Furiosa midway between Dementus and Immortan Joe, placing her visually between the commodities being discussed. Furiosa’s static, mute posture underscores her lack of agency. The depiction of this scene portrays Furiosa as a passive element in a male-controlled economy of power. Narratively, this scene is important in deepening Furiosa’s internal conflict. It heightens Furiosa’s awareness and psychological distress at losing control over her own body and future. It also plays a significant role in the moment that establishes this as one of the fundamental motivations for her resistance and subsequent transformation throughout the film.



Figure 4.3 Negotiation scene of the exchange between Immortan Joe and Dementus

Acts of Resistance: Survival, and Breaking Stereotypes

In the scene at minute (1:15:18), the film presents Furiosa's transcendence phase, when she is no longer just a trapped "Other" but begins to take control of her own life and destiny. This moment marks her transformation from silent survival to active resistance. The scene begins with a rear-view shot, following Furiosa as she moves forward. This camera movement emphasizes her physical and mental development, indicating that she is beginning to forge her own path in line with existential theory. When Immortan Joe's convoy, led by Praetorian Jack, is ambushed by a group of rebels, the scene quickly escalates in intensity. The rapid camera cuts create a sense of chaos and urgency, visually reflecting the chaos of the battlefield and the internal transformation that is taking place within Furiosa. The surrounding environment is seen coated in dust and smoke, dimming the natural light and creating a muted color palette. This visual atmosphere symbolizes the instability of the time and the harsh conditions that test Furiosa's resolve. Furiosa, who was initially passive, consciously takes the initiative and her own life choices in order to survive. She takes refuge in the truck as she observes the situation and strategically launches a counterattack. Her movements are measured, not impulsive, indicating agency and preparation.

According to Simone de Beauvoir's framework, this moment illustrates Furiosa's shift from immanence to transcendence. Previously confined to a passive state where she merely reacts to circumstances, she now chooses to act with the purpose of survival. She begins to construct her own decisions. The framing of the scene changes to support this shift in transcendence. In this scene, Furiosa is captured in a bold, close-up shot that places her at the center of the action. This visual shift indicates her increasing dominance in the narrative. Narratively, this scene serves as a turning point in her character development. The film not only highlights her physical survival, but also introduces her as a thoughtful and calculating agent. Her resistance is depicted not as merely reactionary, but as a deliberate and transformative act. Through this scene, the film reinforces the idea that liberation is not something that happens by chance, but is built through action, strategy, and will. Furiosa begins the process of redefining herself, proving that a woman who was once silenced and objectified can fight back, reclaim, and reconstruct her own identity in a world that seeks to erase her.

