

What Lunacy Alters: A Philosophical Take on Mad Max Fury Road

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Abstract

In this article, our objective of study is to show how the movie Mad Max: Fury Road (2015) successfully uses the depiction of lunacy as hyperreality to deepen the main narrative of post-apocalypse in the movie. We aim to conduct this study as a philosophical and phenomenological examination of elements encountered within discourse of the movie. In this study, by investigating how the postmodern notion of hyperreality is cinematically used to deepen the sense of post-apocalypse, through the lunacy of the character, Coma-Doof Warrior, we aim to clarify the philosophical depths of the movie. A portrayal of his lunacy, as a case of hyperreality, helps to saturate deeper the sense of the post-apocalypse in the Fury Road. As for the process of our examination, we first explain different scopes of hyperreality in order to be able to focus on its usage within postmodern thought, especially by Baudrillard. Second, we show the philosophical connections between perceptions of hyperreality and notion of apocalypse. Among these connections, we specifically emphasize a phenomenological impossibility of a particular sense of post-apocalypse, since this sense of post-apocalypse is at the core of the relation between sense of reality and sense of post-apocalypse, as depicted here. Then, since this relation between reality and post-apocalypse is cinematically put into work in the theoretical background of Fury Road to amplify the sense of post-apocalypse, this shows that there is an underlying philosophical understanding of societal collapse and apocalypse (both as internal and external, both on a major and minor scale) in the movie. This understanding in the conceptual structure of the movie uses the close relation between characteristics of lunacy and notion of hyperreality, through the depiction of the character, Coma-Doof Warrior. Last, by relating that this depiction can be thought as an element within philosophy of film, we show this movie successfully uses the lunacy as

hyperreality to deepen the sense of post-apocalypse. In the end, we reach to a point where we enrich the philosophical grounds of the relevant discussions regarding the movie.

Keywords: Apocalypse, Baudrillard, Philosophy of Film, Postmodernism, Post-Apocalypse.

Browsing through Different Hyperrealities

When Derrida wrote “the end approaches, but the apocalypse is long lived” (Derrida 1984b, 29), he made a remarkable connection between the idea of “the end” and “the apocalypse” (which is also a form of ending) with using the conjunction of “but”. He didn’t use the word “and”, but he used “but”, (and) this made all the difference. If we want to clarify the sentence, we can also read it as: “The end is what’s always approaching, therefore the apocalypse has been living for a long time.” Derrida helps us to problematize the sense of apocalypse not only as something finalized, fixed, stabilized and constant, but also as something mobile, moving, transforming, and continuing. It is not just something that will be waiting for us down the line in the end, but it is what whose awaiting is something that had already started so long ago. These two senses (apocalypse as the final point of all and apocalypse as the process of the final) have a problematic aspect to them when they are considered from a specific postmodern viewpoint. Through this problematic (which will be explained in a while) we follow these senses as thematic background elements in *Mad Max: Fury Road* (George Miller, 2015). Here, we will examine *Fury Road* with the idea of hyperreality and try to have a better understanding how the element of lunacy is used as a hyperreality to absolutize the sense of post-apocalypse.

The term hyperreality is used to define (especially in postmodern phenomenology) at least four different occasions we experience. First, it is used for the situation where our consciousness is aware of that there is more than one reality. For example, sometimes in our dreams during sleep, we are aware of the fact we are dreaming. In these lucid dreams, we have the awareness that the reality around us is just a dream, and we know that we are “in fact” just sleeping in a bed or somewhere. We have conscious awareness regarding the difference between dream and reality. The dream reality (where we fly, run at the speed of light etc.) is one reality and the physical reality (where we sleep in our bed) is another reality, and the mind is aware of them both. This awareness brings the experience of hyperreality (Liu 2016, 10–17).

Second, this concept is used for the situation where again there are two different realities and we are aware of both, but we don't act accordingly to this awareness. One can find videos of people using virtual reality headsets or glasses where they are so "caught up" in the virtual world, they "forget" they are standing in a regular, physical room. They damage physical walls, furniture, televisions as they try to "escape" from virtual monsters. Even though they are aware that they are "actually" in their houses with no real danger around, they still act and move their physical bodies accordingly to the spatial area of the virtual world, not to the physical one. As another example, one can remember those fuzzy moments where it's almost impossible to distinguish between human intelligence or artificial intelligence. When AI is advanced in cyberspace, even though we know it's an AI, it still feels like what we are interacting with is human intelligence. These are again where the experience of hyperreality happens (Barroso 2019, 46–49).

Third, the term hyperreality is used to describe the situation where the sense of reality is saturated, enhanced, or amplified, as the word "hyper" suggests. This enhancement might be accomplished with technological tools that create augmented reality like holograms. Or it can emerge as a personal, psychological experience, like when we look at a painting which somehow awes us so much that it makes us feel what strikes us through the painting is "more real and true" than everything else around. Heidegger's famous remark "in the work of art, the truth of the being has set itself to work" points to a similar experience (Heidegger 2002, 16). And when a religious believer to any of the Abrahamic religions thinks and feels that the God and angels are more "real" than humans and everyday physical objects, it can be said that a form of hyperreality is experienced (Wartenberg 2013, 121).

Within the parameters of this third sense, we encounter one of the main philosophical semantics of the word hyperreality which is given to it by Eco. For him, hyperreality is directly related to the diametric condition where for there is to be the real, there also must be the fake. This is the indispensable process of fabricating the absolute fake to generate the real (Eco 1986, 6–7). The hyperreal surfaces or manifests when the fake becomes so perfect that it replaces the real. This is the reversal of the roles between the real and the fake. This is the ultimate substitution where representation is so perfect and flawless that it precedes and prevails the real. It is when the representation is "more real than real, more perfect than the original" (Perry 2002, 42). This brings us to the fourth sense.

