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REBELLIOUS WOMEN IN MEN'S DYSTOPIA: KATNISS AND FURIOSA

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Abstract

Dystopian fiction serves as a premonition against possible future perils of humanity. Its popularity is largely attributed to its overdose of action and commercial success which explains the high number of film adaptations in Hollywood. However, the genre is commonly acclaimed to be dominated by men whereas women usually exist as vague, trivial personalities. The Hunger Games and Mad Max are two major film productions (the former adapted from novel) which have subverted this general understanding and turned the notion of the male hero upside-down by creating the rebellious heroine. Katniss and Furiosa are perfect illustrations of determined, powerful women whom rebel against the patriarchal order in the hegemonic, male dystopia. This study places Katniss and Furiosa in spotlight and analyses both movies from an ecofeminist perspective which maintains a special bond between women and nature. This essay thus aims to reveal environmental issues in relationship with the female protagonists.

Key Words: *Dystopia, Ecofeminism, Hunger Games, Mad Max, Film Studies.*

ERKEKLERİN DİSTOPYASINDA İSYANCI KADINLAR: KATNISS VE FURIOSA

Özet

Distopya türünün amacı insanlığı geleceğin muhtemel felaketlerine karşı uyarmaktır. Türün popülerliği bol dozda aksiyon içermesine ve ticari başarısına bağlıdır ki bu başarı Hollywood film sektöründeki çok sayıdaki film uyarlamalarını açıklamaktadır. Fakat tür genel olarak erkeklerin egemen oldukları ve kadınların silik karakterler olarak arka planda kaldıkları bir tür olarak görülmektedir. Açlık Oyunları ve Mad Max: Fury Road, geleneksel erkek kahramanın yerine isyancı kadın kahraman konseptini yaratarak bu genel kanıyı tersine çevirmeyi başaran iki önemli yapıtı oluşturmaktadır. Katniss ve Furiosa, erkeklere ait distopyada başrolü oynayan ve ataerkil düzene başkaldıran güçlü ve isyancı kadın modelinin ideal örnekleridir. Bu makale, Katniss ve Furiosa karakterlerini mercek altına alarak, her iki film yaptını kadın ve doğa arasında özel bir bağ olduğunu öne süren ekofeminist yaklaşım ışığında analiz etmektedir. Çalışma, böylece çevre sorunlarını kadın kahramanlar ile ilişkilendirerek açığa çıkarmayı amaçlamaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: *Distopya, Ekofeminizm, Açlık Oyunları, Mad Max, Film Araştırmalar*

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Since its first examples at the beginning of the 19th century, dystopian fiction has been labelled as a predominantly male genre in literature. Considering its general atmosphere, dystopian fiction presents us a gloomy perspective of a world that stands at the edge of catastrophe. Dystopian forerunners have made the public believe that this is a male dominated genre. Canonical works such as *The Time Machine*, *Brave New World*, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, and *Fahrenheit 451* are male-centred and hardly touch upon gender or women's issues. Their protagonists are men, women's concerns are left unmentioned and women characters are either trivial or vague. Male hegemony in dystopian fiction is observable in every aspect, from the storyline to the characters and covert implications. However, recent film adaptations have managed to subvert this perception.

Two dystopian film productions have been in spotlight in recent years: *Mad Max: Fury Road* and *The Hunger Games Series*. *Mad Max* is a post-apocalyptic dystopian cult film that was first released in 1979, following sequels in 1981 and 1985. Thirty years after the last sequel, the director George Miller decided to produce a new version which was released in 2015 called *Mad Max: Fury Road*. *The Hunger Games* on the other hand was first released as a novel by the American author Suzanne Collins in 2008. The novel was adapted to the main-screen in 2012, following three sequels with the last one released in 2015. This study focuses on the film versions of *The Hunger Games*.

These two dystopian works of popular culture differ from others because they both have a female protagonist. The tough-guy male hero is replaced by a rebellious heroine in both. Hence, the male dominated, cliché dystopian narrative is subverted and altered to create the revolutionary female-dystopia. Women's bond with nature is striking, hence the two films' protagonists are analysed from an ecofeminist perspective. Therefore, the paper has two layers: Scrutiny of the rebellious female heroine and its comparison with the conventional male oriented versions and analysis of the female heroine's relationship with nature and the role of nature in these films within their dystopian context.