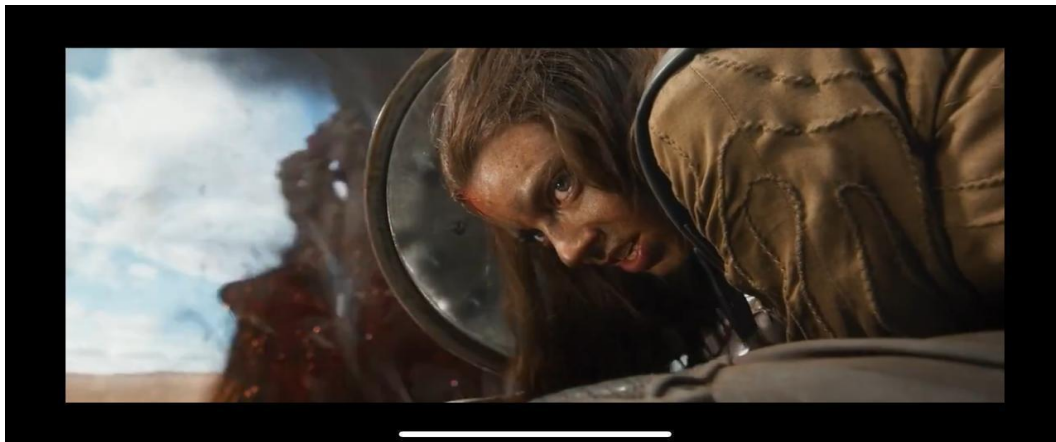


Figure 4.4 Furiosa's first battle

Still within the broader theme of resistance and breaking stereotypes, the scene at minute (26:22), known as the “Five Bike Teddy” fight scene, presents another powerful moment of defiance. In this sequence, a female character, Elsa Pataky, emerges as a physical and symbolic challenger within a male-dominated space. She is one of the only women participating in a violent contest where strength, speed, and brutality are required to earn a position under Dementus’ command. The scene is shot using a wide-angle camera, allowing the audience to fully observe her presence and physical engagement in the arena. This framing is crucial because it does not reduce her role to background action or mere tokenism; instead, it centers her body and movement as the primary focus of the frame. Her struggle is clearly presented as legitimate and intense, equally matched against her male opponents. This clarity of action, paired with this portrayal of strength. Through fast-cut sequences, the film emphasizes her speed, impact, and agility, mirroring how action films typically highlight dominant male heroes. In this scene the visual language is used to elevate a female character, that change expectations about gender and capability in combat.

From Simone de Beauvoir’s existentialist feminist perspective, this moment is an embodiment of transcendence. It portrays a woman acting as a subject, not only physically resisting, but also rewriting the social meaning of her presence in that space. In a setting that defines women as weak or decorative, she asserts her subjectivity through confrontation, skill, and success. This victory is more than physical but it is ideological, undermining the immanence traditionally assigned to women. Narratively, this moment plays a key role in expanding the thematic arc of the film. It shifts the audience’s perception: the story is no longer only about Furiosa’s personal trauma, but also about the collective capacity of women to survive and lead. The scene becomes a signal to young Furiosa, watching and absorbing the idea that women are not bound by traditional roles, they can fight, they can win, and they can command respect on their own terms. Thus, the “Five Bike Teddy” sequence contributes significantly to the film’s feminist undertone. It challenges the patriarchal hierarchy of the world built by Dementus and Immortan Joe, and opens space for new representations of female power.



Figure 4.5 Resistance by female characters to become Dementus' subordinates

Reclaiming Subjectivity and Agency

In the scene at minute (1:50:56), Furiosa and Praetorian Jack attempt to escape from Dementus' captivity. However, their plan fails, and both are recaptured. Furiosa is restrained with chains, her body literally bound and immobilized, rendered once again as a powerless object in the hands of patriarchal authority. This image visually recalls Simone de Beauvoir's concept of immanence, where women are confined to roles of passivity and subjugation, stripped of their ability to act or decide. The framing of the scene reinforces this confinement. Close-up shots of Furiosa's face, especially as she scans the environment and contemplates her next move, reveal a building internal resolve. Her body is wounded and trapped, but her gaze remains alert, indicating that her mind is not defeated. When the opportunity arises, Furiosa acts decisively. In a moment of extreme desperation and unflinching will, she cuts off her own hand to escape. The camera lingers on her expression and the flow of blood not to sensationalize the violence, but to emphasize the cost of freedom.

From the lens of Beauvoir's existentialist feminism, this is a clear instance of transcendence. Furiosa refuses to remain in a state of passive immanence. Her self-mutilation is not an act of defeat, but one of deliberate, existential assertion. She reclaims control over her own body, even if it means sacrificing a part of it. In doing so, she rejects the identity imposed upon her by patriarchal domination that of a prisoner, a pawn, or a victim, and becomes the author of her escape. Symbolically, her wound becomes a site of transformation. It represents both the violence she has endured and her refusal to be defined by it. Rather than allowing her body to remain a site of patriarchal control, she decided to reconfigures it. Her pain becomes purposeful. Narratively, this moment is a major turning point. It marks the end of Furiosa's victimhood and the beginning of her full emergence as a self-defined subject. After this moment, every action she takes is imbued with an awareness of sacrifice and the urgency of freedom. Her agency embodied in every scar, every risk, and every decision she makes thereafter.



Figure 4.6 Furiosa manages to escape from Dementus

Solidarity and Empowerment among Women

In the scene at minute (2:17:17), Furiosa successfully liberates the Wives who have been imprisoned and exploited as reproductive "objects" by Immortan Joe. She leads them away using a war rig, reclaiming not only their physical freedom but also their right to agency and personhood. Visually, this moment is framed with Furiosa at the forefront, driving the vehicle, while the Wives are seated behind her—symbolizing not just escape, but direction, leadership, and purpose. The camera uses low-angle shots from behind the truck, emphasizing Furiosa's position of power and suggesting a new direction for all the women she leads.