Fourth, the term hyperreality means, as Baudrillard defines, “the generation by models of a real without origin or reality.” (Baudrillard 2010, 1). It’s the copy without the original. It is related to the situation where the difference between what’s real and not real is so blurred that it no longer exists. It has something to do with the inability of the mind to differentiate between a reality and a simulation of reality. It is when the mind is aware of two different realities but can’t quite figure out where one ends, and the other one begins. In all those moments in our life when we truly feel and think, “I’m not sure if this is real or I am just dreaming”, where we couldn’t differ fiction from reality, we experience a sense of hyperreality. In Baudrillard, this sense of hyperreal is directly related to his understanding of semiotics. The hyperreal is what’s left behind when both the signifier and signified (of a sign) disappeared, when there’s no more connection between a referent and a reference. It is the “fake real” which doesn’t lead back to any authentic real. It is what’s without origin. (Baudrillard 2010, 2–13). There are lots of movies where some forms of hyperreality can be found (Bharati & Ajit 2018, 2–3). While the hyperreality is “more real than real” as it was in Eco, this results that the simulation is truer than truth (Smith 2010, 66–68). With this detail, we start to talk about simulations as realities (in three different orders) with the thematic of semiosphere. To define shortly, semiosphere designates the sphere where the sign processes operate in all interconnected areas of a lifeworld. It is the domain of all signs that represent and define a culture. It is not the reality as an abstract and universal concept, but the particularized and experienced reality that someone or a society is living within with their social, financial, religious, political, dogmatic, historical, existential etc. characteristics which make them who and what they are. Now the identicalness that hyperreality creates between “reality as semiosphere” and “simulation as semiosphere” was already sensible within the semantics of the word “virtual” which means both “real” and “unreal”. But with this identicalness, it will be possible for us to bind a connection between the experience of reality and experience of apocalypse, and we will find this connection at the centre of the sense of hyperreality in *Fury Road* through the theme of madness. “In the culture of madness ‘reality’ and representations’ endlessly played off each other” (Porter 2002, 64).

Surely, there are other definitions of hyperreality, for example, “sound hyperreality” can be defined as “sensory or audial impressions we would never really have in the other world”, meaning the sounds which can only be created through digital software (Gonzales 2018, 17–19). Or one can

relate the idea of hyperreality with other closely related concepts, such as “distributed virtual reality”, “augmented reality”, “mixed reality” (Terashima 2005, 13), but we will stick with how Baudrillard defines it, since it is most related with the sense of hyperreality which the Doof Warrior creates within *Fury Road*. Because the way the Doof Warrior behaves is designed in a way that he also doesn’t have the awareness that enables him to distinguish between two different realities. And the way Baudrillard defines is also the most relevant to the philosophy of film and phenomenology of post-apocalypse where it is crucial to comprehend the relation between perception of realness and the sense of apocalypse. To explain this relevance of Baudrillard, we must first start with the relation between the concept of cinema and idea of hyperreality.

Fall of the Distinction between Real and Not Real

The general conception regarding cinema bringing a new sense of vital realism for humans is true on at least two levels. The first layer is about cinema bringing the experience of motion when compared to reality of photography as something still or space-time fixed representation. With this regard, “cinema” will always have some aspect that is “more real” than photography, since our everyday experience of life includes motion more than immobility and inaction. Humans live their lives with moving around. Human existence relies on humans not stopping. As a historical-cultural heritage, humanity has shadow plays, operas, theatres, plays etc. as the sense of motion on some sense of screen, and since the late 19th century, it has had cinema. With cinema, it can be said that the represented reality finally caught up with the reality of everyday life, at least motion-wise. This is the first level.

The second level has something to do with what cinema does to the sense of reality. As the “represented” reality catches up, especially in the sixties, humanity realized that cinema can be used as a tool which doesn’t only “represent” but also create a narrated reality. “The famous *L’Arrive d’un train en gare* of 1895 showed from a low angle, close-up, a steam train so realistically approaching the early cinema audience that they would cry out or move. Cinema—and now television and other audio-video forms—has obviously gone even further than the realism of the early documentary. And one important effect is the lowering of the realism/irrealism distinction still more strongly apparent in the photograph. I shall turn to two very recent events to heighten this effect. (1) The Vietnam War of the sixties brought a kind of ‘television realism’ into

virtually every household of the West” (Ihde 1995, 48–49). So, the cinema, or to be more precise, what is shown as a “represented reality” on the screen, does not only create a representation, but it has a power of implying, ignoring, overlooking, emphasizing, overshadowing, highlighting etc. one sense of reality over the other. With this power, reality turns into a raw pile of events which can be cut up into pieces, edited, and put back together in different sequences and then put onto the screen as the background images of any indoctrinated narrative which are set up in a way that they prove the validity of that narrative. With this power, reality turns into the pre-determined documentary of what is decided to be taken as real. “But what was most fascinating was the simultaneous immediate awareness by the viewers that the news was being ‘cooked’ and yet its planned effect was accepted and even celebrated. It was as if the ‘realism/irrealism’ of television was itself the new ‘real thing.’” (Ihde 1995, 49).

As the third level, this loss of the distinction between realism and irrealism is one of the causes of hyperreality. And this depiction is close to how Baudrillard has thought of this idea. As he argues, in three levels of simulation, the first level belongs to the representation where its being the copy of a reality is obvious. This level is where the difference between reality and representation of it is clear. On the second level, this obviousness disappears and the line between reality and representation becomes unclear, foggy, obscure. And the third level (this is where the hyperreal belongs) is where the sense of reality is generated without depending on any reference to some “other” authenticity or real which was still relevant (more in the first level, less in the second). In this third level, the twofold structure (one is reality, other is representation) isn’t intact in the process of generation anymore (Lane 2001, 30). With hyperreal, there is no more mimesis or representation. So, for Baudrillard, in hyperreality there is not only sense of “blurring” between first two orders, but there is also a sense of “detachment” from both (Lane 2001, 86).

