RESISTING PATRIARCHY IN FEUDAL JAPAN THROUGH WOMEN'S AGENCY IN *SHŌGUN* (2024)

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
	This study examines the forms of resistance by female characters against patriarchal culture in the television series Shōgun (2024). The study highlights how feudal Japanese society shaped gender roles, and how Lady Mariko, as the main female protagonist, negotiated her agency within a strong patriarchal system. Using Simone de Beauvoir's existentialist feminism theory and Sylvia Walby's concept of patriarchy, this research analyzes intellectualism, self-sacrifice, and strategic compliance as means of subverting social norms. Through qualitative methods involving in-depth understanding and character analysis, this study identifies that Mariko's form of resistance manifests through measured actions against social expectations, codes of honor, and gender-based power hierarchies. The findings show that instead of engaging in open rebellion, Mariko demonstrates agency through symbolic intelligence and self-sacrifice as a challenge to male dominance. This research also highlights how the series reconstructs historical narratives by placing women's inner strength and intelligence at the center of political and cultural stories. This study contributes to feminist criticism of popular media by showing that contemporary historical dramas can present representations of women's resistance within patriarchal systems and reimagine women's positions as active agents in male-dominated history. This research reinforces the ongoing discourse on gender, power, and representation in popular culture, emphasizing that agency within oppressive systems often emerges through subtle, complex, and contextually bound forms of resistance.

1. INTRODUCTION

Patriarchy has long been a structural source of inequality in many societies. Walby (1989) defines patriarchy as a system of social structures and practices in which men dominate, oppress, and exploit women. In a patriarchal society, the roles of men and women are very different. This can be seen from the most basic scope, namely the family, where all decisions within the family are typically made by the head of the family, who is often the man, and must be obeyed. Women's actions are thus shaped by male authority (Crabtree & Muroga, 2021). Furthermore, Abrams & Harpham (2013) state that patriarchy extends across cultural, religious, political, legal, and artistic domains, systematically diminishing women's contributions.

Patriarchal culture is a complex and deeply rooted social phenomenon in many societies, including those in Asian countries such as Japan. Historically, Japanese society during the feudal

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period was characterized by a highly patriarchal social structure. As in many other ancient civilizations, women in Japan were viewed as inferior and often marginalized. Compared to men, they did not receive equal recognition or treatment. Even during the Tokugawa Shogunate, a period often regarded as one of Japan's golden eras, women's roles and rights remained largely overlooked (Surya & Kaluge, 2021). Villa (2019) further explains that the consolidation of Buddhism and Confucianism entrenched gender hierarchies, positioning men as leaders and providers, and women as domestic caretakers. These cultural norms not only shaped past societal expectations but continue to affect Japanese women today.

This historical marginalization persists today, as patriarchal practices remain embedded in both cultural attitudes and institutional structures. For instance, Rich (2019)*The New York Times* reports the persistence of gendered labels like "Christmas cake" for unmarried women over 25, reflecting enduring societal pressure. Financial pressures and existing gender norms make many Japanese women increasingly reluctant to marry and have children, given the domestic roles that are imposed on them after pregnancy. Lukyantseva (2023) shows that Japanese women experience pressure from the patriarchal system in Japan, which causes rebellion and a sense of wanting to be active in society. However, as Imamah (2023) points out, structural barriers still prevent women from achieving equality, mainly due to inherent domestic demands.

As a reflection of social issues in society, works of literature and popular culture such as films and television series often represent power dynamics, including patriarchal practices. These representations are important in understanding how patriarchal structures are not only reproduced, but also how forms of resistance to them are constructed and articulated through media. The enduring image of Japan as a submissive, alluring, and idealized woman continues to shape perceptions of the nation and remains closely linked to broader issues of power, representation, and imperial discourse (Bohnke, 2022). *Shōgun* (2024), directed by Jonathan Van Tulleken, and inspired by Japanese historical events during the feudal era, is one of the Japanese television series that strongly addresses the issue of patriarchy. The television series is an adaptation of the novel of the same name by James Clavell, which was released in 1975 and was highly received by the public. This is evidenced by its 8.6/10 score on IMDb as well as wins in 18 categories at the 2024 Emmy Awards, including the Best Drama and Best Actor and Actress categories.