From Simone de Beauvoir's existentialist perspective, this is an unmistakable act of transcendence, freedom and agency. Transcendence, in Beauvoir's theory, involves the rejection of imposed passivity (immanence) and the assertion of subjectivity through conscious, meaningful action. Furiosa, at this moment, no longer fights for herself alone. She mobilizes a collective, turning individual resistance into systemic challenge. The film no longer portrays her merely as a survivor or a fighter, but as a liberator, someone who enables others to break free from the very structures that once bound her. This scene shows that freedom, as Beauvoir argues, is not only individual but must be extended and enacted in solidarity. Furiosa's decision to save and lead the Wives is thus both personal and political. It dismantles patriarchal hierarchies not only through physical rebellion but through cooperative, empathetic leadership.

Narratively, this serves as the emotional and ideological climax of the film: a symbolic closure of suffering and a hopeful beginning of a new, empowered social order shaped by the women themselves. Thus, these scenes show the evolution of Furiosa's character. No longer a solitary figure fighting for survival, she emerges as a leader whose struggle becomes deeply interconnected with the liberation of others. These acts of collective resistance illustrate Beauvoir's belief that true subjectivity is not only found in freedom from oppression, but in the choice to use that freedom to transform the conditions of others



Figure 4.7 Furiosa leading The Wives away to freedom, symbolizing collective liberation.

There is also a scene at the minute (1:40:05) which shows solidarity, where Furiosa and Praetorian Jack arrive at Bullet Farm under the orders of Immortan Joe to secure weapons and ammunition. However, their mission turns into a deadly ambush orchestrated by Dementus's forces. In the midst of the chaotic assault, all of Immortan Joe's men are killed, leaving only Furiosa and Jack alive. As the battle intensifies, the two are physically separated, Jack fends off

the enemy alone, while Furiosa becomes trapped behind an iron wall. At this moment, she has the opportunity to retreat to safety, but instead, she makes a conscious decision: to return, find another route, and rescue Jack from certain death. Visually, the scene reinforces this moral and existential dilemma. Framed between heavy, enclosing walls, Furiosa is shown hesitating only briefly before turning back. The camera follows her swift and purposeful movement through the debris, highlighting both the external obstacles and her internal resolve. Lighting is dim and metallic, creating a cold, high-stakes atmosphere that mirrors the danger and urgency of her choice.

From Simone de Beauvoir's existentialist feminist perspective, this moment can be read as a clear act of transcendence. Transcendence, for Beauvoir, means asserting one's subjectivity by taking deliberate, responsible action that defies passivity or objectification. Furiosa refuses to act according to the logic of survival-at-all-costs, a logic often embedded in patriarchal systems that encourage abandonment or emotional detachment. Instead, she asserts her freedom by choosing empathy, not as a weakness, but as a conscious rejection of the status of "the Other." Rather than being reduced to a passive or reactive figure, she acts with clarity and purpose, showing that resistance can also mean choosing to stand with another in solidarity. Narratively, this scene expands Furiosa's characterization beyond that of a solitary survivor. Her actions here represent a turning point where existential freedom is no longer limited to individual autonomy, but is extended through relationships, trust, and loyalty. It reinforces the idea that feminist resistance is not only about defying male power, but also about forging new ethical frameworks—ones based on care, mutual respect, and shared struggle.

Thus, the film presents Furiosa not only as a fighter, but as a moral agent, someone who uses her agency not just to escape, but to lift others alongside her. Her refusal to leave Jack behind underlines the deeper message of the film that true freedom, as Beauvoir insists, is only meaningful when it is used in service of others, especially in defiance of systems that seek to isolate and dominate.