This sense of “detachment” is an important detail since it will be the main bridge that will enable us to create a connection between the hyperreal and lunacy of Coma-Doof Warrior in following pages. But now, we must first see how the idea of apocalypse comes into play with the sense of reality in both cinematic and existential mode.

What Can Be More Real Than an Apocalypse?

There are movies whose script follows a catastrophic event. It can be any kind of “end of the world” scenario, or it can be the “after” story of any kind of catastrophic event, such as after the nuclear bomb, zombies, alien invasion, epidemic, pestilence, cosmological disasters, and natural calamities on a larger scale. We imagine possible apocalyptic scenarios and how the world would’ve turned out after if those apocalypses would’ve happened. It’s almost like we incline towards and consume these narratives about our very own ending to compensate for the fact that we can’t imagine or fully comprehend how it all began. Just because we can’t fully fathom how the universe or the evolution of vitality in the whole existence (in all presence and being) began, we incline to fully familiarize ourselves with how it all (whole existence, presence and being) will end. Since we don’t have any personal or collective memory regarding how the existence of universe and humanity started, maybe in this way, by imagining how it might will end, we are trying to close the gap and meet the deficit, regarding being a human. Why? Maybe by imagining how it will all end, we try to overcome ourselves as humans. We find beauty, or at least aesthetic appeal, in decay and what is ruined, flawed. One might consider the awe we feel in response to the architecture of historical ruins or long-abandoned, wrecked buildings. We grasp the beauty of the imperfection at the edge of nothingness. In a universe where entropy always increases (where decay, vanishing and disappearing are constantly happening), the phenomenon of apocalypse is both what’s always happening all the time (on smaller scales) and what awaits at the end of the line in the natural course of the things (on the biggest scale). It is both what is already inevitably happening (as a continuing decay and increasing entropy) and what eventually will happen as the ultimate end of the world, of the whole universe, of the whole reality. It is both the process of moving away from order towards absolute chaos, and the ultimate end of that process. So, seeing beauty in decay, which is the true state of nature and things, might be an aesthetic defence mechanism that has its roots deep in our subconsciousness. This may help us cope with the tragic realization of the process of total annihilation of everything there is (including oneself). And it can also be the appreciation of finally realizing the true and real state of all occurrences and happenings. In short, what is apocalyptic is always more real and true when compared to what is not apocalyptic. So, in one sense, *Fury Road* depicts something more real, because it has the theme of apocalypse. Most of the details in *Fury Road* –like the founding pillars of societal structure

being reduced to the presence of milk, water, gasoline, bullets, and ownership of fertility— scream the realness of the apocalypse in the *Fury Road*.

The relation between what is apocalyptic and what is real has also another layer. This concerns with the two different definitions of the word “apocalyptic”, where one is “regarding a disclosure or revelation of great knowledge” (as revealing what is real), and other one is “catastrophic, regarding the complete destruction of the world.” Even though the relation between these two meanings, one being “a new sense of reality” and other being “a total catastrophe”, will become a problem later, the success of the “realness” of *Fury Road* is directly related to the way it embraces this relation. It uses the sense of hyperreality (both its weak and strong forms) to deepen the sense of realness and apocalypse within the movie.

Now, it must be mentioned that another technical detail about the “realness” of the *Fury Road* surfaces when it is considered in the context of cinematic superpowers, superheroes, spells, computer-generated imageries, and visual effects that create non-realistic components. *Fury Road* is as “real” as anything apocalyptic can get on a screen. It depicts a post-apocalyptic world which is plausible, believable, and realistic. There is no alien invasion, no magical or supernatural elements, no viruses that turn people into zombies, no large astronomical objects hitting the earth and causing the extinction of humanity. Instead, *Fury Road* tells the story of a societal collapse due to war and critical resource shortages which are nothing magical or unrealistic. It shows how fragile our progress and advanced technologies are, and how they can disappear in the blink of an eye. Those thousands of years of social, intellectual, cultural etc. progress we have managed to accomplish can be erased or undone with some event like it’s nothing. The *Fury Road* tells that us going back to the primitive hunter-gatherer state is not that of a slight possibility, it can happen. The seeds that one of the Many Mothers holds in her bag symbolize this possibility. And *Fury Road* is not a CGI-drenched movie; most of its effects are physical. This also adds another layer of realness to the aura of its narrative. It portrays a dystopia which is practically plausible. We can also find a philosophical examination of something similar to this in somewhere else (Derrida 1984a, 30–31). Therefore, the *Fury Road* has a deeper sense of realness in its depiction of post-apocalypse.

The Impossibility of Post-Apocalypse

But, when we think about the word “post-apocalyptic”, we immediately realize that something is off. There is a big problem with the phrase “post-apocalyptic.” From a phenomenological perspective, the phrase is self-contradictory. It almost feels like a paradox. In the broader sense of the word, apocalypse might mean any kind of catastrophic event on a bigger scale. But in the strict sense of the word, there can be no “post” after the apocalypse because apocalypse is the very thing that annihilates the possibility of any “post” or “after” situations. If it’s really an apocalypse, then there can’t be any “post” or “after”. And if there is any form of “post” or “after” of some event or thing, then, that event or thing can’t be considered as an apocalypse, by definition. This is the phenomenological impossibility of the post-apocalypse. There can’t be anything such as “post-apocalypse”, since the apocalypse is the ultimate, final end of all things (we are excluding the narrative of biblical, religious afterlife for now).