In *Shōgun* (2024), female characters are represented as figures who are not entirely subject to the patriarchal feudal social system. Although they live in a society that severely limits women's roles and voices, the female characters in the series exhibit various forms of agency and resistance strategies. They are not portrayed as passive figures, but as individuals who actively negotiate their position and life choices, both subtly and openly. Mariko, the main female character, deonstrates that women's voices are equally deserving of recognition. Through acts of sacrifice and strategic intervention, she asserts influence and contributes meaningfully to political outcomes. This representation challenges the prevailing notion, as suggested by Ariefa (2021) that women during this historical period lacked opportunities to speak, act, or create like men.

This study aims to examine how female characters in *Shōgun* (2024) resist patriarchal gender norms through their actions, choices, and existential awareness. The main focuses of this study include describing the forms of patriarchal culture in feudal Japanese society represented in the series, analyzing the forms of agency of female characters amidst the system, and explaining
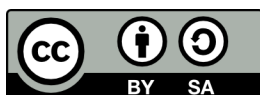
how agency is created as a form of resistance to patriarchal structures. Through this analysis, the study contributes to the feminist critique of historical dramas and illustrates how media can reimagine women's roles within male-dominated historical narratives.

Within the framework of Sylvia Walby's theory of patriarchy (1989), oppression against women is understood as being sustained through multiple overlapping structures, including the household, the state, cultural institutions, and male violence. In parallel, Simone de Beauvoir's existentialist feminism (1949) provides a framework for understanding how women, though constrained by a patriarchal system, can exercise freedom and construct their own subjectivity. In *Shōgun*, these patriarchal structures are reflected in the feudal power hierarchy, particularly in the roles of male authorities who hold political and familial control. Yet, although Mariko is surrounded by systemic limitations, she gradually asserts her agency through intellectual clarity, moral conviction, and ultimately, her decision to take control of her own life.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Review of Previous Studies

Many researchers have applied Sylvia Walby's theory of patriarchy to analyze forms of oppression against women in fiction. Several studies show various patriarchal structures identified by Walby (1990), especially in literary works and films (Naza, 2024; Baruna & Lestari, 2022); Naufina, 2021; and Sinta & Ambalegin, 2020). Naza (2024) identified patriarchal structures in the film *The Impossible Dream* (1983) through a descriptive qualitative approach. Baruna & Lestari (2022) explored gender-based oppression in Cho Nam-Joo's *Kim Ji-Young, Born 1982* utilizing a biographical approach. Similar patterns were identified by Naufina (2021) and Sinta & Ambalegin (2020), who demonstrated how female characters are confined within patriarchal expectations through qualitative analysis.

Additionally, Simone de Beauvoir's existentialist feminism has been utilized to examine women's agency in literary works and popular culture. Several studies demonstrate that this theory highlights the significance of women's autonomy, responsibility, and ability to construct their lives independently within patriarchal contexts (Swartzentruber, 2023; Suhadi et al., 2023; Lestari et al., 2022; Jaleel, 2021; and Haner, 2024). Swartzentruber (2023) analyzed female autonomy in Madeline Miller's *Circe* and Anaïs Mitchell's *Hadestown* through qualitative analysis. Suhadi et al., (2023) highlighted the value of intellectual labor and decision-making in Indonesian literature utilizing a qualitative descriptive. Lestari et al., (2022) identified elements of existentialist feminism in pop song lyrics, particularly emphasizing women's autonomy and confidence through a descriptive qualitative approach with the approach of syntagmatic and paradigmatic relations. Jaleel (2021) and emphasize the body as a contested site of patriarchal control, and how women resist through autonomy and embodiment, through a qualitative analysis.