The term ecofeminism was first coined by Françoise d'Eaubonne in her famous 1974 work *Le féminisme ou la mort*. (Feminism or death) She argued that the liberation of nature could not be held apart of women's liberation. As a sub-branch of feminism, ecofeminism's main concern is the struggle against patriarchal world order and liberation of women. In addition to that, the theory forms a connection between women and nature and asserts that both have been oppressed by the system of patriarchy (Tong, 2009: 237). Rosemary Radford Ruether states that the ecology and the women's movement are a united cause:

Women must see that there can be no liberation for them and no solution to the ecological aims within a society whose fundamental model of relationships continues to be one of domination. They must unite the demands of the women's movement with those of the ecological movement to envision a radical reshaping of the basic socioeconomic relations and the underlying values of this society. (Ruether, 1975: 204)

Ruether thereby emphasizes that the oppression of women is linked to the oppression of nature by the male dominated, patriarchal society. Hence, ecofeminism successfully combines the philosophy of feminism with environmentalism.

Ecofeminists have described a number of arguments advocating the connections between feminist thought and ecological concerns (Gaard, 1993: 4). One of these is the fact that all concepts related to women, nature, animals, sentiment etc. have been labelled as unworthy and inferior while on the other hand, everything in relation to men, masculinity, reason, mind, intellect etc. have been emphasized as useful and worthy (Ibid., 5). Ecofeminism aims to unveil these artificially created perceptions. Another argument which connects feminism, animals and environment is based on the notion that women and animals have become the primary victims of environmental pollution. (Ibid., 5) Another significant bond between nature and gender lies in the fact that most of the people who make critical decisions concerning the environment are male and most of them who are affected by those decisions are women. (Eaton, 2003: 13) However, this is not very accurate as issues such as class, race precede gender in this case. (Ibid., 13) Karen J. Warren defines four basic principles of ecofeminism, also known as ecological feminism:

- (1) There are important connections between the oppression of women and the oppression of nature;
- (2) understanding the nature of these connections is necessary to any adequate understanding of the oppression of women and the oppression of nature;
- (3) feminist theory and practice must include an ecological perspective; and
- (4) solutions to ecological problems must include a feminist perspective. (Warren, 1987: 4)

An additional remarkable figure who contributed to the ecofeminist cause is the French philosopher Simone de Beauvoir. De Beauvoir believed that women's discrimination was mainly caused by her biological features; her capability to reproduce and by her social child-caring duties. (De Beauvoir, 1989:19-29) She did not approach the female body in a positive way, with pride or acceptance but on the contrary, in a very negative way, as a complete burden. (Ibid., 19-29) Therefore, she emphasized that women's body actually serves as an obstacle, something that limits her creativity. (Ibid., 19-29)

Man seeks in woman the Other as Nature and as his fellow being. But we know what ambivalent feelings Nature inspires in man. He exploits her, but she crushes him, he is born of her and dies in her; she is the source of his being and the realm that he subjugates to his will; Nature is a vein of gross material in which the soul is imprisoned, and she is the supreme reality; she is contingency and Idea, the finite and the whole, she is what opposes the Spirit, and the Spirit itself . . . Woman sums up Nature as Mother, Wife and Idea; these forms now mingle and now conflict, and each of them wears a double visage. (De Beauvoir, 1989: 144)

Simone de Beauvoir simply affirms that men regard themselves as protagonists and place women at the antagonist position. She is the giver of life, the creator to the same

extent as nature. Although, men choose to take advantage of her, she can overcome all forms of oppression because she represents the origin of existence.

In her essay *Gender and the Environment*, Mary Mellor, evaluates the relationship between women and nature in a sociological context and points out that:

The ecological destructiveness of the Western socioeconomic system has been seen by many ecofeminists as the result of the dualist nature of western society. Western society is seen as being divided in ways that prioritize one aspect of society through the denigration of its opposite or alternative. Scientific knowledge is valued over vernacular or popular knowledge; the public World of institutions and commerce is valued over the private world of domestic work and relations; abstract universalized thinking is valued over thinking linked to the particular and personal. For ecofeminists, these divisions are summed up in two crucial hierarchical dualisms: man, the masculine, is prioritized over woman, the feminine, and human society and culture are seen as superior to the world of nature. In these hierarchical relations, woman and nature are thrown into a contingent relationship as the despised and rejected by-products (or precursors) of modernity. (Mellor, 2013: 16)