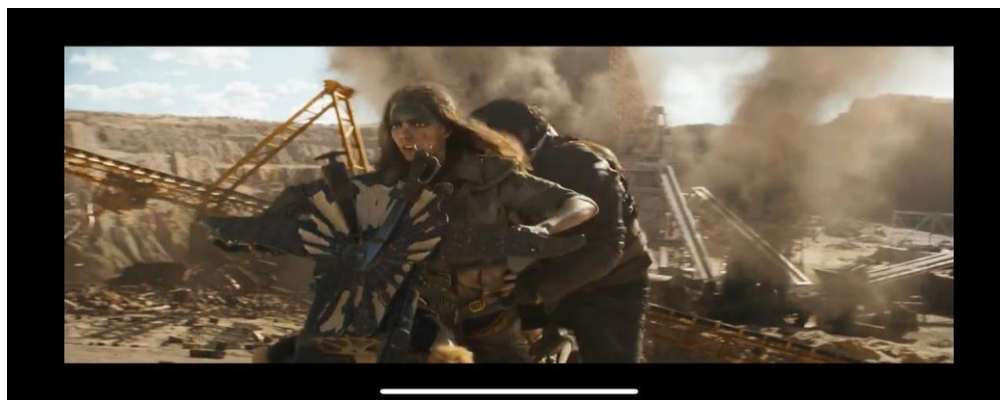


Figure 4.8 Furiosa's struggle against Dementus' men to save Praetorian Jack

Interpretation Based on Simone de Beauvoir's Existential Feminism

In the scene at minute (1:57:32), as tensions rise before the climactic war between Dementus's group and Immortan Joe's forces, Furiosa is seen forging a metal prosthetic hand

from scrap materials. This act follows her earlier mutilation, when she sacrificed her own hand to escape captivity. Now, instead of viewing her injury as a limitation, Furiosa actively reconstructs her body, transforming it into a site of power, utility, and resistance. The camera lingers on the process, the grinding of metal, the shaping of the mechanical fingers, and Furiosa's focused expression emphasizing not only the technical construction of the prosthetic but the symbolic reconstruction of her identity.

From Simone de Beauvoir's existentialist feminist perspective, this moment represents a powerful instance of transcendence. In Beauvoir's theory, transcendence involves surpassing imposed roles, redefining one's essence through action and will. Furiosa does not mourn her wound as a loss that weakens her subjectivity. Instead, she uses it as the foundation of transformation. Her iron prosthetic hand is not merely a survival tool; it becomes a metaphor of existential freedom, a sign of how one can reclaim agency even from trauma. She refuses to be reduced to "the Other" as an incomplete or dependent figure in a patriarchal structure. Instead, she turns her altered body into a weapon, a tool, and a symbol of leadership. The symbolism of metal is strong, contrasted with the marking of Furiosa's shift from victimhood to deliberate self-determination. The visual transformation reflects a deeper ideological one: Furiosa no longer operates in reaction to male power, but rather defines her own purpose, driven not just by vengeance but by vision.

Narratively, this moment marks a transition from suffering to strategy. It signals Furiosa's readiness to re-enter the battlefield not as a broken survivor, but as a self-fashioned warrior. Her grief is no longer silent, it has been reshaped into strength. Her prosthetic hand embodies the very essence of Beauvoir's call to action that women must move from immanence to transcendence, from being shaped by others to shaping themselves. Thus, this scene becomes a visual and thematic testament to the capacity for rebirth and resistance, forged not despite loss, but through it.



Figure 4.9 Furiosa makes a prosthetic arm so she can join the fight against Dementus

At minute 2:15:45, Furiosa finally confronts Dementus, the man who had taken her mother, her freedom, and her body. This long-awaited moment marks not only the resolution of a personal vendetta but a decisive symbolic shift in Furiosa's journey from oppression to

empowerment. The visual composition of the scene is telling, Furiosa stands tall and steady, while Dementus is on his knees, his hands bound, head lowered, which is completely subdued. The camera frames her in a position of dominance, while the lighting casts a radiant glow on her face, creating a visual contrast with previous scenes marked by shadow and chaos. In this final confrontation, the power imbalance has been reversed.