So, most “post-apocalyptic” fictions tell the story of a timeline where modern civilization has collapsed, yet there remains something left after. This is also true for *Fury Road*. When we see the political and social tyranny of Immortan Joe, we understand that this is not the lack of a civilization, but it’s just another form of it. Something catastrophic has happened to the modern civilization we are accustomed, and this new form of society is what’s left after. When we see the elements like the political and social tyranny of Immortan Joe, Furiosa as a character of empress, the hierarchical order and ranks in Immortan Joe’s militia, task sharing, rationing, tribalism, distribution of roles and work, trade of oil and water, different social groups etc. we understand that this is just another form of civilization. It’s just more primitive, savage, unethical, non-modern and probably unfair and harsher than the civilization we are accustomed to. Therefore, it is not even a “post-civilization” fiction, because there is still some type of civilization, just like there was one in ancient tribes and clans. So, one can say that *Fury Road* is not as real as a post-apocalyptic fiction can be, because it’s not a post-apocalyptic fiction, per se, to begin with.

At first sight, this might seem like it is a detail that decreases the sense of apocalypse. Because one might argue that for example “lack of a sense of society” would be more fitting to the theme of apocalypse than the presence of another form of it. But in fact, it is quite the opposite. Remember that apocalypse is always both what’s happening and what will happen. So, the presence of some diminished form of society increases the sense of apocalypse in *Fury Road*, because it makes us

wait (and hope) for the apocalypse to happen to tyranny of Immortan Joe. And this sense of apocalypse as “what will happen” shows itself more clearly when we think of the food and water scarcity, alongside the inability to continue the human lineage and population with enough newborns. When these things are considered, it feels like it really doesn’t matter if there is some sort of primitive and savage civilization, because humanity will definitely perish. An apocalypse is still on its way to destroy the societal structures that are left within the world of Fury Road. So, this can be seen as a movie which shows the last one or two generations of humanity who will die out soon, no matter how they act or what they do. Regarding this, Fury Road can be seen as a post-apocalyptic movie where the apocalypse (I) has happened and (II) is still happening.

Surely, one also needs to remember here the ending of the Fury Road where the last scene optimistically tells us that a new order with the guidance of Furiosa will be established in the Citadel and this might be the very thing that humanity needs to not just survive but also to flourish and prosper again. When Furiosa is brought up with surrounding cheers of “let them up”, it is, as the reversal of power, the point where the sense of dystopia starts to disappear, which might also function as the starting point of a utopia that will be built. When Milk Mothers open the valves and let the pouring water touch the wasteland, it is no longer a wasteland, and it is the proof that nothing will be as it was under the tyranny of Immortan Joe. It is the point that makes us imagine a new societal structure will be established, and people might have the chance to thrive. Within this perspective, the Fury Road has an ending where the sense of “happily ever after” is not so banal or stereotypical.

Between Insanity and Madness

The Fury Road has the sense of apocalypse which both “is happening” and which “will happen”. To deepen this sense of apocalypse, one might argue that Fury Road needs the one which “has already happened and has been completed”. This third sense comes with lunacy of the Doof Warrior as a hyperreality. He plays his guitar to lead Immortan Joe’s War Boys with melodies of rage and music of mayhem. With his music, he heartens them to attack with full craze. His music creates an emboldening and instigating effect which enhances courage or fearlessness in War Boys’ hearts. The Doof Warrior might be, at first look, portrayed as an over-emphasized musician who is the equivalent of a bugler who represents a continuation in the lineage of the historical

connection between war and music. But with a detailed analysis, it becomes clear that the phenomenological contribution of The Doof Warrior to the movie is deeper. The Doof Warrior is the depiction of apocalypse that has already finished its happening, because the Doof Warrior himself, his lunacy, is the very result of that apocalypse being completed. He is the interior apocalypse that “has already happened” within the human mind and psyche, which deepens the exterior apocalypse that both “is happening” and “will happen” within the world of Fury Road. A hyperreality, as something which saturates and “hypes” a reality (therefore the sense of apocalypse) is in play with the Doof Warrior’s absolute lunacy. His lunacy functions as a pure form of hyperreality in the movie.

Other than being a post-apocalyptic movie, it’s been known that Fury Road is also a movie of madness. It’s in the title itself: Mad Max. Title says that there’s a character whose name is Max, and Max is mad. But, when we watch the movie, there rises a problem about this. Because throughout the whole movie, Max is actually not mad at all. Moreover, he is relatively a sane person who has rational behaviours and sensible reasonings. He is of sound mind (other than his occasional episodic flashbacks) and he is able to act according to an understanding of right and wrong. Maybe he is not clear-headed for today’s standards, but for the world he’s living in, he’s rightfully judicious enough. Max is not mad at all. He is in a survival mode, and he acts accordingly to that with his plausible choices and logical deductions. His deeds in the movie have an inner consistency and they are compatible with the necessities of the events happening around him. All in all, there isn’t any severe sense of “madness” in Max.

And it’s not just Max, but other characters in the movie are also not really mad. In the world of Fury Road, there is social order, labour distribution, specialized tasks, trading, collective workforce in harmony, mutual relationships between individuals, cognitive understanding of right and wrong, sense of responsibility etc. In the Fury Road world, everybody has a role, and they act according to the necessities of those roles. There is no sense of real madness here. Surely one can mention how disturbed the War Boys are. It might be said that the mental state of the War Boys is so radical and extreme that even the survival instinct of human psyche is not at work or functioning in the way that we are used to, and this might be the proof that they are mad. It can be said that, through the kamakrazee state of the War Boys, with them wholeheartedly believing they are destined for Valhalla and shouting “witness me”, there is no doubt in their mind about the truth