Thus, Mellor contributed to ecofeminist theory by asserting that the destruction of nature is a consequence of the dualism of Western philosophy. Mellor thereby puts the blame entirely on the Western society which generated the dualistic mode of thinking. Ecofeminism maintains that patriarchal institutions achieve their hegemony through the use of dualistic hierarchies such as man vs. woman, culture vs. nature, rational vs. irrational, human vs. animal, white vs. black etc. (Ling, 2014: 96) The roots of this mode of thinking are deeply embedded in the scientific rationality of the Enlightenment which reduced women and nature to simple objects in service of human hegemony. (Ibid., 96) As a result, women and nature stand at the same side as oppressed objects. Dualism socially constructs our culture and puts nature and women at the opposite direction of hegemonic constructs like men and rationality which stand at the centre of western culture. Hence, all which is at the opposite of the centre is excluded or discriminated. Therefore, the oppression and abuse of women and nature are direct consequences of the dualistic structure. (Ibid., 96) Thus, so as to emancipate nature and women, we must get rid of the dualistic mode of thinking. (Ibid., 96)

What is the alternative to the hegemonic, dualistic logic which has dominated our culture for centuries? Ecofeminism puts forward that humanity and nature ought to be interrelated just like women and nature and successfully avoid binary oppositions in order to obtain the harmony of science and humanities. (Ibid., 96) In order to establish gender equality, patriarchy and its institutions must be overthrown first. (Ibid., 97) Chen Ling argues that:

Only by overthrowing patriarchy and its cultural structure can women obtain fundamental equality. Therefore, for Ecofeminism, in order to get out of gender domination and get identity and social status, we must first insist female principles to conduct women's movements and eliminate androcentrism. Thus, for Ecofeminism, the women's

movement is no longer the economic evolution, nor the political movement for the pursuit of the same and undifferentiated status with men or the radical social movement to completely eliminate gender differences; it is the political movement which recognizes differences and diversity. Ecofeminism emphasizes identity and cultural specificity and advocates conducting the political movement from the experience and perspective of women rather than men. On a practical level, Ecofeminism focuses on a female narrative style and emphasizes the experience of women to construct the discourse system and identity politics of women. (Ling, 2014: 97-98)

What is more, ecofeminism affirms that cultural change precedes any other type of innovation such as the relations of production and that women need to possess active role in the society. (Ibid., 100) As a result of this reasoning, gender equality must be the first step to be achieved in order to establish an alternative to patriarchy. The domination of nature and sexual domination are exposed by ecofeminists and fully attributed to patriarchy which fails to bring equality and peace. Similarly, patriarchy falls short of providing a solution to the oppression of women and destruction of the environment.

Additionally, cultural anthropologist Sherry Ortner touched on an intriguing point when she wrote what was to become inspiring for many feminist activists:

What could there be in the generalized structure and conditions of existence, common to every culture, that would lead every culture to place a lower value upon women?... My thesis is that woman is being identified with—or, if you will, seems to be a symbol of—something that every culture devalues, something that every culture defines as being of a lower order of existence than itself. Now it seems that there is only one thing that would fit that description, and that is “nature” in the most generalized sense. (Ortner, 1974:71-72)

Ortner intended to expose the perception of women in the hegemonic patriarchal society. She made the interesting connection between women and nature in the sense that both are extremely degraded and devalued. Ortner also proposed a solution: women need to be actively present and productive alongside men in order to enjoy full equality. (Ibid., 87)

Lastly, ecofeminism is widely regarded as a democratic political view with an emphasis on the relation between identity and democracy. (Sandilands, 1999: xvii-xviii) It is a questioning of the democratic longing embedded behind identity. In other words, many critics believe this struggle to have started from identity issues and progressed to a critical, democratic political view. (Ibid., xviii) Catriona Sandilands comments on this notion of ecofeminism and states that:

This discussion has us turn our attention from the obvious (and notably essentialist) limitations of much ecofeminist theory toward its movement in the direction of a broad and relatively sophisticated analysis of gender and nature in politics. It is this implicitly political

element that strikes me as ecofeminism's greatest promise; the democratic politicization of gender and nature suggests a process of challenging hegemonic identifications, of opening up new spaces of social and political (and ecological) life to scrutiny and debate, and of tackling the discursive relations in which problematic gendered and ecological relations are embedded. (Sandilands, 1999: xviii)

This statement highlights ecofeminism's social and political contribution to our contemporary society and asserts that it has raised serious awareness on gender and ecological matters.

In short, despite the fact that ecofeminists differ in approach and perspective, they all share the common opinion that gender and environment are interconnected and in order to make an analysis, they ought to be studied simultaneously. (Eaton, 2003: 20) Ecofeminists regard the destruction of nature and the discrimination of women as corresponding as they are ultimately a result of the dualistic patriarchal society on which the western socioeconomic system is founded. The domination of nature and sexual domination of women are concrete consequences of this system. The solution lies in the overthrowing of hegemonic patriarchy which is responsible for this decay. After the abolishment of patriarchy, women must be allowed equal chances and contribute equally to the society. These arguments not only demonstrate the democratic nature of ecofeminism but also reveal its contribution to our modern day society.