While previous studies have examined patriarchy and agency across diverse media, limited scholarship has focused on historical dramas such as *Shōgun* that reinterpret women's agency within feudal power structures. In addition, this study also highlights how female characters in the series *Shōgun* (2024) define and assert their agency amidst an oppressive social order.
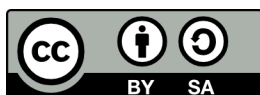
2.2 Theoretical Framework

This research uses two interrelated feminist framework to analyze the forms of gendered oppression and agency depicted in *Shōgun*: Simone de Beauvoir's existentialist feminism and Sylvia Walby's theory of patriarchy.

Existentialist feminism is an approach in feminist theory that highlights the importance of individual freedom, self-awareness, and choice in the face of patriarchal structures. One of the figures in this school is Simone de Beauvoir, through her monumental work *Le Deuxième Sexe* (*The Second Sex*, 1949). In *The Second Sex,* Beauvoir argues that women have historically not been regarded as autonomous subjects, but rather shaped as "*the other*" in male-dominated social relations. She writes:

"One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman" (de Beauvoir, 1949, p.330) .

This statement emphasizes that womanhood is not something that is natural or biological, but rather shaped by social, cultural, and historical processes that subordinate women to certain roles. Women's position as the *other* implies that their identity and existence are not recognized autonomously, but are always determined by men as universal subjects (Tong, 2009).

However, Beauvoir does not see women solely as passive victims of the patriarchal system. In an existentialist framework, humans are essentially free beings who have the ability to choose, act, and create meaning for their own existence. This agency is realized through three things. First, women's awareness of their subordinate position. Second, decision-making that reflects her free will. Third, concrete actions that shape her existence consciously. In other words, women can fight for their independence through deliberate life choices, despite restrictive social conditions.

Complementing this is Sylvia Walby's theory of patriarchy. It is important to have an understanding of the different types of oppression perpetrated against women. There are six structures of patriarchy, according to Walby (1989, p.20), including patriarchal relations in the household, paid work, the state, male violence, sexuality, and cultural institutions. However, this research focuses on three patriarchal structures: the household, the state, and male violence.

According to Walby (1989, p. 63), the patriarchal structure in the household establishes women as the primary caretakers of domestic matters, while men assume a role in the public sphere. This structure is linked to violence perpetrated by men, which continues to be felt by women (Walby, 1989). Women who make mistakes and get violence from their husbands are considered normal because husbands are positioned as protectors of wives (Hotifah, 2011). Dewi & Suwandana (2024) Married women who are victims of domestic violence are often trapped in situations with limited options, making it difficult for them to voice their wants or needs. They choose to forgive and stay in the relationship, resulting in repeated violence (Ismalia et al., 2022).

On patriarchal relations within the state, Walby (1989) sees that the law cannot protect women from domestic violence, as well as the lack of women in government decision-making. In line with Held (1982) those who state that patriarchy is the basis of the state, which itself represents "the formal institutionalization of the separation of men's and women's lives." Finally, patriarchal relations in cultural institutions. Relationships in which some institutions create representations of women from patriarchal perspectives in the fields of religion, education, and media (Walby, 1989).

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In addition, patriarchy in culture and social beliefs creates and perpetuates the dominant role of men and subordinates women in domestic and social life. Since the beginning of civilization, men leading a family was considered natural and went hand in hand with society.

3. METHODOLOGY

This study uses a qualitative method to analyze women's struggle against Japanese patriarchal culture in the television series *Shōgun* (2024). According to Creswell (2009) this method allows researchers to gain a deeper understanding and perception of existing social problems, in this case patriarchy. This method is in accordance with the purpose of the study, which is to describe how women's struggles are depicted in the patriarchal culture of Japanese society.