and realness of this. More than believing, they think Valhalla is really waiting for them. This waiting isn't a matter of possibility, it's as real as the vehicles they drive, weapons they use. For them, the narrative of the afterlife is not a matter of faith. It is not a matter of probability which can or can't be validated as something absolutely true and real. In the way their rationality and logic work, the Valhalla is as real as the water, blood, and milk they need to consume. Maybe even more real than those. For them, Valhalla is the reality when reality reaches its own absolute. Because the narrative of Valhalla waiting for them is so inscribed within the minds of the War Boys, the reality of Valhalla is what is going to be the next (and main) reality if they manage to die with honour. The reality of Valhalla is the doubtless subsequent that is definitely going to be there, when the present (let's say physical for now) reality ends. But is this madness? Are War Boys really mad? Or is it another form of rationality? It can be said that their perception of reality is essentially different from what we are accustomed in our current European postmodern world. It can even be said that they are immoral or amoral, to a degree. They might be mentally deranged or demented. But are they mad? What is this madness that we need to see here? Now, we need to clarify some distinctions to understand further what a madness is as a phenomenon, to determine whether the main figures in *Fury Road* are mad or not.

Here, it would be phenomenologically practical to think of the situation under three umbrella terms, namely (I) insanity, (II) madness, and (III) lunacy. And we will consider these three terms through their different relations to hyperreality, in the fourth sense of it we mentioned above. Now, from the get-go, we can say that none of the main figures in *Fury Road* are insane. They have nothing to do with insanity, since in insanity, there is no sense of hyperreal. This is because insanity is not about the blurring of the line between two different realities but, in this context, a complete collapse of two realities onto each other to the point where there isn't even one reality left behind as remained intact. There isn't a sense of duality or dichotomy in insanity, as it is the field of absolute meaninglessness where it is impossible for any sense of accountability or responsibility can occur. There can't be no crime, good deed, or wrongdoing in insanity, as it is the land where there is no experience of right and wrong. There isn't any possibility for any form of distinguish. Moreover, it would be impossible to construct the social structure in *Fury Road* with insanity. Insanity is about the existential state where all sense of reality is already lost, to the point that self-awareness, recognition are dismantled and destructed. There is no normal or abnormal in insanity.

It's impossible for any sense of blurring or "detachment" to happen, as in insanity, there's nothing left to detach from. That's why insanity can't have a hyperreal.

In madness, things are different with the sense of reality. Because in madness, realities don't collapse onto each other, they stay intact. Moreover, the distinction between them also stays intact. A mad person isn't a person without a sense of reality, but a person who is deeply aware of the distinction between the realities, and who chooses the more chaotic one. Maybe this act of choice is deliberately or maybe not, maybe it is willingly, or maybe subconsciously, but there's already a self with an awareness. Mad one is the one who is able to watch himself/herself going towards chaos step by step. There is a sense of consciousness in madness. It is true that madness is without any control. It is also true that in madness, there is emotional disturbance, irrational behaviour, and lack of reason. But in madness, contrary to insanity, there is accountability and choice. Mad one sees how two realities differ from each other and chooses the crazier one. Mad person knows which one is real and which one is phantasy and out of these two, chooses the most deranged one. Insane one can't choose one or the other, because for the insane one, there is nothing to choose, and moreover, there's no one to choose. In madness, realities are turned inside out. In madness, what is normal turns into abnormal and what is abnormal becomes the new normal. That's why in madness, there is still meaningfulness, even though this meaningfulness is in a frenzy. Contrary to insanity, there is a sense of coherence and logic inside the madness, even though these (coherence and logic) are in a state of craze. So, mad one is the one who embraces irrationality. Insane one is the one who can't be other than arational, meaning the dichotomy of rationality and irrationality doesn't open itself to the insanity. Insanity always has to be arational, whereas that dichotomy is open for madness. Mad one sees the rational and irrational on their own sides and either deliberately chooses the irrational, or can't help oneself but to choose the irrational. And in madness, the irrationality makes sense. This irrationality is not something flawed, but it's just something bizarre. Insanity is the impossibility of the presence of sanity, whereas madness is the (conscious or unconscious, deliberate or non-deliberate) estranging from sanity to the point where sanity is negatively kept as an antithesis. That's why, while insanity is related with the phenomenological lack (or nonexistence) of sanity; madness is related with the negative presence of sanity. In insanity, sanity is just not there, whereas in madness, sanity is there by being not there. In madness, sanity is there by being what is negated. What is negated doesn't disappear from

existence, but it just starts existing as the negated, maybe more so. This sees that there is no blurring of the line between different realities but there is a deep awareness of that line and an absolute disregard of it. Mad one exactly knows the line where one reality ends and other reality begins, but she/he just completely ignores that. Mad one knows what to ignore. Madness needs to know what to ignore. Madness can't be madness without knowing and ignoring that line (see, Felman 2003, 35–36). That's why madness can't have a hyperreal.

Surely, these descriptions are not scientific, clinical, medical and psychological determinations at all, even though they surely are not ignorant and non-related to those determination (see, Laing 1990, 18–35), but they are how sanity and sense of reality as phenomena can be represented in cinema. Now, it has become possible to say that main characters in *Fury Road* can be considered as mad. They are mad and it's not a flaw but a necessity. "In the classical period, on the contrary, it manifested the very fact that the madman was not a sick man. Animality, in fact, protected the lunatic from whatever might be fragile, precarious, or sickly in man" (Foucault 2005, 69). The War Boys or others surely don't have a sense of hyperreal, because even though two realities (current, physical one and Valhalla) are deeply connected, in a way that the second one is fundamentally and continuously attached to the first one, the War Boys know the line which divides these two realities. They are aware of that line is the death. The line that separates two realities is not blurred or indistinguishable for them. They know where and how Valhalla begins for them. This is how the sense of madness is established in the movie. And this connection between madness and awareness of death also brings a deeper sense of realness to the movie, as madness and truth are sometimes closed to each other than sanity and truth (see, Güven 2005, 84–92). But still, there is a sense of hyperreality in this movie which amplifies the sense of post-apocalypse as a phenomenon, and it comes with the lunacy of the Doof Warrior.