The Hunger Games and *Mad Max: Fury Road* are both movies that present gender issues in line with ecofeminist concerns. Consequently, the following questions come to mind: Why is the protagonist of these films specifically a rebellious heroine? What is the role of nature in these dystopian works? What is the relationship between the heroine and the environment?

The Hunger Games presents the futuristic North-American nation of Panem. Governed by the totalitarian rule of the Capitol and its dictator, President Snow, the country is divided into twelve districts. Actually, it used to be divided into thirteen districts but a failed revolt of district thirteen made the Capitol organise the annual 'Hunger Games' which is held in a virtual arena where two young kids from each district compete to kill each other to become the ultimate survivor. The series tell the story of Katniss Everdeen, an ordinary young girl from district twelve.

The districts of Panem are deprived of all wealth, food and natural resources. People are forced to labor under miserable conditions and every district is obliged to provide certain raw materials to the Capitol. Because of hard labour and constant hunger, the citizens are too busy with survival and too scared to revolt against the Capitol. (Dror, 2014: 82) Even the smallest attempt of rebellion is punished in the most brutal way possible:

Taking the kids from our districts, forcing them to kill one another while we watch - this is the Capitol's way of reminding us how totally we are at their mercy. How little chance we would stand of surviving another rebellion. Whatever words they use, the real message is clear... If you lift

a finger, we will destroy every last one of you. Just as we did in District Thirteen. (Ross)

Interestingly enough, *The Hunger Games* is a combination of two canonical dystopian works: *1984* and *Brave New World*. (Dror, 2014: 82) The citizens of the twelve districts witness the Orwellian atmosphere of *1984* whereas the Capitol itself resembles the futuristic hi-tech world of *Brave New World*. Like Huxley's masterpiece, the people living in the districts are totally unaware of the fact that they are living in a strictly controlled society and of the atrocities committed by their government. (Ibid., 82) People are simply reduced to a single instinct: labour in order to survive.

The role of nature is prominent in *The Hunger Games*. Borders of the districts are strictly under surveillance by the Capitol but despite this Katniss often breaches the limits and takes off to the forest. Nature is of great importance as it becomes a space of freedom for the contestants, the ultimate wilderness where there is no authority, oppression and hunger. (Ibid., 87) Katniss feels completely free to think and act in nature. The Capitol restrains them from nature and all natural supplies so as to maintain complete dependence to the system. Without the hard labour they provide to the Capitol, the citizens are doomed to starve and exterminate. However, nature herself provides enough food to nurture all humans. Katniss is aware of this vital fact:

Deep in the woods, I've listened to him rant about how the tesserae are just another tool to cause misery in our District. A way to plant hatred between the starving workers... and those who can generally count on supper and thereby ensure we will never trust one another. (Ross).

Her participating in *the Hunger Games* is a reflection of her quest to find her inner-self. Every time Katniss ends up in the woods, she exceeds herself and comes closer to her ultimate objective of liberating the people from the Capitol's cruel dictatorship and maintaining freedom and equality for the citizens of Panem. The Capitol and President Snow make use of highly advanced technology to create virtual environments such as the wild forest where the games are organized. President Snow's main intention is to feed the mice to the cats, in other words to strike where they happen to be the weakest. All of the contestants gather at the Capitol to compete at the *Hunger Games* where they are expected to violently hunt each other in a hostile, virtually created wild environment. The participants come from their districts where hard labour is the routine and natural spaces are very scarce or seriously damaged. Therefore, Snow places all the contestants in a wild forest which is actually a giant virtual studio controlled by a team of professionals. The officials instantly modify the environment with the help of hi-tech computers by adding wild animals and artificially created extreme weather conditions to the game. Thereby, they interfere directly into the game and play God by deciding who will die and who will stay alive. Snow's plan fails when Katniss and Peeta both survive and refuse to slaughter each other. Snow interferes again by changing the rules and proclaiming them both winners of the annual *Hunger Games*.

The fact that the protagonist of this dystopian story is a rebellious woman is another interesting point. Instead of using a conventional male hero, Suzanne Collins preferred to create a tough heroine. This has many possible reasons. By creating a female protagonist, Collins clearly subverts the gender roles in the *Hunger Games*. Katniss is an attractive, courageous heroine. Her physically athletic body, masterly bow and arrow skills and driven ambition for rebellion make her the perfect woman rebel. Katniss is a good-looking woman on the outside and she is tougher and more determined than many other characters in the story, including her boyfriend Peeta Mellark. Katniss is rational, decisive, active and powerful whereas Peeta is reflective, vulnerable, irrational, passive and gives a weak impression. There is a scene in the film where Peeta starts crying out of sentimentality. Thus, gender roles are radically subverted to create a revolutionary effect. The following feminist message is conveyed through these characters: 'Women can be more rebellious than men, in other words independent and combative as well as sensational and epic.'