The data collection process includes watching the television series *Shōgun* (2024) thoroughly to understand the narrative and story structure, finding and selecting scenes relevant to the research subject, especially those depicting women's agency in the face of the patriarchal system, and converting dialogue from visual descriptions of the selected scenes into written data format for analysis.

This research utilizes Sylvia Walby's theoretical framework of patriarchy. Walby (1989) views patriarchy as a complex and layered social system, which regulates relations between men and women through six main structures, namely: household, paid work, state, male violence, sexuality, and cultural institutions. In this study, four patriarchal structures are used, namely: household, state, male violence, and cultural institutions. In addition, this research also adopts the existentialist feminism approach proposed by Simone de Beauvoir. In this framework, agency is understood as the capacity of individual women to resist objectification and strive for freedom through conscious choices and actions that affirm their existence as subjects.

To maintain the authenticity and truthfulness of the data, this research uses primary sources in the form of the television series *Shōgun* (2024) and secondary sources that include books, journal articles, and relevant feminist theories. The data is systematically analyzed and grouped based on the theory of existentialist feminism by Simone de Beauvoir and the patriarchal structure identified by Walby, with the aim of understanding how the forms of agency carried out by women are depicted as resistance to patriarchal social structures.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This research highlights the struggles of women against patriarchy, as featured in the television series *Shōgun* (2024), focusing on the character of Lady Mariko. Mariko is a noblewoman whose life is completely directed by the social structure and gender roles prescribed by her husband and the societal norms. Although *Shōgun* does not explicitly place women at the center of the narrative, the series implicitly shows how female characters, especially Lady Mariko, experience structural oppression and determine agency as a form of resistance to the patriarchal social order.

Patriarchal Structures in *Shōgun* (2024)

The television series *Shōgun* (2024) is set in the *Sengoku* period (146-1600), when Japan was still divided into regions led by warlords. At that time, society was governed by a strict hierarchical system, where people submitted to their leaders. Lady Mariko, the female protagonist of the series, is portrayed as a noblewoman who is protected and commanded by Toranaga, one of the most powerful political figures. Mariko is assigned by Toranaga as an interpreter, so on various

occasions, Mariko also accompanies Toranaga in diplomatic affairs, including interacting with foreigners.

Mariko is also the wife of Buntaro, a respected samurai. In her position as wife and servant to her leader, Mariko lives between two interlocking patriarchal structures. First, patriarchy within the domestic sphere through her marital relationship with Buntaro. Second, patriarchy is embedded in the broader social structure, specifically in the state and the feudal system, which regulates power relations between men and women within the political order. These two forms of patriarchy are the dominant contexts in Mariko's experience as a woman who is constantly restricted, but at the same time tries to resist the structures that oppress her.

The first form of patriarchy featured in the *Shōgun* (2024) series is the patriarchal household. The household not only functions as a place to live, but also as the main space in the preservation of male dominance over women. This patriarchal practice is reflected through the unequal division of labor, where women are allowed to work, but not as the main breadwinners. Additionally, women are also restricted in their movement, and their social roles are largely confined to the domestic sphere. A representation of this condition can be seen in the following scene:

Scene 1 (Episode 2 minute 19:05)
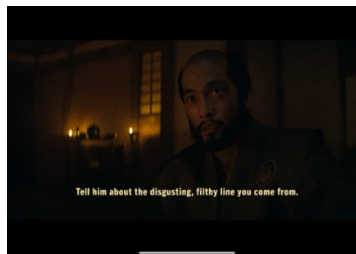
Buntaro : "Why should your mother be anything outside this house?"
Figure 1: Buntaro questions Mariko's role outside the home.
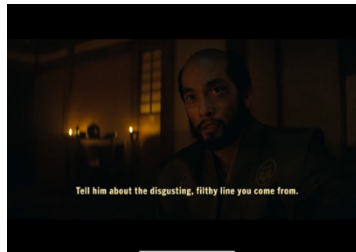*Source: Researcher Processed Data.*