From Simone de Beauvoir's existentialist feminist perspective, this moment encapsulates the full arc of transcendence. Initially positioned as "the Other" a voiceless object traded between patriarchal powers, now Furiosa fully aware of her agency and acting with decisive purpose. Her choice to pursue and capture Dementus is not driven merely by rage, but by a deep existential assertion that her life, body, and choices belong to her alone. The vengeance she enacts is not just retributive, it is liberatory. It reflects Beauvoir's idea that transcendence occurs when a woman steps beyond the roles imposed on her by others and defines herself through her own actions. This scene does not simply end a cycle of violence, it reconfigures the symbolic order. Furiosa is no longer the girl who was taken, bartered, and silenced. She is now the one who determines the fate of her oppressor. Her upright posture, calm expression, and controlled power suggest not just survival, but victory on her own terms. In contrast, Dementus, who once wielded authority through brutality and domination, is now reduced to impotence and silence.

Narratively, this confrontation is the climax of Furiosa's transformation. It is the culmination of her existential struggle, no longer trapped in immanence or victimhood, she has rewritten her identity through resistance, sacrifice, and purpose. In defeating Dementus, she does not only reclaim her autonomy, but also symbolizes the reclamation of womanhood itself from the margins imposed by patriarchy. Thus, this scene serves as a powerful feminist resolution, illustrating that a woman once treated as an "object" also can rise, fight, not only for personal justice but for the liberation of others. Her victory is not just physical, it is existential, ideological, and symbolic. Furiosa, fully transcended, stands as a challenge to the very system that once sought to define her.



Figure 4.9.1 Furiosa managed to catch Dementus who was trying to escape

Narrative Structure

Theme

The main theme of this film is patriarchal domination and women's resistance to their position as "the Other". This theme is explored through the traumatic experiences and character development of Furiosa from childhood to becoming a leader of the rebellion. The idea of women as objects as explained by Beauvoir becomes the main narrative foundation, and is then resisted through acts of transcendence, agency, and solidarity.

Character and Characterization

The main character in Furiosa: A Mad Max Saga is Imperator Furiosa, who experiences significant character development from a girl who is used as an object to a free subject with full agency. At the beginning of the film, Furiosa is constructed as a figure who has no control over herself; she is kidnapped, exchanged, and silenced. This initial characterization is shown through the use of narrow framing, low lighting, and passive body position, reinforcing her image as "the Other". She does not have long dialogues, and is more often shown as a silent figure in stressful situations, indicating her entrapment in a state of immanence. As the narrative progresses, Furiosa's characterization changes along with the actions and choices she makes. The scene when she starts planning her escape, saving The Wives, even cutting off her own hand to escape, signifies the transition from a passive character to an active one. In this phase, the cinematography supports the transformation through close-up cameras that highlight her expression of determination, as well as central framing that places her as the center of control. This is a form of transcendence, where the character is no longer determined by the patriarchal world around her, but by her own consciousness.

Furiosa's characterization is also strengthened through the use of symbols, such as the prosthetic hand she made herself. The hand is not just a physical tool, but a symbol of the new power she built herself. Furiosa's character is not formed through long dialogues or verbal expressions, but through concrete actions and symbolic visuals, which emphasize that she is a woman who transcends the limitations of the patriarchal system. In addition to Furiosa, other female characters such as Mary Jabassa and The Wives also show various levels of characterization, from passive objects to collective agents in resistance. However, Furiosa's transformation is the most complete representation of a woman moving from entrapment to freedom. Thus, the characters and characterization in this film not only serve to build the story, but also become a means of social criticism of the structure of masculine domination. Through the character of Furiosa, this film depicts a complex existential process, full of trauma, resistance, and liberation.

Setting

The setting of the film which takes place in a post-apocalyptic world is The Citadel, Bullet Farm, and the barren desert are visual representations of a brutal and oppressive patriarchal world. These environments are not only settings, but also agents of repression that shape the existential conditions of the characters. The Green Place, which appears at the beginning of the film, is a symbol of hope and female autonomy, in contrast to the Citadel, which represents patriarchal domination. This setting supports Beauvoir's idea that women's freedom is often suppressed by patriarchal social and spatial structures.