Katniss' perfect harmony with nature contributes to her survival and vital role as the "Mocking Jay", the legendary rebel created by non-other than the Capitol itself. The Mocking Jay itself is a genetically engineered hybrid bird created by the Capitol. As it created Katniss in the same way, the bird is symbolic for hope and rebellion which becomes the ultimate quest of Katniss and her companions. Additionally, it is also symbolic of the revival of nature in a highly industrialized country with a distorted environment. The Capitol plays with the people as well as with nature. Katniss' rebellion stands for nature's rebellion against this patriarchal, war-driven, oppressive rule.

The Capitol has intended to create the Mocking Jay, enhance her using the best special effects and finally crush her to show the twelve districts the power of the dictatorship and the outcome of any type of possible rebellion. Eventually, President Snow's master plan fails as the Mocking Jay survives each test and finally joins power with the rebels to overthrow the Capitol and its oppressive forces.

As a result, Katniss' quest in *The Hunger Games* is homogenous to nature's quest for survival against an industry-driven totalitarian regime which exploits nature and its resources to the fullest extent. Nonetheless, the survival and rebellion of Katniss is equally symbolical for the revival and continuation of nature. The series, thereby promote hope for future generations to come. As with ecofeminist theory, female struggle stands in perfect harmony with nature's quest. Katniss not only revolts against the Capitol but also against patriarchal rule. It is exactly that patriarchal order, led by President Snow which has modified, distorted and gradually destroyed the nature of Panem. The victory of Katniss brings about the overthrowing of patriarchal rule and its component, industrial exploitation and aims to establish an alternative female and nature-friendly order in place of the former. Hence, the revival and preservation of the environment requires the active role of women and elimination of the conventional patriarchal order.

The second dystopian film *Mad Max: Fury Road* draws a portrait of a post-apocalyptic world in a distant future. The first *Mad Max* movie starring Mel Gibson was produced in 1979, followed by two sequels in 1981 and 1985. After 30 years, Australian director, George Miller produced another sequel entitled "*Mad Max Fury Road*" which

received six Academy Awards. I will focus on this version as it is the most recent film of the series.

The male co-protagonist Max Rockatansky is a lonesome warrior who struggles to survive in the middle of the wasteland. The opening scene begins with Max being chased by heavy vehicles with numerous armed pale men referred to as war boys. Upon his capture, he is taken away by them and held as a hostage in the cave-like isolated citadel. So far, the viewers are only introduced to Max and naturally assume that he is the one and only protagonist of the movie. Surprisingly, Max is not the only protagonist in the film and this is gradually revealed with the introductory scene of Imperator Furiosa who takes off with the emperor's wives with the ambition of liberating them.

Max and Furiosa's first confrontation ends up in a violent physical fight between the two heroes. Max is chained to a war boy named Nux and Furiosa has only one arm. Their strength seems to be even but Max eventually triumphs over Furiosa and runs away with the war rig. The physical combat between the two characters is symbolic of Furiosa's uprising against the patriarchal authority that has controlled her since her early childhood. Despite the fact that she gets defeated physically, she prevails mentally when Max discovers that he is not able to drive the war rig as it has a special code built in by Furiosa which makes her the one and only driver of the immense vehicle. Later on, the two protagonists join forces as they realise they are fighting for the same cause.

Mad Max: Fury Road is a post-apocalyptic dystopia that pushes the limits of survival to the extreme. Survival and environmental issues are at the centre of the film. It is set in a post-apocalyptic, hellish world which emerged following major ecological disasters. Oceans have dried up forming huge areas of salt, making the world a barren dustbowl with little or almost no resources of survival. In the heat and dust of the Australian desert, water has become the most precious commodity that people need to survive. Water is more vital than oil or any other resources in the wasteland. Therefore, water is one of the essential elements of this post-apocalyptic world. The scarcity of water is a direct indication of environmental disasters and destruction of natural resources by humanity, mainly men.

Joe Moore was a former Colonel at the Australian army. Following major catastrophes, he set out to the desert with his soldiers and successfully took over the Citadel, controlling the rare food and water resources left. He is now accompanied by his "War Boys" and has transformed into a divine, epic leader. Diseases are a common trait in this world mainly because of malnutrition and epidemics. Immortal Joe also suffers from respiratory deficiency and uses a tool that allows him to breathe better. He is literally being worshipped by his followers and has created a phony religious cult that helps his people justify his worship and service. Those who die for him in battle are considered as martyrs who are lucky enough to be rewarded in Valhalla.