Lunacy As a Pure Form of Hyperreality

Depiction of the mental state of the Doof Warrior completely separates him from War Boys, because while all the people in *Fury Road* world might be caught up in madness, the Doof Warrior is not mad. And he is not insane either. He is something in between. He is lunatic and he is the only lunatic person in the whole movie. This lunacy brings the sense of hyperreality which makes

the (post-)apocalypse more (post-)apocalyptic. One can see this lunacy and hyperreality crystal clear in the smile of the Doof Warrior. In his lunacy, every possible line is blurred forever.

The Doof Warrior is part of the militia, but he is not exactly one of the War Boys. How could he be? After all, he's blind. And according to the director-screenwriter George Miller, he is blind from birth. And when Max whacked him on the head and his mask fell off, we learn that he is not just partially behind, because he doesn't even have eyes and it's almost like they are carved out. So, it's impossible for him to drive, shoot or attack in an effective way to be one of the War boys. One might question how a character like him could survive all this time in the world of *Fury Road*. There are different versions of his background story, mainly circling around the idea that (following George Miller's account) Joe found him abandoned as a deformed toddler, took him in out of pity and then trained him to be a bugler. Another backstory says that the Doof Warrior killed his own mother, skinned her face off, and turned it into a mask. The singer iOTA, the Australian actor-musician who portrays the Doof Warrior confirms that Doof Warrior's skull mask was fashioned from his dead mother's head, although there's no remark about the character of the relationship (positive or negative) between Doof Warrior and his mother.

Whatever his origin story is, he has his role within militia. He keeps the adrenaline and feeling of urgency alive with his music. He probably also uses his riffs to convey orders from Immortan Joe, since his guitar produces the only sound that can be heard by all the War Boys marching with the noise of engines revving and shouts. It can be said that since the Doof Warrior stands really close to the booming speakers, his hearing must be really impaired and poor, because of constant exposure to his own music on high volumes. Therefore, he might be playing his guitar rather instinctively with only the feeling of the vibrations in his body from the loudspeakers, explosions, and motors guiding his music. He probably determines the mood of his tunes by feeling his environment, such as how fast the Doof Wagon is going, how deep and powerful the turmoil and rumble (which are created by other vehicles and people around) are. It seems that the Doof Warrior can sense the panic, resentment, hatred, aggression, disappointment, desire for violence, and rage in the air—and he creates the mood of his riffs in accord with what he senses. Even though he senses the crave for violence, there isn't any reference regarding Doof Warrior himself is violent or that he has any tendency for violence. This might be related to the impossibility that since the Doof Warrior can't construct the sense of "self" in himself, because of the apocalypse that had

happened in his mind. Therefore, he also can't construct the sense of "the other". This means, it might be impossible to claim that the Doof Warrior himself has the urge for violence (Lawlor 2016, 87–91). He doesn't see the flames flowing from his guitar, but he feels the heat for sure. His cadence when the fleet came to a stop (because of vehicles being stuck in the mud) is on point. Most of the time, he is in front of the convoy, probably trusting the Doppler effect.

But the Doof Warrior is more than just an apocalyptic bugler. His plane of reality is not same with the reality of the War Boys. Because he is lunatic. Being lunatic is phenomenologically different from being insane or being mad. One might argue that lunatic is the craziest. That's because in lunacy, hyperreality happens. In lunacy, there is that blurring and detachment mentioned before. Here, the line between realities is forever blurred. Moreover, the phenomenological framework and terminological dichotomies that were functional in dealing with insanity and madness are useless now. Lunacy is not half insanity and half madness, even though it is the impossible in between. In lunacy, there is no collapse of realities into a phenomenological mush, and there isn't any necessary meaninglessness that comes with this collapse. It is also altogether impossible to think lunacy through terms like accountability and responsibility because these words don't hold any distinguishing power, as when they did regarding insanity and madness. It's just not appropriate to think of lunacy under these terms. For example, in insanity, there was no crime, good deed, or wrongdoing; and in madness these were there; but in lunacy, it's rather not plausible to consider under these terms. Because in lunacy, it's not that there is right and wrong, and it's not that there isn't any right or wrong either. Lunacy is the impossible in between.

One can continue to deconstruct other elements as well. In lunacy, there is no loss of agency and there is also no sense of agency either, again in between. In lunacy, realities are not lost, or they are not completely there distinctively. In lunacy, it is not that there is no self-awareness and it's also not that there is self-awareness, it is in between. In lunacy, it is not that there is not normal or abnormal (like in insanity), and it is also not that normal and abnormal are fully there perversely (like in madness). And this phenomenological in-betweenness might be the very source of hyperreal. In madness, realities stay intact and separate; in insanity, realities collapse into oblivion; in lunacy, it's all blurred, non-experienceable if intact or collapsed. This opens the possibility of hyperreal. In insanity, there is loss of consciousness; in madness, there is a warped consciousness; in lunacy, it's impossible to pinpoint whether there's consciousness or not. In insanity, there wasn't

any choice; in madness, choices are there and erratic; in lunacy, it's not just that it's phenomenologically undetectable whether there is choice or not, but moreover, the choice itself as a phenomenon might be impossible to begin with. In insanity, there was no real and there was no phantasy; in madness, there was the line between real and phantasy, and conscious (or unconscious) act of disregarding the presence of this line; but in lunacy, it's impossible to distinguish where real starts and where phantasy ends. Therefore, lunacy is bound to hyperreal. In insanity, there was no logic, in madness, there was a crazed logic; but in lunacy, it's all in haze whether there's logic or not. Insane was arational; madness was irrational; lunacy is impossibility of being arational or irrational, or any other form of non- (or lack of) rationality (see, Kavanaugh 2012, 100–109). In insanity, there was no dichotomy with realities; in madness there was dichotomy with realities; in lunacy, there is just indeterminacy of whether there is dichotomy or not. That means lunacy is the in between meaningful and meaningless, between senseful and senseless. Therefore, thinking about lunacy through the terms of meaning and sense would be nonpractical. In lunacy, it's uncertain what happened to the sanity. Is it negated? Is it not there anymore? Is it there by being not there? Is it there by being there? Unknown. Is it possible to be so sane that it is lunacy? Unknown (Custance 1952, 241). What is for sure that the relation between sanity and lunacy is different than the relation between insanity and sanity and, than the one between insanity and madness.

