

## Dying Historic On The Fury Road: Homeric Epic and *Mad Max*

In this paper I examine the reinterpretation of Homeric epic in George Miller's 2015 film, *Mad Max: Fury Road*. While the film is not an exact homage to either Homer's *Iliad* or *Odyssey*, I believe the film's plot, characterization, and cinematography imitates the story, themes, and style of both the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. I believe such analyses as this one are valuable and necessary to the field of Classics because they provide evidence that our field is constantly and currently relevant.

The film starts with the stealing of a woman, a wife, and leads to a violent and grandiose series of battles between the chieftain, Immortan Joe, Imperator Furiosa, and Max, the film and franchises' title character. The post-apocalyptic military industry run by Immortan Joe, wherein his gang of warriors, the War Boys, do battle with guns, spears, and fire from reconstructed muscle cars, fiercely resembles the glory-driven warrior culture of Homer's *Iliad*. The desire for the *kalos thanatos* and the element of spectacle involved in fighting and dying can be seen both in the soldiers at Troy as well as the War Boys in the film. While warriors on the Trojan battle field pray for glory in death, and therefore infamy in memory, before launching themselves into attack, at times into probable death, the War Boys' cry "Witness me!" before throwing themselves into explosions, thus demanding glory and spectacle in their death. Additionally, the cinematography of the road wars in *Fury Road* evokes the pacing and style of battle scenes in the *Iliad*. Both share a high concentration of detail, a large amount of violence, a propensity to grandiosity, and a rapid variation in rhythm with attacks and deathblows slowing down and speeding up for effect.

At the same time, Furiosa functions as a post-apocalyptic Odysseus, wandering on her way home some twenty years after departure, only to be faced with another battle upon her arrival. We may see Furiosa and Max functioning as halves of one wandering warrior identity, of Odysseus and his infamous alter ego, Nobody. Max can function as Odysseus' Nobody not only because he is a nameless individual to the other characters for the majority of the film, but also because, if Furiosa is Odysseus, Max is Odysseus' psychological double. Furiosa's title, name, and journey align her with Odysseus, the cunning Greek general we recognize, and while Furiosa does eventually return home as Odysseus does, Max has no home to which to return. Max/Nobody functions as a site of trauma, both from war and endless wandering, that can never fully be healed or found a home, as is evidenced by Max disappearing into a crowd instead of joining the celebrations in the last scene of the film. He is the broken wanderer we see at the end of Odyssey, tired of adventures, and despairing of ever being able to return home.

Additionally, I analyze the ways I believe *Fury Road* uses Homeric epic through the act of witnessing, spectacle, and heroic identity. To this end I employ Monica Cyrino's work on classical mythology in cinema as well as that of Martin Winkler. I have used Sanimir Resic's work on warriors and masculinity, and Wolf-Hartmut Friedrich's work on Homeric descriptions of violence. I must also necessarily draw on the work of Thomas Dilworth in regards to the *Mad Max* franchise.

### Bibliography

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