Joe's stronghold called the Citadel is the ultimate place where he controls all the limited resources. He possesses water, food, plants, crops, seeds, medicine, tools,

motorcycles, cars, heavy vehicles, machines, etc. He is not the only one who is worshipped; engines and gasoline are adored and glorified for they are considered as symbolic of power and influence. Once every while, Joe engages in a spectacular demonstration of supremacy where he 'waters' his miserable people. The following dialogue reveals his most precious resources:

The Vuvalini: What's there to find at the Citadel?

Max Rockatansky: Green.

Toast: And water. There's a ridiculous amount of clear water. And a lot of crops.

The Dag: It's got everything you need, as long as you're not afraid of heights.

Keeper of the Seeds: Where does the water come from?

Toast: [re: Immortan Joe] He pumps it up from deep within the earth. He calls it "Aqua Cola" and claims it all for himself.

The Dag: And because he owns it, he owns all of us.

Keeper of the Seeds: I don't like him already. (Miller)

In another scene Joe shouts: *"Do not, my friends, become addicted to water. It will take hold of you, and you will resent its absence!"* (Miller) His deliberate dehydration of his people is a weapon he uses as blackmail to control the people and remain in power forever. Immortan Joe not only possesses the very few resources and nature left but also women he calls "Wives" to ensure the survival of his line and to provide an heir to his kingdom. Just like he owns everything, he also owns the wives, treating them as mere objects.

Furiosa is a skilled female warrior whom was given the title "imperator" by Immortan Joe himself. She was given the sacred mission to guard Joe's "Five Wives". Her commitment to the wives causes her awakening and soon escapes with the wives to the so called "Green Place", where she was known to be born. "The Green Place" is central to the storyline. It used to be the only fertile place where crops were grown and the home of the "Many Mothers" described by them as: *"The soil, we had to get out. We had no water. The water was filth. It was poison, it was sour. And then the crows came. We couldn't grow anything."* (Miller) A major contamination ruined the area and turned it into dirt and dust. Unaware of this reality, Furiosa escapes with the wives heading to the Green Place assuming that it still exists.

Throughout the film, the Green Place is mentioned as a heavenly paradise. The location becomes their main objective, a symbolic escape from hell to heaven which serves as a serious motivation for them to endure every hardship on their hazardous journey. Hence, Green and nature are associated with heaven and paradise in *Mad Max*. Green stands for nature, agriculture, crops and food, in short: life and salvation. However, the Green Place is not the only reference of nature in the film. Right before the beginning of the film, the effect of an explosion on trees is shown as a short footage which is a clear reference to devastating wars causing major ecological disasters. Furthermore, there are constant references to the environment throughout the film. One of these is the line uttered by the wives: *"Who killed the world?"* (Miller) This is an obvious questioning of how humanity got itself in such a huge mess. The dead

world represents lifeless environment with almost no water and resources left, creating a horrifying image. This crucial statement is also an indirect implication to all those who are culpable: none other than the system of patriarchy.

From an ecofeminist perspective, Furiosa and the wives' actions are strikingly significant. Furiosa was trained and promoted to the rank of imperator by the dictator Immortan Joe. Despite serving him for long years, Furiosa awakens and revolts against her ruler by taking off with his most precious wives, mostly referred to as 'property' by Joe himself. For Joe, the wives are a mere commodity used to satisfy his lust and ensure his offspring. The wives respond by repeating: "*We are not things*" (Miller) and openly reject the notion of being personal property. Furiosa's revolt against Immortan Joe and his army of war boys is symbolic of a rebellion against the patriarchal world order. The only women in the film are Furiosa, the wives and the so called many mothers. There are no other female characters as all the others are male. Hence, a female minority rise up against the male majority. It is exactly the patriarchal world order that is responsible for killing the world as it is covertly implied in the film. Since men account for wars, violence, exploitation of nature and resources, they are primarily accountable for all the destruction and chaos.

In ecofeminist terms, Furiosa's rebellion is symbolic of nature's rebellion against patriarchy to survive. Men's destructive nature has caused wars and brought humanity at the brink of chaos. On the other hand, the term 'mother nature' suggests that nature and women are interconnected. In the film, it is easy to observe that both women and nature have been severely and violently oppressed by the ruthless, patriarchal order. As a result, Furiosa's uprising stands for the possibility of nature's salvation in an almost wasted world. Her triumph over the male symbolizes female triumph over patriarchy and nature's survival over destruction. Once again, women and nature stand side by side.