One might wonder how the Doof Warrior holds this sense of lunacy in the movie. To understand this, one need to consider the scene where Max separates him from his guitar. The Doof Warrior is not interested in capturing or overpowering Max. At one point, he has the positional advantage where he could easily neutralize Max from behind, but he doesn't. More than that, he literally doesn't even try to protect himself from the tussle. He just wants to have his guitar back; nothing else matters for him. He doesn't care about the chase, he doesn't care about Max, Furiosa or wives. He doesn't care about the fleet, what's been stolen, or the fight. He just wants to go back to playing his guitar. Even after Max smacks him down, he doesn't try to retaliate or punch back. Max and the reality that Max is in don't matter for the Doof Warrior. He just wants his guitar back, to continue to play. And when he gets it back, a genuine smile on his face appears, and this clearly shows his sense of fulfilment and existential completion. He was on the brink of dying and all he cared about was his guitar. This close relation between lunacy and music in the movie is not a

coincidence since this relation is already well-established (Hamilton 2008, 49–55). He is the lunatic on the battlefield who doesn't even try to survive, kill, capture, or die. Everyone else has some sense of survival mechanism intact in their psychological well-being and sense of selfhood, even though at the same time they genuinely welcome death upon themselves. But the Doof Warrior doesn't have this sense, and that's why he is not mad but lunatic. And through his lunacy, his smile brings the hyperreal to the movie. He is the element of hyperreal which makes the (post-)apocalypse more (post-)apocalyptic.

With this absolute lunacy, it's not that he's just living "in his own little world", but he is already somewhere beyond the awareness that enables the difference between two realities. The only thing that keeps the realities away from collapsing is embodied in the guitar, and that explains his attachment to it, as if it is what's really real that also makes everything else real. In this sense of hyperreal, he is the perfect example for Baudrillard's simulation here. He is stuck within the haze of non-differentiating realities, and in here, he is stuck in a simulation. His awareness regarding the things happening around him is not sufficient. He is not aware of the chase (as such) or what Furiosa had done to the Immortan Joe. And in that way, he is a hyperreality. This is not because of his disabilities (being deaf and blind), although they play a part in this hyperreality being possible, but it is because assessing a reality as separated from another (reality) is not open to him as a possibility, even though the realities are, more or less, there. That is what lunacy is. That is what hyperreal is. The more lunatic the Doof Warrior, the more hyperreal he is.

It is obvious that the Door Warrior's "simulation" is different. He is not like the person with VR headset on, trying to not fall from a cliff, while he is in fact in his own living room. Moreover, the Doof Warrior's sense of reality is not same as that of others. He lives and exists somewhere where the rest doesn't. He is, to some degree, aware of the "other" reality, because when the vehicle he is on stops, he slows down his music. But he still isn't within the mental state that enables him to fully distinguish the characteristic features of that "other" reality, because his phenomenological horizon can't transcend those realities enough to establish those realities as such. Probably he is not even aware of the fact that he is "supposed to" overcome Max. It is probably impossible for him to distinguish Max from other War Boys, or any other human being for that matter. Moreover, he doesn't try to get some form of reward from Immortan Joe, while that's what all the other people are basically trying to do. Probably he doesn't even know if and what they are chasing after. He

doesn't even try to enter Valhalla with an honourable death, while that's what all the other War Boys basically trying to do. Probably he doesn't even know a thing such as "Valhalla". How can he know? He is blind from birth, he is probably partially deaf, and we have no information about him being able to speak and think properly. Who can communicate such information with him? He is probably the loneliest one in the whole Fury Road world, since it's almost impossible for others to have a conversation or interaction with him. Moreover, no one probably cares about him, since he can never "witness" someone. He probably doesn't even have an idea about what "witnessing" means. Is he even capable of being taught such abstract concepts? Even if he is, it's obvious that he doesn't care about someone "witnessing" him. According to the "other" reality around him, he is more or less contextless regarding what's going on around. While all the other War Boys can follow what's happening around them (whether they are getting close to capturing Max, Furiosa or when Immortan Joe gets one of the wives back etc.) the Doof Warrior knows nothing. He is not aware of any substantial processes or news. He doesn't and can't know why the Doof Wagon accelerates or slows down. He just experiences it without a context and almost without a content. That's why his guitar and music are probably the only entities in his own reality. This is his lunacy, and this lunacy brings a sense of hyperreality to the movie.