The data above illustrates that women are not supposed to have roles or activities outside the home. In the context of feudal Japanese culture, this view reflects a norm that severely limits women's mobility and confines them to roles as guardians of family honor, housekeepers, and servants to their husbands. This reflects what Walby (1989) describes as patriarchy within the household, where women are structurally positioned in domestic roles, while access to the public sphere is restricted and male-dominated. In fact, Mariko demonstrates intellectual prowess and the ability to devise effective strategies, particularly in her role as an interpreter between the Japanese and the British. However, instead of being recognized, her skills were viewed as inappropriate by her own husband. This shows how women's public roles, although useful and crucial in political and diplomatic contexts, are still considered to violate the boundaries of traditional gender roles shaped by patriarchal structures.

Male violence against women in *Shōgun* (2024) is the next form of patriarchy on display. This violence is not only physical but also verbal and emotional, serving to demean, intimidate, and control women. Walby (1989) identifies male violence as a core structure of patriarchy that functions both as a method of enforcing female subordination and as a form of power

reinforcement in intimate relationships. The most obvious example of this is seen in the relationship between Mariko and her husband, Buntaro. In one of the scenes, Buntaro says:
**Scene 2 (Episode 5 minute 30:35)**

Buntaro : *"Tell him about the disgusting, filthy line you come from."*

Figure 2: Buntaro verbally insults Mariko's family background.
Source: Researcher Processed Data.

The above data shows clear verbal abuse, where Buntaro denigrates Mariko's family background in front of others. Such remarks not only reflect one's personal anger, but also serve as a tool for symbolic domination in patriarchal relations within the household. Buntaro insults Mariko's identity and origins, reinforcing his position as an authoritarian figure while weakening Mariko's self-esteem and status. These actions show that male violence in the patriarchal system is not only done with physical violence or hurtful and degrading words, but is also used to control women psychologically and socially.

In addition to violence in the form of verbal abuse, Mariko also experienced physical violence perpetrated by her husband, Buntaro. In a scene that takes place after dinner together, Buntaro shoots an arrow that almost hits Mariko in the face. This action can be understood as a form of symbolic intimidation and physical threat that shows his unacceptance of Mariko's attitude that is considered too active and independent, including when she tries to mediate the tension between Buntaro and Blackthorne through a softened translation. Mariko's refusal to fully submit to her husband's orders, especially when she chooses to leave dinner without Buntaro's permission, triggers the physical violence that follows. This is illustrated in the following data:
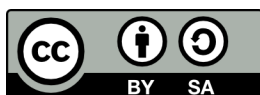
Scene 3 (Episode 3 minute 33:30)

Figure 3: Buntaro physically intimidates Mariko with a near-miss arrow.
Source: Researcher Processed Data.

The scene above shows that male violence against women is used as a tool to enforce male dominance and control over women's bodies and wills. It also shows how women are forced to obey and submit, even when their choices are based on moral integrity or a desire to live with dignity. Mariko, who in the narrative has lost her entire family and lives in the shadow of past trauma, is still not given the space to determine her own path. Although she is Buntaro's wife, her autonomy as an individual is usurped, and her daring to leave dinner is seen as a form of insubordination worthy of physical punishment. Thus, Buntaro's physical violence is not simply a matter of personal relations between husband and wife, but a reflection of the patriarchal system that seeks to control women through physical and verbal violence in order to maintain the traditional order of power that places women in a subordinate position.

Patriarchy in the state is a form of domination that operates through official institutions such as the legal system, government, and public policies that tend to strengthen the position of men. According to Walby (1989), patriarchal structures in the state refer to how state institutions of the legal system fail to protect women from injustice and violence, especially in the domestic sphere. In the context of Japanese patriarchal culture featured in this series, the form of patriarchy in the state is reflected through the symbolic and practical power given to men in the household even when their actions are clearly violent as in the following data:
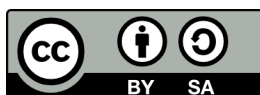
Scene 4 (Episode 5 minute 43:57)

Toranaga : "Buntaro may do what he wishes to his wife. But right now, I cannot have my translator harmed."