Existentialist Feminist Reflection on the Findings

This section aims to discuss the findings that have been analyzed previously in sub-chapter 4.1, by linking them to Simone de Beauvoir's existentialist feminist theory and the problem formulation that has been presented in Chapter I. The main focus of this discussion is to discuss and explain how female characters in *Furiosa: A Mad Max Saga* experience various forms of patriarchal domination and how they reject or transcend this domination to achieve agency and existential freedom.

Representation of Patriarchal Domination of Women as "The Other"

In the framework of Simone de Beauvoir's existentialist feminism, women have historically been constructed and stereotyped as the Other (Mosier-Dubinsky, 2014). The concept of the Other is found in her monumental work in the book *Le Deuxième Sexe* (The Second Sex, 1949), Simone de Beauvoir stated that this concept illustrates that women are not considered the main characters in life or society. Instead, women are seen only as complements to men, and do not have their own position or value. This is very clear in the film *Furiosa: A Mad Max Saga*, especially in the scenes when women are made objects of transactions, manipulation, and violence. The character of Mary Jabassa (*Furiosa*'s mother) is used as a tool or intermediary to obtain information by Dementus (23:46), then *Furiosa* is also treated as an exchange item by Immortan Joe (55:32).

In Beauvoir's context, this treatment shows the loss of women's existence as free subjects who can determine the path or fate of their own lives. This representation highlights how the social structure in the film reflects a patriarchal system that places women in a passive position, unable to speak out, and their life choices are dependent because they are determined by the role of men. Beauvoir's concept of immanence is a condition in which women are limited to passive roles that are depicted through physical and symbolic restraints on the bodies and decisions of female characters.

Transcendence and Resistance to Patriarchal Structures

Although women at the beginning of the film are placed in an immanent condition, this condition is one of the concepts in existentialist feminism by Simone de Beauvoir, immanence is a depiction of a condition in which women are trapped in passive, limited, and undeveloped roles because they are confined by patriarchal social and cultural expectations. However, *Furiosa* shows the process of transcendence as a form of resistance. *Furiosa*'s character slowly and surely begins to strategize, hone her abilities, and take over her agency through conscious and courageous actions that reflect the will to free herself from oppression. The scene when *Furiosa* fights and begins to strategize (1:15:18), and when she cuts off her own hand to escape (1:50:56), is a symbol of the transcendence process.

In Beauvoir's theory, transcendence is an active act of women to go beyond their passive status by creating their own meaning and purpose in life. *Furiosa* not only tries to survive, but also refuses to continue being a victim. She goes beyond the physical limitations, stereotypical limitations, and psychological limitations imposed by the patriarchal world around her, *Furiosa* chooses to actively act as a free subject and is responsible for her life.

Solidarity and Collective Agency in Women's Struggle

This film not only shows Furiosa's individual struggle, but also shows how important women's solidarity is in playing an active role in freeing themselves from oppression. The scene when Furiosa saves Wives (2:17:17) and chooses to return to save Praetorian Jack (1:40:05) illustrates that the struggle against patriarchy is not only carried out individually, but can also be carried out through cooperation and empathy for others. Simone de Beauvoir stated that women's freedom is not only determined by themselves, but also by their ability to form equal and supportive relationships. In the context of this film, solidarity among women (and male allies like Jack) becomes a force that enables collective freedom and systemic change to patriarchal structures.

The presence of Mary Jabassa and The Wives, who contribute to the broader theme of female resistance within the film's structure. Mary Jabassa, as Furiosa's mother, plays a crucial role in the exposition stage, where her kidnapping and ultimate death at the hands of Dementus symbolize the brutal silencing of maternal power in a patriarchal world. Her resistance, although brief, serves as a narrative trigger for Furiosa's long journey toward subjectivity. Meanwhile, The Wives, initially portrayed as passive captives, undergo a transformation in the film. Their decision to escape and their unified actions alongside Furiosa form a collective resistance arc. This shift from immanence to transcendence aligns with Beauvoir's view that liberation is not only personal but also possible through solidarity. As the plot advances, their role becomes increasingly active, showing that the narrative of resistance in Furiosa is not centered solely on one heroine, but reflects a broader struggle shared among women. Their presence strengthens the film's structure by expanding the feminist narrative from individual awakening to communal defiance.