The Doof Warrior as Both What's to Come and What's Left

The Coma-Doof Warrior is the perfect case of hyperreality in Fury Road, because, only through him, it's just become impossible to distinguish between two realities. The War Boys might think and live like the physical reality and the reality of Valhalla are deeply intertwined with each other with their lack of scepticism and lack of doubt about the reality of Valhalla. But they are still able to distinguish one reality from another, because they know that, in order to be in Valhalla, they need to die in an honourable way in a battle. They are aware that they need to "transcend" to the Valhalla. They know that the reality of Valhalla is something to "get across" to. This shows that they are aware of the difference between the two realities. They know that there is a "line" between this and that reality. But the Doof Warrior doesn't show whether he has this awareness or not. Moreover, different from the War Boys, his "second" reality is not the reality of Valhalla. He is not trying to die in an honourable way. We don't know if he even has a first and second reality. All we know is that he is phenomenologically stuck inside a haze and that haze is gravely disturbed

if his access to his guitar is taken away. In this haze, it's almost impossible for him or for us to distinguish in which moment he lives in which reality. During the chase (again, he probably isn't even aware that there is a chase), while he is on the Doof Wagon, playing his guitar, he probably lives in the two realities at the same time, without being able to differentiate between them.

This phenomenon of hyperreality amplifies the sense of realness (and therefore sense of apocalypse) which is crucial for the overall aura of the movie. Thanks to the close connection between the apocalyptic and the real, the Doof Warrior, as a hyperreality which is fuelled by absolute lunacy is the ideal post-apocalyptic character that amplifies the sense of post-apocalypse. What "hypers" the real also necessarily "hypers" the sense of apocalypse. He is the hyperreal because his whole existence or phenomenological horizon is that haze. It is nearly impossible to fully include him inside the reality where the other characters live, because he is not mad (like others). This is not just because he is blind, partially deaf, and probably dumb. This is mainly because he belongs to two realms of realities at the same time. And for this belongingness, we also can't full exclude him either as someone insane, since there is a sense of accordance in his behaviours. He is not mad, and he is not insane. He is lunatic. All the delirious moments, sudden bursts of mania, delusions, paranoias, psychosis, hallucinations, neuroses etc. which are organized around these three terms (see, Arnold 1806, 27–90) are now able to refer themselves to a sense of hyperreality, thanks to the lunacy of the Doof Warrior in *Fury Road*. But more importantly, by depicting a sense of hyperreality in the *Fury Road*, the Doof Warrior also represents another kind of apocalypse.

Through the problematic situation of the distinction between two realities (real and fake, real and artifice, real and copy, real and fiction, real and phantasy etc.) becoming indistinct, we recognized the concept of hyperreality, as it is defined by Baudrillard, actualized in the movie *Fury Road* through the character, the Doof Warrior. We encounter that the sense of hyperreality can work as one of the main essential key points to investigate the idea of apocalypse. This essential connection between apocalypse and hyperreality is manifested through the examination of lunacy of the Doof Warrior. Maybe with this connection, it would become easier to consider the phenomenology of apocalypse not only under the dichotomic features such as "finalize or continuing, fixed or mobile, stabilized or moving, constant or transforming" which will always fall short and be superficial.

For the Doof Warrior, there are two further nuances that need to be emphasized. First, if an apocalypse is related to the end of the process of moving away from order towards absolute chaos, then the Doof Warrior, as a hyperreality, successfully accomplishes that sense. His mind is more chaotic than the minds of the War Boys or anyone else's. If the Fury Road is the apocalypse that happens in the society and world (exterior), then it can be said that the Doof Warrior is the apocalypse that happens in the human mind and psyche (interior). He is already at the extreme and final limit of his own lunacy. His mind can't be more chaotic. This absolute sense of chaos (in his mind, in his psyche) make him the hyperreal. He lives two apocalypses at the same time while all the rest live only the exterior apocalypse of the Fury Road world. It's still possible for the mad ones in Fury Road to go madder, but the Doof Warrior can't be more lunatic, because this interior sense of apocalypse is already there within him. The Fury Road world represents the apocalypse of humanity, and the Doof Warrior represents the apocalypse of human. He bears these two apocalypses and brings a pure sense of hyperreal to the movie with seamless blur hazing over the differentiation between them. He is in both realities. He is the product of both realities. As a hyperreality, he is the most (post-) apocalyptic in this (post-) apocalypse.

Second, as a final remark, it is obvious that the apocalypse of Fury Road world is still yet to happen. It might have already begun, but as a process, its completion remains in the future. It is ongoing. By contrast, the apocalypse of the Doof Warrior has already happened and finished. Therefore, the Doof Warrior, as an interior apocalypse, is also the symbolic representation of the exterior apocalypse of the Fury Road, if and when that (exterior) apocalypse fulfils itself. His lunacy, as the apocalypse of the individual, also amplifies the sense of post-apocalypse of the Fury Road with this way. Because the Doof Warrior is literally what's left after the apocalypse which has happened (in his mind, or in the mind of the person he used to be). He is the impossible glance that shows us the impossible "after" of the apocalypse. His lunacy, as a hyperreality, is the real "post-" in the post-apocalypse whose impossibility we showed earlier.

Conclusion

What we have discussed here, and all the details which have emerged through this discussion, clearly show that Mad Max: Fury Road is not an empty "Hollywood thrills" without a layered, conceptual background, but on the contrary, it has an intellectual-philosophical depth to itself.

Among other elements, this usage of lunacy as hyperreality to deepen the main narrative of post-apocalypse in the movie is a clear indication of this depth. This philosophical richness is most definitely not by chance but rather manifested after a careful consideration by screenwriters and director. And this situation is probably among many other factors which result in the success of the movie. It is also possible that the phenomenological interpretation here might contribute to the theoretical philosophy of film in general, since this kind of proper usages of philosophical and postmodern notions in cinematographic narrative might indeed become the determining factor in the overall characteristics of the movie. It is obvious that, in the case of *Fury Road*, lunacy of Coma-Doof Warrior is not this determining characteristic of the movie, as it is not one of the main figures. But this doesn't mean that what the Coma-Doof Warrior brings to the philosophical depth of the movie is something insignificant, on the contrary, it is the "hidden" driving force of the realness of post-apocalypse in the movie which is essentially post-apocalyptic.

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