Figure 4: Toranaga justifies inaction toward domestic abuse.
Source: Researcher Processed Data.

In the scene above, Torananga, the most powerful character in the series shows a passive attitude towards the violence committed by Mariko's husband, Buntaro. The statement *"Buntaro may do what he wishes to his wife"* shows that domestic violence is considered a private affair of men who have full rights over their wives. No legal or moral protection is offered to Mariko except for pragmatic reasons: that she has a political function as a translator for Toranaga. This means that women are only considered worthy of protection if they have functional value within the male power system.

Toranaga's attitude reflects how state power in a patriarchal system is not neutral, but rather reinforces male authority over women. Even when he is in a position to protect Mariko, this power is not used to uphold justice, but to maintain the stability of male power and the existing social hierarchy. Thus, the state, which is supposed to be the protector of women's basic rights, becomes part of a system that allows violence to occur under the pretext of social or cultural structures.

Forms of Agency of Female Characters in *Shōgun* (2024)

In a patriarchal society, women's agency is not always demonstrated through direct action or overt rebellion. Women played a significant social role in feudal Japanese society as depicted in *Shogun* (2024). Mariko's character is a direct example of how social influence can be a well-functioning medium of female agency to shape power dynamics, culture, and social relations amidst a strong patriarchal structure. Despite systemic oppression, Mariko demonstrates agency in various ways. Her actions resonate with Beauvoir's (1949) existentialist feminism, which positions women as capable of becoming autonomous subjects through awareness, decision, and action.

- Intellectual Agency

One of the most fundamental forms of women's independence in a patriarchal society is intellect. Intellectuality includes the ability to think critically and discern society. Women possess the intelectual capacity to understand, analyze and respond to oppressive systems and create sustainable strategies for change. In addition, intellectual institutions provide opportunities for women to participate critically in public conversations. As reflected in the following scene:

Scene 5 (Episode 2 minute 22:39)

Hiromatsu : *"And why should we care about the Christian Regents?"*
Mariko : *"Because our lord can only be impeached if the council vote as one."*

Figure 5: Mariko explains political strategy before male leaders.
Source: Researcher Processed Data.

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The data above clearly illustrates how Mariko exercises her intellectual agency through her keen political understanding, strategic analysis, and courage to voice her views in a male-dominated space. When Hiromatsu questions the relevance of the Christian *regents*' power, Mariko responds with systemic thinking that demonstrates a deep knowledge of the mechanisms of political power. As she says *"Because our lord can only be impeached if the council votes as one."* This remark shows that Mariko understands the formal structure of power that governs decision-making at the highest level. She not only conveys information, but constructs logical arguments based on power relations and political laws, a capacity for strategic thinking rarely afforded to female characters in patriarchal societies.

More than that, Mariko goes on to explain the motive behind Toranaga's actions: *"He uses the barbarian to sow division between Ishido and the Christian lords."* This statement is not only a form of interpretation, but also evidence that Mariko is able to read hidden strategies, understand complex political alliances, and recognize the symbolic function of Blackthorne's presence as a tool of power maneuvering. She demonstrates the capacity to think within the system, but also beyond the system by exposing male power plays that have been hidden behind formal language.

Toranaga*'s* response confirms Mariko*'s* intellectual superiority: *"You could use some of your daughter in law's intuition."* This statement indirectly recognizes that Mariko has political insights that even senior male advisors like Hiromatsu lack. It is a symbolic acknowledgment of women's intellectual capacity in a context where their voices are often minimized or ignored. Mariko does not impose her views, but delivers them in a calm, data-driven and solution-oriented manner. It is a form of intellectual power that is not dominative, but collaborative where Mariko invites to think not to dominate.