Cinematic Visuals and Symbolism as a Means of Feminist Criticism

In terms of visuals, this film also plays an important role in strengthening the feminist narrative. The choice of camera angles, lighting, colors, and symbols, such as Furiosa's prosthetic hand, becomes a visual representation of existential transformation. Furiosa's self-made iron hand (1:57:32) is not only a tool, but also a symbol of strength, resilience, and control over her own body and destiny.

This concept supports Beauvoir's theory that women's bodies should not be an obstacle to achieving freedom, but can instead be an empowering field of struggle. In other words, Furiosa's body becomes a symbol of resistance, courage, and the ability to create new meanings that go beyond the gender boundaries constructed by society.

Relevance to Previous Studies and Research Contributions

This research extends the insights of previous studies that have applied Simone de Beauvoir's existentialist feminism to the analysis of female representation in film and television. Studies such as Ummayah (2024), who examined Barbie: The Movie, and Faldano (2015), who analyzed Persepolis, both focus on how individual female characters transcend their subordinate roles and reclaim subjectivity. Likewise, Lestari et al. (2023) in their study of Bombshell explore women's resistance to systemic oppression in a corporate setting, while Dennis (2016) focuses on Arya Stark in Game of Thrones as a figure of existential transformation. These works have significantly contributed to feminist criticism by showing how women resist patriarchal systems in various narrative and genre contexts.

However, this study offers a distinct contribution by situating the analysis within the action–science fiction genre, a field often dominated by hypermasculine narratives and traditionally resistant to nuanced feminist interpretations. *Furiosa: A Mad Max Saga* presents a more chaotic and violent world, wherein female characters do not only survive but actively resist, lead, and redefine their identities. Unlike previous studies that often highlight individual protagonists, this research broadens the scope by examining multiple female characters such as *Furiosa*, Mary Jabassa, Norton, and the Wives, thereby uncovering both personal and collective dimensions of domination and resistance.

By combining narrative and visual analysis, this study demonstrates how cinematic elements such as framing, lighting, and symbolic imagery work alongside story structure to represent existential feminist concepts such as the Other, immanence, transcendence, and freedom. The analysis reveals that *Furiosa* not only portrays resistance, but also challenges traditional gender roles embedded in the genre itself. Therefore, this research contributes to the field of feminist film criticism by offering a genre-specific interpretation rooted in existentialist feminism, and by highlighting how action cinema can serve as a platform for complex, empowered female representation.

CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis conducted in Chapters I through IV, this research concludes that *Furiosa: A Mad Max Saga* (2024) offers a significant representation of female empowerment and resistance within a patriarchal, post-apocalyptic society. The film's narrative and visual elements, when analyzed through Simone de Beauvoir's existentialist feminist framework, reveal that the main female character, *Furiosa*, experiences various forms of domination rooted in patriarchal structures. These include physical subjugation, objectification, and the denial of agency, all of which are depicted through *Furiosa*'s interactions with male authority figures and the oppressive environment of the Citadel. *Furiosa*'s journey is emblematic of existentialist feminism, as she refuses to accept the role of "the Other" imposed upon her by patriarchal norms. Instead, she actively seeks to define herself as a subject, demonstrating resilience, autonomy, and leadership. Her resistance is multi-layered, it is not only physical that manifested in her struggle for survival and freedom, but also psychological and existential, as she challenges the internalized limitations of her gender. Through acts of defiance, strategic alliances, and the assertion of her own identity, *Furiosa* successfully subverts traditional gender roles and becomes a symbol of hope and empowerment for other women in her world.

The film's narrative structure, character development, and thematic focus all contribute to a nuanced portrayal of women as agents of change and representation of tough women. By centering the story on *Furiosa*'s perspective, the film challenges the male-dominated conventions of the action genre and redefines what it means to be a hero. This aligns with Simone de Beauvoir's assertion that women must transcend socially constructed limitations and claim their freedom through conscious action and self-definition. In summary, *Furiosa: A Mad Max Saga* not only entertains but also educates and inspires by presenting a powerful critique of gender inequality and offering a model for resistance and empowerment. The film's representation of women as

empowered and autonomous individuals has the potential to influence audience perceptions and contribute to broader social change regarding gender roles and expectations.

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