Moreover, Furiosa is the ultimate rebellious heroine. She is a tough and powerful woman with the looks of a warrior: shaved head, warrior clothes and a prosthesis forearm replacing the one she lost in battle. She is an expert driver and a skilled fighter which she displays on occasions of combat. She carries tough characteristics both physically and mentally. The fact that she was raised as a skilled warrior provides her great advantages in her quest for survival. She is determined and rebellious to the heart in spite of the fact that she earned the title of 'Imperator' and has a high status in Joe's army. What is it that caused her to rebel? Furiosa closely witnesses the cruel treatment of the wives by Joe and sees them getting severely abused as mere objects. She cannot stand against this and decides to save her fellow sisters by taking them to the so called 'Green Place'. It goes without saying that she is also tired and fed up with Immortan Joe's ruthless, dictatorial rule over the impoverished masses.

Furiosa is outspoken with a tremendous instinct for survival. Her dialogues are usually short and clear:

Imperator Furiosa: How does it feel?

The Splendid Angharad: It hurts.

Imperator Furiosa: Out here, everything hurts. You wanna get through this? Do as I say. Now pick up what you can and run. (Miller)

Furiosa's awakening occurs after she bonds with the wives, and she decides to rebel against Immortan Joe. Her quest to reach the Green Place with the wives is the central plot of *Mad Max: Fury Road*. She simply happens to bump into Max in the middle of her quest. This is exactly why Furiosa is the main protagonist of the film, not Max. Max's story and quest is more individual and collateral, independent from the main storyline. Max struggles to survive in a hellish world but does not have ambitions like Furiosa who holds herself responsible for the wives. Max is a lonesome vagabond who realises he cannot survive without her help whereas Furiosa is the ultimate leader. She plans the escape and does everything in her power to protect the wives. Max simply goes with the flow and follows his interests in order to survive. In the earlier phases of production, the director George Miller suggested two titles for the movie: *Mad Max: Fury Road* and *Mad Max: Furiosa*. He eventually decided on *Fury Road* as the Furiosa title was intended for a follow up anime film. (Davis, 2015) In an interview, Miller revealed the significance of Furiosa as the protagonist of the film:

It's more Furiosa's story and how she came about, he explained. 'Even though it's a chase, to really make the film as authentic as possible we wrote backstories to every vehicle, to every character.' (Davis, 2015)

At the final scene, Max and Furiosa return triumphantly to the citadel with Immortan Joe's dead body. Furiosa stays at the citadel with the wives and others whereas Max continues his lonesome quest. This final scene reveals her true leadership as well as her being the ultimate protagonist. She chooses to stay at the Citadel whereas Max chooses to leave the place and moves on with his quest. Max's separation from Furiosa happens fast but smooth. Their common antagonist, Immortan Joe was the only factor which united the two characters. After Joe's elimination, Max and Furiosa have no more reason to stay together and separate from one another. The partnership is finally over.

Furiosa's rebellious heroine identity keeps her tough and ensures her survival as without her strong personality and physical endurance, she would never be able to survive the trouble she got into. Her skills of survival are not mimetic but imperative to remain alive. These are the traits that make Furiosa not only a distinct female character but also a radical leader. Right from the beginning, Furiosa falls in deep contrast with the wives whom display stereotypical female characteristics. The wives are physically and mentally fragile and desperately in need of protection. They have been victimised by a patriarch dictator. At the end of the film, Furiosa meets the old Many Mothers and upon hearing that the Green Place vanished from the surface of the earth, she and the wives are shocked and disillusioned. That which they had been struggling for all along had been gone and done with. At last, they decide to return to the Citadel to overthrow Immortan Joe's reign and strive to establish a better future.

In conclusion, *Mad Max: Fury Road* provides a gloomy outlook upon our distant future and depicts a possible scenario of the results of an environmental catastrophe. Furthermore, it presents us many binary oppositions that are vital to our understanding

of the main theme: life vs. death, nature vs. wasteland, men vs. women, machine vs. plant, water vs. thirst, food vs. hunger, peace vs. war etc. From an ecofeminist perspective, it can be concluded that notions such as nature, life, plants, water, food, peace and birth are associated with the female or feminine whereas opposing concepts such as wasteland, death, machine, thirst, hunger and war and destruction are commonly considered to be male or masculine. As a consequence, men destroy where women build up, men cause death where women give life. The ultimate connection between “Mother nature” and women is established through this reasoning as the term “mother nature” openly suggests that nature is the giver of life as she gives birth just like women do. Thus, in order to restore nature to her unspoiled condition, it is mandatory to overthrow the patriarchal dualistic mentality and hegemony which only brings about destruction and catastrophe. This cause is clearly visible in both characters as both Katniss and Furiosa strive to overthrow the patriarchal rule which oppresses them. Their struggle to get rid of male hegemony is symbolical of nature’s struggle to be reborn from the ashes of patriarchy.