- Existential Agency through Self-Sacrifice

Women's self-sacrifice, while often seen as a passive act or the result of social pressure, can in fact be a powerful expression of agency. In this context, agency refers to women's ability to act and make decisions that impact their own lives, even when they are under restrictive or limited social conditions. Conscious and autonomous acts of self-sacrifice can reflect women's inner strength, moral leadership, and capacity to respond to injustice through transformative value choices. When women choose to sacrifice for their values, the safety of others, or personal integrity, they are not simply giving in to the situation, but are exercising their free will to define the course of life or even death with meaning of their own making.

In this case, Mariko decides how her life ends. This is reflected in the following data:

Scene 6 (Episode 9 minute 40:36)
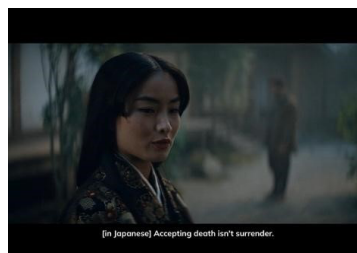
*Mariko : "Accepting death isn't surrender. Flowers are
flowers because they fall."*
*Buntaro : "No, I understand perfectly. He's taking
advantage of your loyalty. Your life is worth more than this."*

Figure 6: Mariko discusses the meaning of death with Blackthorne.
Source: Researcher Processed Data.

The above statement shows Mariko's existential agency as a woman in control of her own life and death. Mariko does not see life as the only form of success, nor does she see death as a defeat. Instead, she understands both as spaces to assert value, honor, and the freedom to make choices.

In her actions, Mariko shows that female power does not always come in the form of domination or open rebellion. She does not resort to physical confrontation to challenge patriarchal norms. Through a singular, deliberate act, she disrupts the oppressive value system.. Mariko transforms death, often a symbol of women's subordination, into a tool to assert strength, dignity and truth.

As such, Mariko's self-sacrifice in the series cannot be understood as a form of defeat or submission. Instead, it exemplifies Beauvoir's notion of asserting freedom through conscious, purposeful choices. Mariko carves out a space of meaning within a restrictive system, and through her decision, she reclaims the right to make decisions for her own life.

Agency as a Form of Resistance in *Shōgun* (2024)

The feudal Japanese society that serves as the setting for the *Shōgun* (2024) series is a highly patriarchal society, where social, political, and cultural structures are controlled by men. Female characters were required to follow a value system that emphasized loyalty, devotion, and obedience to their fathers, husbands, and leaders. In this system, women's roles are limited to domestic and symbolic functions, and they are rarely given the space to make important decisions concerning politics, morality, or their own existence.

In this context, Mariko's agency becomes a form of symbolic and substantive resistance to the patriarchal structure that limits women:

- Rejection of Patriarchal Control

In a patriarchal society, women are regarded as objects of men's decisions - husbands, fathers, and rulers. However, Mariko consciously took control of her own life and death. She asserts herself as an active subject capable of determining her own fate. She makes deliberate decisions about her life and death. Mariko's rejection of male domination is also explicitly shown in the following scene when her husband, Buntaro, invites her to commit shinjū (collective suicide) as a form of protest against the existing political situation:

Scene 7 (Episode 8 minute 26:34)

Buntaro : "Let us go to death tonight. I wish to finally give it to you in protest of our lord's surrender and your enemies. Let us welcome death together. Let us enter oblivion as husband and wife."
Mariko : "Even now you fail to understand. It was a life beyond your reach. And I would sooner live a thousand years than die with you like this."ou must all learn to be kind".

Figure 7: Mariko refuses Buntaro's invitation to die together.
Source: Researcher Processed Data.

Based on the above, Mariko refused Buntaro's invitation. The dialog above shows a form of assertion that what has been taken away from her is not the right to die, but the right to live freely and meaningfully. By refusing to die with her husband, Mariko reclaims autonomy over her life as a form of agency that directly defies traditional gender norms. She demonstrates that women have the capacity to determine their own destiny, even when it goes against the values of loyalty that are attached to them as a form of the existing patriarchal structure.

- Political Impact of Death

Mariko's choice to sacrifice herself cannot be read as a form of submission, but rather as an expression of ultimate agency. In Japanese patriarchal culture, honor is often associated with male death practices such as *seppuku* or ritual suicide, as a form of atonement. Mariko, however, reverses this narrative. She chooses death as a goal and a strategy. In one scene Ochiba says:

Scene 8 (Episode 9 minute 33:58)

Ochiba : "You're all wrong. Lady Mariko will do as she says. She will die to be free of the disgrace that has burdened her. And then all of Osaka will be disgraced for letting her die".

Figure 8: Ochiba foresees the political consequences of Mariko's sacrifice
Source: Researcher Processed Data.

The above statement suggests that Mariko's death will have significant socio-political consequences, one of which is the humiliation of a power structure that allows a woman to choose death as a form of resistance. When Mariko chooses to die, it becomes a political act that shakes up the patriarchal system, showing that women's agency does not only live in continuity, but also in a deliberate and meaningful death.

- Recognition as a Thinking Subject

Mariko shows through her agency that women can think critically, play politics, and act on principle. In doing so, she challenges the patriarchal system that considers women to be irrational, passive beings who only function in the domestic sphere. She showed that women can also be historical actors who think, choose and create meaning. Mariko's intellectual courage and moral alignment are even recognized by her leader, as seen in the following scene:

**Scene 9 (Episode 10 minute 49:07)**

Toranaga : "Crimson sky is already finished. With the Regent united. I could never send an army to Osaka. It would have meant certain death. So I sent a woman to do what an army never could".

Figure 9: Toranaga acknowledges Mariko's decisive contribution.
Source: Researcher Processed Data.

The above statement is not only an acknowledgment of Mariko's tactical role, but also a reversal of traditional patriarchal logic, where strength and victory are usually associated with masculinity and physical violence. The television series portrays a woman as a strategic weapon that is more effective than military force, suggesting that women's thinking, courage, and intellectual abilities equal and even surpass patriarchal standards of success in terms of diplomacy and power.

Mariko, therefore, sees agency as a way to survive, but also as a transformative force that destroys patriarchal values from within. Her actions align with Beauvoir's (1949) existentialist concept of transcendence, where women move beyond roles imposed upon them and redefine their existence through conscious and meaningful actions. The system she will challenge sees her as a conscious subject and agent of change.

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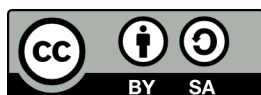
5. CONCLUSION

Based on the above discussion, it can be concluded that first, the form of patriarchal culture in feudal Japanese society is depicted systematically and deeply through Lady Mariko's life experience in the *Shōgun* series (2024). The analysis of dialogues and scenes shows that women experience subordination not only in the domestic sphere, but also in the state structure. In the hothousehold, women are restricted in their movement and roles, and are vulnerable to violence, both physical and verbal. Meanwhile, within the state, the law and the power system do not favor women. Women's existence is only recognized to the extent that they have strategic use value for the patriarchal structure controlled by men.

Second, women's agency in Mariko is manifested through forms such as intellectuality and conscious self-sacrifice. Mariko's intellect demonstrates that women can contribute to political discourse and strategy in a critical and credible manner. Meanwhile, her self-sacrifice is not a form of resignation, but a conscious act used as a tool to disrupt and undermine the patriarchal value system.

Thirdly, such an agency serves as a direct means of challenging the oppressive patriarchal culture. Mariko successfully asserts her existence as a thinking and acting subject in a system that has excluded women from decision-making. She refuses to be governed by those in power, makes decisions about her own fate, and uses death as a political statement that breaks power structures. Thus, *Shōgun* (2024) presents a complex female narrative in which women's agency becomes a subversive force that challenges and dismantles patriarchal domination symbolically and structurally.

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