Furthermore, *The Hunger Games* also depicts an alternative shockingly dystopian view upon our future society. The series give us an account of the consequences of a highly industrialized society where people are doomed to hard labour for survival. Human rights have been abolished and a vicious patriarch controls everything. Nature has been severely damaged and confined to a limited space. Again, in line with the ecofeminist cause, women’s quest is inseparable from nature’s quest. Katniss symbolizes salvation for not only her people but also for the nature of Panem. Katniss’ quest signals hope for the masses and for the rebirth of nature. Katniss is not alone in her quest, her followers build up masses of rebels whom act under the leadership of another strong woman leader called President Coin. However, after the fall of President Snow, Katniss instantly shoots and kills Coin for causing the death of children by bombing them and for risking to become the next ‘President Snow’. At the end of the last film, *Mocking Jay Part 2*, commander Paylor, a black woman is elected President with promises of creating a better society. It is symbolical that a woman is granted leadership in a democratic way.

Additionally, ecofeminism argues that natural domination and sexual domination must be eliminated in the quest for an egalitarian and peaceful society. In *Mad Max*, natural domination (natural disasters resulting in the wasteland) and sexual domination (the abuse of Joe’s wives for pleasure and procreation) are clearly observable and challenged by Furiosa who takes action to overthrow the patriarch. *The Hunger Games* also reveals the domination of nature (scarcity of green fields due to serious industrial exploitation) and sexual domination (by President Snow who sexually abuses the winners and uses them as prostitutes for affluent citizens.) Again, Katniss takes action to emancipate women and nature.

The fact that ecofeminism is in essence a democratic political movement is also observable in both productions. In *Hunger Games*, Katniss rebels to get rid of a patriarchal dictatorship with hopes of establishing an egalitarian democracy. At the end of the last film, she senses that their leader, Coin will become the next dictator despite being a woman. Katniss does not hesitate to eliminate Coin and directly provokes a democratic election. In *Mad Max*, Furiosa brings the end of a highly oppressive tyrant

whom rules his people in a ruthless way. After liberating the people, Furiosa grants her people a significant chance for a return to democracy. The film ends with a hope for a democratic reign.

All in all, comparing Furiosa and Katniss, it can be asserted that both women characters are independent, determined and rebellious. In my opinion, both Katniss and Furiosa convey a subliminal message to the women of the early 21st century: to stand up and revolt against male oppression. Women can overcome patriarchy as long as they are determined and take up action. Hence, revolutionary activism prevails in both productions.

In addition, both films clearly demonstrate the covert ecofeminist idea: women's and nature's cause is a common, united cause that cannot be held apart. Nature's liberation shall not take place as long as women are not fully emancipated. In her acclaimed work, *Woman and Nature*, Susan Griffin sums it all up for us:

He says that woman speaks with nature. That she hears voices from under the earth. That wind blows in her ears and trees whisper to her. That the dead sing through her mouth and the cries of infants are clear to her. But for him this dialogue is over. He says he is not part of this world that he was set on this world as a stranger. He sets himself apart from woman and nature. (Griffin, 1978: 1)

Griffin clearly emphasizes the natural bond between women and nature. Women are the only ones who are in dialogue with nature. Men and patriarchy have brought about alienation from nature which is gradually leading to the destruction of our natural environment. In order to stop this destruction, women must overthrow hegemonic patriarchy and proclaim a matriarchal order that will restore Mother Nature to her previous unspoiled condition. As it is the case with both Katniss and Furiosa, the bringing down of men's hegemony will require devotion to the cause and a fierce struggle. However, without any form of rebellion or struggle, it is very unlikely that patriarchy will revise or abolish itself.

Finally, there is no doubt that both *Mad Max* and *Hunger Games* are environmentally conscious works of popular fiction. The covert message they convey to the public is that of preserving nature and demonstrating possible outcomes of any type of natural disaster and its terrible results upon humanity. Katniss and Furiosa are two rebellious heroines whose struggles and upheavals are closely associated with the quest of Mother Nature to remain alive in a highly destructive, patriarchal world order. As argued by ecofeminism, women's endeavour is symbolical for Mother Nature's effort to survive devastation and the heroines' victory suggests that there is still hope for nature and we might be able to save our earth with the rebellion of women against the hostile, industry driven, greedy patriarchal war-machine.

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